



Paying for College – FAFSA and Scholarships

One of the biggest decisions a student and their family will face revolving around higher education is how to pay for college and what aid to pursue. The most common ways students pay for college include their family (direct help), federal aid, financial incentives from colleges, private resources and work-study programs. No matter what the student or family's financial situation is, pursuing all forms of aid can drastically reduce the amount of out-of-pocket expenses. In this *College and Career Corner*, we'll address some of the popular methods students pay for college and the steps needed to help ensure they have the opportunity to get as much aid as possible.



FAFSA – [The Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) is undoubtedly the most common method that students turn to for need-based aid, and it's not just loans! FAFSA provides an estimate on aid students may receive by looking at the student's and family's finances, in comparison with the college's net price to determine qualification for aid. It must be filled out by a student and parent and will require documents such as a Social Security Number, ARN (if a non-US citizen), federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned or invested. FAFSA can provide grants (which are not paid back), federal work-study programs (where students work at the college in exchange for a stipend towards tuition and/or room and board), and federal student loans. FAFSA opens in October and the sooner you can apply, the better! Each school and state have its own separate financial aid deadline. Apply early to ensure you can get the most need-based aid at the federal level, as well as from your state and college.

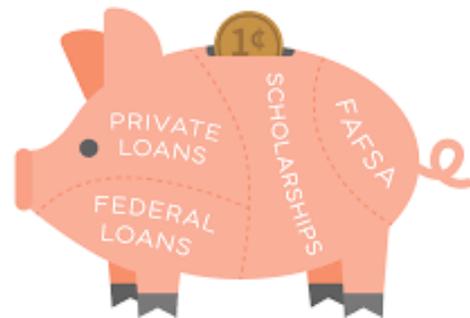


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Scholarships – A common misconception is that scholarships are reserved only for students with exceptionally high GPAs or test scores, but scholarships are available for a wide variety of categories outside of academics too! Simply put, scholarships are award-based aid that does not need to be repaid. They are typically awarded towards an interest you might have, where you were born, what major you are pursuing, etc. While not necessarily based on your academics, ranking or GPA, it certainly can be! There are thousands of scholarships available and searching online is the easiest and fastest method. Just be aware of a few **red flags** that might signal a potential **scholarship scam**. If a scholarship says you have to pay to apply, are guaranteed to receive aid, gathers very personal information (like your credit card or social security number), does not state any eligibility requirements or lists no contact information, it is a scam. Using reputable, trusted sites for searching by category is the recommended way to go. Here are some recommended links for finding and applying to scholarships:

<https://finaid.org/scholarships/>
<https://www.scholarships.com/>
<https://www.fastweb.com/>
<https://www.cappex.com/>
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>
<https://www.niche.com/colleges/scholarships/>



No matter if you already have a college fund started or a plan to pay for your education and living expenses, applying for all need-based and merit-based aid can be an easy way to potentially save thousands of dollars. While the length of time required to apply to each scholarship will vary, on average, applying to FAFSA only takes 30 minutes. Many scholarships require at least one essay, but you may be able to reuse your essay depending on the type of questions asked.

If you have any questions regarding FAFSA, applying for scholarships or where to find the proper resources for either, please visit the College and Career Counselor, Ms. Catherine Lewis, in room 116 or reach out via email at clewis@sjnacademies.org or call 262-646-7283.