



“Paying for College”

Start Your Journey Now for 2026-27!

(Enrolling in 2025-27)

A presentation by the College Funding Project, with information adapted, in part, from the U.S. Department of Education. The Delaware Higher Education Office (DHEO) funds the College Funding Project in partnership with Stand by Me NexGen.



Stand By Me is a joint project of the State of Delaware and United Way of Delaware

standbymede.org

What will we learn today?

- How much funding is available?
- What types of funding are available?
- How do you apply for it?
- When do you apply for it?
- What else do you need to know?



How much money is available?

Enough to cover the full “Cost of Attendance” if needed!

Cost of Attendance (COA)

The "Sticker Price"

- COA is calculated annually by the Financial Aid Office at the school student is attending.
- COA can vary by school/state of residence/major.
- COA includes tuition/fees as well as allowances for books/supplies, and student's living expenses for the academic year (*adjustments may be made if enrolled less than half time*).
- **Total financial aid from all sources cannot exceed "Cost of Attendance."**

COA Elements
Tuition
Fees
Books and Supplies
Food and Housing
Transportation
Clothing
Misc. Personal Expenses

What will it cost YOU?

“Sticker Price”
(Cost of Attendance)

—

Scholarships/grants
(“Free” Money)

=

“Net Cost” to you

*Federal Work Study and Federal Direct Loans
can be used to help cover the “net cost,” as needed*



What types of funding are available?

Scholarships and Grants

- This is the **FREE** money – it does not have to be paid back!
- Find out how and when to apply
 - ***Must at least complete the FAFSA, but other applications also may be required***
 - Ask potential schools
- Need-based federal and state **GRANTS** may be available to students with high need
- How well students do in high school may impact how much in merit-based **SCHOLARSHIP** funding they are awarded
- Make sure you understand the “fine print”
 - ***Ex.: will the grant/scholarship be renewed each year?***

Federal Work Study (FWS)

- This is money that can be earned from part-time employment while student is in school
- Jobs typically are on campus and may offer flexibility in work schedules
- Part-time employment may still be available if student is not eligible for **FWS** funding, but jobs may be harder to find and more likely will be off-campus with less flexible hours

Loans

- This is money the student (and the parents) can borrow
 - ***It must be paid back after finishing school***
- Loans are used to fill any funding gap
- Always borrow federal loans first!
 - ***Repayment of federal loans is very flexible and can be responsive to individual circumstances***
 - Monthly payments on federal loans borrowed by the student can be based on student's income rather than the amount of their debt
- Borrow the minimum amount needed to attend chosen school

Primary Federal Aid Programs

Grants

- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
- Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant

Federal grant funding could total more than \$7,300/year depending on your situation.

Employment

- Federal Work-Study (FWS)

Loans

STUDENTS:

- Direct Subsidized Loan
- Direct Unsubsidized Loan

PARENTS:

- Direct PLUS Loan

Federal loan funding could cover up to COA minus all other financial aid, if needed.

Who is eligible for federal financial aid?

Student generally must be:

- U.S. citizen, permanent resident or eligible noncitizen with a valid Social Security number
- Pursuing a degree or certificate at an eligible institution
 - *You also must be enrolled at least half-time to borrow Federal Direct Loans.*
- In possession of a high school diploma, GED certificate, completed home schooling or enrolled in an eligible career pathway program
- Maintaining satisfactory academic progress once in college or career school

Both student and at least one parent/contributor must create an FSA ID (account username and password) to complete the **FAFSA** and gain access to federal student aid.

DACA/Undocumented Students

You should:

- Contact the Financial Aid Office at each school being considered and ask what funding options may be available at that school.
- Apply to ***TheDream.US*** scholarship program (DSU and other colleges).

You are:

- Eligible for possible **SEED scholarship funding** at DTCC/UD.
- Not eligible for **FEDERAL** financial aid under current federal law.

Primary Delaware Programs

Scholarships and Grants

- **SEED (Student Excellence Equals Degree) Scholarship** – merit-based award for use if enrolled in associate degree, diploma, credit certificate, bachelor's degree, or workforce training program at Delaware Tech; or the Associate's (AAP) degree program at the University of Delaware.
- **INSPIRE Scholarship** – merit-based award for use at Delaware State University.
- **B. Bradford Barnes Memorial Scholarship** – merit-based award to cover all direct education expenses at the University of Delaware for the academic year.
- **Herman M. Holloway Sr. Memorial Scholarship** – merit-based award to cover all direct education expenses at Delaware State University for the academic year.
- **Diamond State Scholarship** – merit-based award for use at any college/university in US.
- **Scholarship Incentive Program (ScIP) Grants** – need-based award for use at any college in Delaware or as part of "Academic Common Market."

Primary Delaware Programs

Scholarships and Grants

- **Educator Support Scholarship** – *major-specific award for use if enrolled in in bachelor's or graduate degree programs at public or private Delaware institution*
- **Career-Based Scholarship** – *major-specific award for use if enrolled in in bachelor's or graduate degree programs at public or private Delaware institution*
- **Education Benefits for Children of Deceased Veterans and Others** – *covers tuition and fees at a Delaware public college, or private Delaware college if program not offered at DE public institution, or out-of-state public or private college if program of study not offered in DE; student must be 26-24, DE resident of 3+ years, and the surviving child of a military servicemember, state trooper, or state transportation work who was killed in the line of duty*
- **Foster Care Tuition Waiver** – *Full ride scholarship for us at any of the three DE public colleges for students who were in foster care in Delaware during teenage years*

Delaware Application Requirements:

2026-27 Delaware Scholarships/Grants

- Complete the **FAFSA** at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) and submit it by **5/15/2026**.
- Create your Delaware Higher Education Office (DHEO) “**Student Account**” by clicking on the “**Student Account Access**” link at:
<https://tinyurl.com/DEFinAid>
- Complete the required application form for the merit-based scholarships funded by the State of Delaware and submit online by **2/28/2026**.
 - Application is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/DEFinAid>
- Complete any additional requirements specified by the school.

Delaware Student Success: *Your Scholarship Source*

- Allows you to:
 - *Search/Research Colleges and Trade Schools*
 - *Search/Research/Apply for Scholarships*
 - *Learn About the College Investment Plan (529)*
 - *Download Checklists for Grades 9-12*
 - *Easily navigate to the DE Higher Education Financial Aid Portal*
- Visit delawarestudentsuccess.org and use this resource today!

Institutional Scholarships

- Individual schools will usually have their own aid for which students could be eligible
 - *Make sure to ask the Financial Aid Office at each school to which you are sending FAFSA information about their in-house aid offerings*
- Some examples of Delaware institutional aid:
 - *DTCC: SEED*
 - *DSU: Inspire*
 - *UD: SEED, First State Promise*
 - *Goldey-Beacom: endowments*



How do you apply for federal funding?

Minimum Application Requirements for Federal Student Aid

At a minimum, you must:

- Apply for admission
- Submit the **FAFSA** (the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid”) at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov)

However, there may be ADDITIONAL application(s) required
by some schools or funding programs!

“FAFSA”

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

It’s the federal application used to collect demographic and financial information from “**contributors**” – *e.g., student, student’s spouse, parent(s), step-parents.*

- **FIRST STEP:** Student and at least one parent (if student is considered **dependent**) each must create their own **Studentaid.gov** account by creating their **FSA ID** (account username and password) initially at [Studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) the first time they are completing the **FAFSA**.
- **SECOND STEP:** Complete the **FAFSA** application online at: [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) (**FAFSA** must be completed **every year** financial aid is needed).

2026–27 FAFSA is expected to be available on **October 1, 2025**

- *Uses federal tax information (e.g., income/taxes paid) from your **2024** federal tax return.*

Why do you have to submit the FAFSA?

FAFSA does ...

- Determine student's eligibility for federal student aid
- Gather family's income and asset information needed to calculate "Student Aid Index" (SAI)
- *Need to be submitted every year financial aid is needed*

FAFSA does NOT ...

- Collect information about household's expenses or "special circumstances"
- Determine what specific financial aid will be awarded
- Determine how much financial aid will be awarded
- Serve as loan application

Information Needed to Complete FAFSA

- Student's Social Security number (SSN) – *student must have SSN to be eligible for federal student aid*
- Parents' birthdate, email address, and Social Security number *[if providing parental information and parent(s) have a Social Security number (SSN)]*
 - ***Parent(s) who do not have a valid SSN still can complete the **FAFSA** but they first will need to create their own FSA ID (account username and password)***
- Student's Alien Registration Number if he/she is not a U.S. citizen
- Copy of **2024** federal tax return, schedules and W-2 form(s)
- Records of untaxed income, interest income, veteran's non-education benefits
- Information on ASSETS including cash; savings and checking account balances; annual child support received; education savings accounts (529 Plans) if student is designated beneficiary; investments including real estate but not including the family home; net worth of businesses and farm investments

Federal Tax Information & the 2025-26 FAFSA

- For you to be eligible for federal financial aid, and to have your **2026-27 FAFSA** processed by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), you and your parent(s) as contributors (if dependent) will be required to provide **CONSENT AND APPROVAL** for your **2024** federal tax information to be transferred automatically through the IRS Direct Data Exchange as part of the **FAFSA** application (*even if a federal tax return was not filed for 2024*).
- However, you and your parent(s) as contributors (if dependent) still will want to have the **2024** federal tax return/schedules and W-2 forms available if tax return(s) was/were filed—additional information may need to be entered from them that is not transferred automatically as you complete the **2026-27 FAFSA** online.

What is the “Student Aid Index” (SAI)?

- **SAI** is an eligibility index number used by schools (e.g., colleges and universities) to help them determine how much “need-based” financial aid a student is eligible to receive at that institution.
- **SAI** is the same amount regardless of the school attended.
- **SAI** can be negative (down to -\$1,500).
- Student is eligible for a maximum Federal Pell Grant if **SAI** is between -\$1,500 and \$0.
- **SAI** does not account for the number in college (*family can contact the Financial Aid Office to request consideration of this “special circumstance” to see if additional financial aid can be offered*).

Non-need based financial aid (*e.g., unsubsidized federal loans*) is available to help you replace the SAI, if needed.

FSA ID is required to sign the FAFSA



FSA ID:

Your “Electronic” Signature

- **FSA ID** is used to access your account and sign the **FAFSA**.
- You can use the “**Create Account**” option to create your **FSA ID** (*account username and password*) at: StudentAid.gov.
- **STUDENT** and at least one **PARENT** (*if parent(s) information is required on the FAFSA*) each need to create their own **FSA ID** if they have not done so previously before they complete/submit the **FAFSA**.
- For assistance creating your **FSA ID**, call **800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243)** or register for a Stand By Me NexGen One-on-One Zoom FSA ID Completion Appointment at UWDE.org/fafsa.

NOTE: *Parent(s) who do not have a valid Social Security Number (SSN) still must create an FSA ID.*

“CONTRIBUTORS”

“**Contributor**” is anyone who is required to provide personal and financial information in their portion of the **FAFSA** form.

- Contributors are:
 - Student
 - Student’s spouse, if married
 - Biological/adoptive parent(s) if student is considered **dependent**
 - Stepparent if parent required to provide information has remarried and student is **dependent**
- Contributors are NOT:
 - Grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, brothers or sisters, aunts or uncles, even if they have helped raise the student

Contributors must provide information on the **FAFSA** for the student to be eligible to receive federal financial aid, but they are not financially responsible for the student’s education costs by providing that information.

Parents and the FAFSA



Will parents' information be needed on the FAFSA?

- **YES**, if student is determined to be **DEPENDENT**.
- **NO**, if student is determined to be **INDEPENDENT**.

Student is considered INDEPENDENT in 2026-27 if ...

- Born before 1/1/2003
- Married
- Grad/prof student
- Serving on active duty in military for purposes other than training
- Veteran of U.S. armed forces
- Has dependent children
- Has dependents other than children/spouse
- Emancipated minor as determined by court
- Someone other than parent or stepparent has *legal guardianship* as determined by a court (court papers must say "guardianship" rather than "custody")
- Since age 13, both parents deceased, in foster care, or dependent/ward of court
- As of 7/1/2025, determined to be unaccompanied youth who is homeless or self supporting and at risk of being homeless

NOTE: Most high school seniors are considered DEPENDENT, and therefore, must provide parent(s) information on the FAFSA.

Who are “Parents” on FAFSA?

- “Parents” are the legal (**biological** or **adoptive**) parents of the student (*includes any individual listed as a “parent” on student’s birth certificate*).
- The following are **NOT** the “Parents” when completing the **FAFSA** even if the student lives with these individual(s):
 - *Grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings or other relatives*
 - *Foster parents, legal guardians (student likely is “independent”)*

Are BOTH parents required to provide information on FAFSA?

- **YES**, if parents live together (*regardless of marital status*).
- **NO**, if parents do NOT live together:
 - Information must be provided by the **parent** who provides the **greater amount of financial support** for the student regardless of where the student resides.
 - Must include information from stepparent if the **parent** who provides the **greater amount of financial support** has remarried.
 - If both **parents** provide the exact same amount of support or if they don't support the student financially, then the **parent** who has the **greater income or assets** must provide their information (and if remarried, so must the stepparent).

What if student does not have contact with parents or cannot obtain information from them?

For example ...

- Parent(s) whereabouts is unknown
- Parent(s) is/are not permitted to have contact with student

Then, “Unusual Circumstances” may exist ...

- Student can complete/submit the **FAFSA** without providing parents' information and have it processed provisionally by ED.
- But student also must contact **Financial Aid Office (FAO)** at **EACH** school to which they are applying for admission/financial aid to request further review/evaluation by the FAO to determine if they can override dependency status so that the student does not have to provide information from parent(s) on **FAFSA** before processing of the submitted FAFSA can be finalized by ED and financial aid awarded.

What if you have “Special Circumstances?”

Special circumstances may exist that make it difficult for the family to provide support for the student to the extent expected based on information reported to ED in the **FAFSA**.

- Special circumstances may include:
 - Loss of income/employment
 - Extraordinary expenses (e.g., healthcare, dependent care)
 - More than one child in college/school

When you feel “Special Circumstances” exist ...

- Contact the school’s Financial Aid Office after submitting the **FAFSA** application and explain the circumstances to see if any adjustments can be made and additional financial aid offered to the student.



When do you apply?

Apply Early!

- Do **NOT** wait until you are offered admission.
 - *You could miss important filing deadlines established by the school you want to attend.*
- **2026–27 FAFSA** is expected to be available by **October 1, 2025**

For assistance completing your 2025-26 FAFSA, call 800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243) or register for a Stand By Me NexGen One-on-One Zoom FAFSA Completion Appointment at UWDE.org/fafsa.

How will you know what financial aid you are eligible to receive?

The school's Financial Aid Office will notify you of the types and amounts of financial aid you are eligible to receive as soon as possible after:

- You have been admitted to the school.
- You have submitted your **FAFSA** and all other required financial aid application materials.

You will need to follow the directions provided by the school to complete the process (including applying for any loans you need to borrow).

FAFSA RESULTS:

“FAFSA Submission Summary”

- Student will receive **“FAFSA Submission Summary”** once the **FAFSA** has been processed by ED.
- Student and parent(s) should review the information:
 - Check all information for accuracy; correct any errors
 - Update estimated information, if necessary
 - Update school listing, if necessary
 - Submit corrected/updated **FAFSA**, as needed



Chart your course
Prepare for college

**Your journey starts
with FAFSA!**

Access federal, state
and institutional
funds by completing
FAFSA.

Final Comments

In summary ...

- **Is money available?** – *YES, money is available—but you must apply for it!*
- **How much?** -- *You can receive financial aid in an amount up to the “Cost of Attendance” (tuition/fees, books/supplies, living expenses) calculated by the school you attend.*
- **What types of funding are available?** – *(1) Scholarships/grants, (2) Federal Work Study and (3) loans.*
- **How do I get the money?** – *At a minimum you must: (1) apply for admission to the school, and (2) complete and submit the **FAFSA**—but additional forms may be required by the school you want to attend.*
- **When can I apply for 2026-27?** – *As soon as possible once the **2026-27 FAFSA** is available; expected to be available by October 1, 2025*

Financial Aid Application Checklist

- Create separate **Studentaid.gov** accounts by creating **FSA ID** (account username and password) for student and parent(s) using “**Create Account**” option at: [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).
- Create your DHEO “**Student Account**” for Delaware state funding by clicking on the “**Student Account Access**” link at: [Higherstudent.doe.k12.de.us](https://higherstudent.doe.k12.de.us)
- **Complete/submit 2026-27 FAFSA** at: [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) as soon as possible once it launches online. **Application should be available by October 1, 2025** (*include both student & parent information, as needed—apply early*)
- Contact the Financial Aid Office at each school; ***ask if any other materials/information are needed; explain any UNUSUAL or SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES student/family may have that will impact your ability to pay for school.***
- Review financial aid offer when received from school(s) and respond as needed/instructed to complete the process.
- Apply for any federal loan funding that is needed (*as instructed by school you attend*).
- Continue researching and applying for privately-funded scholarships.

Helpful Tools ...

- “Federal Student Aid Estimator” available at: [StudentAid.gov/aid-estimator](https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator)
- “Net Price Calculator” for the college you want to attend—search tool available at: CollegeCost.ed.gov
- “College Scorecard” available at: CollegeCost.ed.gov
- “College Navigator” available at: CollegeCost.ed.gov



For assistance/more information . . .



- College admission and financial aid staff
- High school counselor
- Online resources:
 - StudentAid.gov
 - DelawareStudentSuccess.org
 - GIBill.va.gov
 - StandByMeDE.org/stand-by-me-nexgen
 - CollegeCost.ed.gov

For phone assistance, call:

- U.S. Department of Education at **800-4-FED-AID** (800-433-3243)
- Stand By Me NexGen: **Dial 211 or call (800) 560-3372**



COLLEGE FUNDING PROJECT

**Paying for college begins today;
start your journey now!**

***Money is available, but you need to file the **FAFSA!**
Be strategic, start preparing now!***



Stand By Me is a joint project of the State of Delaware and United Way of Delaware

standbymede.org

Get Involved

Upcoming In-Person Workshops

- **Dec. 5 – FAFSA (Day): 8-11am**
- **Dec. 10 – FAFSA (Night): 6-8pm**
- **Jan. 8 – FAFSA (Day): 8-11am**
- **Jan. 14. – FAFSA (Night): 6-8pm**
- **Feb. 4 – FAFSA (Day): 8-11am**
- **March 11 – FAFSA Night: 6-8pm**
 - (school-wide parent-teacher conferences)

***For FSA ID assistance, visit student's Schoology for appt.
link or scan QR code on next slide***

Stay Connected

**Scan for more great SBM NG
events and resources!**



Thank you!

The Stand by Me NexGen Team