

Facts about Getting into College

Four years of college can cost as little as \$2,000 or as much as \$100,000. But costs should not prevent a good student from going to college. You should encourage your child to go to college and take the responsibility for getting the financial information that is needed. The most important thing you can do is to make sure your child takes good mathematics and science courses in high school, learns to study, and gets good grades. There are also some tests that students can take to qualify for scholarships and financial aid. Here are some important steps to take during the junior and senior years of high school.

- *Take the PSAT test.* Many organizations, businesses, and foundations base their scholarship selection on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) that is given in October of the junior year. As soon as school starts in August or September, make sure your child is registered to take the PSAT test.
- *Find out about financial aid.* There are many opportunities for financial aid, especially for minority students entering mathematics, science, and engineering fields. Many colleges do require parents and families to contribute to their child's education. They put together an individualized "package" that includes scholarships, loans, part-time student work, and parent's savings. Application forms for financial aid and the guidelines for the amounts of family contribution are available from the high school guidance counselor.
- *Obtain information from colleges.* During the junior year and the summer before the senior year, write to the colleges you have selected for catalogs, application forms, and financial aid information. Books with information about colleges and their addresses are in bookstores and libraries. Most colleges require you to complete the College Board's Financial Aid Form (FAF) or the American College Testing Program Family Financial Statement (FFS). These forms need to be

completed only once, then all colleges have them available for determining financial need.

- *Contact community organizations.* Write to community organizations and talk to school guidance counselors about sources for scholarships. If you work for a large company, ask about scholarships for children of employees. Many books about scholarship sources can be found in bookstores and libraries. There are special scholarships for minority students and for students from certain areas of the country. Scholarships and loan forgiveness programs are available for students who plan to teach mathematics or science.
- *Plan to take the SAT and ACT tests.* Many colleges require a certain score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT) Assessment for admission. Students should take one of these tests during the fall of their senior year. There are fees for taking the test, but fee waivers are available. If a student takes four years of mathematics and science, along with English, history, a foreign language, and other challenging courses there should be no problem earning a good score. Some schools offer SAT preparation programs and review books are available, but the best preparation is a solid high school program of study.

Everybody can go to college. Community colleges, state colleges and universities, small liberal arts colleges, and prestigious private universities all offer a good college education. Costs, individual preferences, and locations vary, but some kind of college is available to everyone. The country needs people with good mathematical, scientific, and technical knowledge. Minorities and women have not traditionally studied in these areas. But the nation's needs will become more acute in the future, providing great opportunities for good jobs and fulfilling careers to anyone with a good mathematics education.