

Slide 1 - Introduction	Thank you for joining this session on the topic of Professional Judgment as it relates to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as the FAFSA. It is brought to you by the Office of Student Financial Assistance, a division of the Florida Department of Education – a state sponsor of the National Training for Counselors and Mentors.
Slide 2 – Professional Judgment definition	Professional judgment is defined by the very same law which details the Expected Family Contribution. Professional judgment by definition is “the authority of the financial aid administrator on the basis of adequate documentation to make adjustments on a case by case basis to the cost of attendance or the values of the data items required to calculate the expected student or parent contribution (or both) to allow for treatment of an individual eligible applicant with special circumstances.”
Slide 3 – Professional Judgment basics	The FAFSA does not provide a way for a family to indicate any special circumstances on the application itself. The purpose of professional judgment is to take these situations into account. The action of professional judgment generally occurs after the FAFSA is filed. Professional judgment is exercised by the financial aid administrator. A link is provided in this slide if you would like more information.
Slide 4 – Common Situations	There are many situations where professional judgment is helpful. These include loss of income, unusually high medical expenses which are not covered by insurance and elementary or high school tuition for younger children. In fact the law provides many examples for which Congress believes the use of professional judgment is warranted.
Slide 5 – Unqualified Situations	As you can imagine there are a number of situations where the use of professional judgment is not appropriate. Such situations are often a reflection of family lifestyle choices. Circumstances which do not justify the use of professional judgment include vacation expenses, tithing, and consumer debt. We have covered the basics of professional judgment; let’s now turn our attention to the actual process.
Slide 6 – Professional Judgment process (1)	The professional judgment process varies from college to college. Unlike other aspects of federal financial aid, the Department of Education cannot regulate professional judgment, which means school are free to structure the process in a way that best meets the needs of the institution. Keep in mind, it is up to the college whether or not it will exercise professional judgment and for what situations. For example, one college will use professional judgment by taking into account elementary school tuition for younger children. A nearby university may not consider such an expense an appropriate use of its authority.

<p>Slide 7 – Professional Judgment process (2)</p>	<p>Regardless of how the process may vary from one college to another, some aspects of professional judgment will be the same. One of these consistencies is documentation. The family must be able to document its special circumstance in order for the financial aid administrator to consider any possible adjustments of the information used to calculate the expected family contribution. Families may be asked to submit a signed statement describing their situation. Supporting documentation can include items such as the tax return, pay stubs, and copies of medical bills. It is important to note, that the financial aid office has the right to ask for the documentation it determines necessary to review the family’s situation the appropriateness of exercising professional judgment.</p>
<p>Slide 8 – Professional Judgment process (3)</p>	<p>Another consistent aspect of professional judgment is the authority of the financial aid administrator. His or her decision is FINAL. The Department of Education cannot appeal it. However, if a family disagrees with the decision, they should schedule an appointment with the financial aid office. It is possible the family did not share all relevant information pertaining to the special circumstance. Additional documentation provided may impact the financial aid administrator’s decision.</p>
<p>Slide 7 – Need Additional Assistance?</p>	<p>For more information about this topic please visit www.NavigatingYourFuture.org. Select the Contact Us tab to locate an outreach representative near you. We will be more than happy to help! Thanks for attending today’s session.</p>