The School at Columbia University is fully committed to making it possible for all families to afford to enroll their children. Below please find information about the basic principles of The School’s financial aid, application procedures and deadlines, and information about how awards are determined.

The School bases its financial aid policy on guidelines provided by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), which state that it is the responsibility of parents or guardians to pay for the educational expenses of their children to the extent they are able. In assessing need, The School will take account of the assets and obligations of both parents or guardians and will not be bound by separation or divorce agreements or by the assertion that one parent or guardian is unwilling to pay. Therefore, both parents or guardians must fill out separate Parents’ Financial Statement (PFS) forms. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent or guardian to ask the noncustodial parent or guardian to fill out this form. Both parents must also submit tax forms.

**BASIC PRINCIPLES**

1. The School at Columbia University is committed to providing need-based financial aid for all neighborhood families.

2. The financial aid applications are processed by Tuition Aid Data Services (TADS), an independent company. All families are evaluated using the same methodology and formula.

3. Application deadlines are strictly enforced: Friday, Nov. 20, 2015 for all families.

4. The amount of financial aid a family receives is based solely on the family’s financial need, not on student merit. Changing family circumstances are considered each year. The standard minimum tuition payment per family will be $530 for the 2016-17 year.

5. All financial aid documents and award amounts are held in strictest confidence. Financial aid information is never used in determining a child’s admission to or re-enrollment in The School.

6. Through TADS, The School calculates an expected Household Contribution to Education (HCE) for all children in a family using each family’s current income and expenses and, to a lesser extent, savings and assets. The HCE is then allocated across all children in tuition-based schools (pre-school, K-12 and college). Basic living expenses such as food, clothing and shelter are funded with income before we calculate the HCE. The School believes each family should feel they are making some contribution to the cost of their child’s education.
Financial Aid Information Sheet – 2016-17

7. Financial aid is awarded on an annual basis. For this reason, families will submit all of the forms each year.

8. The current family address used by the parent(s) of a student at The School must be the same on all documents submitted to The School and/or TADS: doctor’s notes and medical forms, housing verification documents, federal income tax returns, paystubs and SNAP awards.

9. When parents are divorced, separated, or have never been married, both parents must complete the TADS application process. Financial information for stepparents must also be included.

10. Auditors from TADS will review financial aid applications and supporting documents. They may contact families directly with questions or requests for additional information. Families are encouraged to contact TADS directly with any questions about the submission process.

11. 2016-17 financial aid awards are contingent on a review of families’ 2015 federal tax returns. Families should expect 2016-17 financial aid awards to track the change in 2016-17 tuition rate, unless for some reason there is a significant difference between the estimated income on the application and the actual 2015 income.

12. After the TADS application process is complete, The School recommends that families request a copy of their parental report and review the data. The School has arranged for TADS to waive the $8 processing fee for this report. However, families must request to receive this report; it is not automatically sent.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

• Financial aid applications are collected by TADS. Please complete the TADS application online at www.tads.com by the deadline: Friday, Nov. 20, 2015 for all families. Under no circumstances with The School extend these deadlines or grant exceptions.

• A family will not be considered for a 2016-17 financial aid award if the application and supporting documents are not submitted by the deadline listed above.
• TADS’ process for determining the financial need of a family requires several supporting forms. TADS will not be able to finalize your application and calculate your award until all forms are received. The list of forms includes:
  a. TADS application
  b. 2014 federal tax returns (all schedules, attachments and W2s)/ Verification of Non-Filing
  c. Recent paystub
  d. Lease, rent stub, or mortgage coupon
  e. Housing maintenance charge receipt (if paid)
  f. Other bills or statements, as needed to support certain expenses
  g. IRS Form 4506-EZ

• Wherever applicable, information submitted by a family on their TADS application must match information filed on their 2014 federal income tax return. Examples of continuity include, but are not limited to:
  a. Family address
  b. Self-employed status
  c. Day/elder care expenses

• If applying as a two-household family (i.e., parents are divorced, separated, or have never been married and live separately), each parent must complete a separate TADS financial aid application. Stepparents are considered part of the student's household and their financial information must be included on the TADS application.

• Send to TADS a copy of 2014 federal tax returns with all schedules, attachments, and/or W2s or 1099s. Do not send state tax returns. Also send copies of a recent paystub, and of a lease/rent stub or mortgage and maintenance payment coupon. These supporting documents must be uploaded to the TADS website by the deadline: Friday, Nov. 20, 2015 for all families.

• Families do not need a completed 2015 tax return to complete the TADS application; just estimate annual income from a recent paystub. TADS will confirm these numbers when your 2015 federal tax form is received in spring of 2016.

• If families would like to make TADS aware of any special circumstances, please submit the information in writing. Feel free to attach any additional documents to your application that may explain or support these changes.

• IRS Form 4506T-EZ (Request for Transcript of Tax Return) is the only form families are required to send directly to The School. In a separate envelope, send the signed original IRS Form 4506T-EZ to The School by Friday, Nov. 20, 2015 for all families.
• Mail a copy of 2015 federal tax returns, with all schedules and attachments, to TADS as soon as it is filed, but no later than April 30, 2016. No change will be made to awards unless there is a significant difference between actual 2015 earnings and the estimate on the TADS application.

• The fee for processing the application online is $34, paid by credit card to TADS. If a family needs assistance with the fee, please contact financialaid@theschool.columbia.edu.

• If a family needs a paper version of the application, please contact financialaid@theschool.columbia.edu. The fee for processing the paper application is $40, payable by check to TADS, and must be submitted with the application. If a family needs assistance with the fee, please contact financialaid@theschool.columbia.edu.

If applications are not completed by the deadline, your family will not be considered for financial aid. The deadline is:

Friday, Nov. 20, 2015 for all families
**REVIEWING THE AWARD**

- Families are informed of their financial aid award when they receive their 2016-17 enrollment contract.

- The same formula and rules for determining awards are used for all families. Ultimately financial aid awards are a results of the data submitted in TADS.

- The School reviews each application individually to ensure financial information is entered correctly and awards are calculated consistently.

- Families are encouraged to meet with the Financial Aid Office if they believe any of their circumstances have not been factored into their awards.

- The School will consider an appeal and re-review a family’s application if there are extenuating and/or unusual circumstances. To request an appeal, please notify the Financial Aid Office in writing by letter or email. Outline the reasons for the appeal and attach additional documents as needed.

  The School supports the efforts of all families to apply for financial aid and meet deadlines.

  **If you need any assistance, please contact the Financial Aid Office at**
  financialaid@theschool.columbia.edu