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The FAFSA is Available; Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) Can Help

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

“In 2014, less than 30 percent of Montana students completed their FAFSA by the March 1 priority deadline,” said Rhonda Safford, statewide coordinator of College Goal Montana. “At Student Assistance Foundation, we want to make sure that all Montanans have the help they need to submit the FAFSA on time and maximize their opportunity to receive financial aid.”

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. 2015 will mark the 10th year that SAF has organized the effort for Montana.

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

According to Safford, SAF is reaching out to Montana students and families to provide assistance through methods ranging from step-by-step, instructional FAFSA completion videos on its SmartAboutCollege.org website, to delivering FAFSA completion reminders via text. Here is a complete list of free resources:

- SmartAboutCollege.org website
 - Step-by-step, instructional FAFSA completion videos
 - Comprehensive calendar of Montana FAFSA completion events
- Social media
 - Facebook — FAFSA: What’s in it for me? page
 - Twitter — @GetFAFSAHelp
- Text messages — Text FAFSAHELP to 41411 to receive texts with FAFSA tips and deadline reminders
- One-on-one help
 - Email us at FAFSAhelp@safmt.org
 - Call us at 877-COLG4ME (265-4463)
 - Contact the SAF outreach manager in your area
- Scholarship opportunities — Students who attend a College Goal Montana event or view the instructional videos on SmartAboutCollege.org can complete the survey at

<http://smartaboutcollege.org/community/college-goal-montana.jsp> to be entered to win one of 15, \$500 scholarships.

“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 \$29.6 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:

- FAFSA PIN — to get your PIN, log on to www.pin.ed.gov. Both student and one parent (if the student is under the age of 24) will need a PIN.
- Social Security numbers (students and parents)
- Last year’s federal tax returns for estimating purposes (or 2014 if complete). You can go back later to confirm numbers after you finish your 2014 taxes. If you need free help with your taxes, click on the Montana Free File link on the bottom of the College Goal Montana page on SmartAboutCollege.org.
- W-2s, tribal income, other aid information (TANF, child support, other benefits)
- Additional asset information (money market funds, stocks, other investments)