



## GETTING ORGANIZED WITH FINANCIAL AID PAYS OFF

by the student editors of **GETTING THROUGH COLLEGE WITHOUT GOING BROKE**,  
a Students Helping Students™ book

Before you start applying to colleges—before you even start to seriously think about which colleges you want to apply to—you have to start thinking about how you'll pay for your education. Very few families have vast resources and figuring out how to finance your college education will take a lot of organization and hard work. It's not impossible, but you need to start early so that you take advantage of every possible opportunity.

### START SAVING EARLY

*"The summer before your freshman year, try not to spend as much money going out. I used to go out to eat all the time and it was such a waste of money."*

**Sophomore,  
SUNY - Albany**

If you have a part-time or summer job during high school, it's a good idea to begin putting money away for college as soon as possible. It may be too late by the time you're reading this book to take full advantage of this advice, but even if you just start now, it will help you later. You may end up using this saved money to help pay for tuition or books, you may just keep it for extra spending money, or maybe you'll buy a new computer for yourself, but no matter what you decide to do with it, it will help.

### TALK TO YOUR PARENTS

Finances are a touchy subject and you and your parents may be uncomfortable talking about it, but it's really important to be open and honest. Ask your parents if they have any money saved for your education. Find out how much they can realistically afford to pay for college each year, and how much they will expect you to contribute. Understanding your family's financial situation is important and you shouldn't assume anything at all without talking about it first.

*"I was lucky because my mother really wanted to be involved in the college search. In fact, she was usually a lot more involved than I was. Sometimes, it would get on my nerves, but I'm grateful that she took care of so much. She knew when all the applications and forms were due, she told me what to fill out and when I had to sign something, she made sure everything got done on time. She probably talked to my high school guidance counselor more than I did! If your parents are like this, don't feel like they're interfering and don't be resentful. If your parents seem like the exact opposite of this, you can try to get them more involved, but know when to take control and handle it on your own."*

**Sophomore,  
Cornell University**

### MAKE FRIENDS IN THE RIGHT PLACES

This may seem silly, but it will help you to make friends with certain people in your community who might have some say over where scholarship money goes. Get to know your guidance counselor, your high school principal, and the teachers in your school. If you have a job in your town or if you do community service work, you'll probably meet local business people. All of these people could potentially influence local scholarship money. Having connections could definitely pay off for you. Literally.

*"One of the most important contacts I ever made was with my high school counselor. When it came time for scholarships and she was reading through hundreds of applications, my name stuck out because we had shared a lot of discussions about college."*

**Senior,  
New York University**

For more helpful tips and proven strategies from students and recent grads on applying for financial aid, acing your scholarship applications, managing your money at college, staying out of credit card debt, and much more, visit [www.StudentsHelpingStudents.com](http://www.StudentsHelpingStudents.com) and buy the Students Helping Students™ guide titled **GETTING THROUGH COLLEGE WITHOUT GOING BROKE**, available at bookstores and online stores, such as Amazon.com.

## CONSIDER A VARIETY OF SCHOOLS

Don't ever rule out your choice of college based on how expensive it is. If you work very hard, are persistent, and know where to look, you can find a way to pay for it. You've probably heard this piece of advice over and over but take our word for it—most of us are living testaments to the possibility of attending an expensive school without being related to Bill Gates.

What you should do is make sure that you apply to a range of colleges—very expensive, moderate, and less expensive. Some people do everything right and still can't find enough money to afford their dream school. When this happens, it's important to have a backup school, a financial safety school, which you know you will be able to afford even if you don't get the right financial aid package.

*"Take the time to apply to lots of schools. Everyone knows this is a good idea if you want to maximize your chances of being admitted, but it's also the best insurance policy you can have against financial aid disasters. If your dream school comes back with an offer to put your whole family into indentured servitude for life, you'll have a fallback position, and you'll also have some leverage."*

**Recent Grad,  
Dartmouth College**

## UNDERSTAND EARLY DECISION IMPLICATIONS

If you're thinking of applying Early Decision to a particular college or university, make sure that you understand the implications it has for financial aid. While you'll know if you're accepted by early winter, you will not receive your financial aid award until the spring, most likely in March or April, when admission letters for regular admission are sent out. This means that you'll have to accept your offer of admission to your Early Decision school before you know what your financial aid award will be.