FAFSA and the CSS Financial Aid Profile

The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid program is the largest provider of student aid. It funds more than $150 billion in federal grants, loans, and work-study each year to more than 15 million college students. In order to be eligible for federal aid, and many state and local scholarships you _must_ complete the FAFSA.

Please note that many colleges now require applicants to fill out the FASFA and/or the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE regardless of whether or not you are applying for financial aid

The 2017-18 FAFSA application will open three months earlier than in the past on October 1, 2016. The new FAFSA will be using _prior, prior year_ tax information (2015),that can be directly imported through the use of the _IRS data retrieval tool._ Please consult [FAFSA Changes for 2017-18](). It is important to fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible to be considered for aid.

Useful (and legitimate) FAFSA Resources

You should avoid all FAFSA websites except the official [www.fafsa.ed.gov]() sites. All others are fee sites that charge for various services. _It is not necessary to pay to complete or submit the FAFSA._ It is manageable and free.

[USDoE FAFSA information]()

[Completing the FAFSA]()

There are also very good tutorials on Youtube explaining how to complete the FAFSA forms.   Search for _How to Complete the FAFSA_. The best are offered by the UC system.

CSS (College Scholarship Service)/Financial Aid PROFILE

The [CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE]() is an application that collects financial information used by over 400 colleges and scholarship programs to award financial aid from sources outside the federal government, including institutional scholarships, grants, and loans. The College Board will send your PROFILE to the colleges and scholarship programs that you designate. While not all colleges and scholarship programs require the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE, most highly selective schools do. The following Student Guide lists [current CSS schools]()

The CSS/PROFILE collects detailed and comprehensive information on family income and assets of all types, whereas the FAFSA collects information on income and only limited types of assets. There are twice as many questions in the PROFILE as there are in the FAFSA.

The CSS/PROFILE is available in October and required by many schools at that time. Another difference between the PROFILE and the FAFSA is that there is an application fee. This fee is $9.00 for current academic year applicants and a reporting fee of $16.00 for each college or university to which you send it. You may request fee waivers if you are financially eligible.

[CSS PROFILE]()