

## Completing the 2008-2009 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

### What is the purpose of the FAFSA?

When you submit your FAFSA to the federal processor, the information you provide is used in a federal “need analysis” formula to calculate an “Expected Family Contribution” (EFC): the amount your family can be expected to contribute towards educational expenses in the 2008-2009 school year. Your EFC and its underlying data are provided to you and reported electronically to all of the colleges you list in FAFSA Section 5. Colleges use your FAFSA to determine your need-based aid eligibility. If your EFC is less than the total cost of any college for the year, you qualify for financial assistance; if your EFC is greater than what the college costs, you need no further help.

### Which version of the FAFSA should I file?

Every year the US Department of Education increasingly emphasizes the online FAFSA on the Web, but the paper application remains available. For 2008-2009 the two versions of the FAFSA obtain the same information from families, but they are not identical in format.

- FAFSA on the Web [<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>] is the better option. It is processed faster than a paper FAFSA; the web site uses edit logic to improve the accuracy of your data submission; and it allows for quicker and easier corrections. *If you choose FAFSA on the Web, pay close attention to the signature requirement.* See below for details. The US Department of Education issues a ‘FAFSA on the Web worksheet’ annually to help families prepare their data. It will be available at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) toward the end of 2007. Our website--[the Wooster financial aid page](#)--will link to this worksheet when it is released.
- The second option—a paper FAFSA—should be available in high school guidance offices (and in many public libraries) by the end of 2007. The form includes instructions, a return envelope, and a reply postcard.
- Since most continuing students use the Web to reapply for aid, in 2008-2009 the U.S. Dept. of Education will email Renewal Reminders to all eligible students.

### When should I file the FAFSA?

- You may not submit the 2008-2009 FAFSA before January 1, 2008. Paper FAFSAs mailed before January 1 will be returned unprocessed, and the FAFSA on the Web site will not be accessible earlier. Each college will have a different submission deadline, but in general the earlier you can file the FAFSA the better. Make sure you know the FAFSA filing deadline of each of your colleges.
- Wooster strongly suggests that prospective students complete the FAFSA by February 15, 2008. We shall award all possible aid whenever an applicant completes the financial aid applications. *[Remember that we require a supplementary aid application also.]*
- You can complete the FAFSA using estimated financial information, but may have to correct that estimated information when your tax returns are complete.

### What are the FAFSA signature requirements?

The student applicant and one parent must sign the FAFSA. An unsigned paper FAFSA will be returned unprocessed. FAFSA on the Web offers two signature alternatives:

- You may print a signature page and mail it to the FAFSA processor. Your electronic application is held in waiting until the signature page is matched with it.
- The preferable method is for you and your parent each to obtain a Personal Identification Number (PIN) in advance and use both PINs to sign your FAFSA electronically. You should apply for both PINs at <http://www.pin.ed.gov> before completing your FAFSA. They remain valid for filing your FAFSA in subsequent years, so keep them safe and confidential.
- Without the appropriate signatures (or PINs) a FAFSA is not valid. It is your responsibility to provide a valid FAFSA to your colleges.

### What particular suggestions would help me complete the FAFSA accurately?

Most FAFSA questions are obvious, but turn to the instructions if you are uncertain about any item. Here are some tips for completing the paper FAFSA or the FAFSA on the Web worksheet:

1. The entire FAFSA supposes that the student aid applicant, not the parents, is completing it. In **Section 1-Student Information** provide information about **the student: full legal name as it appears on the social security card, accurate Social Security Number, and correct date of birth.** If these three items do not match the computer records of the Social Security Administration, the FAFSA is rejected.
2. To be eligible for federal student aid (and in Ohio for state aid as well) males over age 17 must be registered with Selective Service. You may register by answering “yes” to Q22.

3. You should probably answer '*both work-study and student loans*' to Q26. No school is likely to increase your grant aid because you do not work or take out a loan. Some schools may not inform you of your loan or employment opportunities if you answer '*neither*'. You can always change your mind about loans and work-study later; answering the question affirmatively does not commit you to them.
4. *Be sure to answer Q31 about illegal drug offenses.* For purposes of this question, alcohol and tobacco are *not* considered illegal drugs. **Your aid application will be delayed if you leave this question blank.**
5. **Section 2-Student Dependency Status** distinguishes between financially independent students (typically older adults) and students who are financially dependent on their parents and thus determines whether parental financial information should be included on the FAFSA or not. Most students graduating from high school in 2008 will answer 'no' to every question in this section and provide parental information in Section 3.
6. **Section 3-Parental Information** asks for demographic and financial information about the parent(s) with whom the student resided in 2007. *If the student applicant does not live with both of the natural or adoptive parents, consult the instructions to determine how to answer these questions.* In general, the FAFSA asks nothing about a non-custodial parent, but a stepparent (and his or her income) is included. If your family circumstances are particularly complex, you may wish to consult us for advice. Be sure to report your parents' demographic information (Q58-65) accurately. Your FAFSA will be rejected if these data cannot be matched with the Social Security Administration database.
7. **Section 4-Student Finances** asks for the same financial information from the student applicant as was asked of parents in **Section 3**.
8. The income information for the parents [Q76-86] and for the student [Q32-42] will be easier to fill out if you can complete your 2007 federal income tax returns in advance, but do not miss any FAFSA filing deadline required by your schools. You may complete the FAFSA using estimated information before you are able to complete your 2007 federal income tax returns.
  - **Save copies of your 2007 federal income tax returns, both student's and parents'.** Wooster and many schools will ask for them to confirm your FAFSA data.
  - Save a copy also of the FAFSA worksheets A, B, and C for the family's untaxed income and credits. Wooster and other colleges may ask to review these worksheets.
9. Report asset information in Q43-45 (for the student) and Q87-89 (for the parents) as of the date you complete the FAFSA. Do not report negative asset amounts; use '0' instead.
10. In Q67 *only children of the household can be listed as attending college.* If a parent will attend college next year, please contact us for a special adjustment to your calculated Expected Family Contribution.
11. In **Section 5** list **all** of the colleges to which you are applying for aid. *Wooster's federal school code is 003037.*
12. **If you complete the paper FAFSA, keep a photocopy and mail the original to the federal processor in the attached envelope.** Use the reply postcard as your assurance that your FAFSA reached the processor. **If you complete FAFSA on the Web, be sure to print a copy for your own records.** If you provide your email address, you will receive an email confirmation of your FAFSA receipt.

#### **What happens once my FAFSA has been processed?**

If you file electronically a data confirmation page is available to you immediately on the FAFSA website. Four weeks or so after you submit the paper FAFSA you will be mailed a Federal Student Aid Report (SAR) reflecting your FAFSA data. If you have not received your SAR within a month, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center: (800) 433-3243. *You should review your FAFSA report for accuracy.*

- Your FAFSA report should indicate your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) as calculated by the federal need analysis formula. **If your EFC is not reported, the information provided on your FAFSA was incorrect or incomplete.** Instructions will tell you what you must correct to have your EFC calculated. Perhaps your FAFSA information did not match the records of the Social Security Administration or other government agencies.
- Using your federal PIN you may make corrections to your FAFSA online. Not all inaccurate information affects your aid eligibility. You may want to seek our advice to see if a correction is necessary.
- You may add new schools to **Section 5** online at the FAFSA website or by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center: (800) 433-3243. If you completed a paper FAFSA, the operator will ask for your social security number and four-digit Data Release Number (DRN) located in the upper right corner of the first page of your SAR. This DRN is *not* your federal PIN.

**Please contact us if you need assistance in completing your FAFSA or understanding its results.**