Navigating FAFSA and RDS to Prepare for College

Both FAFSA and RDS are required and need similar information for completion. Below is a breakdown of what these two items are and the information needed to complete them.

College Foundation of North Carolina®

FAFSA — U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FEDERAL STUDENT AID

FAFSA: Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to determine your eligibility for federal and state financial aid.

North Carolina RDS — Residency Determination Service

RDS: Use RDS (Residency Determination Service) to receive an RCN (Residency Certification Number) to determine your eligibility for in-state tuition and state grant awards.

	FAFSA	RDS
What?	Possible eligibility for federal and state financial aid for college	Possible eligibility for in-state tuition and state grants
Where?	*fafsa.gov*	*ncresidency.org*
First Step?	Get FSA ID (Federal Student Aid Identification) – student and parent/legal guardian	Complete RDS online
When?	FSA ID before Oct. 1; FAFSA as soon as possible after Oct. 1	Ideally before student applies to NC colleges and universities
	INFORMATION REQUIRED	**INFORMATION REQUIRED**
Student's Personal Identifying Information (SSN, ARN,USCIS or TIN)*	YES	YES
Parent's Personal Identifying Information (SSN, ARN,USCIS or TIN)*	YES	YES
Student-filed Federal Taxes	YES	YES
Parent/Legal Guardian-filed Federal Taxes	YES	YES
Student-filed State Taxes	NO	YES
Parent/Legal Guardian-filed State Taxes	NO	YES
Address of Permanent Residence	**YES,** for state grant eligibility	**YES,** for in-state tuition and state grant eligibility
Driver's License or Vehicle Information (if available)	YES	YES
Military Information (if applicable)	YES	YES
US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Documentation (if applicable)	NO	YES
What to Save After Completing Form?	**FSA ID** - Keep it safe.	**RCN** - (Residency Certification Number) Keep it safe.
Apply Again?	**YES.** Use FSA ID to complete the FAFSA each year in college.	**NO.** RCN never changes, but you may need to reapply if you transfer to a different institution.

*SSN = Social Security Number; ARN = Alien Registration Number; USCIS=US Citizenship and Immigration Services; ITIN = Individual Taxpayer Identification Number