CAPS | PARENT EDUCATION SERIES

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY DECISIONS

Choosing a college that fits your educational goals and financial future

Choosing a college is both an educational and financial decision. Compare the **full cost**, the aid you actually receive, and the value of the degree—not just the published tuition or size of a scholarship.

FIVE FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. **Compare net price, not sticker price** — Subtract grants and scholarships from the total cost of attendance. Loans are borrowed money, not discounts.
2. **Understand financial aid offers** — Separate grants and scholarships from loans and work-study. Check renewal requirements and deadlines.
3. **Evaluate the full cost of graduation** — Account for annual increases, housing, transportation, and the possibility of additional semesters.
4. **Consider borrowing and repayment** — Estimate student and parent debt across all years and compare payments with realistic post-graduation earnings.
5. **Balance academic fit with value** — Consider graduation rates, academic programs, internships, student support, and career outcomes.

A SIMPLE COLLEGE COST COMPARISON

Estimated annual expenses	College A	College B
Total cost of attendance	$42,000	$32,000
Grants and scholarships	–$18,000	–$12,000
Estimated net price	**$24,000**	**$20,000**

Illustrative example only. Net price excludes loan proceeds and work-study earnings. Actual costs and aid vary.

FOUR QUESTIONS EVERY FAMILY SHOULD ASK

- What will we pay each year after grants and scholarships?
- What might the entire degree cost, including increases or extra semesters?
- How much debt could the student and parents have at graduation?
- Does the academic and career value justify the cost?

PLAN WITH CONFIDENCE

CAPS helps families understand costs, compare financial aid considerations, and explore affordability strategies.
Complimentary 20-minute consultation: calendly.com/caps-planning-info/introduction-meeting

Educational information only. CAPS does not guarantee financial aid, admission, affordability, or earnings. Verify costs and aid offers with each institution.