

# FINANCIAL AID

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### LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

March 6, 2012

Dear UCSB Community,

Spring quarter means it is time to begin thinking about reapplying for financial aid for the next academic year. There is some good news the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships would like to share with you. After years of discussion and negotiation, the Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service have developed and fine tuned the IRS Data Retrieval tool.

This tool will allow students and parents to transfer tax information directly from the IRS to their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Not only will this make filing the FAFSA easier, it will also cut down on the number of inadvertent mistakes while completing the FAFSA. More good news is the use of the IRS Data Retrieval tool will eliminate the need for students and parents to submit paper copies of federal tax returns if they are selected for verification of their FAFSA data.

However, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships would like to caution families who choose not to use the IRS Data Retrieval tool that they will be required to provide an IRS Transcript to complete their financial aid application if selected for verification. The process of requesting an IRS Transcript can take six-to-eight weeks depending on the time of year. We strongly suggest all students and parents take advantage of the IRS Data Retrieval tool.

If you have already filed your 2012-2013 FAFSA, you are encouraged to update your information using this tool. For directions on how to complete this process, please view our tutorial here:

<http://www.finaid.ucsb.edu/Bulletins.aspx?bulletin=3-minute-verification!-irs-data-retrieval-on-the-fafsa>.

On the local front, we highly recommend that students and parents visit our website on a regular basis. Our staff is constantly posting friendly updates and tips and it is a great way to stay on top of your financial aid related business. Also be sure to follow us on Twitter and Facebook to stay on top of important announcements.

We wish you the best of luck this spring and remember to update your FAFSA information by using the IRS Data Retrieval tool as soon as possible.

Warmest Regards,



Michael M. Miller  
Director, Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships

# FAFSA SIMPLIFICATION

The 2012-2013 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Over 20 million students file a FAFSA each year to determine their eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid programs. As you can imagine, this number has been climbing in recent years, and the Department of Education has been working hard to make the process easier on students, families, and financial aid administrators nationwide.

This simplification is exemplified by the average time it takes a student to complete the FAFSA. In 2010-2011 the average time to completion was nearly 33 minutes, while in 2011-2012 this time dropped to just over 23 minutes. Two major factors have contributed to this dramatic reduction.

- **Skip Logic**

The online FAFSA will only ask questions that apply to you based on your answers to previous questions. For example, if you indicate that you are female, you won't be asked about your selective service registration status.

- **IRS Data Retrieval**

The online FAFSA now allows students and parents that have filed their taxes to pull the relevant tax information directly from the IRS. No more sifting through pages and pages of tax returns to find the data you're looking for.

The IRS Data Retrieval tool is a particular boon to families (and financial aid administrators) as it allows students that are selected for verification to forego submitting copies of their tax transcripts to their financial aid office.

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### *Wait a second... Did you just say a Tax Transcript??*

Yes, you heard that right. As the data retrieved from the IRS is official tax information, and greatly reduces the number of potential errors in a student's application and subsequent financial aid award, the Department of Education is doing some arm-twisting to encourage parents and students to use this option.

In 2012-2013, students selected for verification will no longer be allowed to provide any type of federal tax return to their financial aid office. Instead, students and parents must either use the IRS Data Retrieval on the FAFSA or request tax transcripts directly from the IRS. We anticipate that applicants that choose to use the tax transcript option will experience significant delays in receiving their Financial Aid Award Letter in comparison to students that use the IRS Data Retrieval tool; due to the time it will take for them to receive their transcripts from the IRS.

From a taxpayer's perspective, this new policy isn't a bad thing. Not only will the more accurate information reduce taxpayer dollars spent on ineligible students, but the IRS Data Retrieval tool creates efficiencies in the way information is processed across multiple government agencies. These efficiencies mean even more savings for taxpayers and faster response times from financial aid offices.

The good news for students and parents is that the Department of Education has indicated that applicants that use IRS Data Retrieval will also be less likely to be selected for the verification process in the first place. As you can see, there is very little reason not to use IRS Data Retrieval.

Students selected for verification in 2012-2013 will also see a few changes in the information that they must verify:

- **Food Stamps**

The Department of Education now requires that students whose families receive food stamps must now provide documentation of their benefits.

- **Child Support Paid**

Likewise, it is now required that financial aid offices collect information pertaining to the amount paid, the child supported, and to whom the support was paid, when students or parents report an amount for this field.

- **Assets**

The skip logic on the FAFSA will sometimes allow families to skip questions related to their assets. As this information is necessary to confirm Cal Grant eligibility, UCSB will also be collecting asset information during the verification process.

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### **Confused Yet?**

We hope not, but if you are, we strongly encourage you to check out the **7 Easy Steps to the FAFSA: A Student's Guide to Federal Student Aid**. This is the 5th year that the UCSB Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships has produced a detailed FAFSA tutorial aimed at guiding families through the FAFSA process. You can find it at: <https://www.finaid.ucsb.edu/Media/FAFSASimplification/index.html>.

You're all set. File your FAFSA!

Additional information:

IRS Data Retrieval is now available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Your information will be available for transfer within 1-2 weeks of electronically filing your tax return or within 6-8 weeks if you filed a paper return. Remember, we will only accept IRS Tax Transcripts, which can be requested online from the IRS at: <https://sa1.www4.irs.gov/irfof-tra/start.do>.

### **On the Horizon— Important Work-Study Dates**

Work-Study will expire, eventually, for 2011-2012!

#### **Notice:**

Work-Study will be removed from financial aid award letters later in the spring quarter if it has not been used. The expiration date is to be determined. Stay tuned!

#### **May 18, 2012 (Friday)**

This is the end date for off-campus employment through Work-Study funds. All off-campus employers must send in timesheets within one week to ensure student wages.

#### **June 8, 2012 (Friday)**

This is the end date for on-campus employment through Work-Study funds. Wages will not split thereafter, so employers are responsible for 100% cost. In addition payroll processed beyond this date will incur surcharge fees and refunds are not applicable.

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### **Federal Work-Study Program Contact Information**

#### **Esteban Marin**

Work-Study Manager  
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#### **Anna Lin**

Financial Aid Advisor  
[Anna.Lin@sa.ucsb.edu](mailto:Anna.Lin@sa.ucsb.edu)

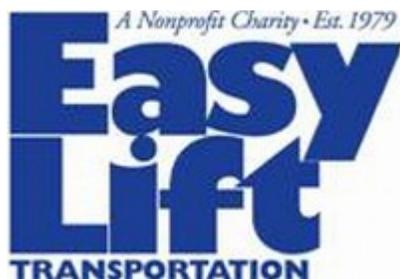
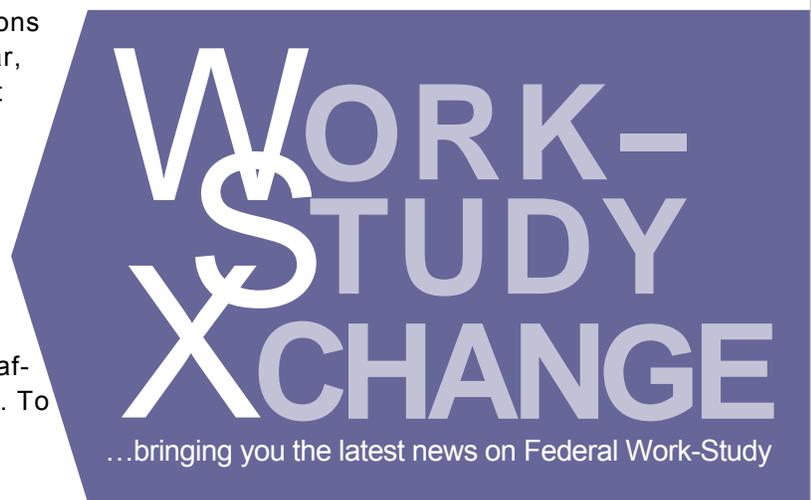
#### **Daniel Nguyen**

Financial and Work-Study Specialist  
[Daniel.Nguyen@sa.ucsb.edu](mailto:Daniel.Nguyen@sa.ucsb.edu)

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<http://www.finaid.ucsb.edu/WorkStudy.aspx>

Work-Study funding is still available. Work-Study positions might be a little harder to come by this time of the year, but students should still consider seeking employment opportunities regardless. If you've been thinking about working a few hours a week but haven't gotten around to looking for a job, GauchoLink is up and running 24 hours a day. Visit GauchoLink to build your resume and to find part-time opportunities on-campus and off-campus.

Employers, you are sitting on a pot of gold! It is March after all. You can still hire students that have Work-Study. To post a position, please visit GauchoLink: <http://career.sa.ucsb.edu/students/gaucholink.html>.



### Employer Highlight Reel: EASY LIFT TRANSPORTATION

Established in 1979, Easy Lift Transportation (ELT) is a non-profit organization focused on providing transportation services to the disabled or those with limited mobility; according to one account, that is nearly 65,000 people in Santa Barbara. As one of a very limited number of organizations providing such services, with nearly 80,000 rides under its belt annually, Easy Lift is providing an essential and commendable service to Goleta and Santa Barbara.

For more than 30 years, Easy Lift has been providing an impressive array of transportation services, which includes a modest fee for their "Dial-A-Ride" service. This includes curbside pick up and drop off for customers that are "physically or cognitively" unable to take the MTD bus. The "Loaner Vehicle Program" permits organizations to send a qualifying candidate to learn how to safely drive and operate an Easy Lift vehicle and become a volunteer driver. An organization's trained volunteer can then borrow and operate an Easy Lift vehicle to transport its own clientele in need of their services.

Easy Lift's "Mobility Training Services" will teach individuals how to use the MTD map and schedules, in addition to teaching them where and how to catch particular MTD bus transportation services. The "Children's Accessible Transportation" (CAT) program functions as a partnering system between Easy Lift and various youth organizations across Santa Barbara and Goleta. CAT's main objective is to provide free, alternative transportation services to "less advantaged" children that participate through any of the 17 local youth organizations in the vicinity.

Easy Lift is an important community-based organization that serves a critical function to the disabled, physically challenged, the elderly, and children with limited opportunities. Easy Lift was chosen as part of this quarter's Employer Highlight Reel given how awesome its mission to serve our community is. The Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships believes that UCSB students and the community should be aware of Easy Lift's contributions. Those that want to volunteer there or perhaps seeking work-study employment in the near future (assuming it's available) should contact Easy Lift at the following number: (805) 681-1181. Check them out online at [www.easylift.org](http://www.easylift.org).

Articles by: Esteban Marin



## Post-Grad Status: On Working and Paying Loans After College

Interview by: Esteban Marin

Pablo Lopez, recent UCSB Alum, currently shares the responsibility of coordinating the Freshman Summer Start Program, Transitions, and Return to Title IV programs for the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Mr. Lopez shares his thought with us about school, loans, and work life, which we believe sets a great example to up and coming undergraduate students and ultimately shows us a glimmer of hope in this tough economic climate.

**Q: Pablo, tell us a bit about yourself. Where did you grow up?**

**A:** Hello everyone. I am a Financial Aid Advisor here at the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. I was born in Mexico but lived in Oxnard, CA for 16 years before I came to UCSB. I decided to attend UCSB because I wanted to get outside of my comfort zone, but not be too far from home and UC Santa Barbara is known as a great institution. My time at this institution was great and something that I would never want to change or forget due to the great memories I have. In the spring of 2010 I graduated with BA in Chicano Studies and Spanish. While at UCSB I worked at the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships as a Peer Advisor, and upon graduating from U.C. Santa Barbara I managed to obtain a job as a Financial Aid Advisor. In 10 years I see myself working at a University like UCSB, but for the Athletic Department.

**Q: Tell us about what role financial aid played in meeting your educational goals?**

**A:** Financial aid has played a large role in meeting my educational goals; without it I would have not been able to attend UCSB. My parents do not make much money and I know for a fact that without financial aid I would have gone to my local community college instead of coming straight to the university. This would have delayed my goals by possibly three to four years.

**Q: Did you have to borrow student loans? If so, can you describe how you managed to keep your loan debt to a minimum? Any pointers on this?**

**A:** During my stay at UCSB I did take out around \$18,000 in loans, but this was mostly from my first two years at school due to not being able to manage my money or obtain a job. My last two years, however, I only took out around \$3,000 in loans, which I actually paid back right away upon graduation because I never spent it. My suggestions to keep loans at a minimum are: budgeting, avoid spending money on things you do not need, not eating out more than once a week, and working.

**Q: How are you handling repayment? If your loan repayment was much higher because you had borrowed**

**much more, do you think you could still manage the monthly payments? How would that affect your life-style?**

**A:** Repayment has not been hard for me due to being able to obtain a job soon after graduation. As mentioned earlier, I paid off \$3,000 as soon as I graduated and my parents gave me \$5,000 that I used to pay off a couple of loans. My loan payments decreased but I still had car payments, rent and other bills I had to worry about. Because of this I still budget myself close to how I was when I was a student. I still managed to put a couple of hundred dollars into my savings every month, as long as I keep to my budget and minimize my spending money. If I had borrowed more than I currently owe, I would have had to budget myself even more strictly and probably not be able to do much with any left over money.

**Q: Did you participate in Work-Study? How did this help you overall?**

**A:** Participating in work-study was really helpful. Without this, I would have never worked at the Office of Financial Aid and would not be going to graduate school in the fall at the University of Southern California, as it opened professional avenues. Without work-study I would have had to take out most of my loans, if not all, and have landed myself into bigger debt.

**Q: How do you foresee your student loan debt in the future?**

**A:** I will be attending the University of Southern California in the fall to start my M.Ed in Post-Secondary Administration and Student Affairs. Due to it being a private institution, I foresee myself getting into larger debt, but hopefully I will be able to obtain some scholarships from the university or other private scholarships to minimize my debt.

**Q: Do you have any advice for current UCSB students as it concern student loan debt?**

**A:** My advice is to take out loans if you need them, but if you just want the money to make multiple purchases on things like an iPhone, iPad, a new sound system, etc. or anything you really do not need, then do not take out a loan.

## SECRETS TO A WINNING SCHOLARSHIP

Article by: Mark Kantrowitz, Publisher of Fastweb.com and FinAid.org

Fastweb and the National Scholarship Providers Association (NSPA) conducted a survey of NSPA members to understand the extent to which scholarship providers use the web and social media to evaluate scholarship applicants. NSPA has more than 300 members who collectively award more than \$1 billion in scholarships each year. About a quarter of the NSPA members responded to the survey.

# SCHOLARSHIPS

### Key findings from the survey included:

- About a quarter of scholarship providers use web search sites like Google and/or social media web sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter to search for online information about scholarship applicants. Most screen only finalists due to a lack of resources to screen all applicants.
- Three quarters of the scholarship providers were looking for one or more red flags, mostly for signs that the scholarship applicant might reflect badly on the scholarship sponsor. They wanted to see whether the applicant demonstrates good judgment, and were looking for provocative or inappropriate photographs or remarks, illegal activities (e.g., underage drinking and use of narcotics), insensitive or discriminatory remarks or a negative attitude. A quarter reviewed the student's online presence to identify or resolve conflicting information about the applicant, such as lies about qualifications listed on the application form.
- More than half of the scholarship providers review an applicant's online presence to get to know the applicant better, to look for creativity and other positive personality traits or to evaluate real life communication skills.
- A third of scholarship providers who reviewed an applicant's online presence have denied an applicant a scholarship and a quarter have granted an applicant a scholarship because of information they found out about them online.

A report on the survey may be found at:

[http://www.finaid.org/educators/20120224\\_scholarshipsscreeningsurvey.pdf](http://www.finaid.org/educators/20120224_scholarshipsscreeningsurvey.pdf)

An article for students about the survey, with tips about developing a professional online presence, can be seen at:

<http://www.fastweb.com/financial-aid/articles/3478-some-scholarship-sponsors-review-the-online-presence-of-finalists-when-selecting-winners>

# Reese's PIECES

Dear Paula,

I heard about AB130 and AB131. What are the differences between the two bills and how will these new laws impact UCSB students?

Steven

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Dear Steven,

Both bills are part of the California Dream Act signed into law in October 2011 by Governor Jerry Brown.

#### AB130

This bill went into effect January 1, 2012. The bill allows students who qualify for AB540 non-resident tuition exemptions to apply for scholarships funded by private sources. Our office has awarded \$12,000 to eligible students this year.

#### AB131

This bill will take effect January 1, 2013. The bill will allow undocumented AB540 students to apply for Cal Grants and University Grants. The California Student Aid Commission is developing a *California Dream* application to determine eligibility. Qualified students may receive University Grants as early as winter 2013 and Cal Grants as early as fall 2013.

Steven, watch for updates on the Financial Aid website regarding these two new bills.

Regards,



Paula Reese, Financial Aid Advisor

## MISSION STATEMENT

The University of California, Santa Barbara Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships provides students with the financial resources and related services necessary to achieve their educational goals. We are committed to providing accurate, user-friendly, responsive, and respectful service to students and their families. We administer federal, state, and university aid and scholarship programs in accordance with applicable policies and regulations while striving to be an innovative and service-minded department.

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