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Montana Priority FAFSA Deadline is March 1: Get Help Today at SmartAboutCollege.org

The clock is ticking on the priority Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) deadline for most Montana schools, so students hoping to receive federal aid for fall classes should get online today to complete and submit their FAFSA by March 1.

“It’s not hard to lose track of time and let this deadline get away from you,” said Rhonda Safford, statewide coordinator of College Goal Montana. “Fortunately, Student Assistance Foundation has developed a series of instructional videos that students and families can watch day or night to get step-by-step help completing this process.”

According to Safford, numerous factors determine a student’s financial aid award, but those students who submit their FAFSA by the priority deadline are eligible for the best and widest range of aid available.

She added that students and parents completing their FAFSA now — after having filed their 2012 income tax returns — have the time-saving benefit of using the IRS data retrieval tool to pre-fill some of their answers to questions on the FAFSA. In addition, using information transferred through the data retrieval tool makes it less likely that the student’s FAFSA will be selected for verification by the school’s financial aid office.

“If you haven’t filed your taxes yet, you should still complete the FAFSA and submit it by the priority deadline,” Safford said. “You can estimate the amounts based on your last year’s tax return. Then, after you file your taxes, you’ll need to log back in to the FAFSA to fix any estimated information.”

Safford reminds students and families that the first “F” in FAFSA stands for free, and that they shouldn’t pay anyone for help completing the form. She advises students to visit the financial aid office at their college of choice or their high school counselor for guidance. Also, students can check out the videos and information on the SmartAboutCollege.org website, or visit any of SAF’s nine campus outreach offices for assistance.

Finally, Safford suggests that students who have submitted the FAFSA check out SAF’s latest FAFSA instructional video, “Step 6: What’s next?” to find out what comes after the student presses the submit button on the FAFSA website.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue 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 \$25 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

