WOMEN'S INSTITUTE OF TORAH SEMINARY & COLLEGE

<u>HELPFUL TIPS FOR FILLING OUT A FAFSA</u>

Please read carefully

- FAFSA stands for Free Application for Student Aid
- Go to www.FAFSA.ed.gov to access the application. Do not google FAFSA as you might be taken to a site that will charge you money for the application
- Read through the introduction page before completing the form
- When prompted to create a student FSA ID, follow the instructions for creating a username and password. The FSA ID serves as the student's legal signature. You must enter an email address that was never used on a FAFSA application before. When done, either verify with email or continue without verifying. <u>Make sure to write down all usernames and passwords for later use.</u> (For your convenience, you can use the form at the end of this document.)
- Create a Save Key. In case you will need to stop the application before you are done, it will automatically save each section as you finish it.
- Documents needed to complete the FAFSA:

  *Social Security number for student and parents
  *2021 tax return, W2's
  *Bank statements and records of investments
  *Records of untaxed income

- If you need help understanding a specific question, click on HELP (?)
- Make sure to use the student's and parents' legal names as they appear on their social security cards

<u>Below is some helpful information for how to answer some of the FAFSA questions:</u>

Section I – Student demographics

1. What will your high school completion status be when you begin college in the 2023-24 school year? Choose HS diploma or GED, as relevant.
2. Make sure to enter the legal name of the high school you attend(ed). You can Google your High School's code or call the school to get it.
3. What college degree or certificate will you be working on when you begin the 23-24 school year? Choose 1st Bachelor's degree
4. Will you have your 1st Bachelor's degree before you begin the 23-24 school year? No
5. What will your college grade level be when you begin the 2023-24 school year? Girls going to seminary choose Never attended college (even if courses were taken for credit in high school, because you were not enrolled as a degree-seeking student at that point). Girls returning from seminary choose 2nd year. Second year student should choose 3rd year or 4th year, as relevant.
6. Are you interested in being considered for work study? No (we do not have a work-study program)

Section II – School selection

Do you know your college's federal school code?

- Choose "yes" and enter the WITS Federal School Code: 042652. Press "search" and the name Women's Institute of Seminary & College will appear. Check the box and then click next.
- Housing Plans – If you will be attending seminary abroad or out of state, or if you will be boarding with a local family, choose Off Campus. Otherwise, choose With Parents.

Section III – Dependency Status

You will be asked a few questions to determine whether you are applying as a dependent or independent student. <u>IMPORTANT</u>: You are answering these questions as the student – not the parent. Answer the questions to determine if you are required to provide information about your parents on your FAFSA. Check all that apply or check "none of the above".

After answering the questions, dependency status will pop up. Make sure to choose option 1) I will provide parental information. (This is mandatory unless there are extenuating circumstances decided in court.) Your application will be incomplete if you choose the other option. Note that it is very rare in our student population that a student is considered independent unless she is married or has no parents.)

Section IV – Parent Demographics

You will be asked for information on your parents and their dependents. FAFSA will ask how many people are in your family. Even if you have siblings who file their own taxes, or who are not living at home, if your parents are still supporting them with at least ½ of their income, you can include them in the number of family members. You will also be asked how many family members will be enrolled in college. Include all children who are (will be) enrolled in post high school <u>accredited</u> yeshivos, seminaries and colleges.

Section V – Parent Financials

1. Dependent students **must** fill out their parental financial information. You will be asked if your parents have completed their IRS income tax return for **2021**.
2. You will be asked to put down taxable income from specific lines on the 2020 income tax return. You will be given the option to link your FAFSA to the **IRS DRT (Data Retrieval Tool)**. You should absolutely **agree** to do this as it will expedite your financial aid verification should you be selected for that process.
3. After putting in the parents' information, you will be asked to create an FSA ID for one parent. If a parent has one from a previous FAFSA application, use it. If you do not remember it, create an FSA ID for the 2nd parent. <u>Please</u> - write it down in a safe place and remember for which parent you created it. (If you do not create it at this point, you will have to do it at the end in order to sign and submit your FAFSA application.) Please note that you will be unable to link to the IRS without first creating the FSA ID. If the IRS data retrieval tool does not work, then enter your financial information from the specified lines on your 2021 tax return or W2 forms.
4. In the Untaxed Income section:
   - Social Security income **does not** need to be included on your FAFSA.
   - Parsonage benefits (housing, food and other living allowances paid to military, clergy, and others) **do** need to be reported.
   - Click Help (?) to find information on how to answer questions on parents' current assets. You do not need to include the home in which you live, retirement plans or pension funds.

Section VI – Student Financials

You will be asked to write down any income the student earned. If the student was not required to fill out their own tax return, choose the "not filing" option. If the income was above $400, the student might be asked to submit a W2 form in the future if selected for verification, even though the student was not required to file a tax return. Make sure you have documentation for any income you report, even if the amount of income seems insignificant to you.

Section VII – Sign (FSA ID) and submit FAFSA application

You will be required to electronically sign for both student and parent. If you have not created an FSA ID for either student or parent, create one at this point. Your FAFSA application is not considered complete without both signatures. It is much more complicated to sign later.

Before signing the application, there is an option to view/print your FAFSA information. First, view and make sure all the information you entered is accurate. If not, make the necessary changes. It is a little complicated to make changes later. Please double check that WITS is the name of the school selected. Then, if you have a printer, print the application for possible future reference.

Lastly, sign the application as student or parent 1 or 2, checking to be sure that the signatures are in the correct space for parent or student. Then click "submit my FAFSA now". If you have trouble signing electronically or with any other aspect of the FAFSA, call the FAFSA help hotline at 1-800-4-FEDAID to
see what to do since the application will not be processed until the signatures are received.

Section VIII – Confirm your application

Save and print a copy of your confirmation page. It should show that WITS is the college chosen. Please look at the bottom of the confirmation page for your Eligibility information. Look at "Based on the eligibility criteria, you may be eligible for the following:" This is not your exact financial aid award, but the number next to PELL can help me estimate if you will be eligible for a federal Pell grant. Please note that we do not participate in Federal Loan programs.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT YOU COMPLETE THE FAFSA BEFORE MARCH 1 IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR ANY STATE AWARDS.
To apply for MD state awards, use the following link: https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us and create a student login. Check off that you are interested in the need-based GA and/or EA award, and also legislative awards. GA awards are only applicable to students who are high school seniors this year. EA awards are possibly applicable to seniors who will be in seminary next year and returning current seminary students. MDCAPS will notify you if you qualify for the GA or EA awards, and they will let you know what they need from you to be granted the award. Legislative awards are not necessarily need-based and must be applied for individually. Guidelines are on the MDCAPS website.

PLEASE NOTE: EVEN IF YOU FILED A FAFSA APPLICATION FOR THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR, YOU MUST RENEW IT IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE FAFSA FOR THE COMING ACADEMIC YEAR. STATE SENATORIAL AWARDS WILL AUTOMATICALLY RENEW IF YOUR FINANCIAL INFORMATION IS THE SAME OR SIMILAR TO WHAT IT WAS FOR THIS YEAR'S DETERMINATION, AS LONG AS THE RENEWAL IS FILED BEFORE MARCH 1. HOWEVER, STATE DELEGATE AWARDS MUST BE RENEWED EACH YEAR.

If you have questions you think I may be able to answer, please contact me at trappaport@wits.edu and I will be happy to do whatever I can to help you. GOOD LUCK!

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE OF TORAH SEMINARY & COLLEGE

For your convenience, you may record all your usernames and passwords below.

FSA ID

Student's Username:

_____

Student's Password:

_____

Parent's Username:

_____

Parent's Password:

_____

Save Key:

_____

Parent 1:

_____

Parent 2:

_____