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Take Advantage of Free Help to Complete the FAFSA at Montana College Goal Sunday

(HELENA) In this trying economic climate, it's more important than ever for Montana students and families to take advantage of every option open to them to help pay for postsecondary education — that process begins with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

While the FAFSA is lengthy and can be time-consuming to complete, a recent study conducted by the American Council on Education revealed that about 1.5 million undergraduate students nationwide who did not file a FAFSA likely would have been eligible to receive a Pell Grant, if not some other form of aid.

"We at Student Assistance Foundation don't want Montana students to be among the number of people who missed out on aid opportunities — federal or institutional — because they were intimidated by the FAFSA," said Rhonda Safford, state-wide coordinator for Montana College Goal Sunday. "At College Goal Sunday, financial aid professionals and volunteers help families take that crucial step by providing free, one-on-one assistance completing this extremely important form."

This year, Montana College Goal Sunday will take place at 18 sites across the state on Wednesday, Feb. 18 (select locations) and/or Sunday, Feb. 22 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Visit www.CollegeGoalMT.org for more information about this event in your community.

In addition to receiving assistance completing the FAFSA, College Goal Sunday participants may register to win one, \$500 scholarship to the postsecondary school of their choice at each College Goal Sunday site.

"Since the program was established in Montana five years ago we have been able to help more than 5,000 students and families on the path to higher education," said Safford. "We're extremely pleased with that success because it means that people recognize the importance of the FAFSA and are taking advantage of this free resource."

College Goal Sunday is a national program that was originally created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc. and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education. Lumina Foundation provided grant funding to SAF to implement the program in Montana.

For more information about Montana College Goal Sunday, call SAF at 877-COLG4ME (265-4463) or visit www.CollegeGoalMT.org.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are

returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs - to date more than \$14.7 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.