



U.S. Department of Education

COLLEGE FINANCING PLAN

Technical Reference Guide
Undergraduate Students

September 2024

collegefinancingplan@ed.gov



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1 OVERVIEW

The United States Department of Education’s College Financing Plan, shown in Figure 1-1, is a consumer tool that institutions can use to notify students about their financial aid package. The Department’s “College Financing Plan” is a standardized form. It is designed to simplify the information that prospective students receive about costs and financial aid so that they can easily compare institutions and make informed decisions about where to attend school.

Figure 1-1: College Financing Plan

University of the United States (UUS)		MM / DD / YYYY	
Undergraduate College Financing Plan		Download	
Student Name, Identifier			
Estimated Cost of Attendance 2025-2026			
	On Campus Residence	Off Campus Residence	
Tuition and Fees		\$X,XXXX	
Housing and Food	\$X,XXXX	\$X,XXXX	
Books and Supplies		\$X,XXXX	
Transportation		\$X,XXXX	
Other Education Costs		\$X,XXXX	
Estimated Cost of Attendance	\$X,XXXX / yr	\$X,XXXX / yr	
Student Aid Index			
Based on the FAFSA		X,XXXX / yr	
As calculated by the Department of Education and/or the institution using a formula prescribed by law.			
Based on Institutional Methodology		X,XXXX / yr	
Used by many private institutions in addition to the FAFSA.			
Grants, Scholarships, and Other Gift Aid			
Scholarships and Grants are considered "Gift" aid - no repayment is needed.			
Scholarships		Grants	
Merit-Based Scholarships		Need-Based Grant Aid	
Scholarships From Your School	\$X,XXXX	Federal Pell Grants	\$X,XXXX
Scholarships From Your State	\$X,XXXX	Institutional Grants	\$X,XXXX
Other Scholarships	\$X,XXXX	State Grants	\$X,XXXX
Employer Paid Tuition Benefits	\$X,XXXX	Other Forms of Grant Aid	\$X,XXXX
Total Scholarships	\$X,XXXX / yr	Total Grants	\$X,XXXX / yr
VA Education Benefits			
VA Education Benefits		\$X,XXXX / yr	
Estimated College Costs You Will Be Required to Pay			
Net Price To You		\$X,XXXX / yr	
Total cost of attendance minus total grants and total scholarships			
Loan and Work Options to Pay the Net Price			
You must repay loans, plus interest and fees.			
Loan Options*		Work Options	
Federal Direct Subsidized Loan (x.xx% interest rate) (x.xx% origination fee)	\$X,XXXX / yr	Work-Study	\$X,XXXX / yr
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan (x.xx% interest rate) (x.xx% origination fee)	\$X,XXXX / yr	Hours Per Week (estimated)	XX / wk
Total Loan Options	\$X,XXXX / yr	Other Campus Job	\$X,XXXX / yr
		Total Work	\$X,XXXX / yr
* For federal student loans, origination fees are deducted from loan proceeds.			
Other Options		For More Information	
You may have other options to pay the remaining costs. These include:		University of the United States (UUS)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tuition payment plan offered by the institutionParent PLUS loans, which your parent can apply forNon-Federal Private education loan, which you or your parent can apply for after passing a credit checkOther Military or National Service Benefits		Financial Aid Office	
		123 Main Street	
		Anytown, ST 12345	
		Telephone: (123) 456-7890	
		E-mail: financialaid@uus.edu	
Customized Information from UUS		* Loan Amounts	
		Note that the amounts listed are the maximum available to you. To learn about loan repayment choices and calculate your Federal Loan monthly payment, go to: https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/plans .	
Next steps			

Glossary

Cost of Attendance (COA): The total amount (not including grants and scholarships) that it will cost you to go to school during the 2025–26 school year. COA includes tuition and fees; housing and food; and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, and dependent care. It also includes miscellaneous and personal expenses, such as an allowance for the rental or purchase of a personal computer, costs related to a disability; and reasonable costs for eligible study-abroad programs.

Direct Subsidized Loan: Loans that the U.S. Department of Education pays the interest on while you're in school at least half-time, for the first six months after you leave school (referred to as a grace period), and during a period of deferment (a postponement of loan payments).

Direct Unsubsidized Loan: Loans that the borrower is responsible for paying the interest on during all periods. If you choose not to pay the interest while you are in school and during grace periods and deferment or forbearance periods, your interest will accrue (accumulate) and be capitalized (that is, your interest will be added to the principal amount of your loan).

Student Aid Index: A number used by your school to calculate the amount of federal student aid you are eligible to receive. It is based on the financial information provided in your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (the FAFSA). This is not the amount of money your family will have to pay for college, nor is it the amount of federal student aid you will receive.

Federal Work-Study: A federal student aid program that provides part-time employment while the student is enrolled in school to help pay his or her education expenses. The student must seek out and apply for work-study jobs at his or her school. The student will be paid directly for the hours he or she works may not automatically be credited to pay for institutional tuition or fees. The amount you earn cannot exceed the total amount awarded by the school for the award year. The availability of work-study jobs varies by school. Please note that Federal Work-Study earnings may be taxed in certain scenarios; however the income you earn will not be counted against you when calculating your Student Aid Index on the FAFSA.

Grants and Scholarships: Student aid funds that do not have to be repaid. Grants are often need-based, while scholarships are usually merit-based. Occasionally you might have to pay back part or all of a grant if, for example, you withdraw from school before finishing a semester. If you use a grant or scholarship to cover your living expenses, the amount of your scholarship may be counted as taxable income on your tax return.

Loans: Borrowed money that must be repaid with interest. Loans from the federal government typically have a lower interest rate than loans from private lenders. Federal loans, listed from most advantageous to least advantageous, are called Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and Parent PLUS Loans. You can find more information about federal loans at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

Net Price: An estimate of the actual cost that a student and his or her family need to pay in a given year to cover education expenses for the student to attend a particular school. Net price is determined by taking the institution's cost of attendance and subtracting any grants and scholarships for which the student may be eligible.

Non-Federal Private Education Loan: A private education loan is a loan issued expressly for postsecondary education expenses to a borrower (either through the educational institution or directly to the borrower) from a private educational lender, rather than as a Title IV, HEA loan offered by the Department of Education.

Origination Fees: An upfront fee charged by a lender for processing a new loan application. It is compensation for putting the loan in place. Origination fees are quoted as a percentage of the total loan.

Parent Plus Loan: A loan available to the parents of dependent undergraduate students for which the borrower is fully responsible for paying the interest regardless of the loan status.

Teach Grant Program: Provides grants of up to \$4,000 a year to students who are completing or plan to complete course work needed to begin a career in teaching. If you do not meet the requirements of your service obligation, all TEACH Grants you received will be converted to Direct Unsubsidized Loans. You must repay these loans in full, with interest charged from the date of each TEACH Grant disbursement. Service obligation information can be found at <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/teach>.

Tuition Payment Plan: A tuition payment plan offered by an institution may allow students to spread out their payments. It includes an extension of credit of 90 days or less in which the educational institution is the lender, or of one year or less where an interest rate will not be applied to the credit payment.

VA Education Benefits: Benefits that help Veterans, service members, and their qualified family members with needs like paying college tuition, finding the right school or training program, and getting career counseling. You can find more information here: <https://www.va.gov/education/>.

For more information visit <https://studentaid.gov>.

1.1 Introduction

This Technical Reference Guide provides programmer specifications and record layouts for vendors and/or institutions that choose to adopt the College Financing Plan. This guide offers a methodical approach, rather than a task-oriented approach, to implementing the tool. It is intended for users who are already familiar with, or interested in using, the College Financing Plan as a supplement or replacement to the institution's existing award letter.

The framework/structure of the College Financing Plan is designed using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), and the actual file containing the HTML code is provided by the U.S. Department of Education. This document will give you a better understanding of the various elements required to produce and populate the applicable fields using the institution's existing data. In addition, this document assumes that the reader understands HTML, and has the required knowledge to edit the provided code.

1.2 Important Contact Information

Please direct any questions, feedback, or comments to the U.S. Department of Education at collegefinancingplan@ed.gov. For more information on producing the College Financing Plan, including information on the HTML file, please visit <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/aid-offer/index.html>.

2 DATA LAYOUT

Figure 2-1 provides annotations for the College Financing Plan template.

Figure 2-1: Annotated College Financing Plan

ANNOTATED

College Financing Plan

Questions? Collegefinancingplan@ed.gov

Student name/ identifier; date issued (right side)

Individual student's estimated cost of attendance

Student Aid Index based on FAFSA and Institutional Methodology

Federal loan amounts you are eligible for

Space for institution to send custom message

University of the United States (UUS)

MM/YY/YYYY

Download

Estimated Cost of Attendance 2025-2026

	On Campus Residence	Off Campus Residence
Tuition and Fees	\$X,XXXXX	\$X,XXXXX
Housing and Food	\$X,XXXXX	\$X,XXXXX
Books and Supplies	\$X,XXXXX	\$X,XXXXX
Transportation	\$X,XXXXX	\$X,XXXXX
Other Education Costs	\$X,XXXXX	\$X,XXXXX
Estimated Cost of Attendance	\$X,XXXXX / yr	\$X,XXXXX / yr

Student Aid Index

Based on the FAFSA

As calculated by the Department of Education and/or the institution using a formula prescribed by law

Based on Institutional Methodology

Used by many private institutions to determine the FAFSA

Grants, Scholarships, and Other Gift Aid

Scholarships and Grants are considered "Gift" aid - no repayment is needed.

Scholarships	Grants
Need-Based Scholarships	Need-Based Grant Aid
Scholarships From Your School	Federal Pell Grants
Scholarships From Your State	Institutional Grants
Other Scholarships	State Grants
Employer Paid Tuition Benefits	Other Forms of Grant Aid
Total Scholarships	Total Grants

VA Education Benefits

VA Education Benefits

Estimated College Costs You Will Be Required to Pay

Net Price To You

Total cost of attendance minus total grants and total scholarships

Loan and Work Options To Pay the Net Price

You must repay loans, plus interest and fees.

Loan Options*

Federal Direct Subsidized Loan (4.9% interest rate) (a credit origination fee)	\$X,XXXXX / yr
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan (4.9% interest rate) (a credit origination fee)	\$X,XXXXX / yr
Total Loan Options	\$X,XXXXX / yr

* For federal student loans, origination fees are deducted from loan proceeds.

Other Options

You may have other options to pay the remaining costs. Those include:

- Tuition payment plan offered by the institution
- Parent PLUS loans with your parent as guarantor
- Non-federal private education loans with you or your parent as co-borrower
- After paying a credit check
- Other Military or National Service Benefits

Customized information from UUS

Next steps

The sum of each grant sub-category appears here; campus-based FSEOG and TEACH Grants would appear here under "Institutional Grants"

Aid awarded by school but earned through work

School contact details for more information and next steps

NOTE: Institutions may contact Collegefinancingplan@ed.gov to indicate their commitment to use the College Financing Plan. Students, parents, and institutions may also direct questions about the College Financing Plan to that e-mail address. Visit the College Financing Plan's page on the Office of Postsecondary Education's Web page for resources and background about the development and adoption of the College Financing Plan: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/ques/aid-net/index.html>.

Outlined below are the data elements in each section and the information required to produce and populate the College Financing Plan.

2.1 Student Information

This section contains information specific to the institution and the prospective student including the estimated cost of attendance, possible grant and scholarship aid, work options, loan options, and so on. The data required to populate the **Student Information** section are provided by the institution. Table 2-1 outlines each “Subsection” and provides a “Description” of its intended use

Table 2-1: Student Information Section

Subsection	Description
Student Name/Identifier	The prospective student's name and identifier (as assigned by the institution).
Date Issued	The month, day, and year that the College Financing Plan was created to notify the prospective student about their financial aid package.
Institution Name	The name of the institution providing the College Financing Plan.
Estimated Cost of Attendance 2025-2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition and fees • Housing and Food • Books and supplies • Transportation • Other education costs • Estimated Cost of Attendance 	This information is generated by the institution itself and should provide a clear understanding of the costs associated with one year of enrollment at the institution for the named student.
Student Aid Index <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the FAFSA • Based on Institutional Methodology 	At most institutions, the expected family contribution is based on the FAFSA results; however, if an institutional methodology is used, that result may be provided.
Scholarship and Grant Options Scholarships Merit Based Scholarship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships From Your School • Scholarships From Your State • Other Scholarships • Employer Paid Tuition Benefits • Total Scholarships Grants Need-Based Grant Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Pell grants • Institutional grants • State grants • Other Forms of Grant Aid • Total Grants 	This should include all financial aid options available to the named student to assist with the costs outlined above.
VA Education Benefits	Benefits that help Veterans, service members, and their qualified family members with needs like paying college tuition, finding the right

	school or training program, and getting career counseling.
Estimated College Costs You Will Be Required to Pay • Net Price	This number reflects the net cost of attendance for the named student after grants and scholarships are taken into account.
Loan options • Federal Direct Subsidized Loan • Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan • Total Loan Options	At most institutions, the recommended loan amounts for the named student are based on the FAFSA results; however, an institutional methodology may also be used.
Other Options • Tuition payment plan offered by the institution • Parent PLUS loans, which your parent can apply for • Non-Federal Private education loan, which you or your parent can apply for after passing a credit check • Other Military or National Service Benefits	Students may have other options to pay the remaining costs.
Work options • Work-Study hours per week (estimated) • Other Campus Job • Total Work	At most institutions, the expected work award amounts for the named student are based on the FAFSA results; however, an institutional methodology may also be used.
Customized information	Institutions can use this section to add additional, customized information specific to the institution and the named student.
For more information and next steps • Financial Aid Office Contact Information (Address, Telephone, and E-mail)	Specific contact information for the institution's financial aid office including the address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

Table 2-2 lists each “Element” used within the **Student Information** section, along with its assigned “Control ID” (as it is displayed within the College Financing Plan HTML code).

Table 2-2: Element and Control ID for Responsive College Financing Plan

Element	Control ID
School Name	school-name
Student Name/Identifier	student-name
Date Issued	date-stamp

Download Button	download-btn
Cost Section Header	costs-table
Tuition and fees	costs-tuition-and-fees
On-campus housing and food	costs-housing-and-food-on- campus
Off-campus housing and food	costs-housing-and-food-off- campus
Books and supplies	costs-books-and-supplies
Transportation	costs-transportation
Other educational costs	costs-other-education-costs
Estimated Cost of Attendance On campus	costs-total-estimated-cost-on- campus
Estimated Cost of Attendance Off campus	costs-total-estimated-cost-off- campus
Student Aid Index Header	family-table
Based on the FAFSA	family-fafsa-cost
Based on Institutional Methodology	family-institution-cost
Scholarships Section Header	scholarships-table
Scholarships from your school	aid-scholarships-school
Scholarships from your state	aid-scholarships-state
Other scholarships	aid-scholarships-other
Employer Paid Tuition Benefits	employer-paid-tuition-benefits
Total Scholarships	aid-total-scholarships
Grant Section Header	grants-table
Federal Pell Grants	aid-grants-federal-pell
Institutional Grants	aid-grants-institution
State Grants	aid-grants-state
Other forms of grant aid	aid-grants-other
Total Grants	aid-total-grants
VA Education Benefits	va-education-table
VA Education Benefit	va-education-benefit
Estimated College Costs You Will be Required to Pay Header	net-price-table
Net Price	net-price-total
Loan Options Section Header	loan-options-table
Federal Direct Subsidized Loan	loan-options-federal-direct-subsidized
Federal Direct Subsidized Loan Interest Rate	loan-options-federal-direct-subsidized-rate

Federal Direct Subsidized Loan Origination Fee	loan-options-federal-direct-subsidized-loan-origination_fee
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan	loan-options-federal-direct-unsubsidized
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan Interest Rate	loan-options-federal-direct-unsubsidized-rate
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan Origination Fee	loan-options-federal-direct-unsubsidized-loan-origination_fee
Total Loan Options	loan-options-total
Work Options Section Header	work-options-table
Work-Study	work-options-work-study
Work Study Hours	Work-options-hours-per-week
Other Campus Job	work-options-other-campus-job
Total Work	work-options-total

3 GLOSSARY

The Department has added a glossary as a second page to the College Financing Plan. This addition will help better explain financial aid terms used on the College Financing Plan to students, financial aid administrators, and guidance counselors.

Figure 3-1: Glossary

Glossary of College Financing Plan for Undergraduate School students

Glossary

Cost of Attendance (COA): The total amount (not including grants and scholarships) that it will cost you to go to school during the 2025–26 school year. COA includes tuition and fees; housing and food; and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, and dependent care. It also includes miscellaneous and personal expenses, such as an allowance for the rental or purchase of a personal computer; costs related to a disability; and reasonable costs for eligible study-abroad programs.

Direct Subsidized Loan: Loans that the U.S. Department of Education pays the interest on while you're in school at least half-time, for the first six months after you leave school (referred to as a grace period*), and during a period of deferment (a postponement of loan payments).

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Federal Work-Study: A federal student aid program that provides part-time employment while the student is enrolled in school to help pay his or her education expenses. The student must seek out and apply for work-study jobs at his or her school. The student will be paid directly for the hours he or she works may not automatically be credited to pay for institutional tuition or fees. The amount you earn cannot exceed the total amount awarded by the school for the award year. The availability of work-study jobs varies by school. Please note that Federal Work-Study earnings may be taxed in certain scenarios; however the income you earn will not be counted against you when calculating your Student Aid Index on the FAFSA.

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Loans: Borrowed money that must be repaid with interest. Loans from the federal government typically have a lower interest rate than loans from private lenders. Federal loans, listed from most advantageous to least advantageous, are called Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and Parent PLUS Loans. You can find more information about federal loans at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

Net Price: An estimate of the actual cost that a student and his or her family need to pay in a given year to cover education expenses for the student to attend a particular school. Net price is determined by taking the institution's cost of attendance and subtracting any grants and scholarships for which the student may be eligible.

Non-Federal Private Education Loan: A private education loan is a loan issued expressly for postsecondary education expenses to a borrower (either through the educational institution or directly to the borrower) from a private educational lender, rather than as a Title IV, HEA loan offered by the Department of Education.

Origination Fees: An upfront fee charged by a lender for processing a new loan application. It is compensation for putting the loan in place. Origination fees are quoted as a percentage of the total loan.

Parent Plus Loan: A loan available to the parents of dependent undergraduate students for which the borrower is fully responsible for paying the interest regardless of the loan status.

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VA Education Benefits: Benefits that help Veterans, service members, and their qualified family members with needs like paying college tuition, finding the right school or training program, and getting career counseling. You can find more information here: <https://www.va.gov/education/>.

For more information visit <https://studentaid.gov>.