FINANCIAL AID

With a year at a private university costing an average of over $25,000 per year for tuition alone, and a year at a public institution averaging almost $10,000, its not surprising that most families need financial aid to help send their children to college. Understanding the basics of financial aid and how it is awarded can help a student and family plan to meet these expenses

Before applying for financial aid, it is important to be aware of the qualifications:

- The student must be a citizen or eligible non-citizen of the United States with a valid Social Security Number
- The student must have a high school diploma
- The student must be enrolling in an eligible program as a regular student
- The student must be seeking a degree or certificate
- The student must have registered for the Selective Service if he is a male between the ages of 18-25.

Following are the types of institutions that are qualified to disburse federal student aid.
- Universities
- Colleges
- Community Colleges
- Career & Technical schools
- Trade Schools
- Certificate Programs, degree and non-degree programs

Be sure to check that the institution to which the student is applying is approved to participate in awarding federal financial aid. Each school is assigned a federal code which needs to be included on the financial aid application.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

MERIT AID

This aid is awarded for some desirable talent or skill. It generally comes in the form of scholarships; it is gift money that does not have to be repaid. Merit aid may be awarded for the following:

> - **High Academic Performance** – High grades, outstanding test scores, essay contest.
> - **Athletic Ability** – Star quarterback, exceptional swimmer etc.
> - **Talent** – Art, Music
> - **Skill or Performance** – Computer whiz, Community leader etc.

Students may apply for merit aid in two ways:

> - By submitting scholarship applications to a particular college
> - By submitting applications to private sources:
>   The National Merit scholarship Program
>   Coca Cola Scholars Program etc.
> - By applying for "Local Scholarships". Connect to the "Local Scholarship" link on this website for further information regarding this type of award.

Many scholarships can also be accessed through the internet.

NEED BASED AID

This aid is awarded based on financial need. Some of this aid may need to be paid back and some may not. In order to be eligible for this aid students and their parents must complete the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" (FAFSA) each year. This application is available on the web at www.fafsa.ed.gov. or a paper copy may be picked up in the high school guidance office. It cannot be filed until January 1st of a student's senior year.

FILING THE "FAFSA"

In order to file a FAFSA the student and the parent must do the following:

- ➢ Apply for a Personal Identification Number (PIN)
    - ○ This may be done before January 1st. Both the student and parent are required to have a PIN prior to completing the FAFSA.
    - ○ Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov, click the link, "Apply for a PIN", and follow the directions.
    - ○ Both the student and the parent should receive their PINS within a week.

- ➢ Once the PIN is received, complete the FAFSA on line or on paper.

Be sure to have the following information available:

- ➢ copies of parents' and student's tax returns for the preceding year
- ➢ social security numbers and other demographic information
- ➢ financial records, such as information about assets including stocks, bank accounts and real estate and businesses
- ➢ Young men over 18 must be registered with Selective Service to qualify for aid.
- ➢ Make and keep a copy of the completed form before you submit it.
- ➢ Include the codes of the schools to which the student is applying when completing the FAFSA. These codes are available on-line.

Two to three weeks after completing the on-line FAFSA (or four to six weeks for the paper form) students and the schools listed will receive a "Student Aid Report" (SAR). This report will also contain the "Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) report.

The colleges will then use this "SAR" and "EFC" to determine whether federal financial aid will be awarded.

If the student qualifies for financial aid, the college will prepare a financial aid package to help meet the financial need. Financial need is the difference between the college's cost of attendance (including expenses) and the "Expected Family Contribution". (EFC)

The amount of the financial aid award depends on the following:
- ➤ Whether the student is a full-time or part-time student
- ➤ Whether the student attends school for a full academic year
- ➤ Whether the student has special circumstances

The federal student aid will be paid through the school. The school will notify the student by sending out an award letter.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE

A student's federal aid package may consist of one or more of the following depending on the need:

- ➤ **Federal Pell Grant** – This award is available to undergraduates only. It does not have to be repaid.
- ➤ **Federal Stafford Loan** – These loans must be repaid.
- ➤ **Federal PLUS Loan** – These are unsubsidized loans made to parents that must be paid back.
- ➤ **Campus-Based Programs** – This form of aid is administered by participating schools.
- ➤ **Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grants** – These awards range from $100 to $4,000.
- ➤ **Federal Work-Study** – This program provides jobs to students on campus allowing them to earn money to pay educational expenses.
- ➤ **Perkins Loans** – Low interest (5%) loans that must be repaid; the maximum amount is $4,000 for undergraduate students.

Students should contact the financial aid office of the school they are planning to attend for more information and assistance. They can also learn about other state, institutional and private financial aid at the local library's reference section usually listed under "student aid" or "financial aid".

CSS PROFILE

The "CSS Profile" is used to award nonfederal funds such as private grants and scholarship funds to students. Unlike the FAFSA, however, there is a $5.00 registration fee and an $18.00 fee for each school that the "Profile" is sent to.
There are waivers for these fees, but they are given automatically when an individual's financial information reflects the need for a waiver.

WHY FILE THE CSS PROFILE?

Since the FAFSA cannot be filed before January first of a student's senior year, many schools require students to complete the "CSS Profile" in addition to the FAFSA. The "CSS Profile" is especially important if a student is applying to a school as an "early decision" or "early action" candidate because it can be completed and sent to prospective schools significantly earlier than the FAFSA and therefore financial award packages can be awarded earlier.

Students should check to see if the schools they are applying to require the "CSS Profile". If so, students can apply on-line at www.collegeboard.com or they can pick up a paper application at their high school guidance office.

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

There are several resources to assist students and their families with applying for financial aid.

- ➢ **Financial Aid Night** - Held in January usually at Stonehill College. At this presentation a representative from the financial aid office of Stonehill discuss the FAFSA, how to apply and will answer any questions about financial aid.
- ➢ **College Goal Sunday** - Held in January at Brockton High School. At this workshop are individuals who will actually assist with the completion of the FAFSA.
- ➢ **TERI College Access** - This is a federally funded program that offers free guidance on planning and paying for college. There is an office at Career Works on 34 School Street in Brockton, telephone number (508) 513-3414, or students and parents can log on to their website at www.tericollegeaccess.org.