

WHY FAFSA?

Have you ever wished you could get help paying for technical certificates or a college degree?

Whether you're a recent high school graduate or an adult returning to school, there's a powerful tool to help you pay for your education—and **it's free to apply**.

It is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and it's your gateway to grants, work-study, and low-interest loans that can make your higher education more affordable.

Utah students of all ages have an incredible opportunity to unlock financial support for college and career training—but many don't apply. Some may not know about the FAFSA, or might not realize how simple and valuable the FAFSA can be. The truth? It's easier than you think, and the benefits can be life-changing.

How the FAFSA Works

The first step to receiving financial aid is completing the FAFSA, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The programs details are found at www.studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

Here is a quick overview of how it works.

1. Create a StudentAid.gov account and complete the **FAFSA**
 - a. The account makes it easy to check the status of your application, complete future year applications, and find answers to your questions. Be sure to remember the user name, password, and email associated. Some parents may already have an account they used to apply for federal aid when they went to college.
2. Use the application to select up to 20 schools to send your FAFSA information (you can always update this list in your FAFSA account, even after you complete the form).
3. Each school uses your information to determine how much aid your eligible for to help reduce the cost of college. You'll receive a financial aid offer and can compare the cost of different programs to make an informed decision.

You can even use the Federal Student Aid Estimator tool to get an early idea of how much federal aid you might receive – helping you plan ahead and budget for college.

Take the First Step

Money is available to help make the cost of college more affordable – whether you're just starting out or starting over. The FAFSA is your first step toward a brighter future.

Don't miss out on the support you deserve.

Important Reminder: You must complete the FAFSA *every year* you're enrolled in college to continue receiving aid.

What You'll Need to Apply



- A [StudentAid.gov](#) account for you (the applicant) and any [contributors](#) (like a parent or spouse).
 - Wondering who counts as a parent on the FAFSA? Use the [Who's My FAFSA Parent? wizard](#) to find out before you begin.
- Social security numbers
- Tax returns and income information (for the you and your contributors).
- Info about assets, federal benefits, or child support.
- School list (where you want to apply or where you attend college).

If you already file taxes, you're halfway there! The FAFSA uses the IRS Direct Data Exchange to securely pull your tax information to answer the tax question, making the process even easier.

Who Needs a Contributor?

- Dependent students (usually recent high school graduates under the age of 24) will need a parent to complete their part of the FAFSA.
 - There are some unusual circumstances that allow younger students to complete the FAFSA without their parent's information. Use [this link](#) to learn more.
- Independent students (often adult learners) may need a spouse to complete part their part of the FAFSA.

What Happens After You Apply?

- You'll receive get a [FAFSA Submission Summary](#) with your estimated federal aid and next steps.
- Each school you listed on your FAFSA will send you a financial aid offer that shows how much aid you will receive at that school. (the amount of aid you actually receive may be different than the submission summary and vary for each school)
- Aid may include
 - Grants (free money you don't repay.)
 - Work-study (access to flexible, part-time on-campus jobs. If you qualify, contact your school to learn how to apply for a position on campus.)
 - Federal student loans (which you can choose to accept or decline. These funds do need to be repaid with interest if accepted.)

How Aid is Calculated

FAFSA evaluates your financial need and connects you with funding options to help pay for college. Here are some factors that are considered when calculating financial aid:

- Your [Student Aid Index \(SAI\)](#) is calculated after you complete your FAFSA. A lower SAI means you may qualify for more need-based aid.
- Your [cost of attendance \(COA\)](#) is a general budget at each school that includes direct (i.e. tuition and fees) and indirect (i.e. housing and transportation) costs
- Your year in school and enrollment status (i.e. full-time or part-time student)

Each school subtracts your SAI from the cost of attendance to determine your financial need and need-based aid eligibility. Other factors, like scholarships or non need-based aid you receive may also impact this calculation.

To wrap things up, there is money available to help make the cost of college more manageable for students. If you already file taxes, you are half-way to finding out how much financial aid you or your student is eligible to receive. The next step is to complete the [FAFSA](#).