Section 480(d) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), defines an independent student as someone who fits into one of the following categories. Under these categories a student is independent if he or she:

- Was born before January 1, 1992;
- Is an orphan, in foster care or is a ward of the court at any time since age 13;
- Is an emancipated minor as determined by a court in his/her state of legal residence;
- Is in legal guardianship as determined by a court in his/her state of legal residence;
- Is an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or at risk of being homeless as determined on or after July 1, 2014, by a school district homeless liaison or the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program;
- Is a graduate or professional student;
- Is married;
- Has legal dependents other than a spouse for whom he/she provides more than half their financial support; or
- Is a student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.
- Is currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training or is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Examples of unusual circumstances include:
- family abuse or neglect,
- parental abandonment, or
- other situations where contact between you and your parents is non-existent.

According to guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, the following circumstances do not qualify as unusual circumstances and do not merit a dependency override:
- Parents refuse to contribute to the student’s education;
- Parents are unwilling to provide information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or to complete the verification process;
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes;
- Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency;
- Incarceration or confinement.

Definitions:

**Ward of the Court** – Page AVG-26 of the 2015-2016 Federal Student Aid Handbook: “A student is a ward of the court if the court has assumed legal custody of her. In some states the court may impose its authority over a juvenile who remains in the legal custody of her parents; such a student is not a ward of the court. Also, incarceration of a student does not qualify her as a ward of the court.” Having a legal guardian does not automatically make a student a ward of the court but will make the student independent on a separate FAFSA question. A legal guardian must have been appointed by the court and the parent’s rights terminated for the child to be a ward of the court.

**Homeless** – At any time on or after July 1, 2014, lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing, which includes living in shelters, parks, motels or cars, or temporarily living with other people because you had nowhere else to go.

**Unaccompanied** - At any time on or after July 1, 2014, not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

**Youth** - Twenty-one years of age or younger or still enrolled in high school as of FAFSA application date.

**Please Note**
- You will be notified in writing of the appeal committee’s decision. This process may take up to 30 days.
- If your appeal is incomplete or submitted without the necessary documentation, processing of your appeal will be delayed until the additional information is obtained. **Appeals must be submitted by mid-term of the semester for which you are requesting aid.**
- Submission of an appeal does not guarantee your request will be approved.
- If approved, the dependency override is valid for only one academic year. Approval in one year does not guarantee approval in following years. Your status must be reassessed each academic year.
- An approval by the WNCC Financial Aid Appeal Committee is relevant only to your application at WNCC. Each institution to which you apply must make its own determination of your dependency status. No school is obligated to accept a decision made by another school.
INSTRUCTIONS: Complete ALL required information on this form.

☐ Attach a typed (or neatly hand-written), signed statement that explains in detail the extreme, unique, and/or unusual family circumstances that prevent you from obtaining and providing your parents’ information for your financial aid application.

☐ Attach a signed copy of your 2014 Federal Income Tax Return if you filed, and a copy of your 2014 W-2s. If you were not employed, provide a statement explaining how your living expenses were covered.

☐ Attach documentation of your 2014 income to date from all income sources.

☐ Attach a copy of your current lease agreement, mortgage statement or rent receipt. If you do not have a lease or mortgage in your name, attach a statement explaining your current living situation.

☐ Attach court or other official documentation of your status (e.g., guardianship, HHS documentation).

☐ Attach a signed statement from your guardian (if applicable) detailing your circumstances.

☐ Attach a signed statement from a third party who is knowledgeable of your family situation and can verify the reason you are unable to provide your parents’ information. This third party should be someone unrelated to you and should be on letterhead. Appropriate third-party statements are from clergy, school counselors, teachers or similar professionals.

Please print neatly

Your address _____________________________________________

City, State, Zip __________________________________________

How long have you lived at this address? _____ Years _____ Months

Is the lease or mortgage in your name?

☐ Yes (attach a copy of your lease or mortgage)

☐ No (attach a copy of your current lease agreement, mortgage statement or rent receipt. If you do not have a lease or mortgage in your name, attach a statement explaining your current living situation)

Mother’s name ____________________________  Father’s name ____________________________

Address ____________________________  Address ____________________________

City, State, Zip ____________________________  City, State, Zip ____________________________
Do you live with your parent(s) during school breaks?  □ Yes  □ No
When did you last live with your parent(s)?  ________________________________
When did your parent(s) last provide any monetary support for you?  ________________________________
When did you last have contact with your parent(s)?  ________________________________
How often do you have contact with your parent(s)?  ________________________________
Are you covered by your parent(s) medical insurance?  □ Yes  □ No
Are you covered by your parent(s) car insurance?  □ Yes  □ No
  □ Check here if you have your own medical and/or car insurance. Attach a copy of your current policies.
Do you own your own vehicle?
  □ Yes (attach a copy of your title, registration, and loan)
  □ No (attach an explanation of your transportation arrangements)
Are all utilities (such as electricity, gas, telephone, cable) in your name?
  □ Yes
  □ No (attach explanation)
Cash support from people other than the student’s parents (includes amounts paid by others for bills in the student’s name).
  Amount of cash support:  $____________________
In-kind support is support other than money (e.g., friends or relatives giving the student food or allowing him/her to live with them rent free).
  Value of in-kind support:  $____________________

Student Certification
By signing below, I agree to provide additional information or documentation deemed necessary by the Financial Aid Appeal Committee, including court documents. I further certify that all information contained on this form and in the supporting documentation is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. Purposely providing false or misleading information can result in fines, imprisonment, or both.

Signature: ________________________________  Date: ________________________________

WNCC Financial Aid Office  •  1601 E. 27th Street  •  Scottsbluff, NE  69361
  (308) 635-6011  •  fax (308) 635-6732  •  email:  financialaid@wncc.edu