Paying for college
A guide for students and parents

STATE your passion.

IllinoisState.edu/payingforcollege

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE
Illinois State University
A college education is one of the biggest investments you'll make in life, second only to buying a home. Your degree will be the foundation for your career. Whatever path you choose, you will be well prepared for the challenges ahead with a degree from Illinois State. And our students do complete their degrees—our graduation rate is nearly 15 percent better than the national average. For six straight years, Illinois State has ranked in the Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine top 100 public universities in the nation for quality and value. At Illinois State, you’ll develop skills and make connections that will enhance your life personally and professionally forever.

No matter what your family’s financial circumstances are, you can find a way to manage college costs. Our Financial Aid Office helps thousands of students finance their education each year. It might not be easy, depending on your situation, but consider it an investment in your future. During the recent economic downturn, college graduates were twice as likely to stay employed compared to workers with only a high school diploma.

The best investment you will make in your future
The first step toward qualifying for financial aid at Illinois State is filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA uses such factors as your family’s income, the number of people in your household, and family assets to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Your EFC is a measure of your family’s eligibility for federal student aid. It is not the amount of aid you will receive or the amount your family will have to pay.

Be sure to file your FAFSA each year by March 1—Illinois State’s preferential filing date for the following academic year. The form is available starting in January online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Our school code is 00169200.

To file your FAFSA, you will need information from:
• your tax return,
• your parents’ tax return, and
• any savings, investments, and other assets belonging to you or your parents.

You will be notified of your EFC followed by an award notice from Illinois State. Your award notice tells you about the scholarships, grants, loans, and other aid for which you qualify. If you file your FAFSA by March 1, you will get your award notice in April.

Making it happen
If you and your family have saved money to pay for college, now is the time to decide how best to use that money, but it’s not too late to prepare if you haven’t started saving. Consider the costs of tuition, housing, books, and living expenses when thinking about how much money you’ll need and what your budget should be. At Illinois State, your tuition rate is frozen for four years meaning when you are a senior you will be charged the same rate as your freshman year, so you can do some long-term planning now. Also, we offer a convenient payment plan, for a small fee, so you can spread your tuition payments throughout the semester.

A mix of federal, state, institutional, and private dollars help Illinois State students pay for their education. The key to getting many scholarships and grants is finding out about them and applying early. Talk with your high school guidance counselor about scholarships and grants available to students at your school. You may want to try a financial aid estimator such as the U.S. Department of Education’s Federal Student Aid FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov or the cost of attendance estimator available at FinancialAid.IllinoisState.edu/prospective. You’ll get an idea of the federal aid for which you might qualify. Your academic profile and your family’s finances influence the types of aid you may qualify for including gift aid—grants and scholarships—which is not repaid, or self-help aid, such as loans and work study.

Zac S.

Broadcast journalism major, Alton
Zac is the first from a family of 11 children to pursue a four-year college education which means he’s also the first to find a way to pay for it. He says he didn’t know anything about paying for college or the financial aid process before he got started and neither did his mother.

“It was frustrating because I felt like I had to figure it out on my own. During my freshman year, my advisor took me to the Financial Aid Office to help me make sense of my situation and alleviate my fears that I would not be able to return the following year because of finances,” Zac said.

Zac works on-campus, receives several grants, and a small scholarship, but also takes out some small federal loans to make ends meet. He’s confident he will find a job after graduation to repay his loans. He says his determination made his college dreams a reality.

“File your FAFSA by March 1, try to stay positive, and hope for the best. If I would’ve given up because no one was helping me with the process, I wouldn’t be here today. I wasn’t going to let that happen,” Zac said.

Budgeting for 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and fees</td>
<td>$12,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room and board</td>
<td>$8,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and supplies</td>
<td>$1,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>$3,563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total estimated cost of attendance</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25,906</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tuition and fees for out-of-state students are $19,521. For most students, tuition rates remain the same for four years.
Think about your options

Loans

Rising college costs make borrowing money a fact of life for today’s college students. More than 65 percent of students attending four-year colleges take out loans. At Illinois State, the average student borrows $18,300 over four years which amounts to a post-graduation monthly payment of about $200 on a standard, 10-year repayment plan. More than 98 percent of Illinois State graduates pay their federal loans back on schedule.

Most of the money borrowed by Illinois State students comes from federal student loan programs. These loans are a good place to start because they offer reasonable interest rates and flexible repayment terms. The federal loans for which you qualify will be listed on your award notice.

Your parents may borrow additional money for you. One option is the Federal Direct Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students or PLUS loans. PLUS Loans for parents of dependent students are not need-based, but are subject to parent credit worthiness. Under this program, parents can borrow up to the total cost of education minus their student’s expected financial aid. Payments can be deferred until the student finishes college. Otherwise, payments typically begin in March of the student’s first year.

Private banks and loan companies also offer student and parent loans. Known as “alternative loans,” these loans often:

• charge higher or variable interest rates
• base rates on the borrower’s credit score
• require a cosigner

While these loans help make college affordable, it is critical you understand the terms of all of your loans, regardless of the source. Federal student loans may be deferred if you cannot find a job after leaving college, but alternative loans often cannot be. Make sure your post-graduation repayment plan is reasonable.

Student employment

More than 6,000 Illinois State students work on-campus jobs. Students can earn enough money to cover personal expenses, buy books, or contribute toward their

Kelly Y.
Marketing major, Bloomingdale

Apply for as many scholarships as possible and don’t give up even after you start school. That’s the best advice Kelly can give other students about paying for college. She funds her studies at Illinois State with a combination of scholarships, work, and help from her parents.

“My sister is three years older than me, so my parents had done it before and were very knowledgeable about the process by the time I was looking at colleges. They encouraged us both to apply for all of the scholarships we could,” said Kelly.

Kelly is a University Scholar, one of Illinois State’s most competitive and highly valued scholarship programs, but she also receives a few other, much smaller scholarships from regional and local sources. She says scholarships add up quickly, even if the individual awards are small.

Kelly is responsible for additional expenses not included with tuition and fees such as study abroad and other trips. She works on campus to earn money for these things.

“More than the money, my job in the Office of Admissions has helped me to get really involved and connected on campus. I’ve also learned a lot about how to manage my time,” Kelly said.
tuition. Some student workers qualify for Federal Work-Study, a need-based financial aid award program, but most on-campus jobs do not require work-study eligibility. Many more students are employed off campus. The Financial Aid Office hosts off-campus job fairs each semester to help match students with flexible employers in the community.

Students and parents often worry that grades will suffer if a student takes a part-time job, but studies show students who work up to 10 hours a week actually have slightly higher GPAs than students who do not work. Working students learn valuable time management skills. Often, the time spent working doesn’t take away from time in the library; it replaces time wasted on nonproductive activities like watching television. Every student is different, so you must weigh the advantages and disadvantages for yourself.

Grants

The results of your FAFSA determine if you’re eligible for most grants. You will automatically be considered for federal, state, and University grants when you submit your FAFSA. Funds are limited, so most grants are available only to students with the highest need.

Illinois State enhances state and federal grants with our own programs which provide more than $6 million a year in additional grants to more than 1,700 students.

Scholarships

Earning a scholarship starts long before completing applications and getting letters of recommendation. Your grades, achievements, and activities during high school typically determine the scholarships for which you are eligible. Before you start your search, think about the things that make you a unique and special student:

- What is your grade point average?
- What do you plan to study?
- Have you done any community service or volunteering?
- In which activities have you participated?
- Do you or your parents belong to any clubs or civic, social, or religious organizations?

Your high school guidance counselors’ office is a good place to start your scholarship search. They often know about the scholarships available only to students in your school, town, or county which are often easier to get because the applicant pool is typically smaller.

During the recent economic downturn, college graduates were twice as likely to stay employed compared to workers with only a high school diploma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April</th>
<th>May 1</th>
<th>Freshman year at college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receive and review award notice, early April (if FAFSA is submitted by March 1)</td>
<td>Enrollment deposit deadline</td>
<td>Find a job. Late summer/early fall before you start classes; Job fair held during the first week of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss award, costs, and budget with your family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Scholarship Resource Office has a wealth of information about scholarships available to Illinois State students. We guide students to the appropriate departmental, state, and regional scholarships. Our helpful, knowledgeable staff can answer any questions you have about the scholarship process. Visit the Scholarship Resource Office at IllinoisState.edu/scholarships to learn more and start searching.

Many departments, programs, and schools at Illinois State also have some scholarship or tuition waiver funds. Visit your intended program’s website to learn more.

We strongly advise against paying for any online scholarship search service or information. At best, these companies give you information you could find on your own for free. At worst, they promise exclusive scholarship leads or guaranteed scholarships they cannot deliver. Be sure you’re dealing with a trustworthy website or organization before revealing any personal information.

Illinois State Scholarships

Illinois State awards three highly competitive, merit-based scholarships to new students with exceptional academic talent. Qualified students who apply for admission and submit all required admissions documents during the preferred application filing period will be invited to apply for these scholarships.

Presidential Scholarship
This is a $32,000 award—$8,000 per year renewable for up to four years—for new beginning freshmen. Recent recipients had an average ACT score in the lower 30s, and an average cumulative GPA of 4.0 or above on a 4.0 scale.

University Scholarship
This is a $20,000 award—$5,000 per year renewable for up to four years—for new beginning freshmen from traditionally underrepresented groups, or first generation college students who have overcome hardship in achieving their academic goals. Recent recipients had an average ACT score of 26, and an average cumulative GPA of 3.7 on a 4.0 scale.

Community College Transfer Scholarship
This is a $3,000 award—$1,500 per year renewable for up to two years—for first time community college transfer students, and who have completed an associate’s degree (AA/AS) prior to enrolling at the University. A minimum cumulative transfer grade point average of a 3.5 on a 4.0 scale as calculated by the Office of Admissions is required at time of application. Qualified students will be notified about the next steps by late December.

Charity M.
Communication studies major, Bloomington
Charity dreams of founding a non-profit organization to improve the educational experiences of Hispanic students. She wants to get the message out that a college education is possible, even when it seems unlikely. Charity didn’t expect to go to college. In fact, a high school guidance counselor told her she couldn’t.

“I felt like if I couldn’t go to college, why bother to finish high school? Neither of my parents graduated high school; hard work was valued over a good education. So I dropped out. When I went back to get my G.E.D., an advisor encouraged me to go to college,” Charity said.

Charity worked a few different jobs before she went back to school at Heartland Community College. There she found out about financial aid options. She decided to continue her education at Illinois State after receiving an associate’s degree. She is financing the rest of her education with a combination of state and federal grants, student loans, and work study. Charity is confident her hard work will pay off.

“The important thing is to get here, even if that means taking out loans. I know with a bachelor’s degree I’ll be more marketable as an employee. The increase in my income will take care of my debt,” Charity said. She recommends looking beyond the Financial Aid Office for gift aid to reduce college costs.
Financial aid
where do you fit in?

Here are some examples of how real Illinois State students are funding their education. While many considerations, such as savings, number of family members, students in college, and student earnings, factor into your financial aid package, you can look at the adjusted gross income in each case to get an idea of what kind of aid you might expect. Keep in mind that these examples show costs and aid for the 2010–2011 academic year.

Please note, these examples are for reference only. Every situation is different and the FAFSA takes many factors into consideration to determine your Estimated Family Contribution. You will not know exactly how much aid you will receive from Illinois State until you complete your FAFSA and receive your award notice.