

EXCEPT IN VERY UNUSUAL AND MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAN BE DOCUMENTED, parents/family units have the primary financial responsibility in meeting educational costs, as measured by the federal Expected Family Contribution derived from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Following is a list of criteria. If you meet at least one, you can apply as independent (without parental data).

- At least 24 years of age by 12/31/18 (born before 1/1/95)
- Married (as of the date of application)
- Graduate student (working on a master's or doctorate program, so N/A at RCC)
- Serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces
- Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces
- Have a child(ren) and provide for at least half their support
- Have a dependent (other than child or spouse) who lives with you and you provide more than half their support through 6/30/19
- Since turning 13, both parents are deceased
- Since turning 13, was in foster care
- Since turning 13, was a dependent or ward of the court
- In legal guardianship now (if under 18) or were as of the last day of your 17<sup>th</sup> year
- An emancipated minor now (if under 18) or were as of the last day of your 17<sup>th</sup> year
- On/after 7/1/17, under 22, unaccompanied and homeless as elibly documented or as self-supporting and at risk of being homeless as elibly documented

If you do not meet any of the above criteria, but think you should be able to apply without parental information, review the following appeal criteria. If you believe you qualify and provide the required documentation, RCC will review your appeal and notify you of our decision, which is final, for aid eligibility consideration at RCC.

### CRITERIA

- Parent(s) are **UNABLE\*** to participate in the application process. Or,
  - Student is **UNABLE\*** to obtain parental information
- \*An unwillingness or inconvenience in providing information does not constitute being "unable."**

### DOCUMENTATION

- Submit a clear explanation of why you are UNABLE to provide parental information, and the reasons why you should be considered "independent."
- Submit a minimum of two letters from as "official" as possible objective, responsible, third party adults who are knowledgeable of and willing to attest to the statements of the student.

-Letters should be on letterhead and clearly address, at a minimum, the following information:

- Who is the author and what is their relationship to the student?
- What situation exists between the student and the parent(s)?
- What is the time frame of that situation?
- Corroboration of other pertinent information presented by the student
- Signature, date, address, title and phone number of the author

-Examples of "responsible adults":

- Sponsor
- High School Counselor
- Court Official - Legal Document
- Clergy
- Teacher
- Social Worker
- Agency Representative - Official Documents

The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible, even without a parent's signature. Then, appropriate documentation must be provided to the Financial Aid Office. Documentation will only be accepted and consideration for "independent" status given to a student who meets the above criteria. Upon acceptance of complete independence appeal documents, a student may be required to meet with the Director of Financial Aid or a Financial Aid staff member. Any necessary appointment will be made only after appropriate documents are submitted and reviewed. Further information may be requested. If approved, the Director of Financial Aid will submit an electronic dependency change to the existing federal application. Decisions are school specific, apply to only one academic year, and are final.