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CONTACT:

Carolynn Bright
Communications Officer
(406) 495-7506

College Goal Montana: Completing the FAFSA: What's in it for you?

Students and families, want to know what's in it for you when it comes to filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)? Well, nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) is here to answer that question.

On Nov. 15, SAF will launch a new component of its College Goal Montana program — FAFSA – What's in it for me? This unique financial aid awareness effort is geared at using social media to get the word out about why it's important for everyone who plans on attending college to complete the FAFSA by March 1.

College Goal Montana is an annual campaign that encourages FAFSA awareness and helps students and families complete the important form. 2014 will mark the ninth year that SAF has organized the effort for Montana. FAFSA – What's in it for me? is an extension of that work.

“This social media campaign is targeted at Montana students (and their parents) to let them know in plain speak why they should complete the FAFSA — what's in it for them?” said SAF's Rhonda Safford, statewide coordinator of College Goal Montana. “This effort features kids talking to kids; financial aid professionals telling it straight; and parents acknowledging that they don't have all the answers when it comes to getting their students to college.”

Students can access fun and informational videos, important FAFSA completion tips, and more by liking FAFSA-What's in it for me? on Facebook, and following us on Twitter @GetFAFSAHelp.

“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.”

Safford added that SAF encourages students to ask questions about completing the FAFSA on Twitter (**no personal information, please!**), share ways they are saving for college, and provide any other ideas they think might help their peers.

“The best way to get the message across about the importance of the FAFSA is for students to talk to each other, and to get real answers from real professionals in the financial aid field,” she said. “We want to hear about your lessons learned, funny things that have happened — we can all learn from each other.”

Additional FAFSA resources available through SAF on SmartAboutCollege.org include videos explaining the FAFSA completion process step by step, beginning with getting a FAFSA PIN, through signing and submitting the application. In addition, FAFSA filers can watch the videos on SAF's YouTube channel, SAFTube4U. Should students or families need one-on-one assistance, the SmartAboutCollege website provides email, and phone options. Finally, students and parents can text FAFSAHELP to 41411 to receive free texts with FAFSA tips, deadline reminders and more.

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 \$27 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.