

How To Find Grants To Pay For College



STEP

01

Fill Out The FAFSA

Both federal and state governments give out college grants. To be eligible, you'll need to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). There are so many reasons to fill out a FAFSA, but for the purposes of grants, you have to fill out a FAFSA so that the colleges can figure out the extent of your eligibility for financial aid. You don't have to stop with grants - family contributions, work-study programs, and scholarships can significantly bring down the cost of tuition. We recommend that you only consider student loans after you explore all of these options, and even then, start conservatively by only taking out federal student loans.

STEP

02

Discover Your Expected Family Contribution

Once you fill out your FAFSA, the colleges that grant you admission will send you financial aid award letters that let you know if you are eligible for any college grants. Move quickly on getting those college applications in, because grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. Fill out that FAFSA as soon as you can! One of the main factors that determine your eligibility for grants is your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is calculated through the information you provide on your FAFSA. Your EFC is the amount your family is presumed to pay for college based on financial information, despite whether they actually intend to pay that amount. Students with higher EFCs are likely to receive loans rather than grants, but don't be discouraged. With the variety of grants available for all types of backgrounds, financial need, and ability, there are many types of grants, and if you do your research, you just might find the financial help you need for college.

STEP

03

Understand Your Federal Grant Options

Colleges can choose to disburse grant funds in the form of a single lump sum payment or disbursement (equal installments) by sending federal financial funds to your school and crediting them to your account.

- 1 **Federal Pell Grants:** The largest source and most common source for federal grants, and they are awarded solely on your financial need.
- 2 **Academic Competitiveness Grant:** This grant is a combination of a merit and need-based grant for college freshmen and sophomores.
- 3 **Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (FSEOG):** Help low-income undergraduate students who need substantial financial aid for college tuition.
- 4 **TEACH Grants:** A good option for students who agree to teach for four years at an elementary or secondary school that serves low-income families.
- 5 **Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grants:** Available to students whose parent or guardian passed away as a result of military service in Afghanistan or Iraq after September 11, 2001.
- 6 **National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grant:** This grant is available to college juniors and seniors on the basis of need and merit.

STEP

04

Consider Grants From Your School

While the FAFSA is the mainstream gateway to financial aid, it is not your only option. You can also fill out a CSS profile to get access to grants as well scholarships for your college education. Unlike FAFSA, the CSS profile is a slightly more in-depth option that costs \$25 for your application and \$16 for each school. If there is a school you feel is way out of your league, this may be worth it.

STEP

05

Consider State Grants To Pay For College

After you have gone through all of your federal grant options, consider state grants by contacting one of the state grant agencies provided by the Department of Education. We also have put together an ultimate guide of Financial Aid and Student Loans By State, which includes any grants offered by your state. Just click your state and see what's available.

STEP

06

Explore Options For Other Special Grants

There are many grants dedicated to women, minorities, international students, and grants for disabled students. These are some of the most overlooked grants, so take the time to see if any of these grants apply to you and fill out an application.

- 1 **Grants For International Students:** There are student grants available to international students, although they are typically lower than programs for domestic students.
- 2 **American Association of University Women (AAUW) Career Development Grants:** Helps women who already have a bachelor's degree, but want to advance their careers by continuing their education.
- 3 **Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award:** Need based grant for women who provide support for their family.
- 4 **The Education Support Award from the Patsy Takemoto Mink Education Foundation:** Helps low-income mothers pursuing a degree or vocational training.
- 5 **The P.E.O. Program for Continuing Education (PCE):** Assists women who support their families and experienced an interruption in their education.
- 6 **Grants For Minorities:** While federal aid is open to all ethnicities, some financial aid is offered specifically for minority applicants. If you qualify as a minority, be sure to apply for grants that take your background into account. Regardless of your ethnic background, fill out a FAFSA and explore all of your options. High school students should check with their school counselor and their desired university financial aid office for more information.
- 7 **Grants For National Organizations:** There are public and private educational grants for disabled students who wish to pursue their college education. Many public and private organizations dedicate grants and scholarships to specific mental or physical disabilities such as cystic fibrosis and blindness.

While the United States Department of Education is still the first place you should visit when applying for financial aid, federal, state and private grants should not be dismissed when considering all of your options for financial aid. Take advantage of all grants and scholarships before resorting to loans, otherwise you could end up making student loan mistakes. If possible, use student loans as a bridge to close the gap between grants, scholarships, and tuition.

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