

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do I apply for Financial Aid?

Students seeking financial assistance should use one of two methods to apply, depending on what type of aid they are seeking:

Method 1 - Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Renewal Application for Federal Student Aid (Renewal FAFSA). This method allows a student to apply for federal and state aid as well as the HOPE scholarship. The FAFSA is available online at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. You may sign your application electronically with your Federal Student Aid (FSA) User ID. You can acquire a FSA User ID at <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/sign-in/landing>. The application process begins in October and you will need to re-apply for federal financial aid each year.

Method 2 - Complete the HOPE Application. Students seeking a HOPE scholarship or grant only, may apply online at <http://www.gafutures.org/>.

Columbus State University Financial Aid Deadlines

How do I complete a FAFSA?

Below are tips for completing your FAFSA. For a complete explanation and instructions for each section, visit <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. If you have questions, please call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or visit the Financial Aid Office.

- List Columbus State University as a college choice. Our school code is **001561**.
- A "Help and Hints" sections is available by each question of the FAFSA.
- Complete the entire application as accurately as possible, including all optional information. Omitting this information may cause delays in processing.
- Keep a copy of your tax forms, and any other documents you used to complete the form.

When is the deadline to apply for Financial Aid?

You may file your FAFSA for the FAFSA cycle after October 1. However, there is a priority processing date set by CSU. If your application is complete on or before the priority processing date, your request for assistance will be processed before the fee payment deadline.

Columbus State University Financial Aid Deadlines

What is a FAFSA Submission Summary?

A FAFSA Submission Summary is the result of your Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Columbus State University will receive the electronic version of this report if our school is listed on the FAFSA. You should review your FAFSA Submission Summary at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> for completeness and accuracy. You may make corrections electronically at this same website. You will need your FSA User ID to use this site. You can sign up for a FSA User ID at <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/sign-in/landing> - please note that any change to your report may delay our response regarding your notification of eligibility for financial assistance.

If the comments on your FAFSA Submission Summary state that more information is needed to determine your eligibility for financial aid, you should make the necessary corrections electronically at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. A valid FAFSA Submission Summary is required before financial aid can be determined.

When applying for financial aid, what other documents may be necessary?

After filling out your FAFSA application and receiving your FAFSA Submission Summary, additional documents may be requested. All documents required for verification will be requested through your verification portal, where you can submit them. To review the required documents please [log into MyCSU](#), and click on Students, then click the tile for Financial Information and Resources, and then click "FAFSA Verification Portal" to review missing items.

Some examples of other documents that may be requested in your Financial Aid Checklist in MyCSU are listed below:

- A copy of the birth certificate to authenticate citizenship.
- A copy of the Selective Service Registration card for verification of registration.
- A copy of the social security card to verify the correct name and number on file with the Social Security Administration.
- A copy of the resident alien card for documentation of eligible non-citizens.

To ensure that you are processed on or before the fee payment deadline date, all of your documents should be submitted before the applicable deadline dates. We recommend that you respond to any request for additional documents within 5 days. Please note that processing times vary during the peak times of the semester.

When will I receive my Financial Aid Offer Letter?

After filling out your application and receiving your FAFSA Submission Summary, additional documents may be requested. All documents required for verification will be requested through your verification portal, where you can submit them. To review the required documents please [log into MyCSU](#), and click on Students, then click the tile for Financial Information and Resources, and then click "FAFSA Verification Portal" to review missing items.

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- A copy of the birth certificate to authenticate citizenship.
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- A copy of the resident alien card for documentation of eligible non-citizens.

To ensure that you are processed on or before the fee payment deadline date, all of your documents should be submitted before the applicable deadline dates. We recommend that you respond to any request for additional documents within 5 days. Please note that processing times vary during the peak times of the semester.

What should I do with the Financial Aid Offer Letter?

You can locate your Financial Aid Offer Letter, detailing financial aid that's been awarded to you through MyCSU. **Log into MyCSU, click on Students tab, then the tile for Financial Aid Dashboard.** You will also receive an email to your CSU E-Mail address with a link to the Financial Aid Offer Letter.

Read your Financial Aid notification very carefully. Contact the Financial Aid Office immediately if you have any questions regarding the type and/or amount of your award(s). If you are a dependent student and your parent(s) are interested in applying for a Parent loan, a must be completed online at studentaid.gov.

What changes could affect my financial aid awards?

Your initial award(s) will be based on full-time enrollment for each term awarded. These are some examples that may cause your award(s) to be revised:

- Change in enrollment status
- Receipt of additional awards such as scholarships, grants, etc.
- Changes in reported financial information since your original award
- An increase or decrease in your loan eligibility

How do I receive my first loan at CSU?

If this is your first loan at CSU, you must complete the following 2 steps to [finalize processing of an educational loan](#). Award amounts are subject to change based on availability of funds.

How long does it take to process the PLUS loan application?

The application for a Parent or Graduate PLUS Loan must be completed online through [Federal Student Aid Website](#). The US Department of Education will conduct a credit check online to determine the applicant's eligibility for the loan. The application will then be sent electronically to CSU where we will process the application based on the decision made by the US Department of Education. This can take 1-2 weeks.

When do I receive my financial aid?

Funds awarded are first transferred to your student account invoice to pay institutional charges. The remaining balance is credited to your refund preference via your TouchNet student account, no earlier than the third week of classes if your application process was completed by the priority processing deadline and you early registered for classes.

All other students with aid receive their credit balance per their refund preference via their TouchNet student account, no later than 14 days **after** their funds are applied to their institutional charges.

You will receive a new disclosure statement from studentaid.gov for each new loan (before or at the time the first part of your loan is paid to you or credited to your account). This disclosure statement provides comprehensive information about the types of loans you are borrowing, the amount, your loan period and the anticipated disbursement dates.

How do I cancel or reduce a loan that has not been disbursed?

Login to your MyCSU account, click on Students tab, then the Financial Aid Dashboard. Then select My Award Letter Information -> My Award Letter. At the bottom of the Online Financial Aid Award Letter, select Reduce/Decline Awards.

How are the costs determined?

Your bill for courses that you are enrolled in is determined by the Office of Student Accounts after you register for classes. For financial aid, we award you based on the "Cost of Attendance" determined through your FAFSA and account information. Your educational cost, or the "Cost of Attendance," is the average costs for a student based on the following information that you provided on the FAFSA:

- Whether you are a Georgia resident or non-resident.
- Where you plan to live while you are in school.
- Your dependency status as determined by federal criteria.
- Current year packaging budgets--undergraduates and graduates.

What is the SAI?

The SAI is the Student Aid Index which is derived from information you provided on your FAFSA. Based on the federal needs analysis formula, the SAI is an estimated amount that you and/or your family should be able to provide toward your educational expenses over the course of the academic year. However, please note that this amount is **not** a posted bill, or expected payment amount for your family. We use this number to determine need for other aid.

Your SAI is based on the following information you provided on your FAFSA:

- Your family's income and assets.
- The number of people enrolled in college in your household.
- Number of people in household.

What is my financial need?

Your financial need is the amount remaining after applying your Student Aid Index to your cost of attendance.

**Cost of Attendance
- Student Aid Index (SAI)
= Financial Need**

How will my financial need be met?

Your financial need will be met through:

- Financial aid in the form of grants, federal work study and/or loans.
- Scholarships (from CSU or outside sources).
- Student Employment (like FWS)
- Outside sources (such as 529 plan or savings).
- Current Family income.

What if I have special circumstances?

If you feel that you have extenuating circumstances, consult your Financial Aid Counselor. If you qualify for any adjustments to your educational costs, your student/parent contribution, or your dependency status, you will be notified of any adjustments/changes.

Please note that, **in general**, the following are *not* considered extenuating circumstances:

1. A parent refusing to provide data.
2. A student who does not want to ask parents for information.
3. A student who is and has been on "his or her own" for several years.
4. A student who does not communicate with parents.
5. A student who is divorced at the time of the application and does not meet one of the current definitions of independency for the aid year.
6. Voluntary resignation or reduction of hours in employment.

What could delay my financial aid?

Some reasons your funding may not be accessible on the first day of classes:

- Late admissions
- Late in completing your financial aid application ([Be aware of the deadlines](#))
- Missing documents
- Enrollment changes
- Information that you are in default on a student loan or owe a repayment to any Title IV financial aid program.

When do I receive my financial aid?

Financial aid funds awarded are first used to pay institutional charges. Financial aid in excess of institutional charges is first released to the student's selected refund preference via their TouchNet student account during the third week of the term. After the third week of the term, these funds are released no later than 14 days from the day the excess balance occurred.

If this is your first loan, you must complete the following 2 steps to [finalize processing of an educational loan](#): [Entrance Loan Counseling](#) and the [Master Promissory Note \(MPN\)](#).

What is Satisfactory Academic Progress?

Please review the full [Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy](#).

How does the refund policy work?

Fees will be recalculated and appropriate adjustments made for students who register and then find it necessary to drop a course before the end of the schedule change period. No refund will be made for a reduction in credit hours after the schedule change period. Students who formally withdraw from the university before the official first day of the semester will be entitled to a complete (100%) refund of all registration fees. Students withdrawing from all courses after the official first day of the semester will be entitled to a **prorated** refund of tuition, fees and elective charges. The proportion refundable is determined by the date of withdrawal and is equal to that portion of the period of enrollment for which the student has been charged that remains on the last day of attendance, up to the 60 percent point in time of the semester. Specific dates reflecting the above refund schedule are published each semester in the Schedule of Courses.

All students receiving financial assistance who formally withdraw or who stop attending all classes are subject to regulations regarding the return of funds to the appropriate aid program.

Refunds are applied in the following order:

1. Unsubsidized Direct Stafford Loan
2. Subsidized Direct Stafford Loan
3. Perkins Loan
4. Direct PLUS Loan
5. Pell Grant
6. Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
7. Other Title IV programs
8. HOPE Scholarship
9. Other non-Title IV programs

NOTE: The student must return unearned aid for which he/she is responsible by repaying funds to the applicable aid program.

The following steps are performed in refund determination:

- Step 1. Determine the student's Title IV aid and HOPE for the term
- Step 2. Calculate the percentage of Title IV aid and HOPE earned
- Step 3. Determine the amount of Title IV aid and HOPE earned by the student
- Step 4. Determine the total Title IV aid and HOPE to be returned
- Step 5. Determine the amount of unearned Title IV aid and HOPE due from the school
- Step 6. Determine the amount of unearned Title IV aid and HOPE due from the student

How many times can a student repeat a course and have federal financial aid pay for it?

If a student **passes a course** with a grade higher than an "F" and wishes to retake it at Columbus State University or by transfer of credit for a better grade, they may repeat the course **ONE** time and receive federal financial aid funds for it as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, including the school's SAP policy.

If a student **fails a course** they may repeat the course at Columbus State University or by transfer of credits and receive federal financial aid funds for it **until** they receive a passing grade (D or above) and as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, including the school's SAP policy.

What if a student passes a course with a grade higher than F and wishes to retake it for a better grade, but then fails the course the second time?

The failed course counts as their one-time retake and the student cannot be paid for retaking the course a third time.

What if a student is repeating a course and withdraws from it?

If a student is repeating a course and withdraws from the course, it is not counted as their paid retake.