Financial Aid Office
Professional Judgment Procedure

Professional judgment is the authority of an institution's financial aid office, on a case-by-case basis, with sufficient documentation, to adjust elements on the students FAFSA or the Cost of Attendance (COA). Hence, adjusting their student aid index (SAI) or their COA. The changes to the SAI must be submitted to the Department of Education via the FAFSA Partner Portal (FPP). SAI changes must be identified as such by selecting the "Requested SAI Adjustment" for professional judgment which will generate a new Institutional student information record (ISIR).

The reason for the adjustment must be documented and must relate to special circumstances, not to conditions that exist for an entire group of students. All inconsistent or conflicting information must be resolved prior to making any adjustments. A financial aid administrator's decision regarding professional judgment adjustments is final and cannot be appealed to the Department.

This procedure is intended to serve as a guide for the Financial Aid Officer to evaluate a situation on a case-by-case basis and make a professional judgment.

Among the conditions under the regulation, can include, but are not limited to:

- Death of a parent or spouse
- Divorce or legal separation
- Recent unemployment of a family member
- Override Cases for Dependency Status, which include but are not limited to:
    - Deceased parent(s)
    - Parental incapacity (incarceration or mental or physical disability)
    - No contact with parents
    - Circumstances that can be verified with letters officially certified by counselors or teachers, government agencies, medical personnel, judicial agencies (Prison), church personnel, courts, or letters from third parties, such as neighbors.
- Other significant changes to a family's income, assets, or student's status

Procedure:

1. Students must complete their corresponding FAFSA application with the data requested for the specific year.

2. If the student is selected for verification, documentation must be submitted to complete the verification request.
3. The student explain their current situation and request a professional judgment.
4. Based on the information presented by the student, the Financial Aid Officer evaluates to determine which kind of professional judgment will apply.
5. When the Financial Aid Officer determines the professional judgment to be made, the student will be advised of what documentation will be needed for review, for a determination to be made.

Documents needed for review to determine if a professional judgment is applicable vary on the circumstances for which the professional adjustment is being requested. Documents can include but are not limited to:

<u>For Professional judgments based on significant changes in income:</u>

- Letter of dismissal or resignation
- Settlement letter (holidays or bonuses)
- Letter of unemployment income
- Letter of income received from PAN or TANF
- If the student is currently employed, year-to-date income information from the current employer
- Documentation of income received from 401 K withdrawals or pensions
- Disability or social security income documentation

<u>For Professional Judgment based on Extraordinary Expenses or Income:</u> Expense:

- Documentation of medical diagnosis and invoices for payments issued
- Documentation or payments issued for the benefit of a household member.

Revenue:

- Inheritances- Evidence of the amount received
- Allowances-Amount received for years of service and evidence in which it was invested
- Overtime pays for an extraordinary event (hurricane, tremors, etc.)

When the Financial Aid administrator receives all required documentation for changes to the SAI, a correction will be made to the FAFSA record in the FAFSA Partner Portal (FPP) system.

Once the corrected FAFSA generates a new institutional student information record (ISIR), the Financial Aid office will then review, package, and award the student's financial aid.