

# FINANCIAL AND INCLUSION AID GUIDE

## 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR

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**Pine Crest School offers need-based financial aid to attract, enroll, and retain mission-appropriate families who could not otherwise afford the full cost of attendance.**

## **FINANCING A PINE CREST SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Pine Crest maintains the philosophy of need-based financial assistance. The School does not offer any form of merit aid, meaning that there are no “scholarships” for athletic, academic, or arts performance. Pine Crest encourages families with financial need to apply for tuition assistance by following the steps outlined below.

Understanding that a Pine Crest education is a significant investment in a child’s future, the School’s Financial Aid Committee reviews, evaluates, and makes a fair assessment of each family’s ability to afford an exceptional education for their children. To enable the School to fairly and equitably make these determinations, Pine Crest requires all applicants to submit an application. The application must be submitted annually to the outside vendor engaged by the School to assist with this process—FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment.

Before approaching the School for assistance, families should consider all available financial avenues. The Financial Aid Committee requires evidence that a family’s commitment to their child(ren)’s education is a priority over discretionary lifestyle choices. The School expects families who apply for aid to make the necessary adjustments in using their discretionary resources and lifestyle choices and to access any ancillary resources available to them through extended family, work, and local organizations.

Financial Aid is partly funded by gifts from generous donors who believe in supporting mission-appropriate families in pursuing a Pine Crest education for their children. While the School is deeply committed to assisting families with demonstrated need, our resources are limited and distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Therefore, we encourage families to apply as soon as possible and before the application deadline.

To ensure the privacy of our families, Pine Crest maintains all financial aid applications and awards in the strictest confidence. The School’s need-based application process is separate and distinct from its admission process, which is need-blind. The School expects families who receive aid to maintain the same level of confidentiality around the process and the award. Families who discuss these matters outside of the Office of Financial Aid run the risk of losing their award.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

Families must apply for financial assistance and demonstrate their financial need in each year of attendance.

The application deadline for returning families is **November 15, 2023** and **January 15, 2024** for new families. All of the following steps in the application process must be completed in advance of the applicable deadline (except as otherwise noted):

- Complete the online financial aid application through FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment.
- Upload prior year 2022 signed federal tax returns.
- Upload current 2023 signed federal tax returns, including all supporting schedules, business taxes, W2s, and explanations by **April 15, 2024**. Pine Crest will not award financial aid until all current supporting tax documentation is uploaded and reviewed. “Draft” tax documentation is not considered.

For new families, a student must first gain admission to Pine Crest and complete the enrollment process before the family’s financial aid application will be considered.

For returning financial aid applicants, Pine Crest does not process or review financial aid applications unless the student is enrolled in the current academic year without restriction. Returning families whose child(ren) have been placed on a “hold status” due to business, academic, or behavioral reasons will not have their application considered until the hold has been removed. In addition, repeated failure to pay



all school-related costs in a timely manner may affect a family's eligibility for financial aid.

All families run the risk of not receiving financial aid if their documents are not submitted and their application is not processed before the applicable deadline.

Families must notify the School immediately of any changes in their circumstances (positive or negative) during the application process or after an award has been granted. If new information comes to light after an award has been granted, Pine Crest reserves the right to amend the award. Families who withhold or misrepresent information during the process or fail to disclose a change in circumstances run the risk of having their award revoked.

### **“TOTAL FAMILY” CONTRIBUTION PHILOSOPHY**

Pine Crest maintains a “total family” contribution philosophy under which the primary responsibility for financing a student's education rests with the entire family. Active engagement in the financial aid process is one expected form of exercising this responsibility. Financial aid decisions are made on a “total family” basis.

Under the School's approach, all parents, guardians, domestic partners, and step-parents are expected to play a critical role in financing a student's education. These expectations apply regardless of any legal agreements between family members, such as alimony agreements, prenuptial agreements, divorce, custody, or other similar arrangements. In cohabitation cases, Pine Crest considers the entire household income, regardless of the family's legal status.

The School is happy to speak with any noncustodial parent reluctant to provide their information to FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment and the School. However, Pine Crest's policy requires noncustodial parents to submit their financial information on the FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment application. Refusal to provide this information will result in an “incomplete” application status and a resulting denial of financial aid.

The School recognizes that, at times, unusual circumstances may make it difficult for families to obtain and supply certain financial information. In these rare cases, a waiver request must be submitted for the School's consideration before a further review of the financial aid application. Please contact Jim Sullivan, Director of Enrollment Management, at [jim.sullivan@pinecrest.edu](mailto:jim.sullivan@pinecrest.edu) to request a waiver.

### **UNDEREMPLOYED/NON-WORKING FAMILY MEMBERS**

In many Pine Crest families, all family members work to maintain an income sufficient to support independent school education for their children. It is unfair to ask Pine Crest to subsidize the educational cost for a family with one or more members who choose, for lifestyle reasons, not to work at levels commensurate with their education or abilities and/or who voluntarily elect not to work at all.

In computing the Required Family Contribution, FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment (on behalf of the Financial Aid Committee) will impute estimated income for family members who choose not to work and/or who do not work at a level commensurate with their education or abilities.

If a parent is self-employed and claims a low income compared to the Bureau of Labor Statistics annual mean wage for that profession, a higher income level will be imputed unless a reasonable justification for the lower income can be demonstrated. Parents returning to school, starting a business venture, or changing jobs as a personal choice must realize that Pine Crest will not underwrite a resulting decrease in their family income. Families with extraordinary situations should explain their situation in the additional notes section of the application.

### **STUDENT ASSETS/TRUSTS/COLLEGE FUNDS/INHERITANCE**

Savings, investments, trust funds, 529 funds, and any other assets in the name of the student or held for the benefit of a student for any reason (even those restricted in some way) are considered resources available for use in funding



a student's education at Pine Crest and must be reported during the FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment process.

## **MULTIPLE TUITION-CHARGING SCHOOLS**

If more than one child in a family attends a tuition-charging institution, Pine Crest requires families to apply for financial aid at each institution their children attend. When determining eligibility for aid, Pine Crest does not consider any tuition paid for children beyond the undergraduate level (e.g., master's and doctoral degrees) as part of the family's expenses. Pine Crest cannot subsidize tuition for other tuition-charging schools of any type, including college. Copies of awards from other institutions may be required.

## **HOUSING EXPENSE AND HOME EQUITY/USE OF DISCRETIONARY INCOME**

The equity a family has in their primary residence and in any other real estate or personal property, will be considered in determining a family's financial need. While the School does not generally expect parents to sell their home or to take a home equity loan to support their child(ren)'s education, there may be cases where the family's equity in an asset is sufficiently significant that the equity will be considered in the calculation of financial need. The expectation is that families applying for financial aid will choose reasonable housing commensurate with their income level. If a family spends more than 30% of their net income, the excess spent on housing over 30% will be allocated back into the application as available income.

Families who direct discretionary income toward the acquisition of real estate or personal property, rather than toward the cost of education, will be expected to contribute a larger portion of their current income towards educational expenses.

## **BUSINESS INCOME/BUSINESS STARTUPS**

All family members who own a business are required to upload current business tax returns. Business owners will also be asked to furnish cash flow statements, balance sheets, and any other information relevant to the business. The School does not consider business or rental depreciation or loss in the calculation of financial need, as depreciation does not reflect an actual cash disbursement or loss.

Pine Crest will not underwrite a parent's decision to finance a startup company, and in the same light, will not supplement income loss from a business, bankruptcy, past income tax debt, or lawsuit liability.

The School will make appropriate adjustments to the family income consistent with these principles. If a clear financial picture that matches lifestyle cannot be created through documentation, the application will be declined and the family denied aid.

## NEGATIVE INCOME

The income that is reported to the IRS is different from actual cash flow. The FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment methodology focuses on cash flow and cost of living adjustments. Reviewing a family's tax documentation is one method of verifying what the family has reported in the application. In the case of reported negative income, a family's lifestyle will be evaluated and appropriate adjustments to income will be made in assessing need. As stated above, the application will be denied if the School cannot reconcile the documentation with the family's observed lifestyle.

## LOSS OF INCOME FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION/CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Pine Crest will not underwrite losses associated with substance abuse, addiction, or criminal activity, as those activities could jeopardize a family's ability to provide a Pine Crest education for their children. If a family member loses income in connection with any such activity, the loss of income will not be considered and total full income prior to the loss will be imputed.

## FOREIGN INCOME

Pine Crest does not award financial aid without income verification through United States federal tax returns. In cases where one family member files U.S. taxes and another works outside the country, income will be imputed for the family member with foreign income.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q: Should I apply for financial aid or not?**

A: If you believe your family requires financial assistance to support your child(ren)'s education, we encourage you to apply.

**Q: What financial sacrifices does Pine Crest School expect my family to make when evaluating how much we can afford for tuition and school-related expenses?**

A: Pine Crest believes that the primary responsibility for financing education rests with families. Our Financial Aid Committee's goal is to effectively evaluate each family's financial picture in such a manner that the family realizes some financial sacrifice for a Pine Crest education. We will not provide aid to offset "lifestyle" choices and expenditures (such as luxury cars, second homes, expensive vacations, club memberships, and credit card debt) that could have been directed to education.

### **Q: What does FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment do?**

A: FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment is a service that utilizes an accepted methodology to compute a family's ability to pay for students' educational expenses. Many independent schools like Pine Crest use FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment to provide financial aid analysis.

### **Q: What is the range of aid that is awarded?**

A: Pine Crest's financial aid awards range from a small percentage of the tuition to almost full tuition. All families are expected to make some contribution toward tuition.

### **Q: Do I have to reapply each year for Financial Aid?**

A: Yes. Each student's need is recalculated annually. Therefore, parents are required to complete the application and upload the required documentation each year.

### **Q: Are students ever asked to take jobs at Pine Crest School to help pay for their education?**

A: No.

### **Q: Will applying for financial aid have an impact on the admission decision?**

A: No. Admission decisions are made first. After the Admission decision is made, the Financial Aid Committee reviews applications. The Financial Aid decision will be provided along with the acceptance notification.

### **Q: Does financial aid cover school trips and other ancillary costs, like the Learning Network?**

A: No. The financial aid award covers the cost of tuition and, in certain circumstances, the cost of transportation and after-school care. Extra costs are not included, like trips, music lessons, parking, and athletic fees. Certain high-need students will qualify for our Inclusion Aid Program, which helps cover various ancillary costs associated with a student's enrollment at Pine Crest.

**Q: If a parent decides to attend graduate school, how will that choice impact the financial aid award?**

A: The Financial Aid Committee expects that the family member enrolled in graduate school will continue to earn income and fund their education without depending heavily on family resources. If either or both is not the case, these factors will be considered in assessing a family's financial need.

**Q: If I choose to volunteer at Pine Crest School rather than work. How will that decision impact my financial aid award?**

A: Pine Crest recognizes that families have the freedom and the responsibility to make choices regarding their financial status. However, if only one parent works outside of the home, the Financial Aid Committee will impute additional income as if the non working parent was employed full-time in a job commensurate with their education and abilities.

**Q: If I am living with someone who is not my child's biological parent or if I am remarried, how will the Financial Aid Committee review my child's file?**

A: We require financial information from all parents and other adults living in the applicant's household, including step-parents, significant others, and partners.

**Q: Our family needs financial support beyond the level Pine Crest School can provide. Are there other financing options available?**

A: Yes. Families may apply for a customized educational loan through Your Tuition Solution (YTS). YTS pays the school your child's tuition, and you pay YTS directly. For more information, contact the Financial Aid Office at (954) 492-2179.

**Q: The award amount that we received is not sufficient, is there an appeal process?**

A: Yes. Please send your request for a second review in writing to the Financial Aid Office. You will be asked to complete a detailed Monthly Cash Flow Report and provide additional documents to substantiate your appeal.

**Q: I still have questions regarding the application process for financial aid. Whom should I contact?**

A: Please contact Jim Sullivan, Pine Crest School Director of Enrollment Management at [jim.sullivan@pinecrest.edu](mailto:jim.sullivan@pinecrest.edu), or call FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment at 866-315-9262.