

MULTIPLE WAYS TO SAVE MONEY ON COLLEGE EXPENSES

There are many ways to bring the “sticker price” of a college education down to a more manageable sum. The following describes a variety of approaches summarized by category. Some of these methods may speak to your situation while others may not. Whatever the case, with some colleges costing upwards of \$50,000 or more a year, most families are looking for ways to economize!

FILE FOR FINANCIAL AID

A family does not know whether they will be eligible for any federal or institutional grants, loans or work study unless they file for financial aid. There are several factors that go into the aid formula in addition to income such as age of the parents, number of family members, how many in college, etc. Both the student and a parent file for financial aid **January 1st or later in the calendar year** the school will be attending college. Be careful to watch financial aid **priority** deadlines for every college. The website to file for federal aid is www.fafsa.ed.gov There is NO COST to file for aid. Private universities may also require that you complete a CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA. The CSS Profile is available through CollegeBoard. Be sure to check the financial aid requirements and deadlines carefully for every college.

OBTAIN A MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

Many colleges offer merit scholarships to academically talented students. Check each school you wish to apply to for the criteria for their merit scholarships. These merit scholarships can range from a few thousand dollars to \$25,000+. Some colleges have full tuition competitive scholarships. Usually the college website will describe these opportunities and the criteria to be considered. Many colleges select the top applicants and invite them for a “scholarship weekend” where a student meets a variety of school faculty and/or administrators as well as other applicants and they compete in interviews and other formal programs for the scholarship. Most public colleges have merit scholarships based on GPA and test scores. Other private colleges may provide leadership or community service awards. Go to the **Financial Aid** link of the university website and research scholarships.

Apply to colleges that offers merit scholarships where your GPA and test scores are in the top 15%-20% of the current freshman class.

For colleges that extend merit scholarships, you are more likely to be offered a merit scholarship if your statistics are comparable to the top 15%-20% of their current freshman class. You will need to know your unweighted GPA and your SAT or ACT test scores to see where you stand. Here is how you compare yourself to the freshman class at any college:

- Go to Collegeboard.com.
- Enter the college you wish to look at in the College Search box,
- Click on the “applying” box on the left,
- Scroll down and click on the “Academics” which shows GPA and then the “SAT/ACT” box for test score comparisons.
- Compare your numbers with the current freshman class at that college

Generally very selective and Ivy League colleges do not offer merit scholarships, as most students accepted into these colleges are considered “meritorious”. However these colleges do offer significant need based awards, and often determine “need” at a much higher level. Some private institutions (generally the more selective colleges) consider families with incomes between \$100,000 - \$150,000 to have need, or families with multiple students in college to have

need, so do not assume you are not eligible. You can determine whether you will qualify for need at a particular school by going to their Financial Aid Estimator located on their website.

Take the PSAT in October of your junior year to become eligible for the National Merit Scholarship.

If you score in the top **percentile** on the test you will be in the running to become a National Merit Scholar. Many colleges offer scholarships from a few thousand to more than full tuition for National Merit scholars. Here is the link to more information: <http://www.nationalmerit.org/nmsp.php> You can also take the PSAT (or PSSS) before your junior year for practice, but your score will not be considered for the National Merit Scholarship program.

Merit scholarships are often offered to students with special talents such as musical, artistic, significant community involvement or leadership. If you have these talents check schools you are interested in to see if they offer these types of awards. Check on the **Financial Aid** link on the college site and then under “Scholarships”. Also be sure to check on the sites of various departments, for example “Visual Arts” to see if the department sponsors other awards. During your high school years, build an impressive list of FOCUSED extracurricular activities. Try to participate in activities for several years and show a dedication to your school and your community through being an athlete, volunteering, and participating in school plays. In this case, quality is better than quantity, so spend several hours a week dedicated to one or two activities. Schools today want to see a developed passion in a student vs. a student who does a little bit of everything. So find one or two activities you are interested in and get deeply involved in those activities.

How diverse are YOU to the schools you are applying to?

Colleges look for diverse students in a number of ways. For instance, the University of Alabama has been seeking more geographic diversity in the last couple of years. Therefore, they have been more generous to Arizona students in their scholarship offers. These trends come and go and are considered “incentive” discounts/scholarships. In general, if you are a “different” type of student you are more likely to receive offers...think of a woman who wishes to get a degree in construction, or a male looking to become a nurse, or a student from Arizona at a school in Iowa. Of course you still need to meet and/or exceed their admission criteria, but being different can help you obtain additional funds.

Generally, **MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS FROM THE COLLEGE THAT YOU WILL ATTEND ARE THE LARGEST SCHOLARSHIPS YOU WILL BE OFFERED.** Therefore it makes sense to seek out the colleges that will offer you the best merit scholarships! The College & Career Center has a list of colleges that are known for generous awards.

APPLY TO COLLEGES THAT ARE GENEROUS

Plan a strategy of applications that includes colleges that historically offer strong financial aid/scholarship packages. You will find that private colleges usually have stronger endowment funds and can be more generous with merit aid. There are a number of places to find these statistics. Kiplinger creates an annual list which is interactive. Here is that link:

<http://www.kiplinger.com/tools/privatecolleges/>. When you open this article you will see columns with a variety of headings. Click on the Average Non-Need-based-Aid with the arrow pointing downward and it will refresh the list to show the colleges that give the most non-need (=MERIT) aid based on “average non-need-based aid”.

In addition you can see this information on Collegeboard.com in the financial section of each college.

- Go to Collegeboard.com.
- Enter the college you wish to look at in the College Search box,
- Click on the “Paying” box on the left,
- Notice the annual tuition costs (i.e. Sticker Price) and please don’t have a heart attack!
- Scroll down and see the financial aid distribution – remember this is the “average” package...the more your student is desired, the higher this financial aid package can be.

- Once you have reviewed these statistics click on “Policies and Stats”
- Here, you will find more information regarding the criteria for and type of financial aid offered.

APPLY TO STATE COLLEGES THAT OFFER REDUCED TUITION AND/GENEROUS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OUT-OF-STATE

The WICHE/WUE program

The WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) offers the WUE Scholarship (Western Undergraduate Exchange) program to students within the program states. The states involved in this program are Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Washington or Wyoming. Through this program out-of-state students can be eligible for a tuition rate set at 150% of their college’s in-state tuition. For example, a college in Colorado has tuition of \$8,000 in-state and \$15,000 out of state. If your student is eligible, they could receive tuition of \$12,000 to attend that college.

HOWEVER, each college can stipulate any limitations or restrictions on this scholarship including the number it awards per year or the majors a student may be limited to under the WUE restrictions. If you are interested in any PUBLIC institutions in the states listed above check into that college’s WUE listing at:

http://wue.wiche.edu/search_results.jsp?searchType=all. Then go onto the college’s website and research their particular limitations/eligibility for the WUE discount tuition.

Another interesting program is the Texas scholarship program.

This program states that any out-of-state student who receives an offer of a scholarship at a Texas **PUBLIC** university of \$1,000 or more will ALSO BE ELIGIBLE for in-state Texas tuition rates! However, each college determines how difficult it is to obtain those \$1,000+ scholarships, so check college websites to be sure.

COLLEGE TUITION AT A DISCOUNT

Many students **take AP or IB classes** during their years at Desert Mountain. *If a student scores well* they can earn college credits at many universities. Also students take **dual enrollment classes** through our community colleges while at Desert Mountain. These types of classes could translate into a student at our in-state colleges being close to sophomore status as an entering freshman. Out of state colleges frequently also give credit based upon your *test scores*, but you will need to check with each college (including the in-states) to confirm what they accept. Simply search AP, IB or Community College Credit at the prospective university’s website to determine their policy.

Take **summer classes at a Maricopa Community College** during your first two summers after high school graduation. Students who employ this strategy can graduate a year early saving almost \$20,000 for the family.

Take the maximum credits you can at your college if they offer **“flat rate tuition”**. Some universities offer a flat rate tuition, whereby your yearly fee is not calculated by credit, but rather by semester or year. At these colleges you could take anywhere from the 12 credits per semester to say 18 credits. Therefore, if you take the 18 you are receiving a “discounted” tuition per credit. Employ this strategy throughout your first three years and you will graduate early. Be careful however that you do not overwhelm yourself with college level work, especially during your freshman year when you are transitioning into college.

Many students today are obtaining their **Associates Degree at community colleges** and then transferring to universities after two years. In-state community colleges run around \$2,000 in tuition per year compared to around \$9,000 for in-state universities. There are two programs that smooth the path from Maricopa Community Colleges to ASU and NAU.

- The MAPP program with ASU allows a student who has determined their major to sit with an academic advisor at a Maricopa Community College and set a path for classes to ASU. If the student completes these classes successfully they will be automatically accepted to ASU in that major. In addition, the percentage of tuition increase is capped from the time they enter the program to the time they enter ASU. Therefore, this student would pay LESS tuition than anyone else transferring into ASU during the same year as a junior.
- The NAU program also allows students to take classes at community colleges that automatically transfer to NAU. In fact there are some NAU majors that you can fully complete in Scottsdale at the SCC campus. No need to go to Flagstaff...no additional costs of room & board.
- UA is working with the community colleges right now to start a similar program.

Other community colleges throughout AZ have similar programs. **Coconino Community College has a program with NAU** and students can even attend Coconino Community College and LIVE in an NAU dorm! Spots are limited because NAU students have first rights to the rooms, but every year some students live at NAU and take classes at Coconino. **Pima Community College (in Tucson) has an Arizona Transfer Admission Pathway** that lists specific degrees that a student can start at Pima Community College and finish at U of A.

FIND A LESS EXPENSIVE COLLEGE

U.S. News & World Report annually ranks colleges and universities in a number of areas each fall. Tuition rates are one of them. Each year they list the top least expensive state universities. The Princeton Review and USA Today also rate colleges that are considered a **Best Value** based upon such factors as academics, costs and financial aid. Examples of some schools that have made their list include Bowdoin, Colorado College, Duke, Rice, Indiana University–Bloomington, University of Alabama, Purdue and University of Michigan *as well as many more*. Some schools made the list for their generous financial aid packages. Others are included because the cost of attendance relative to the value of the education was considered a good value. A complete list is published every year in Princeton Review's book **The Best 371 Colleges** available in the College & Career Center or Barnes & Noble.

SERVICE FOR TUITION PROGRAMS

AmeriCorps is a national organization where young people work in community service throughout America in exchange for a living allowance (about \$7,500 per year), healthcare AND an education award (about \$5,000 per year) that they can use to pay back student loans or finance their education. The service projects must meet 1 of these 4 criteria: education, public safety, human needs and the environment. For example, a student may help tutor inner city students, or monitor clean air quality, etc. Students can be involved in AmeriCorps right after high school, during college, after college, during or after grad school or any occupational training. With the economic downturn these programs are getting increasingly competitive. To find out more call 800-942-2677 or visit their website: www.americorps.org.

ARMED FORCES SERVICE

Generally the types of educational programs offered are determined by when the person wants to serve their military time. The Military Academies and ROTC are programs whereby a student **receives their degree and then serves in the military**. In these two programs the student attends school and completes a degree while also participating in military preparations while at college. Another program, called Platoon Leadership Program, allows you to obtain your education while you are enlisted as well. All of these program are competitive and are generally based on well you do on the ASVFAB test—a military assessment test, but he financial benefits are significant.

Military Academies:

Each branch of the military, with the exception of the Marine Corps, has its own academy -- a four-year college that offers a bachelor's degree and a commission in the military upon graduation. The military academies are **highly** competitive and are tuition-free to students who are admitted. Students must be recommended by either their Congressman or Senator to be eligible to apply for these academies. A city-wide informational program is available each spring for juniors to attend that are interested in this possibility.

The three main military academies are:

1. U.S. Military Academy, located in West Point, New York;
2. U.S. Naval Academy, located in Annapolis, Maryland; and
3. U.S. Air Force Academy, located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Two other academies operate on the same model as the military academies, with subsidized tuition in return for service. They are:

1. U.S. Coast Guard Academy, located in New London, Connecticut; and
2. U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, located in Kings Point, New York.

ROTC

In the ROTC scholarship program, the military covers most of the cost of tuition, fees, and textbooks and also provides a monthly allowance. Scholarship recipients participate in summer training while in college and fulfill a service commitment after college. Contact the branch of service or the college you are interested in to learn more.

ASU: Air Force, Army, Navy

NAU: Air Force, Army

U of A: Air Force, Army, Marine, Navy

Gateway CC: Air Force, Army

Phoenix CC: Air Force, Army

Montgomery GI Bill and tuition assistance programs are available for young men and women who **first serve their country, and then complete their schooling**.

Under the Montgomery GI Bill Chapter 30, Active Duty members enroll and pay \$100 per month for 12 months; and are then entitled to receive a monthly education benefit once they have completed a minimum service obligation. Under Chapter 1606, a reservist must be actively drilling and have a 6-year obligation in the Selected Reserve to be eligible.

Military Tuition Assistance programs vary, but most military branches allow members to take college courses while on active duty during their off-duty hours. Also some military training can count towards college credits, especially the various technical and vocational training areas. The National Guard and the Reserves also offer similar benefits to those on active duty. Again, check with the particular military branch you are interested in for details.

PARTICIPATE IN EVIT OR ACE WHILE AT DESERT MOUNTAIN

These are two distinct programs that are available to students at Desert Mountain that allow students to take classes away from Desert Mountain for college and/or career advancement.

ACE allows students who fit into the category of “underrepresented population at college campuses” (i.e. minority students, first generation to college, low income, etc.) to take classes at Scottsdale Community College FREE while at Desert Mountain. Students apply for the program during the fall of their sophomore year (this is the ONLY time they can enter the program). If selected, they take 2 classes each summer after their sophomore year and 1 class each semester for the last two years at Desert Mountain. If they enter their first classes with no remedial work required (i.e. they test into College English etc.) they can earn up to 24 college credits by the time they graduate from Desert Mountain...FREE!

In the EVIT program students can take any number of classes that prepare them for "tech-prep" or "school-to-career" programs. Students are eligible to take these classes anytime during their Junior or Senior year at Desert Mountain but must sign up early in the spring of the previous year. Students can go through a sequence of career-focused courses in high school that prepares them for an apprenticeship program or for a specialized sequence of college courses in a particular occupational field. Students can begin their nursing study through EVIT which allows them a quicker entrance into the Community College Nursing programs. In addition, students who completed the Certified Nursing Assistant or Emergency Medical Technician program at EVIT can work as a CNA or EMT while in college and make a better than average wage while in college. Students can help offset the cost of medical school while working as an EMT based on the classes taken at EVIT for that certification! Classes range from medical to automotive, cosmetology, etc.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION COLLEGES

Cooperative Education colleges have been around for a long time, but are seeing resurgence in popularity due to our economic downturn. In a “Co-op” college a student will study for a certain number of semesters and then work full time for a semester or more. However, the student is paid for the internship and can make up to \$7,000 per year. Another added benefit is that the student graduates with a true work resume and real work experience in their field. For a list of Cooperative Education colleges, go to www.co-op.edu.

SPECIALITY OR SHORTENED/COMBINED PROGRAMS

Some schools offer combined degree programs or 3-year programs that allow students to take all of the courses needed for graduation in 3 years, instead of 4, thereby eliminating 1 year's educational expenses. For instance American University offers a Global Scholars Program in International Relations that can be done in three years or you can obtain your masters in just 4 years' time. There are many medical schools that offer a combined bachelor/med program of 7-8 years. Simply search these terms in your web browser and you will find some specialty programs (be sure to note the major you are interested in...i.e. 5 year combined MBA programs).

ELIGIBILITY DISCOUNTS

Many colleges have discounts offered if you fall into an eligible group. Here are some of the most common of these:

- Employees of the college receive discounts for themselves and their children.
- Alumni of the university may receive discounts for their children.

- Two students at the same university may mean more savings.
- Students of a particular religious group receive a discount.

Since these are so varied and specific to each college, you will need to research the college's specific websites or contact their admissions office to learn of any specific eligibility group.

LOOK FOR LOCAL AND/OR UNUSUAL OR SPECIALITY SCHOLARSHIPS

Do you think you have to have off-the-chart intelligence or exceptional athletic ability to get a scholarship? Think again. Scholarships exist for all kinds of students, including those with a particular passion, strong leadership skills, and service-minded students. Sign up for some of the more reputable scholarship search engines such as www.fastweb.com where you answer questions about yourself and then they will send you emails with scholarships geared towards your demographic. Never pay money for a scholarship search! Be sure to check on our Naviance program and listen to morning announcements for information about local scholarships where the competition pool is smaller. Our high school promotes scholarships for DMHS students *exclusively* such as the PTO scholarship and the Daniel Konchan Memorial Scholarship.

As for the unusual scholarships...you may have heard of a few. There is the "tall" scholarship from the Central Arizona Tall Society...or the Scottsdale College Fair Scholarship, for a student who has lost a parent sometime in their life...or scholarships for students who have had someone in their family have cancer...or the NFIB Young Entrepreneur Foundation scholarship for a student who has started their own business or is very involved in DECA....the list goes on and on. Here is a link to a website listing many of them <http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/unusual.phtml>

ONCE ON CAMPUS....WAYS TO SAVE!

Take advantage of savings opportunities/scholarships once on campus.

Opportunities for **Departmental Major Specific scholarships** are not available to freshmen, but open up thereafter. Many freshmen change majors and therefore universities wait until more advanced years to offer these scholarships. Students can apply for these scholarships or may be invited to apply by a professor in a class they have done well in during freshman year.

Most colleges have a **Resident Assistant program** for sophomore students or older. These students live in the dorms and have a job to assist other students in their dorm experience, and often receive a stipend for room and board in return. Students apply for these positions in the spring of each year for the following academic year.

Continue to seek scholarships! Once you are admitted to a college you are able to view their scholarship offerings in full detail. In addition they may have a scholarship search website unique to the college such as the University of Arizona's Scholarship Universe. Here you will find some national scholarships, but also ones that are particular to your college and there could be thousands at a large university! Many alumni set up scholarships and they can be very, very particular. We recently found one at U of A with a "preference" for a student who graduated from Arcadia High School and was studying agriculture at U of A...talk about specific!

Save on room & board

Commuting is another way to save. If your college is close enough, some students will live with mom & dad all four years they are in college. Other students will go to the university dorm the first year to experience the college lifestyle and then move back home for savings.

For those out-of-state students, many **move off campus** after their first year and find living accommodations that are less expensive. In addition to savings on rent, students can often eat well on much less money than the college meal plans. Just remember if you plan on eating at home do not get into the habit of buying food at school all the time... without that meal plan, those lunches at the school cafeteria could break your budget!

Other parents may be financially able to **purchase a home** in the area of their student's college. If other students rent rooms in the house it may offset the mortgage and provide a savings opportunity. Just be sure the house is eligible for your tax purposes before you buy.

Additionally, many colleges list "**work for housing**" opportunities near campus that provide free housing opportunities to students in exchange for a certain number of hours of work each week. Check the job bulletin boards at school.

Find a job that feeds you. I have heard of students who work in one of the college eateries, or work with the athletes (and get to eat with them too), or work serving meals at a frat or sorority house. Great way to earn money and eat too!

Save on Textbooks

Buying used textbooks or renting textbooks is the way to go! Chegg.com is a well-known site for this. Today I saw a book that normally costs \$152.47 at this site priced for rental at \$23.64 and priced to buy it used at \$30.99. In addition your student can buy used (and sometimes rent) at their college bookstore these days. Also try - BigWords.com. They search the Web for the best prices on used textbooks. Always search for a book using its ISBN number — not just the title — to make sure you're getting the right book and the right edition. Be sure to check with professors about peripheral materials that come packaged with textbooks, which used books may be missing.

Many students also wait until the first week of school to see how important a book is to the class. Some professors will tell them they do not need to buy the textbook as they do not use it often, or suggest they share.

Make the **most of your meal plan**. While a trip to Chipotle's or Panda Express may be tempting remember you are already paying for food! Many colleges have deli style areas, homemade meal stations as well as fast "food court" options. Mix it up; perhaps pack a lunch from the deli area - just do whatever you can to make the most of your plan.

Don't buy the hype. Sure every store from Bed, Bath & Beyond to Target is going to tell you **what "essentials" you need** for dorm life. Most likely you don't need them all. Talk to someone at the college you will be attending to see what you really need. My daughter thought about buying a vacuum but decided against it. Turned out someone down the hall had one that everyone used. Also how many students really need a printer in their room when there is one in every study hall? See what is essential at your college and buy according to your priorities.

Utilize local student discounts: Many college town businesses, such as local shops and restaurants, will offer great savings if you show your student ID. You might get half off breakfasts, special discounts on certain days, etc. Learn where the bargains are and go after them.

Learn to budget. For some students this is the first time they really have to pay attention to their finances. Learning to budget is a great life skill and quite necessary during your college years. Do you really need that new logo t-shirt or do you want to go to the concert next week? Do you want to save money to go on a study abroad program...then maybe you have to eat at the cafeteria again. These kinds of small decisions will help you stay within your means and allow you to make decisions that reflect your priorities.