​Seniors and Families,

We want to share some updates and resources for the new FAFSA application process. In December 2020, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which included the FAFSA Simplification Act. This act reduces the number of questions on the application, expands Pell Grant eligibility, and removes outdated restrictions to increase access to federal aid. While the updates may be challenging to navigate at first, we trust they will benefit students and their families in the long term.

**This year's FAFSA will open by Dec. 31, 2023.** In future years, the FAFSA will resume its opening date of Oct. 1.

The FAFSA Simplification Act has resulted in several changes, starting with the 2024-25 FAFSA. Here are a few of the major changes:

* The application will be streamlined and contain new terminology.
* The FAFSA will use a different calculation to determine a student's financial aid eligibility.
* Financial information can be pulled directly from the IRS to streamline FAFSA filing.
* The term Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) will change to the Student Aid Index (SAI). The Michigan Achievement Scholarship will change eligibility requirements accordingly.

Because the FAFSA is opening much later than usual, you can anticipate that award letters will also arrive later. MCAN will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available, but here are important actions you can do right now:

1. **Create your FSA ID at StudentAid.gov**

Your Federal Student Aid ID is the username and password for your StudentAid.gov account. You and

anyone contributing to your FAFSA (like a parent) will need an FSA ID. Refer to the [contributor](https://michigancollegeaccessnetwork.app.box.com/s/27d69gfu9kj238srd37bdkz9n23fytdl)

[document](https://michigancollegeaccessnetwork.app.box.com/s/27d69gfu9kj238srd37bdkz9n23fytdl) to determine who contributors might be.

2. **Gather the information you will need to complete the FAFSA**

You and anyone contributing to your FAFSA will need 2022 income tax returns, records of investments

and assets*(if not a public high school family*), Social Security numbers, child support information (if

applicable), and other personal information. Much of this data will be directly pulled from the IRS and

auto-populate your FAFSA, but it will be good to have it on hand.

3. **Research colleges**

One of the keys to succeeding in college is to find the right fit. Think about your ideal college

environment and use the [College Scorecard](https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/) or [BigFuture](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search/filters) to learn about the institution, such as the

fields of study offered, the average cost of attendance, the size of the institution, and admissions and

graduation rates among other factors.

4. **Apply for admission to college**

Once you’ve created a list of potential colleges, complete your applications for admission.

(many students applied by November 1st)

5. **Research and apply for scholarships**

One of the best ways you can spend your time as you await the FAFSA to open is to research and apply

for scholarships. Scholarship searches and applications take time, but every scholarship received helps

reduce the cost of your education and may prevent you from having to take on debt. Here are some

websites to help: [BigFuture](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college), [Scholarships by MI County](https://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/students-families/mi-scholarship-search).

6. **Watch webinars for support**

[FAFSA family and student webinars](https://www.uaspire.org/news-events/financial-aid-events)

*Source:* [*Five Things You Can Do While You Wait for the 2024-25 FAFSA*](https://mappingyourfuture.org/Downloads/Mapping-Your-Future-FAFSA-Delay-Five-Things-To-Do.pdf)*, MappingYourFuture.org*