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## IMPORTANT NOTICE ON: Applying for a Pennsylvania State Grant

Students who have completed the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) may not have a complete State Grant record. This is why...

When a student completes the FAFSA, they have taken the initial step in applying for a Pennsylvania State Grant. However, there are data elements required by the State Grant formula that aren't on the FAFSA. So once a student submits a FAFSA and the record is sent to PHEAA, PHEAA checks the student's record to see if the additional items are lacking (always the case for freshmen) or are complete. If the items were completed on a prior year form, the State Grant record is complete (assuming the new FAFSA is complete and there are no major changes). But if the required State Grant items are lacking, PHEAA contacts the student instructing them to take the necessary steps to complete the State Grant Form (SGF). Students who have a valid email address receive the following message:

*"This email is being sent to you because the information we received from your FAFSA indicates that you may be eligible for a Pennsylvania State Grant. To fulfill our mission of helping Pennsylvania residents afford higher education, PHEAA would like to invite you to apply for your PA State Grant online."*

Additional instructions tell the student how to go about the completion process. The appropriate Internet link is included with the instructions. Student are told to go to the website, complete and print the form, then sign it and mail it to PHEAA. PHEAA will send two email notices like this to the student. If the student still doesn't respond, PHEAA will mail the student a blank SGF with instructions to complete and sign it, and mail it to the Agency. That is the final reminder the student will receive.

If the student does not have a valid email address they will receive their SGF and instructions in the mail. Again, they must complete and sign the form and mail it to PHEAA.

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**New items were added to the SGF for the 2010-11 award year.** These items include a question about veteran status (the date of discharge if the student is indeed a veteran), the state that issued the driver's license or photo I.D., and the state and date of legal residency for both the student and parent(s).

All students should be advised to watch for messages from PHEAA regarding their State Grant status and encouraged to respond to any messages as soon as possible. The record must be complete before any State Grant funds will be disbursed.

## 'Tis The Season

No, we're not talking about winter, or ski season, or even the holidays. **We're talking about Financial Aid Season!**

As your students wrap up the admission application process for the schools they are considering, it's time for them and their parents to begin thinking about the financial aid process. Paying for college is becoming more difficult each year, so students must be sure to capitalize on every opportunity they have to secure funding and reduce their out-of-pocket expenses. This is especially true for certain populations, such as first generation students, foster kids, and students from low income families.

### » HERE ARE A FEW FINANCIAL AID HINTS AND REMINDERS FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS:

- The FAFSA application process can begin any time now. Students should check college websites for their financial aid deadlines and submit the FAFSA by the earliest deadline date of all potential schools.
- The FAFSA should be submitted no later than May 1<sup>st</sup> to ensure PA State Grant consideration.
- The Financial Aid Office will be their primary point of contact in this process
- Students should submit the CSS Profile only for those schools that require it.
- Students should begin (or continue) their online scholarship searches.
- Review FAFSA application sites such as Education Planner and Fast Web.
- Watch out for scholarship scams and "too good to be true" offers.
- Students must respond to their colleges' requests for additional information.
- Students will receive an email from PHEAA requesting additional information.
- Families should begin thinking about how much they may need to borrow.

Many families fear the financial aid process. It seems confusing, frustrating or intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. There are five sources of free information and assistance available to them – your office, the Financial Aid Office at the colleges they are considering, the PHEAA Regional Office that serves their area, printed literature we have available, and websites. Using those resources, following these tips, and using the online FAFSA application process can significantly ease their frustration and make "Financial Aid Season" a bit easier to manage.

# An Update on PHEAA-Related Appropriations

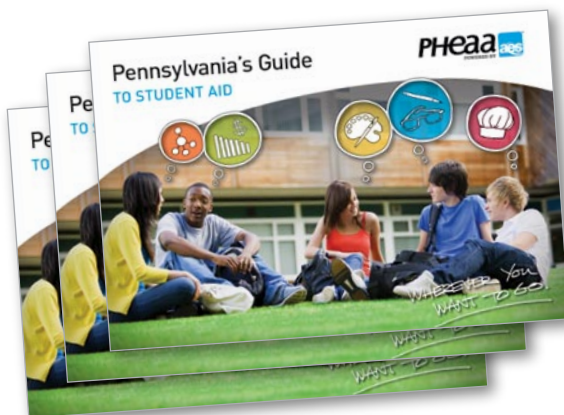
Since the Commonwealth Budget passed late in 2009, a review of the changes in program appropriations may be helpful for those who are interested in the higher education funding process.

## » 2009-2010 CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROPRIATIONS

- The State Grant Program went from a funding of \$407,413,000 in 2008-2009, to an appropriation of \$403,632,000 in 2009-2010. This represents a 1% decrease in funding. It should be noted that PHEAA has been able to maintain the maximum award from 2008-2009 of \$4,120 for 2009-2010. However, the average award for 2009-2010 will drop to \$2,728 from the average of \$2,794 for 2008-2009.
- The Agricultural Education Loan Forgiveness Program had a funding of \$84,000 in 2008-2009 and that has been reduced to \$71,000 which is a decrease of 15%.
- The Matching Funds appropriation was \$13,938,000 for 2008-2009 and that same amount has been provided in 2009-2010.
- The Nursing Education Initiative has been reduced from \$2,418,000 in 2008-2009, to \$1,000,000 in 2009-2010. That is a decrease of 59%.
- The New Economy Technology Program or NETS had funding of \$4,293,000 in 2008-2009 and the funding for this program in 2009-2010 is \$3,778,000, reflecting a decrease of 12%.

## PA Student Aid Guide Reminder!

Counselors are reminded that they may order printed copies of Pennsylvania's Guide to Student Aid. The Guide is Pennsylvania's most comprehensive financial aid planning publication and is available at no cost. Pennsylvania's Guide to Student Aid offers in-depth information on the federal student aid process and includes details on most of Pennsylvania's aid programs, including the need-based Pennsylvania State Grant.



The PA Guide is a valuable resource for students who are in their junior or senior year of high school. Students interested in continuing their education should begin researching their financial aid options as early as possible. **Counselors may order copies of Pennsylvania's Guide to Student Aid online on PHEAA's website at [PHEAA.org/counselors](http://PHEAA.org/counselors), or by contacting the PHEAA Regional Office which serves their school.**

Pennsylvania's Guide to Student Aid may be distributed to students at Financial Aid Nights, College Fairs and Career Fairs. The PA Guide should also be made available for students to pick up at the high school guidance office.

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## PA Student Aid Guide Reminder! – continued –

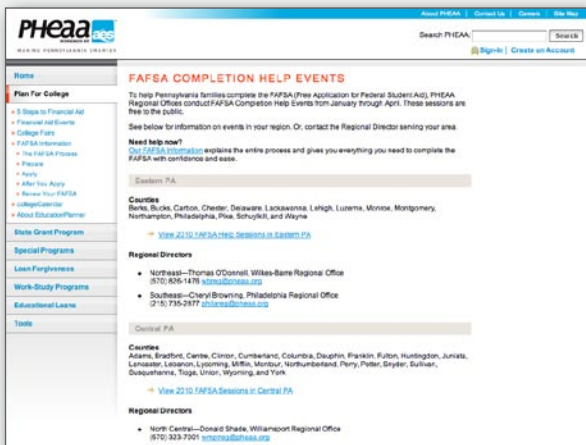
One printed copy of Pennsylvania's Guide to Student Aid was sent to each PA high school last fall. Counselors were advised to order additional copies of the PA Guide online. Ordering the PA Guide online streamlined the distribution process and proved to be a significant cost-saving measure for PHEAA.

Counselors may use the PA Guide to assist students with: information on federal and state grants, scholarships, federal student loans and work-study programs; eligibility information, application procedures and deadlines; timelines for both high school juniors and seniors preparing for college; helpful resources and contact information; ways to identify financial need and how families may qualify for aid; tools to help create a student budget that estimates expenses; online resources for forms, research, calculators, and much more.

## Statewide FAFSA Completion Sessions

Students must complete the FAFSA, to qualify for federal aid, most state grants, scholarships, student loans, work-study programs, the PA State Grant, and many school-based student aid programs.

Beginning this month and continuing through April, PHEAA Regional Directors, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (PASFAA), are offering more than 150 FAFSA Completion Help Events. These statewide events are free and open to the public. They are designed to offer families individual guidance in completing the FAFSA.



The schedule for these events can be found at PHEAA.org, under "Fill out the FAFSA," or [click here](#). Please help us by encouraging all of your families to take advantage of this free service.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THESE EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR PHEAA REGIONAL OFFICE.**

Sharon	724.347.5891
Pittsburgh	412.690.6980
Williamsport	570.323.7001
Harrisburg	717.720.2055
Wilkes-Barre	570.826.1476
Philadelphia	215.735.2877

## 2010-11 State Grant Program

It's hard to believe that your seniors will be off to college this fall and the need to impress upon them the importance of applying for financial aid is critical. The FAFSA is the first step in a sequence of events that begins the financial aid process and is the starting point for applying for the Pennsylvania State Grant Program.

**First-time applicants for a PA State Grant must complete the 2010-11 State Grant Form (SGF).** For students who supplied a valid email address on their FAFSAs, they will be notified via email to complete the SGF at [PHEAA.org](http://PHEAA.org) in Account Access. This secure website provides the student with the SGF and allows them to view their eligibility and award information online. New this year

to the SGF are questions regarding the veteran status of the applicant, the state in which the applicant is licensed to drive, and additional state residency items. These are items that were deleted from the FAFSA, but are essential for the State Grant Program. You may receive inquiries from students or parents about these questions. Student began receiving SGF notifications during the last week in January.

**Your PHEAA Regional Director is always available as a resource** for any questions regarding the financial aid process for students and families. Please be sure to avail yourself of their services.

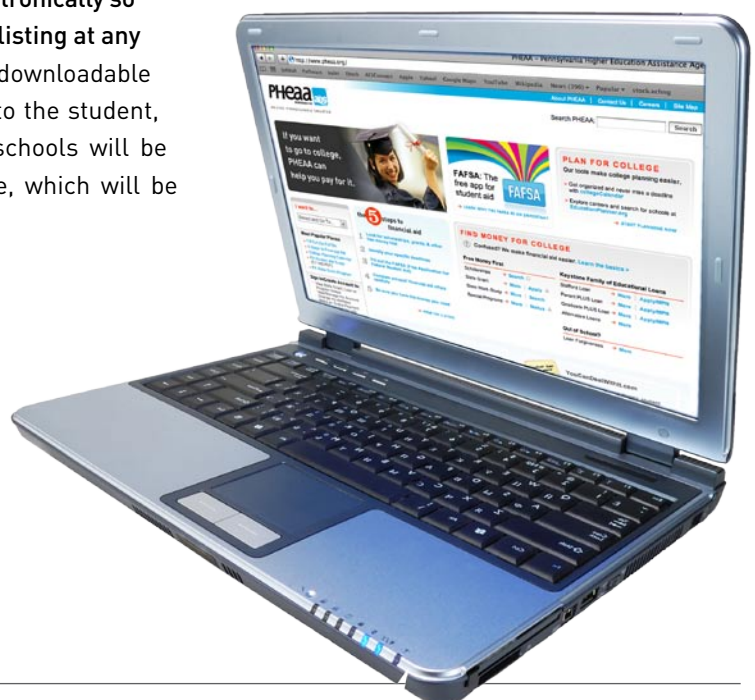
## New Service Available For Counselors!

For many years, PHEAA has provided students who took the SAT/ACT test during their junior year in high school with information regarding financial aid for college and the importance of filing the FAFSA. High school counselors were notified with paper rosters of the names and addresses of these students in December. A second mailing was provided in March to indicate which of the students had already filed a FAFSA. This allowed ample time to follow-up with those high school seniors who had not completed a FAFSA at that point. This list was a static, single point in time report.

**For next year, PHEAA will be providing this service electronically so that high school counselors can view or retrieve their listing at any time with live data.** The information will also be on a downloadable report that can be used to generate correspondence to the student, if so desired. This spring, a small number of high schools will be participating in a pilot program of this added service, which will be available to all high schools in 2011.

The fall Counselor Workshops sponsored by PASFAA and PHEAA will provide additional details on this new online functionality, along with training materials. Your PHEAA Regional Director will be able to assist you as you gain access to this important information.

**Stay tuned!**



# 2009 November PHEAA/PASFAA Financial Aid Workshops for Pennsylvania Counselors

As school counselors, you are on the front lines of advising Pennsylvania's youth about higher education and how to afford its cost. As such, PHEAA and PASFAA are greatly appreciative of your attendance at the annual 2009 November PHEAA/PASFAA Financial Aid Workshops for Pennsylvania Counselors.

**For the current 2009-10 school year, 1,388 counselors made it to one of the 41 workshops that were held statewide.**

As the annual financial aid workshops are geared to counselors with a lot to little financial aid knowledge, we encourage all counselors, regardless of their years of experience, to attend a workshop every year.

While the underlying principals of financial aid do not change dramatically from year to year, the delivery system of the aid system often does. One of the things

that those in attendance learned at this year's workshop is that starting 1/28/2010, the USDE launched a pilot program giving students and parents an option to automatically transfer data from their 2008 IRS tax forms into a 2009-10 FAFSA. If the pilot program is successful, this new option will be built into all future FAFSA forms. Wow, talk about convenience, ease and accuracy! This was just one of the many updates provided at the workshops.

If you were unable to attend one of the workshops this year, but would like to receive the materials distributed at the event, please contact your local PHEAA Regional Director. **The dates/sites of the November 2010 PHEAA/PASFAA Financial Aid Workshops will be listed in the May issue of this newsletter.** To avoid schedule conflicts, please review the workshop listing at that time and reserve a date on your calendar to attend a workshop next year. We're looking forward to seeing you then.

## BREAKDOWN BY REGIONS OF 2009 COUNSELOR WORKSHOPS

	Workshops	Attendees
<b>Northwestern PA</b>	7	157
<b>Southwestern PA</b>	9	351
<b>North Central PA</b>	6	153
<b>South Central PA</b>	7	230
<b>Northeastern PA</b>	8	320
<b>Southeastern PA</b>	4	177
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1,388</b>



**AVAILABLE NOW!**  
**New FAFSA 2010–11 Campaign Materials**

[PHEAA's FAFSA Toolkit](#) now contains new items specifically for secondary schools. Download these free materials to help remind your students to renew their FAFSA. In addition, look for free printed materials on the [Online Ordering page](#).



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PHEAA's mission is to create access to higher education. We're about making Pennsylvania smarter. The resources we provide to Pennsylvania each year through scholarships, grants, outreach, loan forgiveness programs and many other services allow Pennsylvania students to reach their full potential. To go beyond. To discover.

**THINK PHEAA FIRST FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL AID.**

**REGIONAL SERVICES**  
1200 N. SEVENTH STREET  
HARRISBURG, PA 17102-1444  
800.692.7392

PHEAA/AES is one of many Guarantors participating in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). A student or parent borrower may obtain a FFELP loan from a lender that uses PHEAA/AES as the Guarantor or any other participating lender. These materials have been developed and paid for by PHEAA/AES for informational purposes. The information contained herein is believed to be accurate at the time of printing. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the law and the industry, information contained in this document may become outdated and PHEAA/AES does not guarantee the accuracy of the information herein. You should verify that this information is correct.

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