

*Helping Homeless  
Students Navigate the  
Financial Aid Process*

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# *Florida Community College System*

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- 28 community colleges
- Served more than 700,000 students in 2006-07 academic year
- Offer career and technical certificates, Associate in Science degree, Associate in Arts degree, and Bachelor's degree at select institutions
- If a student earns an AA, they are guaranteed admission to one of the 11 state universities

## *Florida College System*

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- With the passage of SB 1716 during the 2008 legislative session, community colleges were able to change their names
- All colleges will maintain an open door admissions policy

## *Standard Diploma Requirements for College Admission*

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- Traditional Program (9<sup>th</sup> grader beginning in 07-08)
  - Complete 24 academic credit hours
  - 16 core courses
  - 4 courses in major area of interest
  - 4 additional elective credits
  - 2.0 cumulative GPA on an unweighted 4.0 scale
  - Earn passing score on the Grade 10 FCAT
- Traditional Program
  - Complete 24 academic credit hours
  - 15.5 in required subjects
  - 8.5 in electives
  - 2.0 cumulative GPA on an unweighted 4.0 scale
  - Earn passing score on the Grade 10 FCAT

## *Standard Diploma Requirements for College Admission*

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- **Three Year Program**
  - 18 credits
  - Includes foreign language
  - Earn passing score on the Grade 10 FCAT
  - Achieve a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required for the college preparatory accelerated 3-year high school graduation option pursuant to paragraph
  - Achieve a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required for the career preparatory accelerated 3-year high school graduation option pursuant to paragraph

# *Alternatives to Standard Diploma*

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## **CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion**

- Awarded to students who meet ALL requirements for standard high school diploma EXCEPT passage of grade 10 FCAT.
- Allowed to sit for the Common Placement Test (CPT) and be placed into college credit or remedial courses as appropriate.
- May not be eligible for financial aid or certain academic programs (e.g., education or nursing)
- May not transfer to a state university before completing the AA degree or earning the GED.

## *Alternatives to Standard High School Diploma*

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- **General Equivalency Diploma**
  - Treated the same as standard high school diploma
  - Student must take the CPT to determine placement
  - Eligible for college-level courses

## *Alternatives to Standard High School Diploma*

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### **Special Diploma**

- May enroll in non-college credit career and technical certificate programs.
  
- Requires GED for admission to associate degrees/ college credit programs.

## *Applying to the Community College*

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- Open access
- Apply early
- Take College Placement Test (CPT)
- Attend orientation
- Get involved in campus activities
- Register for needed services
- Take success skills course

## *FACTS.org*

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- Students can access the site to check transcripts, graduation requirements, search for college programs and apply to college
- <http://www.facts.org>

## *Fee Exemption for Homeless Students*

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- F.S. 1009.25 (2)(e) exempts certain students from the payment of fees, including lab fees, at a school district that offers postsecondary career programs, public community college, or state university

## *Fee Exemption for Homeless Students*

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- **The student must:**
  - Lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence; or
  - Primary residence is a shelter designed for temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - A public or private place not designed for human beings as a regular sleeping accommodation.

## *Fee Exemption*

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- You think the student qualifies; what does the student do next?
  - Gather documentation to demonstrate homeless status
  - Documentation should come from a social services agency or other entity providing services to the student (such as a school district providing services)
  - State homeless coalitions
  - Meet with a representative of the registrar's office
  - Student will be asked to provide updated documentation of status on a semester-by-semester basis

## *Fee Exemption*

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- 155 students from 13 community colleges received the exemption during the 2006-2007 academic year

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- Apply early (first come, first serve)
- Begin by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- Ask foundations at local institutions if they have scholarships available
- Student should receive a letter detailing the aid they are eligible for within a few weeks of filing the FAFSA

# *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- Independent v. Dependent status
- Student must answer yes to one of the questions below in order to be considered independent
  - Were you born before January 1, 1985 (making you 24 or older)?
  - Are you working on a master's or doctorate program?
  - Are you married as of day you file FAFSA?
  - Do you have children who receive more than half of their support from you?
  - Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse)?
  - Are you an orphan, or are you/were you (until age 18) a ward/dependent of the court?
  - Are you a veteran of the US Armed Forces?
  - Are you currently active duty military personnel for other than training purposes?

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- Per federal regulations, a student may be considered independent if a financial aid administrator determines and documents the student's independent status based on unusual circumstances.
- Students must meet with financial aid counselor to make this determination.

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007
- Effective July 1, 2009

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- FAFSA Changes beginning in 2009
  - The following students can be declared independent
    - Individuals who were in foster care
    - Emancipated minors or minors in legal guardianship and
    - Individuals that have been verified as an unaccompanied youth who are homeless children or youth or are at risk of homelessness

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- State aid is available including:
  - Florida Student Assistance Grant
  - Florida Work Experience Program
  - First Generation Grant
  - Special interest scholarships
  - Bright Futures

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- Federal Aid is available including:
  - Pell Grant
  - Academic Competitiveness Grant
  - SMART Grant
  - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
  - Loans

## *Applying for Financial Aid*

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- Student should expect to file or renew their FAFSA each year
- The financial aid they are eligible for could vary each year as funding amounts vary

## *Contact Information*

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