



IowaCollegeAid.gov
Your Financial Aid Connection

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NEWS RELEASE

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Free Application for Federal Student Aid Available January 1, 2012 *Early Application Can Increase Amount of Aid Received*

Des Moines, IA, December 28, 2011 – For college-bound students and their parents, January 1 is more than the start of the New Year; it also marks the first day they can complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2012-2013 academic year. The FAFSA is a standardized application used to determine eligibility for federal, state, and in some cases, institutional financial aid.

System updates and enhancements have helped to make filing the FAFSA easier for students and families. “We encourage students and parents to complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov because the instructions, 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). “It is also processed faster than the paper version, which can be an important factor when meeting financial aid deadlines.”

Iowa College Aid urges all college-bound students to complete the FAFSA regardless of their financial situation. “Most families are eligible for some form of financial aid, but 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. Reputable resources, including Iowa College Aid, are available to help you for free.

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Meet state and college deadlines. Many states, including Iowa, have a FAFSA filing deadline for state-funded scholarships, grants and work-study opportunities. To be eligible for several State of Iowa financial aid programs your FAFSA must be completed and received at the federal processing center prior to July 1, 2012 (earlier priority filing deadlines exist for certain programs). You also need to complete the Iowa Financial Aid Application, which can be accessed through the statewide community web portal, www.IHaveaPlanIowa.gov. Keep in mind, most colleges and universities have earlier FAFSA filing deadlines. Students should check with their 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.

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). You can apply for student and parent PINs while completing the FAFSA online, or you can go to the Federal Student Aid PIN website, www.pin.ed.gov, to obtain your PIN 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 through Iowa College Aid can contact their Information Service Center 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.

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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 nearly \$60.0 million annually, administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) program, provides borrowers with assistance to avoid the serious consequences of default, 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 used to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.