Financial Aid Basics

NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY

What is Financial Aid?

- Provides access to postsecondary education.
- Covers such expenses as tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation.
- There are 2 types of financial aid: gift aid (grants and scholarships) and self-help aid (loans and work-study).

Funding a College Education: Who’s Responsible?

- Primary responsibility lies with students and their parents.
- Parents will contribute to the degree that they are able.
- The family’s circumstances should be evaluated in a consistent, fair, and equitable manner.
Sources and Forms of Financial Aid

- Federal Government
  - Pell Grant
  - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
  - Teacher Education Assistance for College & Higher Education (TEACH)
  - Federal Work Study (FWS)
  - Stafford Loan
  - PLUS Loan
- State Government
  - Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)
  - GO Grant
  - Many other state supported programs. For more information contact LOSFA. (1-800-259-5626)
- Private Resources
  - Community organizations
  - Corporations
  - Churches/religious organizations
  - Off campus employment
- Institutional Programs
  - Scholarships
  - Waivers

Student Employment

- Provides part-time employment opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students on campus.
- Students earn federal minimum wage and are paid on an hourly basis.

The Application Process

- Application for student aid available at
  - www.fafsa.gov
- Worksheets available
  - Financial Aid Office
  - Guidance Counselor’s Office
- Applicants may be selected for verification. If so, some of the following documents may be required:
  - IRS Tax Return Transcripts
  - W2 Information
  - Asset Documentation
  - Means of Support
- Be aware of deadlines and priority dates.
Electronic Filing Advantages

- Faster processing
- Online help
- Fewer errors
- “Skip logic” allows students to skip unnecessary questions
- Immediate EFC estimate
- Application can be saved and completed later
- Online receipt verification
- Designated customer service phone number
- IRS Data Retrieval Tool

FAFSA Completion

- Read the instructions before and as you complete the application.
- Follow the instructions.
- Documents you’ll need:
  - W-2s and 1099s for the year 2012
  - federal tax returns (2012, if possible)
  - bank statement, investment summaries, etc.
- Ask questions when you do not understand.
- Nicholls’ Financial Aid Office 985-448-4048 or 877-NICHOLLS (642-4655)
- Federal Student Aid Information Center 800-4-FED-AID (433-3243)
- Make it a family event.

Tips for Students and Parents

- Apply for all types of aid. Don’t assume you are ineligible.
- Complete your tax return as early as possible.
- Keep copies of all applications and forms submitted to schools or the processor.
- Note the student’s social security number or student identification number on all paperwork submitted to the school.
- Write down the name of each person you talk to when asking for advice.
- Do not leave the answer blank. Enter $0 if you have nothing to report.
- Child support received for the student is generally reported as parental income.
- Follow tax return line references.
- Respond to requests in a timely manner.
- Accept or decline your financial aid awards.
- You must reapply for financial aid prior to each year of enrollment. Schools generally notify students who are receiving financial aid when reapplication must take place.
Student Data

- Student Demographics will capture the following:
  - Permanent Mailing Address
  - Social Security Number
  - E-mail Address
  - Citizenship
  - Residency
  - Drug Conviction

- The school section will allow the student to select up to 10 schools to receive their FAFSA results. You must select at least one Louisiana school for TOPS purposes.

- Nicholls school code is 002005.

Dependency Status:

Who is an Independent Student?

- Were you born before January 1, 1990?
- As of today, are you married?
- At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, will you be working on a master’s or doctoral program (such as IA, MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, or equivalent certificate, etc.)?
- Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?
- Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
- Do you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014?
- Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now through June 30, 2014?
- At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?

Continued...

- As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor?
- As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you in legal guardianship?
- At any time on or after July 1, 2012, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
- At any time on or after July 1, 2012, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
- At any time on or after July 1, 2012, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
Who is a Parent?

• If both parents are married and living together, answer questions about both.
• An adoptive parent is treated as a biological parent.
• A foster parent is not treated as a parent.
• A legal guardian is not treated as a parent.
• If a parent has died, do not report information on the deceased parent. If the widowed parent has remarried, complete information on the parent and their spouse.

Continued...

• If the parents have divorced, answer the questions about the parent the student lived with most during the year.
• If the student lived equal amounts with each parent, answer the questions based on the parent who provided the most financial support during the year.
• If the parent has remarried, answer the questions based on the parent and their current spouse.
• If the parents are separated, then apply the rules for divorce.

Parent Data

• The Parent Demographic section will require students to report their parents’ current marital status, date of birth, social security number, and residency status.

• The income and assets of the parents will be reported in this section also. Using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool will help you in reporting the most accurate information. We strongly encourage students and their families to utilize the retrieval tool.
Student Financial Information

As with the parent income, we strongly encourage students who filed a tax return to utilize the data retrieval tool.

Signing and submitting the FAFSA

- Signatures: For a dependent student, both the student and the parent, whose information was provided on the FAFSA, must sign before the application will be processed.

- When completing the FAFSA electronically, three methods of signing are available:
  - Electronic Signature – apply for a PIN @ www.pin.ed.gov
  - Printing the signature page and mailing the signed page to the federal processor.
  - Signing the SAR and mailing it to the federal processor.

Personal Identification Number (PIN)

The PIN allows you online access to your personal federal student aid information so you can:
- Sign the FAFSA
- Access your Student Aid Report
- Make corrections to your application
- Sign a Master Promissory Note
- Check your loan history
- Apply for your PIN at www.pin.ed.gov
Expected Family Contribution

- The EFC of a dependent student is based on both the student and parents’ financial information.
- The EFC of an independent student is based on the student (and spouse’s) financial information.

Expected Family Contribution: Calculation Components

- Parents’ prior year income
- Student’s prior year income
- Value of parents’ assets
- Value of student’s assets
- The number of household members attending college at least half time (excluding parents)
- Family size
- Age of parents

Avoid Errors

Errors made in completing the FAFSA and/or supplemental forms may delay application processing and result in the loss of financial aid funds.

Please complete all forms carefully.
Frequent FAFSA Errors

- Nicknames
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Divorced/Remarried Parents
- Income earned by mother and father
- Other untaxed income
- Household size
- Number in family attending college
- U.S. income taxes paid
- Real estate and investment net worth

After completing the FASFA:

- Review your Student Aid Report to ensure accuracy.
- Check your Nicholls email and Banner Self-Service accounts frequently for additional information requests.
- Submit all requested forms promptly.
- Sign your promissory note.
- Check the Banner Self Service system to view your financial aid status at Nicholls.

How to Keep Your Financial Aid

- Pass your classes
- Maintain credit hours
- Maintain minimum GPA standard
- Re-apply for aid each January

*Satisfactory Academic Progress is defined by the university. Check with the school’s Financial Aid Office for the specific requirements.
**Direct Stafford Loan**

Long-term loans must be repaid.
- Interest rates can vary each year and are posted after July 1.
- Various repayment options are available.

**Loan Limits:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
<td>$9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
<td>$10,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior - Senior</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
<td>$12,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>$20,500</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Loan limits may be reached through a combination of Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Stafford Loans.
- Interest in the subsidized portion of the Stafford Loan is paid by the government during enrollment.
- The student is responsible for the interest on the unsubsidized loan, which may be capitalized.
- The school's Financial Aid Office will notify the student of their specific subsidized and unsubsidized loan eligibility.
- Repayment of principal on either Stafford Loan begins no later than six months after the student ceases to be enrolled at least half-time.

**Important Loan Information**

- A Master Promissory Note (MPN) is a legal document which you sign to indicate your willingness to repay a student loan.
- The MPN will contain your Rights and Responsibilities as a borrower.
- The MPN and Entrance Counseling must be submitted in order for the loan funds to be disbursed.
- Complete the MPN and Entrance Counseling at the following address: www.studentloans.gov

**Important Financial Aid Dates**

- January 1, 2013 - Start Applying for Fall 2013 - Spring 2014 Financial Aid
- Nicholls Priority Processing Deadline for Fall 2013 - April 15, 2013
- Nicholls Priority Processing Deadline for Spring 2014 - October 31, 2013
TOPS Eligibility Requirements

- Opportunity Award
  - 2.50 minimum GPA in core curriculum
  - ACT score of at least 20

- Performance Award
  - 3.00 minimum GPA in core curriculum
  - ACT score of at least 23

- Honors Award
  - 3.00 minimum GPA in core curriculum
  - ACT score of at least 27

Completion of the core curriculum must be done before high school graduation.

TOPS Retention Requirements: Credit Hours

- Must earn 24 hours of credit each academic year (fall, winter intersession, spring, spring intersession, summer, and summer intersession)
  - Failure to earn 24 hours will result in award cancellation.
  - Hours earned in advanced placement courses may not be used.
  - Hours earned in remedial courses required by the institution may be used.
  - “Hours earned” are hours successfully completed with a passing grade.

TOPS Retention Requirements: GPA

- Steady Academic Progress will be verified at the end of every fall semester, summer session, and intersession. You must earn at least a 2.00 cumulative GPA.
- At the end of each Academic Year, the following cumulative GPA must be maintained:
  - Opportunity Award: 2.30 first academic year
    2.50 all subsequent years
  - Performance Award: 3.00
  - Honors Award: 3.00
Don’t Blow Your TOPS

• Contact LOSFA at www.osfa.la.gov or 1-800-259-5626 with any TOPS questions.
• Social Security Number – same as it appears on your social security card
• Citizenship – must be a US resident
• Residency state and date for both student and parent
• List a Louisiana public or private college or university on FAFSA
• Social Security Number must be given for ACT Registration.
• Date of High School Graduation and High School Code must be correct on ACT Registration.
• Include TOPS ACT Code 1595 on the ACT Registration.
• Minimum ACT score is 20 (17 for Tech Award) and must be obtained by the April test.

TOPS Application

There are two methods of applying for a TOPS scholarship:

1. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
   • Must be completed if the family is eligible for federal grant aid (Pell Grant).
   • Must be completed if the student is seeking any other form of financial aid.

2. TOPS On-Line Application
   • Available on the LOSFA Website at www.osfa.la.gov
   • May only be completed by students who can certify that their family does not qualify for federal grant aid.
   • In the event of a budget shortfall, students completing the Online Application will be the first to lose their TOPS award.

TOPS Application Deadlines

• For 2013 graduates beginning their post-secondary education in the 2013-2014 academic year:
  • Priority deadline: May 1, 2013
  • No-penalty deadline: July 1, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Application Receipt Date</th>
<th>Receives TOPS Funding For:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1, 2013 - July 1, 2014</td>
<td>8 Semesters beginning with Academic Year 2013-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 2014 - August 30, 2014</td>
<td>7 Semesters beginning with Academic Year 2013-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 31, 2014 - October 29, 2014</td>
<td>6 Semesters beginning with Academic Year 2013-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Applications Received After October 29, 2014</td>
<td>Ineligible for TOPS Award</td>
</tr>
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TOPS Award Letter

• Students eligible for a TOPS award will be notified by means of an official award letter from LOSFA.

• TOPS recipients should familiarize themselves with the Rights and Responsibilities included with their award letter.

• TOPS recipients are personally responsible for knowing and complying with the TOPS continuation requirements.

Scholarships

• Check the financial aid lobby for details and your Nicholls student e-mail account for the Inside Students announcement.

• Pick up applications at the Scholarship Office or the Financial Aid Office.

• Students may receive TOPS and other scholarships as long as they do not go over their Cost of Attendance (COA). Once the COA has been exceeded, loans and institutional aid (scholarships) will be reduced.

Cost of Attendance:

• Tuition and Fees
• Books and Supplies
• Room and Board
• Transportation
• Miscellaneous and Personal Expenses