



Fall Virtual Financial Aid Training

Agenda

OCTOBER 30, 2026 • VIRTUAL SESSIONS

Session:	Option 1	Option 2
8:30 – 9:00	Welcome and Keynote: Updates from the World of Financial Aid Presenters: Mila Tappan and Mary Dyer	
9:05 – 9:55	A. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – Part 1 Presenters: Floreka Mananga and Maire Pelletier Moderator: Mila Tappan	B. Piecemeal Approach to Paying for Higher Education Presenters: Jessica Whittier and Karin Parsons Moderator: Nikki Vachon
9:55 – 10:05	B R E A K	
10:05 – 10:55	C. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – Part 2 Presenters: Karin Parsons and Jessica Whittier Moderator: Sydney McLean	D. Resources to Help Families Prepare to Pay for Higher Education Presenters: Mila Tappan and Mary Dyer Moderator: Floreka Mananga
11:00-11:50	E. Navigating the FAFSA in Unusual Circumstances Presenters: Sydney McLean and Maire Pelletier Moderator: Jessica Whittier	F. Helping Students & Families Navigate the New Student Loan Landscape Presenters: Nikki Vachon and Mila Tappan Moderator: Mary Dyer
12:00 -12:15	CLOSING and 🎉🎉 PRIZES! 🎉🎉	

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Session Descriptions and Presenters

A. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – Part 1

Presenters: Maire Pelletier and Floreka Mananga

Completing the FAFSA can feel overwhelming, but understanding the first steps can make the process much more manageable. In Part 1 of this two-part session, we'll explain how to prepare for filing the FAFSA, including creating StudentAid.gov accounts, determining who needs an account, and understanding the different roles students and parents play in the application process. We'll also explore who should start the FAFSA, how the experience differs when a student or parent starts the form, and what information is needed before getting started. A guided FAFSA demonstration will walk through key sections of the application and address common questions and challenges. By the end of the session, attendees will feel more confident and prepared to support students with FAFSA completion.

B. Piecemeal Approach to Paying for Higher Education

Presenters: Jessica Whittier and Karin Parsons

Higher education costs are seldom covered by one funding source alone. This workshop will explore the "piecemeal" approach to paying for education after high school by combining multiple funding sources and strategies to make college more affordable. We'll discuss how savings, scholarships, grants, student employment, payment plans, tax benefits, and other resources can work together to help reduce out-of-pocket costs and borrowing.

C. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – Part 2

Presenters: Karin Parsons and Jessica Whittier

In this session, we'll dive deeper into important FAFSA processes and recent updates affecting students and families. We'll explore identity verification requirements, discuss the impact and opportunities created by real-time FAFSA processing, and review the latest information regarding parents with multiple students completing the FAFSA. We'll also cover key components of the Student Aid Index (SAI) formula, including how student earnings, savings, and other financial factors can affect aid eligibility. We'll examine Pell Grant eligibility charts and share practical examples to help families better understand how financial decisions impact aid outcomes. We'll wrap up the session by covering the FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS), common correction scenarios, and strategies for resolving issues efficiently.

D. Resources to Help Families Prepare to Pay for Higher Education

Presenters: Mila Tappan and Mary Dyer

This session will highlight practical resources for you to use and share with students and families as they plan for higher education costs, including FAME's new Education Funding Blocks web page, the College Board's Big Future site, net price calculators, and other FAME resources. Participants will learn how these tools can support early planning conversations, strengthen students' and families' understanding of how financial aid works, and connect them with timely, actionable affordability and planning information.

E. Navigating the FAFSA for Students with Difficult Situations

Presenters: Sydney McLean and Maire Pelletier

Sometimes there are life circumstances that can make it difficult to complete the FAFSA. In this session, we'll cover what makes someone a "Dependent" vs. an "Independent" student while filing, what qualifies as an "Unusual Circumstance" on the FAFSA, and ways to support students who are attempting to change their status to independent. We will also discuss assisting students who are ineligible for federal student aid as well as those students whose parent is unwilling to complete their portion of the FAFSA. Participants will leave with clear guidance, real-world examples, and actionable steps to help students move forward.

F. Helping Students & Families Navigate the New Student Loan Landscape

Presenters: Nikki Vachon and Mila Tappan

Recent changes to student loan programs are creating new challenges for students and families, from updated Parent PLUS Loan limits to new Schedule of Reductions (SOR) regulations that can unexpectedly affect student loan borrowing. Understanding the rules has never been more important. This session will equip counselors, educators, and access partners with the knowledge needed to help students make informed borrowing decisions and avoid financial aid pitfalls that could impact their ability to complete a degree.