



IowaCollegeAid.gov
Your Financial Aid Connection

NEWS RELEASE

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Advice for College-Bound Students: Start with the End in Mind when Selecting a College

Iowa College Aid recommends students align college choice with cost and career potential

Des Moines, IA, June 6, 2012 –The end of the school year also marks the beginning of a busy year for students preparing to enter their senior year of high school. One of the biggest decisions high school seniors will face is selecting a college – a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly. Picking the right college means finding the perfect fit, allowing students to earn a degree in as short a timeframe as possible, at a cost that fits within the family's budget. The wrong selection can mean transferring schools, losing credits, delaying college graduation or worse.

“There is a growing gap between the job positions employers will need to fill in the future and the number of college graduates who have the education and training needed to fill the job openings,” explained Karen Misjak, executive director of the Iowa College Student Aid Commission. “To minimize college costs and maximize future employability, students need to keep the end in mind when selecting a college,” said Misjak. “They need to make decisions based on where they want to be after two or four years of college. That means having a general career path in mind and being aware of job market trends and the outlook of potential careers.”

Iowa College Aid recommends the following pointers to help students compare schools and find the right fit:

Explore Careers

While you don't have to know exactly what you want to major in, having a general career path in mind is an important factor in finding the right college fit. Resources like www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov can help you find colleges that offer majors that interest you, match characteristics you find important in a college, and provide side-by-side college comparisons.

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Keep Employability in the Forefront

Be aware of the income potential and the job outlook for careers within your chosen career path. Find information specific to Iowa and across the nation in www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov. Check out resources available at your prospective college. Career service centers, career fairs, on-campus recruiting, job search assistance and networking events can help you land internships, co-op programs, research opportunities and ultimately a job after graduation. Check out the [Iowa College & University Snapshots](#) on Iowa College Aid's website to compare colleges on important factors such as retention and graduation rates.

Keep Loan Balances in Check with Potential Earnings

Stories about debt-ridden college students are abundant. To keep from joining their ranks, it is important to select a college where you can keep your student loan debt at a reasonable level compared to your potential income. For example, if you plan to go into social work, with an expected starting salary of just under \$25,000 in Iowa, your student loan payments should not be much over \$200 a month to keep within 15% of your net income. On a standard 10-year repayment plan, that equates to around \$20,000 in total student loan debt. Check out the SLOPE calculator in www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov to determine reasonable student loan debt levels for other career choices.

Make an Educated Decision

If after all of your research and comparisons you are still undecided, take the time to go over the pros and cons of each choice. Review your on-campus tour notes, consider the strength of your academic program, and be rational about college costs and the amount of student loans you will need to borrow at each college. In the long run it is not always best for your financial future to just follow your heart. You will be spending years at college, and even more YEARS paying back student loans, so it is important to know your choice feels right to you.

By using some of these ideas, students will be better prepared for a future career and less likely to be blindsided by a tough job market or burdensome student loan debt. Keeping the end in mind during the college section process is the key to a successful outcome. For more information on how to plan prepare and pay for college, please contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456 or visit www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.

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About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling nearly \$60.0 million annually, administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) program, provides borrowers with assistance to avoid the serious consequences of default, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR-UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being utilized to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.