

Four Key Steps to Financial Aid

1 Federal Aid -- FAFSA

THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL AID. The FAFSA is the *key* to federal grants (like the Pell Grant), federally-backed student loans and work study. It is need-based aid. You can apply **OCTOBER of your senior year**. For the Class of 2022, you will need your 2020 federal tax information or tax returns. See the FAFSA website for details on how to apply (Understanding Aid, Apply for Aid, etc.) and to access the application- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>.

We encourage *all* families to complete the FAFSA even if you think you won't qualify, since colleges and many scholarships use information from the FAFSA to award their scholarships/aid. You can complete it even if you don't know where you will attend college/technical school.

It's important to complete the FAFSA in October of senior year – be aware of deadlines each college may have.

2 State Aid – Florida Student Financial Aid

Seniors must complete the Florida Student Financial Aid application to be eligible for state aid, including **Florida Bright Futures**. Bright Futures provides scholarship money for students who will attend college in Florida. It is merit-based aid - eligibility is based on GPA, SAT/ACT scores **and** community service hours.

Seniors must apply between October 1 and graduation to be eligible. Go to www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org/ssfad/bf/ to apply. It's important that you know and understand the eligibility requirements and deadline!

All students should apply-- even if they are not sure if they will qualify, if they are not considering going to college, are planning to go out of state, are taking a year off or are enlisting in the military. There are state grants in addition to Bright Futures for which you may be eligible. See details of eligibility requirements on the above website.

3 Institutional Aid

Check for scholarships at the college you will attend. Many offer scholarships through their financial aid office. Students may need to submit separate applications. Also, ask the specific department of the major you will be seeking to see if they offer any scholarships. Scholarships may be need-based and/or merit-based. Most require that the student have successfully submitted the FAFSA.

4 Private Scholarships

There are many national and local organizations that offer scholarships. Some are specific to a major, an ethnicity or require certain GPA/test scores, so students need to read each carefully for the eligibility requirements.

The College and Career Center at Manatee High School maintains a list of scholarship opportunities that is posted on the school website (<https://www.manateeschools.net/manatee>) – click on “Academics” then “College and Career Center” to see the link.

