



About “Ask Benji”

What Is Benji?

Benji is a first-of-its kind chatbot that utilizes Artificial Intelligence technology, and was specifically designed to help students, parents, and educators get quick answers to 600+ questions about the FAFSA. As more Arizona students and parents use this service, Benji will continue to learn and respond to more questions and unique circumstances.

Benji is free and easy to use. It is not an app. There is no download required.

Benji is not fluent in Spanish yet, but will be able to direct users to some Spanish language resources on FAFSA and financial aid.

Why Was Benji Developed?

Benji was built to help ensure that Arizona meets its FAFSA completion goal of 52 percent of Arizona students for the 2020-2021 FAFSA cycle. The project was developed and launched by a coalition of state higher education leaders: College Success Arizona, Achieve60AZ, Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, Arizona State University, Maricopa Community Colleges, Be A Leader Foundation, and Helios Education Foundation.

For Ask Benji’s first year, the coalition seeks to reach 30,000 households and provide direct FAFSA assistance to at least 10,000 families in Maricopa County. Arizona has one of the lowest FAFSA completion rates in the nation and Ask Benji seeks to reverse that trend to ensure that access to higher education is equitable across the state.

Benji may also affect the number of students enrolling in a college or university. Completing the FAFSA directly impacts the number of students who pursue a higher education. According to the National College Access Network, 90 percent of those who submit the application ultimately enroll at a college or university.

How Benji Works

Benji provides immediate, confidential answers to questions about the FAFSA. The tool has been programmed to answer 600+ FAFSA and financial aid questions that students and parents may have while completing their FAFSA. Benji will also capture data such as name, high school, and graduation year in order to group



users and send timely, relevant nudges. The information that Benji collects is confidential and will only be used for these purposes.

Why You Should Refer Users To Benji

Benji can help reduce the caseload for educators, especially school counselors, by providing answers to questions about the FAFSA; the goal is to minimize the need to address repetitive FAFSA questions so that counselors can focus on unusual student or family circumstances that are highest priority.

Benji provides immediate, expert assistance for students and parents seeking answers to questions about the FAFSA. When students or families approach you with questions about the application, you can now refer them to Benji for quick answers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Benji will also send users nudges about upcoming FAFSA events, priority deadlines, etc. to encourage students to complete their applications.

How to Make Benji Work For You

Benji is here to help you help your students and families. Make the most of Benji by:

- Encouraging students to “Ask Benji” any FAFSA or financial aid questions.
- Passing along materials provided by the Ask Benji team to your students and families to help spread the word about Benji.
- Informing the Ask Benji team of upcoming FAFSA related events. The team can provide you with materials about Benji to pass along to your students and families. Email the team at benji@collegesuccessarizona.org.

How to Get Started With Benji

To get started, all one needs to do is text the word “Help” to Benji at 602-786-8171. Once a user has texted Benji, it will respond to the dialogue with answers to questions or links to resources. Benji quickly responds to all questions, 24-7.

Where to Get More Information

Visit www.askbenji.org for more information about Ask Benji, the FAFSA, and other resources. Follow along on social with @benjiFAFSA.