

Seniors and Families,

Normally, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is released on Oct. 1 for the following academic year, but this year, due to changes mandated by Congress, the 2024-25 FAFSA won't be available until December.

That means anyone who plans to apply for financial aid for the 2024-25 academic year has some extra time on their hands. So, what should you do? Here are five other things you can do to prepare for college while you wait for the FAFSA to become available:

1. **Create your FSA ID at StudentAid.gov**

Your Federal Student Aid ID is the username and password for your StudentAid.gov account. You and anyone contributing to your FAFSA (like a parent) will need an FSA ID. Refer to the [contributor document](#) to determine who contributors might be.

2. **Gather the information you will need to complete the FAFSA**

You and anyone contributing to your FAFSA will need 2022 income tax returns, records of investments and assets (*if not a public high school family*), Social Security numbers, child support information (if applicable), and other personal information. Much of this data will be directly pulled from the IRS and auto-populate your FAFSA, but it will be good to have it on hand.

3. **Research colleges**

One of the keys to succeeding in college is to find the right fit. Think about your ideal college environment and use the [College Scorecard](#) or [BigFuture](#) to learn about the institution, such as the fields of study offered, the average cost of attendance, the size of the institution, and admissions and graduation rates among other factors.

4. **Apply for admission to college**

Once you've created a list of potential colleges, complete your applications for admission. Remember, many colleges charge a fee with the admission application, but some states offer a free application period if you are applying to a state institution. A list of Michigan colleges and universities without application fees or offering fee waivers can be viewed here: [Michigan College Month Fee Waivers](#).

5. **Research and apply for scholarships**

One of the best ways you can spend your time as you await the FAFSA to open is to research and apply for scholarships. Scholarship searches and applications take time, but every scholarship received helps reduce the cost of your education and may prevent you from having to take on debt. Here are some websites to help: [BigFuture](#), [Scholarships by MI County](#)

6. **Begin scheduling appointments with FAFSA supporters for help** (school counselors, advisers, etc.)

7. **Watch webinars for support**

[FAFSA family and student webinars](#)

Note: when filing the FAFSA, make sure you [check the box](#) that indicates you receive the Free Reduced Lunch Program (**public high schools only**). This is due to the universal free lunch program in Michigan.

We are always here to support. Please reach out with any questions or needs.

Source: [Five Things You Can Do While You Wait for the 2024-25 FAFSA](#), [MappingYourFuture.org](#)