



GenTX Way to Pay Video Discussion Guide

This Video Discussion Guide provides some sample discussion points, ideas, and questions that can be used to guide group discussions around the *GenTX Way to Pay* videos: www.GenTX.org/FinancialAid. Use the following questions as a jumping off point to get the conversation going, to identify key insights from the videos and to promote clarifying discussions. Applying for and understanding financial aid can be difficult, but getting fears, concerns and helpful suggestions out in the open can benefit everyone. Fostering meaningful conversations is a solid first step for each student and family in finding their way to pay.

Discussion Guide: Financial Aid 101

- 1) What aspects of financial aid do you find the most confusing?
[Note to facilitator: encourage people in the group to answer some of the tough questions together and discover how other people here have navigated these tricky topics.]
- 2) Your financial aid package will differ for every school where you're accepted. Has anyone experienced getting multiple financial aid offers yet?
- 3) Money for college will come from three sources: free money, money you borrow and money you earn. Which do you think might make up the most of your financial aid package? Do you have some savings that you plan to contribute to your education? Do you want to take a part-time job to earn money during high school? Would you be interested in a work-study program if it's offered as part of your financial aid package?
- 4) Let's discuss the differences between scholarships and grants. They are both free money, but grants are state and federal funds you can get by filling out your FAFSA. Scholarships often come from other, independent sources. Do you know where to look for independent scholarship listings? Have you found any resources or websites that have been helpful in finding scholarships specific to your situation, talents or background?
- 5) You have to apply for financial aid every year you are in college. What strategies can you put in place to remember to apply each year? Is there anything you can do this year when you fill out FAFSA to make it easier next year?
- 6) What is a reasonable amount of time you can commit every week to applying for financial aid? It could be looking for scholarships, getting questions answered at the counselors' office, visiting one of the colleges you'd like to attend or filling out the FAFSA. Has anyone actually blocked this time on their calendar? How do you make time each week to move this forward with everything else going on?
- 7) What resources do you know about for where you can get help applying for and understanding financial aid? *[Note to facilitator: make a list together to share with everyone.]*

Discussion Guide: Understanding FAFSA

- 1) How many of you have looked at or filled out the FAFSA? What was your first impression of the FAFSA form? What were the hardest parts? How did you feel when you finished? What kept you from giving up? How long did it actually take to complete? What are the top three tips you might have for someone filling out the FAFSA form for the first time?
- 2) Do you have concerns about including your income tax information on the FAFSA? Let's discuss why colleges need this exact information and why it's far riskier to not complete the FAFSA than it is to submit your tax info.
- 3) What are the biggest barriers that you think might get in the way of completing the FAFSA? What are some ideas for how to ensure those roadblocks don't stop you from getting your share of FAFSA funds?
- 4) Let's set some goals for getting the FAFSA completed. Here's a few logical steps to get you started:
 - a. Decide on a date to go over the form and figure out what information you need to gather (income tax records, social security numbers, etc.).

- b. Filling out the FAFSA requires both the student and the parents/family to offer information. Conversations between students and their parents/family about finances and income can be very difficult conversations to have. How will you have this conversation?
 - c. Set a date to actually sit down and fill it out.
[Note to facilitator: Bring out a discussion that reveals that different families will want to do this different ways. Some might give all of the information to their son/daughter to fill it out. Some parents will prefer to fill out the financial information separately from your student, so together you could complete the rest of the form first and then input the income tax numbers alone.]
- 5) What resources do you know about for where you can get help filling out the FAFSA? Let's make a list together to share with everyone.
 - 6) What are some of your new year's resolutions? How much of a time commitment do they take? Now, compare that to an hour or two to complete the FAFSA as close to January 1 as possible. It's a resolution that's achievable in a short amount of time and it can mean thousands of dollars toward your future education.

Discussion Guide: The Lowdown on Loans

- 1) Many people are concerned about taking out student loans and going into debt for college, but loans are often one part of how families cover the cost of college for many families when it comes to paying for higher education. What are your specific fears?
- 2) How are student loans different from other bank loans? Are you aware that many student loans don't acquire any interest until after you graduate? And many of them have longer repayment periods. Student loans are some of the best loans available, so it's important to keep that in mind as you contemplate borrowing money for school.
- 3) Remember, just because a college offers you a certain amount of loans doesn't mean you have to take them all. It's a good idea to only borrow what you can pay back. But once you graduate, paying back your loans will be easier because you will have the potential to earn a better salary with your degree. Have any of you done any research to find out what kind of salaries people in your future field earn?
- 4) If you are worried about taking out loans, what are some ways you can actively help bring the cost of college down so you don't have to borrow as much?
[Note to facilitator: Applying for scholarships, taking certain classes in high school (like AP or IB programs) that can count toward a college degree, or starting out at a community college to get your prerequisite classes out of the way before attending a university are all ways to lessen the financial load of college.]
- 5) What are some ideas you have about how you will pay back your loans? Do any of you make a budget for yourself? Share some stories about how budgeting works for you in making day-day decisions and tradeoffs.
- 6) Did you know that completing the FAFSA makes you eligible for both state and federal student loans? How are these loans different than bank loans?
- 7) What do you think when you hear, "An education is something nobody can ever take away from you."
- 8) What resources do you know about for learning about student loans?
[Note to facilitator: make a list together to share with everyone.]

Discussion Guide: Undocumented Students

- 1) Did you know that under Texas law undocumented students may qualify for in-state tuition and some state financial aid if they meet certain Texas residency requirements?
[Note to facilitator: In general, the requirements under Texas law are that: (1) the student resided in Texas with a parent or guardian while attending high school in Texas; (2) graduated from a public or private high school or received a GED in Texas; (3) resided in Texas for the three years leading to graduation or receipt of a GED; and (4) provided their institutions a signed affidavit indicating an intent to apply for permanent resident status as soon as able to do so]

- 2) Do you know which financial aid application you should use (FAFSA or TASFA)? If you are uncertain about which financial aid application to use, do you know who to contact to determine which form you should use? *[Note to facilitator: Students should contact the appropriate office at the college or university to which they have applied, usually either the registrar or admissions office, to determine which financial aid application to use. If you think that you may qualify to use the TASFA application, contact the colleges or universities to which you are applying to ensure that they accept the TASFA (some colleges or universities may have you fill out a paper copy of the FAFSA instead)].*
- 3) Do you know where can you find the TASFA application?
<http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/index.cfm?objectid=D465D848-EA0F-C0EA-5209BC8C89262877>