FOR STUDENTS

Open DOORS

What Will College Cost? 10 Questions to Ask

Understanding College Costs

College costs can be confusing, especially if you are new to this process. The price listed on a college website is not always the amount you will have to pay. Financial aid - such as grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans - can change your cost. Use these questions to understand what a college would actually cost you and your family.

Ask the college's financial aid office these questions directly. It is okay if you do not know the financial aid terms yet. The staff will explain anything that is unclear. Write down the answers so you can compare colleges. If the financial aid offer is not enough, ask whether the college can review it again or if there is additional aid available. You can ask:

- At a financial aid or FAFSA event, to learn what information you will need and what to look for in a financial aid offer
- After colleges send you financial aid offers, so you can compare what each college would actually cost you
- After you are admitted, when you visit campus or talk with the college's financial aid office by phone, email, or in person
- Before you pay an enrollment deposit or say yes to a college, especially if the costs or financial aid are unclear

Take Your Next Step

Explore more ways to pay for college.

Scan or visit **bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college**

10 Helpful Questions

1. What's the average total cost of attendance — tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, travel, and other personal expenses? What additional costs are common in this program (lab fees, clinicals, technology, internships, study abroad)?
2. By how much should I expect costs to increase each year? Ask for a 3–5-year history of cost increases.
3. Does the school offer scholarships or other aid that isn't based on financial need? What percentage of students receive merit aid, and what's the average award?
4. What forms are required to apply for financial aid?
5. What is the priority deadline to apply for financial aid?
6. When will I be notified about financial aid award decisions?
7. What financing options are available, including federal student loans, Parent PLUS Loans, institutional payment plans, and private loans?
8. If the financial aid offer isn't enough, can I appeal or ask for a revision? Under what conditions will the aid office reconsider the offer?
9. What are the academic requirements or other conditions for renewing financial aid, including scholarships?
10. Regarding student employment, including Federal Work-Study: How are jobs assigned? How many hours per week can students work? How and how often are they paid?

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