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Hi, I'm Susan Stephenson, Financial Aid Director at Eastern Wyoming College.

There are many different options for funding your education out there if you know where to look and how to apply. We'll touch on the most important sources of aid to apply for in this introductory presentation; see our other videos for details and step-by-step instructions on how to apply for each. It's important to realize that you must apply for *many* different types of aid to receive the most funding possible, and you must apply every year.

Let's start with a recap of the four types of aid.

Financial aid can be need-based or non-need-based and comes from many different sources, like the federal government, states, colleges and universities, and outside sources. Aid comes in many different types, usually narrowed down to four: grants, scholarships, employment and loans. Grants and scholarships are the best type of aid to apply for, because they are "free money" that do not have to be paid back! Grants are usually awarded on the basis of need. Scholarships can be awarded on the basis of merit or need or both. With student employment, you are working to earn money that doesn't have to be paid back. Loans are the very LAST form of aid that you should apply for because what you borrow **MUST** be paid back.

To start off, you should apply for admission at each institution you are interested in attending. You must be in the college's computer system first in order for the Financial Aid Office to match your applications and aid to you. Then, you'll want to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (or, FAFSA). Be sure to include the school codes of ALL schools you are interested in attending on this application. EWC's school code is 003929. Since this is THE federal application that determines your eligibility for the Pell Grant, Work-Study and Direct Student loans, you don't need to redo it at individual schools. Pay attention to schools' priority deadlines (EWC's is March 15), as meeting this date can give you eligibility for aid with limited funding. Then, complete scholarship applications **BY DEADLINE** for EACH institution to which you are applying. It is important to note that every college is different and may have different scholarship applications, deadlines and requirements. Complete any additional institutional forms that each school may send you as soon as possible; not returning requests for information can delay your aid. Be sure to ask for information, deadlines and applications at each institution to which you are applying and don't hesitate to contact the school's Financial Aid Office for help. TRiO's Educational Opportunity Centers can also help with any applications or questions about college you may have. Contact Wyoming's EOC program online at www.uwyo.edu/seo/eoc or by phone at 307.766.6189.

Let's briefly look at the main aid application process. To apply for federal grants, employment and loans, you must complete the FAFSA each year. This is a **FREE** application! You must go to fafsa.gov to apply; if you go to fafsa.com instead, there will be a hefty charge to process your application and you should **NEVER, EVER** pay to apply for aid of any kind! The FAFSA becomes available January 1 each year for the next academic year, so if you are a senior graduating May 2015, as of January 1, 2015, you can complete the FAFSA for the 2015-2016 school year. You will need to have several pieces of information available for yourself and your parents if you are considered a dependent student: Social Security Numbers, tax returns or estimates of income information, bank and investment account statements, and untaxed income information, to name a few.

There are seven basic steps to the FAFSA application. For step-by-step instructions, see the *Seven Easy Steps to the FAFSA* video. You will enter information for: your demographics; the school or schools you want your information sent to; and you will answer questions about your dependency status and parental information if you are considered dependent. You will also enter financial information for you (and your parents if you are dependent). This step is made easier by using the IRS Data Retrieval tool; there is also a detailed video on how this tool works. The last FAFSA steps are to sign the application using your PIN (one parent will have to sign, too, if you are dependent), and then click on the “SUBMIT” button. You will know you are finished when you see a confirmation page. A Student Aid Report will be e-mailed or mailed to you shortly thereafter.

If you are not yet a high school senior (or it’s not yet January 1st), you can still estimate your federal aid eligibility by completing the FAFSA4caster at fafsa4caster.ed.gov. This is not an official application, nor does it guarantee your aid eligibility, but it can help students of any age get general financial aid info, provide familiarity with the application, and help your family analyze costs and resources available before your senior year depending on the type of college you choose (like public or private, two-year or four-year).

Now that we have talked about the federal aid application, let’s talk about state aid applications. Each state may offer grants or other aid to its residents attending in-state schools. In Wyoming, the Hathaway Scholarship is a generous award program for Wyoming high school graduates who meet certain GPA, ACT and curriculum criteria. You must apply within two years of graduation at the Wyoming college you plan to attend. Pell-eligible Wyoming students may also be eligible to receive a Wyoming College Access Grant; to apply, students must complete the FAFSA by March 1st and go online to accept the award by August 1st. For Wyoming students who are not eligible for the Hathaway, there is the Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation Scholarship. Students may apply online at: www.thomas-foundation.com.

Your college is a large source of various aid programs. You may have to do one application or many separate applications, but your school can offer grants, scholarships, loans, employment, tuition remissions, resident assistant benefits—lots of opportunities are there for funding! Scholarships can be need-based or merit-based, and may require some level of academic achievement, usually a minimum GPA or ACT score and may be based on activities or talents, like art, photography, theatre, journalism, music, or athletics; or based on being in student government or because of your major or career interests. Some scholarships look at community involvement or extracurricular activities while some are established for students from a particular county or area, or who graduated from a specific high school. It is crucial to pay attention to deadlines—missing an application deadline can mean losing scholarship funding. Also, don’t be afraid to promote your accomplishments in scholarship essays; this is sometimes the only way schools know if you are deserving of a scholarship, so be complete, use proper grammar and spelling, and detail your achievements. Please note that every college has a different scholarship application process, and scholarships vary widely school to school.

Don’t forget to apply for other aid, like Workforce Development, Voc Rehab, or Bureau of Indian Affairs if you’re eligible; Veterans benefits are a great resource, or use your school’s payment plan option. Apply for outside scholarships from private agencies, civic organizations, or churches, or seek sponsorships from employers or local businesses—it never hurts to ask if there is any assistance available.

It is important to know the requirements and deadlines for ALL applications, including admissions, financial aid, and housing at ALL institutions you might be interested in attending. Research multiple aid sources, like federal, state, institutional and outside scholarships, and other agencies, like Workforce. Make sure your applications are complete, neat, and signed. Keep copies for your records and be sure to reapply every year for applications that require it. Deadlines are essential for

not missing out on aid. Most importantly, ask questions and request help! That's what we're here for!

You may be eligible for MANY types of aid, but you must APPLY to find out! For more information on financial aid and how to apply, please contact us at 307.532.8224 or e-mail us at financialaid@ewc.wy.edu.