VCU Student Financial Management Center

Understanding and Completing the 2025-2026 FAFSA

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2025-2026 FAFSA Terminology

- **Account Username and Password (FSA ID)**: username and password used to log in to all Federal Student Aid products and tools on StudentAid.gov.
- **Contributor:** any individual required to provide consent and approval for federal tax information (FTI) along with their signature on the FAFSA form, including the student; the student's spouse; a biological or adoptive parent; or the parent's spouse (stepparent).
- **Primary or Custodial Parent:** for a dependent student whose parents are divorced or separated, the primary or custodial parent is the parent who provides the greater portion of the student's financial support and is required to provide their information (and if applicable their spouse's information) on the FAFSA form.
- **Provisionally Independent Student:** if a student indicates they have unusual circumstances or indicates for the first time they are unaccompanied and homeless, or at risk of being homeless (without a designation from a specified entity), the FAFSA will consider the student to be provisionally independent. The SAI will remain provisional and not official until the student's college or career school makes a final determination. For special circumstances, please contact sfmc@vcu.edu.

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- VCU FAFSA School Code: 003735
- VCU priority deadline this year is March 1st
- Students and parents need to create a FSA ID at Studentaid.gov. It will take 1-3 business days for a newly created FSA ID to be verified by the Social Security Administration. For individuals without SSNs verification can take longer.
  - If biological parents live in the same home and are either married or unmarried, both parents need a FSA ID
  - If biological parents are not together and the primary financial parent is remarried, both primary parent and stepparent need a FSA ID
  - If biological parents are not together and the primary financial parent is not married only the primary parent needs a FSA ID
  - If either contributor already has an existing FSA ID, do not attempt to create another. Follow steps to reset FSA ID username and/or password.

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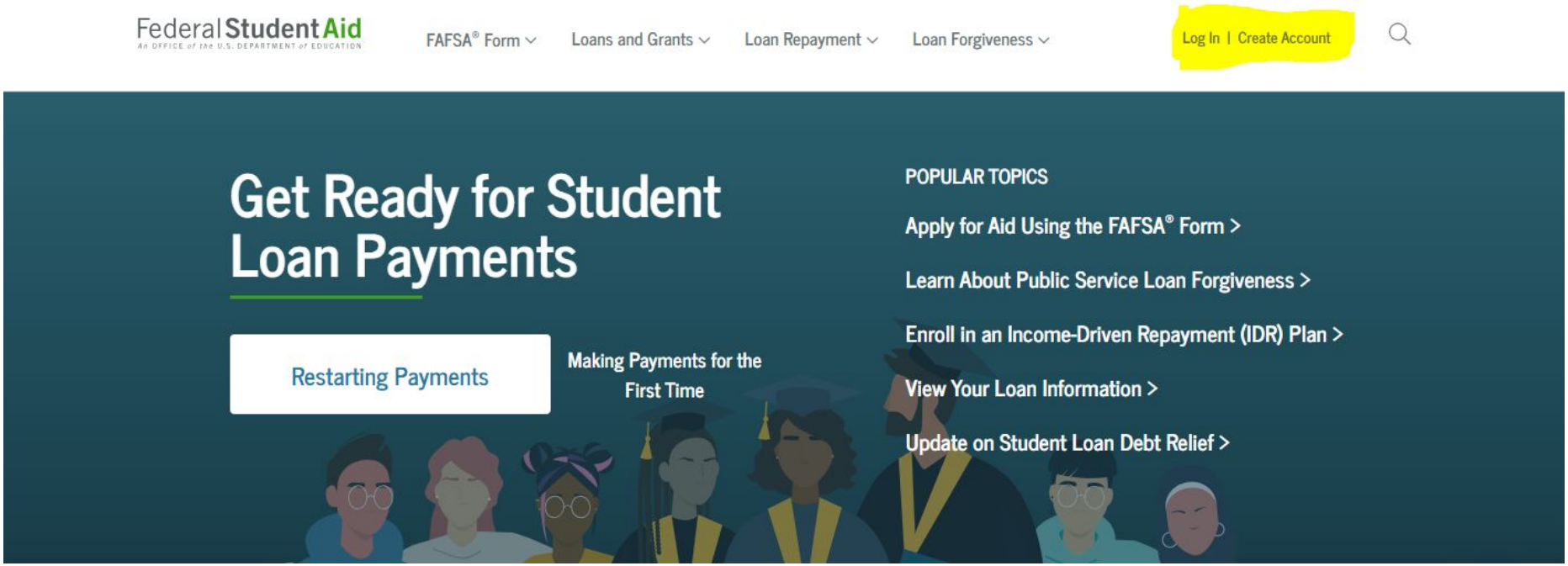
Create Account



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Create an Account

Whether you're a student, parent, or borrower, you'll need to create your own account to apply for, receive, and manage your federal student aid.

Get Started

Already have an account? Log In

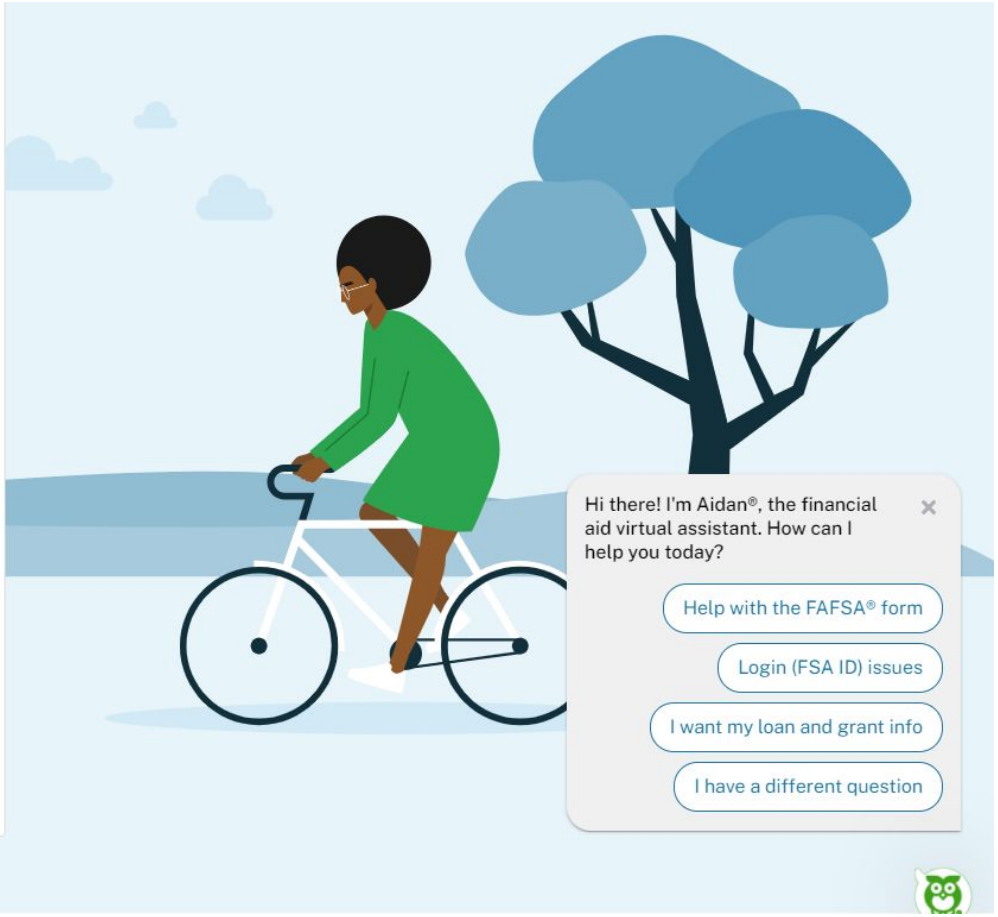
What You Can Do With Your Account

You must have an account to do the following:

- Fill out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form online
- Complete other online forms (such as the *Master Promissory Note*) required to receive aid
- Review the federal student aid you've received

What You'll Need

- Your Social Security number (if applicable)
- Your own email address



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Step 1 of 7

Personal Information

I understand that I'll be required to certify that the information I provide to create an account is true and correct and that I'm the individual I claim to be.

If I'm not the person I claim to be, I understand that I'm not authorized to proceed and that I should exit this form now. If I provide false or misleading information, I understand that I might be subject to a fine, prison time, or both.

First Name

Middle Initial

Last Name

Date of Birth

Month *Day* *Year*

Social Security Number

☐ I don't have a Social Security number.

Cancel Continue

VCU

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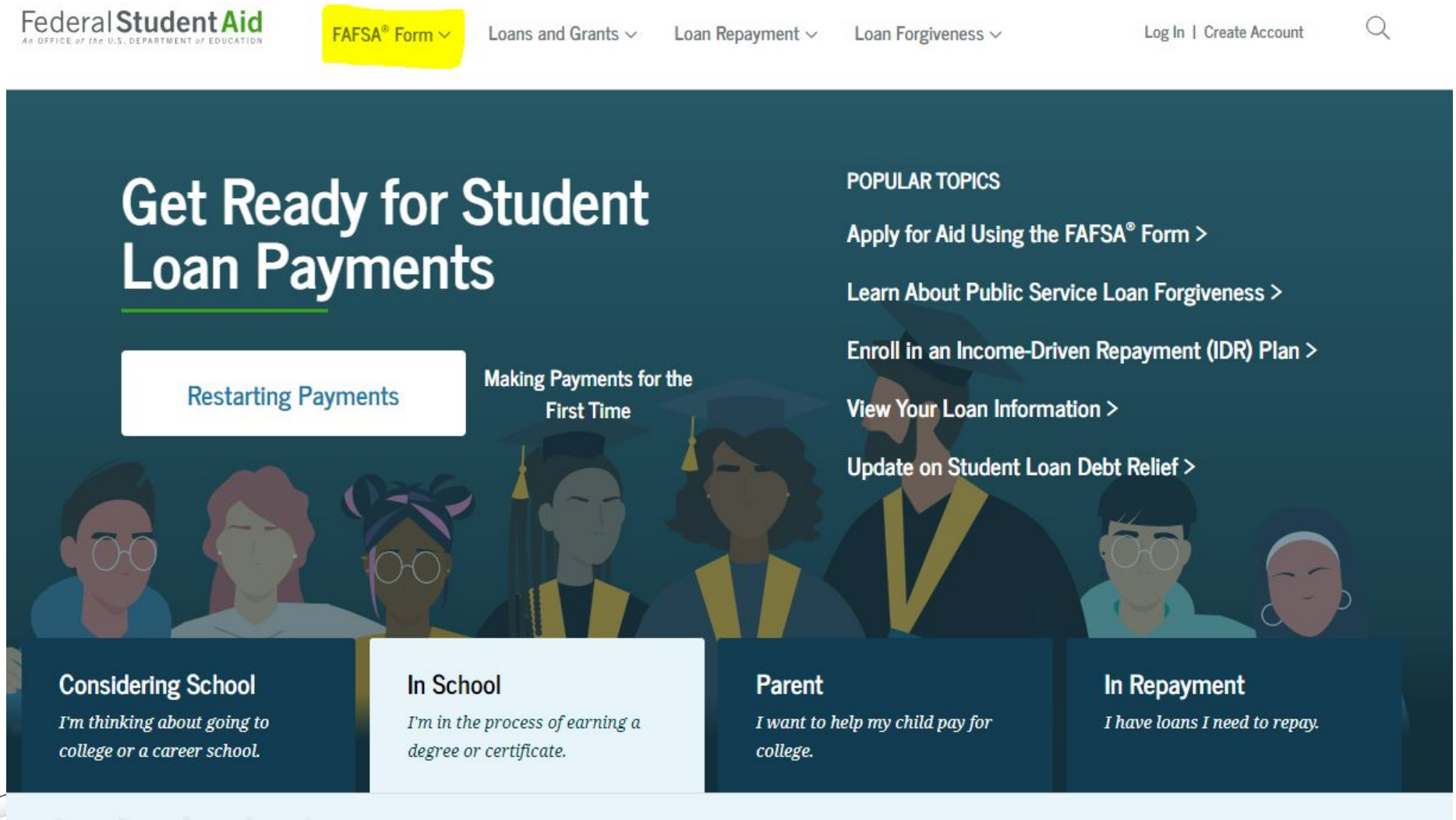

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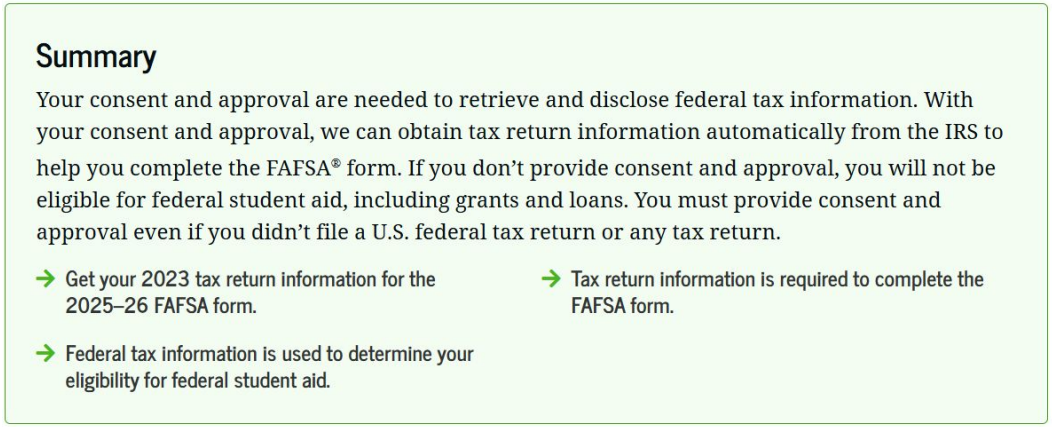
At the beginning of the 2025-2026 FAFSA, each student will be required to provide consent and approval for federal tax information (FTI) along with their signature on the FAFSA® form. If consent is denied, a pop-up will appear informing the student without consent they will not be eligible for Federal Student Aid.

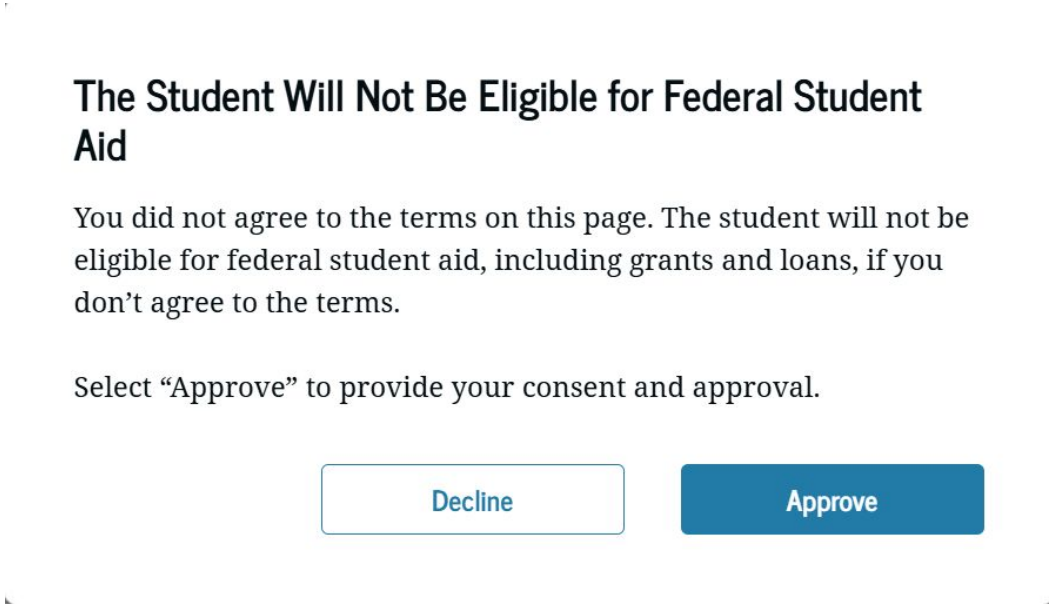


Summary

Your consent and approval are needed to retrieve and disclose federal tax information. With your consent and approval, we can obtain tax return information automatically from the IRS to help you complete the FAFSA® form. If you don't provide consent and approval, you will not be eligible for federal student aid, including grants and loans. You must provide consent and approval even if you didn't file a U.S. federal tax return or any tax return.

- → Get your 2023 tax return information for the 2025–26 FAFSA form.
- → Tax return information is required to complete the FAFSA form.
- → Federal tax information is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid.

If the student does not give consent, the following pop up will appear and you will be given the opportunity to provide consent.



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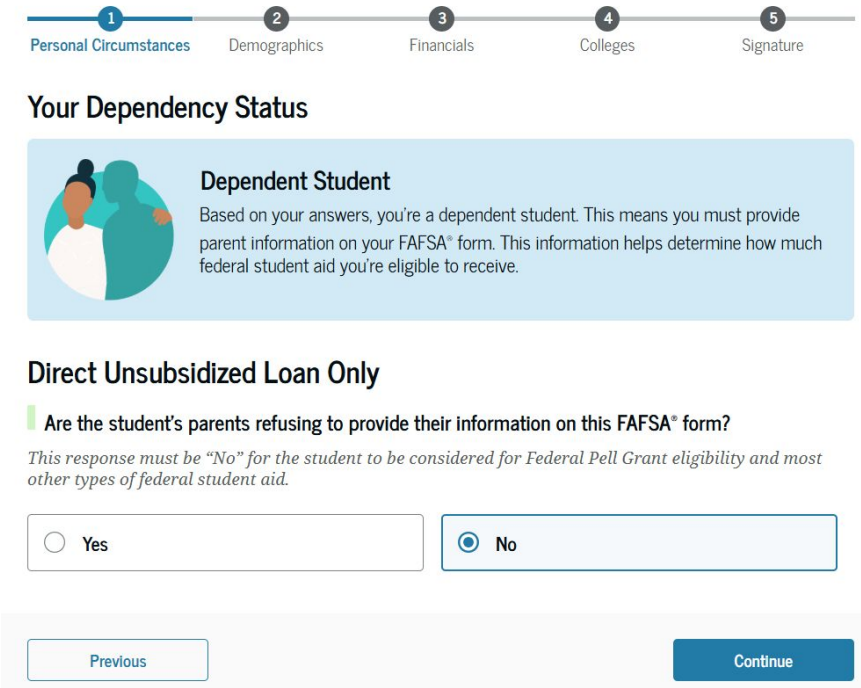
- Allow student to begin the form first and once they invite the parent (s), continue to finish their portion of the FAFSA and sign it before the parent enters the FAFSA.
- Many families are getting tripped up by this question:

In order to invite your parents the proper answer to this question is "No". If you answer "Yes" it passes the student through without giving option to invite parent (s)



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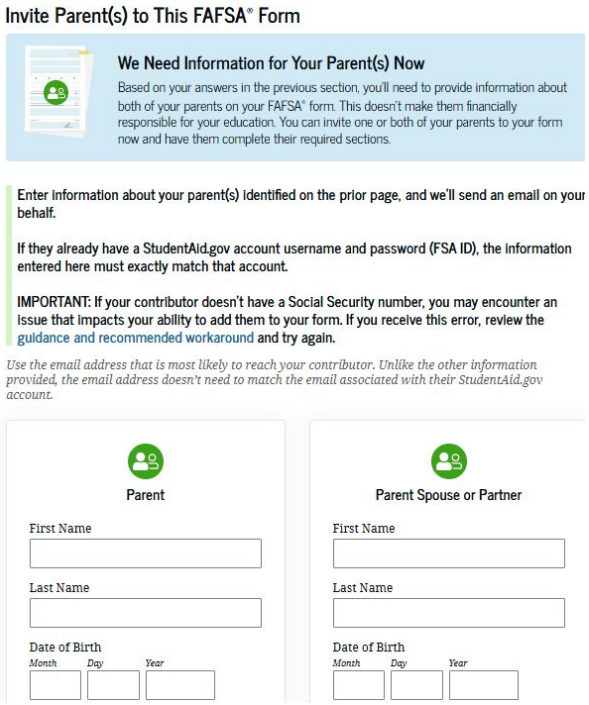
What is a Parent?

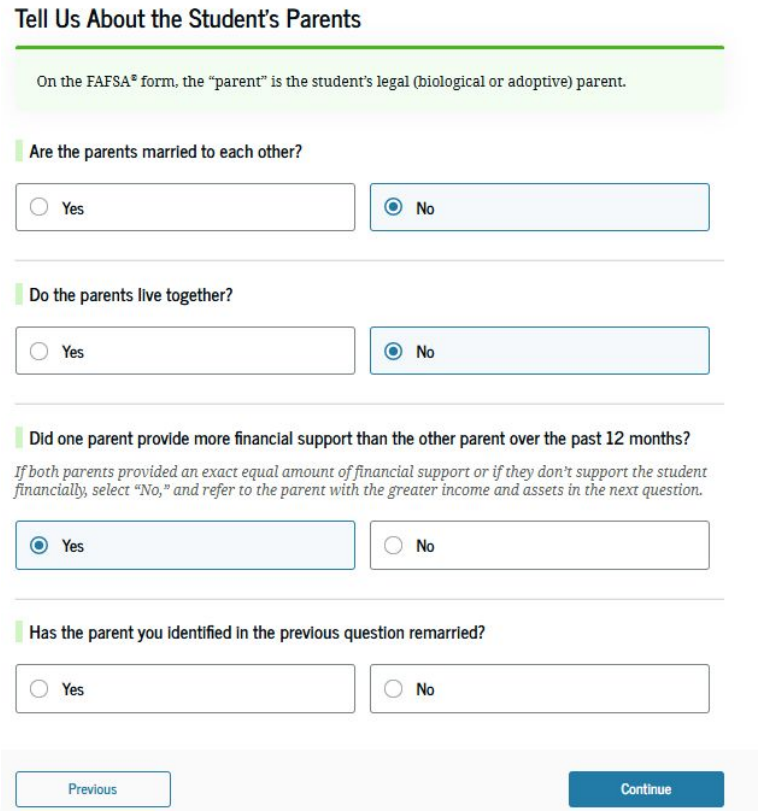
A biological or adoptive parent and/ or the parent's spouse (stepparent). If your caretaker does not fit the above definition: answer FAFSA questions appropriately and email sfmc@vcu.edu

The student **HAS** to invite the parent (s) to complete the FAFSA by way of the email address supplied by the student (does not have to be the parent email address associated with the parent FSA ID)



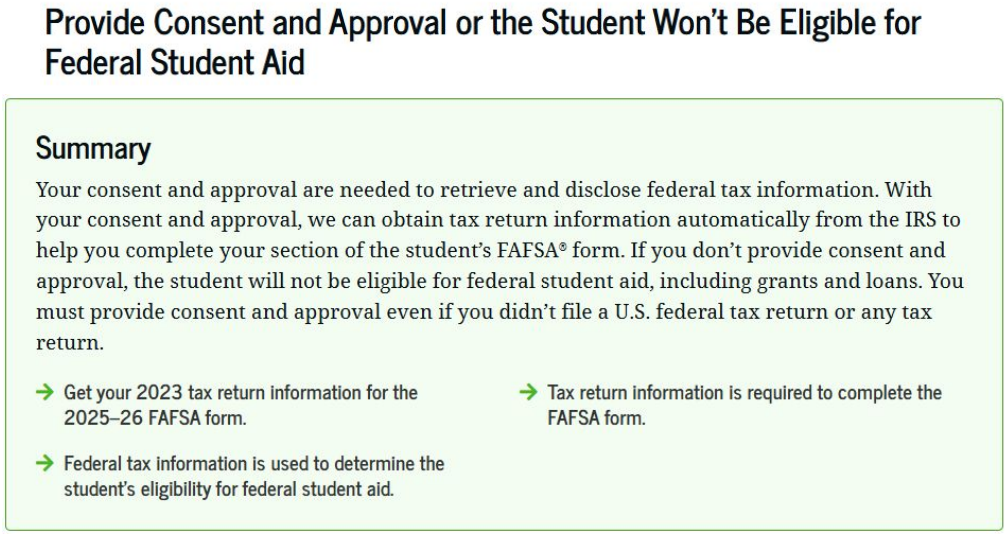
Which Parent?

Primary or Custodial Parent: for a dependent student whose parents are divorced or separated, the primary or custodial parent is the parent who provides the greater portion of the student's financial support and is required to provide their information (and if applicable their spouse's information) on the FAFSA form.



Parental Consent?

Once the parent accepts the invite, before they can start the FAFSA, they will be required to provide consent and approval for federal tax information (FTI) along with their signature on the FAFSA® form. If consent is denied, a pop-up will appear informing that the student will not be eligible for Federal Student Aid.



Provide Consent and Approval or the Student Won't Be Eligible for Federal Student Aid

Summary

Your consent and approval are needed to retrieve and disclose federal tax information. With your consent and approval, we can obtain tax return information automatically from the IRS to help you complete your section of the student's FAFSA® form. If you don't provide consent and approval, the student will not be eligible for federal student aid, including grants and loans. You must provide consent and approval even if you didn't file a U.S. federal tax return or any tax return.

- Get your 2023 tax return information for the 2025–26 FAFSA form.
- Federal tax information is used to determine the student's eligibility for federal student aid.
- Tax return information is required to complete the FAFSA form.

What's Next?

- If you have already attempted to complete your FAFSA and received an error, contact the SFMC for assistance.
- VCU will not begin to receive the completed 2025-2026 FAFSAs from the Department of Education until January
- Financial aid packages are estimated to be completed by the end of February for newly accepted students

VCU Student Financial Management Center

We are Here to Help!

Virtually

Website: sfs.vcu.edu
Email: sfmc@vcu.edu

Drop-In Zoom Room
Monday - Friday
9am-11am & 2pm-3:30pm

https://vcu.zoom.us/j/6739682425

In Person

Harris Hall, First Floor
1015 Floyd Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23284

Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Questions???