

Financial Advising

Need-based Financial Aid

Two instruments are used to determine how much financial aid you can receive. They are the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the CSS / Financial Aid PROFILE. The FAFSA is generally used for determining eligibility for federal, state, and institutional need-based aid. At private institutions, a supplemental application like the CSS / Financial Aid PROFILE may be necessary for need-based aid.

All incoming college students should expect to contribute something towards their own education costs. How much a student's family will be expected to contribute depends on their financial situation. This is called your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The FAFSA is the form the U.S. Department of Education requires to determine your EFC. The government conducts a need analysis based on financial information, such as income, assets, and other family information, which you (or your parents if you are a dependent student) will be asked to provide. A federal processor then examines your application and sends the results to the colleges where you have chosen to apply.

You should never pay a fee to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or have someone fill it out for you. However, the College Board does collect a fee to process the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE. You should only submit a PROFILE if your college or scholarship program instructs you to do so. The College Board provides free assistance should you have questions about the process, the application, or the questions found on the application. You should never pay a fee to receive this assistance.

Scholarships

Most of the scholarships that a student will receive as an incoming freshman will come directly from the university or college where the student is applying.

There are three types of scholarships.

1. Merit or academic-based scholarships are typically awarded on the basis of academic, athletic, or artistic merit. Some merit scholarships also consider financial need, but rewarding a student's performance is the primary focus.
2. Major-specific scholarships are given to those who have shown academic excellence in a particular subject, with the restriction that this subject must become the student's major. These types of scholarships are usually offered by an individual college.
3. Demographic scholarships are awarded based on factors that have little to do with education or school activities. That's not to say that these scholarships make no consideration of merit or need, only that the primary determinant is some characteristic of the student like race, gender, or religion.
4. Independent Scholarships not associated with a particular college typically offer smaller amounts of money and involve tremendous amount of work on the student's part. The application process usually involves providing academic information, standardized test scores, a resume, and writing an essay. Be aware of scams in this process.

Types of Scholarships:

General Scholarship Websites

www.fastweb.com

Scholarships for Alabama Colleges/Universities

www.auburn.academicworks.com

www.scholarships.ua.edu

www.samford.edu/admission/scholarships

www.bsc.edu/admission/scholarships.cfm

www.uab.edu/students/paying-for-college/

Some scholarships may require nomination from Westminster

Alabama Boys State

www.alboysstate.org

Alabama Girls State

www.alabamagirlsstate.org

Alabama Governors' School

www.alabamags.org

Birmingham Christian Magazine

www.birminghamchristian.com

Distinguished Young Women (Shelby County)

www.shelby.al.distinguishedyw.org

Furman Scholars

www.furman.edu/Furman-Scholars-Program

Jefferson Scholars Foundation

www.jeffersonscholars.org

NHS Scholarship

www.nhs.us/students/the-nhs-scholarship

Shelby County Leadership

www.leadershipshelbycounty.com

Grants

This is money the government provides for students who need it to pay for college. Grants, unlike loans, do not have to be repaid. Eligible students will receive a specified amount each year under this program. Your FAFSA will be used to determine your eligibility for any grants. You can see an example of a grant offered at the University of Alabama [website](#).

Work Experience Programs

Work experience or an on campus job is a form of financial aid that offers students a part-time job. The smooth hiring process and flexible hours make this option desirable for many students. See Berry College's [website](#) for an example.