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FAFSA opens Saturday, October 1 ***Federal Application for Student Aid helps students pay for college***

(Lincoln, Neb.) EducationQuest Foundation is encouraging Nebraskans who plan to attend college during the 2023-2024 academic year to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), which opens Saturday, Oct. 1 at studentaid.gov.

The FAFSA is the application for federal, state and college-based financial aid. Colleges use information contained in the FAFSA to determine eligibility for financial aid, which can be a combination of scholarships, grants, work-study funds and student loans.

EducationQuest Foundation President and CEO Liz Koop said, "EducationQuest's mission is to improve access to higher education for every Nebraskan, which is why we stress FAFSA completion. The form is key to determining students' eligibility for financial aid. Last year, only 52 percent of Nebraska's high school seniors completed the FAFSA, which means millions of dollars in 'free' federal money to attend college went unclaimed."

A study by *NerdWallet* showed that about 4,100 Pell Grant-eligible Nebraska high school students from the Class of 2018 did not file a FAFSA, which equates to around \$15 million.

EducationQuest Foundation Senior Vice President for College Planning and Outreach Services Daphne Hall said, "College is a big investment, and the reality is most students need financial aid to make earning a degree possible. Filing your FAFSA early can make all the difference when it comes to paying for college. While the form itself can seem intimidating, it really isn't that complicated and EducationQuest can help with a variety of free online resources as well as personal assistance."

Prior to starting the FAFSA, applicants must create a Federal Student Aid Account at studentaid.gov. The parent or guardian of a dependent student must also create an account. User names and passwords should be stored in a safe location as they are required to access and sign the FAFSA. Income tax return information from 2021 will be required to complete the application.

More information about the FAFSA and free tools to help with the filing process are available at EducationQuest.org.

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EducationQuest Foundation is a nonprofit organization with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska. Headquartered in Lincoln, EducationQuest provides free college planning services, need-based scholarship programs, college access grants for high schools, and outreach services for community agencies. For more information, visit EducationQuest.org.