



IowaCollegeAid.gov  
Your Financial Aid Connection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Free Application for Federal Student Aid Now Available** *Early Application Can Increase Amount of Aid Received*

**Des Moines, IA, January 2, 2014** – For college-bound students and their parents, January is more than the start of the New Year; it also marks the availability of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2014-2015 academic year. The FAFSA is a standardized application used to determine eligibility for federal grants, loans and work-study funds from the federal government. In addition, many colleges and states, including Iowa, use FAFSA information when determining eligibility for institutional and state financial aid programs.

Completing and filing the FAFSA is not as difficult as many people think. “We encourage students and parents to complete the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) because the help features and built-in edits, which reduce applicant error, simply aren’t an option when completing the paper FAFSA,” explained Karen Misjak, Executive Director of the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid). “With all of the recent enhancements to the online form, it only takes about 30 minutes to complete.”

Iowa College Aid urges all college-bound students to complete the FAFSA regardless of their financial situations. “Most families are eligible for some form of financial aid, and they need to apply early to meet the priority deadlines associated with different programs,” said Misjak.

To help Iowa families, Iowa College Aid offers the following FAFSA filing tips.

**File the FAFSA no matter your financial situation.** Even if you do not think you will qualify for need-based financial aid, you should still file the FAFSA. Many colleges require that you file the FAFSA to be considered for institutional aid. In addition, you are required to complete a FAFSA to be eligible for federal Stafford loans and completing the FAFSA does not obligate a student to accept any of the aid offered.

**Never pay to file the FAFSA.** You can file the FAFSA for free at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Reputable resources, including Iowa College Aid, are available to help for free. In addition, more than 50 College Goal Sunday events will be held throughout Iowa to provide one-on-one assistance with FAFSA filing. Dates and locations of the events can be found at [http://www.iowacgs.org/en/2014\\_locations/](http://www.iowacgs.org/en/2014_locations/).

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**Meet state and college deadlines.** Many states, including Iowa, have FAFSA filing deadlines for state-funded scholarships, grants and work-study opportunities. Several state of Iowa financial aid programs have priority filing dates as early as March 1. Keep in mind, most colleges and universities have their own FAFSA filing deadlines. You should check with your college of choice to determine its priority deadline for financial aid and if additional documentation is required.

**Double check information to avoid delays.** Review your FAFSA information before you submit it for processing. Make sure the student's Social Security number and the parent's Social Security number are typed in the correct spaces. Mix-ups like these will cause processing delays.

**It's easier than ever.** One of the newest enhancements, the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, allows you to automatically transfer the required tax information to the FAFSA, which saves time and reduces applicant error. Students and families can file the FAFSA prior to completing their 2013 taxes by using estimated income information. The tax data should be available within 1-2 weeks of electronically filing taxes and then the IRS Data Retrieval Tool can be used to make a FAFSA correction, streamlining the completion of the FAFSA.

**Electronically sign your FAFSA.** The electronic application is not complete until both the student and parent electronically sign the FAFSA using their Federal Student Aid Personal Identification Numbers (PIN). Filers can apply for student and parent PINs while completing the FAFSA online, or they can go to the Federal Student Aid PIN website, [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov), to obtain PINs prior to starting the FAFSA.

Students and families who have questions about applying for financial aid, or are interested in learning more about the resources available for college and career planning can contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456.

Additional resources for Iowa families as they plan, prepare and pay for college are available on Iowa College Aid's website, [www.IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://www.IowaCollegeAid.gov).

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***About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission***

*Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$68.0 million annually, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR-UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being utilized to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at [www.IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://www.IowaCollegeAid.gov).*