

College Planning

Smarter Ways To Prep For College Costs

(NAPSA)—Dealing with higher education costs is a major financial challenge for many American families. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid can help. There is now a free online tool that let's you estimate the amount of federal aid you could receive long before applying to college.

Although the government provides \$80 billion a year to help students achieve a college education, in the past students had to wait until the spring of their senior year to determine their eligibility for federal aid. With the new FAFSA4caster, you can get an early estimate, opening doors that might otherwise have looked closed.

The Department of Education and office of Federal Student Aid created the tool to help students and their families:

- Instantly determine what type of federal aid the student is eligible to receive and estimate the award amount for each. This includes federal grants, loans and work study.

- Reduce the time it will take to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the qualifying form for all financial aid.

- Simplify the financial aid process for students and families.

Along with helping you plan ahead, the tool gives people a jump start on the federal student



Starting the college-planning process early can help turn dreams of higher education into reality.

aid application process.

When it comes time to complete the FAFSA, which all students interested in financial aid must fill out as early as possible after January 1 of the year they will attend college, they will already have completed a significant percent of the questions.

The tool is available at the Federal Student Aid Web site. Along with accessing the FAFSA4caster and getting an estimated amount of potential aid, you can also read about the financial aid process and various types of federal student aid available.

The tool is available in English and Spanish. To learn more, visit www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov or call (800) 4-FED-AID.

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