

UNDERSTANDING

YOUR AWARD LETTER

You've been accepted to your school of choice, and you are well on your way to adventures in learning that await! You've been approved for financial aid and you will soon be getting a financial aid offer containing important details about your investment in education.

We're here to answer common questions, compiled by students just like you!

How Will I Get My Financial Aid Offer?

Financial aid offer letters come in many shapes, sizes and names. They may be referred to as a merit letter, award letter, or financial aid package. And, you will receive your offer letter by email, mail, or accompanying your acceptance letter.

When in doubt, check with your school financial aid officer to find out how your school will be sending this to you.

What Do I Do With the Information in My Financial Aid Letter?

Your financial aid letter will inform you of the true cost of attendance for each of the school's you are considering. By comparing the cost of attendance of each school you are considering, you can determine the best financial choice for your financial situation. And, you can use this knowledge to negotiate with your school of choice. Every school has a different process, but speak with your financial aid office to discuss negotiating your offer letter.

What Are My Next Steps After I Compare My Financial Aid Offers?

Contact your school of choice to formally accept your financial aid award and decline any other financial aid offers you will not be accepting. These offers usually have an acceptance deadline determined by the school, so be sure to plan accordingly.

After you accept your offer, you will need to complete and submit any additional paperwork such as your loan applications.

What Will My Financial Aid Offer Include?

Financial aid offers typically include the total cost, expected contribution, and the funding you will receive to pay for your education. This funding will usually fall into one of three categories: Free Money, Borrowed Money, and Earned Money. Ultimately, the true cost of attendance will be included in your offer letter.



Cost of Attendance (COA)

An amount calculated by the college including the estimated cost for one year of attendance. This includes tuition, room and board, books, and supplies. It can also include transportation or personal expenses.



Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

Your EFC is automatically calculated by your FAFSA.



Financial Need Amount

Your financial need is calculated by subtracting your EFC from your COA; It is the difference between your ability to pay for school and your out-of-pocket cost.



Financial Aid Amount

This funding will usually fall into one of three categories: Free Money, Borrowed Money, and Earned Money.



Free Money

Money that is awarded to you for your education that you do not have to pay back (Scholarships, Grants, Fellowships).



Borrowed Money

Money that is loaned to you for your education expenses that you will have to pay back with interest (Federal and State Loans, Private Loans, Credit-based loans).



Earned Money

Money you earn through a program that you don't have to pay back to help offset your education cost (Work Study).