

PSC-ED-FSA-TISD

**Moderator: Christal Simms
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4:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome everyone and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen only mode. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. I would now like to turn today's conference over to Mr. Adam Essex. Thank you, sir. You may begin.

Adam Essex: Thank you very much. Well, hello and welcome to the US Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid presents how to fill out the FAFSA, a guide to completing the FAFSA online.

We're live today for our nation's capital in Washington, DC. I'm Adam Essex, one of your presenters for today's event and joining me in DC is my colleague is Kevin Roberts and joining remotely from a regional office in Kansas City is Katherine Coates.

All three of us are awareness and outreach specialists for the Office of Federal Student Aid and we're thrilled to have you join us. I would like to remind you that you can text your questions or comments to us throughout this presentation.

We'll respond to as many questions as we can in our one hour presentation. Also, if you feel that we are speaking too fast or too slowly or there's a noise distraction, there's an icon on your toolbar. It looks like a little gentleman holding his hand up. You can click on that icon in a drop-down menu will appear and we will do our best to accommodate your request. Again, we want to thank you for joining us at this time and I would now like to turn over the presentation to my colleague, Katherine Coates.

Katherine Coates: Good afternoon everyone. As Adam mentioned, this is a presentation about FAFSA on the Web and it is that time of the year and students and parents I thinking about filing the free application and also remember that the free application of the FAFSA is different from filing an application for the schools that you would like to attend.

Typically, students do - they're applying for their various schools in the fall of their senior year. Federal financial aid programs that are offered are the federal PELL - federal grants, federal work study and federal student loans.

And just a little bit about these particular programs. Most people are familiar with federal grants. They think of them as the free money that's available to students. Our work-study programs are positions that are offered at schools for undergrad and graduate students who work part-time while attending school in these positions can be offered on campus to help pay for educational expenses.

And, of course, the student loans are available where students could get the loans in their own names and parents can get loans on behalf of their students. So truly, when you are thinking about applying for school, you'll want to complete the FAFSA. You really don't want to miss out on aid from federal student aid, from the schools and from the state.

And we offer more than \$150 billion in federal aid to help students pay for their college. Something that you'll want to know and remember is that every year that the student is going to school, they should complete the free application. They should file their FAFSA every year.

For high school seniors they should file any time after January 1st of their senior year. Remember that it's helpful for a student who is a dependent and one of their parents to get a personal identification number, a PIN. This four digit number is used for a lot of things including completing FAFSA and filing it electronically.

And, of course, the earlier that someone can complete the FAFSA, the better. These are just some of our basic eligibility requirements. We ask that students have a high school diploma or a GED or homeschool certificate.

And if someone is completing the FAFSA, the student and the parent will need to provide their Social Security Number and the name that is shown on the Social Security card is a name that needs to be presented on the FAFSA.

So no nicknames for someone. Whatever name is shown on the Social Security Number, that's how the FAFSA needs to be completed. A US citizen and someone who is an eligible non-citizen can complete the FAFSA.

Young men from 18 to 25 should be registered with Selective Service. They can do that prior to completing the FAFSA or while the FAFSA is being completed. There is a drop-down box that will indicate or the student can indicate whether or not he has signed up with Selective Service. And if he has not, then that student can click that link so that our information gets shared with Selective Service.

A student needs to be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an eligible program and they need to be pursuing a valid degree, certificate or credential. Every school has but they call satisfactory academic progress. For some schools, they may ask for certain grade point average.

Some schools might ask for certain number of classes that the student needs to be enrolled in and pass those courses in order to meet that academic progress and that's something that the admissions office or financial aid office can assist with because every school has that different satisfactory academic progress.

Again, when someone is getting ready to complete the FAFSA, these are items that are helpful to complete the form. Again, the Social Security Number for the student in the parent. If a student wants to provide a driver's license number they can. That's optional.

If someone is an eligible non-citizen, their alien registration number is used to complete the form. And typically if a student or parent has W-2 information that is available, again, that information can be used to complete the FAFSA.

Embedded into the FAFSA is the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. This tool is helpful for those students and families who have electronically submitted their tax information.

And typically about two to three weeks after the tax information gets submitted they can go into the FAFSA form and basically link to IRS and basically saying IRS, the student gives us permission to import the information into the FAFSA. And that would be a good way to have the FAFSA pre-populated with the IRS information, with the tax information.

And at the same time, too, if someone doesn't have their taxes complete, they can use the best estimate they have, basically that they don't want to wait too long to complete the FAFSA. They can always use estimates and then go back and make updates and corrections once the taxes get filed.

And if anyone has any veteran's benefits for themselves or for their students, that information is helpful, again, complete the FAFSA information. And, of course, any information about savings or investment from a business or a farm for the student and the parent, that information also helps to complete the FAFSA.

And, of course, you know, we're getting ready to talk about the FAFSA itself. It's that free application basically to let students know what type of aid they could receive while going to the school of their choice.

This is the only Web site that students and parents should be going to. Remember, it's the free application for federal student aid. We're going to be walking through screenshots for a student who we had created fictitious information about. And again, this is the only site that someone should be using when they complete their FAFSA.

This is the login screen that the student will see in this is where they'll be going into to put in their information. Student's area will always be in blue. Information for the parents will always be in purple. To the right hand side there's information, help and hints that are very useful.

If someone has a question, if they're not sure how to answer particular question, they can always look to the right hand side and get information as far as how to complete that information.

And in this case, the student that we'll be showing is a dependent student. Our student is (Melanie Howard). She's entered the Social Security Number and the date of birth. At this point, we're going to imagine that (Melanie) is a high school senior. She's going to be going to school this fall.

She'll be completing the 2014/2015 FAFSA and that's where she will start this process as far as entering the rest of her information. At this point, our student will need to create a password. This password is useful because if (Melanie) can't complete the FAFSA in one sitting, she can come back the next day, and a week or so, and continue working on the FAFSA.

The FAFSA saves for 45 days and since - if she can't complete it in one sitting, it's nice to get that password. That way, she wouldn't have to begin at the very beginning of the FAFSA and start that process all over. And so, it will save so that she can continue working on the FAFSA.

This is basically just an introduction page that has some good information that I'll just briefly point out to you. At the top, there are different areas that the student will look at to see how much progress they're making from the student demographics school selection, et cetera.

So looking at the tabs will let the student know how much progress they've made. If someone needs to have some assistance they can always call us at the 800 number. They could have a live chat, talk to a counselor.

In the FAFSA it uses what we call skip logic so if someone can bypass certain questions they can do that into the FAFSA, whereas, the paper version someone would need to complete all the questions on that paper product.

And it typically takes 30 minutes or less for dependent student and their parent to complete the FAFSA. And remember, that the FAFSA information is encrypted when it is sent to us. It's turned into a code so that it'll be harder for a hacker to read the information.

This page is basically demographic information about her. In this particular case, you can see information about (Melanie), her Social Security Number, her date of birth, her address and such.

In this situation, she's lived in Louisiana for at least five years, provided a phone number. She's also provided an email address and that will be helpful but we need to communicate with her if there're any questions or issues that come up.

Next, more information about (Melanie). It indicates that yes, she is a US citizen. She'll have a high school diploma. She's never attended college so this will be her first year at college and she'll be pursuing a bachelor's degree. In this particular situation, she's indicated that she would be interested in work-study and that's a good answer.

I believe that if someone wants to work-study position it basically lets them get into that pool of students so that the financial aid office will know which students are interested in work-study. She could always change your mind later - to let the financial aid office know whether or not she wants to have that or maybe she'll find her own position.

And then there's also information about parent one and parent two. In this case, the first parent is a high school diploma and parent two has had at least college, because there are some states that like to know whether or not someone is a first-generation college student.

In the next slide, (Melanie)'s going to indicate the school that she has attended and in this case it's Alfred M. Barbe High School. It's in Lake Charles, Louisiana. And she's entered that information and she's going to click confirm.

After she's clicked confirm, underneath there are listing of schools and she'll want to select the school that she had - that she will graduate from, again, Alfred M. Barbe High School. She's going to select that and then it will go to populate that page reflecting the correct school.

And again, you can see at the top of the high school you selected was added to the application and click next to continue. At this point, I want to turn it over to Kevin Roberts so that he can continue with a presentation.

Kevin Roberts: Thank you very much Katherine and hello everyone and welcome. I do want to remind everyone at this time to please send in your questions or comments to us. We have already answered several questions so far we look forward to receiving more questions so we can respond to any questions or comments you may have during the pre- about the presentation or any other situation you may be experiencing.

And we're here to assist you in any way possible, so send in those questions to us. And I'm going to go ahead and continue on with the presentation. So we're moving on, and as you notice, we have moved to the second tab above. It's called the school selection tab.

This section begins by informing (Melanie) that she may qualified for federal aid based upon the information she has inputted so far. Next you will

designate which school she wants to receive her processed FAFSA data. She must list one I can list up to ten.

For the purposes of this training, we'll have (Melanie) conduct a search for Southern University. Next, you will see that there are three institutions by the name of Southern University. We have Southern University in Baton Rouge, Southern University in Shreveport and lastly, Southern University in New Orleans.

You want to make sure you choose the correct institution. Large-scale institutions will normally break up their OPEID numbers so some schools will have a separate OPEID number for their law school, for their medical school, for their college of art. So you want to make sure you choose the correct school to have your FAFSA transmitted to.

And for the purposes of this presentation, (Melanie) is choosing to go to Southern University in New Orleans, so I'm sure she's going to party a lot with Mardi Gras is almost over- which I believe is over by now.

Next, under the school selection summary, for (Melanie), she's going to choose whether or not she wants to live on campus, off-campus or with parents. Those are the three options that we do provide to our students and it does affect the overall cost of attendance.

So you want to make sure that you're aware of the housing costs it would be associated with the overall cost of attendance. And so for (Melanie), she's going to choose to live on campus.

Next, we talk about dependency determination. Now, before I continue on about dependency, just a little bit of background. Our dependency rules are for

the purposes of receiving federal financial aid only and this does not have anything to do with the dependency rules that are governed by the IRS.

So I want to make that clear. For dependency determination, we have 13 questions overall. If (Melanie) answered no to all 13 questions, she is considered a dependent for the purposes of receiving federal financial aid and must provide parental information.

Now, if she chose yes for any of those 13 questions, then she would be considered an independent she may or may not have the option to provide parental information. We do come up with a question that asks if you want to even though your independent. And they'll show that to you in the next screen.

So here are the results, the dependency status results screen. And so for (Melanie) she did answer no to all 13 questions, therefore, is required to provide parental information. If you're an independent student, you will also receive the screen so you really don't need to provide parental information.

Moving on to the next screen, parental demographic information. We do request that you provide both parents information in the household. And so for (Melanie), here, she's going to provide information for her parent one and parent two.

The screen has not yet been updated. We did remove reference to mother and father to make it non-gender specific, so when you do get out into the FAFSA and you see it be updated, it will either say parent one or parent two so won't be gender specific. So I do apologize that this screenshot is a bit old but this is what you'll see for the parental information.

And we do require all the information that's provided, their full name, their date of birth and Social Security Number and email address. Continuing on, we're going to look at the parental tax information for (Melanie)'s parents.

You can either select you already completed your tax information, you will file, or you're not going to file. For the purposes of this presentation, going to have (Melanie)'s parents select will file.

Now, tax season is upon us, and so a lot of folks have not yet completed their tax returns or it has been processed through the IRS and that is absolutely okay. You can use estimated tax returns to fill out the FAFSA if your taxes are not yet completed.

Please estimate as close as you can and then once your tax information has been processed through the IRS, please log back into the FAFSA.gov and update your tax information. You may even be eligible to use the IRS data retrieval tool to automatically populate your tax information for you.

So here is (Melanie)'s parents tax information. We've estimated, of course, and so she will go ahead and complete this information here. So it's a very simple form. You just need to follow along.

If (Melanie) did a - if (Melanie)'s parents did at 1040 you look at line 21 just pick the number from line 21 and import it onto the FAFSA, so it's rather simple. If you've already completed your FAFSA, you can go ahead and use the IRS data retrieval tool link.

Moving on, you can go ahead and continue by filling out any additional financial information and untaxed income. So you'll just click on the box that applies to you and complete the information.

Like Katherine said, this is all skip logic you just fill in what is pertinent to your financial situation. All right, and now for the student, we do require that the student provide their tax information. And so for (Melanie), she did make a little bit of money, not much, but she did make \$1200.

So we're going to go ahead and have (Melanie) complete her tax information on this. (Melanie) will also select any additional financial information and untaxed income and she'll also provide balances for checking and savings accounts, et cetera, on the FAFSA form. Fairly simple, the same information that her parents provided but this is specific for (Melanie).

All right, we're getting close to the end and this is our sign and submit section. All students and parents, if you're a dependent, are required to obtain a PIN. A PIN is a personal identification number and you can apply for a PIN through the FAFSA.gov Web site.

In you'll be required to have this PIN to not only sign for your FAFSA but you also needed to log into several of our Web tools, such as Studentloans.gov were you complete your loan application if you going to take out a loan and you'll be able to sign for that loan using your PIN number.

And that PIN will stay with you for the whole entire lifecycle you can change at any time. But make sure you sign up for a PIN before you do this because it's so much easier when you have a PIN and you can sign it right away instead of (unintelligible) processing.

So because (Melanie) is a dependent, shall need both a PIN for herself and for her parents. Now, what happens if you don't have a PIN that's available? That's okay. We do have other options I did submit.

If you look right below where it says what is the student's PIN, we have the hyperlink that says other options to sign and submit. We give you two options. You can either print out the application and sign, manually sign, the application and mail it to us or you can submit it to us without signature pending receipt of your PIN number. So we do give you the options of how to submit your FAFSA to us.

All right, so (Melanie)'s going to go ahead and input her PIN and next, were going to go ahead and request her parents' PIN numbers. Parents, a word to the wise, please, please, please do not share your PIN number with your dependent. Make sure you keep that PIN number to yourselves. So, both the parents and the student will have a PIN number and the parents sign the PIN for the fast application.

And then lastly what we're going to do is make sure that (Melanie)'s parents agree to the terms and conditions of the FAFSA and submit my fast now. So, it is pretty much the process for submitting the FAFSA. It's very simple, very fast process. It takes no more than 28 to 30 minutes complete the FAFSA on the Web. It's very fast.

For those of you who have any questions regarding the FAFSA, we do have our federal student aid information call center. We are available to you. We have - we can talk to you about general information about federal student aid. We can talk to about the FAFSA application.

If you do not have Internet connectivity at home, that's okay. We'll send you out a paper FAFSA you can do the FAFSA with us while on the phone with her call center reps. That's not a problem. We can also assist you with any staff corrections, so if your tax returns are estimated and you want to give us

the correct tax return information, we could do it over the phone, so please call us.

And then lastly, they can assist you with any student loan history. If you have prior student loans or just have general inquiries on current loans, please give them a call. They'll be able to assist you. And our toll-free number is 1-800, the number 4, FEDAID. Again, our number is 1-800, the number 4, FEDAID or 1-800-433-3243.

We invite you to check out our main Web site of Studentaid.gov. Studentaid.gov is our main homepage for the Office of Federal Student Aid and it will give you lots of information from how to prepare for college all the way out to repayment time for you student loans.

And so that Web site provides you with the complete lifecycle of the loan process. So I encourage all of you to visit Studentaid.gov. And of course, we want you to always visit our main FAFSA Web site at FAFSA.gov. Please do not go to any other Web site complete your FAFSA application.

The first letter in the acronym FAFSA is free. Our application is always free. Please refrain from going to any other Web sites where they require upfront costs. We will never, ever charge each complete the FAFSA online.

And then lastly, for our guidance counselors or constituents that help students in completing the FAFSA, we encourage you to visit our brand-new Web site called Financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov, again that is Financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov. please visit that Web site for a wealth of information on how to help students complete their FAFSA, hosting financial aid nights, et cetera. We have a lot of great information for you on that Web site.

You know, these call us anytime from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm Eastern Standard Time and we may have extended hours it could be available to you. And now, I'd like to open it up for questions.

We highly encourage you to text your questions or comments to us. It's going to be an interactive session so Katherine, Adam and I are standing by waiting to answer all of your great questions. I know Adam has already started responding to a whole host of questions so I'll go ahead and turn it over to Adam.

Adam Essex: Absolutely. So our first question that we need to answer is really addressing the issue of the PIN. Kevin, as you mentioned the PIN is required. Can you reconfirm that of PIN is required for both the parent and the student?

Kevin Roberts: Yes, a PIN is required for both the students and the parent to sign for their FAFSA application and to also sign for any master promissory notes if you plan on taking out student loans.

For the parents, if you going to take out a parent PLUS loan, which is alone for the benefit of the child to attend school and to pay for the cost of attendance at the dependent's institution, you will need to have that PIN available you can electronically sign it. So, great question, Adam and the answer is yes.

Adam Essex: Yes, thank you, (Regan), for that question. Our next question is from (Linda) and I'm going to punt to Katherine for the answer on this. (Linda) wants to know the parents are divorced, is financial aid information required in the form for both the student - for the students and both parents? So the issue is around divorce and whose information going on that dependent child's FAFSA.

Katherine Coates: Thank you, (Linda), for the question. Yes, depending on which parent the student lives with, and has provided more support throughout the last 12 months, that's the parents and/or stepparent, if that's the case, whose information needs to be on the FAFSA.

So whichever parent the student has lived with for the majority of the time in the last 12 months, that parent, and if there's a stepparent involved, those two parents would need their information on the FAFSA as well as the student's.

Adam Essex: Wonderful. Thank you, Katherine. And please let us know if any of these questions do not fully answer your question. Please just send us a text message and will be able to tackle it again or maybe from a different angle. Our next question is from (Patty), Kevin, and I'll give this one to you. (Patty) like to know what is the deadline for submitting the FAFSA form?

Kevin Roberts: Hi, (Patty). That's a great question and thank you for asking. We get that question quite often. For the FAFSA there is no federal deadline, you can fill out the best that year-round, so there's no deadline for the (feds).

However, you want to be cautious as there our state deadlines for completing the FAFSA. We have a lot of states that receive our FAFSA submissions to determine state aid which is additional aid that may be available within your state.

So you want to make sure that you're getting your FAFSA before the state aid deadlines because those funds do go out quickly. Those funds do expend very quickly so you want to make sure you're ahead of the game. I know we just did a last big push for California, and California's FAFSA deadline was this

past March 3rd, so we had a lot of students they completed their FAFSA so they could be eligible for that state's aid program.

So that's a great question, so no deadline for the federal, but there are state deadlines to want to be cautious of. And for state aid deadlines, once a look at our Web site at FAFSA.gov. You have a whole list of state aid deadlines for you.

Adam Essex: Great. Our next question is from (Eleanor) and (Eleanor)'s asking specifically about the special circumstances category. You heard us reference that during today's presentation.

If a FAFSA applicant is completely their application at FAFSA.gov and they indicate no to all those dependency questions - and we'll talk more about those in a moment - that determines whether or not parental information was on the FAFSA, if an applicant answers no to all those questions and they are considered to be dependent for FAFSA purposes, they can indicate that they may have special circumstances.

And this is - would essentially allow them to opt out of the full FAFSA process and special circumstances are really unique to the applicant. We're considering them on a case-by-case basis. We hear really heartrending stories about issues of abuse or abandonment or maybe the parents is in jail, incarcerated, or just gone, doesn't have any contact with the child.

In those instances, obviously even though the student was determined to be dependent based upon those 13 questions, we're not going to force them to locate their parent or tracked on their parent, get that information and put it on the FAFSA.

They can be considered for special circumstances. They'll need to indicate on the FAFSA, no, I will not provide parental information and then answer the additional cascading questions that appear around their special circumstances.

They will also -- and this is a requirement -- need to seek out the financial aid officer at the school that they think they want to attend or know they want to attend, and really make the case for their special circumstances with that financial aid officer.

They'll need documentation. For example, if I say that I've been abandoned and I'm living on my own and supporting myself, you know, typically there are other adults in that young person's life that can corroborate this, folks from the ministry, neighbors, school leaders, teachers, others that can cooperate it.

We would want to see things like rent receipts, grocery receipts, car receipts, gas, fuel bills, things like that, just to substantiate that, you know, the student is living on their own, supporting themselves, maybe they're in a group house, whatever the situation is.

So approach the special circumstances very carefully. It does exist but it's a case-by-case basis. You need to have a conversation with the FAA at the college that the student wants to attend and the FAA's decision is final and not appealable to us, the US Department of Education, so you want to make your case carefully.

Katherine, the next question we got really speaks to that as well. It's from (Linda) and she said that there are still questions around who is the parent for the purposes of FAFSA.

Katherine Coates: Thank you, (Linda). Remember that federal student aid has their roles and IRS has their own roles. And I know some families will say that they don't show student as a dependent on their tax information. Well, that's fine for - in that situation but typically, someone, if they can't answer one of those 13 dependency questions that we mentioned earlier, then they will be a dependent student.

And as Adam mentioned, there are case-by-case situations where someone truly won't be able to provide parental information. And basically a documentation of some sort, again as Adam mentioned, maybe a counselor at school, maybe someone from the faith-based community can address that and document that for the financial aid office.

But in a situation where a student comes from a divorced family and the student truly is living 50% at one residence and 50% at the other residence, then the parents would need to decide whose information will appear on the FAFSA, because if they are both providing equal amounts of support for the student, one of them will need to decide which parents information will show on the FAFSA with the students.

Adam Essex: Wonderful. Thank you, Katherine, for that great answer. Again, just to remind everyone that's listening today, please feel free to submit your comments and questions to us online (during) the little Q&A dialog box. We're happy to take those as we go along. We have about another 20 minutes or so on the presentation. We're going to tackle as many of these questions as we can. A lot of them have come in.

I'm going to take the next one. It's from (Mark). And (Mark) is inquiring whether or not undocumented students are going to be eligible for federal student aid. And this is a great question and is, too, something that we

frequently have to answer and probably something a lot of you have heard about or thinking about.

The high-level answer is that undocumented residents, sometimes referred to as illegal aliens, are not eligible for federal student aid for the purposes of FAFSA, however, undocumented students may be eligible for money from the state in which they reside in the form of state financial aid.

That student might also be available for money from the college or university they attend in the form of institutional financial aid or scholarships. In the student should also do a very thorough scholarship search to see what other types of aid might be available to them that are essentially blind to the student citizenship status.

So yes, for FAFSA purposes, the student is not eligible for federal student aid. But that doesn't mean that they are ineligible for a wide variety of other aid from the state, from the college or from other sources like scholarship organizations.

So the message we want to convey to all of you is that even though, for FAFSA purposes they're not eligible, we really want the students to know that they should think about college, they should get all the information they can about other sources of financial aid and we hope that they will apply and enroll in colleges.

So thank you, (Mark), for that question. Our next one, Kevin, I'm going to pass to you. This is from (Emily). And (Emily) really wants to know about taxes and the FAFSA, and a scenario could be if the parents have not done their tax return yet, and (Emily)'s a dependent student, should she wait to do her FAFSA until her parents have done their taxes?

Kevin Roberts: That's a great question, Adam, and we get it all the time here at the department. Hi, (Emily). How are you? I'm so happy to answer your question. And the question really is that should not wait. You should fill out your FAFSA as fast as possible.

If you are a senior in high school read we request that you fill out your FAFSA as early as January 1st of your senior year in high school which is just this past January 2014.

So for your parents, if they have not yet completed their tax return, I highly recommend that you asked them to provide their last year's tax return and estimate their taxes as close as possible until they're officially completed by their tax accountant and then processed through the IRS.

So, (Emily), I don't want you to wait. I want you to get that FAFSA and as soon as possible. Delaying the FAFSA submission process delays you from receiving any type of state aid or institutional-based aid. Not necessarily federal aid, but you do want to act quickly so you can be a part of that pool of money that's available early enough because sometimes money goes out very quickly.

Like federal work study, it's our first come first serve, so you want to be able to obtain them money as quick as possible. And, (Emily), I do want to roll your question into with (Linda) - I saw (Linda)'s question through our Q&A session.

And she asked what if our income circumstances have changed significantly and the tax return used for the FAFSA form? And that's a great question, (Linda), and I want to address that real quickly.

What we recommend is that you speak with the financial aid office. We understand that there are a lot of financial circumstances that may have occurred over the past year or over the past, maybe, eight years since the financial crisis and a lot of incomes have drastically dropped from where they were previously, which is completely understandable.

What we request is that you go to the financial aid office, meet with the financial aid director and talk to them about your new financial circumstances because they have a process it's called a professional judgment.

A professional judgment is basically you pleading your case to the financially director and informing them that you are no longer making this money as reported on your tax return and you're now making this.

And what they can do is offer additional aid to you in the form of institutional aid or additional loans that may help offset the cost of attendance. Now, when they do perform a professional judgment, it is at the discretion of the institution.

So I do want to warn you that when you do request that, it is at the discretion of the institution and there is no appeal process with the Department of Education. So talk to the financial aid director, work with them and see what they can offer you in the form of a best award package for your son or daughter. Adam.

Adam Essex: Okay. Well, our next question is, on the FAFSA form we're asked how much do we, the parents, expect to pay for college for the 2014/2015 year. Is this what we think our EST will be or what we think we can realistically pay? What if the student is really paying 90% of their college education?

There're a couple of questions in this one question, so let me just clarify, that as with last year, on the current FAFSA, the 2014/2015 FAFSA, we do not ask either the student applicant or the parents how much they anticipate paying for college.

What we do ask is where do you anticipate and enrolling school? So we were talking about the fact that students can list up to ten colleges or universities on their FAFSA. You're going to list as many as you want up to ten, and we will know, based upon what schools you've listed in the schools obviously will know what your cost of attendance at that institution is going to be.

In the cost of attendance can vary widely among institutions. There are some lower-cost schools. There are some higher costs schools. But you don't have to estimate that, thankfully, on your FAFSA. All you have to do is tell us about yourself, where you live, you are, what your demographic information is, your income and asset information and the same for your student.

And then based upon that and based upon what we know about the school and their cost of attendance, we will determine, number one, which or EFC is, your expected family contribution, and number two, the schools will calculate a financial aid award for you based upon your personal data.

So the good news is that it's a much easier process than these questions would seem to indicate. All you've got to do is provide your information and the schools and we, the Department of Education, will do everything else and we will consider you for the full array of all federal aid, all state aid and all aid from the college or university that you want to attend.

So thank you for that question. Our next one is from (Carlin). I think I'm pronouncing that correctly. I hope so. And I'm going to pass this to Kevin. And it has to do with the number of schools listed on the FAFSA and I just touched on this.

(Carlin) wants to know since you can list up to ten schools on the FAFSA, do you need to enroll or applied to all ten schools to get information on grants? Kevin?

Kevin Roberts: Hi, (Carlin). That's a great question. We get that all the time. Yes, the FAFSA on the Web does allow you to list up to ten schools. And to receive federal financial aid, you do not necessarily need to be accepted or approved into a program.

However, it is a good thing to apply. What the schools will do is, upon receipt of your FAFSA, they will create it's called an award package that will detail all of your loans, grants, federal work study, state aid and institutional aid that you may receive.

And so the schools will probably not be processing these award package letters until right before the fall term starts if you're going to go to school this fall, 2014 and 2015 academic year.

And so, you want to review all of your award packages from all ten schools that you submitted your FAFSA to and pick out the best package. It's like shopping. You want to shop for the best deal, the most bang for your dollar as I call it.

And so, you'll normally find that information about your award packages before the fall term starts. A lot of schools are going through the electronic

method where your award package is posted to your account online with the school. And so you can review it there.

Other schools are still what I call the old school style and will mail you the award package in the mail. So follow up on goals that you applied and see when your award package will be mailed out to you to determine what aid you'll be receiving.

And I do want to also let you know about scholarships is this also goes off of the award package. For the federal financial aid- for the FAFSA form, we do not submit the FAFSA to any scholarship companies whatsoever. If you're applying for a scholarship, make sure you go out and do the research on your own.

Never, ever, ever pay for scholarship search companies. You should never have to pay for that. You should always apply for free scholarships. Now those scholarship companies, they have their own deadlines and they have their own requirements to obtain their scholarships, so you want to read carefully about the requirements for the scholarship programs.

Some of those scholarship companies request a copy of your FAFSA or they may not. If you are awarded a scholarship, congratulations. And they may require that they send the money directly to you or to the school to help offset your cost of attendance.

So, scholarships, you want to do all the research on your own. You can go to Studentaid.gov. We do have a listing of scholarships that are available. And you also want to consider everyday products that you buy a drink or eat, as those companies do have scholarships.

I mean, think about Starbucks, think about Google, think about McDonald's or even Coca-Cola. Check out their websites and look for scholarships. Look to your parent's employers. Maybe they have family scholarships as well.

I mean, there're a lot of great organizations that offer scholarships around, whether it's \$100 or a couple grand, no matter what of the dollar value, it will help towards your educational cost of attendance. So, again, word to the wise, never pay for scholarship searches. And Adam, else are you back over to you.

Adam Essex: Okay, our next question is - I'll pass it along to Katherine). Katherine), this participant would like to know what if you're a single parent with two children and what of the children as a disability.

Katherine Coates: It would still be wise for the student and parent complete the FAFSA, depending on which student, for example, if a student who doesn't have a disability, then they would complete the FAFSA just like anyone else would and the same could be said for the student with a disability.

There are some, for example, some students who are hearing-impaired or who are sight-impaired. They would still want to complete the FAFSA because the school that they will likely attend will need the FAFSA as part of their requirements.

So in that situation, someone who has a disability or someone who doesn't have a disability, they should still complete the FAFSA. And for the family with a student who has a disability, they may want to look to their home state to see if the states might be able to offer any particular state scholarships or grants or such because of the student's disability.

Adam Essex: Great. Thank you (Katherine). The next question we got and is from (Cynthia) and (Cynthia) says, if department says that review all award packages from each of the schools they apply to, aren't students encouraged to inform their school of their intent to enroll or register prior to award packages going out? And that's a really great question, (Cynthia).

A couple of different ways this can work. You know, a lot of universities do what they call early action or early acceptance and this is typically for students that have applied early in the fall and often these are really bright, high-scoring students that are getting early admission or early action colleges or universities.

The students will not have even done their FAFSA yet. As you recall, the earliest that anyone in the nation can do their FAFSA is January 1st of their senior year in high school. Adults can do the FAFSA any time but high school seniors need to wait until January 1st, so they might have already been accepted to a college or university.

And often, colleges or universities will just be making estimate awards based upon what the student has told them maybe in their college application. But the real deal is the FAFSA, so once the student goes online to FAFSA.gov on or after January 1st and does their FAFSA, that's when the school is going to calculate their true award package.

Now, back to your question about if you've had multiple schools listed on your FAFSA, if you have multiple schools listed on your FAFSA you subsequently receive multiple award letters, you can certainly take a look at all those award letters, compare them.

You can talk to the individual colleges or universities to see if that's their firm and final offer. Sometimes schools are more generous than others. You might say, "University A offered me a healthy amount of (gift aid) in the form of grants or scholarships. University B offered me a lot of loans."

You might go back to University B and say, "Hey, I got what I consider to be more generous offer from University A," and see if B is going to move at all. Sometimes they do. Sometimes they don't. But it doesn't hurt to just do that bit of negotiation.

Suggest because school is listed on your FAFSA does not mean that you have to accept any financial aid from them. Just because they're listed on the FAFSA, does not mean in that school or even apply.

Sometimes students list schools on their FAFSA and they never apply to med school. So I'll close by saying that typically colleges and universities don't go through the process of awarding - giving out an award letter to a student until they've applied because that's somewhat of a commitment on the part of the college or university.

So the vast majority of them, unless the student is in queue as an applicant or has been admitted, they typically do not send out detailed award letters. So even if you've listed, you know, ten schools on your FAFSA, that doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to get ten firm award letters in your inbox.

Those schools are really going to look for a commitment on the part of the student. They applied. Are they in process or are we waiting for additional documentation from the student? Or have they been accepted for admission to the school?

Our next question -- and I'm going to pass it to Kevin -- it's also about the number of schools listed on the FAFSA. And (Michael) wants to know, if I've listed ten schools on the FAFSA and I want to add more, how does that process work?

Kevin Roberts: That's a great question, (Michael), and, yes, you can add on more schools on the FAFSA. What you'll need to do, is once you submit your FAFSA and it has been processed and you have received what's called a Student Aid Report, that first submission of your FAFSA has already been transmitted.

Then what you can do is go back and update your FAFSA in the school selection inquiry, remove all of those ten schools and then add on ten more schools of your choosing. So that's what you're going to do consistently.

So if you're going to add on the second ten schools, go ahead and submit that FAFSA, making sure that it's in process and you receive a new Student Aid Report.

Now, a word of warning, if you need to make any updates like tax updates or demographic updates, you'll need to go back, update your FAFSA, resubmit it to all 20 schools, so you're going to send the first ten schools are updated FAFSA, wait until it's processed and you received an updated SAR, and then you're going to do that again for the second ten schools and wait for the SAR confirmation.

Now the Student Aid Report confirmation normally takes anywhere between 48 to 72 hours. We do have a very quick turnaround time and processing. So you should be able to process it rather quickly to make sure that all 20 schools of your choosing receive your most updated FAFSA. And so that's a great question, (Michael), and good luck applying to all 20 schools.

Adam Essex: Definitely. And it's worth noting that based upon our own data, we know that the vast majority of FAFSA applicants list only one college or university, over 90% do. And if you think about it, the reason that occurs is because of when FAFSA occurs, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of high school seniors are applying to college in late summer or in the fall and they might already know where they're going to go.

And many students, even if they haven't applied in the spring semester, they still know what school they're going to go to. So over 90% of our FAFSA applicants list one college or university and we always think that's really interesting.

We have another question and, Katherine, I'll pass this one to you. It is from (Cynthia). And (Cynthia) asks, do students whose parents are military or veterans have to fill out the FAFSA because those students know they may fall under their parents G.I. Bill? So Katherine.

Katherine Coates: Thank you, (Cynthia). Good question. I always like to tell students and parents that they really should complete the FAFSA. Many schools ask that the FAFSA get completed because it's part of their requirement just like the last student, complete the (resident's home) application, complete the FAFSA for the school as well.

And even though some students have parents who are in the military or who have the G.I. benefits, it's always nice to be able to complete the FAFSA because maybe money that could come from the FAFSA to help pay for different cost of attendance items like books or transportation expenses, medical expenses, et cetera, if you will, that the information from the FAFSA could be the icing on the cake of financial aid.

Maybe VA benefits will be the cake, if you will, will be the base and then any federal student aid funds could be the icing, could be the little bit of extra, again, that helps pay for different cost of attendance items that the student would incur during their academic year.

Adam Essex: Wonderful. Thank you, Katherine. Another question we've gotten - and I'm going to pass this one to Kevin -- is regarding filling out the FAFSA. We mentioned that it's available in paper and it's also available online.

One of the reasons we make it available on paper is we realize (the digital divide) doesn't still exist and that everyone has consistent and reliable access to the Internet. But, Kevin, can you tell us about the advantages or disadvantages of doing electronic versus paper?

Kevin Roberts: Yes, that's great Adam. Like Katherine had indicated earlier, FAFSA on the Web takes less than 30 minutes to complete. We have built-in skip logic which, based upon your submission, will go ahead and skip over the questions that really don't apply to you which makes the process more streamlined and more efficient on our end and also for you as students and parents.

So we always encourage our students to do a FAFSA on the Web because it will be faster, it'll be processed more efficiently and you can also watch it because you'll receive email confirmations of your submission, you'll receive email confirmations of when your Student Aid Report is received and processed.

And then lastly, (you'll notice) the schools will receive it. We do understand that not all students have access to the Internet which is okay. We're more than happy to help you fill out the FAFSA via paper.

The paper process is still available to you. It's quite a bulky package so it doesn't have that awesome built in skip logic that's available to you, but it's still an easy form to fill out. I highly recommend it. And then you can mail it back to us.

And then lastly, if you just want to call us at 1-800, the number 4, FEDAID, we can even help you fill out the FAFSA over the phone and that's a great way to - as long as you have all your documentation handy for you that we went over earlier in the presentation - Katherine ga- talk to about a list of items that you should keep handy, such as your Social Security Number, alien registration number, if you're not a US citizen, driver's license, not mandatory, their tax information or W-2s.

And so we can help you over the phone and it's also a great way as well. But I will always recommend FAFSA on the Web is your best option and it's very quick and efficient. Thanks Adam. That was a great question.

Adam Essex: Great. Thank you. We have just a few minutes remaining to have any hot or burning questions that you want to submit to us please feel free to do so at this time and we'll try to answer those quickly. We have just a few minutes left.

We have a question from (Cynthia) and it says, for parents who have saved money for their children's education, what does that fall under and do they have to report everything or just what they saved for the student that's filling out the FAFSA? That's a great question, (Cynthia).

And if you are the parent of a dependent student or someone else to support at least half-time, we are going to ask for your income and asset information so

we want to know basically what resources you have at your disposal that you can use to help pay for this dependent's education.

So, yes, those individuals that have been saving for college, you're going to want a report that information on the FAFSA. And primarily what we're talking about here are liquid assets, so this would be money in savings or checking or CDs or in the stock market, mutual funds, things like that.

And the reason we do this is all the rules (defining) the FAFSA, as you know, are set up by Congress and we're really looking for a way to compare millions of applicants all across the country - we had over 20 million applicants last year - how we look at them equitably, apples to apples, to make sure that we're making awards that are fair across the country based upon people's resources because the responsibility for paying for college resides first and foremost with the student and his or her family, as applicable. So we would definitely want you to list -- you're required to list -- all the income and asset resources that you have at your disposal.

The next question is about the PIN. Once assigned a PIN, will that be the same PIN for the entire education career? And the answer is yes. The parent keeps the same PIN. The student keeps the same PIN. If you lose it, you could be reassigned a PIN. You can change your PIN if you would like to at PIN.ed.gov.

So it's going to be something they just want to hold onto, hopefully for not more than four years. Hopefully (that kid) is going to finish college and their four years, if that's their program of study.

And finally, in closing, we want to remind you that the official website for completing the financial aid application is FAFSA.gov, F-A-F-S-A, dot, G-O-

V. There are competing Web sites out there. We just want you to make sure that you're using the official free Web site at FAFSA.gov.

Also if you need more information -- we've covered a lot of information quickly here -- feel free to check out our US Department of Education Web site for students and parents and it is Studentaid.gov, one word, Studentaid, dot, G-O-V.

And has been mentioned a couple of times, we do have financial aid experts that are standing by the can assist you and that number is 1-800-433-3243. Again, 1-800-433-3243. On behalf of Katherine, Kevin, and myself, it's been a pleasure and we hope the session has been informative. Thank you so much.

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