

OPPORTUNITIES

**PREPARING FOR COLLEGE
GUIDE & WORKBOOK**

— NATIONAL 2022-2023 —



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How Going to College
Can Change Your Life

11

Navigating the
Financial Aid Process

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Finding Scholarships

#INVESTINYOUROPPORTUNITIES

ECMC

This workbook belongs to:

Blank white rounded rectangle for student name.

CHECK OUT *our* CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PUBLICATION!



CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES CTE HAS TO OFFER

VISIT WWW.ECMC.ORG/OPPORTUNITIES



FIND OUT WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT CTE AT: www.questionthequo.org

Welcome

Continuing education beyond high school, whether attending a career and technical education institution, community college or four-year college or university, is a big step in investing in your future! You will learn in this book how furthering your education can have a significant impact on your career and financial success. Kudos to you for taking that first step by investing your time and energy into this book. Remember to keep this book close by and reference it often.

We are excited to assist you in preparing for your future. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your education journey!

Updates to This Book

While every effort is made to keep this book up-to-date, program requirements are subject to change. For complete information regarding specific programs, contact the organization responsible for administering that individual program.

The U.S. Congress frequently considers legislation that could change some of the provisions of the federal student financial aid programs. If significant changes are made during the academic year, this book will be updated. You can view the most current version online at www.ecmc.org/opportunities.

Availability in Spanish

To order copies in Spanish and/or download a PDF, visit www.ecmc.org/opportunities.

Para ordenar copias Español y/o descargar un PDF, visite www.ecmc.org/opportunities.

For Administrators and Counselors

This book is a resource for you to share with students. To order free copies of this book, go to www.ecmc.org/opportunities.

About ECMC

Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) is a nonprofit company with a mission to help students succeed. We work to lower student loan default rates; sponsor college access and success initiatives, and financial literacy programs; and provide resources to support student loan borrowers to successfully repay their loans.

For more information, visit us online at www.ecmc.org/about-us.

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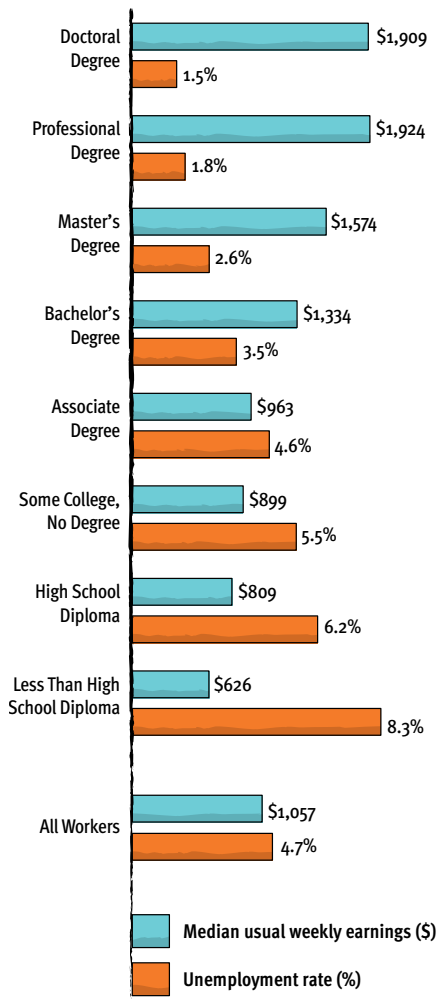
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Going to College Can Change Your Life

Your odds of career success are much higher if you attend college. This chapter shares some statistics that prove this.

EMPLOYMENT RATES & EARNINGS

BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2021



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021 Current Population Survey

Note: Data are for persons aged 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.

Be Happy

People who attend college:

- Report they have more job satisfaction than those who did not attend.
- Typically live healthier lifestyles, and are more likely to have access to employer-provided benefits including: medical insurance, retirement plans and paid time off.
- Are more involved in their communities through higher levels of volunteering and voting.

Finally, talk with people who have gone to college—most will tell you it was fun!

Education Pays

Statistics show that unemployment rates decrease in direct relationship to how much education you receive. The more education you receive, the more money you are likely to make. A study by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021 (Current Population Survey) supports this, shown in the chart to the left. Keep in mind, education is an investment in your future.

Earn More

Going to college costs you money, but not going to college can cost you even more. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the median total earnings over an adult's working life are as follows:

- Less than high school = \$1.2 million
- High school diploma/GED = \$1.6 million
- Some college = \$1.9 million
- Associate degree = \$2.0 million
- Bachelor's degree = \$2.8 million
- Master's degree = \$3.2 million
- Doctoral degree = \$4.0 million
- Professional degree = \$4.7 million

Source: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/collegepayoff2021>

Paths to Higher Education

The term "higher education" refers to all educational opportunities available to you after high school. By knowing all available opportunities, you will have a better idea of what type of college may be a good match for you.

View college options on the next page

ECMC prepared this workbook to guide you through the college selection, application and financial aid process. To reduce confusion, in this book we refer to all types of higher education institutions as "colleges."

Most Common College Types

Type of Institution	Description	Degrees Offered	Admissions
Career and Technical Education (CTE) Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A CTE focuses on a highly specialized curriculum; can be nonprofit or for-profit Geared for students who want to learn a specific skill and find employment within two years Examples include cosmetology, HVAC, culinary and automotive technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificates of completion Associate Applied Science (AAS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion
Community College Junior College (2-year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A college is one institution with multiple academic departments Offers traditional academic, continuing education and remedial programs Offers technical programs, such as cosmetology, HVAC, culinary and automotive technology Offers general education prerequisite courses required for most bachelor's degree programs at four-year colleges and universities Ideal for students looking to transfer to a four-year college and pursue a bachelor's degree, students looking to earn an associate degree or certificate, and students looking to further their education Some colleges offer a limited number of bachelor's degree programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificates of completion Associate of Arts (AA) Associate of Science (AS) Associate Applied Science (AAS) May offer limited: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Science (BS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming freshmen and transfers Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion College transcript, if previously attended College placement testing may be required depending on the school
College (4-year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A college is one institution with multiple academic departments Offers traditional academic programs; may offer technical, continuing education and remedial programs Offers general education prerequisite courses and upper-level, major-specific undergraduate and graduate courses Colleges can be specialized in a specific area or liberal arts based Liberal arts colleges offer primarily liberal arts majors, yet many offer degrees in STEM fields as well Colleges (especially liberal arts colleges) tend to be smaller than universities and offer fewer majors; they may not offer graduate degrees (master's and doctoral) Some colleges offer associate degree programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Science (BS) May offer limited: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associate of Arts (AA) Associate of Science (AS) Associate Applied Science (AAS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming freshmen and transfers Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion (more selective colleges require a higher grade point average) College transcript, if previously attended Supplemental documents may include essay, personal statement and/or academic resume SAT or ACT score may be required depending on the school
University (4-year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A university is one institution with multiple schools and colleges (college of liberal arts, school of engineering, college of business, etc.) Offers traditional academic programs; may offer technical, continuing education and remedial programs Even though universities tend to focus more on research and specialized majors, most universities have a college of arts and sciences that offers liberal arts programs Universities tend to be larger than colleges and offer more majors; they offer graduate degrees (master's and doctoral) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Science (BS) Master of Arts (MA) Master of Science (MS) Master of Business Administration (MBA) Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) There are many other graduate and undergraduate degrees, but these are the most common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming freshmen and transfers Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion (more selective universities require a higher grade point average) College transcript, if previously attended Supplemental documents may include essay, personal statement and/or academic resume SAT or ACT score may be required depending on the school

A Note about School Accreditation and Licensing

Accrediting and licensure agencies provide third-party oversight and ensure the college is providing the quality of education promised to the student. Due to colleges having different accreditation agencies, credits earned at one college may not be transferrable to another college. Check with the admissions department to determine which of your credits will transfer.

For more information about accreditation and state licensing, visit the U.S. Department of Education at www.ed.gov/accreditation.

Choosing the Right College

Your college selection is an important decision, but where do you start? Use the tools and resources in this chapter to help you choose where to apply.

Finding the Right College

Every person is different. Your background, interests and personality are just a few things that make you original and unique.

Depending on many factors, each person has a different experience preparing for college. Let your personal interests, goals and situation influence your decisions throughout the process.

Explore Career Fields

Identify careers that interest you and determine which majors will best prepare you for that career. Investigate the academic requirements necessary to enter into those majors.

Consider Your Academic Strengths

The best way to identify a career field or major course of study is to look at the academic subjects you already enjoy, especially those in which you perform well. Identify majors that concentrate in these subject areas to ensure selection of a major you'll likely enjoy and do well in. Once you've identified a major or majors, identify colleges that offer those majors.

To help get you started, visit the following resources and career assessment websites:

- www.bls.gov/ooh—Occupational Outlook Handbook with more than 1,500 jobs descriptions and their likely pay scale.
- www.khanacademy.org/college-careers-more/career-content—Videos and articles containing detailed information on several types of jobs as well as general advice when starting in the workplace.
- <https://roadtripnation.com>—Videos and interactive tools to help students determine the right college type, major and career.
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>—Career exploration exercises and educational requirements needed to achieve college and career goals.
- www.onetonline.org—The U.S. Department of Labor's interactive database of occupational information.

Determine Support Services That Are Important to You

Colleges offer more than just academics to help students succeed. Health and wellness care, counseling, child care, food support, tutoring, mentoring and legal support are examples of support services made available to students to help them succeed at college.

Research support services offered by the colleges you are interested in and determine if these services meet your needs.

Make Your Decision

Base your final decision on the type of student you are, your educational goals and what situation best fits your needs. Talk to friends, family, teachers and counselors for help with identifying your goals in going to college.

Use the worksheet on the following page to do some self-discovery.



WORKSHEET: CHOOSING THE RIGHT COLLEGE



STEP 1

In the top row, make a preliminary list of colleges that interest you.



STEP 2

Think about important factors you want your college to have. Then, prioritize each factor in the level of importance column.



STEP 3

Cross off colleges that appear to not have what you're looking for. Rank the remaining colleges in order of preference.

LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE	FACTORS TO CONSIDER	COLLEGE (FILL IN NAMES OF COLLEGES THAT INTEREST YOU)			
		1.	2.	3.	4.
	Program of study: Which programs does the college offer to help you achieve your career goals?				
	School size: Do you prefer a large or small college? What is the student population?				
	Class size: How large do you like your classes to be? What is the student-to-teacher ratio?				
	Support programs: Which programs does the college offer to help you stay in college and graduate?				
	City and neighborhood: Do you prefer a city or a small town? What is the population of the city or town?				
	Campus culture: When visiting each college, get a feel for its "personality." How does it match yours?				
	Distance from home: How close do you want to live to your family?				
	Extracurricular activities: Do you have activities in your life that you can't live without?				
	Religious affiliation: Do you want to attend a college affiliated with your religious beliefs?				
	Net price: While one college may appear to be less expensive, what will your final cost be after receiving grants and scholarships? Use https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price to identify your likely estimated cost.				
	Financial aid options: Does the college have special financial aid options? These could include things such as a tuition payment plan to spread out your payments or a guaranteed cost of attendance as long as you are enrolled.				
	Outside learning options: Does the college offer internships, externships, study abroad or service learning opportunities?				
	Housing options near campus: How close or far is housing? Will you need a car, or are where you live, shop and work within walking or biking distance?				



The College Application Process

Depending on your interests and goals, the college application process can be as simple as filling out a one-page application or as complex as writing dozens of essays, taking multiple standardized tests and preparing portfolios. This section will help you organize the process and stay on track.

Preparing for College

Colleges care about the courses you take in high school. The more you challenge yourself when choosing high school courses, the more college options you may have.

HONORS CLASSES

- More challenging academically.
- Typically faster paced; cover topics in greater depth.
- Generally weighted higher for grade point average (GPA) but do not earn you college credit.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) CLASSES

- More challenging academically; courses prepare you to take rigorous exams that can lead to college credit.
- Across various subject areas, 38 AP classes are available.
- Your high school may not offer all AP classes, but most AP classes are also available online (a fee may be required).
- After coursework is completed, students take nationally administered AP exams in their chosen subject areas; if the exam scores are acceptable to the college, the college might award college credit, advanced placement or both for the course.

DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

- Students take college-level classes for college credit while continuing to participate in regular high school activities.
- Classes are often offered at high schools or nearby community colleges.
- Not every high school participates; contact your high school counselor for more information.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

- Two-year curriculum offered by the International Baccalaureate (IB) that combines requirements of a mixture of different national education systems.
- Offered in English, French and Spanish, and allows students moving around the country or from one country to another to transfer among IB schools.
- Students choose courses from the following subject groups: studies in language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, mathematics and the arts.
- A list of participating schools from around the world is available at www.ibo.org.

TECHNICAL PREPARATION (TECH PREP) PROGRAMS

- Multiyear program (two or more years in high school and two in an occupational/technical program at a community college or career and technical education institution) designed to prepare students for technical occupations.
- Expands education and employment opportunities by preparing you for careers in health care, business, industry, labor and government.
- Strong emphasis on math, science and English—a complete Tech Prep program includes the following:
 - A comprehensive career development plan
 - Courses designed for a specific career that integrate academic and occupational preparation
 - A learning environment that emphasizes math, communications, science and technology
 - A smooth transition from high school to college or employment

Practice Entrance Exams

College entrance exams are required by some four-year colleges. There are two tests that help you “rehearse” for taking college entrance exams—the PSAT/NMSQT and PreACT. Taking these tests will help you identify strengths and weaknesses in skills necessary for successful college study. You can then focus your preparation on those areas where you could most benefit from additional study or practice. Your specific test results are not reported to colleges. However, you may receive information from colleges and organizations interested in students testing within your range.

THE PRELIMINARY SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST AND THE NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (PSAT/NMSQT)

The PSAT/NMSQT consists of three tests: usually taken during your junior year that help you practice for taking the SAT. The PSAT/NMSQT consists of three tests:

- Reading
- Writing and language
- Math

These tests measure the following skills:

- Critical reading
- Math problem-solving
- Writing

In addition, eighth, ninth and tenth graders may benefit from taking the PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10.

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation uses these scores to determine eligibility for their scholarship programs.

For more information on the PSAT/NMSQT, visit the College Board website at <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org>.

THE PreACT TEST

PreACT is a multiple-choice test designed to help sophomores prepare to take the ACT. In addition, eighth and ninth graders may benefit from taking the PreACT 8/9. The PreACT is patterned after the ACT and includes testing in English, math, reading and science. PreACT score reports offer a broad view of students’ college and career readiness, and provides information regarding their future performance on the exam.

PreACT also offers insights to help students explore college major and career options to start planning for their future. The test is scored on the same 1-36 scale as the ACT but includes fewer questions. For more information on PreACT, visit www.act.org.

Entrance Exams

Several colleges require you to take a college entrance exam as part of the admissions process. There are two primary tests, the SAT and the ACT, and either test is generally accepted by colleges for admissions purposes.

Placement Tests

Some colleges, particularly community colleges, require students to take placement tests after they have been accepted by the college. Colleges use placement tests in subjects such as math and English to assess current subject knowledge and to assist in placing students in the appropriate class level. Placement tests often take place during the spring or summer prior to starting college. Placement tests measure current knowledge so little preparation is needed. Ask your college for study resources to prepare for the placement tests, if available.

MANY COLLEGES ARE ELIMINATING THE REQUIREMENT FOR ACT/SAT SCORES. CHECK www.fairtest.org/university/optional FOR A CURRENT LIST OF TEST-OPTIONAL COLLEGES. THIS LIST IS EVER-CHANGING. ALWAYS VERIFY TEST REQUIREMENTS WITH THE COLLEGE’S ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR.

ENTRANCE EXAM COMPARISON

	ACT (American College Test)	SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)
What Is Tested	ACT measures what you learn in high school to determine your academic readiness for college	SAT measures what you learn in high school and what you need to succeed in college
When to Take the Test	ACT examination is usually taken during your junior year and is offered seven times a year in the months of February, April, June, July, September, October and December	SAT examination is usually taken during your junior year and is offered seven times a year in the months of March, May, June, August, October, November and December
Registration Deadline	About five to six weeks before the test date	About four weeks before the test date
Test Duration	2 hours, 55 minutes + 40 minutes for optional essay	3 hours + 50 minutes for optional essay
Major Sections	English, mathematics, reading, science and an optional writing section	Math, reading, writing, language and an optional essay
Scoring	1-36	400-1600
Test Owned By	ACT, Inc.	College Board
Started In	1959	1926
Website	www.act.org	www.collegeboard.org

Testing Dates, Fees and Registration

PSAT

2022-2023 Test Dates	Regular Registration Deadlines	Late Registration Deadlines	Notes	Fees	Registration
October 12-25, 2022	Check with your school counselor	Check with your school counselor	Test is administered by high school in a supervised setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSAT: \$18 Schools are billed directly for tests; some schools may require students to pay the fee and may also charge an additional fee to cover administrative costs Fee waivers are available for eligible low-income students See your school counselor for details 	Register with your school counselor or administrator

PreACT

2022-2023 Test Dates	Regular Registration Deadlines	Late Registration Deadlines	Notes	Fees	Registration
September 1-June 1 each year at your school's discretion	Check with your school counselor	Check with your school counselor	Test is administered by high school in a supervised setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PreACT: \$17 Schools are billed directly for tests; some schools may require students to pay the fee and may also charge an additional fee to cover administrative costs 	Register with your school counselor or administrator

SAT

2022-2023 Test Dates	Regular Registration Deadlines	Late Registration Deadlines	Notes	Fees	Registration
October 1, 2022	September 2, 2022	September 20, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunday administrations usually occur the day after each Saturday test date for students who cannot test on Saturday for religious reasons Optional essay will only be available in states where it's required as part of SAT School Day administrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAT: \$60 Late registration: \$30 Test center change: \$25 Cancel registration: \$25 Cancel late registration: \$35 Waitlist registration is not available for the 2022-2023 school year Fee waivers are available for eligible low-income students See your school counselor for details 	www.collegeboard.org
November 5, 2022	October 7, 2022	October 25, 2022			
December 3, 2022	November 3, 2022	November 22, 2022			
March 11, 2023	February 10, 2023	February 28, 2023			
May 6, 2023	April 7, 2023	April 25, 2023			
June 3, 2023	May 4, 2023	May 23, 2023			

ACT

2022-2023 Test Dates	Regular Registration Deadlines	Late Registration Deadlines	Notes	Fees	Registration
September 10, 2022	August 5, 2022	August 19, 2022	<p>You can proceed with your original test date or you can request to change it. However, you will need to pay the basic registration fee for the new test date plus the test date change fee. If you request a date change after the regular deadline for the new date, you must also pay the late registration fee. Your basic registration fee for the original test date will be refunded.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT (no writing test): \$63 ACT (with writing test): \$88 Late registration: \$36 Test date change: \$40 Test center change: \$40 Standby testing: \$63 Fee waivers are available for students who meet one or more indicators of economic need See your school counselor for details 	www.act.org
October 22, 2022	September 16, 2022	September 30, 2022			
December 10, 2022	November 4, 2022	November 11, 2022			
February 11, 2023	January 6, 2023	January 20, 2023			
April 15, 2023	March 10, 2023	March 24, 2023			
June 10, 2023	May 5, 2023	May 19, 2023			
July 15, 2023 ¹	June 16, 2023	June 23, 2023			

¹ No test centers are scheduled in New York for this date.

Submitting Your College Applications

Every college has a different application process with different directions to follow. Read them carefully and use the worksheet on page 10 to organize the information for the colleges you are considering. Make one copy for each college to keep with your application materials.

If you need help, there are many resources you can call on to help guide you, such as parents, teachers, school counselors and volunteer organizations.

WAYS TO APPLY

- Paper
- Electronic

To determine the best way to apply, go to the admissions page on each college's website and look for more information.

Consider visiting www.commonapp.org. More than 900 colleges and universities participate in this one-stop for college admissions where you can apply, keep track of college-specific deadlines and more.

APPLICATION COSTS

Application fees vary among colleges. Many colleges will waive the application fee, especially for applicants who received fee waivers for taking college entrance exams. Check with the college admissions office to determine the circumstances under which the college will waive the application fee.

You may also work with your high school counselor to obtain a fee waiver from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC).

DEADLINES

Deadlines are important. Be sure to pay attention to and meet each college's date for application. If applying with a paper application, be careful to note whether the deadline is based on the arrival or postmark date. If the deadline is the arrival date, make sure to include several days for postal delivery.

EARLY DECISION AND EARLY ACTION

Many colleges allow you to apply under an "early decision" or "early action" program. Typically, you have to apply earlier than most applicants, but you also find out earlier whether you have been accepted. Early decision is a binding commitment to the college of your commitment to enroll, typically in November or December, if admitted and offered a satisfactory financial aid package. Early action is similar to early decision but does not require a binding commitment to attend the college until the spring (typically May 1, which is National College Decision Day). These programs are not for everyone. Generally, only those who have a clear-cut, first-choice college should apply under these programs. If you believe early decision or early action is right for you, check with the college admissions office to determine how to apply.

TRANSCRIPTS

As part of the admissions process, you or your school counselor will need to request and submit an official copy of your high school transcript (and college transcript if you have already earned some college credits) for each college where you plan to apply.

Many students apply to colleges while still attending high school. College acceptance is often contingent upon your grades. You will also need to send a final transcript to the college you will attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If your colleges require recommendations, letters or specific forms, you will need to ask your teachers and/or other adults to be references. Some colleges even ask for peer recommendations. When identifying whom you should ask, consider your relationship with the person and how well you've done in your activities with them.

Writing recommendations can be time-consuming for the people writing them. They might also be writing them for other students. Give your references plenty of time and make sure they are aware of recommendation deadlines. One month before your earliest deadline should be sufficient, but inquire as to your reference's schedule when asking.

A recommendation is a favor. No one is required to recommend you to a college. Here are some commonly accepted rules of etiquette to follow:

- When giving your references the forms, include a pre-addressed envelope to the appropriate address with the correct amount of postage on the envelope if they are meant to mail it directly to the college.
- Write thank-you notes to your references.

ESSAYS

If your colleges require essays, they will usually give you specific questions or topics for your essays. Here are some tips to follow:

- Check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Most software programs offer this feature, but don't rely entirely on the computer.
- Have someone proofread and provide constructive feedback on your essay.
- Don't exceed the word limit, if any is given.
- Be yourself. Don't second-guess what the college would like you to think or say in your essay.
- Don't stray from the question/topic.

Everyone goes about the writing process differently. Brainstorming and outlining are two methods that might help you.





WORKSHEET: ORGANIZE YOUR APPLICATION INFORMATION

Make copies of this page, and complete the information for each college you are seriously considering.

COLLEGE NAME	
---------------------	--

COLLEGE INFORMATION

Address for application: _____

City, state, zip: _____

School website: _____

Application website: _____

Admissions office phone: _____ Fax: _____

CEEB code* (College): _____ (High School): _____

Federal school code:** _____ FAFSA submitted: _____ / _____ / _____

*CEEB codes can be found at www.collegeboard.org.

**Federal school codes can be found at <https://studentaid.gov/fafsa-app/FSCsearch>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations required? YES NO

	Requested	Received	Thank You Sent
Reference 1: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference 2: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference 3: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

VISIT/VIRTUAL EVENT

Name of Person You're Meeting	Date/Time	Location
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

CONTACTS

Name	Phone	Email	Notes
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

APPLICATION DUE	_____ / _____ / _____ __: __ <input type="checkbox"/> ET / <input type="checkbox"/> MT / <input type="checkbox"/> CT / <input type="checkbox"/> PT
<input type="checkbox"/> Postmark date <input type="checkbox"/> Arrive-by date <input type="checkbox"/> Submit online date	
Application Submitted	_____ / _____ / _____

ESSAYS

Essays required? YES NO

	Complete
Topic 1: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Topic 2: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Topic 3: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

TRANSCRIPTS

High school transcripts requested? YES NO

College transcripts (if already earned college credits) requested? YES NO

ENTRANCE EXAMS

Test required Test optional Test blind

Ordered scores sent from ACT/SAT? YES NO

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Other requirements? YES NO

Task	Complete
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Navigating Financial Aid

This chapter will help you understand what types of financial aid are available, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion process and how to stay on course to receive your financial aid.

College Costs

COST OF ATTENDANCE

The cost to attend college is often referred to as Cost of Attendance (COA). COA is used in the calculation to determine eligibility for financial aid. It is often calculated to show the total cost for the academic year, though schools with programs that last a different time period might show the COA that covers a specific period of time. COA includes both direct and indirect costs.

Direct costs are fixed costs that are billed by the college.

- Tuition
- Fees
- Room and board (if living on campus)

Indirect costs are not included on a college bill; however, they are considered in the overall cost to attend college.

- Books and supplies
- Child care or other dependent care
- Costs related to a disability
- Loan fees
- Personal computer
- Personal expenses
- Reasonable costs for eligible study abroad programs
- Room and board (if living off campus)
- Transportation

Tuition

The cost of tuition and fees charged by a college depends on many factors, but the most significant factor is what type of college it is.

- **Public Colleges:** Tuition and fees are generally the lowest because they receive funds from state taxes. Most four-year and two-year public colleges charge higher tuition for nonresidents than for legal residents of the state in which the college is located. This out-of-state tuition can often make the cost of attending a public college as high as the cost of attending many private colleges. However, some bordering state residents may be treated as legal residents of that state under a reciprocity agreement. Check with the college admissions office if you are eligible to receive in-state tuition rates.
- **Private Colleges:** Tuition is usually higher than at public colleges. Private colleges do not receive public funding for their operations and need to charge more of the real costs to students. However, private colleges often have more financial aid resources that can help you pay for college. The greater your overall cost of attendance, the greater the possibility you will demonstrate need for financial aid.

Fees

Many colleges charge fees for other services. Examples include:

- Athletic
- Enrollment
- Greek societies (membership dues)
- Health center
- Library
- Parking
- Student activities
- Technology fees

Room and Board

Room and board means basic living expenses for housing and food. Regardless of the type of college you choose, you will have to consider these expenses.

Colleges with their own housing typically charge you on a nine-month basis for your room and most meals, excluding holiday and vacation periods. The room and board charge is built into your COA. Colleges also expect that students living in privately owned, off-campus housing have a similar level of expense. Some colleges do not allow students to stay in on-campus housing during excluded periods.

If you plan to live at home, you are likely to have lower expenses than on-campus students because you do not have to pay for housing. You will still need to factor in your cost of food and other living expenses. These costs are usually built into a commuter student budget for financial aid purposes.





WAYS TO REDUCE COLLEGE COSTS

- ➔ Earn college credits in high school. You can earn college credits by taking AP or IB exams or through dual enrollment. See page 6 for details.
- ➔ Earn college credits for what you already know. College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests can get you through college quicker or help you graduate on time. For details, visit www.collegeboard.org.
- ➔ Two plus two. Start at a community college and then transfer to a four-year college to complete your bachelor's degree.
- ➔ Tuition reimbursement. If you or your parents are employed, check to see if the employer offers to reimburse you for the cost of attending college.
- ➔ Take an extra class over the normal, full-time load. Usually taking an extra class does not add to the tuition cost for the term.
- ➔ Shop around for textbooks. Rent or buy used books and sell them back to the bookstore or to other students after the end of the term. Look online for textbook deals and consider less expensive electronic versions.
- ➔ Get a job. Working part-time while going to college can help you pay for college and gain valuable work experience.
- ➔ Graduate on time.



Books and Supplies

As a college student, you will spend money on textbooks and school supplies, such as notebooks, paper, binders and pens. The amount you spend for books and supplies will vary only slightly by the type of college, but is related to the curriculum or courses you select. In some academic fields, such as nursing and other medical fields, you will spend more on books than in other fields, such as business or communications. Some fields will require specific uniforms and equipment that must be purchased, such as art, medical or lab supplies.

Personal Expenses

Regardless of the type of college you choose to attend, you will have some personal expenses, such as clothing, laundry, toiletries, recreation, cell phone bills and medical costs.

Transportation

All students spend some money for travel. If you live in a different city than where your college is located, you have to travel to get there at the start of the academic year and travel to return home at the end of the year. Most students also go home at least once during the year. For financial aid purposes, colleges often budget students for two round-trips home per year by the least expensive means of travel possible.

Commuter students will also have travel expenses, whether you use public transportation or a car to get to and from

college several days a week. These costs are built into student expense budgets by colleges for financial aid purposes.

DETERMINING YOUR OWN COSTS

To determine your own cost estimates, remember to consider any additional costs that might result from medical bills or extraordinary personal expenses. If your cost of attendance calculation is greater than the amount determined by your college, you may request an appeal to have your cost of attendance adjusted. The adjustment might increase your eligibility for financial aid.

Estimating College Costs

Before you file the FAFSA, there are ways to get an estimate of how much college may cost you.

FINANCIAL AID

Visit College Board's BigFuture EFC Calculator (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/calculate-your-cost/expected-family-contribution/efc-calculator>) to get an idea of your expected family contribution used by colleges to determine how much financial aid they will offer you.

Use the Federal Student Aid Estimator (<https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator>) to determine eligibility for federal student aid and receive estimated types and amounts of aid you may receive.

NET PRICE CALCULATORS

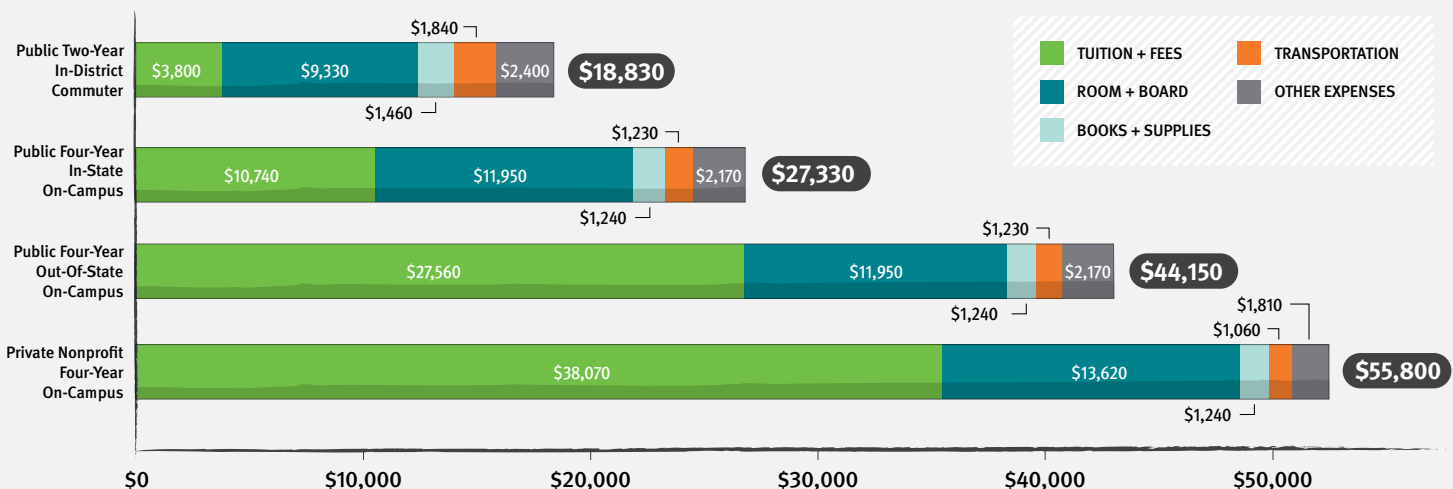
Each college that participates in the federal financial aid programs is required to have a "net price calculator" on its website. These calculators can give you a rough estimate of how much it may cost you to attend each specific college, taking into account aid you may receive from both the college and federal financial aid. The easiest way to find the calculator on the college's website is to type "net price calculator" in the website search field.

The estimates provided by different net price calculators should not be used to absolutely rule in or rule out a particular college. The calculator questions vary from college to college. Because of this, the results may not provide an "apples-to-apples" comparison of your net college costs.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The U.S. Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency Center serves as a central point of access to several tools, including College Scorecard and College Navigator, that provide access to college tuition and fees comparisons, net price calculators, state spending charts and more. Visit <https://collegecost.ed.gov>.

AVERAGE ESTIMATED FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE BUDGETS, 2021-22



Source: <https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/trends-college-pricing-student-aid-2021.pdf>

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID

FAFSA

Completion of the FAFSA is the single most important part of the financial aid process, and it takes most students less than one hour to complete.

By completing this free application, you could be offered thousands of dollars to help you pay for college!

About the FAFSA

WHAT THE FAFSA DOES

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is important! Your eligibility for federal financial aid, including loans, grants and work-study opportunities, is calculated using the Federal Need Analysis Methodology, a formula mandated by Congress. Many states, colleges and scholarship providers also use FAFSA submissions to determine financial aid. The formula takes into account your (and your parents' if you are a dependent student) financial condition. When you complete the FAFSA, you are answering a series of questions to provide this information.

Filing the FAFSA is free. Remember—The first word in FAFSA is “Free.” There are companies that will charge you a fee to help you complete the FAFSA, but there shouldn't be a need to pay for this service.

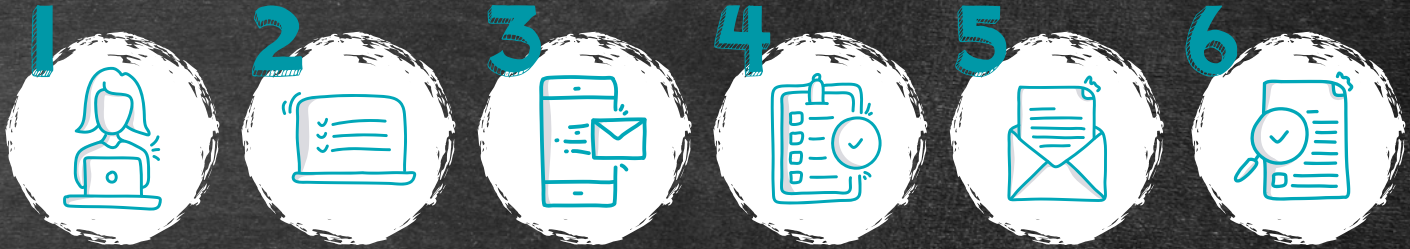
You will need to file the FAFSA each year you will be in college to be considered for aid.

If you do not meet the citizenship requirements for filing the FAFSA, check with the financial aid office at your college to determine if an alternative application can be used.

HOW TO AVOID COMMON FAFSA MISTAKES

- **Don't assume you won't qualify for financial aid or that the process is too hard.** Virtually every student is eligible for at least one type of federal student aid, and the only way to receive federal student aid, some state and institutional aid, and some scholarships is to complete the FAFSA.

- **Check each state and college's deadline and/or “priority filing date” and file your FAFSA in time to meet those deadlines.** Contact the financial aid office regarding other applications or forms you may be required to submit.
- **Create an FSA ID before filling out the FAFSA.** The FSA ID is a username and password used to log in to certain Federal Student Aid (FSA) websites. This will be used every year you complete the FAFSA online as well as to check the status of your federal student loans. You and one parent each need an FSA ID and it should be created prior to starting the FAFSA. Create your FSA ID at <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>.
- **Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT) to automatically transfers tax information from the IRS directly into your FAFSA.** This is the fastest and most accurate way to enter your tax return information in the FAFSA. This tool is available for those who have completed their prior-year taxes at the time of FAFSA filing. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/resources/irs-drt-text> to learn more about using the IRS DRT.
- **Read the application carefully to prevent errors on the FAFSA.** Mistakes and incomplete information can lead to delays in receiving aid. Take your time, use the help function built into the form available on most questions and ask for help if you get stuck.
- **List all the colleges to which you are applying for admission.** Your FAFSA information will only be sent to the colleges you specify (you may list up to ten). Each college has a six-digit federal school code. Visit <https://studentaid.gov/fafsa-app/FSCsearch> to search for federal school codes.
- **Do not delay completing the FAFSA because you are waiting to hear if you have been accepted to a college.** You should file your FAFSA as soon as possible on or after October 1 regardless of whether or not you have been accepted to college. Waiting until you have been accepted could result in missing important financial aid deadlines, making you ineligible for financial aid you might otherwise have been able to receive.
- **Sign the FAFSA appropriately.** You and your parent will each need to acquire an FSA ID to electronically sign your online FAFSA. Failure to do so may cause you to lose out on financial assistance you may be otherwise qualified to receive.
- **Contact your college to report special circumstances.** Since the FAFSA does not include space for you to explain special financial circumstances unique to you and your family, an explanation of the situation should be communicated directly to the financial aid administrator of the college(s) to which you're applying. Special circumstances may include unusual medical bills, an impending divorce or loss of employment. The financial aid administrator may decide to adjust data elements used to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). This adjustment may increase your eligibility for financial aid. Do not mail this correspondence with your FAFSA or directly to your college. It is best to speak with a financial aid administrator and they will tell you what is needed.



1 Create an FSA ID

2 Complete the FAFSA

3 Receive a SAR (colleges receive an ISIR)

4 Complete verification (if selected)

5 Receive financial aid offer letters from colleges

6 Compare financial aid packages and choose a college

1. Your first step is to create an FSA ID. Both the student and one parent (if the student is dependent) must each create an FSA ID. Create your FSA ID at <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>.

2. The fastest, easiest and most accurate way to file and get results is to complete the FAFSA online. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> to file the FAFSA online. Your application is automatically edited for errors as you complete it to ensure your information is as accurate as possible. When your FAFSA information is transmitted over the Internet, it is completely secure. It is easy to navigate with extensive online help including live chat, email and phone options available.

Other ways to file include:

- PDF FAFSA that you download, complete and mail. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/resources>.
- Paper FAFSA that you request, complete and mail. To get a paper FAFSA, call 800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243). If you are hearing impaired, contact the TTY line at 800-730-8913.

To complete the FAFSA, you (and your parents if you are considered dependent) must provide certain information regarding your financial assets, liabilities and income.

Check as you complete the FAFSA:

- You and your parent have signed the FAFSA
- You have listed all the colleges to which you are applying for admission

- If you do not have enough room for all your colleges, list your first ten choices on the FAFSA. Once you have received your valid Student Aid Report (SAR), you can then edit the college list on your FAFSA by making a correction to your FAFSA so that your FAFSA data is transmitted to the remaining colleges.

3. After you file a FAFSA, you will receive a SAR from Federal Student Aid (FSA) between three days and three weeks of submitting your FAFSA that contains information provided on your FAFSA along with your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Your EFC is not the amount of money your family is expected to pay. Rather, you should think of the EFC as an index colleges use to calculate the amount of financial aid you may qualify to receive. While your family is expected to contribute toward your cost of education, the amount of this contribution will be determined by the financial aid office at your college.

When you complete the FAFSA, you indicate the federal school codes for the colleges you are interested in attending. These colleges receive the information you provided on the FAFSA in the form of an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR). Based on this information, each college will determine the amount

and types of aid for which you are eligible. Your state’s higher education agency also will receive your FAFSA results to figure out how much state aid you may receive.

4. Verification is the process colleges use to ensure the accuracy of the information reported on the FAFSA. Being selected for verification does not mean you have done something wrong. You may be required to provide the college with a copy of your tax return or other additional documentation. Be sure to watch for and respond to verification requests in a timely manner or your FAFSA will not be completed and you may miss out on receiving financial aid.

5. You will receive a financial aid offer letter from each college that accepts you for admission. The letter outlines the total financial aid package (grants, scholarships, work-study and loans) for which you are eligible. Financial aid officers at the colleges can answer questions regarding the SAR and offer letters. See pages 24-25 for more information about offer letters.

6. It is time to analyze your financial aid offer letters and make your decision! Use the “Make Your Decision” chart on page 26 to help you analyze and compare your offer letters. Be sure to notify your college of the financial aid options you have chosen to accept and decline as you are not required to accept all financial aid offered to you, such as loans.

Common Questions about Completing the FAFSA

Why does Federal Student Aid (FSA) ask for prior-prior year income tax information from the year before I go to college?

Studies have consistently shown that verifiable income tax information from the prior-prior year (2021 for the 2023-2024 award year) is more accurate than projected information when estimating how much the family will be able to contribute during the coming school year.

What state do I list as my domicile (residency)?

On the FAFSA, domicile is referred to as your “State of Legal Residence.” A person’s domicile is their present, fixed home to which they return following temporary absences and at which they intend to stay indefinitely. To be eligible for in-state tuition benefits and most state-supported financial aid, you must have established domicile for at least one year prior to the first day of class. Minors are presumed to have the domicile of their parent or legal guardian.

Domiciliary intent is determined using many factors. These could include paying state income tax as a resident, registering to vote in the state, owning property, permanent employment, sources of financial support and economic ties with the state. The responsibility is on the student to provide sufficient information to establish domiciliary intent. Contact the registrar’s office at your college for more information.

How do I know if I am a dependent or independent student?

In determining financial need, one of the most important factors is whether you are classified as a dependent or independent student. Dependent students must include parental information on the FAFSA. Independent students should include information only on themselves and their spouse (when applicable). You are automatically classified as independent if you can check ANY of the following boxes:

- I was born before January 1, 2000
- I am married
- I will be working on a master’s or doctorate program (e.g., MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate)
- I am serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces
- I am a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces
- I now have or will have children for whom I will provide more than half of their support between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024
- Since I turned age 13, both of my parents were deceased
- I was in foster care at any point since turning age 13
- I have dependents (other than my children or my spouse) who live with me and I provide more than half of their support
- I was a dependent or ward of the court at any point since turning age 13
- I am currently or I was an emancipated minor
- I am currently or I was in legal guardianship

- I am currently, or at risk of, experiencing homelessness

If none of these criteria apply to you, you are a dependent student (even if you are 18 years old). Visit <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out/dependency> for more information.

In addition, the financial aid office at your college can determine if you should be considered independent if special circumstances exist, but this occurs only in rare circumstances.

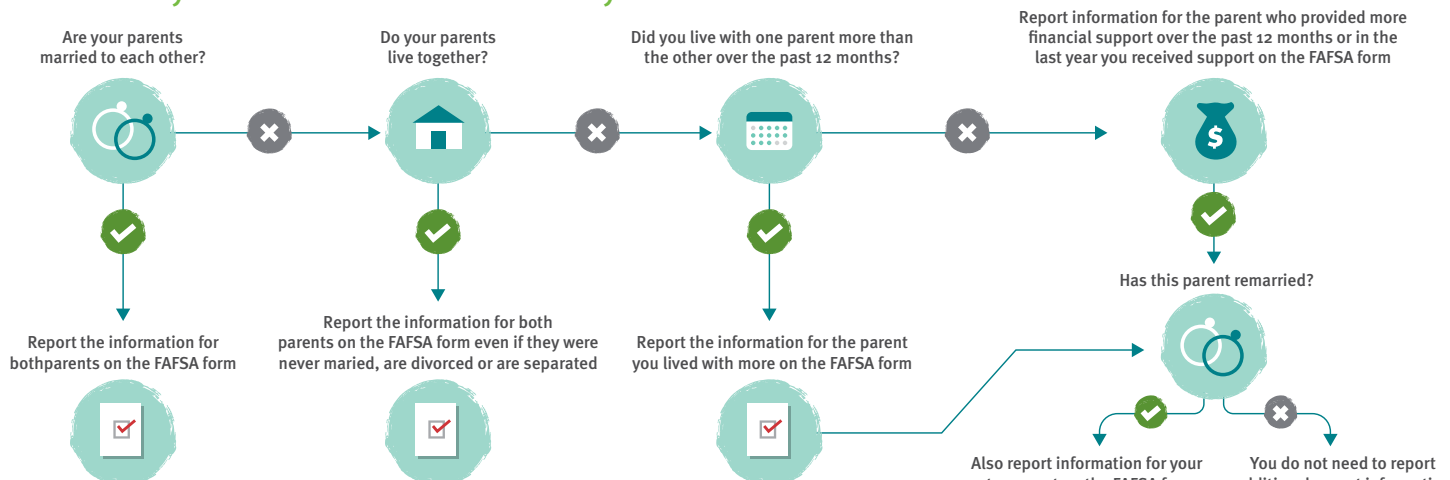
Who is considered my parent for financial aid purposes?

View the chart below to determine who you should list as your parent for financial aid purposes. Keep in mind that the following people are not considered your parents for financial aid purposes unless they have legally adopted you: legal guardians, foster parents, widowed stepparents, grandparents, brothers or sisters, aunts or uncles.

What should I do if I am considered a dependent student but I have no contact with my parents?

Submit your FAFSA without any parent data. You will receive a request for information from your college financial aid administrator. If you do not receive a request for information, contact the financial aid office and request a “Dependency Override.” The college financial aid administrator can use professional judgment to determine if a student should be treated as an independent student. You will need to provide the financial aid office documentation of your circumstances. The decision is based on the financial aid administrator’s judgment based on the facts of your specific situation, and it is final.

Who’s My Parent When I Fill Out My FAFSA Form?



WORKSHEET: CREATING AN FSA ID



Creating an FSA ID is the first step to completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FSA ID username and password are used to electronically sign the FAFSA and other important financial aid paperwork. It also grants you access to your online Federal Student Aid (FSA) account. Compared to completing a paper FAFSA, completing the FAFSA online and signing it electronically may reduce application errors and is also the quickest way to submit the application. Use this worksheet to help you create an FSA ID.

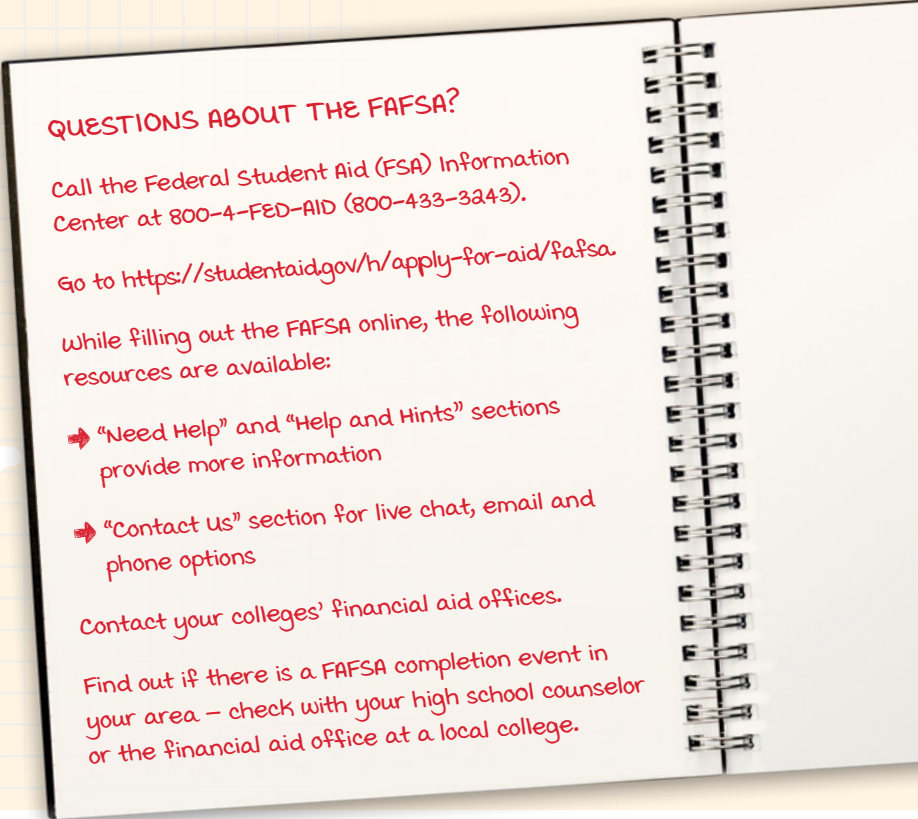
Each student and at least one parent or legal guardian must have a unique FSA ID in order to electronically sign the FAFSA. For a video on how to create an FSA ID, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=yj1Pn-shze8.

INFORMATION NEEDED TO CREATE AN FSA ID	
Student Information	Parent/Legal Guardian Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Social Security card • Student email address² • Student mobile phone number² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/legal guardian Social Security card¹ • Parent/legal guardian email address² • Parent/legal guardian mobile phone number²
STEPS TO CREATING AN FSA ID	
STEP ONE Personal Information	A. Go to the Create an Account (FSA ID) webpage at https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch . B. Click Get Started. C. Enter your name exactly as it appears on your Social Security card, date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy) and Social Security number. If your name is too long and you can't fit your full name into the box, type as much of your name as you can.
STEP TWO Account Information	A. Create a username 6-30 characters in length using any combination of numbers and uppercase or lowercase letters. Student username: _____ Parent/legal guardian username: _____ B. Enter and confirm your email address. It is recommended to use a non-school-based email address since you will need to access your FSA account after you graduate high school. Student email address: _____ Parent/legal guardian email address: _____ C. Create and confirm a password 8-30 characters in length. The password is case sensitive and must include a combination of numbers, uppercase letters and lowercase letters. Do not use personal identifiers (e.g., date of birth, name). Student password: _____ Parent/legal guardian password: _____
STEP THREE Contact Information	A. Enter your permanent mailing address. If you don't have one, you may use your high school address. B. Enter and confirm your mobile phone number. C. It is highly recommended to check the box allowing for quick and easy mobile phone account recovery.
STEP FOUR Communication Preferences	A. Select if you would like to receive U.S. Department of Education communications via email (recommended) or postal mail. B. Select your preferred language (English or Spanish).
STEP FIVE Challenge Questions	A. Select Challenge Question 1: _____ Answer: _____ B. Select Challenge Question 2: _____ Answer: _____ C. Select Challenge Question 3: _____ Answer: _____ D. Select Challenge Question 4: _____ Answer: _____
STEP SIX Confirm and Verify	A. Review your information for accuracy and make any necessary edits. B. Review FSA's terms and conditions and agree to them by checking the box.
STEP SEVEN Account Recovery	A. Select to verify your mobile phone number and/or email address by retrieving the six-digit secure code sent to you and entering it into the box provided. If you provided both a mobile phone number and an email address, you must verify both.

If you provided an email address, you will receive a confirmation email. You can begin to use your FSA ID immediately for activities such as electronically signing your FAFSA; however, some of your activities will be limited until the Social Security Administration (SSA) verifies your information (1-3 business days). Keep your FSA ID username and password in a safe place and do not share this information with anyone.

¹Parent/legal guardian, if you are undocumented or do not have a Social Security number, go to <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out> to find alternative methods to signing the FAFSA.

²The student and parent/legal guardian email addresses and mobile phone numbers must be different.



QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FAFSA?

Call the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Information Center at 800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243).

Go to <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

While filling out the FAFSA online, the following resources are available:

- ➔ “Need Help” and “Help and Hints” sections provide more information
- ➔ “Contact Us” section for live chat, email and phone options

Contact your colleges’ financial aid offices.

Find out if there is a FAFSA completion event in your area – check with your high school counselor or the financial aid office at a local college.

Federal Financial Aid

The U.S Department of Education’s website defines federal student aid as “financial aid from the federal government to help you pay for education expenses at an eligible college or career school. Grants, loans and work-study are types of federal student aid.”

You must complete the FAFSA to apply for this aid.

GRANTS (DO NOT HAVE TO BE REPAID)

Program	Eligibility Requirements	Annual Award	More Information
Federal Pell Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college • U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen • Demonstrate financial need 	Maximum award for 2022-2023 is \$6,895	Award amount depends on COA, EFC, full- or part-time enrollment and Lifetime Eligibility Used (LEU). Lifetime eligibility is limited to the equivalent of six years of full-time funding or 600%.
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college • U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen • Demonstrate exceptional financial need • Recipient of a Federal Pell Grant 	Between \$100 and \$4,000	Award amount depends on amount of funds the college has to award, and full- or part-time enrollment. Colleges grant funds on a first-come, first-served basis and funds can run out.
Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate student whose parent or guardian was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and died as a result of performing military service in Iraq or Afghanistan after the events of 9/11 • Less than 24 years old or enrolled in a qualifying college at least part time at the time of the parent’s or guardian’s death • U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen • Ineligible for a Federal Pell Grant due only to having less financial need than is required to receive Pell funds 	Maximum award for 2022-2023 is \$6,501.99 but cannot exceed the cost of attendance	Payment adjusted for less than full-time study. Total amount may not exceed the equivalent of six years of Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant funding.
TEACH Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate/graduate/post-baccalaureate student enrolled at a qualifying college in a TEACH Grant-eligible program • U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen • Meet certain academic achievement requirements (talk to the financial aid office at your college for specific information) • Receive TEACH Grant counseling • Sign a TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve or Repay 	Maximum award for 2022-2023 is \$3,772	Must agree to teach in a high-need field serving low-income students for four years. If service obligation is not fulfilled, TEACH Grant converts to a Direct Unsubsidized Loan, which must be repaid with interest retroactively.

WORK-STUDY (MONEY EARNED WHILE ATTENDING COLLEGE; DOES NOT HAVE TO BE REPAID)

To be considered for Federal Work-Study, you must complete the FAFSA and indicate on your form that you are interested in being considered for a work-study job. You should then follow up regarding next steps with your financial aid office.

Program	Eligibility Requirements	Annual Award	More Information
Federal Work-Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate or graduate student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen Demonstrate financial need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends on financial need and amount college has to award Contact the financial aid office 	Funds are limited—early filers receive priority. Program provides part-time employment and pays an hourly rate of at least the current federal minimum wage. Your college may also offer its own work-study program. Your college must pay you directly unless you request otherwise and must pay you at least once a month.

LOAN PROGRAMS (BORROWED MONEY THAT MUST BE PAID BACK WITH INTEREST)

To receive federal student loans, you must first complete the FAFSA. You will also be required to sign a Master Promissory Note (MPN), which explains the terms and conditions of your loan(s). Contact the college you will be attending for information about how to sign the MPN. Loan repayment begins 180 days after you leave college or drop below half-time enrollment.

Program	Eligibility Requirements	Annual Award	Repayment Information	More Information
Direct Subsidized Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen Demonstrate financial need 	See <i>Federal Direct Loan Limit Amounts</i> chart on the following page for amounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repayment begins six months after you graduate, withdraw from college or drop below half-time enrollment Maximum repayment term depends upon total principal balance but might extend from 10-25 years For Direct Subsidized Loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2022 and before July 1, 2023, interest rate is a fixed 4.99% 	<p>These loans are awarded based on financial need. The borrower is not charged interest during periods of enrollment and during authorized deferments. The federal government pays (subsidizes) the interest during these periods. Your college will calculate your need for the Direct Subsidized Loan.</p> <p>There is a loan fee of 1.057% for loans disbursed on or after October 1, 2020 and before October 1, 2023.</p>
Direct Unsubsidized Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate or graduate student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen 	See <i>Federal Direct Loan Limit Amounts</i> chart on the following page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repayment begins six months after you graduate, withdraw from college or drop below half-time enrollment Maximum repayment term depends upon total principal balance but might extend from 10-25 years For Direct Unsubsidized Loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2022 and before July 1, 2023, interest rate is a fixed 4.99% for undergraduate borrowers and 6.54% for graduate or professional borrowers 	<p>You are not required to show financial need to receive a Direct Unsubsidized Loan. You are responsible for the interest charged from the time the loan is disbursed until it is paid in full. You can pay the interest as it accrues or allow the interest to be “capitalized,” which means the interest will be added to the principal amount of the loan. Capitalized interest increases the amount you repay. Your college will determine your eligibility for an unsubsidized loan, including the loan amount for which you are eligible.</p> <p>There is a loan fee of 1.057% for loans disbursed on or after October 1, 2020 and before October 1, 2023.</p>
Direct PLUS Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biological or adoptive parent of a dependent undergraduate student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college Graduate or professional student enrolled at least half-time at a qualifying college U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen Does not have an adverse credit history 	Up to the cost of attendance minus any financial aid you are eligible to receive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repayment begins after the final Direct PLUS Loan disbursement; however, the borrower may qualify for a deferment of the first payment until six months after the student is no longer enrolled at least half-time Maximum repayment term depends upon total principal balance but might extend from 10-25 years For Direct PLUS Loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2022 and before July 1, 2023, interest rate is a fixed 7.54% 	<p>Applicants must pass a credit check to be eligible for a Direct PLUS Loan. If they don't pass, they might still be able to receive a loan if they can demonstrate that extenuating circumstances exist or if they secure a creditworthy endorser. A Direct PLUS Loan is an unsubsidized loan, and the borrower is responsible for paying all interest that accrues on the loan.</p> <p>There is a loan fee of 4.228% for loans disbursed on or after October 1, 2020 and before October 1, 2023.</p>

FEDERAL DIRECT LOAN LIMIT AMOUNTS

Year	Dependent Undergraduates (Except Students Whose Parents Are Unable to Obtain Direct Plus Loans)	Independent Undergraduates (And Dependent Undergraduate Students Whose Parents Are Unable to Obtain Direct Plus Loans)	Graduate or Professional Students
First Year	\$5,500	\$9,500	\$20,500 (Direct Unsubsidized Loans only)
	No more than \$3,500 may be in Direct Subsidized Loans		
Second Year	\$6,500	\$10,500	
	No more than \$4,500 may be in Direct Subsidized Loans		
Third Year and Beyond (Each Year)	\$7,500	\$12,500	
	No more than \$5,500 may be in Direct Subsidized Loans		
Total Amount You Can Borrow	\$31,000	\$57,500	
	No more than \$23,000 may be in Direct Subsidized Loans		\$138,500 ¹ for graduate or professional students—no more than \$65,500 may be in Direct Subsidized Loans. The graduate aggregate limit includes all federal loans received for undergraduate study.

¹ Graduate and professional students enrolled in certain approved health professions programs may borrow additional Direct Unsubsidized Loans beyond this amount. Please check with the financial aid office at your college for more details.



Scholarships

Scholarships are a form of gift aid—money that does not have to be repaid. You will want to invest your time into conducting your own scholarship search to locate this free money. There are many scholarships awarded each year, some are based on academics or athletics but thousands are based on a variety of other criteria, including:

- The high school you attended
- The community in which you grew up
- Community service you performed
- The program of study you intend to pursue
- How much financial need you demonstrate
- Hobbies, skills or special interests

Simply put, there are thousands of scholarships awarded every year that have nothing to do with your academic

or athletic performance. However, scholarship donors are not going to come looking for you. It’s up to you to make every effort to find these opportunities.

SCHOLARSHIP DONORS

Investigate the scholarship opportunities offered by the colleges that interest you. The college’s financial aid office or website should have a list of scholarships that are available at the college.

Look to other sources, including religious and civic groups, community organizations, employers and other corporations, foundations and even some individuals.

SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHES

To maximize your chances of receiving scholarship funds, you should develop a plan to search and apply for scholarships. A good place to start your scholarship search is the Internet.

There are several scholarship search sites on the web. You will have to provide some personal information in order for the scholarship search engine to be effective, but be careful! Not all scholarship search sites are legitimate. Here is a list of scholarship search sites known to be legitimate:

- Fastweb: www.fastweb.com
- College Board: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>
- U.S. Department of Labor: www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-scholarships.aspx
- Golden Door Scholars: www.goldendoorscholars.org
- Chegg: www.chegg.com/scholarships
- Peterson’s: www.petersons.com/scholarship-search.aspx
- Niche: www.niche.com/colleges/scholarships
- Cappex: www.cappex.com/scholarships

APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Successful scholarship applicants typically apply for more than one scholarship. They apply for several and so should you. Many scholarships require you to complete a formal scholarship application. They may also request additional information such as:

- An essay or personal statement
- Letters of recommendation
- Examples of work in a specific study area
- SAT/ACT scores
- Transcripts
- Phone or in-person interview

Follow all directions, submit complete, error-free applications and provide all additional information requested. Finally, write thank-you notes to all who helped in your search, especially the donor.

RECEIVING A SCHOLARSHIP

Most scholarships are paid to the college on your behalf. Some may be made co-payable to you and the college. If this happens, you will be required to endorse the check. Alternatively, some scholarship donors may send the scholarship funds directly to you. If you receive a scholarship check, advise the financial aid office at your college immediately upon receipt.

Most scholarships that pay for tuition and fees are not taxable. However, it is possible that some or all of the scholarship funds could count as income and could be taxable. Make sure you seek advice to determine if any scholarship funds should be claimed on your tax forms.

AWARD DISPLACEMENT

Federal regulations (for the 2021-2022 academic year) require the college to reduce the financial aid package when the total aid from all sources exceeds the college's cost of attendance by more than \$300. Certain aid, such as the Pell Grant, do not get reduced. An outside scholarship is most likely to affect campus-based aid, such as the FSEOG grant, Federal Work- Study and the college's own financial aid funds. This is called award displacement. You are required to report any outside scholarships to the college's financial aid office. If you fail to report an outside scholarship and it results in an overpayment, you may be required to repay the college or the government all or part of your need-based financial aid package. Check with the financial aid office if you have questions on how a scholarship may impact your financial aid package.

Scholarship Scams

Securing money to pay for a college education can cause a great deal of stress in a family. Some dishonest companies prey upon the stress the financial aid search can cause. Watch for these warning signs of a scholarship scam.

WARNING SIGNS

1. **“You are guaranteed to win the scholarship or get your money back.”**
No service can guarantee that it will get you a grant or scholarship. Review a service's refund policies in writing before you pay a fee. Typically, fraudulent scholarship search services require that applicants show rejection letters from each of the sponsors on the lists they provide to request a refund of any fees paid. If a sponsor no longer exists, if it really does not provide scholarships, or if it has a rolling application deadline, letters of rejection are almost impossible to obtain.
2. **“Act quick or you will miss out.”**
A dishonest operation might put pressure on an applicant by saying that awards are on a first-come, first-served basis. Some scholarship programs give preference to the earliest qualified applications. However, if you are told (especially on the phone) that you must respond quickly, but you will not hear about the results for several months, there might be a problem.
3. **“We'll do all the work for you.”**
Unfortunately, nobody else can fill out the personal information forms, write the essays and supply the references that many scholarships require.
4. **“The scholarship will cost some money.”**
Some legitimate scholarship sponsors charge fees to defray their processing expenses. But before you send money to apply for or accept a scholarship, investigate the sponsor, especially if a request for money is made by phone. If you win a scholarship, you will generally receive official notification by mail or email, not by phone. “Free” money shouldn't cost you a thing.
5. **“Our scholarship program is endorsed.”**
Be wary of endorsements. Fraudulent operations claim endorsements by groups with names similar to well-known private or government organizations. The Better Business Bureau and government agencies do not endorse businesses.

6. **“You can't get this opportunity anywhere else.”** Scholarship directories are available to access for free in your public library, high school counseling office, college financial aid office and online.
7. **“You are a 'finalist' or you have been selected by a 'national foundation' (to receive a scholarship you never applied for).”** Most legitimate scholarship programs never seek particular applicants and will most likely only contact you in response to an inquiry. In addition, fraudulent scholarship operations often use official-sounding names containing words, such as federal, national, administration, division, federation and foundation. If you think there is a real possibility that you might have been selected to receive a scholarship, investigate before you send money to be sure the sponsor or program is legitimate.
8. **“We need your credit card or checking account number in advance.”** Never provide your credit card or checking account number on the phone to the representative of an organization that you do not know. A legitimate need-based scholarship will not ask for your checking account number. Get information in writing first. An unscrupulous operation does not need your signature on a check. It schemes to set up situations that allow it to drain a victim's account with unauthorized withdrawals.

Additional information on scholarships, including scams, can be found at <https://finaid.org>.

Avoiding Scams

The Federal Trade Commission and College Parents of America (CPA) have partnered to provide tips on recognizing deceptive scholarship and financial aid practices. CPA is a resource, advisor and advocate working on behalf of the millions of parents of current and future college students throughout the United States. For more information about CPA, call toll free 888-761-6702 or visit CPA at <https://collegeparents.org>. Also visit <https://studentaid.gov/resources/scams> for additional information.

\$100 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING GOES UNCLAIMED EVERY YEAR! APPLY EARLY AND OFTEN.

CSS Profile®

In addition to the FAFSA, the CSS Profile is an application some colleges and scholarship programs require students to complete to qualify for institutional financial aid. The application opens October 1. The cost is free for domestic undergraduate students whose family adjusted gross income is less than \$100,000, the student qualified for an SAT fee waiver, or the student is an orphan or ward of the court under the age of 24. For other students, the fee is \$25 for the initial application and \$16 per additional report. To view a list of participating colleges and to apply, go to <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>.

Your Financial Aid Rights and Responsibilities

YOUR RIGHTS

You have a right to receive the following information from your college:

- What financial aid is available, including information about federal, state and college programs.
- What are the deadlines for applying for each kind of aid.
- The cost of attendance and the refund policies if you withdraw.

- What are the criteria used to select aid recipients.
- How your financial need is determined, including how student expenses are calculated in your budget.
- What resources are considered in determining your need, such as parent contribution, assets, benefits and other financial aid.
- How much of your financial need has been met.
- What aid resources make up your financial aid package.
- What part of the aid is a loan and must be repaid, and what part is gift aid.
- What is the interest rate on your student loan, the total amount that must be repaid, the procedures for paying back the loan, how long you have to repay and when repayment begins.
- What are the procedures for appealing a financial aid decision if you think you have been treated unfairly or if your aid package is inadequate.
- How the college determines whether or not you are making Satisfactory Academic Progress and what happens if you are not.
- Complete your application for student financial aid accurately and submit it to the right place on time (errors can delay your getting aid, and intentional misreporting of information is a violation of law subject to penalties under the U.S. Criminal Code).
- Return all additional documentation, verification, corrections and/or new information requested by the financial aid administrator or the agency to which you submitted your application.
- Read and understand all forms that you are asked to sign, keep copies of them and accept responsibility for all agreements you sign.
- Notify the lender/servicer of your loans about any changes to your name, address or school status.
- Satisfactorily perform the work assigned through Federal Work-Study.
- Know and comply with the deadlines for applying and reapplying for aid.
- Report all awarded outside scholarships to your college's financial aid office.
- Know and comply with your college's refund policies and procedures.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You have a responsibility to:

- Review and consider all information about a college's program before you enroll.



IF YOU HAVE TO BORROW MONEY TO ATTEND COLLEGE

Borrow only what you need. Just because you are eligible to borrow a certain amount, don't automatically do so. If you can manage with less, borrow less.

Think about how much you'll make versus how much you borrow. Loans add up over your college career. Think about whether your job after graduation will pay enough to make the payments on the amount you borrow. Visit the Occupational Outlook Handbook at www.bls.gov/ooh to estimate your starting salary.

If you need to take out loans, take out subsidized loans first. You will not be charged interest while enrolled in college at least half-time (more than five credits) or during deferment (a period of time in which you are entitled to have payments postponed).

If you have other income and borrow unsubsidized loans, try to make interest payments while you are still in college. Or simply borrow less. This will significantly decrease the amount of money you will have to repay after you graduate.

Need help figuring out a personal budget to determine how much to save or spend on college each month? Use this personal budgeting worksheet to keep organized www.ecmc.org/students/documents/fab-budgeting-flyer.pdf.



WORKSHEET: SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION TRACKER

Use this scholarship application tracker to stay organized and submit your applications on time. As you complete each step, check off or fill in the appropriate box. Note that not every application will require all the steps. Beware of scholarship scams, such as requests for your Social Security number, credit card or checking account number, or payments to apply. For more info, go to <https://finaid.org/scholarships/scams>.

SCHOLARSHIP NAME	URL OR CONTACT INFO	CRITERIA	DEADLINE	AMOUNT	REQUIRED ITEMS FOR SUBMISSION				DATE SUBMITTED	WINNER ANNOUNCED	RECEIVED AWARD
					RECOMMENDATION LETTER(S)	ESSAY(S)	TRANSCRIPT	FINANCIAL RECORDS			

This worksheet can be downloaded at www.ecmc.org/ScholarshipAppTracker.



The Final Decision

Your financial aid offer letter has arrived. Now is the time to carefully consider your options and select the types of aid and college that are the best fit for you. This section will help you choose the right college, guide you through the final steps in receiving your financial aid and help you financially prepare yourself for college.

Understanding Your Financial Aid Offer Letter

Once you have been accepted for enrollment at any college and have applied for financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and any other financial aid forms required by the college, you and your family will receive a financial aid offer letter. This letter will detail the amount of financial support the college is able to provide for the upcoming year. You might receive the offer letter along with your notice of acceptance. Some colleges make the offer letters available online. Check with your colleges to see how they distribute the offer letters.

READ THE FINE PRINT

- Read your offer letter carefully to ensure you understand all terms and conditions so you can decide if you want to accept any, or all, of the aid offered. Look for instructions for your next steps. You might need to complete additional paperwork (e.g., loan applications).
- Determine if grants or scholarships are available for more than one year. If so, what are the applicable conditions?
- When comparing financial aid offers, consider your final out-of-pocket cost. An offer containing loans may have a higher ultimate out-of-pocket cost than an equivalent offer that contains mostly grants.

MAKE YOUR COLLEGE AWARE OF ANY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Has your family situation changed since you filed the FAFSA? Has a parent become unemployed or ill? Have you been awarded additional outside scholarships? You must report any changes to the college.

Even name and address changes must be reported. Any of these changes can affect your offer.

WHAT IF IT'S NOT ENOUGH?

If after reading the offer letter you believe that the offer and your family savings are not enough to cover all of your expenses, don't panic! There are other options for getting the money you need to attend the college of your choice.

- Research other sources for outside scholarships. It might not be too late to apply.
- Consider any potential benefits from your parents' places of employment. Look beyond just tuition and scholarships, such as programs to lower the cost of computers, insurance or travel.
- See if your college offers a payment plan that allows tuition expenses to be spread out over the year.
- Make sure your financial aid office is aware of any unique situations that affect your ability to pay for college.

MEET DEADLINES

The clock is ticking! Once you've chosen your college, you might need to inform the college, in writing, about how much of the offer you plan to accept. If you don't respond by the date indicated, your offer could be in jeopardy.

WHAT YOU MIGHT SEE ON AN OFFER LETTER

The offer letter provides a summary of the estimated cost of attendance along with financial aid the college is offering you.

JOB LOSS/LOSS OF INCOME ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SHOULD BE REPORTED TO THE COLLEGE'S FINANCIAL AID OFFICE.

Sample University Financial Aid Offer Letter

Costs for the 2022-2023 Year	
Estimated Cost of Attendance for Full-Time Enrollment	\$25,000/Year
Tuition and fees	\$14,000
Room and board (on-campus resident)	\$8,000
Books and supplies	\$1,000
Transportation	\$600
Miscellaneous	\$1,400

Grants and Scholarships to Pay for College	
Total Grants and Scholarships ("Gift Aid"; No Repayment Needed)	\$13,600/Year
Grants from your college	\$8,000
Federal Pell Grant	\$3,570
Grants from your state	\$1,000
Awarded scholarships	\$1,030

What You Will Pay for the 2022-2023 Year	
Net price (cost of attendance minus total grants and scholarships)	\$11,400/year

OPTIONS TO PAY NET PRICE

Work Options	
Work-study (federal, state or institutional)	\$1,000/year

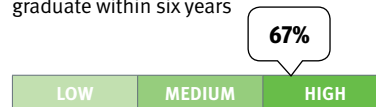
Loan Options*	
Direct Subsidized Loan	\$3,500/year
Direct Unsubsidized Loan	\$2,000/year

*You may be eligible for a different amount. Contact your financial aid office.

Other Payment Options for Remaining Balance Due	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected Family Contribution (as calculated by the institution using information reported on the FAFSA or to your institution) Payment plan offered by the institution Direct PLUS Loan Military and/or National Service benefits Non-federal private education loan 	\$4,900/year

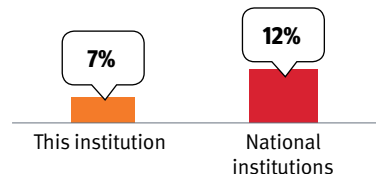
GRADUATION RATE

Percentage of full-time students who graduate within six years



LOAN DEFAULT RATE

Percentage of borrowers entering repayment and defaulting on their loan



MEDIAN BORROWING

Students at Sample University typically borrow \$20,000 in federal loans over four years. The federal loan payment over 10 years for this amount is approximately \$196.84 per month. Your borrowing amount may be different.

REPAYING YOUR LOANS

To learn about student loan repayment, go to <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND NEXT STEPS:

Sample University (SU)
 Financial Aid Office
 123 Opportunities Street
 Anytown, SU 12345
 Phone: 555-123-4567
 Email: financialaid@sampleuniv.edu



COST OF ATTENDANCE

The college's published sticker price.

Example: \$25,000



GIFT AID

Free money (scholarships and grants) that does not need to be paid back.

Example: \$13,600



NET PRICE

Overall cost (the actual price you will pay for your education over time; this includes net cost, which you will pay now plus loans, which will need to be paid back later).

Example: \$11,400

COST OF ATTENDANCE

The college's published sticker price.

Example: \$25,000



ALL AID

Free money (scholarships and grants) that does not need to be paid back plus loans that do need to be paid back.

Example: \$19,100



NET COST

Immediate cost (the price you will pay now for your education; loans will need to be paid back at a later time; net cost can be paid using family contributions earnings and work-study income).

Example: \$5,900



MAKE YOUR DECISION

A quick way to compare offers and determine your net price is to subtract all your grant, scholarship and other free aid from your cost of attendance. Keep in mind that colleges have different ways of offering financial aid, as well as different costs of attendance.¹

		COLLEGE (FILL-IN)					
		Sample college					
EVALUATE	Pros	Top-rated program, low cost of living					
	Cons	May need a car, limited housing options					
COST OF ATTENDANCE	Tuition and fees	\$14,000					
	Room and board ²	\$8,000					
	Books and supplies	\$1,000					
	Transportation	\$600					
	Miscellaneous	\$1,400					
	Total College Costs (A)	\$25,000					
GRANT/SCHOLARSHIPS/WORK-STUDY	Federal Pell Grant	\$3,570					
	Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	-					
	State/other grants	\$1,000					
	Scholarships	\$1,030					
	Institution-based aid	\$8,000					
	Total Grant/Scholarship Aid (B)	\$13,600					
	Your Net Price (Overall Cost) (A – B)	\$11,400					
Work-Study (Work To Earn)	\$1,000						
LOANS		Offered	Accept/Decline \$	Offered	Accept/Decline \$	Offered	Accept/Decline \$
	Direct Subsidized Loan	\$3,500	Accept \$3,500				
	Direct Unsubsidized Loan	\$2,000	Accept \$2,000				
	Direct PLUS Loan	\$4,900	Decline -				
	Private loan	-	-				
	Total Loan Offer (C)	\$5,500					
SUMMARY	Total Financial Aid (B + C = D)	\$19,100					
	Your Net Cost (Immediate Cost) (A-D)³	\$5,900					

¹ Not all colleges participate in all of the financial aid programs listed above.

² If you are living off campus, estimate your housing and food expenses.

³ Loans, which are part of the net price, or overall costs, will need to be paid back at a later time. Net cost can be paid using family contributions, earnings and work-study income.



Freshman Year Checklist

Fall–Winter

College Planning

- Attend college information nights in your community (www.collegenights.org)
- Learn the high school courses required by colleges (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/college-prep/thrive-in-high-school/high-school-classes-colleges-look-for>)
- Meet with your high school counselor for advice on your college plan
- Identify your interests and skills to help you focus on your goals

Extracurricular Activities

- Join a club or try out for a sports team
- Volunteer for something you find important

Spring

Academics

- Focus on your study habits and finish the school year strong
- Keep up your grades—colleges look at your grade point average (GPA)
- Set your sophomore class schedule with your counselor to include honors or Advanced Placement (AP) classes
- Create your four-year academic plan with your counselor

Career Exploration

- Start searching for summer programs (e.g., academic, work, volunteer, travel)
- Spend a day at work with a family member, friend or community member and learn about their job
- Attend career fairs or career day at your school or in your community

College Exploration

- Research the different types of college options—career and technical education (CTE) institutions, two-year community/junior colleges, and four-year colleges and universities
- Attend local college fairs in your area or at your school (www.nacacfairs.org/attend/national-college-fairs)
- Talk to current college students about their path to college and college life
- Try virtual campus tours (<https://campustours.com>, www.youvisit.com/collegesearch, www.ecampustours.com)

Summer

Summer Enrichment

- Participate in an enrichment program that expands your knowledge
- Get a job—many important skills are developed in work environments
- Volunteer with an organization you find interesting
- Apply for a service learning program
- Prepare for sophomore year by doing summer reading
- Visit college campuses

Money Management

- Open a bank or credit union account and save money for college
- Take a financial education course online (www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/index.html)
- Talk to your parents or guardians about a college savings plan



Sophomore Year Checklist

Fall–Winter

Time Management

- Research and implement ways on how to make the most efficient use of your time
- Use SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) goals to keep you on task (<https://studyright.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/SMART-Goals-Tracker.pdf>)
- Include down time in your schedule

College Entrance Exams

- Several colleges are test optional—check www.fairtest.org/university/optional for the most comprehensive list
- Take the PSAT to help prepare you for the SAT (www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat)
- Take the PreACT to help prepare you for the ACT (www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/free-act-test-prep.html)

College Planning

- Attend college information nights in your community (www.collegenights.org)

Spring

Academics

- Keep up your grades—colleges look at your grade point average (GPA)
- Review your four-year academic plan with your counselor
- Plan rigorous academic courses for your junior year
 - Enroll in Honors, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, which may earn college credit
 - Take college courses while in high school and earn both high school and college credit (known as dual/concurrent enrollment)

Extracurricular Activities

- Join a club or try out for a sports team
- Volunteer for something you find important
- Explore summer opportunities—be mindful of application deadlines

Career Exploration

- Seek summer opportunities to work or volunteer in your field of interest
- Take an interest inventory—it expands your ideas for careers you may enjoy (<https://roadtripnation.com/edu/careerfinder>)
- Have conversations with counselors, teachers, family and community members about their career paths and what they studied in college

College Search

- Use an online search engine to find colleges that may be right for you (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>)
- Visit campuses—think about size, location and academic programs
- Attend local college fairs in your area (www.nacacfairs.org/attend/national-college-fairs)
- Try online college fairs and virtual campus tours (<https://campustours.com>, www.youvisit.com/collegesearch, www.ecampustours.com)
- Use an online search engine to find colleges (<http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>)

Summer

Summer Enrichment

- Create a summer reading list from teacher recommendations
- Confirm your summer plans (e.g., work, academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, service learning, travel, camps, internship, campus tours)

College Finances

- Learn about types of scholarships and grants (<https://finaid.org>, <https://studentaid.gov>)
- Take a financial education course (www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/index.html)
- Use the tools found on the College Affordability and Transparency Center website (<https://collegecost.ed.gov>) to compare and estimate your college costs
- Research net price calculators on the website of colleges that appeal to you—type “net price calculator” in the college’s website search field



Junior Year Checklist

Fall–Winter

College Planning

- Meet with your counselor about your coursework and college plans
- Become or stay involved in extracurricular activities
- Check college websites for admission requirements
- Create a professional email address to use when applying for scholarships, registering for college entrance exams and completing college applications
- Meet with college admissions recruiters when they visit your high school
- Attend college information nights in your community (www.collegenights.org)

College Search

- Tour local campuses and visit non-local colleges during winter and spring breaks; consider campus size, location and academic programs
- Try online college fairs and virtual campus tours (<https://campustours.com>, www.youvisit.com/collegesearch, www.ecampustours.com)
- Use college search sites to explore your college options (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>)
- Prepare your college list (refer to worksheet on page 5)

Career Exploration

- Attend a local career fair
- Research career options and their education requirements, median pay and projected growth rates (www.bls.gov/ooh)
- Make a list of careers that may interest you and research the education level required for each profession
- Talk with professionals in careers you are curious about and ask about their work
- Enhance skills that would be useful in a career of interest through your extracurricular activities

Spring

College Entrance Exams

- Register and take your first college entrance exam during spring semester so you can take it again fall of senior year, if you want
 - Several colleges are test optional—check www.fairtest.org/university/optional for the most comprehensive list
 - SAT, with optional essay (www.collegeboard.org); free SAT test prep help (www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat)
 - ACT, with optional writing section (www.act.org); free ACT test prep help (www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/free-act-test-prep.html).

Academics

- Prepare for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams
- Plan your senior year schedule with your counselor
- Review your college preparation coursework and GPA with a college advisor
- Create a list of teachers, coaches and other mentors who will be able to write personalized letters of recommendation

Summer Preparation

- Apply for summer jobs or internships
- Seek volunteer opportunities in your field of interest
- Register for community college courses and earn college credit while in high school, also referred to as dual/concurrent enrollment
- If you took the SAT or ACT, review your test scores to determine if retesting is necessary
- Plan a test preparation schedule if you plan to retake college entrance exams

Summer

College Application Preparation

- Check websites of colleges on your list; review admissions application process and timeline
- Draft your application essays and/or personal statement; work with a college advisor for feedback
- Prepare a scholarship resume and/or a “brag sheet” that includes all your non-academic activities and honors
- Communicate with college admission representatives for questions you may have

College Finances

- Learn about the types of financial aid (<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types>)
- Visit College Board's BigFuture EFC Calculator to see how financial aid can help pay for your education (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator>)
- Search and apply for scholarships (www.fastweb.com, <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>)
- Learn how money works; take a financial literacy course (www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/index.html)
- Use the College Scorecard to compare costs, degree programs and outcomes for the colleges you are interested in (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>)
- Save money for college



Senior Year Checklist

Fall

College Planning

- Attend college information nights in your community (www.collegenights.org)
- Check college websites for applications, deadlines, financial aid and housing information
- Ask your counselor to evaluate your transcript for high school graduation and college eligibility
- Register to take or retake college entrance exams
 - Several colleges are test optional—check www.fairtest.org/university/optional for the most comprehensive list
 - SAT, with optional essay (www.collegeboard.org)
 - ACT, with optional writing section (www.act.org)
- Keep your test scores, resume and transcript organized to help in completing college applications
- Ask teachers or counselors for letters of recommendation
- Finalize portfolios, audition materials or writing samples if required as part of the application
- Get feedback from a college advisor, teacher or parent/guardian and complete revisions of all applications and essays

Financial Aid

- Review the financial aid application process and timeline required by the colleges on your list
- Register for an FSA ID, which serves as your FAFSA e-signature; student's parents/guardians must also register for an FSA ID (<https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>)
- File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on October 1 (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>)
 - Information from the 2021 tax year will be used for the entering class of 2023 as they apply for financial aid for the 2023-2024 academic year
- Attend financial aid workshops in your community for help completing the FAFSA
- Be aware that private colleges may require additional financial information from the CSS Profile (<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>)
- Check your state financial aid websites for more information about in-state financial aid opportunities for undocumented, DREAMer and DACA students (www.ecmc.org/students/resource-guides.html)
- Search and apply for scholarships (www.fastweb.com, <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>)
- Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) once FAFSA has been processed and make any needed corrections

Winter

College Application Follow-Up

- Check your email frequently for additional information colleges might request within their timeline
- Send your mid-year transcript to colleges that request them
- Continue scholarship searches over winter break and continue to submit applications

Spring

Academics

- Keep up your grades—college admissions are conditional and can be rescinded if you do not continue academic excellence
- Check with the colleges where you have applied before considering dropping a senior year class; colleges expect you to complete all of the high school courses you listed as "in progress" on your admissions application
- Take your Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams

College Decision

- Check your email or college admissions portal for admission decision notification
- Visit campuses that most interest you
- Carefully review your financial aid offer for each college where you have been accepted and compare offers; contact financial aid offices to answer questions or update them on any changes to your family's financial situation
- Finalize your financial aid; accept your financial aid offer or work with the college's financial aid office to adjust it
- If you'll be attending a four-year college, notify and place a deposit at the college of your choice by National College Decision Day (May 1)

College Admissions Follow-Up

- Sign into your college portal and review your task list and deadlines
- Check your email for correspondence and deadline reminders
- Request your final transcript be sent to your college choice from your high school registrar before the deadline
- Request AP and IB scores be submitted to your college choice
- Ask about college placement tests—some colleges require them for certain subjects, such as English and math; make sure to register in time and study beforehand
- Sign up for summer and/or fall orientation; some are mandatory and some have a cost
- Figure out housing—if living on campus, complete any roommate survey forms, sign the housing contract and submit a housing deposit to make sure you have a reserved room

Summer—Final Steps!

Orientation

- Attend orientation; at orientation, you will register for your classes; you may also take English, math or foreign language assessments

Paperwork and Payments

- Check your college email account and log into your college's student portal every few days for important notices for new students
- Download your college's health forms and see your doctor; colleges may require evidence of immunizations, including the COVID-19 vaccine
- Most four-year colleges require students to have health insurance, so you may see it on your fall bill; if you don't want it, you must opt out
- Tuition payments are due at the beginning of the term so research payment options beforehand
- Search your student portal for "FERPA waiver" if you want your parents/guardians to access your student account (bill, grades, etc.)
- Ask your high school to send your final transcript to your college

College Finances

- Work and save money for college
- Make a budget with your parents/guardians (www.ecmc.org/students/documents/fab-budgeting-flyer.pdf)
- View your class syllabus for required textbooks; consider buying used textbooks, which cost less than new; you may also be able to save money by shopping for books online, downloading PDFs, buying e-books or renting books

Living on Campus

- Check out a sample packing list and start packing (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/making-a-decision/off-to-college-checklist>)
- Consider creating a roommate agreement (www.collegexpress.com/articles-and-advice/student-life/articles/living-campus/how-make-your-own-college-roommate-agreement)
- Set expectations on how and when you will communicate with your family while away at college
- Make any necessary travel arrangements; buy travel tickets (plane, train, bus) and make hotel reservations early (if necessary)

Living at Home

- Develop boundaries with your family and let them know that your first obligation is your studies, so you're not available while at school
- Identify a study space at home

Support

- Search your college website for "academic advising" or "counseling services;" you'll have access to these free services; www.activeminds.org is another free resource for you to help yourself or your friends
- Check your student portal or college website so you don't miss out on any virtual or local welcome events for students before classes start
- Send thank-you notes to everyone who helped in your college process, such as counselors and teachers who wrote letters of recommendation and scholarship providers who provided you funding for college



Glossary

Familiarize yourself with the college and financial aid terms in this section to better equip yourself for the admissions and financial aid processes.

Academic Year—A period of time schools use to measure a quantity of study. An academic year typically consists of two semesters, three quarters, or a defined number of hours of study.

Advanced Placement (AP)—A college-equivalent course taken in high school that allows the student, upon passing a test, to earn college credit.

Assets—Items of value, such as stocks, bonds, cryptocurrency, savings and real estate. You are required to report the value of some types of assets when completing the FAFSA.

Associate Degree—A degree granted by a college after the satisfactory completion of a two-year, full-time program of study or its part-time equivalent.

Award Displacement—A practice in which a college reduces awarded campus-based aid due to a student's receipt of an outside scholarship.

Bachelor's or Baccalaureate Degree—A degree granted by a college after the satisfactory completion of a four- or five-year, full-time program of study or its part-time equivalent.

Capitalization—For unsubsidized loans, the amount of interest that accrues while you are in college, a grace period, in deferment or in forbearance that is added to the principal balance of your loan.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)—A secondary or postsecondary educational pathway that provides students with hands-on training while preparing them for an occupation upon graduation.

Certificate—A certificate of completion awarded to students who complete a program of study offered in a short period of time and in a specific field.

College Entrance Exam—An exam, most commonly the ACT or SAT, used by some four-year colleges during admissions that attempts to measure what a student learned in high school in certain subjects, such as math and reading.

College Placement Test—A test used by colleges after a student has been accepted to their college to make accurate course-level placement in certain subjects, such as math and English.

Consolidation Loan—A loan that combines several student loans into one new loan from a single lender.

Cost of Attendance (COA)—The calculated cost of attending the college, for a period of enrollment (such as an academic year), which includes transportation, room and board, tuition and fees, and the estimated cost of books, supplies and other expenses. COA is used to determine eligibility for financial aid.

CSS Profile®—A form some colleges may require you to complete in addition to the FAFSA to qualify for financial aid.

Default—Occurs when the borrower fails to make scheduled loan payments for a period of 270 days or longer.

Deferment—A period during which a borrower is entitled to have payments of principal and interest on a federal education loan postponed if he or she meets the eligibility criteria for the deferment. For subsidized federal loans, interest that accrues during periods of deferment is paid by the federal government.

Delinquent—Occurs the first day after the borrower misses a loan payment, causing the payment to become past due and lasts until the payment is made or other arrangements are made, such as deferment, forbearance or a new repayment plan.

Dependent Student—For federal student aid purposes, any student who is not an independent student is considered to be dependent. See the definition of "independent student" for a list of qualifying conditions.

Direct PLUS Loan—A federal loan option available to eligible parents and graduate or professional students.

Direct Subsidized Loan—A federal loan option available to undergraduate students with financial need. The U.S. Department of Education pays the interest while the student is in college at least half-time, for the first six months after leaving college or during a period of deferment.

Direct Unsubsidized Loan—A federal loan option available to undergraduate and graduate students. The student is responsible for the interest charged from the time the loan is disbursed until it is paid in full.

Early Action—A college admissions process that is similar to early decision, but is not a binding commitment to attend the college.

Early Decision—Students who apply under early decision commit to enroll at the college if admitted and offered a satisfactory financial aid package. Application deadlines usually are in November or December with a mid-to late-December notification date.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)—The index number used by the college's financial aid office to determine how much financial aid you would receive to attend their college. The information reported on the FAFSA is used to calculate your EFC.

Federal Need Analysis Methodology—A formula used to calculate your family's expected financial contribution for college. This formula, established by Congress, is used nationwide for all students. The most important factors in the formula are: parent income, assets and net worth; student income and assets; and family size.

Federal School Code—An identifier that the U.S. Department of Education assigns to each college or career school that participates in the federal student aid programs. In order to send your FAFSA information to a college, you must list the college's Federal School Code on your application. A list of Federal School Codes is available at <https://studentaid.gov/fafsa-app/FSCsearch>.

Financial Aid Package—The total amount of financial aid a student is eligible to receive. It might include grants, work-study and loans, and is assembled by the college’s financial aid office.

Financial Need—The amount by which your family contribution falls short of covering the cost of attendance.

Forbearance—The temporary postponement or reduction of loan payments that is typically granted at the discretion of the lender/servicer. The borrower is responsible for paying all interest that accrues during periods of forbearance.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)—A free application that must be completed by all students and parents who apply for federal student aid.

FSA ID—A username and password used to login to certain Federal Student Aid websites, such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the National Student Loan Data System, among others.

Full-Time Student—An undergraduate student who is enrolled for at least 12 credit hours per semester or equivalent. For a graduate student, the enrollment requirements can vary among colleges. Does not include audited courses.

Graduate Student—A student who is enrolled in a master’s or doctoral program at a college.

Grant—A type of financial aid usually based on financial need, which the student does not have to repay.

Independent Student—A student may be considered independent for federal student aid if the student meets certain criteria (*see page 16 for more information*).

Interest—The cost of borrowing money. Interest charges are repaid in addition to the principal of the loan.

International Baccalaureate (IB)—A nonprofit organization that offers student programs in select schools that combine requirements of a mixture of different national education systems.

IRS Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT)—A tool provided by the U.S. Department of Education to automatically transfer tax information from the IRS directly into the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Loan—A type of financial aid that must be repaid (with or without interest). Loans provided by the U.S. Department of Education include Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans and Direct PLUS Loans. Private lenders provide private loans, which can supplement the federal student loan program.

Master Promissory Note (MPN)—To borrow under the federal loan programs, a student or parent must sign this common form. The MPN allows borrowers to receive loans for a single academic year, or for multiple academic years (up to 10 years) without having to sign a new note.

Merit-Based Aid—Financial aid awarded on the basis of grades, test scores, athletic ability or other talent, rather than financial need.

Need-Based Aid—Financial aid awarded based on the family’s ability to pay for college. The FAFSA is typically used to determine a family’s eligibility for need-based aid.

Net Cost—The price a student pays now for their education (immediate cost). Loans, not included in net cost, will need to be paid back later. Net cost can be paid using family contributions, earnings and work-study income.

Net Price—The actual price a student will pay for their education over time (overall cost). This includes net cost, which will be paid now plus loans, which will need to be paid back later.

Net Price Calculator (NPC)—Each college that participates in the federal financial aid programs is required to have a “net price calculator” on its website. A net price calculator can give you an estimate of how much it may cost you to attend each specific college, taking into account grant and scholarship aid you may receive from both the college and federal financial aid.

Part-Time Student—An undergraduate student who is enrolled for fewer than 12 credit hours per semester or equivalent. A graduate student who is enrolled for fewer hours than the college’s standard to be considered a full-time student. Does not include audited courses.

Principal—The loan amount borrowed on which interest is calculated.

Priority Filing Date—The date established by the college by which students are encouraged to submit their FAFSA and have the results forwarded to the college to increase their chances of being

awarded certain campus-based financial aid. Financial aid funds are limited for students who fail to meet their college’s priority filing date.

Promissory Note—The legal document signed by the borrower prior to receiving a loan. States a promise to repay the loan, and lists the conditions of the loan and terms for repayment. The Master Promissory Note (MPN) is one type of promissory note.

Reciprocity—An agreement between states that allow bordering residents to be treated as domiciles of that state. This may include allowing bordering residents to receive in-state tuition.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)—The academic standard you must meet in college to continue to receive federal financial aid. Each college establishes its own SAP policy to comply with federal requirements.

Scholarship—A form of financial aid that does not need to be repaid. Some scholarships are awarded based on merit while others are awarded based on financial need.

Student Aid Report (SAR)—The SAR summarizes the information you included on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The SAR provides the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is used to determine whether a student is eligible for a Federal Pell Grant and other federal aid.

Undergraduate Student—A student who is enrolled in an undergraduate course of study that usually does not exceed four years and that typically leads to a degree or certificate.

Unmet Need—The amount of need remaining after Expected Family Contribution (EFC), grant aid and self-help are subtracted from Cost of Attendance (COA).

Verification—The process colleges use to ensure the accuracy of the information reported on the FAFSA. You may be required to provide the college with a copy of your tax return or other additional documents.

Work-Study—A form of financial aid where students can work part-time while attending college to earn money to pay for education expenses. Students work on or off campus doing community service work or work related to their course of study.



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