

## ***Paying For College Sources of Financial Aid***

### **Source One: From the Government**

The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the primary source of financial aid. Funds are awarded based on need. The FAFSA must be completed by everyone who wants federal government aid. Nearly all college financial aid programs require it be completed, even if they also require other forms.

There is no charge for completing the FAFSA, which you should complete online if possible at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. If necessary, paper forms are available to individuals by calling 800-433-3243.

You cannot file your FAFSA before January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year for which you are seeking aid. If you want a head start, you can visit the website to familiarize yourself with the form and set up pin numbers for you and your parents. **Most college deadlines for financial aid are in February or March.**

The FAFSA process will determine your Estimated Family Contribution or EFC. You may select up to 10 colleges to receive your FAFSA information from the government (paper forms only allow 4 colleges). The Financial Aid Officer at each college will put together a financial aid package for you that will include a combination of loans, grants, and work study options. For more information, go to <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/>.

### **Source Two: From the College**

A great deal of financial aid comes from individual colleges, using their own “institutional” funds. This “institutional aid” comes in the form of grants and scholarships directly from the college or university. To apply for institutional aid, first apply for admission. Then check with the financial aid office to see if additional forms are necessary. The institution will inform you if you are eligible for these scholarships.

Many colleges award merit scholarships as well as need-based grants. Often this aid goes to students with top grades/test scores, but it may also be awarded to minority students or students with unique talents in athletics, art, or music. Colleges may also offer on-campus jobs and loans. Private colleges give more financial aid than public ones, but their tuition is usually higher as well.

### **Source Three: Outside Scholarships**

These come from sources other than the government or the college. Sources for these funds may include private businesses, community foundations, churches, clubs, and individuals. **You must search for these scholarships on your own. This money does not come looking for you!** YOU have to find the programs that fit you and apply. Applications and procedures vary widely so be organized and keep records. You will have to qualify for the scholarship in some manner, such as academic merit, artistic talent, or fitting some set of criteria established for the scholarship. Very few outside scholarships offer anything close to full tuition, fees, room and board. Pursue them, every little bit helps but don't expect them to outweigh other aid you may get.

Sources to help you find outside scholarships:

<http://www.fastweb.com/> - The largest free scholarship search website.

<http://www.columbusfoundation.org/> - Click on the **Scholar Link** to search for local scholarship opportunities.

Check with your employer or the employers of you parents and grandparents. Also check with community groups or organizations. Many offer scholarship opportunities to members or their families.