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Hello, and welcome to FAFSA 101. My name is Michelle LaBonte, and I am here to give you a quick overview of the FAFSA form that you need to fill out to apply for need-based financial aid here at Suffolk University. So let's dive right in. Whew, okay, sorry about that. That took a second.

00:29

Okay, so with the FAFSA form, you submit your FAFSA online, and we have, just this past year, awarded, 94% of our fall students have received a scholarship. We have given out over \$129 million in financial aid this past year, and we, as an office, as an institution, we're really committed to your affordability, to making this work for you. So we have both merit-based and need-based scholarship programs, and we are here to help you work through this process.

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Every student here at Suffolk University has an assigned financial aid counselor. This is based on the first letter of the student's last name, and this information's also right on our website. So if you have your cellphone, if you wanna grab a quick screenshot of this chart, this tells you who you are assigned to, and again, this information is also on our website. So this person is your dedicated resource to helping you with any financial aid questions that you have.

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So of course the big one, how do we apply for need-based financial aid? Now, merit scholarships, you may already know, you are automatically considered for our merit-based program just with your admissions application. So what we're talking about today is the FAFSA. This is the need-based financial aid process.

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So what you have to do, fill out that FAFSA, which stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and it's available now. It becomes available every year after October 1st, right at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov). You will need our Suffolk University school code, which is up on the screen there, another good time to grab a screenshot, 002218, and this is the only form that's required for need-based aid. And of course, it is free.

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We don't want you paying anything to apply for aid. Certainly this is a free form, and we are here to help you with it. So let's break that down really quick. We're gonna go into those individual sections so you know what to expect. So of course, step one, logging in. So this is the screen that you go to. This is what it will look like, right at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov), and these are the sections of information that you're gonna fill out.

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So you'll be able to track your progress at the top. You'll see those sections, as you fill them out, getting those check marks, until you get all the way to Sign & Submit. So let's break that down a little further for you. The first thing you're gonna do after logging in is you're gonna identify your role. This is really important, because you, as the student, you have your own FSA ID and password, and your parent needs to have their own FSA ID and password, as well.

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Now, most of our students do need parent information on their FAFSA, which means you both need to apply for an FSA ID. So this will be your login, as a parent, for completing and signing the FAFSA form. You cannot sign the FAFSA while logged in as the student. This is separate logins, separate IDs, for parents and for students.

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There's also an option there for a preparer to help fill out the FAFSA, but you are gonna choose your role. You are the student signing the FAFSA or you are a parent completing the FAFSA. Make sure you're logging in under the correct role. The next thing you're gonna do is make sure that you choose the correct academic year.

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Now, there are always gonna be two years of FAFSA available, the current year, which is the '21-'22, as well as next year, the '22-'23. So of course the '22-'23 is what you're looking for. Make sure that you are filling out that correct form.

Now the College Search option is gonna allow you to choose the schools that you want to send your FAFSA to. You need the school codes for each of these schools.

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Now you can send your FAFSA to up to ten schools, and again, our school code is listed there, 002218. You can also search by name, city, and state. Be careful, because there is a Suffolk Community College out there, down in New Jersey, I believe it is. So again, using that code makes sure that it gets right to us accurately and timely. Now, as you're filling out the FAFSA, it's gonna ask you to use the Data Retrieval Tool.

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This is what it will look like, and you'll click that blue Proceed to the IRS button. Now, sometimes, depending on your tax or marital status, this option's not given to you. So if you don't see it, don't panic. That's okay. You'll just be entering income information from your 2020 taxes, and if this option is presented to you, then absolutely use it.

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This allows all of your IRS information from the 2020 taxes to transfer over to your FAFSA for you. So this makes filling out the FAFSA a lot easier. You're not looking at any tax line numbers or adjusted gross income. This is simply a transfer of data. Now, when you click that Proceed to the IRS button, you're gonna get a couple warnings, and of course identity theft, data being stolen, transferred, these are all very real concerns in today's day and age, where everything is done online. So you are gonna see the prompts that are shown right on the screen for you, that you are leaving your FAFSA, you are going to the IRS website.

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This is a government website and it's gonna just make sure you realize what you're clicking on. So sometimes students or parents get to these disclosures and they get a little nervous, understandably so, but this is simply moving your tax data from the IRS over to your FAFSA.

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very easy way to get the information on there, and it's also considered verified. So this could avoid you having to send in copies of your 2020 taxes, which you would only do if requested. So once you're in there, on that IRS tool, you will confirm everything that's listed. You do need to enter your name and address in order to access your tax info, and these must be an exact match to your 2020 tax returns.

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So for example, if you list an apartment number on your tax return address, you need to list that apartment number on the IRS website in order to access that return information. Again, this is protecting your identity, to make sure it is really you that is trying to access your tax data. And when you get to the end of that Data Retrieval Tool, there's this little blue button. You're gonna check it off and Transfer Now.

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That button is key, and that sends your information from the IRS over to the FAFSA for you. Now as I mentioned, not everybody is eligible to use the Data Retrieval Tool, and if you're not, that's okay. FAFSA is going to prompt you. So if you leave a critical answer blank, it's not gonna let you move on to the next section.

08:09

It's also gonna give you instructions. So for example, on the screen here, it says, what was your father's adjusted gross income for 2020? You don't necessarily need to know what that means or where that is. You just need to have the tax return and follow the instructions. So in the fine print there, it says that this amount's found on IRS Form 1040, Line 11.

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So it's kinda like connect the dots. If you can follow instructions, you can definitely manually enter your tax information, and please listen to those FAFSA prompts. Let them help you, 'cause the form is designed to catch typical errors that users are submitting. And speaking of, this is one of them.

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A lot of students and parents complete their FAFSA successfully and they forget this Sign & Submit step. It's very important to submit an electronic signature for the FAFSA. You'll do that by re-entering your user name and password. So don't forget that Sign spot. And both the student, and most of the time, a parent, also needs to sign your FAFSA.

09:18

So you're looking for that blue Sign and Submit FAFSA Form button, and then your parent is also gonna do that blue button, Provide Parent Signature. So this is kinda what the screen will look like. The parent logs in after clicking on that blue button and they will log in with their ID and sign the form, as well. And that's it.

09:41

So I know this was a really quick interview. I spoke a little quickly, trying to get as much information to you as possible, but the goal here is to understand that we are here to help you. We can walk you through this process and we really want you to reach out to us if you have any questions, you're not sure what something's asking, you're not sure where to find that form, you don't have the taxes with you.

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These are all questions and concerns that we can help you work through. So again, that financial aid counselor information is on our website. Our contact information is right up on the screen here and we are available five days a week, in-person, over Zoom, whatever works for you, to help you through this process.

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So please reach out to us, and again, I hope that really fast, quick overview was helpful for you, and certainly, any questions, please reach out to us. My name, again, is Michelle LaBonte, and thank you so much for watching.