

Financial Aid Information

Financial Aid usually comes in a variety of ways and may include:

- Grants:** "Free" money that the student does not have to pay back.
- Loans:** Money that has to be repaid, usually with a low interest rate and deferred payment until after the student graduates. In addition there is federally-funded campus employment through the college financial aid office, based on financial need and at minimum wage.
- Scholarships:** Merit awards that do not have to be repaid.

Financial Aid Myths

Don't Believe Everything You Hear

Literally billions of dollars in financial aid is available to those who need help paying for college. Yet lots of misinformation clouds the facts about what type of aid is available and who is eligible. Here are some myths dispelled for students confronting the process of securing financial aid.

College Is Just Too Expensive for Our Family

Despite the media hype about rising college costs, a college education is more affordable than most people think, especially when you consider college graduates earn an average of \$1 million more over their careers than high-school graduates. The average yearly cost of a four-year public school in 2002-2003 is just \$4,081. There are some expensive schools, but high tuition is not a requirement for a good education.

There's Less Aid Available than There Used to Be

In fact, student financial aid in 2001-2002 rose to a record level of more than \$90 billion. Most students receive some form of aid. Less of this aid now comes in the form of grants, however; most aid is awarded through low-interest loans or institutional and other grants. You should consider carefully the financing packages you've been offered by each college to determine which makes the most financial sense.

My Parents' Income Is Too High to Qualify for Aid

Aid is intended to make a college education available for students of families in many financial situations. College financial aid administrators often take into account not only income but also other family members in college, home mortgage costs, and other factors. Aid is awarded to many families with incomes they thought would disqualify them.

My Parents Saved for College, So We Won't Qualify for Aid

Saving for college is always a good idea. Since most financial aid comes in the form of loans, the aid you are likely to receive will need to be repaid. Tucking away money could mean you have fewer loans to repay, and it won't mean you're not eligible for aid if you need it. A family's share of college costs is calculated based mostly on income, not assets such as savings.

I'm not a Straight "A" Student, So I Won't Get Aid

It's true that many scholarships reward merit, but the vast majority of federal aid is based on financial need and does not even consider grades.

If I Apply for a Loan, I Have to Take It

Families are not obligated to accept a low-interest loan if it is awarded to them. "In my opinion, everybody should apply for financial aid," says Tally Hart, Director of Student Financial Aid at The Ohio State University. "Student loans are at all-time low interest rates." She recommends applying and comparing the loan awards with other debt instruments and assets to determine the best financial deal.

Working Will Hurt My Academic Success

Students who attempt to juggle full-time work and full-time studies do struggle. But research shows that students who work a moderate amount often do better academically. Securing an on-campus job related to career goals is a good way for you to help pay college costs, get experience, and create new ties with the university.

I Should Live at Home to Cut Costs

It's wise to study every avenue for reducing college costs, but living at home may not be the best way. Be sure to consider commuting and parking costs when you do this calculation. Living on campus may create more opportunities for work and other benefits.

Private Schools Are Out of Reach for My Family

Experts recommend deferring cost considerations until late in the college-selection process. Most important is finding a school that meets your academic, career, and personal needs. In fact, you might have a better chance of receiving aid from a private school. Private colleges often offer more financial aid to attract students from every income level. Higher college expenses also mean a better chance of demonstrating financial need.

Millions of Dollars in Scholarships Go Unused Every Year

Professional scholarship search services often tout this statistic. In fact, most unclaimed money is slated for a few eligible candidates, such as employees of a specific corporation or members of a certain organization. Most financial aid comes from the federal government, though it's also a good idea to research nonfederal sources of aid.

My Parents Will Have to Sell Their House to Pay for College

Home value is not considered in calculations for federal financial aid. Colleges may take home equity into account when determining how much you are expected to contribute to college costs, but income is a far greater factor in this determination. No college will expect your parents to sell their house to pay for your education.

We Can Negotiate a Better Deal

Many colleges will be sensitive to a family's specific financial situation, especially if certain nondiscretionary costs, such as unusually high medical bills, have been overlooked. But most colleges adhere to specific financial aid-award guidelines and will not adjust an award for a family that feels it got a better deal at another school. "We won't bargain, but we want to make sure we know the family's full financial picture," says Tally Hart, Director of Student Financial Aid at The Ohio State University.

Financial Aid/Scholarship Assistance

The web is a great place to search for on-line applications, scholarships, and general information. Please check out the following sites:

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) Usually, these forms are available in the College Counseling Office early in November. The application can be sent only between 1 January and 30 June of the applicable school year. In order to maximize a student's eligibility for available funds, however, the FAFSA should be completed as soon as possible as 1 January, even if a family must estimate its taxes.

To apply electronically or to find out more about Federal Student Aid, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web Site at: www.ed.gov/studentaid or www.fafsa.ed.gov

College Foundation of North Carolina <http://www.cfnc.org/>

College Board [College Board Online](http://CollegeBoardOnline) features information and on-line registration for the SAT, SAT II, and the College Scholarship Service Financial Aid Profile®, a free on-line College Search, and an in-depth look

at the testing services, workshops and other resources just for school counselors. The College Board Online Internet site is maintained by the College Entrance Examination Board (the "College Board") and the Educational Testing Service ("ETS") as a service to the Internet Community.
<http://www.collegeboard.com/>

ACT Information for Life's Transitions allows students to register on-line for the ACT, to search for colleges, to apply to colleges on-line, and to estimate financial aid, all with the C3 Apply. This site is also the home of the Work Keys Assessment System. <http://www.act.org>

NC Scholars: Students who complete the State Board of Education requirements for a well-balanced, challenging high school program will be named "North Carolina Scholars." North Carolina Scholars receive special recognition at the end of the senior year and at graduation. They also receive an appropriate seal of recognition to be affixed to the diploma.
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/scholars>

College Net is a commercial site with college searches, scholarship searches, on-line college applications, and information about programs and scholarships at NCAA schools for athletes. <http://www.collegenet.com/>

Fast Web is a FREE online scholarship search where students can set up a personalized profile matching their specific skills, abilities, and interests to FastWEB's database of over 375,000 scholarships, and receive immediate results on-line. <http://fastweb.com/>

The Financial Aid Information Page is a huge, comprehensive, and FREE site was created by Mark Kantrowitz, author of The Prentice Hall Guide to Scholarships and Fellowships for Math and Science Students, and is sponsored by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA).
<http://www.finaid.org/>

Kaplan Education Center is a commercial site provides students with information on important tests such as the SAT , LSAT, GMAT, and GRE, financial aid information, as well as a career center with job tips.
<http://www1.kaplan.com/>

Princeton Review shares information about admissions and financial aid, this site features an on-line college matchmaker for students, snapshot information on specific schools, and more. Check out the tester for accurate, full-length simulations of computerized exams like the GMAT and GRE or get practice for pencil-and-paper tests like the SAT. <http://www.review.com/>

U.S. Department of Education provides the breaking news on the national education front, and also has a searchable ERIC Digests, education statistics (NCES), Federal Student Financial Assistance, FAFSA on the Web and more. <http://www.ed.gov/>

U. S. News gives college rankings by U.S. News magazine, articles, personalized college searches, online chats, financial aid, and career information. <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/>