Financial Aid Opportunities

When you make the decision to go to college, one of the most daunting aspects can be the cost of attending and picking a college you can afford...but don’t give up! Financial aid opportunities are available from many different sources for many kinds of students. Even if you don’t think you will qualify for aid, you may be very surprised to learn that you qualify for one or more of the options. Here are a few terms commonly used by financial aid programs and offices:

**Award**—is generally used to describe the actual amount of the funding received by the student from any financial aid granted.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**—is the common application form required for all students seeking most kinds of financial aid from almost all colleges. This application and qualification process is probably the most important aspect of figuring out what types of financial options are available to you and must be completed in advance of enrollment in the college of your choice. The FAFSA application determines your eligibility and will be used through your college career. All federal and state grants, loans, and awards require the FAFSA and many public and private scholarships also require it. FAFSA application and processing is free to students and is available online. Deadlines are different from college to college but most require filing to be finalized at least 2-3 months in advance of the award notification to you.

**Grant**—is used to describe financial assistance usually paid to you and/or your parents to help pay for the costs of going to college. Grants may be made directly to the student or the college as determined by the acceptance terms of grant and re-payment payment is not required assuming the student keeps eligibility. Grants may be federal, state, or private.

**Scholarship**—means funding for college received by a student that does not need to be repaid. Some scholarships are awarded based on academic merit, but not all of them. Thousands of opportunities for scholarships are given by private foundations, corporate foundations, and professional associations. Many of these opportunities go unfunded due to lack of applicants. Eligibility differs from scholarship to scholarship and may be qualified by special or specific circumstances such as family heritage or history, state of residence, minority, gender, or multicultural aspects, ethnicity, nationality, and the list goes on and on. Be sure to ask your financial aid office for assistance in locating these options. You can also access a variety of free and paid search engines on line to find scholarships. Scholarships have various deadlines and requirements but it's worth your time to investigate these opportunities. A few scholarships are only available to graduating high school seniors, but most are open to all entering or returning students. You are strongly encourage to apply for all available aid and external scholarships.

**Loan**—is a term normally used in connection with a federal or state opportunity to borrow money for college at a reduced interest rate and re-payable either during college or after you complete a degree or certificate. The most common loans used by college students and/or their parents are the **Direct Subsidized Loan** and the **Direct PLUS Loans for Parents**. Both of these loans are described below under **Federal Financial Aid Options**.
**Work Study**—is a term used when students are hired to perform regular work to earn money to pay for college expenses. Work study opportunities vary from college to college and may be on or off campus and may or may not come through federal and state sources. These funds are paid as the work is completed and usually starts when the each term begins, not in advance. See more information below under Federal Financial Aid Options.

In order to understand more about the application and qualification process, here are some descriptions of available financial aid grants, loans, awards, and scholarships:

**Federal Financial Aid Options:**

**Pell Grant**—is a federal grant awarded when the student does not have a B.S./B.A. degree or equivalent. The amount received depends on the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), the cost of attendance at the college you choose and your enrollment status.

**Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)**—is a federal grant that is awarded when a student demonstrates exceptional need and does not have a B.S./B.A. degree or equivalent.

**College Work-Study Program (CWS)**—is a federal work program that provides jobs to help pay for educational expenses. Students will be paid at least the federal minimum wage and can work 10 to 20 hours per week. Work-study programs offer students the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning money for college. Students receive work-study funds in the form of a paycheck based on the number of hours worked in any given pay period. Please note that because work-study funds must be earned, they are not available at the beginning of the quarter to help students pay their tuition and fees. Work-study earnings can be used to meet current expenses, such as supplies, transportation, or living expenses, or they can be saved in a personal bank account to help pay expenses for an upcoming quarter. Available work-study positions are posted by the Financial Aid Office and may also be available online.

**Direct Subsidized Loan**—is a low interest loan provided by the federal government on an annual basis and is paid by term directly to the college in your name. This subsidized loan, also known as a Stafford loan, is awarded based on financial need. Interest is paid by the government while the student is enrolled at least half-time.

**Direct Unsubsidized Loan (Stafford Loan)**—is a low interest loan provided by the federal government on an annual basis and is paid by term directly to the college in your name. The unsubsidized Stafford loan is available regardless of need. Unlike the Direct Subsidized Loan, interest on the Stafford Loan must be paid by the student during college the loan cannot exceed the cost of attendance, and the student is charged interest.

**Direct PLUS Loans for Parents**—is a loan available to parents of dependent students to help pay for their educational expenses. Parents are required to demonstrate credit worthiness. Parents will begin repaying both the principal and the interest while the student is enrolled in college.
**Federal TEACH Grant**—is a program that can provide up to $4,000 per year to undergraduate students who intend to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families. It does not require students to demonstrate any financial need. For more information, visit [www.teachgrant.ed.gov](http://www.teachgrant.ed.gov)

**Veterans Benefits**—include a full array of support for active duty military and veterans and their dependents. These benefits are earned through military service. Benefit programs are administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs. The VA must approve all degree and certificate programs for eligibility for veterans’ benefits for college. Please seek out specific information on the following programs from the Department of Veterans Affairs online at [http://www.gibill.va.gov/](http://www.gibill.va.gov/) or contact the Veterans Affairs Office at the college of your choice:

- **NEW! The Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapter 31)**
- **Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (Chapter 30)**
- **Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) (Chapter 1607)**
- **Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) (Chapter 32)**
- **Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program (DEA) (Chapter 35)**
- **Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) (Chapter 32)**
- **Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program (DEA) (Chapter 35)**

**State Grants and Scholarships For In-State Students in Some States:**

**Institutional Student Employment Program (ISEP)**—is a program that provides employment to students who do not qualify for the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program. Like the FWS program, students may work part-time during the academic year and full-time during the summer and semester breaks. All jobs are located on campus. The availability of this type of loan is determined state by state and application and terms of the program will vary.

**Part-time Student State Grant**—is a state grant for students carrying less than a full credit load per term and may or may not be available in your state. Be sure to ask the college financial aid office to see if your state offers this type of assistance. Other eligibility requirements may also apply.

**State Hope Scholarship**—is an award that is offered in many states for low income students who need additional financial aid beyond what other federal options for which the student may qualify. Circumstances and eligibility differ from state to state and may not be offered in all states. This is a scholarship and does not need to repaid unless the student becomes ineligible for reasons determined by each state.

**Worker Retraining Program**—is available in some states if you are unemployed, have exhausted your benefits within the last 24 months, are facing a lay-off, or if you are employed in a declining industry. You may be eligible for Worker Retraining funding and support to help you gain the skills needed to return to work. This option is available in many states but not all colleges offer this option.
**Additional Resources:**

**U.S. Department of Education’s Student Guide**
Visit [http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/SFA/StudentGuide](http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/SFA/StudentGuide) for the complete text of the 2010-2011 Student Guide. This document will tell you about student eligibility, financial need, dependency status, a description of the Federal Pell Grant program, important terms all students should know, phone numbers and TDD numbers, and more.

**Tuition Reimbursement:**
More and more employers offer tuition reimbursement as a benefit to both full-time and part-time employees. Your workplace may offer education incentives that you don't know about. Ask your human resources department.

**Deferred Payment Options:**
Check with your local college financial aid or admissions office to find out if your college will extend tuition and fees charges over a term or a year. Many colleges offer this option so that students and budget expenses and time over time rather than all at once at the beginning of the term.