



College Connections

GUIDE TO FINDING COLLEGE FUNDS AND RESOURCES: AFFORDING COLLEGE

Affording College, a free booklet produced annually by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU), provides information for students and their families to clearly explain the financial aid process so they'll know how to seek the money needed to make college dreams a reality. The booklet is also available in Spanish, *Como pagar la universidad*.

Paying for college can seem like a difficult task, but it is important that families know that financial aid is available. Colleges are committed to helping students and their families, so the 'sticker price' of a college education is rarely the bottom line.

Financial aid — grants and scholarships from the federal and state governments and from the colleges themselves, from work-study, and from low-interest student and parent loans — helps students with the desire

and preparation to succeed in higher education choose the educational setting that is personally best. Nationwide, eight out of every 10 full-time students gets help paying college bills. In New York State independent colleges and universities annually provide \$2.6 billion in grants and scholarships, while state and federal sources provide additional help to students at these campuses.

The just-released edition defines the different types of assistance available to college students and describes, step-by-step, the financial aid application process. Sample aid packages are provided along with a calendar of deadlines for students entering college in the 2009-2010 academic year. In addition, contact information for more than 100 independent college and university admissions offices, and a variety of Internet



resources offer avenues for additional learning.

Affording College will help students and families demystify the financial aid process. From state aid, to loans, to scholarships, to tax deductions, the booklet compiles a variety of resources to help students and families understand how to meet college expenses.

Both *Affording College* and *Como pagar la universidad* are available for free download from the independent colleges and universities' admission and financial aid resources Web site at <http://www.nycolleges.org/resources.php>.

TIPS FOR APPLYING FOR COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID

Adapted from Affording College 2008/09, published by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (cIcu)

The free booklet, *Affording College*, offers these step-by-step tips to applying for financial aid. If you are a senior in high school or a transfer student, anticipating entering college in fall 2009:

- 1. Check with each college financial aid office** to which you are applying to determine which forms you need to file. Don't wait to be accepted before applying for financial aid.
- 2. File the FAFSA** (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. It is the most important form for financial aid consideration and is required for all federal and many state-sponsored and institution-specific aid programs. File the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1 if you are entering college in the fall. Estimate your income if your 2008 tax forms are not complete. File applications for state aid programs (for example, New York's Tuition Assistance Program [TAP] grant).
- 3. Keep a copy of all financial aid forms** you file; follow up on the FAFSA if you have not received a SAR (Student Aid Report) within 4 weeks. Review your SAR; follow directions to make corrections.
- 4. The colleges you indicated on your FAFSA** will receive the estimate of how much your family can reasonably contribute toward college costs based on the information from your FAFSA. In the spring, you will receive a financial aid "award" or "package" from the colleges that have offered you admission. Award packages will contain different combinations of grants, scholarships, work-study and loans to help you with college costs.
- 5. Follow the colleges' instructions** to accept or reject their offers of admission and financial aid, usually by May 1 (watch the deadlines!). Follow up on all your financial aid. In particular, if you will attend college in New York State, follow the directions on your ETA (Express TAP Application) to complete processing of your New York state Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grant.
- 6. Re-apply for aid every year** and meet the deadlines or you may risk losing it. (Forms are shorter and easier to complete when renewing.)

RESOURCES

2009-2010 FAFSA on the Web (FOTW) Worksheet now available! Click [here](#) to visit the worksheet.

Federal Student Aid for Counselors

<http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/clcf/PlanningAFinancialAidNight.html>

The U.S. Department of Education site offers the following helpful resources for setting up a financial aid night:

- *Finding Money for College*: This PowerPoint guide for presentations on financial aid is available in English and Spanish.
- *Planning a Financial Aid Awareness Program*: This "how-to" guide provides a list of tips for planning a successful financial aid night.

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)

<http://www.nasfaa.org/redesign/fanight.asp>

NASFAA has developed a number of downloadable resources, updated annually, to aid school counselors in planning financial aid nights, including:

- *Guide to Planning and Conducting a Financial Aid Night*: This five-page guide covers selecting a date, presenting information about the FAFSA, and arranging for a presenter who is knowledgeable about financial aid.
- *What You Need to Know about Financial Aid*: This presentation includes a PowerPoint slide show that follows the format of the FAFSA on the Web worksheet.
- *Handouts in PDF for downloading/printing*: Among these handouts are: a summary of requirements and features of student aid programs, tracking worksheet for application forms, award package comparison worksheet, fact sheet about financial aid consultants and search services that alerts families to those that are free, sample scholarship inquiry letter, glossary of financial aid terms.

New York's Private Colleges and Universities

<http://www.nycolleges.org/>

The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities' Outreach Programs' site, offers many downloadable publications, including:

- *Affording College 2008/09* (also available in Spanish as *Com pagar la Universidad 2008/09*): The newest edition of this booklet features an overview of the financial aid process, descriptions of major financial aid programs, information about the FAFSA, and contact information for 100+ private colleges and universities in New York state.

New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association, Inc. (NYSFAAA)

http://www.nysfaaa.org/docs/toc_resourcecenter.html#admission

Several PowerPoint presentations useful for workshops and financial aid nights can be found here, including:

- *Administrator Workshop in Financial Literacy*
- *Financial Aid 101*
- *Inside the EFC (Expected Family Contribution)*

National Training for Counselors and Mentors (NT4CM)

www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/NT4CM

The U.S. Department of Education Web site provides free training and support for counselors who help students and families prepare for college financially. Professional trainers provide comprehensive up-to-date information regarding federal and state student aid programs, scholarship searches, and financial aid fraud. Participants learn how to access free resources such as fact sheets, brochures, and PowerPoint presentations to help them help their students.

A SUCCESSFUL FINANCIAL AID NIGHT “HOW TO”

Holding a financial aid night is an efficient way to get important financial aid information to college-bound students and their parents. Here are some steps counselors and school administrators can take to plan a successful event.

Date and time. Set the date four to six weeks in advance, and before important financial aid deadlines have passed, giving families time to plan for the event. Be aware of holidays, religious observances, community activities, and major school events that might conflict with the date, and schedule an alternate date in case of bad weather. Allow parents time to leave work and have dinner, or consider arranging for food at the event.

Location. The location should be familiar, easily accessible to the disabled and those dependent on public transportation, and have adequate parking. Pick a room large enough to hold the expected number of attendees, and see that extra chairs are available. Arrange for microphones, screens, audiovisual devices, Internet connections, and any other equipment needed for presentations.

Presenter. Many counselors present the material themselves; others might consider asking a financial aid administrator from a local college or university. Decide on a format (e.g., team-teaching, a panel discussion) if using two or more speakers, and coordinate the presentations to avoid duplication. Review the presentations ahead of time to see that they're suitable for the expected audience.

Get the word out. Publicize the event well ahead of time (at least four weeks in advance) and in as many different ways as possible, including: PA system announcements at school; direct mailings or e-mails to families; posters and flyers in school; announcements, articles, and ads in the school and local newspapers; flyers and posters at local libraries, supermarkets, gas stations, convenience stores, places of worship, bus stops, and community centers; notices to social service agencies; and public service announcements on TV and radio. Make certain every announcement contains: key

points to be covered in the program; the date (and “snow date”); the time and duration of the event; the location, with address and room number; a telephone number and e-mail address to contact for more information; and the name(s) and affiliation(s) of the presenter(s), directions, child care information, and any other details.

Gather publications and handouts. Examples can be downloaded from the sites listed in “Resources,” including checklists, fact sheets, sample applications, worksheets. Free publications can also be ordered from the Office of Federal Student Aid at www.fsapubs.org/ and from the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities' (clcu) at 518-436-4781, ext. 32.

Arrive early and leave time for questions during or after the event. Make sure that doors are unlocked, directional signs are up, all equipment is in working order, and materials are set up and organized. Begin at the scheduled time.

Thank all who helped organize and participated in the event. A thank you in writing is also appropriate after the event.

Sources:

“Plan Your Financial Aid Night,” http://www.makingitcount.com/educators/tools/hs_finaidnight.asp

“Planning a Financial Aid Awareness Program,” <http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/cicf/PlanningAFinancialAidNight.html>

“Guide to Planning and Conducting a Financial Aid Night,” <http://www.nasfaa.org/Redesign/FANight/PDFs/GuideToPlanningAndConductingFANight.pdf>

© *College Connections* is published by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (clcu) Outreach Programs. clcu is a statewide association representing 100+ independent (private, not-for-profit) colleges and universities in New York State. clcu Outreach Programs has provided free admissions and financial aid information and resources for 25+ years.

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www.nycolleges.org - Admission and financial aid information for students, families, and counselors. **www.cicu.org** - Higher education information for policymakers.

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