

College Prep Survival Guide

Lutie Counselor

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Lutie Website:

<http://schoolweb.missouri.edu/lutie.k12.mo.us/>

Counseling Website

<http://schoolweb.missouri.edu/lutie.k12.mo.us/SubWebs/counselor/index.htm>

Make sure to check out the counselor website weekly for scholarships!



NOTE: As a senior, you will be busy. This is an exciting time full of questions about your future. While we cannot predict if you will like your college roommate or if you will have to take all 8:00 am classes, we hope this handbook will give you some useful information that will answer some of your questions about being successful in this journey of completing your senior year and making many decisions about your future after high school. We know that each senior will come to the college process in his/her own way. Although it is the student's responsibility to take control of the process, we hope this handbook will help you do just that; and we are always ready to assist in any way.

If you are not planning to attend college, see your counselor and begin procedures for other post-high school opportunities.

SENIOR YEAR PLANNING

Your senior year is your opportunity to strengthen your skills and broaden your experiences, in school and out, to prepare for all of the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future. Make the most of your senior year. Maintain a challenging course load. You should take the most rigorous courses available. Stay active and continue involvement in activities, sports, volunteer work, etc. If you have excelled at high school classes, consider taking a college class (Dual Enrollment).

Below is only a basic suggested calendar guideline for your senior year. Because all students are unique, you may have more or less activities to plan.

August

- Register to take the ACT

September

- Begin and maintain a college calendar of all admission and financial aid deadlines
- Review your transcript in detail and check credits for graduation. Your course selection says volumes about your ability, motivation and maturity. Tempting as it may be, taking an easy course load your senior year sends the wrong message about you to colleges.
- Register for ACT as soon as possible whether you are retaking or taking for the first time.
- If you haven't already, make a list of colleges that interest you and request information from them. Make sure you and your parents are on the same page. Iron out any area of disagreement before the search process gets too far along. Keep a folder on every school in which you are interested.
- Look at application deadlines. Develop a calendar with parents.
- Attend Senior Information meetings with counselors. **Sign up to see your counselor if you have further concerns.**
- If you haven't already, make plans to visit the colleges of interest to you.
- Consider volunteering or getting involved in a service project. This can help make you stand out from the crowd in your application.
- Preparing yourself for college involves several factors:
 - ◇ Seriously think about your long-term goals. While many students change career directions and majors several times in their undergraduate years, knowing yourself will be very helpful.
 - ◇ Read the newspaper or news magazine and watch the national news on TV. Stay informed about local, national and international events.
 - ◇ Develop a study schedule that works for you. Developing discipline in your habits now will make the adjustment easier when you get to college and there is no one to tell you to study.

◇Have a POSITIVE attitude and believe in yourself.

October

- Narrow colleges of interest to less than five. Research these thoroughly. Go to www.usnews.com/planner for a planner organized to help you compare characteristics of different schools during your research.
- Begin preparing applications with great care. MOST institutions recommend applications for admissions be submitted by October. Go to www.usnews.com/planner for an application organizer that will help you see at a glance what is done, what needs to be done, and deadlines.
- Begin requesting teacher recommendations. Again, ask at least 5 school days prior to deadline.
- File early decision or early action applications before December 1.
- Begin checking for special scholarship announcements on Lutie website, in Guidance Office and MoVip room
- Find out if your chosen colleges have institutional scholarship deadlines by visiting their web sites or reviewing their literature.

November/December

- Continue to search and apply for scholarships. Many scholarship deadlines fall on or around Dec 1. Local scholarships will normally have a spring deadline.
- Be sure to apply for scholarships in time to meet application deadlines.
- Start gathering identity and financial documents necessary to complete FAFSA. Visit FAFSA on the Web for a list of required documents.
- Both student and parent should request a Department of Education PIN number. The PIN serves as an electronic signature for FAFSA on the WEB and significantly reduces processing time. www.fafsa.ed.gov
- If you are applying for regular decision admissions and for financial aid, it is not too early to submit the PROFILE application. Visit PROFILE On-line to learn more about the PROFILE service and how to submit the application on-line.
- Early decision and early action responses should arrive this month. Read the award letter carefully.
- Financial award letters may arrive with the early admissions. If you have questions about the financial aid award, contact the financial aid office directly. Make sure you understand the terms and conditions of the award before making a final commitment.

January

- Parents should file financial aid forms (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1. Applying early improves the chances of receiving aid from as many resources as possible. Be sure to complete the financial aid application for each college.

- Male students who will be 18 at the time they complete the FAFSA are required to register with Selective Service to be eligible for federal and state aid. (www.sss.gov)
- Continue to apply for scholarships.

February/March

- Avoid Senioritis. Senior grades can be crucial to your admission (including 3rd and 4th quarter grades, especially for those on waiting lists or on the cusp of admissions). All acceptances are conditional until colleges deem your final grades have met their standards.
- Watch for deposit deadlines for housing
- Colleges will begin notifying students of admission status and financial aid. Discuss these with your counselor.
- If financial aid is not adequate, call the specific financial aid office at the college you are going to attend. The first offer is not necessarily firm! Perhaps you can provide special circumstances that exist.
- Participate in Financial Aid Information Nights scheduled by local colleges.
- Many priority financial aid deadlines fall in February. Applications received by the priority deadline are given the highest consideration.
- The Student Aid Report (SAR) should arrive two to four weeks after the FAFSA is submitted. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) figure is printed on the front page at the upper right. If the SAR has not been received four weeks after submitting the FAFSA, call 1-800-4-FED-AID. If there are any errors on the SAR, make corrections and mail back immediately. If you provided valid email address, you can view and make corrections online.
 - ◆ **KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING YOU SUBMIT**
- Continue to apply for scholarships. Apply! Apply!
- Begin looking for summer jobs or internships.

April

- Most colleges will have notified you by April 15 If you are wait-listed, consult with your counselor immediately.
- Continue to apply for scholarships.
- Colleges have an acceptance reply deadline of May 1 (excluding early decision candidates), which you must confirm with an acceptance letter and deposit.
- If there is a gap between the cost of attendance and the financial aid offered, families should start pursuing alternative payment methods.
- Attend Senior Recognition Night
- Complete the semester with good attendance and academic standing

June

- Prepare for final transition to college
- Finalize your housing plans.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

In an admission report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Education Council, the following reminder was given to future applicants: **"The application folder is your single opportunity to influence the admissions process. Approach each aspect of the application as an opportunity. Devote time and thought to each of the various portions."** As you think about your folder circulating among an admissions committee, consider the following:

Be aware that along with your application, colleges review:

- ◆ Your academic transcript for grades 9-11 as well a list of your senior course load. Special attention is given to your grades, your grade pattern, your overall grade point average, the courses you have taken, and your class rank.
- ◆ ACT/SAT performance can be helpful in supporting your academic record. Check your college's requirements.
- ◆ Some consider extracurricular activities, recommendations, the applicant's personal essay, personal interview, alumni connections, and personal strengths.
- ◆ Read every word of the directions before you even print your name.
- ◆ Make a Xerox copy to use as a work sheet.

If you choose to use on-line applications:

- ◆ Always print a copy of your application prior to sending it on line.
- ◆ Give a copy to your counselor with the forms she needs to complete.
- ◆ Avoid filing on-line the week before the application deadline. This is the most risky time to file because of volume and likelihood of system failure.
- ◆ When applying on-line with a credit card, payments can take weeks to reach a school. Pay by check if this option is available.
- ◆ Always call or email the college within 14 days to verify receipt of your on-line application.
- ◆ Demonstrate your best work make this something of which you are proud.
- ◆ Essays should be error-free, thoughtful, logical and organized. Use comfortable vocabulary. Be yourself, the essay should say something the rest of the application doesn't say. You should elaborate on a talent, an interest, and thoughts on a world or local problem, a personal accomplishment. Stay within the length limit for the essay. Admissions officers have limited time, and lots of essays to review.
- ◆ Do not write what you think the admissions office wants to hear. The committee reading your application wants to know you, whatever you think and do. No matter how ordinary you may feel, your folder represents a different individual from all others.

- ◆ Use specific examples when describing your interests and achievements. Explain your involvement and why topics you chose to discuss are important to you. It is better to emphasize the degree of involvement in a few activities than a long list of superficial interests.
- ◆ Why are you going to college? To learn? To learn what? Why? A college should be convinced that you truly want an education. Avoid simplistic answers and reasons. If you want to be an engineer, for example, cite some experience from your own life that led you to this present choice.
 - Typing or printing is acceptable. In some cases, you will be required to write an essay in your own handwriting. Neatness and legibility are obviously essential.
- ◆ Colleges and scholarships always ask for community service projects. This is VERY important. GET BUSY AND GET SOME DONE!
- ◆ Proofread. Spelling errors are unacceptable.
- ◆ Xeroxed copies (clear ones) are perfectly acceptable, but sign each one individually. Your name should be on each page or article submitted in addition to the application.
- ◆ Proofread again!

The Etiquette of Asking for a Recommendation

1. Ask the teacher in person.
2. Ask in such a way that the teacher is free to decline your invitation if he/she feels a strong, positive letter is not possible. Would you be willing to write a college letter of recommendation for me?
3. Ask the teacher as soon as possible. Ask your teachers or counselor to write a letter for you and then attach a copy to whatever form(s) you eventually provide.
4. Make sure you fill out the student section of the form before giving the form to the teacher.
5. You may help the writer by suggesting a theme or focus for the letter and providing a list of your activities.
6. Provide a resume for your counselor and others from whom you request a letter of recommendation. See page 9 for a sample resume.
7. Some teachers want you to provide a copy of the form for each college. Others, however, prefer to fill out the form only once and then copy it themselves. Ask the teacher how he/she would like the Common Application forms.
8. Write a note of thanks to the writer of your recommendation(s).
9. When you hear from the colleges, make sure you inform the teachers who wrote for you the results of your application. Remember that they have something invested in your college process.
10. Above all, remember that writing a good letter of recommendation requires a significant amount of time, time that is above and beyond the call of duty. Make sure that you stay on top of deadlines and paperwork so that the writing of the recommendation is as uncomplicated as possible.

(Sample Resume format)

YOUR NAME
YOUR ADDRESS
YOUR PHONE NUMBER
YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Educational Background

Lutie R-VI School District, HC 4 Box 4775 Theodosia, Mo 65761

(If you have attended other high schools also list them with dates you attended.)

College and Career Plans

Basic Educational Statistics

Your GPA:

Your Class Rank:

Your Graduation Date:

Your ACT/SAT score:

Academic Achievements

Examples: Honors and AP classes enrolled in, research projects completed, special academic contests, etc.

Awards, Achievements, and Honors

Academic Awards, Leadership Awards, Music Awards, Sports Awards, etc.

Extracurricular Activities

Clubs, Sports, etc.

Religious Activities (if applicable)

Church membership, nursery worker, youth group, etc.

Community Service

Christmas baskets, blood drive, etc.

(Go to www.usnews.com/planner for another example of a Personal Profile (Resume))

ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Colleges and universities have varying admission practices. Information pertaining to the policy of a prospective school will be found in its publications. Some of the most frequently mentioned practices:

- ◆ **EARLY DECISION (ED)** Students who have demonstrated sound academic ability apply for admission to their first choice college during the summer or very early in their senior year. Notification of admission is given usually in December or January. Restrictive policies vary with each school and must be checked carefully to see if early decision works to the individual's advantage. This plan is binding. **If you apply ED, you also sign a commitment to attend if accepted and withdraw all other applications.** You should apply under an ED plan only if you know that you can make a well-reasoned, first-choice decision.
- ◆ **EARLY ACTION (EA)** This plan does not require a commitment to matriculate. There are certain schools that have single choice early action (Stanford, Yale, and Harvard). If you apply to those schools, you must adhere to their restriction about applying early to other schools. This plan allows the applicant to compare admissions and financial aid offers.
- ◆ **WAIT LIST** This process allows institutions to initially delay an offer or deny admission. If on a wait list you are extended the possibility of admission in the future.
- ◆ **REGULAR DECISION** This is a plan in which institutions review most of their applications before notifying the majority of candidates of their admission. Colleges set a deadline for completing applications and respond to completed applications by a specified date.
- ◆ **ROLLING ADMISSIONS** This application process allows colleges to review applications as they are received and offers decisions to applicants as soon as the application has been processed.
- ◆ **DEFERRED ADMISSION** High school seniors are guaranteed admission to college a year after graduation.
- ◆ **OPEN ADMISSION** Students are accepted upon application (usually community colleges). Some programs in these same schools may have more selective admissions.

QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGE REPS

When you meet with any prospective college, you might want to ask the following questions during your visit.

Admission

- o Am I eligible for admissions?
- o What tests are required?
- o What are the deadlines?
- o What high school course preparation is needed?
- o What academic demands can I expect to find? How intense is the academic atmosphere (average hours spent studying, library full on weekends, average SAT, ACT scores)?
- o What high school credits in advanced courses qualify you for advanced placement? What scores are needed?
- o What percentage of students return after their freshman year?

Cost

- o How much will it cost?
 - ❖ Cost per credit hour, student fees, housing, meals
- o What kind of financial aid is available and how do I apply?

Majors and study programs available

- o Does the school offer the major I want?
- o Is the school strong in science, fine arts, the humanities, my areas?
- o How many students are in my area of interest?
- o What courses are included in a typical freshman program?
- o If I am undecided, will I have the chance to explore some areas of interest?
- o Does the school have any kind of internship program, co-op, etc.?

Social Life

- o What is the dorm life like?
- o What extracurricular activities are available?
- o Is the college a part of the surrounding community or set apart from it as a self-contained unit? If rural, how far to the nearest town and how do students get there?
- o What method of transportation do students use to get around campus?

Housing

- o How difficult is it to get on-campus housing?
- o Do all freshmen live in dorms?
- o What is the cost?
- o How do I apply? Is it a separate process from the admission application?

LHS TRANSCRIPT REQUEST PROCEDURE

The majority of Lutie seniors will apply to one or more colleges/universities. Many seniors will apply for multiple scholarships. The Guidance Office has an efficient system for managing applications, but the system requires you to follow the guidelines described below.

1. You must submit your college or scholarship application to the Guidance Office at least 10 school days before the mailing deadline to allow time for processing. NOTE: Unless otherwise stated in application directions, it is best for all application materials and attachments to be mailed together as one package.
2. If the college requires teacher recommendations in addition to a counselor recommendation, also give your teacher 5 school days notice. Don't hold up your application waiting for teacher recommendations unless your college requires everything to be mailed together. Do not ask teachers to write recommendations unless the college or university has specifically requested it.
3. Schedule a meeting with your counselor if you need her to write a recommendation letter for you.
4. Review essay questions and any other questions you may have with your counselor.
5. When you are satisfied that your application is exactly as you want the college to see it, or when you have finished an online application:
 - a. Obtain a transcript from the Guidance Office
 - b. Be sure to give all necessary information
 - c. Attach your application fee
 - d. Submit your materials to the Guidance Office.
6. **DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE! THE SOONER YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATIONS, THE BETTER!**
7. Be sure to notify your counselor about the status of your application as you hear from your colleges.
8. If you get a note from a college saying that a piece of your application is missing, DON'T PANIC. In all likelihood, it is at the office and simply hasn't been entered into the system yet. Check with a counselor about the date on which the material was sent, and give the college a few days to sort the mail before you call. Usually, time takes care of the problem; but if it doesn't, let us know and we can help.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COLLEGE VISIT

NOTE: In order for college visits to be coded school business, seniors must notify the main office prior to making the visit. Visiting prospective colleges can be a big help in selecting the right school. Its value is in providing a first-hand impression for you and your family about the people, programs and facilities. Your presence on the campus and your readiness to talk about yourself and your college plans are indications of your serious interest in the college. Seeking and exchanging information with college officials is all part of the process in the campus visit. If you absolutely cannot travel, check if any schools offer virtual tours online.

TIPS

- ◆ Discuss your initial ideas about college with your family and guidance counselor.
- ◆ Make a list of prospective colleges and write to them. Be specific concerning your interests.
- ◆ Contact colleges you plan to visit well in advance. Make appointments at least two or three weeks before your intended visit. Experts recommend that you visit during the academic year to get the feel of the campus in full swing.
- ◆ Evaluate your record so you are able to answer general questions about your academic performance in high school and your scores on standardized tests.
- ◆ Research the colleges you plan to visit. Colleges want candidates who are educated about their campus programs and facilities.
- ◆ Take an unofficial copy of your transcript. Request a copy from the Guidance Office a few days prior to your visit.
- ◆ If possible, arrive on campus in the afternoon and take a late afternoon guided tour. Plan on staying for dinner and spend the night in the dorm. Include a social, cultural, athletic or special event in your visit and attend some classes the next morning. You may also want to arrange to speak to faculty members or coaches in your field or sport of interest.
- ◆ Be prompt for tours and appointments.
- ◆ Pick up an application form, scholarship information and a campus map.
- ◆ Don't hesitate to discuss finances and ask about scholarship, loan and work opportunities.
- ◆ Campus must see: the library, academic facilities and living quarters.
- ◆ Talk to students when the official tour is over. It is important to get some idea about the kind of people you will live and work with on campus.
- ◆ Visit the neighborhood where the campus is located. Look for transportation facilities.
- ◆ Parents are always welcome on college campuses. Prospective candidates, however, should have an opportunity to interview alone with the college official. Parents are often invited in after the interview to ask questions and obtain further information.

- ◆ Remember the sunshine factor. A beautiful sunny day can make the campus seem terrific; a rainy day can dampen your and your interest. Try not to let the weather affect your judgment.
- ◆ Campus tour guides are not all alike. Some are lively, interesting students who are reliable spokespersons for the school while others may not be as well-versed or informed. Don't judge a school solely by the one student tour guide. Meet many others students to get a true picture.
- ◆ Check to see which colleges require and which only recommend an interview. While on campus, try to schedule the interview. The interview is primarily for you to learn about the college and what life would be like for you as a student on campus.
- ◆ Your interview may be with an admissions staff member, a student, or an alumnus.
- ◆ Read the catalogue and do your homework about the school before the interview.
- ◆ Dress comfortably and neatly. RELAX.
- ◆ Know yourself. Going into an interview, it is essential that you have evaluated your personality, interests, abilities, skills and values.
- ◆ Ask about your chances for admission. This is why it is important to bring a copy of your transcript to give the admissions officer an accurate profile of your high school record and test scores. Most admissions officers will be able to give you some idea of your chances of being admitted, but don't expect a definite answer. Usually that can only come later when the college has more complete information on you and its overall admissions competition for that particular year.
- ◆ Remember that the interview can have a positive effect on your admission, rarely a negative one.
- ◆ After your visit, make some notes on your reactions to the college. They may be helpful later when you are trying to remember and evaluate each institution.
- ◆ If questions come up after the visit, don't hesitate to contact the people you have met.
- ◆ If you are definitely interested in the college, follow through by filing your formal application as soon as possible. If you are not interested, don't consider your visit a waste of time. Chances are you will have learned about the kind of college you do want, and about what other colleges are likely to expect from you.
- ◆ Send thank-you notes to those with whom you had appointments.

FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

The primary responsibility for paying a student's educational expenses belongs to the family. However, the choice of a college should not be determined by family finances alone. A student and family should choose a college based not only on finances, but on the student's desire and ability to attend that college. If the proper procedures are followed, a financial aid partnership of parents, student, government and university can become a reality.

FUNDAMENTALS

Basically, there are two types of financial aid: merit-based and need-based.

- ◆ Merit-based awards are typically given by a private institution, your college, or the government. These awards recognize your academic, athletic, musical and various other talents.
- ◆ Need-based aid is awarded according to your ability to pay for college. Colleges calculate your need using this formula:

Cost of Attendance

Your EFC (Estimated Financial Contribution on FAFSA)
+ Outside aid (scholarships)
= DEMONSTRATED NEED

You do not need to be poor to receive aid. There are funds available to help all students who demonstrate need. In order to receive financial aid you must ask for it, i.e., complete the forms and applications. And remember, if you apply for assistance early, you may be more successful in finding the aid you need.

HINTS

- o Keep copies of everything
- o Open and read all mail
- o Use scholarship search engines
- o Apply for every scholarship, even if you don't think you will receive it

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

You should fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. Complete your income tax return before filling out the FAFSA. Institutions have different priority filing deadlines, so it may be necessary to estimate tax information to meet those dates. For answers to questions regarding the FAFSA, guidance is provided through FAFSA by phone or online, or you may wish to contact the specific institution to which you are applying.

***** The counselor will hold two sessions after school to help families file FAFSA electronically, one in January and one in early March. If you can file on your own earlier you are encouraged to do so – the earlier you file the better your chances at additional funding.**

Financing Methods

Financial aid usually comes in a package or a combination of the following methods.

- ◆ **Scholarships**(monies you don't pay back)
- ◆ **Grants**(monies you don't pay back)
- ◆ **Loans**(monies you must pay back)
- ◆ **Employment**(money you earn)

Scholarships

- o Private scholarships - **FREE** Scholarship Searches are available via the WEB.
- o Many institutions offer automatic scholarships. Applications are screened upon admissions and monies are awarded if applicant meets criteria.
- o Information on institutional scholarships may be obtained by writing to the Director of Financial Aid or checking the college's website under financial aid.
- o While there are thousands of scholarships, many of them have strict requirements or are so competitive that they are available only to a few students.

Grants

- o Pell Grants
- o Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants

Loans

- o Perkins Loans
- o Stafford Loans
- o Parent Loan (Federal PLUS Loan)

Employment

Students may seek employment on their own while in college, or they may be eligible for Work-Study if financial need is demonstrated.

A quick summary of steps to Financial Aid:

1. File federal income tax forms as soon as possible (preferably in January) in order to provide accurate data on financial aid forms.
2. Complete the FAFSA which is required by all colleges. Colleges may require supplemental financial aid forms, such as the PROFILE. Contact the individual colleges to which you are applying for this form.
3. Apply for federal and state funds by checking the appropriate boxes in FAFSA(on-line).
4. Tell each college you apply to if you are applying for financial aid. Usually this is done by checking the appropriate box on the application. A college may also have its own financial aid form for you to complete.
5. Check for scholarships for which you are eligible:
 - o from each college
 - o those posted in the Guidance Office, on the LHS website, on the senior board in the hall, and those announced at school
 - o **local scholarships and awards available in the spring**
 - o corporations where parents are employed
 - o military
 - o various search engines
6. Begin your Stafford Student Loan application by checking appropriate boxes on the FAFSA.
7. If you have properly filled out the financial aid forms, you will receive a Student Aid Report in approximately 4-6 weeks (sooner if you apply online). It will give you your eligibility index for federal and state aid. You will be asked to sign an acceptance of the amount received, and the money will be sent to the college. Colleges will notify you of further grants/loans you are to receive in their financial aid package.
8. Ask your counselor for assistance if you have general questions. Specific questions should be directed to the college financial aid offices or the financial aid agencies.

GUIDANCE OFFICE RESOURCES

The Guidance Office houses a variety of college and career reference materials that should be useful in helping students search for appropriate information. These resources may be checked out for your convenience.

- o **College Catalogs** (Located in Main Counseling Office) A number of four-year and two-year college catalogs are available that contain descriptive information about the school, its faculty, its course of study, financial aid and admissions.
- o **Files** A collection of pamphlets & brochures are available that describe and promote their programs and campus activities.
- o **College Planning Books**
 - ◆ Several books are available with updated profiles of colleges with current facts on admission, competitiveness, costs, financial aids, programs of study, student life, regulations, faculty, and student body profiles.
 - ◆ Guidebooks which include admission requirements, size, location, and campus setting, majors offered, and annual expenses.
 - ◆ Books on specific careers and listings of trade schools throughout the US.
 - ◆ Reviews of major labor market trends and the effect on college graduates. Job comparisons are included by subject majors and compensation for jobs requiring a degree.
 - ◆ How-to books on writing college essays. Essays are required for many scholarships and some admissions.

Parent Information on Financial Aid for Students

(The following 3 pages can be found at: <http://www.finaid.org/parents/>)

College Approaches

- Determine how much aid your child will need and how much your family will be expected to contribute with the [Financial Aid Estimation Calculator](#).
- [Maximize your eligibility](#) for financial aid with tips like reducing your savings account by paying off credit card debt.
- Encourage your child to search for [Scholarships](#) -- it takes only a few minutes and it's free.
- Your child won't be able to pay for college entirely on his or her own. Low cost [Parent Loans](#) provide education financing that can help you manage your cash flow.
- [Private Loans](#) can provide additional money.

Apply for Financial Aid

- Apply for financial aid every year, even if you think you won't get any. More than two-thirds of families qualify for financial aid.
- Apply by submitting the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA).
- It is best to review your finances with your child. But if you want to keep the information private, rest assured that the school will not reveal the information you submit on the FAFSA to your child (or any other third party) without your permission.
- Read FinAid's [Guide to Negotiation and Professional Judgment](#)
- The [Education Tax Credits](#) can help you defray college costs through tax deductions, tax credits and exclusions from taxable income.
- FinAid's [Guide to Financial Aid Award Letters](#) gives a few tips on decoding your financial aid package and tools for comparing award letters.

Still Have Questions?

- Confused by all the terminology? See the [glossary](#).
- Still have unanswered questions? Read the [FAQ](#), a collection of answers to frequently asked questions. If you can't find an answer there, [Ask the Aid Advisor](#) lets you submit questions to financial aid professionals across the country.
- If your child has just been admitted to college and you haven't done any advance planning, see FinAid's collection of [last minute tips on finding money for college](#). See also our tips on [budget cutting](#).

Last Minute Financial Aid Information

Here are some last minute tips on finding money for college. It is best to start thinking about how to pay for college as soon as possible. However, there are a few things families can do even if they don't start planning until after their child is admitted. This advice is also useful for families whose finances are falling short of college costs.

1. Start searching for [scholarships](#). There are scholarships with deadlines in every month of the year. The bulk of scholarships have deadlines in the fall and spring, but there are still many awards with deadlines in the summer. Even if you do not qualify for any of these awards, it is best to start searching for scholarships now, to get a head start on next year. Don't put off the search any longer.
2. If you have not yet submitted the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#), you need to submit it immediately.
3. Many families feel that they cannot afford college costs despite the financial aid package, in part because the need analysis formula does not consider credit card balances and other forms of consumer debt. FinAid offers several tips on [maximizing eligibility for need-based aid](#), such as paying off your credit cards to reduce visible assets.

In some cases a family might not be able to find the money for college because of special circumstances, such as high medical bills or an impending job loss. Special circumstances are anything that distinguishes the family's finances from most other families or anything that makes the prior tax year income an inaccurate predictor of family income during the academic year. In such situations the family needs to send a letter to the school summarizing the special circumstances and asking for a [professional judgment review](#). Even so, most families will be faced with hard choices and sacrifices.

4. There are several [education tax benefits](#) that can provide some financial relief after the fact. These include the Hope Scholarship and Lifetime Learning tax credits, and the Tuition and Fees Deduction.
5. It is never too late to start [saving for college](#), even if the child is already matriculated. The tax benefits of section 529 college savings plans can save you money even on a short-term investment horizon. But keep the money in liquid investments, so that you can access it quickly if you need the money to pay college bills.
6. Ask your employer whether they offer any employer tuition assistance programs. Some employers provide student aid for their employees and/or their employees' dependents.
7. Look for student employment opportunities. Even if the student doesn't qualify for Federal Work Study, there are plenty of jobs available for students on and off campus. The student should consider working 10 to 20 hours a week during the semester (15 hours is ideal) and full time during the summer.
8. Consider enrolling in a less expensive school, such as a community college or state school. You can always transfer to the more expensive private college later.

You should also consider other ways of [cutting college costs](#), such as attending a local college and living at home.

9. If you're trying to compare several colleges, consider your out of pocket costs. Private colleges may charge more tuition than public colleges, but they also offer more financial aid. So rather than looking at the sticker price or the discount, focus on the bottom line.

There are two ways of evaluating the bottom line cost. One is to subtract just the gift aid (money that doesn't need to be repaid) from the cost of attendance. This reflects the total amount of money the family will need to pay out of current earnings and through loans. The other is to subtract the total amount of the financial aid package from the cost of attendance. (Be sure to subtract any unsubsidized Stafford Loans and PLUS Loans from the package first, to ensure an apples to apples comparison.) Although many families do not consider education loans to be a form of financial aid, they do provide cash flow assistance. So the difference between the cost of education and the financial aid package represents the amount of money the family will need to spend from their own resources to pay for college.

When comparing out of pocket costs, verify that the school's cost of attendance figures are realistic, since different schools include different expenses in the student budget. In particular, look at the allowances for transportation and personal expenses, since these can vary significantly from school to school.

10. If you can't afford to pay the college bills all at once, ask the school about [tuition installment plans](#). These spread out the school's charges over a 9, 10 or 12 month period. Usually they are interest-free, but charge a small annual fee (typically \$50 to \$100).
11. Consider obtaining an [education loan](#), such as an unsubsidized Stafford Loan or a PLUS Loan. These low-interest loans do not depend on financial need. The interest on education loans is also now tax deductible.

If the parents cannot afford to take on any more debt, apply for a PLUS loan anyway. If a student's parents are turned down for a PLUS loan due to bad credit or bankruptcy, the student becomes eligible for increased Stafford Loan limits. Some banks are also allowing parents to defer payments on a PLUS loan until the student graduates.

Home equity loans and lines of credit are also an option.

12. FinAid does not recommend taking an early distribution from a retirement plan. Between the taxes, penalties, and the negative impact on financial aid, such a move offers only short-term relief while hurting the parents' retirement savings. Even borrowing from a retirement fund is not a good option.
13. Consider [military aid](#), such as ROTC.
14. [Education investments](#) are an alternative to loans in which an investor gives the student money for college in exchange for a small percentage of their income for ten years after they graduate.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

There MANY more websites linked to the Lutie Counselor webpage

www.finaid.org (The Financial Aid Information Page)
www.missourimost.org (Missouri MO\$T Program)
www.ed.gov/inits/hope (Hope Scholarship & Lifetime Learning Tax Credits)
www.upromise.com/mohela (New ways to save for college)
www.studentaid.ed.gov
www.fafsa.ed.gov (FAFSA on the Web)
www.pin.ed.gov (get your PINs for the web-FAFSA)
www.fastweb.com (Scholarship search)
www.srnexpress.com (Scholarship search)
www.gocollege.com (Scholarship search)
www.wiredscholar.com (Scholarship search)
www.missouri.edu/~mufinaid (Scholarship search)
www.scholarships.com (Scholarship search)
www.ncaa.org/about/scholarships/html (Sports scholarships & internships)
<http://gehon.ir.miami.edu/financial-assistance/Scholarship/black.html> (List of multiple minority scholarships)
www.act.org (Online registration for ACT)
www.collegeboard.org (College Board---also try .com)
www.ncaaclearinghouse.net (NCAA Clearinghouse)
www.dhe.mo.gov (Missouri Department of Higher Ed)
www.ed.gov (US Department of Education)
www.ed.gov/pubs/parents (Free publications to download)
www.petersons.com (Peterson's Education & Career Info)
www.skill-ed.com (Career & College information)
www.collegequest.com (College Search)
www.stats.bls.gov/oco/ocoiab.htm (Career Info Occupational Outlook Handbook)
www.mapping-your-future.org (Career Planning)
www.onlinecollegefair.com (College Search)
www.commonapp.org (Common Application online)
www.naACP.org (NAACP)
www.collegefund.org (Multi-cultural students)
www.nclD.org (Students with Learning Disabilities)
www.sss.gov (Selective Service)
www.militarycareers.com (Military Career Guide Online)

