



HOW DO I PAY FOR COLLEGE? Program Guide

Thank you for purchasing college-prep materials from DreamCatcher Curriculum, LLC. We appreciate your business and hope that our products meet your needs for assisting students prepare for college. Although our materials can stand alone as a handout for students, the program guide will offer additional information and activities to share with students in a classroom or workshop setting.

The program guide is intended as a rough outline for the topic and can be adapted as you see fit to meet the needs of your program, school, or situation. The guide also includes copy-permissible pages for use in activities as a supplement to instruction. **Please note that color handouts are copyright-protected and duplication in any form is strictly prohibited.** See our website www.dreamcatchercurriculum.com for additional info, resources, and new curriculum topics.

➤ **BEFORE YOU BEGIN:** This workshop requires minimal prep, however, it is strongly recommended that you read and review the program guide along with the handout before meeting with students.

HOW DO I PAY FOR COLLEGE? OBJECTIVE & INCLUDED TOPICS

To provide high school students, especially those preparing for the financial aid application process, with information about the types of financial aid including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): *Four Types of Financial Aid, FAFSA Process, FAFSA Terms to Know, FAFSA Fast Facts, Scholarships*

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP / SESSION

Consider scheduling the workshop or advising session in the fall semester before the FAFSA application opens. Students should start completing and submitting the FAFSA as soon as they are able in December. Another option is holding the session after the FAFSA opens and assisting with submission and completion as part of the workshop. Consider inviting a financial aid office representative to speak with participants and parents/guardians about the FAFSA submission process, as well as answer any questions. Consider researching potential scholarship sources to share with students.

STEP ONE TIME: 10 MINUTES

Introduce the topic and ask students if they are feeling concerned about the cost of college. **Ask them to name different ways to pay for college** (answers should include: *scholarships, grants, student loans, and perhaps their own funds*). Distribute the *How Do I Pay for College* handout. Pay special attention to the *Grants* section, including the Pell Grant award for the upcoming school year. Next, discuss federal work-study jobs and how to apply for a work-study job on campus. Discuss the three basic types of scholarships. Lastly, discuss student loans. **Encourage participants to obtain federal loans through the FAFSA because these loans provide the lowest interest rate;** discuss the difference between federal student loans and private student loans. Be sure to review the terms below loans (*Interest & Rate, Subsidized/Unsubsidized Loans, Master Promissory Note, etc.*). Lastly, review the FAQs at the bottom of the page. Answer any questions about loans, scholarships, grants and work-study.

STEP TWO TIME: 15 MINUTES

Turn to the inside of the handout to discuss *FAFSA Facts*. Review the *Terms to Know* and answer any questions concerning this section. Make certain to state that **everyone who attends college needs to complete and submit the FAFSA**. Inform students that FAFSA stands for *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*. Emphasize that they should never pay to complete the FAFSA; the only website that is legitimate for student use is studentaid.gov.

Discuss the *Before, During, and After* sections. Before filling out the FAFSA, students should create a Federal Student Aid ID using their social security number, mailing address, email, and phone (as well as answer security questions). **Stress that parent(s)/guardian(s) who plan on entering information on the FAFSA also need an FSA ID.** They should ensure that their name matches their official names and identifications during this process. Using a nickname is not allowed; if any names are spelled differently, that will need to be resolved before completing the FAFSA. Students and parents/guardians will also need to use the tax information from 2 years prior to when the student will be enrolled in college (**for the 2024-25 school year, use the family's 2022 tax returns using the IRS Transfer while completing the FAFSA**). The upcoming FAFSA application will be available beginning in December 2023.

HOW DO I PAY FOR COLLEGE?

Program Guide



STEP TWO CONTINUED

During FAFSA completion, students should be aware of which information will be needed (listed under *During*). There are two ways to complete the FAFSA; **strongly encourage submitting the FAFSA application online**. The colleges to which they applied will review the information and complete the financial aid award, sending a letter of award by mail (or email in some cases). Students must return this letter or complete the process online to indicate the aid they wish to receive. The state in which the student resides might also receive information to award state-based aid.

Provide students with the included *Financial Aid Timeline for Seniors* AND *FAFSA Changes to Know for 2023*.

Review each task, asking students to check off tasks those completed so far (if applicable) and emphasize the following:

- ◆ The 2024-25 FAFSA opens in December 2023. It should open on October 1, 2024 for the 2025-26 application.
- ◆ The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) will be replaced by the Student Aid Index (SAI).
- ◆ Parents and students must log in separately to complete their respective sections of the FAFSA.

STEP THREE TIME: 15 MINUTES

Move to *Who is Considered Your Parent When Filling out the FAFSA*. Ask students to follow the flow chart to determine which parent/guardian's tax info to report. **Make sure they understand who does NOT count as a parent on the FAFSA**. Point out the helpful Student Aid link with more information on dependency.

Next, review *More FAFSA Facts* and discuss each section, answering questions as needed. Be sure to cover the following information:

- ◆ Use only studentaid.gov to complete and submit the FAFSA.
- ◆ Accept aid in this order: Free Money (scholarships and grants), Earned Money (work-study), Borrowed Money (loans)
- ◆ Parents will also need an FSA ID that is separate from their child/children's FSA ID. It is used to access the FAFSA.
- ◆ If a life-changing event happens after submitting the FAFSA (or it's not reflected in the tax information), students can approach the college's financial aid office to discuss options on funding.
- ◆ Discuss the difference between a dependent student and an independent student.
- ◆ Students must provide their parents' financial information when they meet the criteria for dependent student. If they cannot contact their parent(s) and/or it may pose a risk to contact them, they may qualify as a "Provisional Independent Student" under the **Unusual Circumstances** question. Their college will follow up for documentation before disbursing funds obtained by the FAFSA.
- ◆ The FAFSA will now use the IRS Transfer to access tax information. Students AND parent(s) will be required to provide consent for the IRS transfer to occur whether or not they filed taxes.
- ◆ If one or both parents do not have a social security number, they should enter their mailing address. Doing this will not affect the parent/guardian's citizenship or resident status in the United States.
- ◆ Aid from the FAFSA is typically first-come, first-served, so the sooner it is completed, the better the chances of getting aid.

Lastly, discuss *Not a Senior Yet?* For students who might not be seniors, there are various things to be done now to prepare for filling out the FAFSA and other financial aid applications.

LAST STEP & ASSESSMENT TIME: 10 MINUTES

Turn to the back page about scholarships and instruct students to jot down ideas for scholarships in each section. Share any scholarship research you did before the session, as well. To discover more options, students could consider these general sources:

- ◆ National companies like Coca-Cola, Dr. Pepper, Kohl's, Target, (and [DreamCatcher Curriculum!](#)) etc. offer annual scholarships.



HOW DO I PAY FOR COLLEGE? Program Guide

LAST STEP & ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

- ◆ Students can use free online scholarship searches and matching tools like [scholarships.com](https://www.scholarships.com), collegeboard.org, chegg.com/scholarships, fastweb.com, and careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-scholarships.aspx. Stress that they should **never pay for a scholarship search**. Some searches require an account using a valid email address.
- ◆ College departments offer scholarships based on certain majors; these scholarships are sometimes offered after freshman year.
- ◆ Students should also check out their high school counselor's office for more ideas about scholarships.

Ask participants to consider all that they have learned and discuss creating a plan for funding their college educations now and while in college. **Distribute workshop assessments and collect when complete.**

DreamCatcher Extra: Provide a copy of the *Step-by-Step Guide to Completing the FAFSA* (available late Fall 2023); this will be especially valuable for seniors, as it provides insight on the order of questions and information required by the FAFSA.

LEARNING OUTCOME

At the conclusion of the session, students will be able to list three major sources of funding for college, use FAFSA acronyms in a short paragraph, and list a scholarship source that they learned.

THIS TOPIC INCLUDES A COMPLIMENTARY DIGITAL LINK FOR THE *HOW DO I PAY* TOPIC!

Updated regularly as new information becomes available. Simply refresh your flipping book for the latest updates! Share with your staff, students, and parents. Internet access required. Only available for this topic for the 2024-25 academic year. We'll email you the link after your printed FAFSA purchase!

How Do I Pay for College? Assessment

List the four major sources of funding for college (Bonus! Circle the sources that do not have to be repaid.):

Use the terms SAI, FSS, and COA in the sentences below:

I looked up the _____ for my college, which included tuition and fees, housing and food, and technology expenses/books. Next, I completed my FAFSA so that I could get my _____, which reviewed the information I submitted on the FAFSA, including my _____, also known as Student Aid Index.

Name one scholarship source you learned today that you previously didn't know about:

How Do I Pay for College? Assessment

List the four major sources of funding for college (Bonus! Circle the sources that do not have to be repaid.):

Use the terms SAI, FSS, and COA in the sentences below:

I looked up the _____ for my college, which included tuition and fees, housing and food, and technology expenses/books. Next, I completed my FAFSA so that I could get my _____, which reviewed the information I submitted on the FAFSA, including my _____, also known as Student Aid Index.

Name one scholarship source you learned today that you previously didn't know about:

How Do I Pay for College? Assessment

List the four major sources of funding for college (Bonus! Circle the sources that do not have to be repaid.):

Use the terms SAI, FSS, and COA in the sentences below:

I looked up the _____ for my college, which included tuition and fees, housing and food, and technology expenses/books. Next, I completed my FAFSA so that I could get my _____, which reviewed the information I submitted on the FAFSA, including my _____, also known as Student Aid Index.

Name one scholarship source you learned today that you previously didn't know about:

Financial Aid Timeline for Seniors

Check the boxes as you complete tasks!

BEFORE SENIOR YEAR:

- Research scholarship opportunities. Start early so you can be aware of deadlines and requirements.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER:

- Ask about local scholarships; visit your counselor for more info.
- Make a list of all the scholarships to which you will be applying and their deadlines. Use a checklist to keep track of application statuses.
- Use the Federal Student Aid Estimator to determine federal aid.

OCTOBER:

- Find out if your school is offering a college night or college fair(s) and make plans to attend.
- Start applying to your colleges of choice. Be sure to apply to SAFETY (you exceed requirements), MATCH (you reach requirements), and REACH (you *almost* meet requirements) colleges.
- Ask for letters of recommendation if needed for scholarship or college applications.

NOVEMBER:

- Start learning about the FAFSA requirements for your state and colleges of interest. Register for an FSA ID (fsaid.ed.gov); your parents will need to register for one, too.
- Ask for letters of recommendation if needed for scholarship or college applications.

DECEMBER:

- Complete and submit your FAFSA!** FAFSA submission window opens in December for the 2024-25 FAFSA. The 2025-26 application should open October 1, 2024.
- Review your Student Aid Report/FAFSA Submission Summary after submitting your FAFSA. Make any needed corrections.

JANUARY:

- Search for local scholarships for which you might be eligible. Your school counselor is a great resource for finding local apps, which often have spring deadlines.
- Continue searching and applying for other scholarships and financial aid, keeping copies for your records.

FEBRUARY:

- File your taxes for the current required tax year (you'll need to use those records for future FAFSAs).
- Make housing arrangements with your college(s) of choice, if living on campus. Many residence halls are first-come, first-served.

MARCH-APRIL:

- Send additional documents (if required) to your institution.
- Compare financial aid award letters and contact colleges if you have questions about their offers.
- Make a final decision and accept the financial aid offer from your college.
- Consider travel arrangements to get to college and whether you will take a car or need a parking permit.

MAY:

- Consider your student loan options.
- If you haven't already, send thank-you notes to those who wrote a recommendation letter or helped you along the way.

Created by DreamCatcher Curriculum, LLC. This page copy permissible.

Financial Aid Timeline for Seniors

Check the boxes as you complete tasks!

BEFORE SENIOR YEAR:

- Research scholarship opportunities. Start early so you can be aware of deadlines and requirements.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER:

- Ask about local scholarships; visit your counselor for more info.
- Make a list of all the scholarships to which you will be applying and their deadlines. Use a checklist to keep track of application statuses.
- Use the Federal Student Aid Estimator to determine federal aid.

OCTOBER:

- Find out if your school is offering a college night or college fair(s) and make plans to attend.
- Start applying to your colleges of choice. Be sure to apply to a SAFETY (you exceed requirements), MATCH (you reach requirements), and REACH (you *almost* meet requirements) colleges.
- Ask for letters of recommendation if needed for scholarship or college applications.

NOVEMBER:

- Start learning about the FAFSA requirements for your state and colleges of interest. Register for an FSA ID (fsaid.ed.gov); your parents will need to register for one, too.
- Ask for letters of recommendation if needed for scholarship or college applications.

DECEMBER:

- Complete and submit your FAFSA!** FAFSA submission window opens in December for the 2024-25 FAFSA. The 2025-26 application should open October 1, 2024.
- Review your Student Aid Report/FAFSA Submission Summary after submitting your FAFSA. Make any needed corrections.

JANUARY:

- Search for local scholarships for which you might be eligible. Your school counselor is a great resource for finding local apps, which often have spring deadlines.
- Continue searching and applying for other scholarships and financial aid, keeping copies for your records.

FEBRUARY:

- File your taxes for the current required tax year (you'll need to use those records for future FAFSAs).
- Make housing arrangements with your college(s) of choice, if living on campus. Many residence halls are first-come, first-served.

MARCH-APRIL:

- Send additional documents (if required) to your institution.
- Compare financial aid award letters and contact colleges if you have questions about their offers.
- Make a final decision and accept the financial aid offer from your college.
- Consider travel arrangements to get to college and whether you will take a car or need a parking permit.

MAY:

- Consider your student loan options.
- If you haven't already, send thank-you notes to those who wrote a recommendation letter or helped you along the way.

Created by DreamCatcher Curriculum, LLC. This page copy permissible.

FAFSA CHANGES to know for 2023...

#1: THE FAFSA WILL BE SHORTER

The FAFSA was 108 questions long prior to 2023, which was a barrier for some in completing the application.

New laws passed in 2021 will cut the maximum number of questions to an estimated total of 36 questions, cutting down the amount of time needed to complete the FAFSA.

Income information will be imported directly to the FAFSA from tax returns (before you had to access the data yourself using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool). This change will reduce the number of questions required for families to self-report income.

Students will no longer have to answer whether they have had any drug-related convictions, meaning drug offenses will no longer keep students from getting federal financial aid.

#2: NAME CHANGES

The "Expected Family Contribution," or EFC will be replaced by the "Student Aid Index," or SAI. The SAI is a number that colleges will use as an indicator of financial need to determine how much financial aid you can receive. The SAI can be a negative number (up to -\$1,500), making it easier for a college to identify students with the most financial need.

The number of people in your family enrolled in college will not factor into the SAI.

The "Student Aid Report," or SAR will be replaced by the "FAFSA Submission Summary," or FSS.

#3: PARENT CHANGES

The parent who provides the most financial support will complete the parent section of the FAFSA.

Parents and students must log in separately to complete their respective sections. The student and parent will each provide their legal name, SSN, date of birth, and email of the student/parent required to contribute after completing their section. If the parent doesn't have a SSN, they must provide their mailing address. A notification is then sent to the student or parent to complete their section.

#4: FSA IDs

Federal Student Aid IDs will be verified by the Social Security Administration before completing the FAFSA. This could take up to 3 days.

Students AND parent(s) accessing the FAFSA must have an FSA ID. Even parents who do not have a social security number must create an FSA ID. All accounts will use two-step verification for logging in to the FAFSA.

#5: PELL ELIGIBILITY EXPANDED

More students will now be eligible for federal Pell Grants. You will also be able to know sooner whether you qualify and how much of the grant you will receive (up to \$7,395 for the 2023-2024 school year; this amount typically increases each year).

Under the new guidelines, student family size and adjusted gross income will determine Pell eligibility (not EFC, which is how Pell Grant eligibility is currently determined).

Also, the following students can now qualify for a Pell Grant in 2023-24: incarcerated students participating in prison education programs and students with drug convictions, among others.

#6: LIFETIME LIMITS ELIMINATED

You can now get subsidized loans for as long as it takes to complete your education. Before, you would have only been able to take out loans for 150% of the length of your education program (for a 4-year program, the maximum length of time you could take out loans was 6 years). Now you can take out loans for the full length that it takes to finish college.

#7: Assets and Untaxed Income

Business and farm net worth will be included as an asset on the FAFSA (in the past, small businesses and family farms were excluded). Child support received will be included as an asset.

Untaxed income will no longer be listed, including payments to tax-deferred retirement, worker's compensation, & housing allowances.

#8: PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

When there are unusual situations or circumstances that impact your federal student aid eligibility, federal regulations give a financial aid administrator discretion, or professional judgment on a case-by-case basis (with adequate documentation) to make adjustments to the data elements on the FAFSA that impact your Student Aid Index (SAI) to gain a more accurate assessment of your family's ability to contribute to your cost of education. The Department of Education does not have the authority to override or impact a school's professional judgment decision.

#9: MISCELLANEOUS CHANGES

Students and parents will need consent to have tax information transferred from the IRS. This includes filers and non-filers.

Students can list up to 20 colleges on the FAFSA.

Demographic questions will include expanded ethnicity and race options. The FAFSA will only be available in English and Spanish.

#10: "UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES"

If you are a dependent student but cannot contact your parent(s) or contacting them causes risk to you, you may be considered a **provisional independent student**. You will be able to submit the FAFSA without parental info, but your college will follow up to gather documentation.

Helpful Websites & Resources:

Federal Student Aid: studentaid.gov/

Free Application for Federal Student Aid: studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

Create a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID): fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm

How Financial Aid Works: studentaid.gov/h/understand-aid/how-aid-works

Types of Financial Aid: studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types

Managing Student Loans: studentaid.gov/h/manage-loans