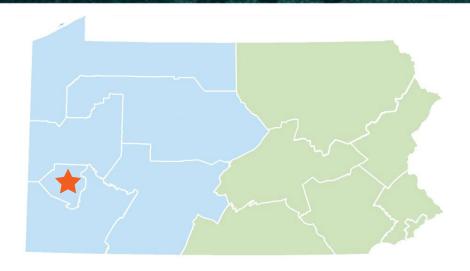


Your Presenter



Amy Kotzev (Sawdey)

Higher Education Access Partner
Allegheny County
PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)
Amy.Kotzev@pheaa.org

What Is Financial Aid?

Financial aid consists of funds provided to students and families to **help** pay for postsecondary educational expenses.



Gift Aid
Grants/Scholarships



Self-Help Work-Study



Loans

Federal Student Loans, PLUS, Private Loans

Funding Sources



Federal Government



State Government



School or College



Scholarships

Financial Aid Made Simple

5 Steps to Financial Aid

Step 1 Step 2 Step 3 Step 4 Step 5 Compare Be sure Look for Know Fill out schools you have FREE your financial the the specific money FAFSA aid offers money deadlines first carefully you need

Step 1: Look For Free Money First

- Start searching early
- Use free scholarship search sites
- Don't ignore scholarships with smaller award amounts
- Search for scholarships every year



Types of Scholarships



Postsecondary Scholarships



Local and Regional Scholarships

Pittsburghfoundation.org



National Scholarships

Fastweb.com
Scholarshipamerica.org
Collegeboard.org

Step 2: Know Your Deadlines

- Applications for admission
- Deadlines for scholarships
 - Institutions, Outside Sources
- Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA)
 - Schools have priority deadlines



PA State Grant Deadlines

You must complete your FAFSA by the deadline to be considered for the PA State Grant.

- May 1—If you plan to enroll in a degree program or a college transferable program at a 2-year private college or other college or university
- August 1—If you plan to enroll in a community college; a designated Pennsylvania Open-Admission institution; a business, trade, or technical school; a hospital school of nursing; or a 2-year program that is not transferable to another institution

DON'T MISS THE DEADLINE!

Step 3: The FAFSA is Your Connection to Funding

The FAFSA is a federal form used to determine student eligibility for the

following:

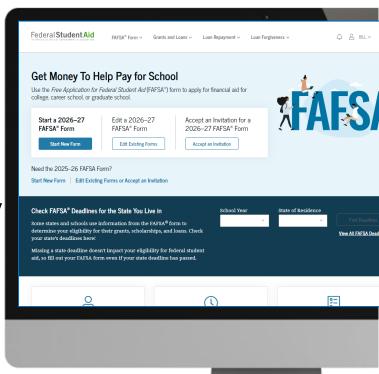
- Federal programs
- State programs
- School programs



FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

- The FAFSA is the primary federal form for financial assistance to attend a postsecondary school.
- Must file a FAFSA each year a student attends school to be eligible.
- Application typically is available by October 1st during a student's senior year.

StudentAid.gov/fafsa



Create Your StudentAid.gov Account

- The student applying for aid and all contributors providing information on the FAFSA need to create a StudentAid.gov Account at StudentAid.gov/fsa-id/createaccount.
- Create at least 1 day prior to completing the FAFSA
- Legal signature for student and contributors.
- Users without an SSN will be able to acquire a StudentAid.gov Account.

Social Security
Number

Username

Email Address

Password

Mobile Phone

Security Questions

Enable Two-Step Verification

2026-2027 FAFSA Prep

Information Needed for FAFSA



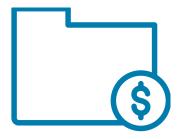
Social Security Numbers



Student & Contributor(s) StudentAid.gov Accounts



Email Addresses (Not high school email address)



Current Records of any stocks, bonds and other investments, including 529 for student for whom the FAFSA is being completed



2024 Federal Tax Returns and W-2's



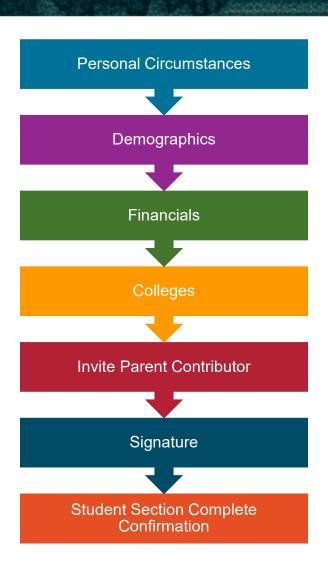
Current bank statements and records of other investment accounts (as of the FAFSA filing date)



Total child support from the most recently complete calendar year

FAFSA Steps - Dependent Student

- 1. Login—dependent student
- 2. Dependent onboarding steps
- Verify student identity information
- 4. Student provides consent



When Is A Student Automatically Considered "Independent"?

- 24 or older on Jan 1st of 2026
- Married
- Veteran (includes active-duty personnel)
- Working on graduate level degree
- Legally emancipated minor or in a legal guardianship with someone other than their parent or stepparent, as determined by a court in state of residence
- Orphan, in foster care or ward of the court at anytime since the student turned 13
- Have legal dependents other than spouse
- Student deemed homeless by proper authority
- PA State Grant status can be different



For Dependent Students, Who Reports Info on the 2026-27 FAFSA?

YES

- Married parents living together
- Biological parents living together
- Divorced or separated parents:
 - The parent that provided the most financial support to student over the past 12 months
 - If equal, then student would invite the parent with the higher income and assets
- Stepparent If part of the student's household
- Adoptive parents

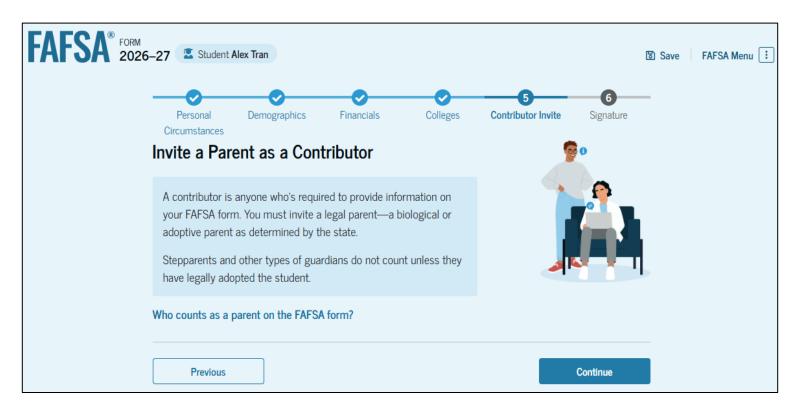
NO

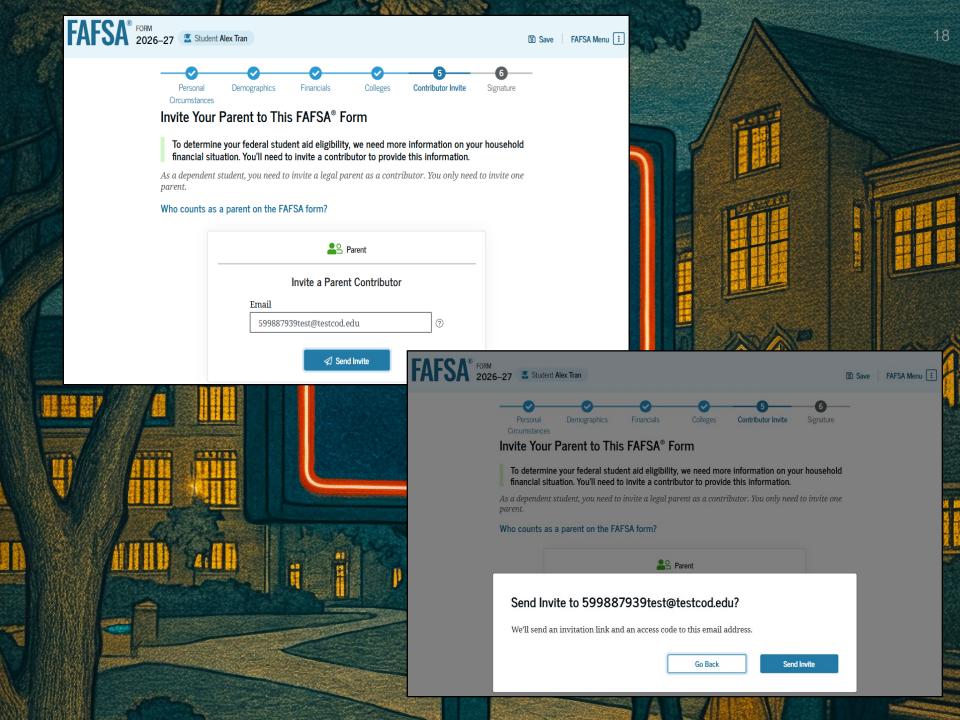
- Foster Parents
- Legal Guardians
 - By court order
- Anyone else the student is living with



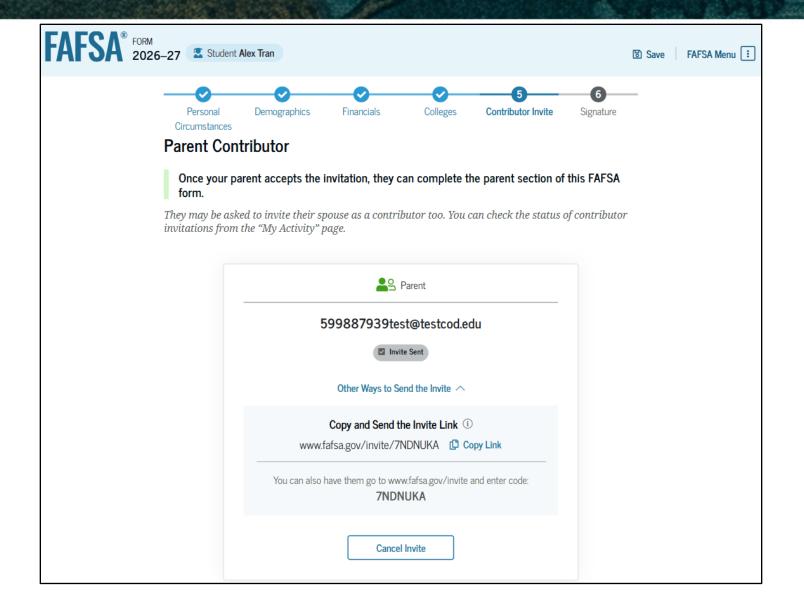
Dependent Student Invites Parent

 The student is asked to invite a parent contributor. The student will enter their parent's email address in order to send them an invite to their FAFSA® form.



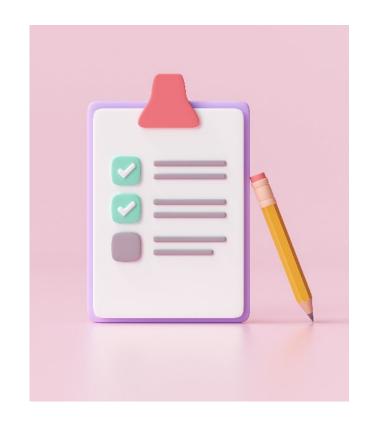


Dependent Student Invite Sent



Consent

- Applicant and any required contributor on the FAFSA must provide consent. They are consenting to:
 - Direct Data Exchange to import applicant, parent, parent spouse, or student spouse Federal Tax Information (FTI).
 - Redisclose FTI to state entities, institutions, and scholarship organizations.



What is considered an asset?

Report the current value at time of filing the FAFSA:

- ✓ Cash
- √ Stocks

Bitcoin

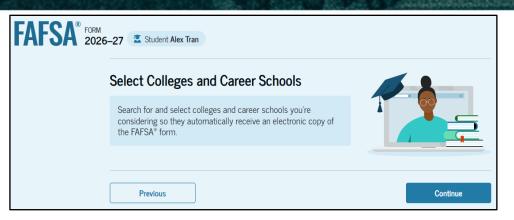
- ✓ Checking ✓ Bonds

Mutual funds

- ✓ Savings
 ✓ Certificates of deposit (CD)
 ✓ Net value of real estate
- Value of 529 accounts for the student owned by the parent(s) of a dependent applicant or owned by the student applicant
- Child support received for the most recently complete calendar year Not reported on FAFSA as an asset:
 - Value of primary home
 - Value of qualified retirement accounts
 - Value of life insurance policies
 - Value of personal property
 - Value of 529 for any other family members (excluding applicant)

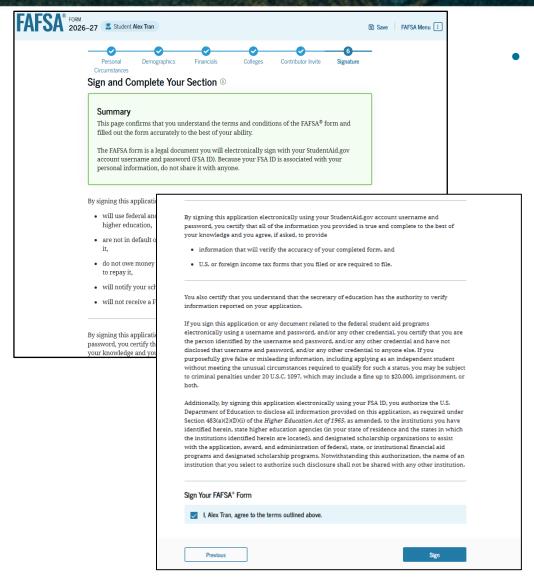
FAFSA – School Selection

- List more than one!
- Only schools that are listed will be able to see your FAFSA information.
- Students can list up to 20 colleges at a time
- Schools can be added or deleted at any time
- First school listed on FAFSA is used for PA State Grant eligibility purposes



FAFSA® FORM 2026	–27 🗷 Student Alex Tran	S Save	FAFSA Menu :	
	Personal Demographics Financials Colleges Contributor Invite Signature Circumstances	_		
Where should we send the FAFSA® information?				
Add at least one college or career school now. You can add or remove schools before and after submitting your form.				
	Search by State Enter School Code California (CA)			
	Q Search			
	Previous Continue			

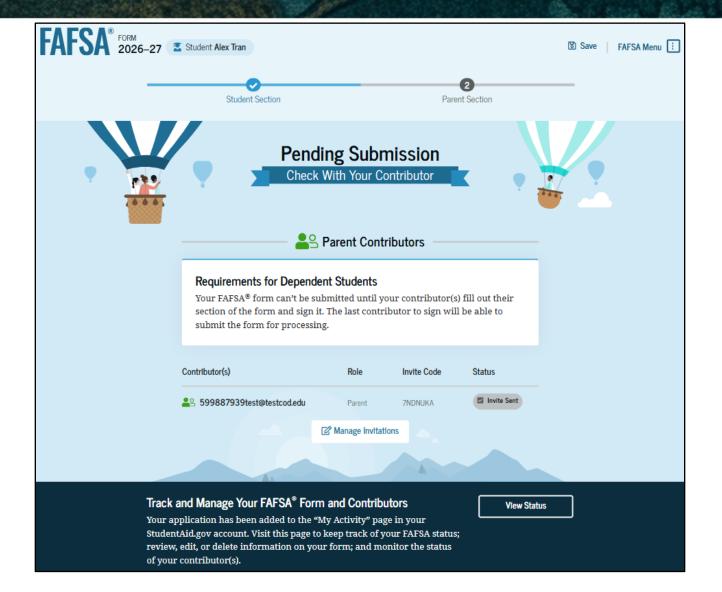
Signing the FAFSA



On this page, the student acknowledges the terms and conditions of the FAFSA® form and signs their section. After agreeing and signing, the student is able to submit their section of the FAFSA form.

Since parent information has not been provided, the FAFSA form is not considered complete and can't be processed yet.

Dependent Student Section Complete



Parent's Invitation Email

Federal Student Aid

Complete Your Section of Alex's FAFSA® Form



Hello.

Alex T. started their 2026–27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form and needs your input as a contributor. Alex won't be eligible for federal student aid without your help.

Accept Invitation

You will need to log in to StudentAid.gov to accept the invitation. If you log in without selecting the "Accept Invitation" button, you will need to go to the "FAFSA® Form" menu at the top of the page, select "Accept Contributor Invite," and provide this code:

7X6XHXF

If this invitation was sent to you by mistake, decline the invitation.

Why You Were Invited

We need some information from you to determine what aid Alex is eligible for. Without your input, they won't be eligible for federal student aid.

Being a contributor doesn't make you responsible for Alex's education costs.

The FAFSA® form is often used to determine a student's eligibility for state and school financial aid in addition to federal financial aid.

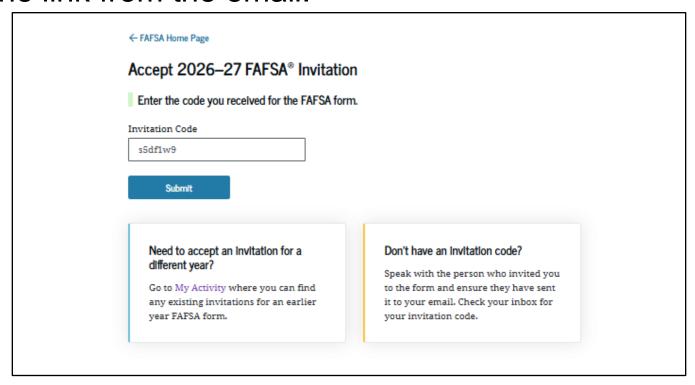
We recommend finishing early in case states or schools have earlier deadlines.



<u>Sign up for text alerts</u> to stay updated on our grant programs, loan forgiveness programs, repayment plans, and information about your loans.

Parent Needs to Accept Invitation

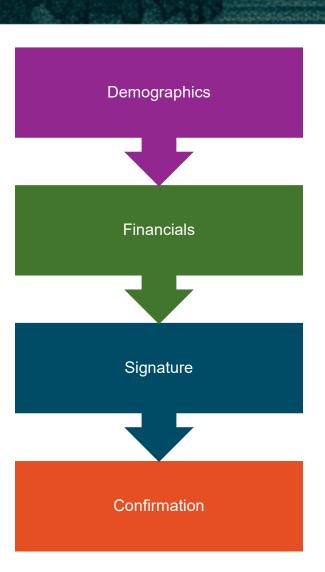
After logging in, the parent is taken to the "Accept 2026–27 FAFSA® Invitation" page. The invitation code from the parent's email automatically fills in the text box if the parent used the link from the email.



FAFSA Steps - Parent Contributor

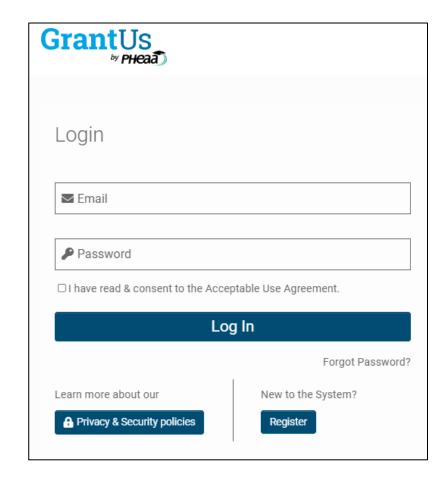
- Following link in email invite parent log in
- 2. Parent onboarding steps
- Verify parent identity information
- 4. Parent provides consent

Once all required data has been provided and all sections have been signed, any role can submit the FAFSA form



PA State Grant Form

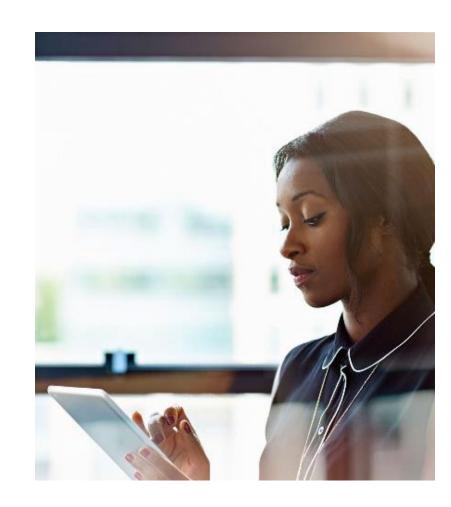
- PHEAA's PA State Grant and Special Programs online account management tool
- Launched for students in 2024-25
- Will be used to apply and manage eligibility for PA State Grant Program and the special programs administered by PHEAA



College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile

- Used by some schools to award need based & institutional aid
- Does NOT replace the FAFSA
- There is a cost to complete

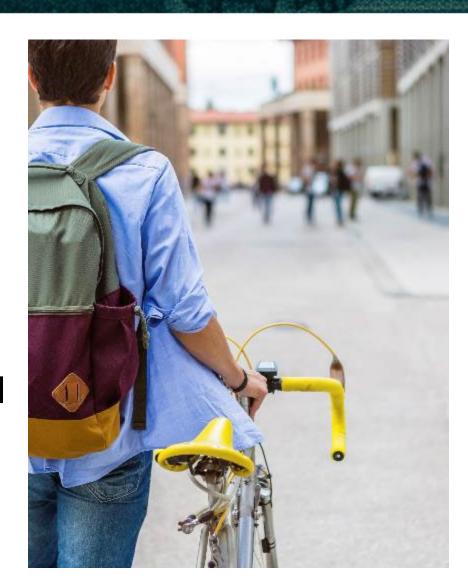




Special Circumstances

If things change....

- Recent death or disability
- Reduced Income
- Divorced or separated parents
 - ... Contact Financial Aid



FAFSA is Filed... Now What?



Student completes the FAFSA



Schools receive FAFSA and calculate financial aid





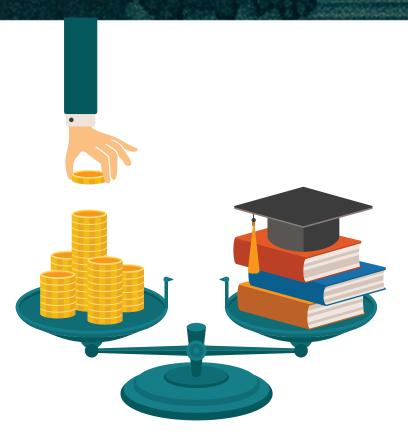


Pg. 3

Step 4: Compare Schools' Financial Aid Offers Carefully

- There is no required standard format
- If you receive a scholarship, do you know if there are conditions for maintaining it?
- Do you understand what is free money vs money that has to be paid back?

Bottom Line: What are your out-of-pocket costs?



Federal Programs



Need-Based Aid:

- Pell Grant (max grant \$7,395)
 - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
- Work-Study
- Federal Subsidized Loan

Non Need-Based Aid:

Federal Unsubsidized Loan

PA State Grant Program

- Award amount determined in part by the cost of the school
- Reciprocal states: Delaware,
 DC, Massachusetts, Ohio,
 Vermont, West Virginia
 - Up to \$600 for full-time students (\$800 for veterans)

Must be at least half-time to be eligible



Pg. 9-11

Other State Programs

- PA Active Volunteer Tuition & Loan Assistance Program
- PA Blind or Deaf Higher Education Beneficiary Grant Program
- Chafee Education and Training Grant Program
- PA Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program
- Grow PA Scholarship Grant Program
- PA Mental Health Education Learning in Schools
- PA Partnerships for Access to Higher Education Program
- PA Postsecondary Educational Gratuity Program
- PA Ready to Succeed Scholarship Program
- PA State Work-Study Program
- PA Student Teacher Support Program
- PA Targeted Industry Program
- PA National Guard Educational Assistance Program
- PA National Guard Military Family Education Program



For details visit pheaa.org

Work-Study

- You must have financial need in order to qualify for work-study
- A work-study position is not guaranteed and may even require an interview
- Work-Study income is not considered as income on the FAFSA



Federal Student Loans

- Available to ALL students (US citizens and eligible non-citizens)
 REGARDLESS of need
- In student's name, no collateral or credit check, must sign MPN
- No payments required while attending school & six-month grace period
- Flexible Repayment options



Pg. 14

Undergraduate Loan Borrowing Limits

Dependent Undergraduate Student (does not include students whose parents are unable to borrow under the PLUS Program)	Annual Loan Limits		
First Year	\$5,500 of which no more than \$3,500 may be subsidized		
Second Year	\$6,500 of which no more than \$4,500 may be subsidized		
Third Year and Beyond*	\$7,500 of which no more than \$5,500 may be subsidized		

^{*}Aggregate Federal Student Loan Limit for undergraduate dependent student is \$31,000

Step 5: Be Sure You Have The Money You Need

- Have you considered annual out of pocket costs beyond the first year?
- Do you understand your actual costs?
- Do you have a strategy for handling out of pocket costs?



Federal Direct PLUS Loan

- In parent's name for dependent's student costs
- Rates set every July 1st for the life of that year's loan; fees are deducted from disbursement
 - 8.94% variable/fixed interest rate; 4.228% fees
- MUST apply each year
- Principal can be deferred while student is in school;
 Interest will continue to accrue
- If denied student is eligible for an additional \$4,000 unsubsidized loan



For 2026-27, parents will be limited to \$20,000 per year with \$65,000 as the aggregate limit **per dependent!**

Private/Alternative Loans

- From private lenders or financial institutions
- In student's name/co-signers usually required
- Can borrow up to the Cost of Attendance
- Based on credit scores and debt-to-income
- Principal can be deferred while student is in school; Interest will continue to accrue
- Terms vary by lender compare before making choices

Read the Fine Print!



PA's Low-Cost Way to Pay for College!

Low, Fixed Rates 3.29–10.45% 1.2

Effective as of 6/5/25



Learn more at **pheaa.org/PAForward**

1) Annual Percentage Rate (APR) Calculations — The lowest APR is based on the following assumptions: A loan of \$10,000 made in a single disbursement, a borrower who selected an Immediate Repayment Plan and a repayment term of 60 months, monthly payments of \$181.11 and a final payment of \$173.14, a fixed periodic interest rate of 3.57%, and total payments of \$10,858.78. The borrower in this sample qualified for a 0.25% Direct Debit benefit for the entirety of the repayment period and a 0.50% Graduation benefit was applied 47 months into repayment.

The highest APR is based on the following assumptions: A loan of \$10,000 made in a single disbursement, a borrower who selected an interest Only Repayment Plan and a repayment term of 180 months, monthly payments of \$87.42 for 52 months and monthly payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$24,431.69. The borrower in this sample did not qualify for any interest rate of 10.49%, and total payments of \$87.42 for 52 months and monthly payments of \$87

2) The provided rate range includes Úndergraduate, Graduate, and Parent loans and may change based on loan type, loan term, repayment plan, and applicable discounts (not all discounts apply to all loan products). See individual loan programs for more specific information. PHEAA uses applicant credit scores to determine eligibility and interest rates. Higher credit scores may mean an applicant is offered a lower interest rate.

Applicants, including co-signers, are subject to credit qualifications, completion of an application and credit agreement, and verification of application information

PHEAA reserves the right to discontinue all programs or benefits without prior notice.

What Can You Do Now?

8

Visit College Websites

Create StudentAid.gov
Account & Complete
the FAFSA

Explore Scholarships Utilize Net Price
Calculators
collegecost.ed.gov

Estimate Federal
Student Aid
studentaid.gov/aid-estimator

Talk About What is Affordable



Grow PA Scholarship Grant Program

This program helps in-state students pay for school and builds the workforce in PA for **in-demand** occupations. New program!

- The Grow PA Grant Program provides grants (maximum award \$5,000 per year) to students who meet the qualifying criteria.
- After graduation, the student must commit to live and work in Pennsylvania, within an <u>in-demand occupation</u>, for a number of years equal to the number of years in which you received the grant.

Learn more at pheaa.org/GrowPA

Student Aid Guide

- The page numbers in top left of this presentation refers to where in the Student Aid Guide (SAG) you can review for more information.
- To view the electronic version of the SAG, go to:

 https://www.pheaa.org/coll ege-planning/student-aid-guide
 QR Code

