

Financial Aid

"Financial aid package" is one of the terms that you will probably hear when working with admissions and financial aid offices. This term refers to the total financial aid assistance that you will receive, including federal and state grants, loans, college work study, outside scholarships, and institutional aid. Generally speaking, federal and state grants are determined by family need, not necessarily by the school's financial aid office.

Apply early for financial aid! Some students may think they can relax and let the college, university, or technical institution worry about their financial aid. Although they may want you as a student, they also have hundreds or thousands of other students they would like to enroll. It's important to realize that the schools may have certain financial institutional aid programs that are limited. Don't miss out on a grant, scholarship or loan for which you are eligible because you did not apply for financial aid earlier. You should do your taxes (both student and parent) as early as possible. Financial aid forms are based on your family's income from the previous calendar year.

Federal Aid:

As of October 1, of your senior year, you may register to complete the [FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) to be eligible for federal student aid and for most state and college aid. The FAFSA is the key to federal grants such as the Pell Grant, federally backed student loans and work study. The FAFSA will generate a Student Aid Report (SAR) that outlines your information and gives you your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is the dollar amount your family is expected to contribute to the cost of college. Institutions use the EFC to determine what types of aid you may receive. The quickest way to apply is on-line. You will need federal tax information or tax returns, including W-2 information for the student and parents, as well as records of untaxed income, savings, investments and other assets. We encourage all families to complete the FAFSA even if you think you won't qualify, since most institutions and many scholarships use information from the FAFSA to determine if you are eligible for aid. It is important to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1 – be aware of deadlines each institution may have.

State Aid:

As of December 1, of your senior year, you may register for Bright Futures. You must complete the Florida Student Financial Aid application, which determines Florida Bright Futures eligibility. Bright Futures is state aid for students who will attend an educational institution in Florida. Eligibility is based on coursework, grade point average, SAT/ACT scores and community service hours. Each year, legislative changes may affect the eligibility requirements and test score requirements. Visit the [Bright Futures website](#) for details. Seniors must apply by graduation to be eligible.

Students should apply even 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. Students who apply and are eligible have up to two years from high school graduation to begin using the scholarship. Check the Florida Bright Futures link on the SEHS website to see the eligibility chart.

Institutional Aid:

Institutional aid represents the grants and scholarships which the college, university, or technical school itself offers prospective students. Contact the financial aid office of the institution you plan to attend. Colleges and universities may offer academic scholarships, leadership grants, achievement grants, art and music scholarships, special talent grants, minority student scholarships, athletic grants, need based grants, out-of-state grants, etc. because they want and need gifted students on their campus. 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.

Local and Private Scholarships:

Market yourself, search and apply for private scholarships. Check the SEHS website scholarship link, and all area high school scholarship website pages. There are many national programs, as well as local organizations that offer scholarships. Some are specific to a major, an ethnicity or college, so students will need to read each carefully for the eligibility requirements. Check the list often since it is updated weekly. The list will include the links to apply on-line or you may pick up an application in the file box. Keep yourself organized and be sure to meet the deadlines. You should take the time to provide a list that includes all honors, activities, community service, church functions, and volunteer positions you have held throughout high school by using the student activity resume on the website. Remember to make it as easy as possible for the admissions and financial aid office to view all of these activities.