

# **Financial Aid Application Changes for 2015-2016**

**Attention Higher-Education-Bound Seniors and any students completing the FAFSA in January 2016**

The Federal Government has made some changes to initiating the financial aid application process and the new process is time consuming and may be difficult for parents and students. Please see the steps on the next page for further details or visit <http://fsaid.ed.gov>.

To help with the process, Ben Rosenberger, from RACC, will be here to present on the Financial Aid Application Process on January 11<sup>th</sup> in the High School auditorium, at 7pm. Please plan to attend this important session.

The Federal PIN that students and parents formerly needed to sign the FAFSA and access other aid information, has been replaced by Federal Student Aid (FSA) to what is now the FSA ID. Creating the FSA ID requires multiple steps that need to be completed independently by the student applicant and their filing-parent. A student cannot complete these steps for their filing-parent and the filing-parent cannot complete these steps for the student.

This new FSA ID creation is not easily combined with completing the FAFSA application due to email address requirements, creating unique user ID's, security challenge questions, issues with the FAFSA application 'timing out' amidst the ID creation, etc. ***We recommend that students and filing-parents create their two FSA IDs prior to beginning the FAFSA.*** You may want to alert your senior students of this significant change now, in anticipation of when they will be completing their FAFSA in a few months.

Here are some important highlights about this new process:

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Students and their parent can no longer use the same email address. While students typically do have email access, parents often do not. If either does not, they must create an email account (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) in order to move through the FSA ID creation process.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ For both the student and the filing-parent, it can be a challenge to create a valid username and password because the security settings have been increased to be 'stronger.' These also need to be unique and not taken by a previous FAFSA filer.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ To acquire the FSA ID for the student and their filing-parent, they each will also need to create five security questions and answers. These are 'challenge' questions that must be answered in the event they forget their username and passwords. Two of these challenge questions can be selected from options that FSA provides but three of them must be completely made up by the applicant and filing-parent. One of these three asks the filer to input a "significant date" that cannot be their birthdate; this question, in particular, is difficult for students and filing-parents to answer without time to consider their answer.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Although the FSA ID can be used immediately by first time applicants once it is created, that is not the case for renewals. For those renewing a FAFSA, there will be a one to three day delay between the creation of the FSA ID and the ability to electronically sign the application.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Although this is not required, the final step in creating an FSA ID is to confirm student/filing-parent email address. A secure code is sent to the email addresses entered when FSA IDs were created. Once the code is retrieved from the email accounts and then reentered (to confirm the email address is valid), users can use their authenticated email address instead of a username to log in to the five ED websites.
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Parents or students who already have a PIN, will still need to create an FSA ID and password. The new ID can be linked to the PIN, but that is a separate part of the process and is completed at the conclusion of creating the FSA ID and password

As you might suspect, completing these new steps is time consuming and may be difficult for parents or students. This process is best completed prior to attempting to electronically sign and submit the FAFSA because there is the probability of the FAFSA application timing out while applicants move through this FSA ID creation.