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# COUNSELOR CONNECTION

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## Students can begin submitting 2016–17 FAFSA in January

Encourage your students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after the first of the year as possible. Some student aid funds are limited, and those who apply early have the best chance to receive all of the aid for which they may qualify. Students seeking college aid for the 2016–2017 school year should file the FAFSA online at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov). Students who file the FAFSA online will get their results 7 to 14 days faster than those who file by mail.

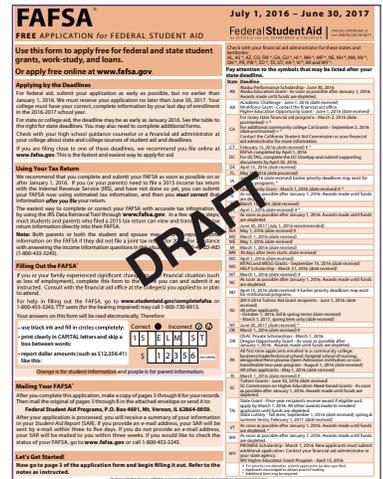
If students want to file a paper FAFSA, they can get a copy by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center toll free at 800.433.3243. They can request up to three copies of the paper application and should receive their FAFSAs in three to seven days.

The FAFSA is used to apply for most need-based state, federal and institutional aid programs, including those administered by KHEAA. Students attending Kentucky colleges and universities may qualify for College Access Program (CAP) Grants. To qualify, a student must show financial need and be enrolled for at least half-time toward an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Students attending most of Kentucky's private colleges and universities may qualify for a Kentucky Tuition Grant (KTG) in addition to a CAP Grant. To qualify for KTG, a student must show financial need and be enrolled full-time.

Funding for CAP and KTG is limited, with awards made to qualifying students on a first-come, first-served basis. Award amounts may change based on available funding and will be set in February.

For more information about the CAP and KTG programs, visit [kheaa.com](http://kheaa.com) or call our state grant program coordinator, Sheila Roe, at 800.928.8926, ext. 67393.



### With this edition:

Included with this *Counselor Connection* is the FAFSA Checklist 2016-2017.

KHEAA publishes the *Counselor Connection* to share information about student financial aid, college preparation and college planning. Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please send them to [publications@kheaa.com](mailto:publications@kheaa.com).



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## High schools must report mid-year graduates by Jan. 15

Since many mid-year graduates will enter college in the spring, their information must be reported to KHEAA by Jan. 15 to avoid any delays in disbursing their Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) funds.

These students can be reported at [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com) by manually adding the data for each graduate through “KEES Account Access” or by extracting the Early Graduate report from Infinite Campus and submitting it as a batch file through the “Upload a KEES File” function.

If your school district does not have any mid-year graduates, you do not have to notify KHEAA.

For more information, please contact Sara Wooden, coordinator for the KEES Program at 800.928.8926, ext. 67397, or [swooden@kheaa.com](mailto:swooden@kheaa.com).



## FAFSA Completion Initiative reporting begins in January

The FAFSA Completion Initiative is a collaborative effort between KHEAA and Kentucky high schools to increase the number of Kentucky students who apply for financial aid to attend college. KHEAA will provide weekly reports to school districts that identify the students in their district who have completed the FAFSA.

School districts that participated in the initiative for the 2015–2016 FAFSA year will automatically participate in the program for the upcoming 2016–2017 year.

Districts that would like more information or would like a data sharing agreement to join the initiative should contact Sheila Roe at 800.928.8926 ext. 67393, or [sroe@kheaa.com](mailto:sroe@kheaa.com).



## Dr. Rollins receives honorary degree from Morehead State University

Dr. Carl Rollins, KHEAA’s executive director, received an honorary doctor of public service degree at Morehead State University’s fall commencement on Dec. 12.

An advocate for education in Kentucky for many years, Rollins was mayor of Midway, a Woodford County magistrate and a state representative from the 56th District (Woodford and parts of Franklin and Fayette counties).

During his tenure in the House of Representatives, Rollins was chair of the House Education Committee and was on the budget review subcommittees on primary and secondary education and postsecondary education.

Rollins has also received the Kids First Advocacy Award from the Kentucky School Boards Association.



## Dual credit courses are now weighted in KEES GPA

Beginning with the 2015–2016 academic year, dual credit coursework is to receive weight in the KEES grade point average calculation. Dual credit coursework will be treated the same as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Cambridge Advanced International. Grades for dual credit courses are evaluated on a 5.0 point scale, where an ‘A’ = 5.0, ‘B’ = 4.0, ‘C’ = 3.0, ‘D’ = 2.0, and ‘F’ = 1.0.

In dual credit courses a high school student receives credit from both the high school and the college in which the student is enrolled. The additional weight in the KEES GPA calculation does not apply to remedial coursework or to dual enrollment courses where credit is not awarded by both the high school and college.

For more information, please contact Sara Wooden, coordinator for the KEES Program, at 800.928.8926, ext. 67397, or [swooden@kheaa.com](mailto:swooden@kheaa.com).

## College Goal Kentucky events begin this month

College Goal Kentucky provides free help to families applying for college financial aid. The event will be hosted at several locations throughout Kentucky in late 2015 through spring 2016. For the date and locations of the site nearest you, visit [www.kasfaa.com/CollegeGoalKY/locations.asp](http://www.kasfaa.com/CollegeGoalKY/locations.asp). At each site students will be able to enter a statewide drawing for a chance to win one of four \$500 scholarships that can be used at any Kentucky school.

At College Goal Kentucky, financial aid professionals from Kentucky will help students and families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is the form students must submit to receive federal and state student aid.

“This is a premier event that provides Kentuckians with both informational and financial resources to reach their postsecondary educational goals,” KASFAA’s Kristie Hughes said. “With the assistance of the financial aid experts at College Goal Kentucky, a student can submit the FAFSA in a timely manner, enabling them to qualify for thousands of dollars in financial aid.”

In Kentucky, grant and scholarship programs help thousands of students every year. Students who file the FAFSA as soon as possible beginning Jan. 1 have the best chance of receiving these funds.



## Pay attention to deadlines for financial aid

High school seniors should keep track of deadlines for applying for college financial aid. Here are some tips:

- Check with the financial aid offices of the schools to which you've applied to determine if they require any forms other than the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Familiarize yourself with the FAFSA. Unless you are starting college before July 1, you cannot file the FAFSA until after the first of the year. But you should still take a look at the information it requires and make plans to attend a College Goal Kentucky session near you. Your counselor should have information about College Goal Kentucky.
- Look for scholarships using KHEAA's "*Affording Higher Education*" and a free online scholarship search. You can find a link to a free search site under the "Paying for College" tab on [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com).
- Attend any college fairs and financial aid seminars offered at your high school or in your area. If a company charges a fee for helping with applications, remember that you can do that yourself for free. If you decide to pay for help, make sure the company is reputable by checking with the state Attorney General's office or the Better Business Bureau in your area, as well as the area where the firm is located.

## Students should take advantage of tax programs

Income tax season is approaching, and students may want to consider these tips to help the process go more smoothly.

Although you may not have earned enough to be required to file income taxes, you may be able to get a refund if your employer withheld taxes from your pay. Before you file, though, discuss the situation with your parents. Depending on how much they contributed to your upkeep during the year, they may be able to claim you as a dependent, which could save them thousands of dollars.

Students and parents may be able to take advantage of these programs on their federal taxes:

- **American Opportunity Credit**, available for the first four years of college.
- **Lifetime Learning Credit**, available if a taxpayer or a dependent is taking college courses to acquire or improve job skills.
- **Tuition and fees deduction**, which lets taxpayers deduct qualified education expenses paid during the year for themselves or a dependent. The expenses must be for college.
- **Student loan interest deduction**, which lets people deduct up to \$2,500 per year on federal taxes for interest paid on federal student loans.

For more detailed information about federal programs, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) to download the free Publication 970 Tax Benefits for Education.

Kentucky also offers a tuition tax credit for undergraduate students who attend state colleges.

Remember that tax rules may change from year to year, so make sure you have the most up-to-date information before filing.



# FAFSA Checklist 2016–2017

TO APPLY ONLINE: [FAFSA.GOV](http://FAFSA.GOV)

800.4FEDAID

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to apply for federal, state and college-based financial aid. You should file a FAFSA **as soon as possible after Jan. 1, 2016**. Awards are income-based, so applying early does not guarantee you will get an award. **If you or your parents have not completed your 2015 tax return, you can file your FAFSA using estimated tax information, but you must correct that information after you file your return.**

*(Note: You may be able to transfer your federal tax return info into your FAFSA using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. See page 4)*

## What you will need:

- Your Social Security number
- Your alien registration number (if you are not a U.S. citizen)
- Your most recent federal income tax returns, W-2s and other records of money earned.
- Bank statements and records of investments (if applicable)
- Records of untaxed income (if applicable)
- A Federal Student Aid ID

If you are a dependent student, you will also need most of the above information for your parent(s).

### How long will it take?



Initial Application:

**30 minutes**

Renewal Application:

**20 minutes**

FAFSA Corrections:

**10 minutes**

## Are you dependent or independent?

If you answer “Yes” to any question below, you are considered an independent student.

- Were you born before January 1, 1993?
- Are you married?
- At the beginning of the 2016–2017 school year, will you be working on a master’s or doctoral program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD or graduate certificate, etc.)?
- Are you on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?
- Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
- Do you have or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you?
- Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who will receive more than half of their support from you, through June 30, 2017?
- At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?
- Have you been declared an emancipated minor by a court in your state of legal residence?
- Have you been placed in a legal guardianship by a court in your state of legal residence?
- At any time on or after July 1, 2015, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
- At any time on or after July 1, 2015, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
- At any time on or after July 1, 2015, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

# Financial Aid Application Process





# Updating your FAFSA: IRS Data Retrieval Tool or Tax Transcript

If you estimated your 2015 income and tax information when you first submitted the 2016–2017 FAFSA, you must update your income information once you have filed your taxes. The IRS Data Retrieval Tool is the best way to do that because it transfers your tax information directly to the FAFSA. However, some people are ineligible and must request a tax transcript from the IRS.

## IRS Data Retrieval Process

This tool should be available about two weeks after you submit an electronic tax return. If you filed a paper form, allow eight weeks for the tool to be available.

## What you will need:

- Student's Social Security number and date of birth
- FSA ID
- Copy of student's and parent's income taxes / W-2s

## Are you eligible for the Data Retrieval Tool?

**Some families will not be eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.** If any of the following situations apply to you, you are **NOT** eligible to use the tool:

- Tax filing status is Married Filing Separately
- Tax filing status is Head of Household
- You are filing an amended tax return
- You are filing a foreign tax return

That means you'll need to update your information manually, using a copy of your completed 2015 tax return and any supporting documents. If the student's FAFSA is selected for verification, you must submit a tax return transcript. You may request a transcript by calling 1-800-908-9946 or by visiting [irs.gov/Individuals/Get-Transcript](https://irs.gov/Individuals/Get-Transcript).

Tax return transcripts show most line items from your tax return (Form 1040, 1040A or 1040EZ) as it was originally filed, including any accompanying forms and schedules. This transcript does not reflect any changes you, your representative or the IRS made after you filed your return.

1. Go to [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov).
2. Log in to the student's FAFSA record.
3. Select "Make FAFSA Corrections" and use the "Next" button at the bottom of each page to navigate to the Financial Information section.
5. Change income tax filing status to "Already Completed."
4. Answer the filtering questions to determine if you are eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.
5. If eligible, the parent will be asked to enter his/her FSA ID before linking to the IRS website.
6. Follow the instructions to complete the process. After the IRS has validated your identification, your IRS tax information will display. You can transfer your information from the IRS or return to FAFSA on the Web. If you transfer your tax information, questions that are populated with that tax information will be marked with "Transferred from the IRS."  
*Note: Be sure to enter your address exactly as it appears on the tax return.*
7. Once the data retrieval is complete, check each field for accuracy and complete any questions requiring information not transferred from the IRS. *Note: Do not change any data transferred from the IRS.*
8. Submit FAFSA corrections.

For more information about college planning services and financial aid programs available to Kentucky students, please call 800.928.8926 or visit [kheaa.com](https://kheaa.com).

