

# SWOSU Student Financial Services Office Issues Notice to Parents and Students

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Office of Student Financial Services on the Weatherford campus is giving notice to area parents and students to be careful of financial aid consultants and scholarship search service agencies offering their services to help obtain financial aid for college.

Jerome Wichert, director of the SWOSU OSFS, said his office has been receiving numerous calls from students and parents about these services, which sometimes carry high fees.

"Before you pay for the services of a financial aid consultant, remember that the financial aid office at SWOSU assists with these services for free," Wichert said.

"Actually a person can contact the financial aid office at any local college/university or a local library for information or assistance."

College web sites, publications and catalogs are also good sources of information.

Wichert said the Internet is an excellent method of obtaining free student financial assistance information. In particular, the U.S. Department of Education web site provides aid information at <http://www.college.gov/wps/portal>. A person can complete the FAFSA free of charge on the U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA on the Web site at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). The 2009-2010 FAFSA will be available on January 1, 2009.

Many scholarship search services charge a fee to find sources of student financial aid. Some of these services have been in existence for some time, while others are relatively new. Wichert said search services need to be used with care and only after a thorough investigation of the services they provide.

Wichert said some services will guarantee a certain number of aid sources. This might simply be that the person can apply for the federal student aid programs.

"There is no need to pay a search service to identify these programs, because information on all of the federal student aid programs is available free of charge in any financial aid office or on the U.S. Department of education web site," Wichert said. "A little time on your part of browsing the Internet or visiting SWOSU's web site, financial aid office, admissions office, guidance counselor's office or your local library will probably unearth many sources of assistance a search service could identify."

Several companies have made scholarship search engines available to students on the Internet for free. These include, but are not limited to:

- FinAid on the Web – [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org);
- The College Board – [http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch\\_ss/welcome.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp)
- Fast Web - [www.fastweb.monster.com](http://www.fastweb.monster.com)