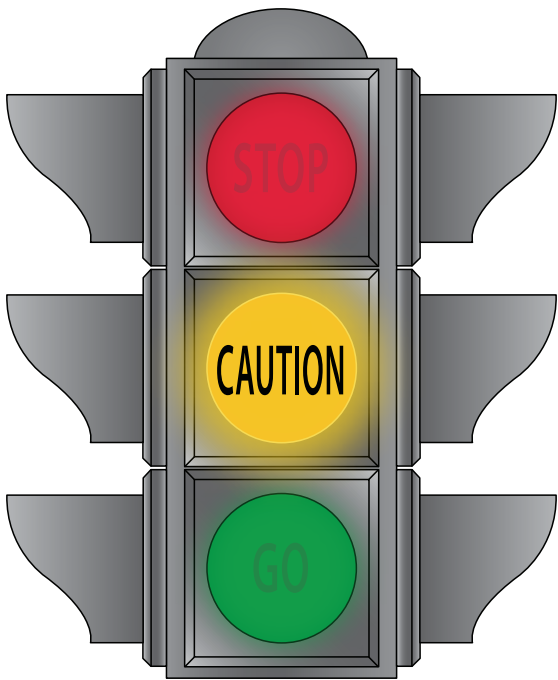


Know Before You Owe



**A Practical Guide
to the Dos and Don'ts
of Student Loans**



What an exciting time in your life! Graduation is just ahead and so is the start of your journey through adulthood. Of course, as you come of age, you will be facing many responsibilities— like the necessity to pay rent, utilities, transportation, insurance, taxes and more.

Your ability to meet future obligations will depend primarily upon your chosen profession. This is why you must choose your career wisely and have a plan that helps you achieve academic success in your area of study, while incurring the least amount of debt possible.

Choosing what you want to be when you grow up may be the most important decision you will ever make. A smart career path begins by determining your destination, and then taking practical steps to get there. Start by being honest with yourself and seeking answers to these important questions:

- *Which career would be my passion?*
- *What level of education is required?*
- *Which schools provide the best program?*
- *Are scholarships available?*
- *What is the average starting salary?*
- *Is the job market good, fair or poor?*
- *What are the geographical considerations?*
- *Do intern or shadowing opportunities exist?*

Once you've figured out your career strategy and investigated the feasibility of finding a job with true earning potential, it's time to consider the costs of realizing your dream.

College tuition and housing fees vary widely. Cost factors include: the national ranking of the university, whether the school is in or out of your state of residency, and the availability of scholarship money.

Generally speaking, scholarships are offered based on the enrollment needs of the university, the academic record of the student under consideration, and the financial status of that student's family.

Be sure to explore every grant, scholarship, and financial-aid opportunity before making your decision. Simply put, the more funding assistance you can find, the less you must rely upon a long-term student loan.

For many careers, a four-year degree from a traditional university may not be required. For example, you may be able to achieve your goals by enrolling in a local technical college or by taking courses online at relatively low costs. You may even be able to remain at home with your parents and save on housing.

Another way to avoid the need for a loan is to work part-time, while taking only a moderate course load, and pay as you go. Keep in mind that there are smaller community colleges in your area that offer general education courses for half the cost of a larger institution. This is a more affordable method of accumulating basic academic credits early in your college career; and then, when the time is right, transferring to a school that offers courses in your desired major. In most cases, these credits can be applied to an undergraduate degree at any other university.

Having studied the job market and earning potential for your chosen field, along with the educational requirements and related costs, you may decide that a student loan is, in fact, a wise investment in your future. But never lose sight of the realities of life after college and the burden of future indebtedness. Here's a review checklist that will help you minimize long-term debt:

✓ Save Before You Enroll

Sock it away now instead of borrowing later.

✓ Don't Make a "Major" Mistake

Investigate starting salaries and job unemployment rates before deciding on a major.

✓ **Search for Scholarships**

Ask each college about its scholarship policy and research all avenues for federal-grant funding and financial aid.

✓ **Choose a Less Expensive College**

In-state public universities have lower tuition and housing fees than private institutions.

✓ **Take a Part-Time Job**

Working your way through college will help you earn while you learn.

✓ **Prepare a College Budget**

Estimate your income and expenses during college and formulate a budget that helps you live within your means.

✓ **Find a Loan That is Right for You**

Set limits on the amount of debt you can afford to incur and select a cheaper fixed-rate federal loan over a more expensive variable-rate private bank loan.

There's no doubt that a degree will improve your job prospects and increase your lifetime earnings. The following are additional information resources that will help you make the right decisions. Remember, the future will be bright as long as you "know before you owe."

Examples of Starting Salaries By Major

Environmental Engineer	\$57,000.
Computer Scientist	\$56,600.
Software Engineer	\$54,000.
Civil Engineer	\$53,100.
Nurse	\$52,700.
Construction Manager	\$51,000.
Accountant	\$44,600.
Graphic Designer	\$32,000.
Social Worker	\$31,000.
Physical Trainer	\$30,000.

Learn more at: studentsreview.com/salary_by_major.php3

The College Navigator

nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

Federal Student Aid

www.fafsa.ed.gov

Financial Aid, Scholarships and Loans

www.finaid.org

Student Loan Information

www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/choose-a-student-loan/#o1

Compare Financial Aid and College Costs

www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/compare-financial-aid-and-college-cost/

Managing Your College Money

www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/manage-your-college-money/#o1

Paying for College: Federal, Private or Both?

www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/repay-student-debt/#Question-1

This information has been provided to you by Trinity Debt Management. If you need further assistance, call 1 (800) 758-3844. Or visit us online at www.trinitycredit.org/studentloans.