

Locker Talk™

how are you paying for college?

February is Financial Aid Awareness Month

By Elizabeth Crouch, Learn More Indiana

Realize You CAN Afford College. Yes, college may be expensive, but there's money out there to help students like you pay for it. Many high school students go through what's called "sticker shock" when they see the overall cost of attending their dream school. This number is not set in stone. In fact, you won't know the actual amount you will need to pay out of pocket until after you submit your information and see your financial aid package.

Become Financially Savvy. Learn the lingo and know your financial aid options:

Grants – aid that does not need to be paid back, usually based on financial need.

Scholarships – aid that does not need to be paid back, usually based on academic or extracurricular performance or ability.

Loans – money borrowed to help cover educational costs that must be paid back.

Work-study – a student employment program that provides jobs for eligible students on or off campus.

Get Your Hands on Some Cash by Asking for Aid. You won't get anything if you don't ask for it. Take the time to fill out the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) and make sure it is received by the Federal Processor by March 10. Some colleges may have earlier FAFSA deadlines and other time-sensitive paperwork that needs to be completed. (Check with the financial aid office at your college for details.)

Get Help. The FAFSA may seem intimidating at first, but there is free help out there.

Learn More Indiana offers online step-by-step instructions on how to fill out the FAFSA. In addition, Hoosiers can order a free publication, *Indiana's Guide to Paying for College: Step-by-Step Tips To Help High School Seniors Apply for Financial Aid*, by calling (800) 992-2076 or visiting www.learnmoreindiana.org/cashforcollege.

Attend "College Goal Sunday" on Sunday, Feb. 15, between 2 to 4 p.m. Students and parents need to bring copies of their completed 2008 IRS 1040 tax return, W-2 forms or other 2008 income, asset and benefits information. Students and parents can receive free, personal assistance by filling out the FAFSA and submitting the FAFSA online right on the spot. To find the location nearest you or to find out more, visit www.collegegoalsunday.org or call (800) 992-2076.

If you can't make it to "College Goal Sunday," get the free assistance you need online on FAFSA Friday, Feb. 27. Log onto www.learnmoreindiana.org/cashforcollege between the hours of 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. or 6 - 9 p.m. to chat with financial aid advisors and ask them your burning questions about the FAFSA.

Get Paid to Play. Attention athletes, did you know you can get paid to play college sports through a variety of financial assistance opportunities? Ask coaches at the schools you're interested in about scholarships and what athletic needs they have for the next year.

Explore Other Scholarships. As opposed to other forms of financial aid, scholarships come from a variety of sources, including colleges and private organizations. Many scholarships are based on merit, athletic or artistic performance, community service or individualized talent. Searching and applying for other scholarships is separate from applying for the rest of financial aid; however, remember to let the financial aid office know about any scholarships you receive. Visit www.learnmoreindiana.org/scholarships and start searching today! •

For more information on how to get to and through college, visit www.learnmoreindiana.org or call 1.800.992.2076



Your college and career connection!