Verification Policy 2015-2016

Each year the U.S. Department of Education (ED) requires schools participating in the distribution of federal aid to verify the consistency and accuracy of data submitted on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The Central Processing System (CPS) selects which applications are to be verified.

The verification process involves the review of federal tax documents and household information to ensure the accuracy of the FAFSA application. To complete verification, applicants may be asked to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool or submit their federal tax transcripts, and provide other documents to Student Financial Assistance Office.

**Who may be selected:** Any student who completes a FAFSA may be chosen for verification.

The Student Financial Assistance Office will verify all mandatory items identified by ED. This could include; household size, the number in college, number of exemptions, adjusted gross income, taxes paid, untaxed income, untaxed IRS distributions, education credits, IRA deductions, tax exempt interest, receipt of food stamps and child support paid. In addition, some students will be required to verify High School/GED completion status as well as complete a statement of Educational Purpose. Our office can also verify discretionary items if we deem necessary.

Student Financial Aid staff must resolve any conflicting information before disbursing financial aid to the students account. If an applicant’s financial aid information requires reprocessing, based on the verification process, corrections will be made electronically administered by the financial aid office. These corrections will generate an updated Student Aid Report (SAR) which will be sent, usually by email, to the student from the CPS. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) may change based on the corrections made. If conflicting information is discovered after aid is awarded or disbursed the Student Financial Assistance Office must resolve the conflicting information. If this changes the students financial aid awarded the student may be required to repay aid if they received in excess of their eligibility. All conflicts must be resolved regardless of whether the student was selected for verification or not.

**Timeline and Deadlines:** Please allow three weeks for the verification process to be completed. The process might take longer if we receive incomplete documents or require additional information.

Your financial aid funds cannot be disbursed to your S&T account until verification has been completed. Please return the requested documents to the financial aid office as soon as possible.

Verification must be completed by **October 31st for the Fall Semester** and **March 1st for the Spring Semester** to allow processing time for your financial aid.

**Documents Requested:** Students chosen for verification could be required to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool on the FAFSA or submit a copy of their IRS Tax Return Transcripts. This is a requirement from the
Department of Education to guarantee the accuracy of the household income reported on the FAFSA and to insure that federal aid is awarded properly. Occasionally unintended errors are made on the FAFSA application and this process will verify the information and make any corrections that are required.

If you filed your federal tax return electronically you should be able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool on the FAFSA or request a Tax Return Transcript within 2-3 weeks of filing. If you filed a paper return, you should be able to request a copy within 8-11 weeks.

Using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool is the preferred way to fulfill the income verification request. However, not all applicants can use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. If any of the following apply to the applicant then he/she cannot use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool and will have to submit a Tax Return Transcript to the financial aid office.

- Parents with all zeros for SSN.
- Any student or parent with a marital status date of January 1, 2014 or later.
- Any student or parent who indicates they have not already filed a tax return or will not file a tax return married independent applicant and spouse who filed separate returns.
- Parents of a dependent student who filed separate tax returns.
- The applicant, parent, or spouse, as applicable, who has filed an amended return.
- If you use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool and alter the data, you will be required to submit a copy of the IRS Tax Return Transcript.

After the verification document request have been met, Student Financial Assistance will compare the information provided on the FAFSA and may ask for additional information if we find discrepancies that cannot be explained.

If you have received a financial aid package before completing verification, your aid eligibility will be reevaluated by your financial aid counselor after verification has been completed. You will be notified by email if your awards change after verification.