



I have made myself what I am.

Tecumseh, Shawnee

Paying for College

Congratulations on making the wise decision to attend college. This is the first step in making better decisions for yourself, your family, and your future.

Now, your next questions are likely to be:

1. *How much will college cost?*
2. *Is there anything I can do to bring the cost down?*

This first question is difficult to answer. The cost varies widely depending on whether the college is a two-year public community college, four-year public college or university, or a four-year private institution. Consider these 2009 average college costs from The College Board:

Two year public college (per year)*	\$ 2,544
Four-year public college (per year)*	\$ 7,020
Four-year private college (per year)	\$26,273

*The costs listed above for two-year and four-year public colleges are for in-state students. The same colleges may charge out-of-state students two or three times that amount—or they might reduce (or eliminate) those extra costs. What’s going on? Click [here](#) for an explanation.

The answer to the second question is “absolutely.” There are ways to bring down the cost of education at every college and that’s what we’ll focus on here.

In-State Versus Out-of-State Tuition

State (public) colleges and universities get the money they need to operate from tuition and from taxes paid by state residents. So, students within that state pay a lower cost. Because out-of-state students haven't been paying tax dollars into that state, they are charged more through tuition.

These colleges also may have a lower price tag to entice graduates to stay in that state. College graduates are more likely to have good jobs, pay taxes, and contribute to the state's economy.

Whether a student pays in-state or out-of-state tuition isn't always set in stone. Consider these facts:

- If a student is a “top performer” (someone with an excellent grade point average or test scores), some colleges may reduce (or eliminate) the extra cost for out-of-state tuition.
- Some states with declining populations of college-age residents may reduce out-of-state tuition costs.
- Some state colleges have agreed to a “reciprocity compact.” This means that a state has an agreement with neighboring states to reduce (or eliminate) the extra cost of out-of-state tuition. For example, Minnesota has reciprocity agreements with Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota as well as with the Canadian province of Manitoba. There are four regional reciprocity compacts: **Western Undergraduate Exchange, Academic Common Market, Midwestern Higher Education, and the New England Board of Higher Education.**





Looking at Real Costs

Maybe you already know which college you'd like to attend. If you haven't made that choice then start by visiting **What to Consider When Picking A College**.

When you've made your choice (or picked your top two choices), it's time to pull together some current costs. First, start by listing the total cost for one year of college below (if you completed the **Researching College Form**, you can list that amount here).

Cost Per Year of College: (include tuition, books, fees, room and board [if needed] and other expenses you can anticipate)

College A: _____ **College B:** _____

Next, subtract from the total any amounts you or your family have saved for your college education.

Amount Saved for College: _____ **Amount Saved for College:** _____

New Totals:

College A: _____ **College B:** _____

Chances are the cost of a year of college is more than you have in savings. Don't be discouraged; two-thirds of college students need financial aid to continue their education. There are ways to fill gap, including:

- Scholarships and **grants**
- **Work-study** programs
- **Community service** jobs
- **Loans** (most **tribal colleges** do not participate in the federal student loan program)

You may be wondering why you only have to list the cost of one year of college instead of two or four years. On the negative side, the cost of college rises almost every year and it's hard to predict costs in the future. On the positive side, after you've been a student for a while, the more you'll realize what resources are available to you. Over time, it may be easier to explore little-known scholarships or grants and have focused talks with a college financial aid officer. Your out-of-pocket costs could actually go down.

After you've considered ways to fill the financial gap in paying for college, it's time to learn about the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) form. If you are enrolling in tribal college, you should also file for **tribal assistance**.



Scholarships and Grants

The wonderful thing about scholarships and grants is that the money doesn't have to be paid back. Essentially, it's free money.

A scholarship is awarded based on merit. For example, a student might qualify for a math scholarship. You probably already know about athletic scholarships. A grant is awarded based on a person's or family's financial need.

The types of federal grants you could receive include:

- The **Federal Pell Grant**
- The **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant**, and
- The **Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant**

It has been a long journey, but the federal government is now committed to fostering American Indian education from an American Indian perspective. These scholarship and grant programs can help ensure a meaningful education for you, and your Native school of thought will become an asset for the entire country.

You also should explore scholarship options from the **American Indian College Fund**, your local tribe, or incentives offered by some colleges and universities to encourage American Indian students to enroll.

Scholarships and Grants continued



Scholarships and grants also may be available through your **state** or through a variety of other organizations based on your field of study, hobbies, interests, etc. These types of grants are usually small, but you may qualify for more than one, which could help whittle down your overall cost. Small scholarships and grants add up!

For example, if you were interested in becoming an emergency medical technician (EMT) or paramedic and researched scholarships, you'd see that some paramedic associations offer scholarships to EMT students. There are also memorial scholarships set up by family members touched by the efforts of an EMT. These scholarships are likely to be small and very specific (must live within a certain state or county, etc.); still, they can help lower your overall education costs. Your college's financial aid office can help you find these hidden scholarship gems.

Setting aside a little time to research scholarships and grants could add up to big bucks. Still, your search could make you a target for scammers. [Click here for some tips on avoiding scams](#), and [click here for ideas on how to search successfully for scholarships](#).



Avoiding Scholarship Scams

According to FinAid.org, hundreds of thousands of students and parents are cheated by scholarship scams each year. These victims lose more than \$100 million annually.

Scammers try to disguise themselves as legitimate government agencies, nonprofit organizations, education lenders, and scholarship matching services. They could have even gotten your name from an honest business or agency, but they're still scammers. Their names may include official-sounding words, such as "National," "Federal," or "Foundation."

Here are a few ideas to avoid being tricked by these scams:

- Never pay money to get money.
- Do your own research to land a scholarship; scammers promise to save you time by exploring scholarships for you. The only thing they really want to explore is your wallet.
- If you have questions about searching for scholarships, ask your high school counselor or someone in a college's financial aid office. They want you get an education and not be "taken" by scammers.
- Never pay for information about a scholarship.
- Know that there are no "guaranteed" scholarships.
- Legitimate scholarship foundations don't charge application fees.

Searching for Scholarships on Your Own

You can search for legitimate scholarships by using these National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators ideas:

- **Work with your financial aid office:** The largest amount of financial aid comes from federal, state, and institutional grants. Your financial aid office can help you find information on available scholarships, grants, and loans according to your needs and background.
- **Contact your academic department:** If you have already decided on a major, your academic department may be aware of awards designated for students in your area of study.
- **Use a free scholarship search engine:** Ask the student aid office to recommend free scholarship search sites other students have found useful.
- **Never assume:** Even if you don't have straight A's there still may be help available. Seek out local and national organizations and associations in your areas of interest to see whether any scholarship opportunities exist.



- **Write the essay:** Few people like to write essays, so use that fact to your advantage. Scholarships that require essays receive fewer applicants, giving you a better chance of qualifying. Keep copies of all the application materials you submit; often, essays, application materials, and college admission essays can be tweaked and used again for future applications. Be sure to thoroughly proof-read before submitting each application.
- **Stack up the small scholarships:** Studies show that families often overlook scholarships that are less than \$500.
- **Apply early:** The best time to apply is NOW! Waiting too long will result in missed deadlines. Don't wait to be accepted to a college to research and apply for private scholarships.
- **Don't do it alone.** Finding and applying for scholarships can be a lot of work, so get friends or family involved in seeking opportunities and keeping you on track with applications and deadlines.
- **Don't get scammed.**



Federal Pell Grant

The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate students. Eligible students receive a specified amount each year under this program. The maximum Pell Grant for the 2010-11 award year is \$5,550. Students may use their grants at any one of approximately 5,400 participating colleges and universities. Grant amounts depend on:

- Expected family contribution (if the student is a dependent)
- College costs
- Enrollment status (full time or part time)
- Whether the student attends for a full academic year or less

Schools participating in the Federal Pell Grant Program either credit the funds to the student's school account, pay the student directly (usually by check) or combine these methods.

To determine your eligibility for the Pell Grant program you must first complete a Free Application for Federal Aid (**FAFSA**) form. In fact, almost all financial aid starts by filling out the FAFSA.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) program is for undergraduate students with an extreme financial need. This program is just for those students with the highest need.

Each college gets a specific amount of FSEOG dollars. It is then up to the college's financial aid office to determine which students receive grants and for what amount. Eligibility is based on financial need and first priority is given to students receiving Pell Grants. The amount of the award varies widely: from \$100 to \$4,000 per year.

To apply for a FSEOG, complete an online **FAFSA**. Do this before the first deadline that is set by the college you plan to attend. These funds are extremely limited; delaying your application could cause you to miss out on these funds. Act now.





Work-Study Programs

Work-study programs allow you to earn money while attending college. Work-study money can be used to pay for classes, books, and personal expenses. Employers in these programs understand the needs of students and try to work with their schedules.

Basically, there are two types of work-study jobs:

- **Federal Work-Study Program.** If you can show the financial need, you may qualify for this program. You could work on campus or off campus at a public agency or nonprofit organization. To show financial need, you must complete the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (**FAFSA**) form. Be sure to mark the box indicating you are interested in student employment.
- **Non-Federal Work-Study Jobs.** Your college may have jobs available that aren't part of the federal program. These jobs are not based on financial need. Check with your school's Career Services department—or your specific academic department—for a listing of non-FWS jobs. The money you earn in this type of work-study job will be used to determine your financial need when filing the FAFSA.



Community Service Jobs

Another possible way to help pay for college is to take a community service job through an organization like AmeriCorps or City Year. Both organizations require a time commitment (typically nine months to a year), but you will earn education awards.

- AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is the domestic version of the Peace Corps, and some of this service occurs on Indian reservations. Most jobs require a full-time commitment of 1,700 hours during a year (9 months to one year). Part-time jobs require 300 to 900 hours of work. The benefits—beyond making a difference in a community—include:
 - A \$4,725 post-service award for full-time participants and a living allowance.
 - A \$2,363 post-service award (pro-rated based on the number of service hours) and a living allowance.

To be eligible for AmeriCorps, you must be 17 or older and have a high school diploma or a GED. To learn more, visit <http://www.americorps.gov/> or call (800) 942-2677.

- City Year. City Year members mostly work in schools as tutors or mentors. You could run after-school programs or conduct leadership classes. You also could help rebuild or improve neighborhoods. After 10 months of full-time service, you could receive a \$5,350 education award to pay for college or existing student loans. To be eligible for City Year, you must be between 17 and 24 years old and have a high school diploma or GED (or pursuing a GED). To learn more, visit http://www.cityyear.org/default_ektid13307.aspx.

Some colleges “sweeten the pot” for individuals who have worked for these organizations by waiving registration fees. They might even grant course credits.

FAFSA Form

All types of federal financial aid start with the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) form. You should complete this form as soon as possible after January 1st of the year you plan to attend college (January 2nd would be ideal). The good news is that even if you're applying to three colleges, you'll only need to complete one FAFSA form.

We highly recommend that you file online at www.fafsa.gov. Online filing can be seven to 14 days faster than mailing an application. In fact, it may be hard to find a paper application. You'll need a lot of documents to fill in the form correctly. So, before completing the form, use this **checklist** to gather the paperwork you'll need.



Based on the information you provide, the FAFSA processor will determine how much you can afford to pay out of pocket for your education. If you're a dependent, the processor will also determine how much your family should contribute. The FAFSA form is extremely important and you should take the time to fill it out completely and honestly.

Some of the questions on the form may be confusing. To get help, you can work with your high school guidance counselor, a college's financial aid office, or College Goal Sunday (<http://www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/>). College Goal Sunday is a nonprofit organization that helps individuals complete the FAFSA.

When completing the form, keep these points in mind:

- Some financial aid is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. So, file as soon as you can.
- File online, if possible. Not only does it cut processing time, but it can help you catch errors right away.
- Read the instructions carefully and ask for help when needed. Errors or incomplete information will delay processing and could jeopardize your chances for aid.
- If you do not yet have completed tax forms, estimate your tax information to the best of your ability.
- Keep a copy of your FAFSA form and the paperwork used to complete the form.
- File a FAFSA every year you enroll in college.

About a week after you submit an online FAFSA form, you will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). The report will list your “Expected Family Contribution”—how much you or your family should reasonably be able to pay out of pocket for college for one student for one year.

The difference between your “Expected Family Contribution” and the cost of college is the amount of financial aid you will seek to pay for college costs. Because each college has different financial aid guidelines, don’t rule out an expensive college until you have applied for financial aid.



Checklist for FAFSA Form

	Social Security number (and your parents' number if you are a dependent).
	Driver's license.
	Latest W-2 forms and other records of money earned.
	Your latest Federal Income Tax Return. This can be an IRS Form 1040/1040A/1040EZ. If married, you'll need your spouse's tax return as well.
	Parents' latest Federal Income Tax Return (if you are a dependent student*).
	Untaxed income records. This could include any needs-tested benefits received in the past two years through Supplemental Security Income, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and so on. You also must disclose untaxed income such as child support and living allowances provided to members of the military or clergy and any non-education veterans' benefits you receive.
	Current bank statements.

*Note: If you don't know whether you are a dependent or an independent student, visit <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/DependentorIndependent10-11.pdf>.



Student Loans

Ideally, you would like to be debt-free when you graduate from college, but this isn't always possible. As a last resort, you may have to consider a low-interest federal student loan to meet your financial need. Like any loan, the money must be paid back and interest will be charged.

(Note: Most **tribal colleges** do not participate in the federal student loan programs.)

Federal Student Loans

There are two main types of federal student loans available:

- Subsidized Stafford Loan
- Unsubsidized Stafford Loan

With a “subsidized” loan, the federal government pays the interest on the loan while you are in school. Subsidized loans are based on need. With an “unsubsidized” loan, the interest on the loan accrues, so the amount you owe when you graduate will be more than the amount you borrowed. Unsubsidized loans are not based on need.

As of July 2010, the lender for these loans is the U.S. Department of Education through its Direct Loan Program. Applying for a Stafford loan starts with filling out the Free Application for Student Aid (**FAFSA**) form.

When you receive the loan, you must sign a legally binding promissory note. This note is your pledge to repay the debt. Repayment begins six months after you graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment.

For more information about Stafford loans, visit the Department of Education's **Student Financial Aid Web site**. The Internet has lots of information about federal student loans. The problem is that much of that information is outdated. How federal student loans are administered changed largely in 2010, so the best way to get current information is to check the Department of Education's Web site or have a talk with your college's financial aid office.

Student Loans continued

More Federally Backed Loans

Two other federally backed loans include:

- Direct Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) Loan
- Perkins Loan

Direct PLUS Loan

Parents of dependent students may apply for a Direct PLUS Loan to help pay their child's education expenses. Parents must meet certain eligibility requirements and the student must be enrolled at least half time. To learn more about the Direct PLUS loan visit the Department of Education's Federal **Student Aid Web site**.

Campus-Based Perkins Loan

Another type of popular loan program is the Perkins loan. Although it's a federal loan, it is administered directly by the financial aid office at the college. Not all colleges participate in this loan program, so check with your school.

A Perkins loan charges 5 percent, but interest doesn't accrue until nine months after you graduate, leave school, or drop to below half-time enrollment. For more information about Perkins loans, visit the Department of Education's Federal **Student Aid Web site**.



Student Loans continued

Private Student Loans

The most expensive type of student loan is a private loan from a bank or similar lender. In addition to charging variable and often higher interest rates than federal student loans, these lenders could also charge you costly fees. According to FinAid.org, a good rule of thumb is that 3 percent to 4 percent in fees is about the same as a 1 percent higher interest rate.

How much a lender will charge you in interest and fees will depend on your credit history. Bad credit equals high cost.

Before taking on a private student loan, look into all other options: grants, scholarships, work-study programs, and federal loan programs. Before signing a private loan contract, make sure you have considered the following:

- The interest rate
- The fees
- Whether interest accrues while you're in school (it usually does)
- When you must start making loan payments (some lenders expect you to make loan payments while you're still in school)
- If the interest rate can be reduced (some lenders lower the interest rate slightly if payments can be automatically taken out of your bank account or if you make your loan payments on time for a year or more)

When considering a student loan—even a low-interest federal student loan—it's a good idea to know what you'll pay over time. Use this FinAid **loan calculator** to compare the costs of various loan programs.





Tribal Colleges and Student Loans

Most tribal colleges do not participate in the federal student loan programs. They prefer to help their students keep costs down with low tuition and fees, and by enabling students to live at home while attending college. Tribal colleges are also very active in helping students obtain grants and scholarships that do not have to be repaid. This approach is a huge financial benefit for students.

Applying for Tribal Assistance

Applying for financial aid from your tribe also requires filling out paperwork and meeting deadlines. Contact your tribe as early as possible about the process you need to follow. Some tribes begin considering applications January 1 for the fall semester. The first students in line for financial aid have the best chance of receiving help.

You may need to provide the following documents:

- Certificate of Degree of Indian blood.
- Tribal enrollment.
- High school transcripts, GED score, or grades or transcripts from a previous college semester.
- Letter(s) of acceptance from your college or university.
- Financial needs analysis from the college(s); this must be sent by the college's financial aid office.

Keep a copy of any forms you submit to your tribe. Ask when you can expect to hear from them, and mark the date on your calendar. Most likely, you will receive a letter from the tribe notifying you of its award decision. The tribe also will send this information to the college(s) you plan to attend. However, if you do not hear by the date promised, contact your tribe. Ask where they are in the process of reviewing your application.

Military Options

Post 9/11 GI Bill

The military also provides financial assistance to college-bound veterans and their family members. For example, the new Post 9/11 G.I. Bill has a generous education benefit for veterans. In some cases, this education benefit may be transferred to dependents. It even includes a \$1,000 stipend to help pay for books and supplies.

To learn more about the Post 9/11 GI Bill, click [here](#).

Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)

College students can get full or partial funding for their two-year or four-year college education by enrolling in ROTC. After graduation—or leaving school—you must complete a set amount of time in the military. For more information about ROTC, visit these various branches of the military:

- **Army**
- **Air Force**
- **Navy**
- **Marine Corps**



Coast Guard College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative

The Coast Guard sponsors a College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI), which is a scholarship program for college sophomores. In exchange for future active duty service as an officer, the program pays for tuition, approved fees, some textbooks. It also provides a salary, health care coverage and other benefits during a student's junior and senior year of college. After graduation the student must enroll in Officer Candidate School and complete three years of active duty.

To learn more about the CSPI program, click [here](#).



Taking It Step by Step

Getting ready to attend college may seem like a confusing process. But, if you take it one step at a time, you'll be well on your way. Look at the steps below and then complete your own checklist.

Step One: Apply to College

- Meet enrollment deadlines.
- Explore grants/scholarships.
- Be eligible for college (high school diploma or GED).

Step Two: Complete the FAFSA Form

- Submit application (preferably online) as soon as possible after January 1.
- Get answers to confusing form questions.
- Keep a copy of the form.
- Keep paperwork used to complete the form.

Step Three: Review the Student Aid Report

- Ensure the report is accurate.
- Make certain it lists all the colleges to which you have applied.
- Get help from the individual college's financial aid office, if needed.

Step Four: Apply for Tribal Assistance

- Locate Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood.
- Have important papers ready (tribal enrollment, high school transcripts, GED score, college acceptance letter, financial needs analysis).

Step Five: Select a College

- Review Financial Aid Award Letter from each college.
- Review pros/cons of each college.
- Choose the college that is the best option for you.

My Checklist and Plan

Getting ready to attend college may seem like a confusing process. But, if you take it one step at a time, you'll be well on your way. Look at the steps below and then complete your own checklist.

Education Requirements:

Have Taken SAT or Accuplacer Tests? Yes _____ No _____

If not, when? _____

High School Diploma or GED? Yes _____ No _____

If not, when? _____

Registered with Selective Service? Yes _____ No _____ Not Applicable _____

College Applications Submitted? Yes _____ No _____

College(s) deadlines for receiving my financial aid requests are:

College A: _____

College B: _____

College C: _____

Submitted FAFSA Form? Yes _____ No _____

If not, when? _____

Received and Reviewed Student Aid Report? Yes _____ No _____

Submitted Tribal Assistance Form? Yes _____ No _____

If not, when? _____

Received College Financial Award Letter(s)? Yes _____ No _____

Selected College and Notified School of Intent to Enroll? Yes _____ No _____

If not, when? _____

Notified Other Schools That I Won't Be Attending? Yes _____ No _____