INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

The U. S. Congress and the Department of Education determine the criteria for whether a student is considered dependent or independent of his/her parents for financial aid purposes. Generally, how the applicant responds to the questions on Step 3 of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) determines a student’s dependency status. If you were unable to answer “yes” to any of the questions on Step 3 of the FAFSA, but feel there are extenuating circumstances which might warrant you being considered independent of your parents, you must explain those circumstances in a petition to your Financial Aid Advisor.

Note: Parental information is legal parents, biological and/or adoptive parents. Parental information is not derived from foster parents, legal guardians, aunts and uncles, older siblings or grandparents. Having sufficient resources to pay your own expenses is NOT considered an extenuating circumstance for determining dependency status.

Examples of eligible circumstances include:
- Abandonment by parent
- Abusive family environment
- Unknown whereabouts of parents

Examples of non-eligible circumstances include:
- Financial hardship
- Parents’ desire NOT to provide financial support to the student
- a student’s ability to be self-sufficient

DIRECTIONS/CHECKLIST:

Please complete all questions on the Petition for Independent Status form.

1. At least three (3) letters of reference must be included with the Petition for Independent Status Form.
   - Two (2) Professional reference letters can include clergy, counselors, teachers, lawyers, etc.
     *Professional reference letter must be on letterhead and signed.
   - One (1) Personal reference letter can include family, close relatives you are not living with or employer.
     *If submitting a letter from an employer, it must be on letterhead and signed.

2. Complete, Sign, and Return the Petition for Independent Status form and all documents to our office. Please ensure all documents include your name and campus wide identification number.

A Petition for Independent Status will need to be completed each year you are attending A&M-Commerce as long as you do not meet the federal definition of an independent student.