



COLLEGE PLANNING



It Pays To Apply For College Aid

(NAPSA)—The cost of college is going up, and has been for years. But college-bound students shouldn't assume that their family will have to pay for everything. They may qualify for scholarships and loans based on financial need.

That's one of the messages of the *Guide to Getting Financial Aid*, a new book published by the College Board.

"Every year, thousands of families miss out on grants, scholarships and low-interest loans because they don't apply for student financial aid," says Jack Joyce, the Board's director of college-planning services and one of the contributors to the book.

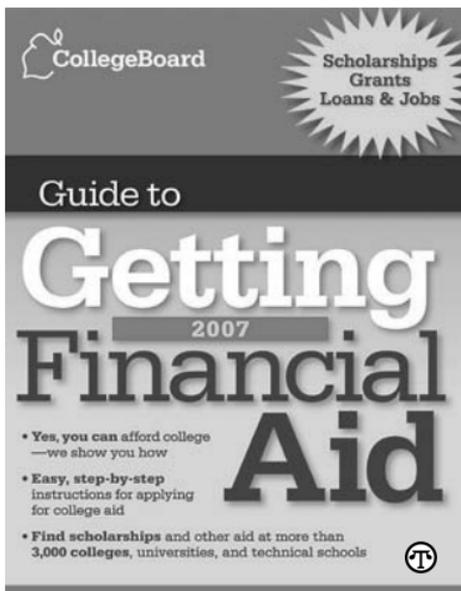
"In many cases, parents assume that they earn too much to qualify for aid, but they're often wrong. Since it costs nothing to apply for federal aid, it's better to apply and find out for sure."

The *Guide to Getting Financial Aid* offers dozens of other tips and strategies for families, including:

- **Apply on time.** Most colleges award aid after a "priority date" in February or early March. This can be confusing, because the application forms are based on the family's tax returns. But waiting until April 15th to submit the financial aid forms can mean missing out on opportunity.

- **If in doubt, contact the colleges.** If you have questions at any point in the process, don't hesitate to contact the colleges to which you're applying for aid.

- **Private schools cost more but also award more aid.** The "sticker price" for a private college may be twice as high as a public university, but these schools also award much more financial aid.



ON AVERAGE, students attending private colleges only pay one-half of a school's "sticker price." The rest is usually made up in scholarships, grants and loans.

"Students shouldn't let cost discourage them from applying to any school they're interested in," says Joyce, "because financial aid may make up the difference."

- **It pays to save.** Even with financial aid, almost every family will be expected to pay something to support its child's education. College savings can make it much easier to meet this "expected family contribution," as it's called by the financial aid officers who distribute federal funds.

More information about college financial aid can be found on the federal student aid Web site, www.studentaid.gov, and the College Board Web site, www.collegeboard.com.

The *Guide to Getting Financial Aid* can be found wherever books are sold.