



# COLLEGE PLANNING



## There's Money For College And Much Of It's Free

(NAPSA)—There's good news for those seeking money for college. Experts say students can get free money to pay for college whether they need it or not. Last year, nearly 2 million students and their families missed out on their opportunity simply because they did not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Each year, more than \$152 billion in financial aid is awarded from the federal government, states and colleges and universities to help students and families pay for college. The first step to getting this money is completing the FAFSA.

"Free money is a terrible thing to waste. Applying early gives families the best shot of getting all of the money their student is entitled to receive to pay for college," says Martha Holler, spokesperson for Sallie Mae, the nation's leading provider of saving- and paying-for-college programs. "Hedge your bets. Even if families think they do not qualify for financial aid, they should still apply. Aid is available on both a need and a non-need basis."

If a high school graduate has a Social Security Number, he or she is entitled to apply for free or inexpensive money, including scholarships, grants and low-interest student loans. Students can find the FAFSA form at their high school guidance office, local libraries or online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Once completed, it can be submitted anytime after Jan. 1 for the year

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in which a student is applying for aid.

For information on the FAFSA, as well as on other college-related resources, students and parents can visit [www.CollegeAnswer.com](http://www.CollegeAnswer.com).

The site offers a checklist to help families gather documents needed to complete the FAFSA, including information on income, investments and taxes. College Answer also provides access to a database containing more than 2.4 million scholarships worth more than \$15 billion in gift aid, and interactive calculators to estimate what a family may be expected to contribute toward the cost of college.

"College-bound students and families should make completing the FAFSA one of their New Year's resolutions for 2007. While you may not be able to predict how much financial aid will be awarded to you, one thing is for sure: The only way to get money for college is to apply for it," Holler says.