

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, Jan. 8, 2016.

CONTACT:

Carolynn Bright
Communications Director
(406) 495-7506

FAFSA Season is Here; Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) Can Help

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available at FAFSA.gov, so Montana students and families should prepare to complete this important application before priority filing dates at Montana schools.

“Every year some Montana students miss out on much-needed funding because they don’t complete the FAFSA,” said Rhonda Safford, state-wide coordinator of College Goal Montana. “All students with plans to go to college in the fall should complete this form and get it submitted by the priority date at their school.”

For most Montana postsecondary schools, the priority FAFSA filing date is March 1. At the University of Montana, that date is Feb. 15.

College Goal Montana is an annual campaign to encourage FAFSA awareness and to help students and families complete the form that provides access to federal, and some state and institutional, aid. 2016 will mark the 11th year that SAF has organized the effort for Montana.

According to Safford, SAF is reaching out to Montana students and families to provide assistance through a variety of methods:

- One-on-one help
 - Contact the SAF outreach manager in your area (SmartAboutCollege.org)
 - Email us at FAFSAhelp@safmt.org
 - Call us at 877-COLG4ME (265-4463)
- Social media
 - Facebook — FAFSA: What’s in it for me? page
 - Twitter — @GetFAFSAHelp
- Step-by-step instructional presentation
 - Visit SmartAboutCollege.org and go to our College Goal Montana page.
- Text messages — Text FAFSAHELP to 41411 to receive texts with FAFSA tips and deadline reminders

Montana high school seniors should also visit SmartAboutCollege.org and pledge to complete the FAFSA by the priority filing date. By doing so, they become eligible to win four, \$500 scholarships and the grand prize \$1,000 scholarship from SAF. Pledge deadline is Feb. 22.

“About \$150 billion in federal grants, loans and work-study funds is available each year, and that doesn’t include the state and institutional aid that is out there,” said Safford. “Financial aid

professionals in Montana will tell you that the return on the investment of taking half an hour or 45 minutes to complete the FAFSA is worth it.”

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to pursue and fund their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs - to date more than \$30 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

Sidebar

In order to complete the FAFSA, students and parents should have the following information available:

- FSA ID – Get a Federal Student Aid ID at fsaid.ed.gov. Both the student and one parent (if the student is under the age of 24) will need a FSA ID. It replaces the FAFSA PIN. Those individuals who previously had a PIN will need to log on to the system to get a FSA ID and link their PIN to that ID.
- Social Security numbers (students and parents)
- Last year’s federal tax returns for estimating purposes (or most current if complete). You can go back later to confirm numbers after you finish your taxes. If you need free help with your taxes, try Montana Free File at montanafreefile.org.
- W-2s
- Additional asset information (savings and checking account balances, real estate excluding the home in which you live, money market funds, stocks, other investments)
- Untaxed income information (child support received, payments to retirement, health savings plans and tax-deferred pensions)