

Guide to Financial Aid

Financial Aid is money that assists students when it comes to educational expenses. This can include tuition, housing, or fees. When it comes to financial aid, students don't know where to start. This guide will help students have a better understanding of what aid is and how to move forward with receiving it!

Kinds of Financial Aid

When it comes to aid, there are four main types that a student can receive: grants, loans, scholarships, and work study jobs.

Grants are funds that you receive, and they do not have to be paid back. Grants are gifted based on financial need. Your financial need is determined once you fill out the FAFSA (which will be covered later in the blog!). Grants can also be specific to states, such as the PA State grant.

Loans are funds that are given to students with the intention of being repaid with added interest. Loans are broken down into 2 main categories: Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans. Subsidized loans are directed toward undergraduate students who have financial needs. Unsubsidized loans are mainly for any student, including undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

Work study allows students to work part time jobs to help them earn money for educational expenses. There is a Federal Work study program that provides these jobs for students. These jobs can be on campus or off campus and students are paid hourly.

Scholarships are also considered, "gift aid". When most student think of financial aid, they think of scholarships. Scholarships can be awarded for academics, sports, service, etc. They can be merit based, need based, identity based, or specific to your desired major and or career. Most universities and colleges offer their own scholarships. They usually have specific requirements in order to qualify for their scholarships.

The different steps to take

1. Talk to your counselor

Ask your college counselor for help. They are here to help you through any post secondary needs. They will know where to help you start!

2. Fill out FAFSA

FAFSA is open for the 2026-2027 cycle! Fill it out as soon as possible. If you are unsure what FAFSA is, read below! There is a brief explanation of what exactly FAFSA is.

What is FAFSA?

FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Families can apply for grants, work study, and loans through this application. Families apply online and it determines their students eligibility for loans, grants, etc. When filling out the application it also sends your form to at least one college or university you applied to in order for the school to receive your financial information/needs.

3. What aid is a college or university offering

Understand what kind of aid a school is offering. Before accepting the offer, talk to family members, counselors, etc. For more information about your offer, reach out to the school for any clarification.

4. Receiving your aid

Once you accept the offer, the college or university will credit it by putting it in the students school account. This money can be used for any educational expenses including tuition, fees, housing, etc. Then students will be on there way!

Check out these links!

[Understand Financial Aid | Federal Student Aid](#)

[How Financial Aid Works | Federal Student Aid](#)

[Guide to Understanding College Financial Aid - US News](#)