Graduate Financial Aid Options & Process

File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa for the current academic year. A new FAFSA is required ***each*** academic year you apply for financial aid and you may submit it as early as October 1st for the coming Fall term. The 2026/27 FAFSA will need to be completed for Fall 2026, Spring 2027, and Summer 2027 aid.

If you have not completed a 2026/27 FAFSA, follow the steps below.

Apply for FSA ID: https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch
Apply for Financial Aid: https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa Make sure to click on 2026-27 FAFSA
School Code: 001150
What happens after FAFSA is completed: The Financial Aid Office receives your information electronically and students are packaged with financial aid once all requested documents are received. Once packaged with aid, a message will be sent to the student to review My Sac State Account. Via My Sac State students can review messages, to do lists, and holds and accept, reduce, or decline aid.

Types of aid available for graduate students and how to acquire each type of loan:

- **Direct Unsubsidized Loan**: Annual loan limit (Fall/Spring/Summer) of $20,500
- **Alternative Loans:** will need to apply with lender of your choice

Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan

Loans are for graduate/professional students and allow borrowing up to $20,500 per year $20,500 per year, with an aggregate limit of $100,000 (excluding any undergraduate loan debt), regardless of financial need. The combined lifetime maximum for all federal student loans is $257,500, not including Parent PLUS loans.

Due to new provisions under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, enrollment level now affects loan eligibility. Students enrolled in fewer than full-time units may have their annual loan amounts prorated. For additional details, visit the Federal Student Aid (FSA) website.

Interest rates for 2025/26 are fixed at 7.94% for graduate students. There is a 1.057% loan origination fee on all Direct Unsubsidized Loans that is deducted at disbursement. Interest rates and loan fees are subject to change pending federal legislative ruling

Repayment begins six months after leaving school or dropping below half time. Interest accrues upon disbursement, and any unpaid interest is added to the loan principal at repayment.

Unsubsidized loans require a FAFSA, Entrance Counseling, and Master Promissory Note (MPN). The unsubsidized loan will be offered to students as part of their financial aid award package. The student must accept the loan, if interested, and complete the following two requirements:

- Entrance Loan Counseling
- Master Promissory Note (MPN)

They will appear on your To-Do list within 48 hours and can be completed via the link on the Federal Student Aid website.

Alternative (Private) Loans

Private loans are also called educational loans that students apply for directly through a private lender. These loans are not part of the federal financial aid application (FAFSA).

Private loans are typically higher-cost loans and should only be considered as a last resort after all federal financial aid options (including federal student loans) have been exhausted.

Important Things to Know

- Approval is based on the lender's requirements
- Interest rates and fees vary by lender
- You are encouraged to compare lenders to find the best option for your situation.

Application and Certification Process

- Apply directly with a private lender
- The lender will send the loan to our university for certification only after credit approval.
- Once the Financial Aid Office receives the certification request certification is typically completed within 3 weeks

Be sure to regularly check the following for updates or required next steps:

- Your **To-Do List**
- Your **Sac State messages**

Loan Disbursement Timeline

- If certified before the semester, funds will arrive no earlier than one week before the semester starts.
- After the semester begins, a minimum 10-day right-to-cancel period applies before funds are sent to the school.
- Sacramento State will disburse funds once they are received from the lender.

Revised 4/27/2026

Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan limits

ANNUAL DIRECT LOAN LIMITS (Fall/Spring/Summer)	$20,500
AGGREGATE LIFETIME DIRECT LOAN LIMITS Graduate/Professional	$100,000 (not including undergraduate debt). Total lifetime maximum of $257,500 for all federal student loans combined (not including Parent PLUS loans).

Enrollment and Disbursement

Census: Census is the date the University determines and locks enrollment for the semester. For disbursement to occur you need to be **registered in all units for the semester** at Census. Fall 2026 Census: September 28, 2026 Spring 2027 Census: February 19, 2027	**Disbursement:** Financial Aid disbursement will occur once you begin attending ½ time (4 graduate units) for the semester. For example, if you are registered for a course that begins June 3rd and a course that begins July 15th, you will not receive your aid until the week of July 15th.

Steps to completing the Financial Aid Process each academic year you apply for aid

1. File the FAFSA at https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa for the current academic year. A new FAFSA is required each academic year you apply for financial aid. The **deadline** to apply for Financial Aid for the **Fall 2026** semester is **November 15, 2026**. The deadline to apply for **Spring 2027** semester is **April 25, 2027**. The FAFSA and all requested financial aid documents need to be filed prior to the end of classes for the semester.

2. After the FAFSA is filed, you will need to log into your MySacState Student Center from the main page www.csus.edu to check your ToDo List and Holds on your My Sac State regularly for requested documents, service indicators, and message from the Financial Aid Office
   a. A College of Continuing Education information (CCE) request form will be required to be submitted each academic year (**Fall and/or Spring**) and will be listed on your ToDo list
   b. A separate form is required for Summer aid and will be available on your Student Center under Financial Aid links between mid-April and June. Awards for summer are based on remaining Direct Loan eligibility not used in the prior Fall and/or Spring semesters

3. When all requirements are met, you will receive a notice of your aid offers via saclink (student) email
   a. Processing time can take up to 4-6 weeks upon receipt of ALL submitted documents to the Financial Aid Office before you receive notification of your award.
      i. Processing times may increase during peak periods and near the start of the semester.
   b. During this process, you will be able to accept, reduce or decline loans offered to you
      i. Eligible students will be offered an Unsubsidized Loan at their maximum eligible amounts for the Fall and/or Spring semesters. *If full $20,500 Direct Unsubsidized Loan is accepted, this would leave no remaining eligibility for summer.*
   c. Sac State will then certify the loan(s) and transmit your loan certification(s)
   d. Within 48 hours your ToDo list will be populated with the Master Promissory Note (MPN) and Entrance Loan Counselling (ELC) link. Both documents must be completed before disbursements can be made

4. Enroll in all courses for the semester by Census for each semester. Census is the date the University determines and locks you enrollment for the semester. Financial aid will determine your aid based on enrolled units at Census. Annual loan limits are reduced for students enrolled less than full time.
   a. Fall 2026 Census: September 28, 2026
   b. Spring 2027 Census: February 19, 2027

5. Be sure to regularly check your MySacState emails and Student Center ToDo list.

6. Disbursement: Direct loans will electronically notify Sacramento State that you have completed your loan requirements. Disbursement dates are determined based on enrollment and attendance in at least half-time status. For disbursement to occur you need to actively attending at least half-time (4 units) for the semester. You must be enrolled in at least half-time by Census to remain eligible for disbursement.

For additional information or if you have any questions regarding Financial Aid providing your Student ID, please contact:
CCE Financial Aid: ccefinancialaid@csus.edu Phone: 916-278-1000 Fax: 916-278-6082

Website: https://www.cce.csus.edu/financial-aid
Financial aid for CCE students: https://cce.csus.edu/financial-aid
Information to apply for financial aid: https://cce.csus.edu/post/apply-financial-aid
Summer Financial Aid: https://cce.csus.edu/post/summer-2024-financial-aid
Frequently asked questions about financial aid: https://cce.csus.edu/faq-pod/frequently-asked-questions-financial-aid

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