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Students should hurry to complete financial aid applications

OLYMPIA—Students who plan to attend college next fall and hope to receive student financial aid should not delay in filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for federal, state, and institutional student financial aid programs.

On Jan. 1, FAFSA applications became available for the 2011-12 academic year that begins in the fall. Students may complete the application online at www.fafsa.gov. Each institution has its own application deadline, and students should contact the financial aid office of the institution they wish to attend for specific deadline information.

Because many aid programs including the State Need Grant (SNG) are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, students are advised to complete the application process well in advance of deadlines. SNG is the state's largest need-based financial aid program. Last year, nearly 22,000 Washington students who met financial eligibility requirements for SNG did not receive grants because demand for financial aid exceeded the supply of budgeted dollars. This trend has continued in the 2010-11 academic year.

Financial hardship caused by the recession and a growing interest in attending college among many people are likely reasons for a surge in FAFSA applications over the past two years.

Information on applying for financial aid and a link to the online FAFSA application are available on the HECB website at www.hecb.wa.gov/paying/applying/applyingindex.asp

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