FAFSA: Step by Step

Direct link to FAFSA: **https://fafsa.ed.gov**

What is FAFSA? FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The federal government uses this form to determine your eligibility for financial aid, which includes: grants, work-study, scholarships and loans.

Why fill it out? The FAFSA is used to determine how much aid you're eligible for and many scholarship organizations require it to be completed regardless on income.

EFC stands for Expected Family Contribution. According to the government's regulations, this is what your family must contribute to your college cost.

How does it work? Your prospective college will try to meet your financial need through aid made up of funds from federal, state, school and private sources. This may include loans, grants, scholarships and student employment.

FAFSA Process: 1-2-3!

The three steps to apply for federal aid:

Step 1: Assemble forms needed to complete the FAFSA

You'll need the following to fill out the form:

--Social security number (for student and parent)

--Student's Driver's license number

--Current investment records (if any)

--Alien registration card (if not a U.S. citizen)

--Parents' federal tax return (Previous year's tax returns can be used for estimates if income is similar)

--Student's tax return (if filed)

--Untaxed income records and other records of money earned (if any)

Step 2: Complete the FAFSA

--Complete a FAFSA on the Web at: www.fafsa.ed.gov

--In order to maximize your amount of aid, fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1.

--Once finished, print the FAFSA summary as well as the "Submission Confirmation" page.

Step 3: Review your Student Aid Report (SAR)

The SAR is proof that your FAFSA was received. You should receive your electronic SAR in 1-3 days after completing the FAFSA.

What if I find errors on my SAR?

--Report errors immediately to your financial aid office. You can also make corrections online at: www.fafsa.ed.gov

--If you don't receive your SAR in 2 weeks, call 1-800-433-3243 (1-800-4-FED-AID).

Additional FAFSA Tips:

--Please keep up with your ID and Password as you will need it for future use.

--Remember that the FAFSA is FREE! If you need help, ask your financial aid office or call the FAFSA Help Desk at: 1-800-4-FED-AID.

--Fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1, and each successive year once you're in college: Early submission maximizes chances of receiving aid.

--Sign the application: If you are filing as a dependent, make sure your parents sign too. You will use your PIN if signing electronically.

--Save your FAFSA online if you can't finish it in one session: Click the "SAVE" button at the bottom of each step to save info for 45 days.

--Don't leave a field blank. If a question doesn't apply, enter "0."

--Print a copy of your FAFSA for your records.

User ID: Your Key to Online Identification

The User ID is the code that the U.S. Department of Education uses to identify you online. The User ID allows you to do the following on the FAFSA:

--Check the status

--Make corrections

--Complete an online renewal form next year

--Electronically sign to expedite the process

Do not reveal your PIN or User ID to anyone. The User ID allows anyone to electronically sign federal student aid documents and access your confidential information.