

# Understanding Financial Aid.



- 1. Determine the Costs.** Estimate how much it costs to attend the school of your choice including tuition and room and board. Don't forget to include other expenses too such as fees, books, supplies, transportation, etc.
- 2. The Free Stuff.** How will you actually pay for school? Grants and scholarships (unlike loans) are free money that does not need to be paid back. Start there! Check with your guidance counselor or local organizations for scholarships. Or you can search online through websites such as [www.charterone.com/edu/scholarshipsearch](http://www.charterone.com/edu/scholarshipsearch).
- 3. The Federal Stuff.** After scholarships and grants, you might still need money so the next step is the Federal Stafford Loan (which does need to be paid back). First you need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Also, check with the financial aid offices of the schools you're interested in to see if they require additional paperwork.
- 4. The SAR.** Completing the FAFSA generates what's called a Student Aid Report. The SAR shows your family's Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is the amount of money the government determines your family will be expected to contribute towards your education.
- 5. Your Award.** Using your SAR, Financial Aid Offices determine your financial need and send you an Award Letter listing the amount of aid you are eligible for (grants, scholarships, work study and federal loans), enabling you to determine the remaining costs.

- 6. Fill in the Gaps.** If there is a "remaining cost" that your award letter didn't cover, that's where other types of funding come in such as tuition payment plans, home equity loans and private student loans (but you should exhaust federal aid first!).
- 7. Counseling...For Your Student Loan.** If you are a first-time borrower of federal loans, you'll need to complete what's called Entrance Counseling. This federal requirement provides you with a loan overview explaining your borrower rights, responsibilities, and consequences of delinquency and default. Usually you can complete this online but check with your Financial Aid office for instructions.

For more information call us at **1-800-721-3969** or visit [www.charterone.com/edu](http://www.charterone.com/edu)