

Planning and Paying for College for Missouri Students

A Step-by-Step Planning Guide for College Affordability



01 CHECK YOUR AID ELIGIBILITY

Before completing the FAFSA, use the [Federal Student Aid Estimator](#) to see what federal aid your student may qualify for. **No account is required to complete.**

You'll need:

- Tax filing status
- Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)
- Total assets
- Annual child support received

This will provide the estimated Student Aid Index (SAI), which colleges use to determine your student's financial need.

02 CALCULATE THE ACTUAL COST

Don't assume you'll pay full price. In many cases, the net price is much lower than the published cost.

Use each school's [Net Price Calculator](#) to estimate what families similar to yours actually paid after grants and scholarships.

03 EXPLORE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES

Every path offers different opportunities, costs, and outcomes. The best choice is the one that aligns with your student's interests, career goals, and your financial situation.

Use [The College Scorecard](#) to compare colleges by graduation rates, typical debt, and estimated earnings.

Questions to Consider:

- What careers interest my student?
- What education or training do those careers require?
- What programs best align with those interests?
- What do graduates typically earn in those careers?
- What is the typical debt for students in this program?
- If my student needs to borrow, will future earnings support repayment?

04 BEGIN BUILDING A PLAN

Create a financial plan that supports your student's goals and works for your family's budget.

- Create a [My Scholarship Central](#) account to begin applying for scholarships.
- Visit the financial aid and scholarship pages for each school you're considering to learn about grants, scholarships, and deadlines.
- Check whether schools on your list accept dual credit, AP, IB, or other college-level coursework, which can help reduce the cost of earning a degree.
- **Complete the FAFSA beginning October 1** to apply for federal, state, and institutional financial aid.

You may also consider additional funding sources including: Student loans, 529 college savings plans, Part-time or summer student earnings, or Federal Work-Study (if eligible)

05 COMPARE YOUR OFFERS & OPTIONS

Once you begin receiving financial aid offers, compare the true cost of each option.

As you compare offers, consider:

- Cost of Attendance (tuition, housing, books, meals)
- Grants and Scholarships (doesn't have to be repaid)
- Student Loans (must be repaid)
- Net Price (out-of-pocket cost)

Comparison tools can help evaluate your options and determine which school offers the best overall value.

Comparison Tools:

- [Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development College Cost Comparison](#)
- [uAspire College Cost Calculator](#)

NEED HELP? MEET WITH YOUR ADVISOR

You don't have to make these decisions alone. Schedule a meeting with your College & Career Advisor to answer your questions, explore options, and create a plan.

ADVISOR NAME:

SCHEDULE A MEETING:

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Student & Family Financial Aid Timeline

Stay on track throughout the financial aid process.



FIRST STEPS

- Create your [StudentAid.gov](#) account (senior students and parent). You'll use this login to complete the FAFSA.
- Build a calendar of college application and financial aid deadlines.
- Use each school's [Net Price Calculator](#) to estimate your actual college costs.
- Complete the [FAFSA Estimator](#) to see if you may qualify for need-based financial aid.

OCTOBER 1

FAFSA opens **October 1**

- Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible to maximize your opportunities for federal, state, and institutional financial aid.

JANUARY 1

Begin applying for scholarships

- Most My Scholarship Central applications open on January 1.
- Begin applying for scholarships.

FEBRUARY MARCH

Watch for financial aid letters from colleges

- Continue applying for scholarships.
- Begin comparing your financial aid offers side-by-side as they are received.

MAY 1

Make your decision

- Notify your chosen school of your decision.
- Check your enrollment deposit deadline and submit, if required.

SEPTEMBER

Start your scholarship search

- Create your [My Scholarship Central](#) account.
- Complete the eligibility profile to begin identifying scholarship opportunities.

NOVEMBER DECEMBER

Watch for priority deadlines

- Some colleges have priority admissions and financial aid deadlines during these months.
- Check each school's requirements and be sure to submit materials on time.

FEBRUARY 1

The Missouri Priority FAFSA Deadline is **February 1**

- Submit your FAFSA by February 1 to ensure maximum funding for the [Access Missouri Grant](#).

APRIL 1

Final Missouri FAFSA Deadline for Access Missouri Grant is **April 1**

- Submit your FAFSA by April 1 to remain eligible for consideration for the Access Missouri Grant.

SUMMER

Complete remaining financial aid requirements

- If you plan to accept federal student loans, complete your Master Promissory Note (MPN) before the school year begins.

Need help with any of these steps? Contact your college advisor for support.