GENERATION TX™

College Planning & Financial Aid Guide

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Why College?

Earning a college degree is one of the best things you can do for your future.

Not only does a college education give you more career options, college also exposes you to new ideas, teaches you new ways to think, and helps you develop a better understanding of the world around you. As a college graduate, you'll be able to contribute more to your family and your community.

Learn More, Earn More

It is becoming increasingly difficult to get hired without a college degree. Competition for good jobs is tough, and if you don't have an education, you will be at a disadvantage. If you plan to have a career when you're ready to enter the workforce, you need an education first.

A college education is an investment in your future. The more time you invest in school, the more money you'll be able to make.

Young adults with an **associate's degree** earn an average of **$6,000** more per year than workers with only a high school diploma

Young adults with a **bachelor's degree** earn an average of **$16,000** more per year than workers with only a high school diploma

Young adults with an **advanced degree** earn an average of **$25,000** more per year than workers with only a high school diploma

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). The Condition of Education 2010 (NCES 2010–028),Indicator 17.

Make A Plan For Higher Education

Your High School Curriculum

Taking the right classes in high school can help you be more successful when you get to college. And now, many financial aid programs require students to demonstrate academic proficiency and a willingness to challenge themselves in high school.

Recommended High School Program

The Recommended High School Program is designed to make sure that you will be ready for college-level work when you graduate. Graduating under the Recommended High School Program is an admissions requirement for Texas public 4-year universities as well as minimum eligibility requirement for many financial aid benefits such as the TEXAS Grant, the B-On-Time Loan, and the Top 10% Scholarship Program.

English, Language Arts, 4 credits
English I, II, III, IV

Mathematics, 4 credits
Three of the credits must be Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. After successful completion of these three courses, a student may select the fourth required credit from a list of state-approved Mathematics courses. Please check with your counselor on the availability of courses

Science, 4 credits
Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or Principles of Technology I

Social Studies, 4 credits
World History; World Geography; U.S. History since Reconstruction; U.S. Government (0.5 credit), Economics (0.5 credit)

Language other than English, 2 credits *(same language)*

Physical Education, 1 credit

Fine Arts, 1 credit

Speech, 0.5 credit

Electives, 5.5 credits

**All students entering the ninth grade at a Texas public high school are automatically enrolled in the Recommended High School Program.*

Distinguished Achievement Program

Instead of the Recommended High School Program, some students may choose to follow the Distinguished Achievement Program. The Distinguished Achievement Program requires all of the courses in the Recommended High School Program plus a third year of foreign language. In addition, students must fulfill four of the following requirements:

Score 3 or above on a College Board Advanced Placement (AP) exam.

Score 4 or above on an International Baccalaureate (IB) exam. Each exam qualifies as a requirement.

Complete original research or project under the direction of a mentor(s), judged by qualified professionals and reported to a qualified audience.

Earn a Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) score that qualifies as a "Commended Scholar" or higher.

Earn a grade of 3.0 or higher on courses that count for college credit (dual or concurrent credit, TechPrep).

Challenge Yourself Academically

Many state financial aid programs now give higher priority to students who meet certain academic requirements or achieved recognition in high school. For example, the Top 10% Scholarship Program provides scholarships to students who enroll in a public university or community college in Texas and earned a place in his/her high school's top 10% of the graduating class.

Beginning in fall 2013, students eligible for the TEXAS Grant Program (the state's largest need-based financial aid program) will earn priority for an award at Texas public universities if they meet criteria in at least two of the following four categories:

Advanced Academic Programs

- ✔ Graduate under the Distinguished Achievement Program
- ✔ Graduate under the International Baccalaureate Program; or
- ✔ Earn 12 hours of college credit (e.g. dual credit, AP)

Class Standing

- ✔ Graduate in the top 1/3 of high school class; or
- ✔ Graduate with a B average

Satisfy Texas Success Initiative (college readiness assessment) requirements

Complete a math course beyond Algebra II

Challenging yourself with rigorous classes in high school may also help you avoid having to take developmental or remedial classes in college. These classes do not count toward your degree, and can negatively affect your eligibility for financial aid. Work hard in high school and save yourself money and time in college.

Earn College Credit in High School

You don't have to wait for college to start taking college classes. In fact, the more college credits you earn now, the less time you'll spend in college, which can save you a lot of money. Taking college-level courses also prepares you for the harder courses you'll be taking in college. You can earn college credit with Tech Prep, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual credit courses.

Extracurricular Activities

Colleges look at more than just grades. Though there's no substitute for earning good grades in high school, don't overlook the importance of your activities outside of the classroom. The activity you choose isn't as important as your ability to stick with it and show improvement, so choose something you love and can commit to. Your activity might be community service (volunteering, tutoring, mentoring, activism, etc.), sports, theater, music (choir, orchestra, band, etc.), Boy/Girl Scouts, etc. Keep in mind that it is usually better to master one activity than to dabble in many.

Create A Brag Sheet

When you write your college application, you may choose to include a brag sheet or résumé that lists all your relevant extracurricular activities beginning with your freshman year. The purpose is to demonstrate your progress, dedication, and achievements over time. Start your brag sheet now and record new accomplishments while they're still fresh in your mind. Update your brag sheet regularly so you don't forget important milestones.

Choose a Path

Earning a college education is the best way to prepare yourself for a successful career.

But "college" doesn't have to mean a four-year university: technical schools, community colleges, and universities are all good choices depending on your career goals and aspirations. Understanding the differences between these schools will help you choose a path that makes sense for your life.

Community colleges offer two-year degree programs that result in associate's degrees, and often the curriculum is focused on career training. Because community colleges are much cheaper than public universities, many students choose to begin their studies at a community college and later transfer to a four-year school to earn their bachelor's degrees.

Technical schools are smart choices for students who are sure about their career paths and want to earn a certification before entering the workforce. These schools offer specialized training for a specific trade or industry, such as becoming an electrician or a real estate broker.

Four-year public colleges or universities offer programs that result in a bachelor's degree in arts or sciences. Texas offers a wide range of wonderful universities, and the tuition for Texas residents is usually much more affordable than tuition for out-of-state schools.

You have a lot of options. Explore them all, and then make a smart decision about the career you want and the education you'll need to get there. Having a plan for the future is the first step.

Applying to College

The 10 Percent Rule in Texas

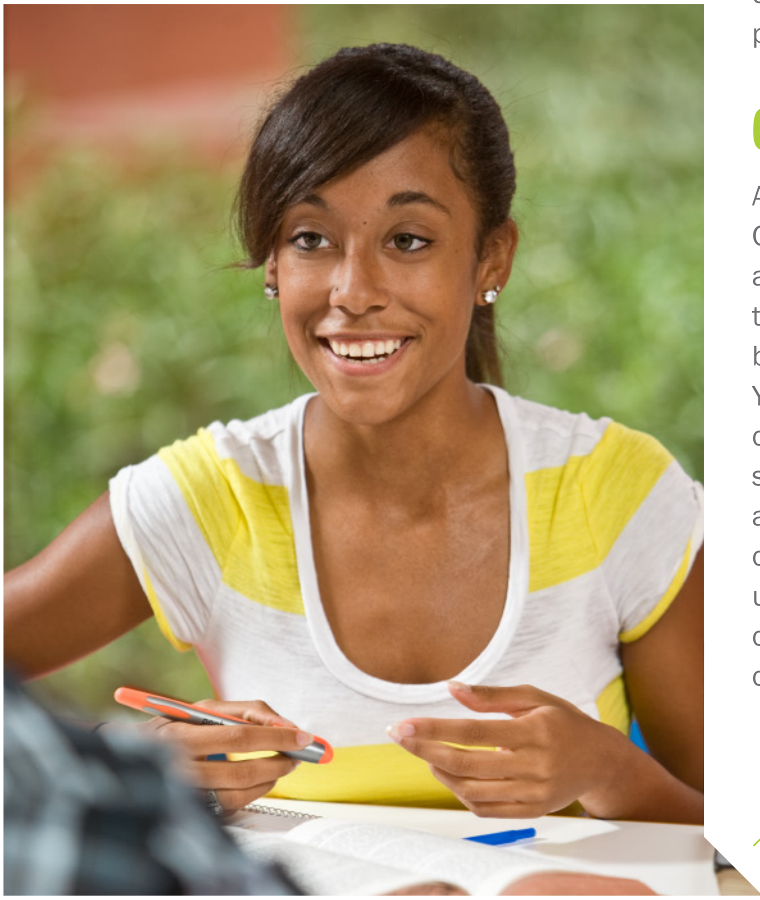
Each university sets its own admissions standards, but all Texas public colleges or universities automatically admit applicants who rank in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Some also automatically admit those who graduate in the top 25 percent of their high school class. All students must submit an application for admission and have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Admissions Tests: SAT and ACT

If you apply to a four-year college or university, you will need to take a standardized test. Most universities accept scores from both the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the American College Testing program (ACT). It's your choice whether to take the SAT or the ACT. The registration deadline for these tests is usually a month before the test date, so be sure to plan ahead. You can register for both tests online or by mail. Learn more about the tests on their websites.

SAT.collegeboard.com

www.ACT.org



College Applications

If you are applying to a public two-year or four-year institution in Texas, you will need to complete the ApplyTexas application. This application is available online at **www.ApplyTexas.org.** Once completed, you can use this one application to apply to many schools across Texas.

If you are applying out of state or to private schools, you will need to check with the individual schools to determine their application process. Many universities across the country use the Common Application, available at **www.commonapp.org.**

All qualified applicants are admitted to Texas public community and technical colleges. Contact community and technical colleges directly for their applications. If you are like many students who go to a community college before transferring to a university, be sure and check the transfer requirements for the university you plan to attend.

College Readiness

All students, except those who score at or above the College Readiness Standard on the required state-approved exit test or meet the equivalent cut scores on the ACT or SAT, must take a Texas Success Initiative test before enrolling at a Texas public college or university. Your college advisor will use your results to help you choose your college courses. If you need to strengthen skills, your college advisor will recommend appropriate assistance such as developmental education courses, computer-based instruction, or tutoring. Each college or university determines when students are ready for college-level work. Ask your high school counselor or college admissions office for more information.

Find Your Way to Pay For College

SCHOLARSHIPS + GRANTS + LOANS + SAVINGS + EARNINGS = YOUR WAY TO PAY

Don't let the cost of college get in the way of your education. Starting with the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), your way to pay will likely be a combination of scholarships, grants, loans, savings and earnings.

College is the best investment you'll ever make in yourself. No matter who you are, you can find your way to pay.

Your future is worth it.

Paying for college is a concern for many students and their families but don't let the expense get in the way of your education. No matter who you are, where you're from or what your situation, there is a way to pay for college. From scholarships and loans to savings and earnings, the combinations are endless.

Now, you might be asking yourself: ***What's FAFSA? What's the point of loans if I have to pay them back? What's work-study?*** These are all valid questions, and there are plenty more out there to ask. The important thing to know is that finding your way to pay for college can be hard and confusing, but it's also worth it. Higher education is an investment in yourself, your family, and your future. Now is your chance to get the facts, have the conversation and find your own way to pay.

The Cost of Attendance

The cost of college attendance depends on where you go, where you live, the degree you earn, and how long it takes you to complete your degree. In Texas, tuition and fees for a 15-hour semester (for example, 5 classes in a semester) range from $556 at a public community college to $19,715 at a private 4-year college or university. In addition to tuition and fees, you will also need to pay for books and other supplies, plus the cost of

The Cost of Attendance, cont'd

room and board if you plan to live away from home. Other costs that contribute to your overall cost of attendance (COA) include transportation and personal living expenses.

Note that while average costs of attendance at independent (private) colleges and universities are higher on average, these schools are sometimes able to provide financial aid packages that make up for the cost difference so that your actual cost of attendance is the same as, or perhaps in some instances even lower than, costs of attendance at a public college or university. Apply to the schools that you would like to attend and that will help meet your goals, and see what type of financial aid package they can provide.

Average Cost for 30 Hours (one year made up of two 15-hour semesters) at Texas Colleges and Universities, Fall and Spring Semesters *(2011–2012)*

	Tuition & Fees	TOTAL Cost of Attendance
Public Community Colleges	$2,144	$14,115
Public Universities	$7,204	$20,644
Public Technical Colleges	$4,304	$15,397
Public State Colleges (Lamar)	$4,182	$14,498
Public Health-Related Institutions	$6,363	$27,010
Independent Universities	$21,780	$32,663
Independent Community Colleges	$11,018	$18,858
Independent Chiropractic Institutions	$8,490	$25,956

What Is Financial Aid?

It's not hard to understand why paying for college can be a challenge for many families. But that's where financial aid comes in—you don't have to do this alone. Financial aid, or what's sometimes called financial assistance, is funding available to students and families to help pay for education expenses. It will likely be a combination of (1) free money that you don't have to pay back (scholarships and grants), (2) borrowed money that you do have to pay back (loans) and (3) earned money through a part-time job offered to you through your school (work-study).

You have to apply for financial aid every year you are in school. And every year, the financial aid you receive will be based on the gap between how much you and your family can pay (based on your FAFSA) and the total cost of attendance at your particular college.

Expected Family Contribution

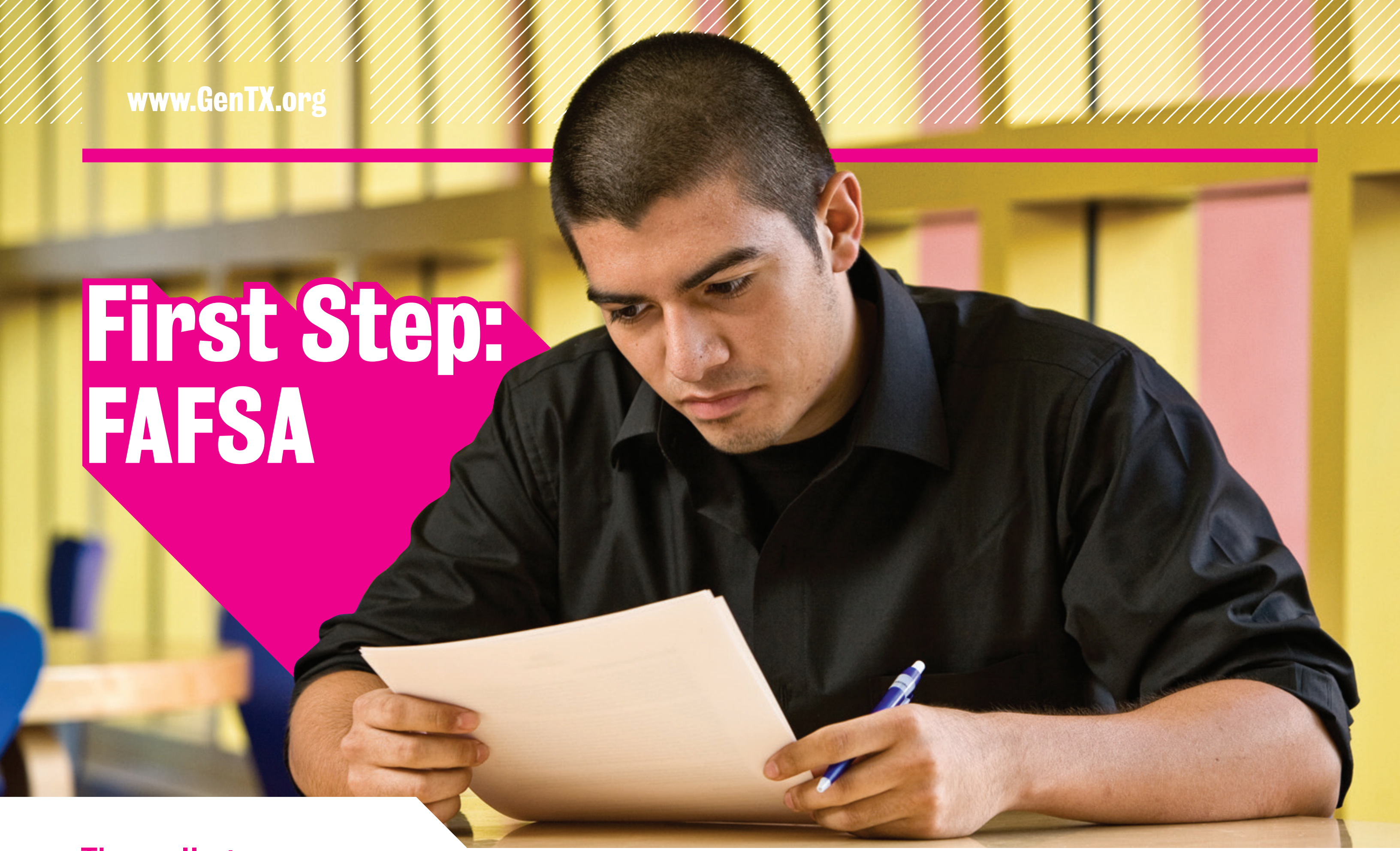
You and your parents are expected to contribute as much as you can to your college education. Most families use a combination of savings, current income, student earnings, and financial aid to pay for college.

The amount you and your parents can contribute for one academic year of your education is called the Expected Family Contribution, or EFC. The difference between the actual cost for you to attend college, your EFC, and any other educational resources you may have, is your financial need.

Cost of Attendance
– EFC
– Other Educational Resources*
= YOUR FINANCIAL NEED

** Other Educational Resources includes scholarships, fee exemptions, tuition waiver benefits, etc.*

Most families cannot pay the entire cost of attendance without some kind of financial assistance. Financial aid is available through government, college, or private sources to supplement the family's resources and help the family pay for college.



First Step: FAFSA

The colleges or universities to which you apply decide how much and what types of financial aid to offer you. That's where FAFSA comes in. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the primary form you will need to apply for most financial aid.

It's the foundation on which colleges determine your financial aid package—that includes funds from the US government (federal funds), the state of Texas (state funds) and the individual college or university (institution-specific funds).

The different combinations of financial aid may vary among schools because they are based on many factors, including your financial need, the total cost of attendance at the school and the financial aid resources available at each school.

The FAFSA is a complex form and can seem overwhelming at first because it requires both your and your parents' income tax information. Since finances are very personal and can be sensitive to discuss, just remember that it's for a very good reason. Talk to your parents about the fact that without the FAFSA, you are not eligible for any governmental or school-specific financial aid. So sharing your tax information is just a small step to help your school determine how much to offer you. It's important to not let anything get in your way of completing and submitting the FAFSA because without it, there is no way for the government or your college to award you any financial aid.

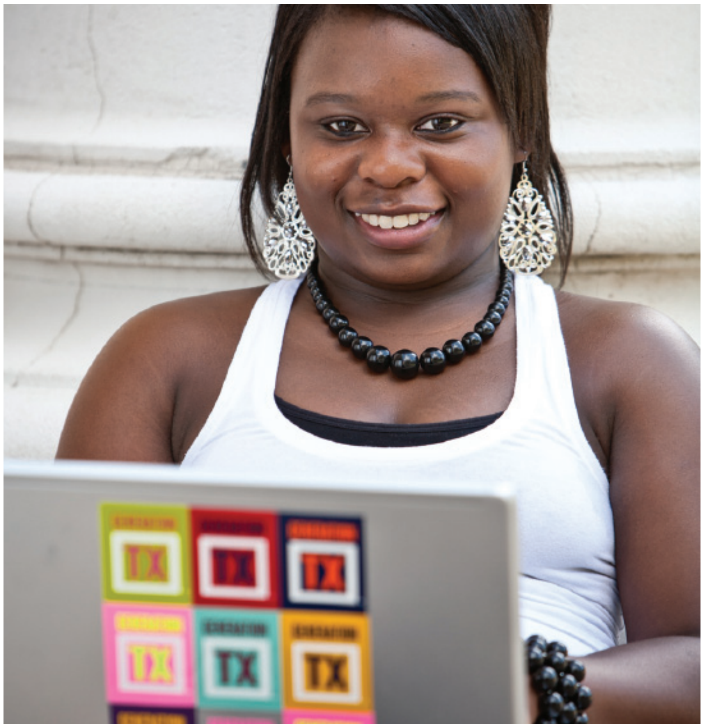
> If you are not eligible to complete the FAFSA due to citizenship status, check with the colleges where you are applying to see if they will accept the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA). Undocumented students meeting certain conditions may be classified as Texas residents for the purpose of in-state tuition and some state (not federal) aid. This is an alternative form that can be used to apply for state aid programs. The TASFA form and the details about who should use it can all be found at www.CollegeForAllTexans.com.

Applying for Financial Aid

The FAFSA is the primary form you will need to apply for most financial aid (scholarships usually have a separate application process). Here are the main steps you'll take as you find your way to pay:

1. Complete and submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. The earlier your form is received, the better your chances of receiving funds. You will need your income tax information and your parents' income tax information to complete the form. You will find both the online and paper version (PDF) of the FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Your high school counselor or any college or university financial aid office can guide you to finding these forms. The FAFSA will be processed more quickly if you submit the application online (FAFSA on the Web). The website section entitled "About Us" has a lot of helpful information.
2. You will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) within four to six weeks of mailing a paper FAFSA, or within a few days of completing the online FAFSA on the Web. The SAR will indicate your EFC and your eligibility for a Pell Grant. Read the report carefully. If additional information or corrections are needed, just follow the directions on the report.
3. The SAR is sent to the colleges and universities that you listed on the FAFSA.
The financial aid office at each school will use this information to calculate your financial need.
4. The financial aid office will figure out which programs you may qualify for and develop a financial aid package.
5. You will receive an award letter explaining the amounts and types of aid that school will offer you in the financial aid package.
You may accept part or all of the aid, and you may need to notify your college or university of your decision if requested or required.

As a general rule, colleges set their own priority application deadlines. Make sure you complete and submit your FAFSA as well as any other required application information before your college or university's priority deadline, so you have the best chance for financial aid and consideration for admittance. If you apply late, some of the aid will already be gone, and the school will only be able to offer you what is left over. Even if your parents haven't filed their tax returns yet, they can use an estimate on the FAFSA form and update it when their tax returns are complete. Doing this will not hurt your chances of receiving aid. In fact, it is better to turn in the FAFSA earlier with an estimated income than it is to wait until later. In other words, even if you just use an estimate, you will still get a good place in the "first come, first served" line.



Types of Financial Aid

Several different kinds of financial aid are available, from scholarships and grants to work-study and loans. Many financial aid packages include a combination of loan, scholarship, grant, and work programs.

Types of Financial Aid

Scholarships and grants do not have to be paid back. Scholarships are usually awarded based on grades or some special talent while grants are usually awarded based on financial need. Aside from the FAFSA, scholarship applications are the other important forms you will want to complete. Your FAFSA will qualify you for federal and state government free money, but it does not apply to any scholarships or grants from independent organizations, groups or donors. Most colleges do count these independent scholarships as a resource when they build your financial aid package. There are a lot of scholarships for high school seniors going into college, so start applying as soon as possible. To find a list of available scholarships, talk to your school counselor or look online.

Loans are borrowed funds that must be paid back, usually with interest. Even if you don't finish your degree, you have to pay back your loans. Families use loans to pay the cost of college over a long period of time—the same way they pay for things like homes and cars. Several different kinds of loans are available from federal, state, university/college, and private sources. Additionally, some loans are available to students planning on certain careers, like those in medicine and allied health.

Types of Financial Aid *cont'd*

Work-study is a need-based program awarded by the college or university which allows you to secure a part-time job to earn a portion of your educational expenses. Usually these jobs take place on campus, and your hours can be easily coordinated to fit your class schedule.

Tuition/Fee exemptions lower the tuition and/or fee charges for students that meet certain requirements. The state uses exemptions and fee charges to lower some students' tuition so that they can attend college and get their education.

Waivers allow some out-of-state students to pay the lower, in-state tuition rate at a Texas public institution. The state uses waivers to reduce college tuition and fees for out-of-state students to encourage them to complete their education here in Texas.

Loan Repayment Programs allow students to repay loans through some type of service—working as a teacher, nurse, or doctor, or by finishing a degree in a set amount of time.

So why should you even consider going into debt to go to school? That's easy.

For many students, borrowing money is the only way to make college a reality. That's why government-funded college loans are the best ones around. When compared to regular bank loans, college loans have lower interest rates and longer repayment periods. Some schools even offer loans with zero interest or that don't have to be paid back if the student earns a bachelor's degree in four years or less, or performs certain work or services after completing college. Plus, graduating from college makes paying back your loans easier because you will have the potential to earn a better salary with your degree. Just remember that if a school offers you a loan as part of a financial aid package, you do not have to accept the full amount or any at all. Borrow only what you need and can afford.

Am I Eligible?

For more information on work-study, tuition/fee exemption and waiver programs and requirements, contact the admissions office or the registrar's office at the college or university you plan to attend, or go to www.CollegeForAllTexans.com.

More Advantages To Finding Your Way To Pay

Tax Advantages

There are so many great reasons to find your way to pay. And believe it or not, paying for college can actually reduce you and your parents' federal income taxes through the following programs as of January 2012.

- ✔ **Receive a tax credit of up to $2,500 per year with the American Opportunity Tax Credit or $2,000 per year with the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit.**
- ✔ **Deduct up to $4,000 per year for tuition and fees and up to $2,500 per year for interest paid on educational loans.**

For more information, contact a tax preparer, look up Publication 970 at www.irs.gov, or call the IRS at 1-800-827-1040.

Savings Advantages: College Savings Plans

Saving early is smart saving, which is why families have a lot of great options for opening college savings accounts. Texas offers both guaranteed tuition plans and qualified 529 savings plans. For more information, call 1-800-445-GRAD (1-800-445-4723) or visit www.texastomorrowfunds.org.

Rebate Advantages: Tuition Rebate for Undergraduate Students

Some undergraduate college students are eligible for tuition rebates. If you complete a bachelor's degree within 4 calendar years and with no more than 3 semester credit hours beyond the minimum requirements of your degree, you may be able to claim a tuition rebate of up to $1,000.* But you have to remember to apply for the tuition rebate before you receive your bachelor's degree. See your business office, registrar's office or financial aid office for an application and more information.

** Up to 9 hours of college credit by examination are excluded from the semester credit hour limit, as are hours for ROTC courses that are not required for ROTC candidates' degrees.*

Tips for Reducing College Costs

- ✔ **Take college-level courses in high school.** TechPrep, dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses allow you to earn college credit in high school and are much cheaper than their equivalent classes in college.
- ✔ **Earn college credit for what you already know** by taking a College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exam.
- ✔ **Plan for your college experience.** Explore career options early to avoid changing majors and spending extra time in college.
- ✔ **Start at a community college.** Tuition and fees at community colleges are less than at universities, and the credits you earn often transfer to four-year universities. Many students also save money by living at home while they attend community college.

Things to Remember

- ✔ **The FAFSA is the foundation for finding your way to pay.** It is your ticket to all federal, state, and college-specific funding. The FAFSA is the primary application you will need to complete for most financial aid. If you're not a US citizen or eligible non-citizen, fill out the paper FAFSA form or the TASFA (if accepted) and take it to the college you plan to attend. You can't get federal aid, but you might be eligible to receive state financial aid.
- ✔ **Most financial aid is based on need.** Your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the same whatever school you go to, but your financial need will vary depending upon the total cost of attending the institution.
- ✔ **You must fill out the FAFSA and reapply** for financial aid each year you are in school.
- ✔ **Submitting your college applications before the schools' priority deadlines** and filling out your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1 will put you in the best position to receive more financial aid.
- ✔ **Going to college is an investment in yourself and your future.** It's something no one can ever take away from you. And even though finding your way to pay may be tough, it's also worth it.

Resources

Financial aid offices, either at the schools you are applying to or even at any nearby college or university, are a great, free resource for you and your family in finding your way to pay.

All questions are good questions regardless of where you are in the process, and they genuinely want to help you. You don't have to wait until your senior year to start planning. Texas also offers a free financial aid information hotline, complete with bilingual operators, at 1-888-311-8881.

To learn more about these and other college-related topics, visit www.GenTX.org

Financial Aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
1-800-4-FED-AID
1-800-433-3243
www.fafsa.ed.gov

Federal Financial Aid Information
www.studentaid.ed.gov
www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov
www.college.gov

Texas Financial Aid Information Center
1-888-311-8881
www.tgslc.org/borrowers/tfaic/

Overview of All Types of Financial Aid
www.collegeforalltexans.com
www.finaid.org

Generation TX Financial Aid Information
www.gentx.org/make-it-happen/apply-for-financial-aid/

Applications and Admissions

ApplyTexas
www.applytexas.org

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
sat.collegeboard.com

American College Testing Program (ACT)
www.actstudent.org

Scholarships

FastWeb
www.fastweb.com

Scholarships.com
www.scholarships.com

Zinch
www.zinch.com

Texas Comptroller
www.everychanceeverytexan.org/funding