

**Family Newsletter**

September 2016

 **Are you registered to vote?**

You have the power to make a difference and an important way to achieve this is to make your voice heard at the polls on Election Day. **You must be registered to vote at least 30 days before the election, so keep that in mind if you are registering or updating your address with the intention of voting in one of the two upcoming elections:**

*August 2, 2016 State Primary Election – registration deadline is July 5, 2016
November 8, 2016 State General Election – registration deadline is October 11, 2016*
Are you already registered to vote? To check, please click the following link and enter your information:  [www.Michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote)

If you are NOT registered, please click the following direct link for a State of Michigan Voter Registration Application with instructions: <http://www.michigan.gov/documents/MIVoterRegistration_97046_7.pdf>

You should send your application to the clerk’s address listed on the application who is associated with your municipality. If you are unsure of who your clerk is, please contact [(517) 676-7255](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/tel:%28517%29%20676-7255) for assistance.

To register to vote, you must be all of the following:
• A U.S. citizen
• A resident of Michigan
• A resident of the city or township where you are applying to register to vote.
• At least 18 years old by Election Day (Those who are 17 years old, but will be 18 by election day may register by the deadline for that specific election.)

**Registered Voters Request an Absentee Voter Ballot:**
You may apply for an absent voter ballot that would be mailed directly to you and you may return the voted ballot to your city or township clerk through the mail.

Absent voter ballots are available for all elections. They provide voters with a convenient method for casting a ballot when they are unable to attend the polls on Election Day. However, please know that a person who registers to vote by mail must vote in person in the first election in which he or she participates.

Please click the following link to obtain an absent voter ballot application with instructions for both the August 2nd Primary and November 8th General Elections  <http://www.michigan.gov/documents/AbsentVoterBallot_105377_7.pdf>

Are you registered to vote, but are looking to simply change your voter registration address? Michigan law states that the same address must be used for voter registration and driver's license purposes. That means, if the residence address you provide on the application differs from the address shown on a driver's license or personal identification card issued by the state of Michigan, the Secretary of State will automatically change your driver's license or personal ID card address to match the residence address entered on this form. If a change is made, the Secretary of State will mail you an address update sticker for your driver's license or personal ID card.

To update your voting address, please visit the Secretary of State’s ExpressSOS website at: <https://onlineservices.michigan.gov/ExpressSOS/>

I hope you have found this information helpful. Please remember that you can always visit [www.Michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote) for up-to-date voter information.

**Getting ready for College**

Now is the time to begin filling out your paperwork for going to college. In addition to filling out the applications for your schools of choice, you will need to make sure to fill out a FASFA. You can submit this information beginning October 1, 2016, even though your student won’t be starting school until a year from now. You’ll use your federal tax information from the year 2015.

**What is FASFA?**

Completing a FASFA is the first step in applying for most federal, state, and college-provided financial aid for students. It stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid because it is filed with the US Department of Education, but most state-sponsored and college-sponsored aid requires the same FASFA filing, so it is not only for federal sponsored student aid as the name might imply.

The FASFA is used by aid providers to determine that amount of the student’s Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is the amount that they expect the student’s family could contribute toward the student’s college education. EFC varies from student to student since it is based on specific financial situation of the student and often of the student’s parents as well.

The FASA is often 100+ questions long and can cover various areas such as student’s family situation, the student’s educational background, the student’s educational plans and prospective colleges, the student’s finances, the student’s spouse’s finances and the student’s parents’ finances. Whether or not parent financial information is required depends on whether or not the student is determined to still be a dependent of one of their parents.

Once the FASFA application is completed and filed, a federal processor will examine all the information provided and pass the examination results on to the financial aid offices of the preferred colleges listed on the FASFA.

<https://www.fafsa-application.com/learning-center/what-is-fafsa>

**What documents will I need before I can file a FASFA?**

It is not necessary to mail any additional documents in order to file a FASFA, but there are several documents which you will need to have available to reference. You will need your federal tax information from 2015.

* You may need your child’s W-2 forms for the previous year or other records of money earned.
* You may need your child’s Federal Income Tax Return for the previous year. This may be IRS 1040, 1041A, 1040 EZ, or another form.
* You may need your Federal Income Tax Return for the previous year if your student is still a dependent.
* You may need your spouse’s Federal Income Tax Return for the previous year if you are married.
* You may need your untaxed income records for the previous year.
* You may need your current bank statements and investment records.
* You may need your child’s Social Security number.
* You may need your child’s driver’s license number.
* You may need your alien registration or permanent resident card if you are not a citizen of the United States.

<https://www.fafsa-application.com/learning-center/what-documents-will-i-need>

**When should I file a FASFA?**

There is currently a 21 month window to file a FAFSA for each academic year, beginning nine months before the academic year on October 1, and ending the same time the academic year ends on June 30. For example:

* The 2017-2018 academic year will last from July 1, 2017 to Jun 30, 2018. A FASFA can be filed for the 2017-2018 academic year between October 1, 2016 and June 30,2018.
* The 2018-2019 academic year will last from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. A FASFA can be filed for the 2018-2019 academic year any time between October 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019
* Etc.

**Keep in mind that the earlier you file, the better your chances are for getting the maximum amound of aid available to you.**

It is also important to note that the FAFSA application is used to apply for federal, state, and college-sponsored aid, however each aid program may have its own deadlines. Therefore, we always recommend filing as soon as possible after the 1st of October.

<https://www.fafsa-application.com/learning-center/when-to-file-fafsa>

Start your FASFA now at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

While most of the information is pretty straight forward, you may need some help in filling out the forms, especially if this is your first time. You can always call your college financial aid office for help.

**TIP: It is critical to know your user name and password as well as the user name and password your child is using. When you enter them, take a picture of them on your phone and have your child do the same thing. That way you should have it stored, if you need to access the site again.**

**Don’t Forget**

One featured guest speaker for the UNITED Conference scheduled for September 25-28, 2016 is DJ “Eagle Bear” Vanas. UNITED stands for uniting neighbors in the experience of diversity.



Motivational speaker, storyteller, leadership expert, author and warrior DJ Vanas is an enrolled member of the Odawa Nation. He is tentatively scheduled to be the Monday evening speaker. Your students will have an opportunity to hear him speaker earlier in the day and have lunch with him. The evening presentation is free and open to the public. Vanas came from a very impoverished background, but went on to become a very highly decorated officer in the US Air Force. He has learned leadership skills, earned a bachelor’s degree in Management and an M.S. in Systems Management. Not only is he an entrepreneur, but he is also a published author and professional speaker. He has been a speaker at NMU before and has spoken at the GEAR UP national conference. Please come and see him if your schedule allows.

If your student is a minority or a member of the LGBT+ community, they may want to connect with an office similar to MERC, the Multicultural Education and Resource Center. Other universities may call it a Diversity Office, Diversity and Inclusion Office, Minority Affairs, or some such similar name. If your child needs help finding employment near their school, they should check in with Career Services or a Student Employment Office. Students who haven’t declared a major may benefit from a visit to the Academic Advisement Center.

When time permits, make sure to check out what Student Organizations are available, or places where they can get set up with volunteer activities. If you plan a longer visit, perhaps there will be time to take in a campus sporting event or be able to work out in their recreational facilities.

When going to visit any college or university, make sure that your questions get answered. If you are not sure what to ask, be forthright with your campus visit personnel. They can give you answers to questions you haven’t even thought of yet, especially if this is your first child to go onto higher education! Don’t be afraid to ask.

Planning a successful campus visit

NMU’s GEAR UP program has taken many of your students on campus visits. But, you may be doing the same, now that the prospect of college is rapidly approaching. Here are a few suggestions to make the most out of your visit.

Make sure to schedule a campus visit through the Admissions Office or Campus visit program from the school you are interested in attending. When filling out their forms, make sure you have the option to visit with all the offices that might pertain to you. Be sure to check in with Financial Aid and Housing, if you are going to be living on campus. There are other offices that might be invaluable to your child as they enter this next phase of their life. Is there a need to visit with Disability Student Services to ensure your student has appropriate accommodations in place to help them be more successful? Perhaps you need to set up appointments with the Counseling Center to continue therapy. Do you and your student know where the Health Center is? If they are familiar with some of these places, they will find it easier to get to them on their own.



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This newsletter and past editions are available at:
http://www.nmu.edu/multiculturaledandres/node/30
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