

College Goal FAFSA Talking Points



These talking points are great to use for Radio, TV, or for short print articles.

For questions or further information please contact:
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Questions and Answers

Q: *What is College Goal FAFSA?*

A: College Goal FAFSA is a financial aid initiative that the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education has been proud to coordinate for the last 22 years. College Goal FAFSA provides information and **FREE** professional assistance to students and families seeking college financial aid. High school seniors, continuing students, and others who are planning to re-enter or start college this year can get free help to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is the 1st critical step in applying for financial aid.

There will be over 300 higher education professionals and community members at sites across the state available to provide face to face help. For those who are not able to make it, there is no need to worry as we have step by step FAFSA instructions on the Arizona College Goal FAFSA website collegegoal.az.gov/college-goal-fafsa.

Q: *What is the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education?*

A: The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE) is a State Agency guided by 16 Commissioners who represent all sectors of higher education. The Commission also administers Arizona State student aid programs and the Arizona Family College Savings Program (529 Plans). The Commission provides help to students and families in preparing for and succeeding in college, particularly with financial aid.

Q: *Why is it important that students and families complete the FAFSA?*

A: The FAFSA is the 1st critical step in applying for financial aid. Over 80% of all student financial assistance is provided by the federal government, totaling over \$150 billion each year. Additionally, the FAFSA is often required to determine student eligibility for state aid, private scholarships or other financial assistance offered by individual colleges, universities, or institutions.

Q: *When should students complete the FAFSA?*

A: The FAFSA for the 2020-21 academic school year is available October 1st at fafsa.gov. We urge students to file a FAFSA in time to meet the priority filling deadlines of their preferred college or university, which can be as early as November 15 of their high school senior year. Filing before the priority deadline increases the likelihood students will receive the most financial aid they are eligible for, and an award letter as early as possible.

Q: *What information will students and parents need to have when they sit down to fill out the FAFSA?*

A: In order to complete the FAFSA, you will need to have your social security number (SSN). If you did not file taxes for 2018, then you will need your income information for the 2018 calendar year. This could include W-2 forms, federal tax returns, records of untaxed income (e.g. child support, worker's compensation), and veteran's non-education benefits. Additionally, you will need current checking/savings account balances, investment values (e.g. stocks, saving bonds), business value, and investment farm value. Students who are considered "dependent" for financial aid purposes will need to provide their parents financial information as well. Students can get a complete list of what is needed at fafsa.gov.

If you want to sign your FAFSA electronically, you will need an FSA ID. Visit fsaid.ed.gov to create an FSA ID for the student and then create an FSA ID for *one* parent.

For additional help, use our 2020-2021 checklist located here: <https://collegegoal.az.gov/first-time-cgfafa-site-coordinator#overlay-context=Coordinator%20resources>

Q: *Where can students and families find the location nearest to them and get additional information?*

A: Families can locate helpful financial aid resources regarding how to search and apply for scholarships, student loan borrowing advice, and how to prevent identify theft on the College and Career Goal Arizona website (collegegoal.az.gov) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CollegeGoalArizona). For those who are not able to make it to a workshop, there is no need to worry. Assistance is available from an Arizona regional college access center or the Federal Student Aid Information Center. Contact information can be found at <https://collegegoal.az.gov/event-information>.

Q: *What are the top three mistakes students make when completing the form on their own that they should be aware of?*

A: The most common error is related to general data entry. Review each field in the FAFSA to make sure you do not have data entry errors, such as adding an extra zero to income information. Too often, students and parents do not review and check their FAFSA before submitting it. General data entry errors can delay FAFSA processing. You will also want to make sure that your social security number (SSN) and date of birth (DOB) are accurately entered. Please be advised, parents sometimes accidentally enter their SSN instead of the student's SSN. It is also important that you use your full legal name exactly as it appears on your social security card – *no nicknames*.

Another common error is answering the income/tax information incorrectly. It is important to carefully read the questions and make sure you are providing the requested information. If you are unsure of what a question is asking, you can get help by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or by using the online "Chat with us" option at <https://studentaidhelp.ed.gov/>.

Additionally, students often make errors when answering the questions related to their dependency. Students believe that if they are not living at home, are financially independent, or claim independent status on federal taxes, that they are "independent" for federal financial aid purposes. Most likely this is not the case. When reviewing the questions it is important that students answer correctly as errors here can result in long delays. If a student has an extenuating circumstance that they cannot reflect on the FAFSA, then they need to speak with the financial aid office at their preferred college, university, or vocational school to learn what they can do to have this information taken into consideration.