

HIGH \$\$\$ or \$\$\$ LOW HOW WILL YOU GO?

Certain colleges may blow you away with their state-of-the-art buildings, fitness facilities, and residence halls. Other schools, not so much — even though the professors and courses may be just as good.

When considering the cost of college, remember that you do have choices, and that each of those choices may have an impact on the cost of your education. Think about those things that you absolutely need in order to get a degree, as opposed to those things that may enhance your experience without necessarily adding educational value.

No judgment here. If you want a latté lifestyle while you're in school, you at least know that about yourself. However, if your primary goal is to avoid some craptacular student debt, play along here to see what kind of impact different choices may have. For each of the categories below, make different combinations of choices, then tally up on the next page.

TUITION

You want to be closer to the ocean, so you choose University of Connecticut — start with **\$38,098** because you're an out-of-state student.

You choose a Vermont state college that has the same major — start with **\$24,898** (tuition for in-state students).

COMPUTERS

You want a laptop that contains every software program on campus and access to the campus-wide wireless Internet — **add \$2,900.**

You use the laptop you have now, and take advantage of the campus 24-hour tech-support and FREE access to the library printers — **add \$1,500** for software and the campus technology fee.

As a commuting student, you bring your laptop to use on the wireless campus, so you have only to buy the software you need for your major and pay the technology fee — **add \$800.**

TEXTBOOKS

At www.textbookrush.com you buy all brand-new textbooks, including Marieb's *Essentials of Human Anatomy & Physiology* for \$188 — **add \$1,000.**

At www.mycollegetextbooks.com, you find used books in good condition, including Marieb's *Essentials of Human Anatomy & Physiology* for \$39.99 — **add \$400.**

TRANSPORTATION

You bring a car to campus and park it in the university parking garage — **add \$1,000.**

You use your bike and ride campus/city buses for FREE with your student ID (buses every 15 minutes) — **no additional charge.**

RESIDENCE HALLS

You jump at the chance for a **single** room in a state-of-the-art residence hall that includes multiple study lounges, a social lounge, tennis and basketball courts, and fitness center — **add \$15,655.**

You choose a **triple** room (you and two room-mates) in the same high-end residence hall — **add \$9,565.**

You live at home and become a commuting student — **add \$1,500** for gas and snacks for the road.

ATHLETIC EVENTS

You purchase the premium athletic pass, sit in the first 10 rows at all athletic events, and receive unlimited drinks/snacks — **add \$1,000.**

You use your student ID to gain free access to all athletic events, with seating above row 10 in the 30,000-seat facility — **no additional charge.**

BUILDING FACILITIES

You attend classes in remodeled or new classrooms with high-back padded chairs and computerized workstations — **add \$5,000.**

You attend classes in buildings constructed between 1955 and 1975, with furnishings from that era — **subtract \$2,000.**

SPRING BREAK

Annual spring-break excursion to the Caribbean, complete with airfare, lodging, and three meals a day for five days — **add \$3,000.**

Alternative spring break excursion to New Orleans, Louisiana, for five days to assist fellow students helping to rebuild a school — **add \$300** travel fee.

Spring break working at the hardware store where you worked the previous summer — **subtract \$700.**

MEAL PLAN

You want to eat in the food court with three different nationally recognized restaurants serving food 24 hours a day — **add \$4,500.**

You opt for the campus dining halls that serve three meals a day from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM and offer a salad bar, a deli bar, and pizza — **add \$2,500.**

As a commuting student, you grab breakfast at home and bring lunch when the spirit moves you to make it — **add \$500** for a punch card you can use for a limited number of meals on campus.

WINTER SKI/RIDE

You purchase a student ski/ride pass at the local mountain and buy lunch at the resort each time you go — **add \$500.**

You volunteer three hours a weekend to help instructors teach kids ages 6–10 to ski/snowboard; in exchange, you receive a pass to ski free the rest of the day (and you bring your own lunch) — **no additional charge.**

MY COSTS

Tuition	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Textbooks	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Residence halls	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Building facilities	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Meal plan	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Computers	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Transportation	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Athletic events	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Spring break	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Winter ski/ride	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
TOTAL COSTS	\$	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

PROS & CONS of my choices

Take a look at your various totals after combining different choices. Then imagine that you applied for financial aid from the federal government, from VSAC, and from the college.

Let's say you're awarded the following amounts to help absorb this year's college expenses. These figures are only examples, and while there's no promise that you'll receive these awards, generally two out of every three students attending four-year colleges in the U.S. receive some sort of financial aid.

- Pell grant free** \$\$ from the federal government for low-income students **\$3,500**
- The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity grant free** \$\$ from the federal government for students with exceptional financial need **\$1,000**
- Vermont grant free** \$\$ from the Vermont Legislature through VSAC (amount will depend partly on the school you attend) **\$3,000**
- College grant free** \$\$ from the college **\$1,600**
- Campus work-study** jobs arranged by your school, usually in offices or departments on campus, to provide students with income during the school year **\$1,600**

TOTAL AID \$

TOTAL COSTS \$

TOTAL AID -\$

AMOUNT YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND \$

Will you ... apply for scholarships? Ask your parents? Take out education loans?

- So, is the total on the high side? Lower than you thought? Affordable? Way too much?
- Think about the reasons for your choices from page 1. Would you be willing to live with roommates to save money? What would be the advantages/disadvantages of buying used books over new ones? What would be advantages/disadvantages of commuting to school over living on campus?
 - Think about your reasons for wanting to go to college. In what ways might some of them enable you to lower your costs?
 - Start considering schools that may fit your budget. Learn how to use net price calculators at <https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price>.
 - Know what you're getting into. At www.mappingyourfuture.org, use the Income-Based Repayment Calculator and the Student Loan Debt/Salary Wizard to help you understand how much you can afford to borrow in student loans, to estimate your student loan payments, and to help you develop a saving and spending plan. Start typing in some random information to see what kind of figures you get.