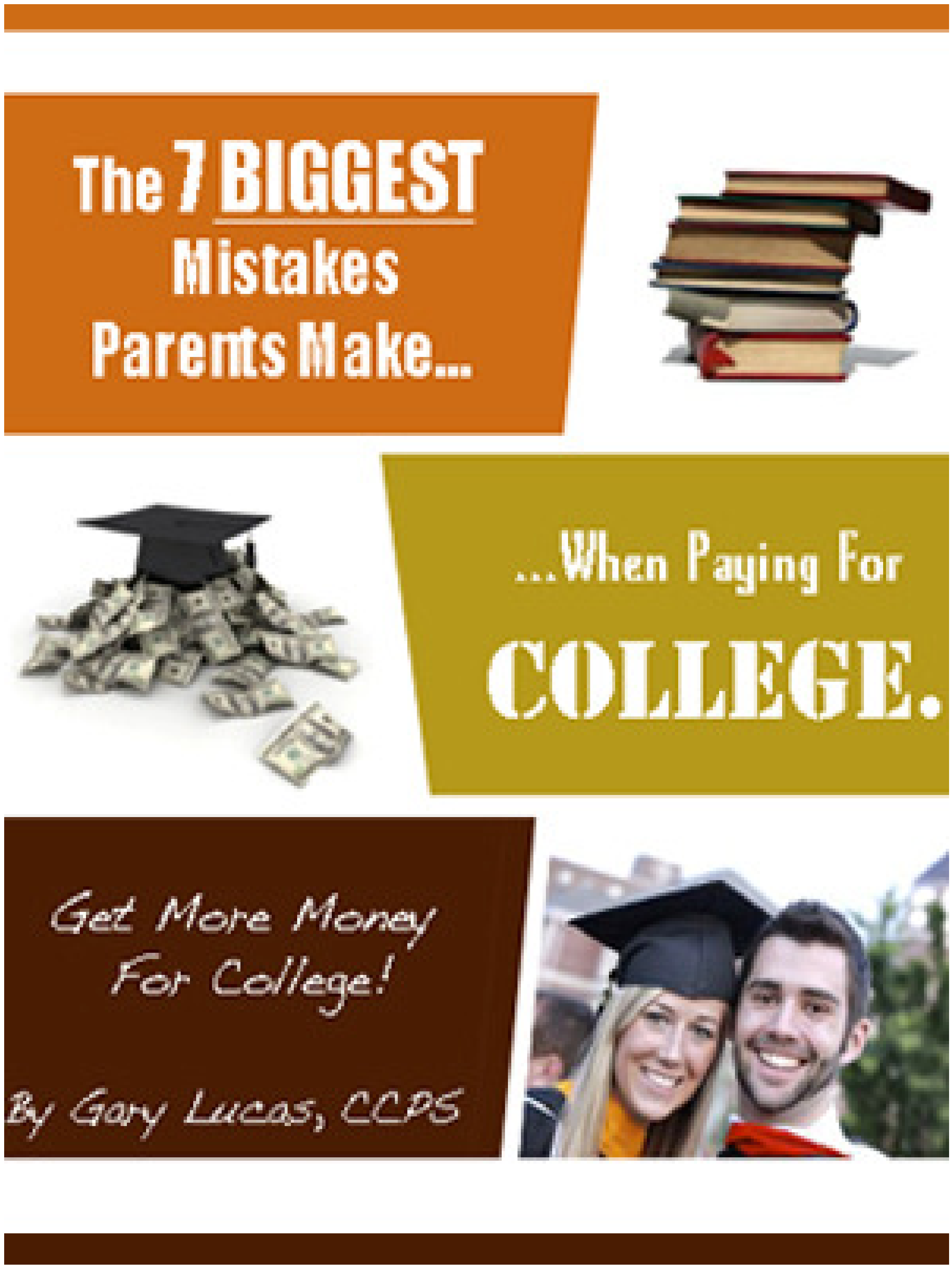
The 7 BIGGEST
Mistakes
Parents Make...
...When Paying For
COLLEGE.
Get More Money
For College!
By Gary Lucas, CCPS

The 7 Biggest Mistakes Parents Make Paying For College

…and how to avoid them

by Gary Lucas, CCPS

College Aid Now
4769 Buckley Road
Liverpool, NY 13031

"If you don't understand how the Financial Aid System works, you will inevitably pay more than the family who does."

-Unknown

"There are two prices for college: One for the informed and one for the uninformed."

-Unknown

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About the Author:

Gary Lucas has been on a mission to teach families how to get more free money for college since 2001. His journey began when he did extensive research on the Financial Aid System and discovered that he personally lost over $23,000 in scholarships and grants because he and his family made the costly errors that most families make when applying and paying for college.

As a Certified College Planning Specialist (CCPS) and a founding member of the National College Advocacy Group (NCAG), Gary helps families of all income levels learn the techniques necessary to not make the same mistakes that his family did that cost him thousands of dollars in lost Financial Aid. Gary is a prominent member of the National Institute of Certified College Planners and a licensed affiliate of MyCashFlowCoach.com, two major organizations dedicated to helping parents save thousands of dollars on their children's education each year.

Gary is a regular speaker at college financial planning seminars throughout the Upstate New York area and hosts national college planning webinars throughout the country. He was the co-host of the Central New York based financial radio show, "Gary and Mike…In Your Business." Gary has also made appearances on financial talk and radio shows, such as Financial Fitness on PBS, The Gary Nolan Show, Big Mike in the Morning, and several others. Locally, Gary also hosts a few high school Financial Aid nights as well.

Gary is a graduate of Le Moyne College in Syracuse, NY and is the founder of College Advisory Services and Innovative College Planning. In addition to his college planning credentials, he also holds his Series 6, 7, 24, and 63 Securities investment licenses as well as his New York State Life, Accident & Health, and Variable Life/Variable Annuities Licenses.

Foreword

College is expensive, this is no secret. If going to college was cheap, and the process was easy, you wouldn't be reading this book. What you probably aren't aware of is the disparity between how much students pay to go to the same college. You see, each student will receive a different Financial Aid package made up of grants, scholarships, and loans. Therefore, some will get more free money than others (like those of you reading this book, of course) and some will have to pay more out of their pocket (those that attempt to do it themselves).

By understanding and avoiding the biggest mistakes that parents' make paying for college, your family will get more free money and will be less encumbered with loans. In addition, you will be able to take advantage of other money saving opportunities most families don't know about or even understand.

It is not uncommon for families that utilize the information in this EBook to save $30,000 to $50,000 in college expenses. In fact, this is the norm rather than the exception.

So let's get right to it…

Mistake #1- Choosing a College Instead of a Career

"How to Avoid the Six Year Graduation Rate"

There are two alarming facts that cost many parents thousands of dollars in unnecessary college expenses each and every year:

Fact #1- 25% of College Freshmen drop out of college in their first year.

Fact #2- The average College Student takes 5.4 years to get a four-year degree

I know what you're probably thinking…That's nice, Gary, but my kid isn't dropping out. And he certainly isn't going to take more than 4 years to get a degree!

Let me say that I agree with you, but only because you are reading this book which will give you the necessary tools to easily beat the odds. Just know that until you finish reading this book, the Vegas odds makers are betting against you. And trust me; they always make money in Vegas.

Before I show you the proven way to easily beat those odds, you need to understand how those 2 facts can cost you big bucks out of your bank account.

Let's start with Fact #1- ***25% of College Freshmen drop out of college in their first year***.

Think about how costly that is. At one of the cheapest public colleges, you will almost literally be throwing away over $2,500 if your child drops out in the first semester. Over $5,000 if they drop in the second semester!

Now think about the cost of a private school. You are looking at an average of $13,500 per semester. I think this is why parents instinctively say, "My kid isn't dropping out or I'll kill 'em!" They know they will be throwing away $27,000 after the first year. Yet the numbers show that 1 in 4 students do each and every year. Why? Hold on, we'll get there…

Let's examine Fact #2 first- ***The average college student now takes 5.4 years to get a 4-year degree***.

So let's think about the essence of what I'm saying here. As daunting as paying for four years of college may seem, statistically it won't stop at four years. It will actually be closer to six years.

Let's once again look at the numbers. At a state school an extra 1.4 years will cost your family over $9,500 on average. At a private school you are looking at a whopping $36,000 on average. Again, this is not some college students…this is the AVERAGE college student.

So what is the biggest reason that over 25% of college freshmen drop out after their first year? And why does the average student take 5.4 years to get their four-year degree? Well, according to the U.S. Department of Education, the answer to both of these questions is because they do not perform a proper career planning assessment.

So the easy solution is: Complete a Proper Career Planning Assessment.

Statistics at the US Department of Education show that if your child is diligent about doing a Career Planning Assessment, it will significantly lower his or her odds of dropping out and taking longer than four years to complete a four-year degree.

Therefore, all you need to do is complete a credible career planning assessment and you will easily beat the odds we discussed and save your family thousands of dollars.

So what exactly is a career planning assessment? It is the process in which your child matches his or her interests, hobbies, likes, skills/aptitudes, and values to a potential career path.

The best assessment programs then use that data to show your child what schools will make the best fit for your student and then guide them toward a career path they will most likely succeed in.

How can you find a good assessment program? You could do a Google search for "career planning programs" to get you started in the right direction. You can also ask your school counselor or local college planner if they offer any or recommend one.

However, since you were willing to buy my E-Book, I want to save you hours of web surfing by making the same recommendation I make to my clients. That recommendation is to use Career Dimensions. They can be found online at www.careerdimensions.com. Please understand that each family is different, so you should do your own research before making a final decision, or consult your nearest Certified College Planning Specialist, but I've had great success using their program.

No matter what program you decide to use, the important thing is to make sure your child is diligent about completing one. And the best part is, they are very inexpensive, especially when you consider how much they can easily save you.

Helpful Tip…

Another great way for a person to determine whether or not a career is a viable fit is by job shadowing. When you sign up for the CollegAidNow.com Free Video Series I will show you how a FINANCIAL DISASTER was avoided by one day of simple job shadowing.

Mistake #2- Underestimating the importance of SAT/ACT Scores

"How Poor Test Scores Reduce Private Scholarships"

Is there a chance that your child will attend a private school or a prestigious state college? If so, you really need to pay very close attention to this section. I'm about to reveal one of the most overlooked ways to get an extra few thousand dollars in scholarship money.

This technique will also work extremely well if you make too much money to qualify for any need based Financial Aid (don't worry, we'll discuss need based Financial Aid later).

So what is this technique?

To help show you, let's take a look at the two Financial Aid awards letters below. These are actual Financial Aid award letters received by identical twins who applied to the same school. Keep in mind, their family's financial information is exactly the same (they have the same parents, of course). While their incomes and assets are the same, you'll see that their Financial Aid awards are VERY different. Take a look on the next page…

Helpful Tip…

I understand that some prefer learning by watching a demonstration. The CollegeAidNow.com Free Video Series provides a video demonstration of me walking through the following situation. Just go to CollegeAidNow.com and sign up to receive the videos full of outstanding college planning advice.

Twin #1 Award Letter

ST. JOHN
FISHER
COLLEGE

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

March 14, 2009
STUDENT ID: 35

NY 13

Dear

Congratulations on your acceptance to St. John Fisher College. We have reviewed your financial aid application for the 2009-2010 academic year and have given full consideration for all the financial aid programs for which you are eligible . We are pleased to offer the following financial assistance:

	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	TOTAL
Presidents Schl	5,000.00	5,000.00	$10,000.00
Direct Sub. Loan	444.00	444.00	$888.00
Direct Unsub. Loan	2,306.00	2,306.00	$4,612.00
Direct PLUS Loan	10,335.00	10,335.00	$20,670.00
Total	$18,085.00	$18,085.00	$36,170.00

Twin #2 Award Letter

ST. JOHN
FISHER
COLLEGE

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

March 14, 2009
STUDENT ID: 39

NY 13

Dear

Congratulations on your acceptance to St. John Fisher College. We have reviewed your financial aid application for the 2009-2010 academic year and have given full consideration for all the financial aid programs for which you are eligible . We are pleased to offer the following financial assistance:

	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	TOTAL
Cardinal Grant	1,250.00	1,250.00	$2,500.00
Room Grant	600.00	600.00	$1,200.00
Federal Work-Study	750.00	750.00	$1,500.00
Direct Sub. Loan	1,750.00	1,750.00	$3,500.00
Direct Unsub. Loan	1,000.00	1,000.00	$2,000.00
Direct PLUS Loan	12,735.00	12,735.00	$25,470.00
Total	$18,085.00	$18,085.00	$36,170.00

Did you notice a difference? I know, sometimes these things can be confusing. Let me break it down.

Let's start with the first award letter. Do you see the line that says "Presidents Schl" for $10,000? This means that Twin #1 is getting a $10,000 Presidential Scholarship. Keep in mind that a Scholarship does not have to be paid back, it's free money.

Now take a look at the second award letter. Do you see the line that says "Cardinal Grant" for $2,500 and the line that says "Room Grant" for $1,200? This means that Twin #2 is getting a total of $3,700 in Grants. Grants are the same as Scholarships in that they don't have to be paid back, once again we are talking about free money.

So, let's do the math. Twin #1 is getting $10,000 in free money and Twin #2 is getting $3,700 of free money. That's a difference of $6,300 of free money per year! Over four years that is a difference of $25,200.

So hear is the bottom line, it will cost their parents $25,200 more to send one of their children to the same school! To be a fly on the wall at dinner that night when those letters came in….!

Anyway, so why does Twin #1 get to go a lot cheaper than Twin #2?

In this particular case, there is one main reason only:

SAT/ACT Scores.

Can you believe it? You'd better. Many schools base their scholarships on a combination of grades and SAT/ACT scores. While the student may have the grades to qualify for a large scholarship, if test scores are not sufficient, the scholarships probably won't come.

Most parents do not know that something as simple as an SAT/ACT score can cost them thousands of extra dollars on college costs each year like the example above.

The good news is, there is an easy solution:

SAT/ACT preparation courses.

I find this is one of the most overlooked areas of college planning, yet it may have the biggest financial impact. Having just a few extra SAT or ACT points can result in thousands of dollars in Scholarships.

So what SAT/ACT preparation courses should you take?

That’s a great question. With thousands of different options, it can be very difficult to answer.

Let’s go through all of your basic four options and discuss their good and bad points and then I’ll give you my recommendation. Don’t skip ahead, this is important to understand.

Buying an SAT/ACT Review Book.

I usually don’t recommend this option since statistically it provides the worst results. The main problem with review books is that they are just too general. Most students tend to struggle on the tests in a particular area or two, so they should really focus on those areas rather than wasting time with the areas that they are already good at. The good news is that they are the least expensive option out there. However, you usually get what you pay for in life, and this is no exception in my opinion.

A General Review Class.

This is a class where there are usually 10-20 kids per classroom learning from just one teacher. While I personally have seen them work much better than a review book, they still have their weak points. For one, the information is general and not catered to each child's needs. Plus I've had several complaints about them being distracting, especially if the students boyfriend or girlfriend is in the class. And you know as well as I do, that's the class they want to be in. So while general review classes will certainly provide some help, they are not really a great value for your hard earned dollar.

A Private Tutor.

A private tutor will provide the best results statistically. They are normally very experienced and can meet the student's individual needs. There is usually little distraction so 100% attention is possible. The bad news is, they are the most expensive option out there. If you have the money to pay for it, by all means go for it! Overall though, I really don't think that a tutor will give you the best "bang for your buck" result.

Online Prep Course.

An online preparation course is almost like having your own private tutor online without the high cost. It learns what your weaknesses are and will tailor a study program to help you most effectively increase your overall score. Some online courses even guarantee results!

Because of these features, the online courses are by far the best option in my view.

So what program should you use?

You can find several programs if you do a Google search for "online SAT prep". You can also ask the guidance counselor or your local college planner what they recommend.

I recommend E-Prep to most of my clients. They seem to have the most comprehensive program that I've seen, it is very user friendly for students, parents can check in on their progress, and it offers a great guarantee. If you would like to research them, they can be found at www.eprep.com. You should use your own judgment when selecting a prep course, but if your child is going to a college that looks at SAT/ACT scores, it's crazy not to at least try something. If not, your child could be looking at an extra $25,000 in college costs just like the example above.

Helpful Tip…

Although we are not affiliated in any way with E-Prep, they have offered a generous 25% discount to my clients that sign up for their programs. If you'd like to take advantage of the 25% discount, please email info@collegeaidnow.com and we'll send you a link to get the discount. Heck, the discount alone will more than cover the cost you paid for this book! You see, your investment is already doing better then your money in the stock market.

Mistake #3- Filing your FAFSA Form Incorrectly

"Why the FAFSA is as Important as Your Tax Return"

It is now your child's senior year in high school. Your child has the perfect college picked out thanks to a great career planning program that not only found the right major for your child, but the right college too! He has taken the SAT's and ACT's and scored as high as he possibly can so that his scholarships and grants will be maximized. You are now feeling pretty good knowing that you have probably saved about $10,000 to $20,000 in expenses already.

Now what?

It's time to fill out Financial Aid forms. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? For those of you that complete your tax returns, you are really going to love Financial Aid forms! Not only are they more complex in general, but unlike a tax return, if you make a mistake you don't get to go back and fix it the next year. Sounds great, right?

Fear not…

Just reading the following pages will help you avoid major mistakes in this process. While I wish I could walk you through all possible mistakes, there are limitations to a simple E-Book. But understanding the big pitfalls will help you get maximize scholarships and grants.

First things first though. Do you know what forms need to be filled out? Well, everyone should at least fill out what is called the FAFSA Form (**F**ree **A**pplication for **F**ederal **S**tudent **A**id). Now there may be others to complete too, like your own state's form, the college's own form, verification forms, a CSS Profile Form, even Business/Farm or Divorced Parents' Supplements. Are you confused yet? Don't be, we'll discuss these in just a few paragraphs.

But for right now, I believe it's important to start with what I believe is the absolute biggest mistake that is made in the entire college planning process. In other words, if you were only going to read one part of this entire book, this would be the one to read. And for the record, this is where my family made a $23,000 mistake that lead to my college planning career and my creation of CollegeAidNow.com. So what is this big mistake?

- ***Having Exposed Assets***

When filling out the FAFSA form, there are certain assets that are counted when calculating your Financial Aid and other assets that are not. Those that are counted are called Exposed Assets.

I feel compelled at this point to mention that this section won't apply to everyone. To my readers that have income in excess of about $350,000 per year, I will give you permission to skip ahead to the next section, although I still think it will be beneficial to understand the concepts. Don't worry though, "Biggest Mistake #5" will be very beneficial to you.

Okay, back to the point.

Exposed Assets can dramatically reduce the amount of Financial Aid you receive. So what qualifies as an Exposed Asset? Basically anything above your Asset Protection Allowance that is not your home or in an IRS qualified retirement account would qualify.

I know what you are thinking…WHAT? You lost me. Well don't worry, I'll explain.

All Federal Financial Aid is based on need. Or in other words, if you don't need it, you won't get it. Simple, right? Also, a good portion of scholarship and grant money given out by the colleges is based on need too.

This is called need based Financial Aid (you see, I told you I'd get to it). Here is how it is calculated:

COA – EFC = NEED

Got it? Believe it or not, it really is as simple as that. Here are the details…

COA stands for **C**ost **O**f **A**ttendance. This is the total cost that the college calculates for your child to go there. It includes tuition, room & board, travel expenses, fees, and miscellaneous expenses.

EFC stands for **E**xpected **F**amily **C**ontribution. This is the amount of money that the Department of Education calculates that your family can pay for the luxury of your child going to college, based on the information you provided in the FAFSA form. I can assure you, just like your income tax, the number is higher than you think it should be. This number never changes based on the cost of the college.

Now, if you are not a math person (or even if you are) I'm going to reveal what this means…

The lower the EFC, the more Financial Aid you are eligible for. The more Financial Aid you are eligible for, the more scholarships and grants you will receive.

Let's go over a few examples just to make sure you've got it:

Let's suppose that after you have filled out your FAFSA form, the Department of Education tells you that your EFC is $15,000. Your child then applies to your local community college that costs $7,000 per year. How much free money can you hope to get to go there? If you said $0, you are right ($7,000 - $15,000 = sorry, no need). Now, what if they applied to Harvard? Harvard's COA is nearing $60,000. How much free money can you hope to get there? If you said $45,000, you got it ($60,000 - $15,000 = $45,000 of need)!

The whole point here is that you want to make your EFC as low as possible so that you can qualify for the most free money (scholarships and grants)!

Ok, so back to those Exposed Assets we were talking about.

Some assets are going to increase that EFC number and some will not. Remember, we don't want to increase that EFC number if we don't have to because it will reduce the amount of free money that you will get.

So, you can have all the money you want in an account that the IRS considers tax qualified and it will not reduce your Financial Aid one bit. These are mostly accounts that you currently don't pay tax on, such as a 401(k), 403(b), IRA, ROTH IRA, qualified annuity, insurance cash value, and the house you live in.

Most of your "other assets" however, like savings accounts, checking accounts, CD's, stocks, mutual funds, 529 Plans, bonds, investment property, rental property, and money under your mattress can significantly increase your EFC. And in case you skimmed over it or thought I made a mistake, yes, 529 college savings plans DO count toward your EFC (I bet your financial advisor didn't tell you that, huh?).

There is one caveat. Depending on your age and whether you are a single parent or not, the Department of Education allows you to have a certain amount of these "other assets" that will not count in your Financial Aid calculation. This amount is called your Asset Protection Allowance. Once you go above that number, your child's Financial Aid will start to be reduced.

Think about it like a tax return. If you make $15,000 per year and have 3 kids, you will have enough deductions and tax credits that you won't owe any income taxes. But if you make $115,000 per year, you can expect to pay some income taxes, because you won't have enough deductions and credits to offset the $115,000. So the key here is, up to a certain point, you won't pay anything for income taxes, but once you get over that threshold, you will start to pay taxes. This is exactly how the Asset Protection Allowance works…you can have a certain amount of assets that won't count toward your EFC, but once you pass that threshold, it will start to increase your EFC. And of course, the further you are over your Asset Protection Allowance, the faster it increases your EFC.

There is a specific table that calculates your Asset Protection. Although it's not an exact science, a good rule of thumb to get an idea of what your Asset Protection Allowance is, take the age of the oldest parent and add three zeros to the end of it. So if the oldest parent is 48, your Asset Protection Allowance will be somewhere near $48,000. If you are a single parent, cut the number in half. No, that is not a typo. The rumors you've heard are false…single parents get PENALIZED in this system, not rewarded. How's that for a myth buster!

If you are really interested in finding out your exact family's Asset Protection Allowance, we keep an updated schedule on our website at www.collegeaidnow.com. Or feel free to send us an email at info@collegeaidnow.com and one of our advisors will send you the info quickly.

So here is the point. If you have exposed assets above your Asset Protection Allowance, you are probably missing out on thousands of dollars of scholarships, grants, and other free money for college.

Now I hate to make matters worse, but there is another major pitfall you need to be aware of here. This seemingly innocuous item adds to your EFC even faster and worse than your exposed assets above the Asset Protection Allowance.

This is the mother of them all; the #1 scholarship killer if you will.

This one doesn't seem to be as much of a secret as it used to be, yet parents still lose scholarships and grants by the thousands because of it.

So what am I talking about? I'm talking about **your child's** exposed assets.

Any money in your child's name will increase that EFC number by 20% starting with dollar one. That's right, they don't get an Asset Protection Allowance like you do.

So if you have money in the bank with your child's name on it, or set up an investment account and find the term UGMA, UTMA, or Custodian on it, you are probably costing your child thousands in free college money, just like my mother cost me.

So what can you do if you or your child has exposed assets?

The answer is, of course, reduce or eliminate them. But how?

Please understand that there can be numerous penalties and tax implications if you reduce or eliminate your exposed assets improperly. However, when done right you will most certainly be getting much more free money for college.

There are some things you can do on your own to help reduce them that I'll get to in a minute, but my best recommendation is that you should consult with your investment professional, tax advisor, or Certified College Planning Specialist first. Now I need to be perfectly clear here, not every investment professional or tax advisor can help you do this! There is one very easy way to tell if they are qualified. Call them up and ask them the following EXACTLY as it appears below:

"Hello (advisors name here), I won't take up much of your time, I just have two questions that I need answered for me really quick. What is my Asset Protection Allowance and where can I fill out a CSS Profile Form?"

If they don't know the answer right away, RUN! This advisor won't be able to help you and may actually cost you money in the process.

Look, your primary care physician didn't fit you for your glasses did he? He probably wouldn't perform open heart or brain surgery for your either if you needed it.

What I'm trying to say is that you really should consult with a specialist on this one.
Would you like to know how I lost out on $23,000 of free money for college? My mother, who was a single parent that made about $20,000 a year when I went to college, met with a financial advisor that was a friend of a friend.

He explained that she should save money for me in my name because there would be better tax savings on the investment. "***What?***" She made $20,000 per year, she didn't pay any tax! And the money in my name didn't allow me to qualify for Pell Grants or scholarships at my college until it was used up in the third year (please note, there wasn't enough to even pay for a year but my mother tried to "stretch it out" which costs us even more). You see, we didn't know it was hurting us, but most importantly the advisor didn't either. This is why parents and students lose money by the thousands for college; They don't know what they don't know. More about this later.

So the whole point of that story was not to feel bad for me (although if you do and feel compelled to help, I'm accepting donations to help pay off my student loans…yes, I'm STILL paying on them!), it was to make you aware that not all financial advisors or tax professionals can help.

If you think you may have Exposed Assets I would highly encourage you to contact a Certified College Planning Specialist (CCPS) in your area. They have the additional training to ensure you properly reduce or eliminate them. To find a CCPS in your area visit www.niccp.com, click on the parent section, then click on "find a CCPS advisor," select the area that you live in and then find the closest by. Or of course, my office would be happy to help you as well over the phone if you are not in the Upstate New York area.

Now, if you are only a little over your Asset Protection Allowance, or absolutely insist on doing everything yourself (although I don't advise performing open heart or brain surgery yourself as I listed above), there are a few things you can do to improve the situation.

First, you need to use up the money in the UGMA, UTMA, and Custodial Accounts for the benefit of your child. Even though this money is considered a gift to your child, you have full discretion to use it as you see fit on their behalf. For example, use it to buy a computer, or a car, or go on vacation, or buy them a copy of this book. DO NOT just sell the account and put it in your name. If you do, you have committed tax evasion and can be penalized by the full extent of the law.

Next you can start working on your money. Maybe you have credit card debt you can pay off, or make some extra payments on your car or house. You could prepay your life insurance, give some to your parents and have them set up a 529 plan for your child, put more in your retirement accounts, or even buy a bunch of my books and give them to your friends for Christmas and Chanukah!

Remember, you still want access to enough of the money to pay for college, so there is a bit of a balancing act there. But with the right planning, you'll have more in your pocket rather than the college bank account!

Okay, onto the next biggest mistake when filing the Financial Aid forms…

- **Missing a Financial Aid Deadline**

If you didn't know, Financial Aid at colleges is awarded on a first come, first served basis and there is only so much aid to go around. If you wait too long to complete your Financial Aid Applications, or miss a deadline all-together, you could easily be giving up thousands of dollars in lost Financial Aid.

As mentioned above, there can be several different Financial Aid Forms that need to be completed for each college your child applies to. Again, these are the FAFSA Form, CSS Profile Form, your own state's Financial Aid Form, Dependant Verification Worksheets, the college's own Institutional Form, and Business/Farm and Divorced Parents Supplements.

If you don't know what forms are required at each school and when they are due, you could easily be costing your family thousands of dollars in lost Financial Aid.

So here is what you need to do…

First and foremost, you need to file your FAFSA form as soon after January 1st of your child's senior year in high school as you can. This form does require actual tax return data, but you can file estimates so that you are first in line for Financial Aid. You can then return to your form when your tax returns are complete to put in the actual data.

Second, find out from each college what other forms are required and when they are due. Each school will usually have all of this information on their website on their Financial Aid Page. If you can't find it, call the Financial Aid Office. Yes, it's that important. Then make sure you complete them by their due date.

A word of caution: Some colleges have deadlines before January 1st of your child's senior year, so don't procrastinate! Ok, another word of caution: Don't wait until your child gets accepted before filling these forms out. If he is planning to apply there, get all the Financial Aid forms done the school requires by the date they require it.

That's really it. There is not much to this section, but you'd be surprised at how many parents I have frantically call me because they had no clue a particular form was due and are now scrambling because they lost thousands of dollars in scholarships and grants.

Helpful Tip…

If you sign up for the CollegeAidNow.com Free Video Series you'll be alerted via email of any important upcoming deadlines. This can help you avoid a costly filing mistake.

Now to the last part of this section. As you may imagine, I get hundreds of phone calls every year from people all throughout the country. Most of those phone calls are due to our next big error…

- **Careless Filing of Financial Aid Forms**

As I mentioned earlier, some Financial Aid Forms can be more complicated and more exhausting than completing your US 1040 tax return. But again, unlike a 1040, you cannot go back and make corrections to a previous year's Financial Aid Form.

Take a look at the following Financial Aid Award letter on the next page. This is part of an actual Financial Aid Award Package that I reviewed. In particular, notice the amount of the "Parents' Contribution" and "Total Scholarship/Grant Aid."

Cornell University
Office of Financial Aid and
Student Employment

203 Day Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-2801
t. 607.255.5145
f. 607.255.5022
e. cornellu_fin_aid@cornell.edu
http://finaid.cornell.edu

MAY 9, 2005

ACADEMIC YEAR 2005-2006

EMILY

Award Notification

ESTIMATE OF COSTS:		ESTIMATE OF RESOURCES	
Tuition & Fees	$31,467	Parents' Contribution	$25,000
Room & Board	10,300	Summer Savings Expectation	2,060
Books & Supplies	680	Student Assets	0
Personal Expenses/Travel	1,419	Other Resources	0
TOTAL BUDGET	$43,866	TOTAL FAMILY RESOURCES	$27,060

FINANCIAL NEED $16,806

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIP/GRANT AID (AS DETAILED BELOW):	$ 5,767
CORNELL GRANT	5,767

Based on this letter, the student is only getting $5,767 of free money to help pay for college.

After reviewing this award package and meeting with the client I discovered he made a common mistake on his FAFSA form. Fortunately, it was early along in the process and we were able to fix the mistake.

Here is a copy of the updated Financial Aid Package once we made the correction. Again, notice the amount of the "Parents' Contribution" and "Total Scholarship/Grant Aid."

Cornell University
Office of Financial Aid and
Student Employment

203 Day Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-2801
t. 607.255.5145
f. 607.255.5022
e. cornellu_fin_aid@cornell.edu
http://finaid.cornell.edu

REVISION LETTER

FEBRUARY 6, 2006

FMIIY

ESTIMATE OF COSTS:		ESTIMATE OF RESOURCES	
Tuition & Fees	31,467	Parents' Contribution	21,200
Room & Board	11,100	Summer Savings Expectation	2,060
Books & Supplies	680	Student Assets	0
Personal Expenses/Travel	1,411	Other Resources	0
TOTAL BUDGET	44,658	TOTAL FAMILY RESOURCES	23,260

FINANCIAL NEED 21,398

REVISED FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE:

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIP/GRANT AID (AS DETAILED BELOW): $11,417

CORNELL GRANT	6,567
MISCELLANEOUS OUTSIDE SCHOL	550
CORNELL GRANT (A)	3,800
NYS MERIT SCHOLARSHIP 2005-2006	500

Do you remember our conversation about EFC? In this Financial Aid Award Letter the "Parents' Contribution" is part of their EFC. Now, remember that the lower the EFC the more potential for free money? Keeping that in mind, look what happened.

The amount of the "Parents' Contribution" was reduced from $25,000 in the first letter down to $21,200 in the second letter.

Because of that reduction, look at the effect it had in the "Total Scholarship/Grant Aid" part (this is the free money section).

This family is now getting $5,650 more in free money!

This proves that just one careless error can cost you thousands of dollars in lost Financial Aid.

In this particular case, the parents attempted to fill out their own Financial Aid Form (which you will soon get my opinion on who should do that) and read the directions wrong. They included their IRA account when they filled out the form. Remember I mentioned that IRA accounts don't go on the FAFSA form? Without a Financial Aid review, this family would likely have lost out on that scholarship money!

Unfortunately this happens all of the time. Many parents don't have any idea that they have lost out on lots of free college money. Lucky for you, you have this book, so you won't be making a mistake like that, right?

So how can you prevent this from happening to you?

There are a few things you can do. First and foremost, don't rush when completing the forms. Parents just want to get it done and over with. Let me ask you this, when you bought your house, did you just rush and try to get it done and over with? Of course you didn't. Well guess what, college could cost just as much as your house if you're not careful! Take a few days to get it done and follow all of the directions to a tee. As a general rule, if you complete your own taxes and know what schedules A and D are, you can probably do it yourself if you don't rush.

However if you don't complete your own taxes, I recommend having a professional do it. You don't need to be as careful finding an expert as you did with having exposed assets, but you want to at least find an accountant, tax professional, or CCPS that does a few dozen a year.

Hiring a professional will not only save you hours of time, but it will better insure that your forms are completed properly so you won't lose out on the Financial Aid you are entitled to.

Mistake #4- Accepting Your 1st Financial Aid Offer

"Why and How to Appeal for a Better Financial Aid Package"

Financial Aid forms are normally completed months before your student ever sets foot on campus. In fact, the information you provide in them will even be from a previous year's tax return. So how can colleges possibly provide you an accurate and up to date Financial Aid Package?

The answer will astound you. Are you ready for it? The truth is, they can't.

What's worse is they may even make mistakes when putting your Financial Aid Package together!

Take a look at the following example on the next page. It is part of an actual Financial Aid Award letter one of my clients received from Cazenovia College. Do you notice anything wrong with it?

Cazenovia College
Financial Aid Award Letter

Please indicate your response by checking accept or decline next to the offered program, sign the certification below and return a copy to the Admissions and Financial Aid Office.

Financial Aid Estimates:

Accept/Decline			Fall	Spring	Total
____	____	Presidential Leadership Schol.	$ 3,900	$ 3,899	$ 7,799
____	____	NYS Tuition Assistance	1,866	1,865	3,731
		Total Financial Aid Offered	**$ 5,766**	**$ 5,764**	**$ 11,530**

I accept or decline this award as indicated above and affirm that the financial aid received will be used solely for the cost of attending Cazenovia College.

Student Signature ____________________ Date ____________

Well? Does it look good to you?

Are you saying to yourself, "How should I know?" Well, that is actually my point. How are you supposed to know if it's good or bad? You probably feel like you are trying to read a second language!

I'll tell you what…take a look at the revised version on the next page and see if it at least looks a little better to you than the first one (the one above)…

Cazenovia College
Financial Aid Award Letter

Please indicate your response by checking accept or decline next to the offered program, sign the certification below and return a copy to the Admissions and Financial Aid Office.

Financial Aid Estimates:

Accept/Decline			Fall	Spring	Total
____	____	Cazenovia College Grant	$ 850	$ 850	$ 1,700
____	____	Presidential Leadership Schol.	3,900	3,899	7,799
____	____	Federal Pell Grant	1,400	1,400	2,800
____	____	Federal SEOG Grant	100	100	200
____	____	NYS Tuition Assistance	1,866	1,865	3,731
____	____	Direct Subsidized Loan*	1,313	1,312	2,625
		Total Financial Aid Offered	**$ 9,429**	**$ 9,426**	**$ 18,855**

* Loan funds will be less any origination fees.

I accept or decline this award as indicated above and affirm that the financial aid received will be used solely for the cost of attending Cazenovia College.

______________________________ ______________
Student Signature Date

Do you notice some of the differences? If not, that's okay. Let me walk you through it.

The revised letter (the second letter) offered my client $4,700 more in free money (they added a Cazenovia College Grant for $1,700, a Federal Pell Grant for $2,800, and a SEOG Grant for $200). Do you see it now?

So why did they do that? Well, Cazenovia made a mistake putting his Financial Aid Package together. With an understanding of the Financial Aid System, we politely made them aware of their error and they took the proper steps to fix it.

What? I know, I know. How are you supposed to understand the Financial Aid System at this level of detail? It's a valid question and I will answer it soon, but for now, let's keep going.

Do you notice anything wrong with this next actual Financial Aid Award Letter?

R·I·T

2006-2007 Financial Aid Award

Office of Financial Aid
and Scholarships
56 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, New York 14623

585-475-2186 Voice
585-475-6909 TTY
www.rit.edu/financialaid

Michael 03/14/2006

Award	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Total
RIT Grant		$666	$667	$667	$2,000
RIT Presidential Scholar		$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$3,000
RIT Computing Medal Sch		$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$3,000
Estimated TAP Award		$166	$167	$167	$500
Subsidized Direct Loan		$875	$875	$875	$2,625
Federal Perkins Loan		$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$3,000
Federal Work Study *					$2,100
Total Financial Aid		$4,707	$4,709	$4,709	$16,225*

All aid is subject to change if additional data requested conflicts with information originally submitted on your financial aid forms.

Don't worry. If you didn't notice anything, that is good. Why? Because by itself, it really doesn't mean anything. But now take a look at the revised letter on the next page and notice the $2,000 increase in grant money (free money) listed as "RIT Grant Increase."

Amendment

Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships
56 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, New York 14623
585-475-2186 Voice
585-475-6909 TTY
www.rit.edu/financialaid

R·I·T

2006-2007 Financial Aid Award

Award	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Total
RIT Grant Increase		$666	$667	$667	$2,000
RIT Grant		$666	$667	$667	$2,000
RIT Presidential Scholar		$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$3,000
RIT Computing Medal Sch		$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$3,000
Estimated TAP Award		$166	$167	$167	$500
Subsidized Direct Loan		$875	$875	$875	$2,625
Federal Perkins Loan		$1,333	$1,333	$1,334	$4,000
Federal Work Study *					$2,100
Total Financial Aid		$5,706	$5,709	$5,710	$19,225*

All aid is subject to change if additional data requested conflicts with information originally submitted on your financial aid forms.

Why did RIT give $2,000 more free money in the revised letter? Because the information that RIT had in order to put this package together was outdated. They were unaware of a current business loss my client had suffered. We politely made them aware of the situation and they generously offered more grant money.

The point I'm trying to make is this:

If you are qualified to appeal for more Financial Aid and you don't, or do so incorrectly, you will be giving up thousands of dollars in Scholarships and Grants.

So what is the solution?

The solution is that you need to Appeal your Financial Aid Award correctly for more money.

There is a right way and a wrong way to appeal, of course. For example, which one of the following two appeal letters do you think would produce better results?

Letter #1

March 1, 2008

ABC College
Financial Aid Office
123 Any Street
Anytown, NY 12345

RE: John Q. Smith, Student ID: 12345

Dear Financial Aid Committee,

We have reviewed your financial aid offer for the 2009/2010 school year. The amount that you gave us will not be enough.

Our family doesn't make much money so we feel that we should be able to get more free money at your school.

Also, my salary was cut this year so money will be even more tight.

Please let us know how much more money you can offer us.

Thank you,

Mr. and Mrs. Smith

Letter #2

March 1, 2008

ABC College
Financial Aid Office
123 Any Street
Anytown, NY 12345

RE: John Q. Smith, Student ID: 12345

Dear Financial Aid Committee,

We have reviewed your financial aid offer for the 2009/2010 school year. While we are very appreciative of $3,100 Class of 1956 Scholarship and $2,000 Heritage Award, due to our family situation we will most likely be financially unable to afford to send John to ABC College. Can you help us?

The estimated cost of attendance at your school is over $28,200. Our family contribution, according to the U.S. Department of Education, is $3,177. Therefore, our need is in excess of $25,928. The package you offered me contains aid totaling $13,403, or only about 50% of the total need. Can you please consider this?

According to the CollegeBoard, we noticed that the average freshman last year received $9,785 in scholarship/grant awards. John received $5,100 in scholarship/grant money. Is there any chance that this could be reviewed?

In addition, Mr. Smith's salary was cut by $10,000 this year due to the state of the economy. We have enclosed the documentation showing last year's wages and this year's wages for your review.

Any further monetary efforts made would be deeply appreciated. We thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration of this matter. If you need to contact us for any reason, please do not hesitate to call at (315) 555-1234.

Best regards,

Mr. and Mrs. Smith

Obviously Letter #2 will greatly improve your chances for getting more aid over the first letter.

Helpful Tip…

I understand how much more people enjoy learning by watching a demonstration. The CollegeAidNow.com Free Video Series provides a video demonstration of letters similar to the ones above. Just go to CollegeAidNow.com and sign up to receive videos full of outstanding college planning advice absolutely free.

By properly appealing for more aid, you could save thousands of dollars on college costs, just like the examples shown above.

However, as noted above, how do you really know if you got a good deal? And how do you really know how to properly appeal?

There are two ways to find out:

1- Do extensive research on the subject yourself

2- Seek the advice of a trained professional

This is one of those times where I would highly recommend consulting with a professional. You don't want to run the risk of actually losing any scholarships and grants, so I recommend you work with someone with experience and a track record of successful appeals.

Here's is how you do it:

Go to www.niccp.com and click on the parent section. From there find the link that at the top that says "find a CCPS advisor." Next, select the area that you live in and then find the closest Certified College Planning Specialist near you. A Certified College Planning Specialist has gone through the proper training and has passed several tests in order to be able to handle such a task.

However, if you are the type that simply MUST do all of the college planning stuff yourself, here is what I recommend. Start with this article by Don Betterton, former Director of Financial Aid at Princeton University:

http://www.simpletuition.com/pay-for-college/plan/financial-aid-award/the-financial-aid-appeal-process/

Then go to your local bookstore, or on Amazon.com and buy the most recent copy of the following guide put out by the CollegeBoard: "Getting Financial Aid."

Use the book to find out what the average awards are at the school you are applying to and compare it to your award. If your award seems substandard based on your EFC (which is explained in the book and in the article I suggested) you may want to appeal.

Mistake #5-Leaving Tax Scholarships Unused

"How to get Uncle Sam to Pay Your Tuition"

While this section applies to all parents, it will have the biggest impact on those readers that make over $350,000 per year in income alone. In fact, by using one of the methods I discuss in this section, I was able to save a client over $685,000 in expenses over the seven years his children went to college. To this day he is still saving almost $100,000 per year thanks to some of the tax strategies I'll be discussing soon…so listen up!

I've observed over the past decade that most people either complete their tax returns themselves, or drop them off at their tax preparer's office and wait for the phone call when they are ready to be picked up.

While this may not be a major problem most of the time, it can cost you big time in lost deductions and credits when your child is in college.

There are several Federal and State tax deductions and credits that you can take on your tax returns when it comes to college. Even some that reduce your income reported to the IRS.

If you use Turbo Tax, or another tax software program, it only knows the information that you actually put into the program. If you don't put your college cost information in correctly, it can't possibly give you the best deductions and credits. It also can't compute two tax returns simultaneously…meaning that you may have been better off using the deduction or credit on your child's tax return rather than yours. Heck, you may even be better off (if you're married) to file married filing separately.

Most accountants and CPA's do hundreds to thousands of tax returns each year. They usually don't take the extra time to review your college cost information to see how to position your tax deductions and credits for the next four years (or more).

I can't tell you how many tax returns I've seen where there are no education deductions or credits at all! Why? The college may not have issued a 1098T tax form or it was mailed to your child and it never got to you.

My point is already proven if you said, "What the heck is a 1098T form." So you know, it's the form the college issues showing the amount you paid and how much you received in free money.

Tax software and tax preparers need to have this form in order to claim some deductions and credits. Since parents are not familiar with these different forms, they don't even think twice about it. Had you heard about a 1098T before I mentioned it? That is just one example.

Business owners are the biggest culprits, especially those who earn too much income to qualify for Financial Aid. There are so many allowable tax deductions and credits for college, but with over 40,000 pages of tax code, they don't know which ones to take. Their tax preparer is, in most cases, too busy doing other returns or may not even know about these deductions themselves.

Most business owners I meet with have never heard of some, or any of these deductions, credits, and tax strategies:

- Health Reimbursement Plan

- Health Savings Account (HSA)
- Hiring your Child
- Deducting a Child's Car (this is a very little known technique)
- Change of Entity
- Education Assistance Plan or Tuition Assistance Program
- Gift and Leaseback Program
- Appreciated Asset Gifting
- Section 1.163-10T(0)(5)

These are just some of the biggest examples. If you and your tax preparer have not discussed these tax deductions and credits, or if you have never heard of them, you are probably spending thousands of additional and unnecessary dollars each year on taxes.

For example, spending just $10,000 a year on insurance premiums can result in an additional $1,500 in taxes without a Health Reimbursement Plan. Hiring your child can shift income to a lower tax bracket and allow you to even deduct his or her vehicle from your business potentially saving you thousands. A Tuition Assistance Program can allow you a deduction of up to $5,250 per year in college tuition costs. Section 1.163-10T(0)(5) can allow you to deduct home interest as a business expense which can help save thousands with a child going to college.

Again, these are just some examples.

In fact, the business owner I mentioned earlier that saved over $685,000 while his children were in college ended up changing his entity type, hired his children, deducted their cars, set up an education assistance plan, incorporated a Health Reimbursement Plan, and gifted appreciated assets away.

So, how do you make sure to get the college deductions and credits you are entitled to? Here is what you need to do. For those parents who are not business owners, you need to keep track of all of your college expenses each year. When it comes time to complete your taxes, MAKE SURE you have a 1098T form from the college. If you don't, you need to call the school's bursars office and find out why.

Be sure to carefully enter the information into your tax program if you are using one, or give all of this information to your tax preparer. When you review your return, check to see that there is an education deduction on your return somewhere.

If you are a business owner, I recommend you review the 3 online videos on this web page:

http://parents.niccp.com/video-presentation.asp

They discuss some of the tax deduction and credit strategies I mentioned above. You will see that it is not uncommon to save over $10,000 to $20,000 each year. In fact, the clients I save the most money are always business owners.

You may also want to find a CPA that is well versed in this field. You can start by doing a Google search for "CPA in 'your town' college planning."

Helpful Tip…

If you are a business owner and don't have someone to help look over these deductions for you, we have currently hired more advisors at our firm to help with this process. Send us an email at info@collegeaidnow.com and someone will be happy to answer your questions.

Mistake #6-Applying for the Wrong Student Loans

"Why the Average Child Lives at Home Until Age 25"

Let's face the facts. The majority of parents do not have enough money saved for their children's college education. So what does this mean?

It means that they will ultimately have to rely on loans to fill the cost gap.

Sure, so far I've given you the tools necessary to save between $30,000 to $50,000, but odds are that you will still need to take out some sort of loan. So, now I'm going to tell you how to save money on that too.

There are several loans available to students and families. Although I will admit they are a little harder to come by after the financial meltdown in 2008. Some of these loans include:

- Perkins Loans
- Parent Plus Loans
- Subsidized Stafford Loans
- Unsubsidized Stafford Loans
- Home Equity Loans

- Alternative or Collegiate Loans

After all of these choices, I can see why parents get so confused, since each one of these loans has their strengths and weaknesses.

In fact I recently received a call from someone who had taken out an Alternative Loan. She said that she had good credit and received an offer from a loan company to borrow $13,000 for 15 years at an 11.24% interest rate with a 5% Origination Fee. She asked me if this was normal for someone in her situation.

After reviewing her information, I determined that it was not a good loan offer. Including the origination fee, she would have paid $27,600 over 15 years.

After completing a loan review, we were able to get her the same loan with a 7.74% interest rate and no origination fee. Over the life of the loan it will save her $5,588. Since she will need to borrow $13,000 each year for four years, her total savings will be $22,352!

By choosing the right loan, you can save thousands of dollars of loan interest, just like the example above. By choosing the wrong loan, you can spend years stressing over payments and missing out on much better uses of your money!

So how do you select the right loan?

Well, let's first look at the loans that are backed by the U.S. Department of Education and are therefore actually considered Financial Aid (yes, loans can be considered Financial Aid!). These are the best loans for students, but some are better others. So, here is the order in which I recommend taking them:

- Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan
- Perkins Loan
- Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan

You want pick the Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan first for 2 reasons. First, interest will not accrue on the loan while your child is in college. This just means that you will only owe the amount that you borrowed once your child graduates and interest will not be added to that amount. Second, it has the lowest fixed interest rate out there, currently at 3.4%. But again, you won't have to start paying that 3.4% interest until AFTER your child graduates. Another great thing about this loan is that it is strictly held in your child's name, so you will not be at all responsible for this loan.

The next best loan is the Perkins Loan. Like the Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan, interest will not accrue until after your child graduates. However, once you do start paying on the loan, the interest rate will be a bit higher than the Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan. Currently this rate is 5%. This loan is strictly in your child's name as well.

If these loans do not cover the cost of college, there may be other loans available to you. These loans include:

- Alternative Loan
- HELOC

- Parent PLUS Loan

An Alternative Loan is a loan in the child's name, but usually must include a credit worthy cosigner also. It can be deferred until the child graduates or drops below half-time, but interest will accrue on this loan from day one.

The best place to find and compare Alternative Loans is www.simpletuition.com. In fact this is the website we used to help the woman in the example above.

If you don't want the loan in your child's name, you can opt for either a Parent PLUS Loan or a HELOC (Home Equity Line Of Credit). A Parent PLUS Loan is designed to be used to pay for your child's college education, but since it is not backed by the U.S. Department of Education, and there is no collateral for the loan, you will need to have good credit in order to qualify. Also, interest will accrue right away and you are looking at a 7.9% interest rate currently.

A HELOC, as the name implies, is only available if you have equity in your home. If you do, it can be a great way to pay for college since interest rates are so low right now. However, as some parents are quick to point out, if you don't pay on this loan the bank can take your house! So, you need to consider that in your decision.

Please note: If you are a parent that does not have good credit, and get denied for a Parent PLUS loan, your child may be able to receive an additional $4,000 in a Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan. Contact the Financial Aid office at your child's college if this happens to you and they will show you how to get the extra $4,000.

For more information and some free guides that the US Department of Education has that go into detail on all of the college loans available, visit their website at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov.

Mistake #7- Not using a Professional College Planner

"Would you operate on Your Own Brain?"

The main difference between those who receive maximum college funding and those who don't is often a matter of knowing what to do, and when to do it. Many experts even claim that when it comes to the cost of a college education there are two prices, one for the informed and one for the uninformed.

As you can see from the preceding sections, if you don't use the college funding systems in place, legitimately and within the required time frame, whether you're interested in a four-year public school, a four-year private school, a community college, or a school specializing in some particular field, you will most likely be wasting thousands of unnecessary dollars on college expenses.

The book *Paying for College without Going Broke* points out that:

> *"A good financial aid consultant will do far more than simply fill out forms. Anyone can throw together numbers on paper. Principally, you hire a consultant to examine your entire financial situation ahead of time and make recommendations to increase your aid eligibility. A good consultant will know the specific rules that govern aid in your state, will be up to date on the constantly changing regulations that govern tax law and financial aid, and will assist you to complete the forms to maximize your aid eligibility."*

The College Board also notes:

> *"The more information you are able to provide up front about your family's situation, the easier it will be for the financial aid office to identify and address your need and eligibility for assistance. Missed deadlines, incomplete or inaccurate answers, and messy or illegible forms can hurt you… Very few families pay the full 'sticker price' for education beyond High School. Financial aid programs and financing options help supplement the amount a family is able to pay toward the total cost of college….To improve your chances of getting the financial help you need, you must know what you have to do, when you have to do it, and how to do it right—the first time."*

I've found over the years that parents don't know what they don't know. Now, go back and read that line again until it becomes clear.

So here is my final piece of advice for this book:

When you are embarking on something of great importance, it usually pays to seek out the advice of an expert. When you are buying a house, you will most likely use a Real Estate Agent. When you complete a Last Will and Testament you will most likely use an attorney. When you have an involved tax return, you will surely call a CPA. I can't imagine then, when you are talking about the future of your child and the potential great expense it will cost, that you wouldn't at least speak to a college planning expert.

In most cases, an initial consultation and a review of your current college plan won't cost you a penny. And also keep in mind, this book only discusses the biggest mistakes that I continually see. There are still several other pitfalls that parents make that end up costing their family money as well.

So I highly recommend that you at least speak with a college planning specialist. Again, there are many available, but I suggest you find one that is certified.

What is a Certified College Planning Specialist (CCPS)? By definition, a CCPS is a financial planning professional who has demonstrated his or her knowledge by meeting the requirements of the National Institute of Certified College Planners (NICCP).

These requirements include passing a series of three tests on college-related topics including: investments for college, tuition tax credits and deductions, tax planning, and student grants, loans, and scholarships. CCPS designees must refresh and expand their expertise regularly by obtaining 12 hours of continuing education credits in college planning every year.

Again, if you would like to find one in your area, visit www.niccp.com, click on the parent section, and then click on "find a CCPS advisor."

Final Thoughts

Fortunately there are thousands of families that effectively maximize their college aid money and minimize their costs. However, there are millions out there that haven't been helped; many wasting thousands of dollars each year in unnecessary college expenses.

It happened to me personally, spending over $23,000 in unnecessary expenses, and it gets me frustrated every time I see a parent go through the same thing.

I want to help as many families as I can not make the same mistakes I did, or so many other families do every year.

That is why I wrote this book, why I teach families across the country about the process, and why I volunteer to help different communities and organizations understand the process.

I'd like you to know that my office can be reached with any questions you may have at: info@collegeaidnow.com

If you are looking to get more information on the college funding process, you may find the following websites helpful:

College Planning Help:

www.niccp.com

www.savingforcollege.com

www.finaid.org

www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov

College Searches and Advice:

www.collegeboard.com

www.petersons.com

Career Planning:

www.careerdimensions.com

SAT/ACT Prep

www.eprep.com

Free Scholarship Searches

www.collegeboard.com

www.fastweb.com

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