FAFSA 101
Application Basics

#1 first u haf-ta fafsa
Diana has been a financial aid professional in Arizona for more than 37 years and has helped countless students with financial aid applications. She has been involved with College Goal FAFSA events since their inception. She has twice been president of the Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Diana is currently College & Career Financial Aid Manager for College Depot, a division of Phoenix Public Library. She is also a consultant for the AZ College Access Network.
What is the FAFSA and why do it?

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

- Determines student’s eligibility for federal grants, loans, and “work-study” programs offered by participating colleges, universities, and career/trade schools
- Also serves to help schools and other scholarship donors distribute need-based scholarships
- Every student who would like to be considered for any type of financial aid should complete a FAFSA
- FAFSA application is designed as an online or mobile application
  - Skips questions that are not needed based on responses to previous questions
  - Edits for errors
How does a student get started?

FSA ID

- User name and password allow student to sign FAFSA electronically
- Same ID also used to enter all U.S. Department of Education systems and applications
- Student must have SSN in order to create FSA ID

If parent information is needed on FAFSA, parent may also be sign FAFSA electronically with their own FSA ID

- Must have SSN or parent will need to sign paper signature page and mail it in
- Some categories of students can complete FAFSA without parent information
Demographic Basics of the FAFSA

- Student must have Social Security Number (SSN) and name must match SS card.
- Undocumented parents complete SSN section of FAFSA with SSNs of 000-00-0000 if their information is required on application.
- Student must be citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Any student with SSN can get FSA ID, but only citizens and eligible non-citizens can get federal aid -- DACA students are ineligible for federal aid.
- FSA ID should be created prior to starting the FAFSA.
- Some questions are asked to create estimated eligibility but college or university verifies final answers.
Who’s the parent?

Student’s natural or adoptive parent(s) if they live together, whether married or not

Natural or adoptive parent student lived with most in last 12 months if parent is separated or divorced

Natural or adoptive parent student lived with most in last 12 months AND step-parent if parent is re-married regardless of date of marriage – does NOT include a parent’s live-in partner if not legally married
When can a student complete the FAFSA without parent information?

- Student has a legal guardian appointed by court in Arizona
  - Legal guardian is NOT considered parent on FAFSA
  - If legal guardian has not been appointed and student is living with relatives/friends, they likely will still need parent information even if parents live out of the country

- Student has child or other dependent(s) they will be financially supporting in coming year

- Student is married

- Student has been designated as homeless youth unaccompanied by parents

- Student is orphan or ward of the court or has been in foster care any time since turning age 13

- Student is active duty military or veteran of Armed Services
What you should know

Must file FAFSA every year student is in college

FAFSA available in October for fall 2021 enrollment period

Based on 2019 federal income tax information for parent(s) and/or student

The IRS Data Retrieval feature on the FAFSA automatically downloads income tax data into FAFSA
FAFSA key questions

Household size

Number in college, not including parents

Family income from “FAFSA year”

- Parent(s)
- Student
- Income earned from work; certain untaxed income NOT provided by government such as Social Security

Assets of parent(s) and student may have to be reported

- Assets EXCLUDE primary residence, small business, retirement accounts, cars, jewelry, furniture
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Scenarios and Questions!