

## Professional Judgement:

Any student can request the Financial Aid Office to review their Financial Aid application under two unique cases: Special Circumstances and Unusual Circumstances. Both cases are classified as Professional Judgement (PJ).

### Special Circumstances:

Special circumstances are when information provided on a student's FAFSA form no longer accurately reflect the current financial situation of a student or student's contributors. Contributors include the student, parent(s) and/or spouse. Examples of special circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- loss or reduction of employment
- change of marital status due to a separation or divorce
- change of marital status due to death
- loss of one-time income
- change of marital status due to death
- child or dependent care expenses, medical, dental or nursing home expenses not covered by insurance,
- tuition expenses at a private elementary or secondary school
- and other changes that impact the student's ability to pay for college.

A student can complete a Special Circumstances Appeal here: (link) **\*The student is responsible for providing appropriate documentation supporting the special circumstances in a timely manner.** If documentation is not submitted by 60 days, then the appeal will be Denied.

### Unusual Circumstances:

The Department of Education presumes that a Dependent Student will receive financial support from their parents. This means that student's parents must provide their financial information on the FAFSA. An Independent Student is defined by the Department of Education as one of the following: a student who is at least 24 years old, married, have children they support, have dependents (other than their children or spouse) they support, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, a ward of the court, an emancipated minor or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Financial aid administrators are given the authority under Section 480(d)(1)(1) of the HEA to change a student's status from dependent to independent in cases of unusual circumstances (e.g. parental abandonment, human trafficking, parental incarceration, refugee or asylum status). **Please note:** we cannot process an Unusual Circumstance Appeal for any of the below reasons:

- Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education
- Parents are unwilling to provide information for the FAFSA or verification
- Parents do not claim the student as dependent on their income taxes
- Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency

A student can complete an Unusual Circumstance Appeal here: (link) **\*The student is responsible for providing appropriate documentation regarding their unusual circumstances.** Once all the documents have been submitted the student's Unusual Circumstances Appeal will be reviewed by the Financial Aid Office. The student will be notified of the determination of their dependency status as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days from the date when all documentation was received or from the date the student enrolled (registered for classes). If documentation is not submitted by 60 days, then the appeal will be Denied.

If a student is an unaccompanied homeless youth or at risk of homelessness. A student is considered homeless if they are lack fixed, regular and adequate housing. This includes but is not limited to:

- youth sharing housing with other people temporarily because they have nowhere to go
- youth living in emergency or transitional shelters
- youth living in motels, campgrounds, cars, parks abandoned buildings, bus or train stations or any public or private place not designed for humans to live in.
- youth living in the school dormitory if they would otherwise be homeless
- youth who are migrants and who qualify as experiencing homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

**Please note:** A student who is an unaccompanied homeless youth or at risk of homelessness can complete an Unusual Circumstance Appeal (Unaccompanied Homeless or at Risk of Homelessness Appeal) here: link

**\*\*Students that are unaccompanied homeless youth or at risk of homelessness timeline:** Cochise College Financial Aid Office timeline of 60 days will begin on the date they receive the student's FAFSA -OR- on the date that the student communicated their homelessness status to the Financial Aid Office. The student will be notified of the determination of their dependency status as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days from the timelines stated above. If documentation is not submitted by 60 days, then the appeal may be Denied.

In the cases when the school has conflicting information concerning a student's eligibility or has any reason to believe the student's FAFSA application information is incorrect, this conflict must be resolved. When conflict data(s) are discovered the student will be notified of the conflict and what are documentation is need to resolve the conflict. The conflict must be resolved before the school can make any PJ adjustment.