

What, Like It's Hard? Crushing Financial Aid Like Elle Woods



RGV FOCUS
a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS



Welcome



*Gina Moraida, M.Ed
Associate, RGV FOCUS*



RGV FOCUS
a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

RGV FOCUS Vision

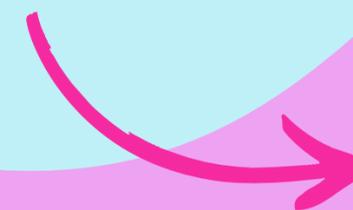
Our vision is for all RGV learners to achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career. We are working to strengthen each step of the educational pathway, better connect our education system, and align community resources to provide the support learners need to succeed throughout high school, postsecondary, and beyond.



25-26 FAFSA Roadmap

- 2025-26 FAFSA Prototype (Sept 2024)
- Who's My Parent on the 25-26 FAFSA Form Standalone Tool (October 1)
- Federal Student Aid Estimator (October 1)
- FAFSA Beta Testing Begins (October 1)
- 25-26 FAFSA Preview Presentation Available (November 1)
- 25-26 FAFSA Form Available (Dec 1)
- FAFSA Information Updates (Ongoing)
- FSA YouTube Channel Updates (October 2024)

[Roadmap](#)



Getting Started with Financial Aid



What is Financial Aid?

It is designed to make higher education more accessible, especially for those who might not have the financial means to cover the full cost of tuition, fees, books, and living expenses.



What is FAFSA?

This application gives you access to three types of aid:

- **Grants and Scholarships-** money you don't have to pay back
- **Work-study jobs:** paid, part-time work that's generally on campus
- **Loans:** money you need to pay back, usually after you graduate



What is FAFSA?

The FAFSA qualifies you for federal aid, but many state governments and colleges also use this application to award their aid.

Most institutions require FAFSA for any financial aid, including:

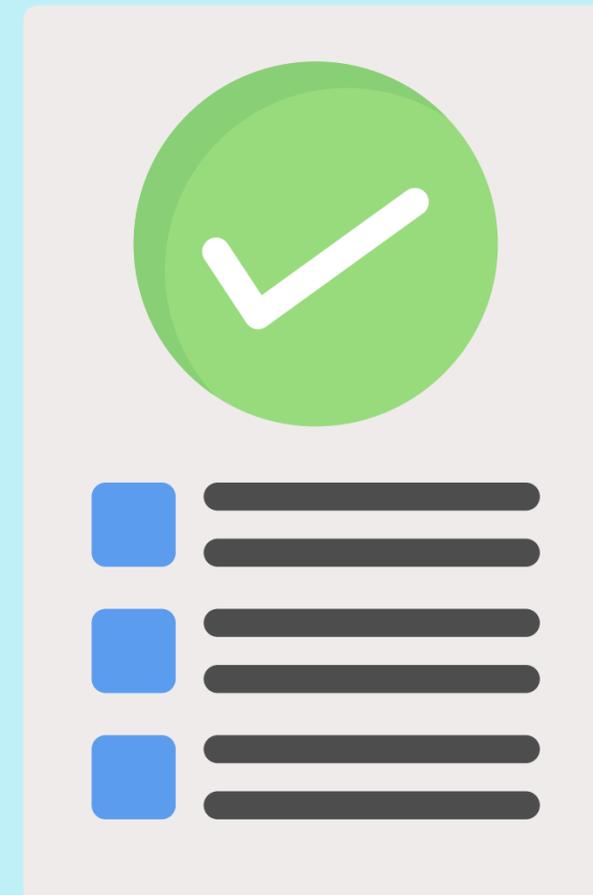
- Students who receive a **full-ride scholarship**
- Scholarship opportunities



CHECKLIST

- ✿ Be a U.S citizen or eligible non citizen
- ✿ Have a High School Diploma or GED
- ✿ Be enrolled or accepted as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program
- ✿ Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress
- ✿ Certify that you will only use federal aid for educational purposes
- ✿ Cannot owe money to the Department of Education
- ✿

FAFSA Eligibility Requirements



CHECKLIST

September- Create FSA ID

October - December :
Submit FAFSA/TASFA

January-February: Review
FAFSA Submission Summary
(FSS)

Jan-Feb: Submit institutional
forms and complete
verification (if needed)

March-May: Review
financial aid offers

March - May: Pay tuition
deposit



Financial Aid Checklist



Types of Financial Aid

Self-Help Aid

Loans

Work-Study



Scholarships

Grants

Gift Aid

How Much Financial Aid Can I Get?

It depends on your financial need determined by several formulas and also decided by Congress



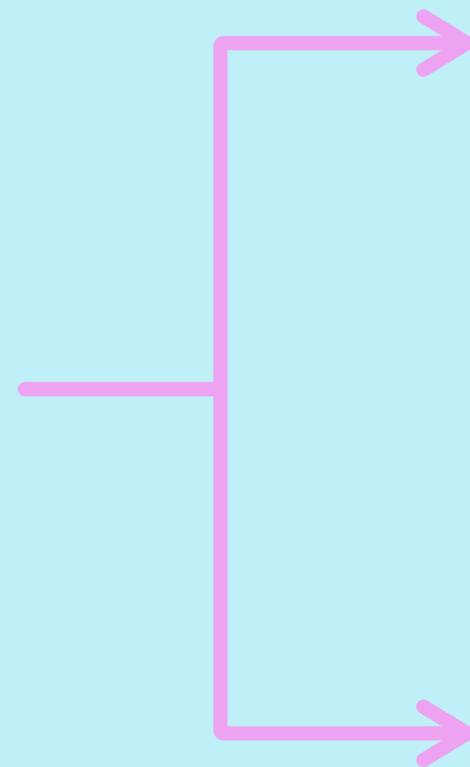
What is the Student Aid Index (SAI)?

Is a number calculated by inputting the information you submitted on your FAFSA into a standard formula used by every college in the country.

- A negative SAI indicates you have a higher financial need. For example if you have an SAI of -1500 you'll qualify for a maximum Pell Grant Award
- Your SAI is not:
 - A dollar amount of Aid you'll receive
 - What your family is expected to provide
 - Your final financial aid offer

What is the Student Aid Index (SAI)?

An index number determines students eligibility for certain types of federal student aid based on answers submitted on the FAFSA



Student Contribution

Parent Contribution
(For A Dependent Student)

How Do Schools Determine Financial Need?

Cost of Attendance
(-) Student Aid Index

= Financial Need



Federal Grants

- For undergraduate students with significant financial need.
- Maximum Pell Grant award for 2025-26: \$7,395
- Lifetime Pell eligibility limit of six year



Different Types of Financial Aid

Grants- Eligibility for the Pell Grant is determined by completing the FAFSA. Does not need to be repaid. Most often awarded by the federal government, state/local governments, schools, or private organizations. Based on: income status, demographics, major, passion projects, need



Articulo en Espanol aqui!



Different Types of Financial Aid

Scholarships are financial aid awards designed to help students pay for an undergraduate or graduate degree. Sometimes a scholarship comes in a one-time check. Other scholarships are renewable and provide students with money each semester or school year. Does not need to be repaid



Articulo en Espanol aqui!



Who Financial Aid Impacts



Students



Families



K-12 Practitioners



**Higher Education
Institutions**

Federal Direct Loans

Fixed interest rate of **6.53%** (starting 7/1/24)



Subsidized Loans

- Need-based
- Government pays the interest while student is enrolled at least half-time

Unsubsidized Loans

- NOT need-based
- Student responsible for all interest that accrues

True of False



My parents make too much money, so I won't qualify for any financial aid

There is no income cut off to qualify for federal student aid. Most people qualify for some type of financial aid, including low interest federal student loans. Many factors besides income -such as your family size and your year in school- are taken into account. Don't make assumptions about what you will get- fill out the application and find out!

I should wait until I'm accepted to a college before I fill out the FAFSA or TASFA form

Don't wait! You must list at least one college to receive your information. You can add up to 20 schools to receive your FAFSA information.

I should call “The FAFSA People” to find out how much federal aid money I’m getting and when

No, you’ll have to contact your school’s financial aid office to find out the status of your aid and when to expect it.

** Student College Portal

I only have to fill out the FAFSA form once

You have to fill out the FAFSA form every year you're in school in order to stay eligible for federal student aid

It costs money to submit the FAFSA form

Absolutely not! You NEVER have to pay to complete the FAFSA form when you go to studentaid.gov.

If you are paying a fee to process your FAFSA you are NOT on the official government website.

Better FAFSA



Who will need to create an FSA ID?

- Students who are filing the FAFSA
- For Dependent Students:
 - Parents and/or stepparents who are required to be listed on the FAFSA
 - If they file taxes jointly only one parent/stepparent will need an FSA ID
 - If they do not file taxes jointly (including if they are non-filers) both parents/stepparents will need FSA IDs
- For Married Students:
 - Student Spouse
 - Only if the student and their spouse do not file taxes together

Who's the Contributor

Did the parents file taxes jointly in 2023 with their current spouse?

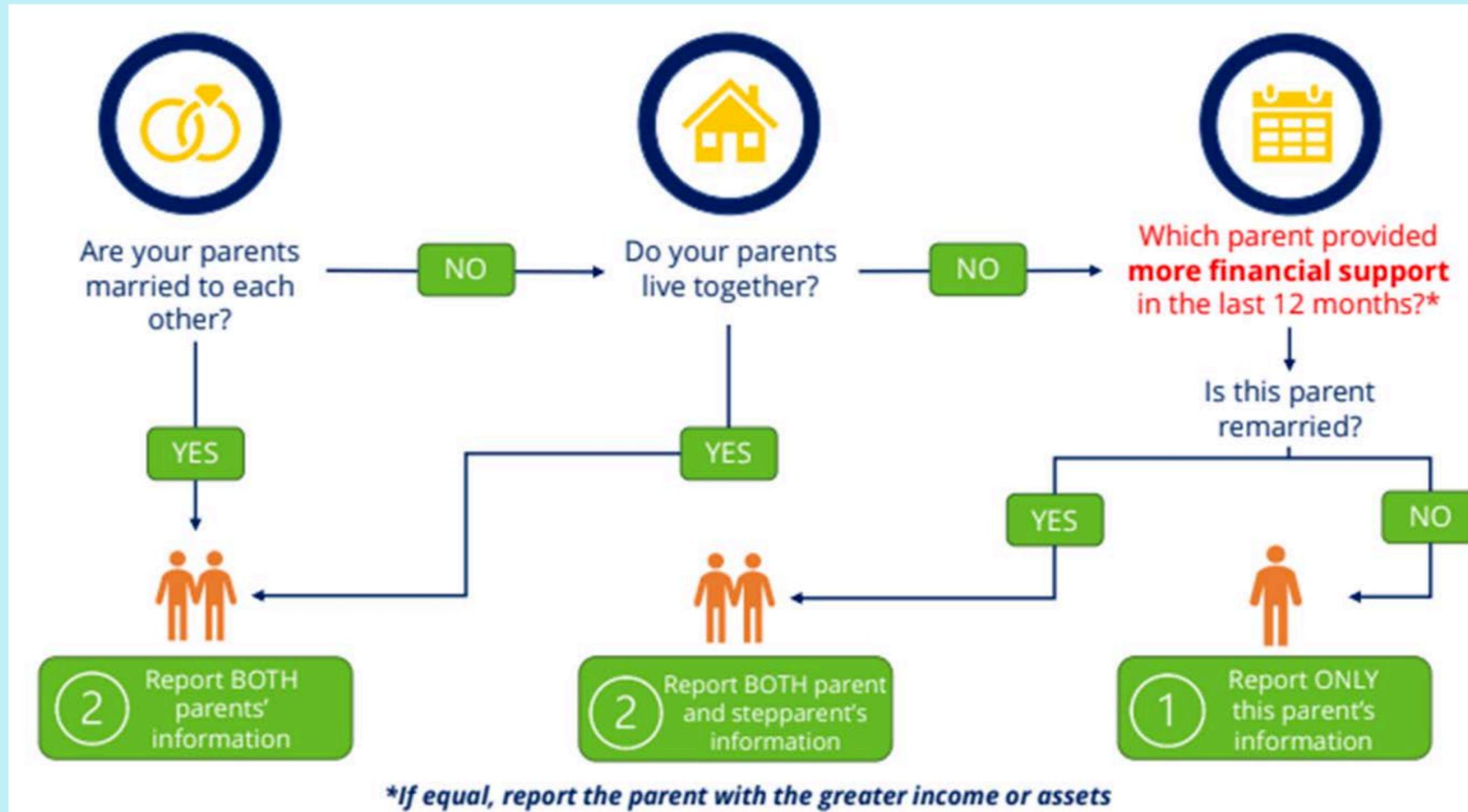
Yes

Only ONE parent must create an FSA ID and complete the Parent Section

No

Both parents must create an FSA ID and complete the Parent Section

Who is My Parent?



FSA ID Process :

Parents without SSNs

- **Call FSA Information Center:** 1-800-433-3243
- Similar to the account recovery process

Attestation Form

*Will be available on
studentaid.gov*



Forms of ID:

- Driver's License
- State ID
- Passport

OR

A Utility Bill AND one ID:

- Municipal ID
- Community ID
- Consular ID

A Student is independent if they...

Will be 24 by January 1 of award year

Are married

Are working on a master's or doctorate

Serve in the U.S. armed forces or are a veteran

At any time after age 13 - were an orphan, ward of the court, or in foster care

Are an emancipated minor

Have a court-ordered legal guardian

Have children or dependents who live with and receive more than half their support from them

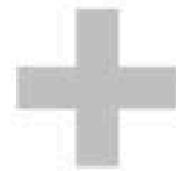
Are an unaccompanied youth who is homeless

Determining Homelessness

Students must meet **both** conditions to be considered independent

Homeless

Lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing



Unaccompanied

Not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

Student Unusual Circumstances

Student Unusual Circumstances

This information will help us evaluate the student's ability to pay for school.

Do unusual circumstances prevent the student from contacting their parents or would contacting their parents pose a risk to the student?

A person experiencing unusual circumstances may have:

- Left home due to an abusive or threatening environment;
- Been abandoned by or estranged from their parents, and have not been adopted;
- Been granted refugee or asylee status and are separated from their parents, or their parents are displaced in a foreign country;
- Been a victim of human trafficking;
- Been incarcerated, or their parents are incarcerated and contact with them would pose a risk to them; or
- Been otherwise unable to contact or locate their parents, and have not been adopted.

If their circumstances resulted in not having a safe, stable place to live, they may be considered a homeless youth and should review the answer to the previous question about being unaccompanied and homeless.

Yes

Previous

If **Yes**, the student can submit the FAFSA with a **provisional independent** status and must follow up with the financial aid office

NEW

Signing and Submitting

The last contributor to provide information will be able to submit the FAFSA

If parent submits

- Parent will see confirmation page with limited info
- Student will receive email with estimated SAI and federal aid eligibility

If student submits

- Will see full confirmation page with estimated SAI and federal aid eligibility

FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)

3-5 Days to process

- **FAFSA Submission Summary**
- Can be viewed online after submitting the FAFSA
- Provides **Student Aid Index (SAI)** and estimated federal student aid
- Opportunity to make corrections *(if needed)*

The screenshot shows the FAFSA Submission Summary page for student Raya Tran. The page includes the FAFSA logo, the form year (2024-25), and the title 'FAFSA Submission Summary'. It displays the student's name, application received date (Jan 1, 2024), application processed date (Jan 16th, 2024), and data release number (1234). The page is divided into sections: Eligibility Overview, FAFSA Form Answers, School Information, and Next Steps. The 'Estimated Federal Student Aid' section is highlighted, showing two types of aid: Federal Pell Grant and Federal Direct Loans, both with a maximum amount of \$4,556. The Federal Pell Grant section includes a brief description: 'A Federal Pell Grant is awarded to undergraduate students who have financial need and who have not earned a degree or are in a teacher certification program. Federal Pell Grants don't need to be repaid.' The Federal Direct Loans section includes a brief description: 'A federal direct loan is money lent by the government to you that you must repay with interest.'

Aid Type	Up to
Federal Pell Grant	\$4,556
Federal Direct Loans	\$4,556

2025-26 Financial Aid Estimator



What if income has changed?

The student can submit a special circumstances appeal to the financial aid office. Financial aid administrators can use “professional judgement” to adjust the student’s financial aid.



SwiftStudent will help you write a financial aid appeal letter - for **free**.

- Am I eligible?
- What documents do I need?
- How do I write an appeal letter?
- How do I submit my letter to the financial aid office?

The image shows a navigation menu for SwiftStudent's financial aid appeal process. It features a circular logo with a compass needle and the text 'SWIFT STUDENT FROM FORMSWIFT'. Below the main heading, there are four white rectangular buttons with blue circular icons: a checkmark, a document, a list, and a printer. Each button contains a question related to the appeal process.

TASFA



Overview

The Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) is used by participating institutions of higher education in Texas to collect information to help determine a student's eligibility for state financial aid.

Students who apply are typically:

- Texas residents who are not eligible to complete the FAFSA

Eligible institutions include:

- Public colleges, universities, and health related institutions
- Nonprofit private colleges and universities

To access the TASFA, visit www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/empowering-our-students/tasfa/



Commons Questions

1. **If the students can fill out the FAFSA, should they fill out the TASFA to get state financial aid?** *No. If the student is eligible to complete the FAFSA the FAFSA will be used to assess state financial aid eligibility*
2. **Should a student send their paper TASFA to the THECB?** *No. A Student should send their TASFA to the financial aid office at the college they plan to attend and reach out to the college for any further instructions.*

TASFA applicants may be eligible for these types of state financial aid

Grants

- TEXAS Grant, TEOG, TPEG, Transfer Grant

Work-Study

- Texas College Work-Study

Educational Loans

- CAL, FORWARD

Exemption/ Waiver Programs

- Foster Care, Educational Aide, etc.

What if a dependent student cannot provide parent information on TASFA?

- The Online TASFA currently does not have a way for a dependent student to bypass providing parent information.
- The student would need to reach out to the financial aid office in these specific circumstances.

What if the student has two parents that are married or living together?

- Both parents' information will be needed on the TASFA.
- Parent 1 will need to acknowledge the information entered on the application for the student to submit.

What if the student has two parents that are divorced or not living together and one or both remarried?

- The parent that provides the most financial support over the 12-month period before the TASFA is submitted will need to report their information on the TASFA as Parent 1.
- If the parent that provides the most financial support to the student is remarried, then the stepparent will need to report their information on the TASFA as Parent 2.

What if the student lives with a guardian or relatives and their parents live in another country?

- Unless the guardian or relative has legally adopted the student, the guardian or relative should not put their information on the TASFA.
- The parent's or parents' information will still be needed on the TASFA.
- The student will not be able to continue filling out the online TASFA without the parent information and may have to reach out to the college on their circumstance.

Online TASFA vs Online FAFSA

Unlike the FAFSA, the Online TASFA:

- Cannot pull IRS tax information like the FAFSA, and students will need to follow up with the financial aid office on documentation.
- Will not have upload ability for tax or other documents.
- Cannot copy over prior application information for the student like the FAFSA, but the student can use the same account and email.
- Does not calculate a Student Aid Index or estimate financial aid eligibility like the FAFSA. It is only a pass-through of information to the selected college.
- Will not be available in Spanish for 2025-26 but will have a paper TASFA linked and available in Spanish.

However, the online TASFA will continue to improve and develop over time.

Additional Information



News and Updates about Federal Financial Aid & The FAFSA

What is the status of FAFSA and financial aid right now?

The FAFSA is open. We encourage students to continue with their FAFSA and state financial aid forms.

What is happening with the Department of Education?

The President has proposed eliminating the Department of Education, which runs FAFSA and federal financial aid. While there have been headlines about executive orders eliminating the Department of Education, this has not happened. However, Congress created the Department and would need to vote to eliminate it. This would take a lot of time and would need the votes of many members of Congress, including many who do not support this. The FAFSA is open, and federal financial aid is still available.

What happened with the federal funding freeze and how does that impact financial aid?

On January 27, the Office of Management and Budget (which oversees the performance of federal agencies and administers the federal budget) released a [memo](#) freezing federal grants, loans, and financial assistance programs. As of 1/29 that memo was rescinded and no longer applies.

The FAFSA is still open. Federal financial aid should be dispersed the same as it has been.



Privacy of FAFSA Data

- Federal laws currently prohibit the use of data for any purpose other than determining and awarding federal aid
- Usage of FAFSA data may change under the new administration
- ***The decision to complete the FAFSA should be made by the student and their family***

Best Practices for Financial Aid Completion

- Outreach- Remind Me, School App platforms, Emails, Social Media, Phone Calls
- FAFSA Workshops during lunch periods and evening sessions to educate students and parents about the importance of FAFSA
- Multiple methods of meeting- Face to face, phone, Google Meets/Zoom, FAFSA nights
- School-based support from teachers, counselors, administrators
- More personalized support for parents without SSNs than ever before
- Data Monitoring



Financial Aid Quick Guide



FAFSA Resources

- FAFSA Prototype is now available. Offers an early glimpse into the user experience of the upcoming FAFSA form.
- Who is my Parent Tool- helps determine which parent(s) should participate in the students FAFSA form.
- Federal Student Aid Estimator- Provides an estimate based on SAI of how much federal student aid the student may be eligible for.

FAFSA
Prototype



Who is my
Parent Tool



Federal Student
Aid Estimator



Resources



25-26 SAI and Pell
Grant Eligibility
Guide



Improvements
underway for 25-26
FAFSA Cycle



uAspire/TxCAN
Financial Aid
Support Hub



*Gina Moraida, M.Ed
Associate, RGV FOCUS
gmoraida@cftexas.org*



RGV FOCUS
a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS