Bloomfield Hills High School

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

Class of 2027

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Revised September 2025

The Bloomfield Hills High School Financial Aid Information packet is for informational purposes only. Consult the financial aid office at the college/university/trade school you plan to attend for more in depth financial aid information. A digital Financial Aid Information packet can be found on the BHHS Counseling website: bhhs.bloomfield.org/counseling. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Bloomfield Hills High School Counseling Office.

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FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

Financial aid is money for college that comes from sources other than the family. It is meant to supplement what the family can contribute to the total costs involved in attending college or a university.

The primary responsibility for paying the educational expenses of a student belongs to the family. The amount of financial aid is dependent on the parent and student income, assets of the family, family size, and other expenses of the family. The first step to apply for financial aid is to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid – www.fafsa.gov) as soon as possible **after** October 1. Filing allows the student to apply for all of the possible loans and grants the federal, state and college agencies provide. The FAFSA will also determine the family's contribution for the student's education.

Each college will attempt to package a financial aid award in a combination of grants (money that does not need to be paid back), loans and campus work study. This package should cover the unmet needs of a student. The unmet need is determined by subtracting the family's ability to pay from the total costs of the school.

While the unmet need varies according to the cost of the college, the family contribution is the same for all schools. The family contribution is not based on the cost of the college, so in planning for college, a student should look at all factors in choosing a school.

Each college has a financial aid office, and we recommend that the family confer with this office on possibilities for financial aid. More than 90% of all financial aid is awarded through these offices. It is important to make informed financial decisions. See publicservicedegrees.org/financial-aid/student-loan-risk-and-responsibility

Students should check the Counseling Canvas, and **XELLO** regularly for scholarships. Other helpful websites are fastweb.com , scholarships.com and Michigan.gov

Sources of College Funding

Grants

This type of financial aid does **NOT** have to paid back. Grants come from state and federal governments, the college/university you are considering, or even private organizations.

Scholarships

Scholarships do **NOT** have to be paid back. Scholarships can be based on need, merit, academics, athletics, community service, etc. Every scholarship has its own specifications for applying and accepting. Colleges/ universities, corporations, financial institutions, and other organizations offer scholarships. Often, scholarships are renewable. Be sure to research all scholarships well.

Loans

Federal and private loans are available to assist students with paying for the cost of college. Loans **MUST** be paid back with interest; however, interest rates and terms vary. The federal government offers federal student loans that usually offer lower interest rates and flexible terms. Loans can be taken out in a parent's name. *Be sure to accept or not accept loans on your college account.*

Work Study

The Federal Work Study program is considered financial aid offering part time employment for college students who demonstrate financial need. A student MUST answer YES on the FAFSA Work Study question to be considered for Work Study. A student MUST research employment opportunities on campus themselves.

The FAFSA is the most important tool is finding sources for college funding. It is imperative to fill out the FAFSA as soon as it is released in October. Factors considered when getting aid are: estimated family contribution, family size and members in college, and the cost of attendance at the chosen college.

How to recognize and avoid college scholarship scams

Average college costs have doubled in the last two decades, and this financial pressure along with new technologies makes today's students particularly vulnerable to financial aid and scholarship scams. "Scammers know to take advantage of those who are stressed," says Robert C. Ballard, president and CEO of Scholarship America, the nation's largest nonprofit scholarship and education support organization. "Fortunately, there are some ways you can avoid getting duped." To help you spot scams, Scholarship America offers the following insights.

Fees and Other Red Flags

Scholarship programs charging a fee to apply often look legitimate. But look at the bigger picture: if the provider is awarding $500 in scholarships and collecting fees from thousands of applicants, it's not funding education so much as making money. Your chances of earning a scholarship are slight if not impossible — sham providers often collect fees and disappear. Some providers claim to have a no-strings-attached grant or an incredibly low-interest loan to offer, as long as you pay a tax or "redemption" fee in advance. Others offer to match you with guaranteed scholarships-if you pay for a premium search service. Keep in mind, there's no such thing as a "guaranteed scholarship." Free, comprehensive scholarship searching and matching services like Fastweb and Cappex will connect you to legitimate, competitive scholarships that don't charge application fees.

Too Good to Be True

Be wary of the "too-good-to-be-true" scam model: an official-sounding organization tells you about an incredible opportunity, offers you a coveted spot at a scholarship seminar, or just sends you a check with a note of congratulations, using messaging designed to get your adrenaline pumping and make you act fast. Remember, scholarship providers aren't in the practice of sending funds out randomly; it's likely the check will bounce, or you'll be asked to send money back for "processing" or an "accidental" overpayment. Your safest bet? Tearing up the check and, if you have time, filing a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. Often unexpected "opportunities" are attempts to get you to divulge personal information. Even clicking on links can expose your data to scammers. Be cautious: Google the name of the scholarship or organization. Scams have often been flagged by the FTC or Better Business Bureau.

Social Scammers

A new scam making the rounds starts with a random friend request on Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat. Accept, and your new friend will start messaging you about a foolproof way to make money for college: they work for a scholarship provider and have found a loophole. They just need to enter you as a winner and you can split the money. If this was real, it'd be incredibly unethical. However, in the midst of stress, you may be tempted — and that could cost more than money. While you may be asked to send cash as an advance, most such scammers are phishing. Give them enough info, and you'll be worrying about getting your identity back. For more scholarship tools, resources and opportunities, including the annual Scholarship America Dream Award, please visit scholarshipamerica.org. "Scholarship scams seem to work just enough for people to keep trying it," says Ballard. "However, two main rules will help you avoid them: never pay to apply and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media. Reprinted from the Oakland Press 11-7-18

SENIORS, GET FREE MONEY FOR CAREER TRAINING WITH THE MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SKILLS SCHOLARSHIP!

WHY CHOOSE THE CAREER TRAINING PATH?

UNLOCK UP TO $4,000 FOR A TRAINING PROGRAM

Start your **NEXT CHAPTER** with free money for **CAREER TRAINING** from the **MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SKILLS SCHOLARSHIP!**

GET ON THE FAST TRACK TO A HIGH-PAYING CAREER

KICK-START your career goals by earning an **INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATE.**

LEARN IN-DEMAND SKILLS

Gain **SKILLED TRADES TRAINING** that could lead to **HIGHER PAY** and greater **JOB SECURITY.**

APPLYING IS EASY. IT'S JUST TWO STEPS.

1. Choose an eligible career training program at **mi.gov/ACHIEVEMENT.**
2. Apply online in **FIVE MINUTES OR LESS.**

APPLY TODAY!

MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SKILLS SCHOLARSHIP | MI Student Aid

mi.gov/**ACHIEVEMENT**

**The Michigan Achievement Skills Scholarship is available through the Michigan Achievement Scholarship. The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential is not affiliated with National Merit Scholarship Corporation or its registered trademarks National Achievement,® Achievement Scholarship® or Achievement Scholar.®*

SENIORS, UNLOCK FREE MONEY FOR COLLEGE WITH THE FAFSA!

YOU COULD BE LESS THAN 30 MINUTES AWAY from accessing scholarships, grants, work-study funds and loans — **NO MATTER YOUR GPA!**

ALL YOU NEED TO COMPLETE THE FAFSA:

- **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS** for you and your parents/contributors.
- **INCOME AND TAX INFORMATION** (like bank account balances and tax returns).

COMPLETING YOUR FAFSA IS AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3!

1. Create your **STUDENTAID.GOV ACCOUNT.**
2. Ask your parents to create their own **STUDENTAID.GOV ACCOUNTS.**
3. **FILL OUT THE FAFSA WITH YOUR PARENTS.** (It takes most families less than 30 minutes to complete!)

DON'T MISS OUT ON MONEY FOR COLLEGE OR CAREER TRAINING!

Not sure about your plans after high school? The FAFSA is the first step to discovering what's possible. **FILL YOURS OUT TODAY!**

MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP | MI Student Aid

FAFSA.gov

WHY COMPLETE THE FAFSA?

The **FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)** keeps your path wide open. Whether you're on your way to college or career training (or even if you're unsure of your next steps), submit your **FAFSA** now so you don't miss out on financial aid later!

UNLOCK FREE MONEY AND MORE

The **FAFSA** is the key to accessing free money for college or career training (including grants and scholarships like the ***Michigan Achievement Scholarship***), work-study funds and loans.

THE FAFSA IS THE FIRST STEP

If you're headed to community college, university or career training, or are still undecided, start by filling out your **FAFSA.** Eligibility isn't based on GPA or academic achievements. And you might qualify for more than you think.

NO PRESSURE — JUST POSSIBILITIES

Submitting the **FAFSA** doesn't lock you into anything. You don't have to know your plans or commit to accepting financial aid to see what doors the **FAFSA** could open for you.

FILL IT OUT IN MINUTES

It takes most families 30 minutes or less to complete. Just create **StudentAid.gov** accounts first and have **Social Security** numbers and income info on hand. You'll complete it quicker than you'd expect.

DON'T WAIT. FILL OUT YOUR FAFSA TODAY!

QUESTIONS?

Stop by the counseling office. We're here to help.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP | MI Student Aid

FAFSA.GOV

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Do you need **money** for college?

Overview of State Financial Aid Programs for 2024-25

MI Student Aid
Accessible • Affordable • Attainable

Money is available to help you pay for college!

01

Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
Complete the FAFSA at fafsa.gov during your senior year of high school and every year you enroll in college.

02

MiSSG Student Portal
A few days after you complete the FAFSA, MI Student Aid receives a copy of it. To check your eligibility for State financial aid programs, create a MiSSG Student Portal at michigan.gov/missg. While logged in, you can also change your college choice and complete additional applications. A Social Security number (SSN) is required to create a MiSSG Student Portal account.

03

Make Sure MI Student Aid Knows Where You Are Attending
Awards are sent to the first Michigan college listed on your FAFSA. If you decide to go to another college, you can update it in the MiSSG Student Portal or by contacting the Customer Care Center at 888-447-2687.

04

Attend College
Attending an eligible Michigan college at least half-time (six or more credits) is required to receive State financial aid funds, with exception of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship and MI Future Educator Fellowship & Stipend programs, which require full-time enrollment. The State financial aid you qualified for should be listed on the financial aid offer from your college. You can also check award amounts in the MiSSG Student Portal.

Most State Financial Aid Programs Require Students To:

- Submit a FAFSA.
- Be a Michigan resident.
- Be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or approved refugee.
- Enroll at least half-time (six or more credits) at a participating Michigan college.
- Not be in default status on a Federal student loan.
- Meet the college's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards.

Current and future awards are subject to available and approved funding.

In Academic Year 2023 - 2024, MiLEAP provided more than $350 million to Michigan college students.

MI Student Aid
P.O. Box 30462
Lansing, MI 48909-7962
888-447-2687
michigan.gov/mistudentaid

@mistudentaid

MiLEAP
Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential

PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP

Recent Michigan high school graduates may be eligible for Michigan Achievement Scholarship. Students must be enrolled full-time and choose one of the following paths:

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GUARANTEE

This program pays for in-district tuition, mandatory fees, and contact hours. There are no income requirements for this program. An additional $1,000 Michigan Achievement Bonus is available for Pell-eligible students.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

Students can receive up to $5,500 per year up to five years. Students must demonstrate financial need by completing the FAFSA with an SAI of $30,000 or less.

CAREER TRAINING

Those who qualify could receive up to $2,000 per year for up to two years to earn an industry-recognized certificate for a faster track to a high-paying career.

MICHIGAN RECONNECT

Scholarship program for students age 25 and older which pays for the cost of in-district community college tuition or a significant tuition discount if you attend an out-of-district community college.

TUITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM (TIP)

Provides assistance to Michigan students who have received Medicaid coverage for 24 months within a 36 month period between age nine and high school graduation.

MI FUTURE EDUCATOR STIPEND

Stipend to support Michigan's hardworking student teachers as they continue their journey to being in the classroom full-time. Student must be completing a required, full-time student teaching experience to receive the award.

MI FUTURE EDUCATOR FELLOWSHIP

Program to create low-cost tuition pathways for future Michigan educators up to three years. Student must be enrolled full-time to receive the award.

FOSTERING FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP

Provides assistance for college expenses to Michigan students who had formerly been in foster care.

Priority Application Deadline: August 1

POLICE OFFICER'S AND FIRE FIGHTER'S SURVIVOR TUITION GRANT

Provides a waiver of tuition for children and surviving spouses of Michigan police officers and fire fighters killed in the line of duty.

Application Deadline: July 15

CHILDRENS OF VETERANS TUITION GRANT

Provides tuition assistance to the natural or adopted child of a Michigan veteran that has died or become totally and permanently disabled, or missing in action (MIA), as a result of military service.

Application Deadline: July 15

More information on programs, award amounts, and deadlines can be found at michigan.gov/mistudentaid.

MI Student Aid

SENIORS, UNLOCK FREE MONEY FOR COLLEGE

WITH THE MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP

PICK YOUR PATH TO COLLEGE FUNDING, NO MATTER YOUR GPA.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GUARANTEE

Earn your associate degree or skill certificate **TUITION-FREE** at an eligible community college!

All Michigan high school grads are eligible.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

Get up to **$27,500** for a public or private university!

7 out of 10 high school seniors may qualify.

CAREER TRAINING

Get up to **$4,000** for a career training program!

Get on the fast track to a high-paying career.

BEGIN BY COMPLETING YOUR FAFSA. IT'S EASIER THAN EVER!

COMPLETE YOUR FAFSA TO APPLY. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS:

1. Gather **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS** and **INCOME INFO** *(like bank balances and tax returns).*
2. Create **STUDENTAID.GOV** accounts for you and your parents/contributors.
3. Fill out the **FAFSA.** It takes most families 30 minutes or less to complete.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP | MI Student Aid

mi.gov/ACHIEVEMENT

UNLOCK TUITION-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE!

All high school grads are eligible for the Michigan Achievement Scholarship's Community College Guarantee

— NO MATTER THEIR GPA OR FAMILY INCOME.

WHY CHOOSE THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATH?

TUITION-FREE DEGREE

Earn a **SKILL CERTIFICATE** or **ASSOCIATE DEGREE** tuition-free at your local community college with the **COMMUNITY COLLEGE GUARANTEE.***

TRANSFERABLE CREDITS

Start at a **COMMUNITY COLLEGE** and take your credits with you to a **FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY.**

FREE MONEY BONUS

If you receive the **FEDERAL PELL GRANT,** you're eligible for an extra **$1,000** for living expenses.

FAST TRACK TO A HIGH-PAYING CAREER

COMMUNITY COLLEGE offers career-focused programs that can prepare you for **HIGH-PAYING JOBS** in as little as two years.

COMPLETE YOUR FAFSA TO APPLY. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS:

1. Gather **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS** and **INCOME INFO** *(like bank balances and tax returns).*
2. Create **STUDENTAID.GOV** accounts for you and your parents/contributors.
3. Fill out the **FAFSA.** It takes most families 30 minutes or less to complete.

GET ON THE PATH TO TUITION-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE. APPLY TODAY!

**Available through the Michigan Achievement Scholarship.*

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mi.gov/ACHIEVEMENT

Myths About Financial Aid

Don't fall for these myths about federal student aid and the application process!

"Federal student aid is just 'free money' like grants."

Reality: Federal student aid includes three different kinds of financial help: grants, low-interest loans, and work-study funds (a part-time job on or near campus). To learn more about the different types of federal student aid, visit **StudentAid.gov/types**.

"My parents make too much money, so I won't qualify for aid."

Reality: There is no income cut-off to qualify for federal student aid. Many factors—such as the size of your family and your year in school—are taken into account. And remember: when you fill out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form, you're also automatically applying for funds from your state, and possibly from your school as well. In fact, some schools won't even consider you for any of their scholarships (including academic scholarships) until you've submitted a FAFSA form. Don't make assumptions about what you'll get—fill out the FAFSA form and find out.

"Only students with good grades get financial aid."

Reality: While a high grade point average will help a student get into a good school and may help with academic scholarships, most of the federal student aid programs do not take a student's grades into consideration. Provided a student maintains satisfactory academic progress in his or her program of study, federal student aid will help a student with an average academic record complete his or her education.

"I don't have good credit, so I can't get a student loan."

Realty: You don't need to get a credit check for most federal student loans (except for Direct PLUS Loans). Also, you won't need a cosigner to get a federal student loan in most cases.

"My ethnicity or age makes me ineligible for federal student aid."

Reality: There are basic eligibility requirements (which you can find at **StudentAid.gov/eligibility**), but ethnicity and age are not considered.

"My parents aren't U.S. citizens, so there's no way I'll get aid."

Reality: Your parents' citizenship status is NOT a factor, and the FAFSA form won't even ask you about it. If your parents don't have Social Security numbers, they must enter 000-00-0000 when the FAFSA form asks for their Social Security numbers.

"The FAFSA® form takes forever to fill out, and it's really hard to do."

Reality: If you've got 30 minutes to spare, you're good. Because that's about how long it takes to fill out the FAFSA form. It's also not nearly as hard as you might think.

"I support myself, so I don't have to include parent information on the FAFSA® form."

Reality: This is not necessarily true. Even if you support yourself and file taxes on your own, you may still be considered a dependent student for federal student aid purposes. If you are considered dependent, you must provide your parents' information on the FAFSA form. The form asks a series of questions to determine your dependency status. You can preview the questions at **StudentAid.gov/dependency**.

"I can't file my FAFSA® form in October because I haven't applied to any schools."

Reality: Actually, you CAN complete your FAFSA form before submitting any college or career school applications. You'll need to list at least one school on your FAFSA form, but go ahead and add every school you're considering, because some schools have early deadlines to apply for their limited funds. Then later, you can add or delete schools on your FAFSA form.

"I'll have to update my FAFSA® form after I file my taxes in the spring, won't I?"

Reality: Nope! Just enter the tax information the form asks for—or better yet, transfer it directly from the Internal Revenue Service if you're offered that option while applying—and you're good to go. No need to update later.

Remember: The FAFSA form asks for your and your parents' tax information from the tax year that was two years prior to the start of the school year for which you're applying for aid. For example, the 2018–19 FAFSA form asks for 2016 tax and income information, while the 2019–20 FAFSA form will ask for 2017 tax and income information.

"I didn't qualify for financial aid last year, so filling out the FAFSA® form again is just a waste of time."

Reality: It's super important to fill out a FAFSA form every year you're in college or career school. Why? Because things can change. For instance, your school or state might create a new grant or scholarship, or the factors used to calculate your aid could change from one year to the next. Either way, if you don't submit a new FAFSA form, you're out of luck.

So what's next?

Go to **fafsa.gov** and fill out the form. If you applied for admission to a college or career school and have been accepted—and you listed that school on your FAFSA form—the school will receive the information from your FAFSA form, calculate your aid, and send you an electronic or paper aid offer telling you how much aid you're eligible for at the school.

Have questions? Contact or visit the following:

- **StudentAid.gov**
- a school's financial aid office
- **studentaid@ed.gov**
- 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) toll free
- TTY for the deaf or hard of hearing: 1-800-730-8913

Decoding YOUR financial aid offers

6 tips

you should know before making the big decision

College and money series

1. The acronyms you need to know

- **Cost of attendance (COA):** an estimate of what one full year of school will cost. It includes tuition, along with housing, meals, fees, books, and more. Check your school's website for a detailed COA.
- **Student Aid Index (SAI):** an index number the U.S. Department of Education and schools use to determine what types, and how much, financial aid you could get. The amount you actually pay may be different.

2. You might get a few types of financial aid

- **Scholarships and grants:** free money that you won't have to pay back—seriously!
- **Work-study:** money you earn by working a part-time job through your school
- **Loans:** money you can borrow that you will have to pay back with interest

3. Remember this equation

COA – financial aid = what's left to pay

Do this equation for every school on your list. If you still owe money, you may need to use savings, private student loans, or other sources to cover the difference.

4. Hold on: don't just pick the biggest offer

A small financial aid offer with more free money may be better than a larger offer with more loans. Why? Because you'll have to pay back those loans with interest.

5. Read the fine print

Before you pick your offer, pay attention to the conditions. Some types of financial aid may be renewable, and some may be for one year only. Also, some scholarships might require you to maintain a certain GPA.

6. Choose what works for you

You don't have to accept all the aid listed in your financial aid offer. Pick the types and amounts of aid you need, and make sure to respond before the deadline.

Learn more at **salliemae.com/finaidoffers**

How can I request a change to my financial aid package?

SwiftStudent will help you understand the financial aid appeals process — **for free.**

Am I eligible?

What documents do I need?

How do I write an appeal letter?

How do I submit my letter to the financial aid office?

Check out the free appeal templates (and more) here:

https://formswift.com/swift-student

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How to Appeal Your Need-Based Financial Aid Award

ivywise.com/ivywise-knowledgebase/resources/article/how-to-appeal-your-need-based-financial-aid-award

By Amy, IvyWise College Admissions Counselor

You've just been admitted to the school of your dreams. You are over the moon, sharing your excitement with your family — until you see the financial aid package. What?! Where did that number come from?

Sticker shock over college costs is real. Despite the rollout of net price calculators and general talk about college being expensive, many families are still completely surprised when they see their expected family contributions. Ideally, you've done your research ahead of time. I recommend families utilize tools like net price calculators — which are mandated by federal law at any institution that accepts federal aid — and MyinTuition (https://myintuition.org/quick-college-cost-estimator/ t) to help estimate costs. Sometimes, however, even the most diligent preparation and research can result in a surprise, especially if your family owns a business or sees large fluctuations in yearly income. Family contributions for divorced or separated parents or guardians can also be complicated and hard to predict.

Thankfully, it's not the end of the road. You can still appeal your financial aid (ivywise.com/blog/the-ultimate-guide-to-understanding-financial-aid-for-colleges/) offer and, while there are no guarantees it will result in more money, you have nothing to lose in trying. (A college will NOT rescind your offer of admission if you attempt to negotiate your financial aid!) I like to remind families that even if an appeal results in another $1,000 in aid, that's a pretty good hourly wage for an hour or two of effort!

Make Fair Comparisons Between Offers

Before you can appeal, especially if you're trying to get one college to "match" another college's offer, first ensure that you're comparing apples to apples. Colleges with need-based policies will not compete with colleges that have merit-based or a combination of need and merit policies.

For example, Harvard might look closely at Princeton's award so they don't lose a student over the difference of a few thousand dollars. This is an apples-to-apples comparison. But Harvard won't match a Trustee Scholarship from Boston University — which covers full tuition and fees — or a full-ride Morehead-Cain Scholarship from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These are apples and oranges.

Do Some Old-Fashioned Math

You also want to interpret award letters similarly. Each school's award letter will look different. You need to know how to pull out the relevant info. There are many tools to help families do this, but I recommend keeping it simple by doing some old-fashioned math. Find the total cost of attendance for billed AND non-billed expenses so you have a true reflection of the total cost of a school. Then subtract any grants or scholarships you were awarded that you don't have to pay back. That's it. Compare the answers for each school.

It doesn't matter if one school gives you more scholarships than another if that school costs more to begin with. I don't compare loans or work study because essentially these numbers can be the same (or very similar) at every school — federal loan amounts are standard and set by the government.

Contact the Financial Aid Office

Now it's time to call the college's financial aid office and ask to speak to a financial aid officer. You may want to explain that you are an accepted student (or parent/guardian) and ask who manages the financial aid for this particular group. Explain that you are seeking a reconsideration of your award package. Ask what the process is, who to address your appeal to — they will ask for something in writing — and the due date. Do NOT miss the deadline they give you!

If you can get the officer to explain the details of how they arrived at your award, that's even better. However, this is rare — at least on a first phone call. But the more you understand about how they calculated your contribution, the better you can prepare and tailor your appeal.

Write Your Appeal Letter

After you've gathered as much info as you can from the financial aid office, it's time to write your letter. The more stress you convey, the better. They are more likely to respond to a specific situation or circumstance, but just registering your general inability to pay their calculated family contribution is important.

Start the letter with a heartfelt expression of gratitude for what they have done already, and simply state that it does not feel feasible to your family. Then give as many specifics as possible. This is not the time to be embarrassed or ashamed —they have seen and heard it all! Nothing will surprise them, and they can only respond if you share.

Things to consider sharing in your letter:

High medical expenses for non-elective procedures or emergency circumstances

- Fluctuations in income due to medical situations, reduced hours, lay-offs, etc.
- Low assets and/or retirement savings for your age and/or lack of primary home ownership
- Better offer from a peer school (attach the award letter, even if they say they don't match other schools' awards)

Things colleges won't take into consideration (although you might want to share them anyway as evidence of general financial stress):

- Exchange rate fluctuations with foreign currencies
- The cost of caring for extended family members
- Home upgrades or repairs such as new roofs, furnaces, remodeling, etc.
- Car purchases or repairs
- Private school tuition, as public education is free

When preparing your letter, also consider the colleges' counter arguments. Financial aid awards consider a family's overall financial health and ability to absorb the cost of college over time. They don't expect you to have the money in-hand immediately to cut a check. Instead, they assume you will view college as an investment and draw from savings, assets, and borrowing tools accordingly. Colleges also assume that if you borrow to finance a car or have a mortgage, then borrowing for college should be on the table as well.

Colleges define your income as the money you had in your pocket before any choices were made. It's essentially your gross income before you funneled anything into a retirement account, an HSA, etc. Owning a business or real estate makes defining income even more complicated. This is a good example of when you'd want to call a college and ask questions about how your income was built in the calculations.

After you've written your letter, providing as much detail and evidence as possible (potentially including pay stubs, receipts, award letters, etc.), send it as soon as possible. There are often tight timelines to make decisions, and you don't want to hold things up on your end.

Stay in Touch with Admissions and Financial Aid

If you need an extension from admissions, make sure you are in touch with your admissions officer as well. Explain that your financial aid is under reconsideration. Usually, financial aid and admissions offices work closely together, but never make any assumptions. You should be communicating regularly, thoroughly, and honestly with both offices.

In the meantime, **do not put down your deposit at the college until you have the results of your reconsideration.** When you put down the deposit, you're signaling that you intend to make the finances happen — whether or not your reconsideration is successful. Financial aid offices can see if you've made the deposit, and the reconsideration is unlikely to go your way.

If financial aid officers have any questions about your letter, they will contact you. If you haven't heard in the timeframe they provided you, make sure you email (for documentation purposes) and call to follow up. Once you have the reconsideration result, feel free to ask further questions if things are still not clear. Sometimes, in complicated situations, it may be necessary to appeal more than once.

It is important to remember that your financial aid officer is on your side and represents you, often to a full committee of other financial aid officers who make decisions as a team. Your financial aid officer is advocating for you and trying to understand your situation so they can make college possible for your family. That said, they are also trying to remain fair and consistent to all families. Try to remain calm and courteous and be grateful for their help.

Regardless of the outcome of the appeal, make sure you discuss financing options with the financial aid office. Ask about a combination of student and parent loans, student employment, outside awards and scholarships, and even university-administered payment plans to help with cash flow. Financial aid officers can go through all of this with you and explain how everything works. They are valuable resources through the reconsideration process and beyond, should you decide to enroll at the school.

A college education is an important investment. If you need help comparing financial aid offers, IvyWise can help. Contact us to learn how we can support you through every stage of the college admissions process, including choosing the best financial aid package.

CSS Profile

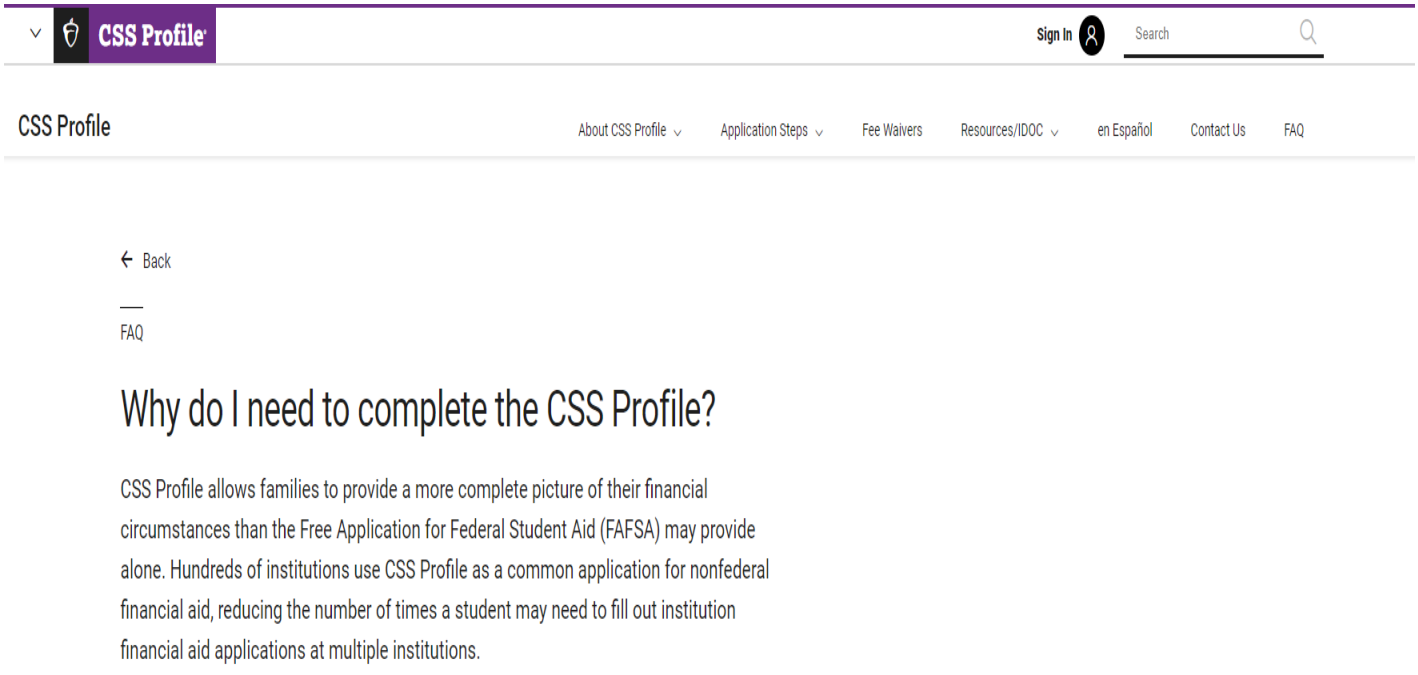
CSS stands for College Scholarship Service, and the CSS Profile is an online application that helps students apply for non-federal financial aid. The College Board, a US-based organization, creates and maintains the CSS Profile.

The CSS Profile is used by many private colleges and universities, as well as some public institutions, to determine a student's eligibility for institutional financial aid. It's designed to provide a comprehensive view of a student's and their family's finances, which helps colleges make informed decisions about distributing their own financial aid resources.

The CSS Profile is available on October 1 each year. It requires extra paperwork compared to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is required for federal financial aid. The CSS Profile asks for detailed information about a student's and their family's finances, including: trust funds, equity in family home, total retirement savings, non-retirement annuities, medical spending accounts, siblings' assets held in a parent' name, and siblings private k-12 school tuition.

The CSS Profile can help students access institutional grants and scholarships, and may result in a lower net price for some families.

https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/



FINANCIAL AID

There are various types of aid, including grants, scholarships, work study, and loans. Take into account the different aspects that play into how your financial aid is determined.

TYPES OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Need-Based: Solely for financial aid; "need" is determined by schools in proportion to the financial background of students

Academic: Solely for academic achievement; students should have a good GPA to apply (3.5 or higher in most cases)

Athletic: Solely for athletic talent; given with intent for the student to play the sport for the school

"Full-Ride": Very competitive scholarships; covers cost of tuition and fees, room and board, and possibly student life costs (books, travel, etc.)

Full Tuition: Covers cost of tuition and fees (registration, classes, graduation, examinations, etc.) at the school

Merit-Based: Solely for achievements; given based on the value of the merit the student contributes to the school

Other: Anything and everything! Scholarships based off religion, ethnicity, location, personal preferences, family situation, disabilities, activities, service, academics, etc. (may or may not be affiliated with the school)

SOME BIG SCHOLARSHIPS

Gates Millennium Scholars: A scholarship funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that offers students of color the chance to pursue higher education without financial burden

Horatio Alger Jr. Scholar Program: A scholarship named after Horatio Alger Jr., a man who believed every person could achieve the American Dream with hard work despite adversity

Jack Kent Cooke Foundation: A scholarship program dedicated to giving students from low-income backgrounds the tools necessary to be successful in higher education environments

Stamps Foundation: Partner schools offer scholarships to students who show exceptional leadership qualities, academic merit, and strong character

Posse Foundation: A full tuition, nomination-based program for students to be in a "Posse" of about ten students from the same area who go to the same college/university and serve as a support system for each other throughout college

QuestBridge Scholar Program: A full-ride scholarship opportunity for students from low-income backgrounds

HOW TO APPLY

Research the possibilities!

Search for scholarships on the following websites: scholarships.com, cappex.com, scholarshippoints.com, fastweb.com, College Board Scholarship Search, scholarshipexperts.com, supercollege.com, nextstudent.com, and more!

- Make sure the scholarships are legitimate by cross-checking scholarships across different websites.
- Do not pay for a service to find scholarships for you.
- Review the application to see what it entails.
- Compile a list of scholarships you can apply to in the upcoming year.
- Be mindful of application deadlines!

FINANCIAL AID

FAFSA (FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID):

The FAFSA Document

The FAFSA is a straightforward document to fill out.

You will need:

- Your social security number
- Your parents' social security numbers (if you are a dependent student)
- Your driver's license number (if you have one)
- Your Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U.S. Citizen)
- Your federal tax information and tax returns, including IRS W-2 information, if applicable
- Your parents' IRS 1040 or Foreign Tax Return (if you are a dependent student)
- Records of untaxed income—child support received, interest income, veterans' noneducation benefits—for you and for your parents (if you are a dependent student)

FAFSA Awards

Colleges use your FAFSA to determine your eligibility for financial aid awards, **which include:**

- Federal Pell Grant: -$6,125 (amounts change annually)
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (for students with exceptional financial need): up to $4,000
- Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grant (TEACH Grant, for undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate students pursuing a career in teaching): up to $4,000
- Iraq-Afghanistan Service Grant (for non-Pell eligible students whose parent/guardian has died as a result of military service or the events of 9/11): up to the maximum Pell Grant amount
- Federal Work Study (part-time jobs on- or off-campus; money is earned while attending school)

Eligibility

To see if you qualify for federal funds, review eligibility criteria at: **studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/basic-criteria**.

Interest

All loans, whether federal or private, come with interest rates. An interest rate is a percentage of the student loan funds added onto the original sum of the loan that you took out. As you pay off your student loans, you must also pay off the interest that has accumulated over time. No loan is exempt from interest.

CSS/FINANCIAL AID PROFILE (FOR NON-FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID)

- Almost 400 colleges across the U.S. accept CSS. You can see a list at: **profile.collegeboard.org/profile/ppi/participatinginstitutions.aspx**
- Available for international students and non-US citizens!
- Instructions for applying can be found at: **cssprofile.collegeboard.org**

Net Price Calculators. Many schools offer Net Price Calculators on their websites, which allow you to estimate the amount of financial aid you can expect to receive.

COALITION FOR COLLEGE