

# College Signing Day Coordinator Toolkit

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Dear College Signing Day Coordinators,

Thank you for participating in College Signing Day! We are launching this official citywide campaign to provide our schools with tools and resources needed to help you host a College Signing Day event on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The goal of College Signing Day is to support seniors to make an informed college decision, celebrate them for their postsecondary plans, and encourage younger students and families to prepare for college as early as possible. This toolkit will provide you with a checklist, event ideas, and templates to help you host successful May 2<sup>nd</sup> activities.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this important college planning event. Your participation will encourage students and their families to make college a part of their future.

Thank you,

Office of Postsecondary Readiness

College and Career Planning Team

## Section 1: Introduction to College Signing Day

### What is College Signing Day?

College Signing Day is New York City's adoption of National College Signing Day, a program of the [First Lady's Reach Higher initiative](#). College Signing Day is held annually on or around May 1<sup>st</sup> and is designed to coincide with the date that most seniors must inform a college of their plans to enroll. College Signing Day is inspired by the NCAA's National Signing Day to reinforce that academic achievement in the classroom should be celebrated as much as athletic excellence. NCAA's National Signing Day is when high school seniors sign a letter of intent to play sports at a specific college. Traditionally, players participate in press conferences to announce their intentions. As we work to ensure College Access for All becomes a reality, our goal is to build on and extend this level of excitement for ALL students to see college as an option in their future.

### Why host a College Signing Day event?

- To recognize all students for their postsecondary plans
- To encourage and remind students to make a decision that is the best match and fit
- To influence younger students as they prepare for college
- To support a school's college-going culture and wrap up the school year with a celebration

### How do I join and what am I expected to do?

- To participate, please [register](#) TODAY
- Once you are registered, start planning some great College Signing Day activities! Activities to help students make a college decision should happen throughout the month of April, leading to a culminating "Signing Day" event on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Consider also participating in the White House's "Reach Higher College Signing Day." You can register [here](#).
- Have fun!

The success of your College Signing Day relies not just on you, but on your school community. Engaging the school community in the planning and implementation process will create excitement for all students. Section 3 discusses ideas to build enthusiasm leading up to College Signing Day along with resources to help plan for this event.

## Section 2: Resources to Support Students Decide Where to Enroll

This section provides tools and resources to support students through their decision-making process as they consider where to enroll in the Fall.

### 5 Things You Can Do to Help Students Make an Informed College Decision

1. Ensure that all students' FAFSA and TAP forms are accurate and updated. Review students' Student Aid Report (SAR) and make corrections as necessary.
2. Help students and families review and compare financial aid award letters to determine which colleges are affordable and a good financial fit.
3. Connect students with an admissions or financial aid representative and ask questions regarding the financial aid award letter, appeal process, and/or or waiving the enrollment deposit fee, if applicable.
4. Help students and families review and **compare college's characteristics** such as graduation rate, location, size, distance from home, population demographics and available majors. Tools such as the USDOE [College Scorecard](#) are designed to help compare college costs and other outcomes.
5. Help students and families consider which college environment offers best academic and social match.

### Additional Activities to Support with the College Decision-Making Process

- Build a bulletin board or tip sheet with information students should consider when making a college decision.
- Connect students with a CUNY and or SUNY admissions representative to discuss how to compare acceptances from these institutions and answer questions.
  - Admissions Contact Information for CUNY and SUNY Schools:
    - CUNY: [admissions@cuny.edu](mailto:admissions@cuny.edu), 212-997-CUNY (2869)
    - SUNY: [askSUNY@suny.edu](mailto:askSUNY@suny.edu), 800-342-3811

### How to Best Support Seniors at Different Steps in the College Planning Process

#### Student Status: Student has not yet applied to college or may have an incomplete application

1. Meet with students to **explore** postsecondary options and financial aid information.
2. Support student to **apply** to colleges and universities with late or rolling application deadlines:
  - a. CUNY Fall 2016 Admission Application is still available and applications will be reviewed on a space availability basis. Click [here](#) for more information.
  - b. For additional schools still accepting applications visit [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
3. Support student to **complete** their application(s).

#### Student Status: Student applied to college, but has not yet been admitted

1. Meet with student to make sure their college and financial aid applications are **complete**.
2. Encourage student to **follow up** with colleges to check on the status of applications.
3. **Explore** other postsecondary options, if applicable.
4. Support student to **apply** to college or university with late or rolling application deadline.

### Comparing Financial Aid Award Letters using the Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet

When deciding where to attend college students and families must consider college affordability. One way to assess cost of attending each college is to use the Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet. Below you will find tips for completing this worksheet:

- Have all packages on hand
- Not all financial aid packages look the same. If the Total Cost of Attendance is not listed on the package, check the school's website or call each college's financial aid office.
- Enter all of the information for each package into the comparison worksheet.
- Enter numbers for the entire year. Some packages may split costs and aid offered by semesters or trimesters. If this is the case on some packages, add them together to get the total for the year. For example, if tuition is \$5,000 per semester, the total tuition is \$10,000. This same rule applies to grants, loans and work study.
- Use a calculator to ensure accuracy and double check your math.

### Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet Example

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): \$0

Estimated Cost of Attendance – 1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Public College #1	Private College #2
1. Tuition	\$7,670.00	\$35,100.00
2. Room and board	\$10,800.00	\$14,500.00
3. Fees		
4. Other costs		
5. Direct Costs subtotal: add lines 1 to 4	\$18,470.00	\$49,600.00
6. Books	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00
7. Travel (NYC MetroCard, etc.)	\$800.00	\$800.00
8. Personal expenses & miscellaneous	\$1,130.00	\$1,130.00
9. Indirect Costs Subtotal: add lines 6 to 8	\$3,330.00	\$3,330.00
10. Total Cost of Attendance: add lines 5 and 9	\$21,800.00	\$52,930.00
11. Total Financial “need”: line 10 – EFC	<b>\$21,800.00</b>	<b>\$52,930.00</b>

#### Total Grants and Scholarships – 1<sup>st</sup> Year

12. Pell Grant (federal)	\$5,815.00	\$5,815.00
13. FSEOG (federal)	\$1,100.00	\$1,100.00
14. TAP (NYS)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
15. TEACH Grant (federal)		
16. HEOP, EOP or SEEK/College Discovery grant		
17. Other _____		
18. Institutional Grants	\$895.00	\$22,000.00
19. Outside/private scholarships (add all together)		
20. Total Grants and Scholarships: add lines 12 - 19	<b>\$12,810.00</b>	<b>\$33,915.00</b>

**Options to Pay Net Costs (line 11)**

<b>21. Work Options: Work-Study</b>	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00
<b>22. Perkins Loan</b>		
<b>23. Subsidized Stafford Loan</b>	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
<b>24. Unsubsidized Stafford Loan</b>	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00
<b>25. PLUS Loan</b>		
<b>26. Other _____</b>		
<b>27. Total Loans: add lines 22 to 26.</b>	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
<b>28. Total Financial Aid: add lines 20, 21 &amp; 27</b>	\$19,910.00	\$41,015.00
<b>29. Gap: Your need (line 11) – Total Financial Aid (line 28)</b>	\$1,890.00	\$11,915.00

**What Will You Pay for College?**

<b>30. Total Net Cost: line 10 (total cost of attendance) minus line 20 (total grants/scholarships)</b>	\$8,990.00	\$19,015.00
<b>Amount you can borrow in loans: from line 27</b>	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
<b>Amount you can work for with work study: from line 21</b>	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00
<b>Upfront Costs: line 29 (gap) plus EFC</b>	\$1,890.00	\$11,915.00

**Your Net Costs – Full College Career**

<b>31. Total Net Costs: multiply line 30 by expected # years of college</b>	\$35,960.00	\$76,060.00
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*"Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet" (c) 2012 Options Institute(TM).*

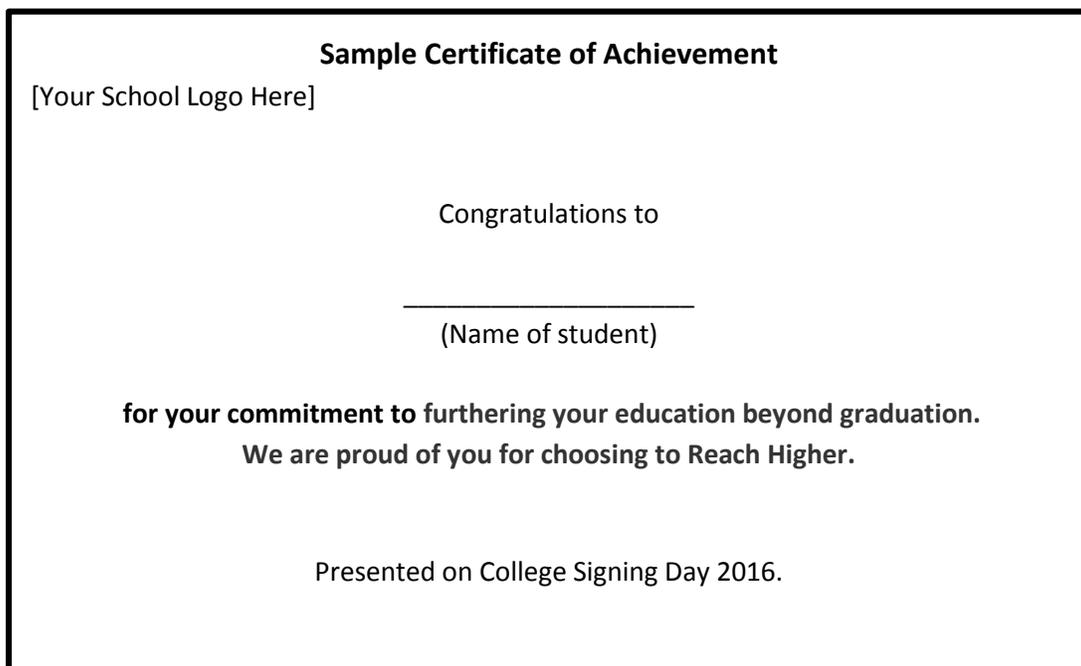
In the example above, College 1 appears to be a better financial fit for the family since it offers a smaller financial gap compared to College 2 (\$1,890 and \$11,915 respectively). If student is interested in attending College 2, student should contact the college's financial aid office and explore financial aid appeal process to try to lower the financial gap.

### Section 3: Planning Your College Signing Day (May 2, 2016)

With proper planning, event promotion, and creative thinking, you can support your students to make informed decisions and celebrate their choices. To reach as many students as possible, consider getting the whole school involved. From the timing of event to the location, work with your school's administrators, faculty and other school staff to plan an event that works best for your school and students. Based on resources and budget of your school, consider involving music, decorations, food, or prizes to make College Signing Day as celebratory and fun as possible!

#### Examples of Activities and Event Ideas for College Signing Day

**Assembly:** Host an all-school assembly to celebrate the postsecondary commitments of each of your seniors and their families. This could be an add-on to an already established school event or a stand-alone assembly. Consider including non-seniors, guest speakers such as high school alumni, elected officials, college admissions and financial aid representatives, and/or parents. The assembly could also include a presentation of certificates to students to acknowledge their postsecondary plans.



**Announcements:** Make announcements over the school audio/video system to acknowledge students on their postsecondary plans and share where they will be going.

**Create a Postsecondary Plans Bulletin Board or “Where will you find the Class of 2016?”:** This could look like seniors writing the names of the college, military, certificate program, or other postsecondary institutions they plan to attend on banners or strips of construction paper, or collecting copies of acceptance letters and hanging them in a main hallway.



**College gear:** During College Signing Day, ask school staff to wear college apparel, encourage staff to share their postsecondary experience, wear their alma mater gear, and post signs on classroom doors advertising where they went to school.

**“I Am Going to College” Stickers:** Give students an “I Am Going to College” sticker either before or after the College Signing Day event.

**Interviews:** Interview seniors about their postsecondary plans and create a special section in the school newspaper, or create a newsletter that celebrates your student’s postsecondary choices.

**Social media:** Take pictures as students bring in evidence of their postsecondary plans and share on social media. Section 4 discusses suggestions for social media outreach.

**Additional ideas:** Celebrate during a lunch or study hall period with pizza party or ice cream social, host a breakfast or lunchtime ceremony, or celebrate as a part of an existing school activity.

### Who to Involve

**Students:** Recruit students to help in the planning of College Signing Day, and ask students to promote College Signing Day through their social media accounts using the #CollegeSigningDay #ReachHigher and #CollegeAccessforAll.

**School Staff:** Encourage all staff to be involved in making your school’s College Signing Day a success. Share your planning with them and ask for their help brainstorming ways to make this event something the whole school embraces.

**Higher Education Institutions:** Reach out to higher education institutions where your students will enroll in the fall and ask if they can attend the event and/or provide any college gear for your students.

**Volunteers/Community Representatives:** Identify contacts in your community that may be interested in helping make your College Signing Day a success by either donating time and/or resources. Volunteers could include: alumni, families, PTA, community based organizations, higher education representatives, and community leaders.

### College Signing Day Coordinator Checklist

#### Things to consider when planning College Signing Day:

- Submit the NYC DOE College Signing Day registration [form](#).
- Set up a College Signing Day team at your school to plan the event.
- Discuss with teachers possible assignments or activities for College Signing Day.
- Select your activities based on resources and budget.
- Confirm College Signing Day location and time.
- Meet with seniors to provide support through the college decision process.
- Inform seniors of the expectations for College Signing Day.
- Send a student and parent letter home. Notify both students and parents of the planned event.
- Contact colleges, local businesses, and local nonprofits or community organizations for donations and sponsorships.
- If you are providing food, contact a local restaurant or catering service.
- Plan and prepare outreach to get the word out about the event in the community. Discuss with your team possible volunteers and/or speakers to recruit.
- Distribute resources to faculty and staff at your school and suggest they promote the event by decorating their classroom, bulletin boards, and/or door with related information.
- Finalize arrangements for the event and inform staff of the event details.
- Confirm any additional staff needed. Inform custodial staff of setup and cleanup needs.
- Confirm all seniors have informed you of their postsecondary choice.
- Ensure your event supplies are ready the day before College Signing Day.

#### Reminders for the Day Before/Day of/Day After Your Event(s)

- Set up any decorations and music the night before or day of the activities, if applicable.
- Check in with staff to make sure they know where to go and what to do.
- Take pictures during College Signing Day events and upload them to Facebook and Twitter using the hashtags #CollegeAccessforAll, #ReachHigher, and #CollegeSigningDay to participate in the White House's Reach Higher and the NYC DOE's College Signing Day social media.
- Congratulate students and families on being one step closer to college and share an enrollment checklist as the next step.
- Send thank you letters to individuals involved such as alumni, volunteers, school administration, catering, businesses, higher education institutions, and/or guest speakers.

## Section 4: Promoting Your School's College Signing Day

Promoting your school's College Signing Day will help you involve the larger school community. In the following pages, you'll find sample flyers, letters, and social media outreach to promote the event to all those involved both within your school community and outside the walls of your school.

### Sample Flyer/Poster

<b>[Your School Logo Here]</b> College Signing Day - May 2, 2016	
<b>Who?</b>	Class of 2016 Families Underclassmen
<b>What?</b>	We will celebrate our seniors' postsecondary enrolment plans.
<b>Where?</b>	<b>[NAME OF SCHOOL, ROOM NUMBER, OR LOCATION]</b>
<b>When?</b>	<b>[DATE AND TIME OF EVENT]</b>
<b>Why is College Signing Day Important?</b>	To encourage a college-going culture within our school community. To influence younger students to apply for and enroll in college. To recognize ALL seniors for their postsecondary plans. To support our students and their decision.
<i>For more information contact <b>[Your School's College Signing Day Site Coordinator]</b></i>	

### Sample Student/Family Letter

**[School Logo]**

**[School Address]**

Dear Students and Families,

**[Name of Your High School]** is hosting a College Signing Day to celebrate the senior class of 2016 making the important decision to enroll in a college or postsecondary institution. On May 2, 2016 we will celebrate our students as they pursue their dreams of education beyond high school.

**[Insert information about all activities leading up to and during College Signing Day. Include speakers, games, prizes, food, etc.]**

All graduating seniors are invited to attend and are encouraged to celebrate postsecondary institution of their choice. Parents, school administration, teachers, staff, and community members are invited to join the celebration. To RSVP: **[Insert Information]**.

Thank you in advance for joining us as we celebrate our student’s commitment to education.

Sincerely,

**[Principal and/or College Signing Day Coordinator]**

### **Sample Student/Family Email**

Dear Students and Families,

**[Name of School]** will be hosting a College Signing Day on May 2 **[time, and location]** to celebrate graduating seniors’ postsecondary plans. If you have any questions please call/email **[Name, Title, Phone/Email]**. Thank you in advance for joining us as we celebrate our students making college a part of their future.

Sincerely,

**[Principal and/or College Signing Day Coordinator]**

### **Promoting College Signing Day on Social Media**

Social media is an excellent way to create buzz around your event. Social media can be used to engage students about where they want to go to school, what they are doing to get there, and answer questions or concerns.

To engage in social media, first confirm that parents of students whose picture may appear on social media have given their consent. If consent has already been arranged, it need not be granted again. If you need to get consent from the student(s) in question, form can be found [here](#).

**Social Media Hashtags:** We encourage you to use the #CollegeAccessforAll, #ReachHigher, #BetterMakeRoom, and #CollegeSigningDay to participate in NYC and White House’s Reach Higher College Signing Day social media.

### Example Facebook and Twitter Posts:

- National College Signing Day is around the corner. What factors will weigh into what college you choose? #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- While you're thinking about who you're taking to prom, don't forget to keep thinking about where you're going to college this fall. Whether it's a university, community college, certificate program or the military, you've made a big decision to keep learning. The **[school name]** is here to support you every step of the way. #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- You've completed your college applications and you've filled out the FAFSA, now your hard work is about to pay off! We can't wait to hear where you are going this fall. #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- Seniors! May 2 is National College Signing Day. Tell us where you are going to college! #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- May 2 is National College Signing Day! Join us **[school name]** in congratulating our seniors for this big decision. #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- Don't forget to wear your college gear to celebrate College Signing Day on May 2! #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- Nothing should stop you from reaching your dream. #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay
- Join @FLOTUS and **[school name]** to help students #ReachHigher and realize their potential #CollegeSigningDay *(In Twitter, using the @ sign will direct the tweet to First Lady Michelle Obama's twitter account (twitter handle: FLOTUS))*
- The **[school name]** staff joins @FLOTUS in celebrating higher education! #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #CollegeSigningDay

### **Connect to National Reach Higher College Signing Day:**

For information about the Reach Higher initiative, including more examples of social media posts visit the Reach Higher [website](#) and download the *Reach Higher Signing Day Toolkit*.

### **Connect to NYCDOE:**

Follow NYC Department of Education on social media leading up to and during your College Signing Day event for updates, resources, and shout outs!

Twitter: @NYCschools

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NYCschools/>

## Section 5: After College Signing Day- Matriculation and Enrollment Support

### Senior Checklist- Common Enrollment Steps

Once your student and family has decided where to enroll, there are a number of steps students must take before they matriculate. Common enrollment steps are listed below, but be sure to check the college or university's official website and correspondence for specific and up-to-date information. We encourage you to share this checklist with your students.

- Talk to your family, teachers, counselors, college outreach program staff, and people you trust to help you make your decision about where to enroll.
- If you've applied for financial aid by completing a FAFSA, read and understand your Student Aid Report (SAR) to find out how much financial aid you have received. If you have questions, be sure to share them with your college's financial aid office.
- To enroll, follow the directions in the official acceptance letter/email you received from your college. Each college has its own steps and system for officially enrolling. Most likely, you will be directed to the college's official website and instructed to log into the internal student information system. If you need help, don't hesitate to ask questions.
- Some colleges require a monetary deposit to officially enroll. This deposit can range from \$100 to \$500 or more. If you need help, don't hesitate to contact the college's financial aid office to discuss options. Some colleges may even waive the deposit fee so please don't hesitate to reach out to the college admissions or financial aid office.
- As part of the enrollment process, you may be prompted by the college to sign up for a campus email address, campus housing, accept your financial aid award, and/or start the advising process to sign up for classes.
- After you have officially enrolled, you will also get information from your college about summer orientation and placement exams. Be sure to sign up for any required testing and attend orientation events.
- After you have officially enrolled, request a copy of your final high school transcript to be sent to your college.
- Check out your college's summer reading list to get a jump start on your college experience.
- Don't melt this summer! "Melting" means you have followed all the steps to officially enroll in college, but for some reason, you don't show up in the fall. To keep you from melting, here are some tips:
  - Stay active this summer through jobs, internships, clubs, sports, etc.
  - Talk about your college dreams, plans, and fears to your friends, family, and people you trust.
  - Figure out how you will physically get to college in the fall, and ask for help if you need it.
  - Help your family prepare for your college experience – this isn't just a life change for you, but also for them.

## Matriculation Guides

A coalition of college access organizations in New York City developed about 65 matriculation guides intended to provide students, families, mentors, and counselors with the information needed for students to enroll successfully in college. Please click on the links below to access the Matriculation Guides online. *(Please note: the 2016 Matriculation Guides will be available by late April)*

- Matriculation [Guides](#) for CUNY Colleges
- Matriculation [Guides](#) for SUNY College
- Matriculation [Guides](#) for NY Private Schools

## Additional Matriculation Resources

- NYC College Line "[Succeed in College](#)" Resources
  - [The First Year](#)
  - [Make it to Graduation](#)
  - Transition to College activities and [resources](#)
  - From Application to Enrollment [Checklist](#)
  - [Crossing the Bridge](#): A Map to Your College Success, a resource guide for college-based access and success programs in the NYC metro area
- [Helping Students with Disabilities Transition from High School to College](#)- a Transition Guidance Document
- [College App Map](#)- Online and mobile college and career planning apps launched by College Summit to help students get to and through college.

## Section 6: Acknowledgements

The *NYC College Signing Day Coordinator Toolkit* was created in March 2016. The following resources informed the creation of this toolkit: [Path to College Tennessee](#), [GEAR UP North Carolina](#), [Michigan College Access Network](#), [Washington College Access Network](#). We would also like to thank *Goddard Riverside Community Center Options Institute* for allowing us to include their Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet.

**Section 7: Appendix**

**Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet**

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): \$

Estimated Cost of Attendance – 1 <sup>st</sup> Year	School #1	School #2
1. Tuition		
2. Room and board		
3. Fees		
4. Other costs		
5. Direct Costs subtotal: add lines 1 to 4		
6. Books		
7. Travel		
8. Personal expenses & miscellaneous		
9. Indirect Costs Subtotal: add lines 6 to 8		
10. Total Cost of Attendance: add lines 5 and 9		
11. Total Financial “need”: line 10 – EFC		

**Total Grants and Scholarships – 1<sup>st</sup> Year**

12. Pell Grant (federal)		
13. FSEOG (federal)		
14. TAP (NYS)		
15. TEACH Grant (federal)		
16. HEOP, EOP or SEEK/CD grant		
17. Other _____		
18. Institutional Grants (from college, total)		
19. Outside/private scholarships (total)		
20. Total Grants and Scholarships: add lines 12 to 19		

**Options to Pay Net Costs**

<b>21. Work Options: Work-Study</b>		
<b>22. Perkins Loan</b>		
<b>23. Subsidized Stafford Loan</b>		
<b>24. Unsubsidized Stafford Loan</b>		
<b>25. PLUS Loan</b>		
<b>26. Other_____</b>		
<b>27. Total Loans: add lines 22 to 26.</b>		
<b>28. Total Financial Aid: add lines 20, 21, 27</b>		
<b>29. Gap: Your need (line 11) – Total Financial Aid (line 28)</b>		

**What Will You Pay for College?**

<b>30. Total Net Cost: line 10 (total cost of attendance) minus line 20 (total grants/scholarships)</b>		
<b>Amount you can borrow in loans: from line 27</b>		
<b>Amount you can work for with work study: from line 21</b>		
<b>Upfront Costs: line 29 (gap) plus EFC</b>		

**Your Net Costs – Full College Career**

<b>31. Total Net Costs: multiply line 30 by expected # years of college</b>		
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*"Financial Aid Comparison Worksheet" (c) 2012 Options Institute(TM).*