

Student Financial Aid Checklist – Class of '14

This to-do list does not include admission activities; it is solely related to financial aid. The admission application is a separate process. Do not wait until you are admitted to a college to apply for financial aid.

Each college may require additional steps – follow Financial Aid Office instructions!

To Do: Preferably before January 1, 2014

- Make a list of every college under consideration.
- Visit the website of every college; read the financial aid office (FAO) information. Note the FAFSA deadline.
- Determine if any college(s) on your list requires the PROFILE and determine the deadline date(s).
 - Go to: profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp
 - Use drop-down list to check if the colleges on your list require the PROFILE.
 - Register for and complete the PROFILE if required (may be required before January 1).
- Develop a comparison chart of realistic and specific costs for each college. Start with the FAO standard student budgets and build upon these. Search the website for “2014-15 student budgets” – this will usually bring up the information.
- List unique expenses you might face (like transportation for an out-of-state college) and add this amount to the standard budget – now you can compare total cost at all your colleges.
- Complete the “Net Cost Calculator” for each college – compare estimated net costs at each.
- Review the college’s profile on the federal “College Navigator” nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/ . Are you making a good investment decision if you go to this college?
- Search for scholarships and begin applications. www.fastweb.com (One example of a search engine.)
- Gather all 2013 income/asset information at the end of December (so you and your parents can estimate 2013 income on the application).

To Do: After January 1, 2014

- Complete the FAFSA in early January 2014. Meet the earliest deadline on your list of colleges. Do not wait until taxes are completed. Use a best estimate of family 2013 income. Do not wait for March 2nd.
- Apply online at: www.fafsa.gov You will receive PINs for electronic signatures during this process.
- Do you need help filling out the FAFSA? There may be a “Cash for College” workshop in your area. Check at www.calgrants.org/index.cfm?navId=25 but remember, do not miss a FAFSA deadline waiting for a workshop!
- Check with high school authorities in January for instructions on how to submit your Cal Grant GPA Verification and follow those instructions. Your GPA must be sent to the state by March 2, 2014. Submit the GPA verification even if you think you will not go to college in California. It’s IMPORTANT!
- When you get a response from the FAFSA (called the Student Aid Report, or SAR), check the accuracy of the information you submitted. You will use the SAR to:
 - Make corrections if there are errors.
 - Revise reported 2013 income information when tax returns are complete.
 - Add or delete colleges from your list.
- Follow the individual instructions received from each college FAO. Most colleges will have an electronic link to your file status. If you do not hear from a college or find a link online 2-3 weeks after you get a response to your FAFSA, check with the FAO for follow-up requirements. IMPORTANT! Send everything requested and do so immediately...if you do not understand a request, call or email right away.
- Many colleges will require you to contact IRS for a Tax Transcript – follow instructions.
- You will receive a separate communication from Cal Grant...ask the FAO for an explanation if you have questions.
- Go to <https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/logon.asp> and register for “WebGrants” to monitor your state Cal Grant status.
- If you are admitted to the college, you will receive a financial aid offer, usually before May 1st. When the offer arrives, read the whole package and follow all instructions.
 - Contact the FAO if you have questions.
 - If you have applied to a community college, your offer of financial aid will probably come later (June? July?). However, you should contact the college to be sure you have completed your application.

- Decide which college you will attend (typically before May 1, 2014 for four-year colleges).
 - Do not make a May 1st deposit until you are sure you have an offer of financial aid that is OK for you and your family. Work with the FAO and Admissions Offices if you have concerns.
 - Notify Cal Grant (through WebGrants) if you change your college choice from the one listed on your WebGrants screen.
 - Notify the college FAO immediately if you receive any resources (like a scholarship) after you receive your offer of financial aid or if there are other significant changes in your circumstances.
 - Read the college website and materials to learn how and when you will receive your financial aid and how much your family will actually owe to the college and when.
 - If you receive an offer of loan, look for instructions on required “entrance counseling.” You will have to complete this activity before receiving the proceeds of your loan. Remember, you do not have to accept loan assistance (all or part of what is offered) in order to keep your work and grant funds. Talk to the FAO if you have concerns.
 - If you receive an offer of Federal Work Study find out from the college how you get a job and take early action. FWS is not a guarantee of a job; you must seek an eligible job right away.
 - Finally, thank the Financial Aid Office for helping you get to college. They work hard and will appreciate this small gesture.
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Remember! The College Financial Aid Offices have the final say over your eligibility. Work closely with them and follow their instructions. Use this space to note additional items and actions required by the colleges.

**You must renew your financial aid application each year.
Follow the college instructions.**