



2009-2010 INDEPENDENT STUDENT POLICY

Students are classified as dependent or independent for student aid programs based on the philosophy that students' parents have the primary responsibility for paying for their children's undergraduate education.

You are an independent student for 2009-2010 if you fit one or more of the following categories:

- At least 24 years of age by December 31, 2009
- Married
- Graduate or professional student
- Has children or dependents for whom the student provides more than half support
- Orphan or ward of the court
- Veteran of US Armed Forces or currently serving on Active Duty (for other than training purposes) in the Armed Forces

In addition, financial aid administrators are permitted to use professional judgment on a case-by-case basis to change a student's dependency status from dependent to independent when unusual circumstances make it unreasonable to expect parents to contribute to educational costs.

As required by law, the Office of Student Financial Assistance will adhere strictly to the definition of an independent student.

Please note the following with respect to students under age 24:

- 1) Students previously classified as independent cannot be grandfathered into an independent status on the basis of prior independence.
- 2) Likewise, students are not independent solely because they previously depended on state, federal or institutional aid to attend school.
- 3) For financial aid purposes, a student may not declare independence due to internal family arrangements, family disagreements, or attainment of "legal age".
- 4) Parental unwillingness (rather than inability) to contribute cannot be used to justify a dependency override.
- 5) A student's resources or the fact that a student is or is not claimed by the parent(s) as an income tax deduction will not be used to determine independent status.
- 6) While it is quite possible for an individual to be self-sufficient while working full-time, it is very difficult for that same individual to be self-sufficient while attending college full-time. Therefore, the fact that an undergraduate student under 24

was on his or her own prior to attending GW is not sufficient in itself to change the student to an independent status. GW, like Congress, expects the student and the parents to contribute to the student's undergraduate education costs.

- 7) The only acceptable reason for appealing dependency status is a documented severe and unplanned situation which indicates that it would be impossible for you to obtain financial assistance from your parents. Examples are physical or emotional abuse, severe estrangement, abandonment, parental drug abuse, incarceration, mental incapacity, or another such situation beyond your control.

If you think you have unusual circumstances that would make you independent even though you normally would be considered dependent, you may appeal your situation by following these procedures:

- 1) File the PROFILE and FAFSA as a dependent student; you must include parental information and obtain their signatures on the forms.
- 2) Provide signed copies of all pages and schedules of 2008 federal tax returns, as well as W2s from all employers, for you and your parent(s).
- 3) Write a letter to the Appeals Committee of the Office of Student Financial Assistance, explaining in detail why you think we should override your dependent status, and attach documentation which supports your written statement. You must include original signed statements from at least two professional adults who are not family members which verify the circumstances you described in your letter. In general, professional adults would include clergy members, guidance counselors, teachers or professors, doctors, family counselors, mental health professionals, law enforcement officials. (NOTE: A highly generalized statement will cause your appeal to be denied. Be complete and be specific; concentrate on providing facts, not opinions. The success of your appeal depends on you -- what you tell us and what you show us.)
- 4) If your appeal is successful, the parental financial information will be ignored in the final calculations that determine your contribution.
- 5) You will be notified of the outcome in writing.
- 6) The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. The Committee will consider an appeal only once based on the same set of circumstances.