



# Big J Educational Consulting

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## FAFSA and CSS Profile Instructions – Part 2 of 2

The FAFSA and CSS Profile open on October 1 for any citizen or eligible non-citizen expecting to apply for financial aid for college. In our document *FAFSA and CSS Profile Instructions – Part 1 of 2*, we provide detailed instructions on how to begin and submit the FAFSA and CSS Profile. But many parents aren't sure whether or not to apply for financial aid. Determining need eligibility is a more complex process than one handout can explain. But here are some guidelines to keep in mind while you make this decision:

- Most college applications now ask the student, “Do you intend to pursue need-based financial aid?” If you do, then this box must be checked “Yes.” If you don't, then select “No.” This is a binary choice. There is no option that says, “I'm not applying for financial aid but I'll take the money if you offer it.”
- If your child checks “No” but you go ahead and file the FAFSA prior to the institution's financial aid application deadline, one of three things will happen over which you have no control:
  - The college contacts you to clarify whether or not you're applying for need-based aid.
  - The college doesn't contact you, assumes you are applying for need-based aid, and processes your FAFSA (and CSS Profile).
  - The college doesn't contact you, assumes you are not applying for need-based aid, and ignores your request for institutional need-based aid.
- **IMPORTANT:** Make sure the college application accurately reflects your financial aid intentions.
- A handful of colleges request submission of the FAFSA, CSS Profile, or both if your child is seeking non-need-based merit aid from that institution. At some institutions, there are specific merit scholarships that request one or both of these forms, while other scholarships do not. Parents and students should verify each institution's merit aid policy by visiting their website or contacting the admission office directly. This is an annoyance, but it's the only way to know for sure.
- For those who have decided not to apply for need-based financial aid but nonetheless want to take advantage of low interest unsubsidized federal student loans, you will need to file the FAFSA to initiate the process. But when and how do you file? I recommend these steps:
  1. Have your child check “No” on the college application asserting that they do not intend to apply for need-based financial aid.
  2. Do *not* submit the FAFSA prior to the institutions' deadlines. You are not in danger of missing the federal deadlines, which are much, much later.
  3. In May or June, after depositing at the school your child plans to attend, call the financial aid office to inform them that your child wants to initiate a request for federal student loans.
  4. Then file the FAFSA listing only that institution. These funds will be sent directly to the institution prior to registration, reducing the student's semester fees by half the amount of the annual loan.