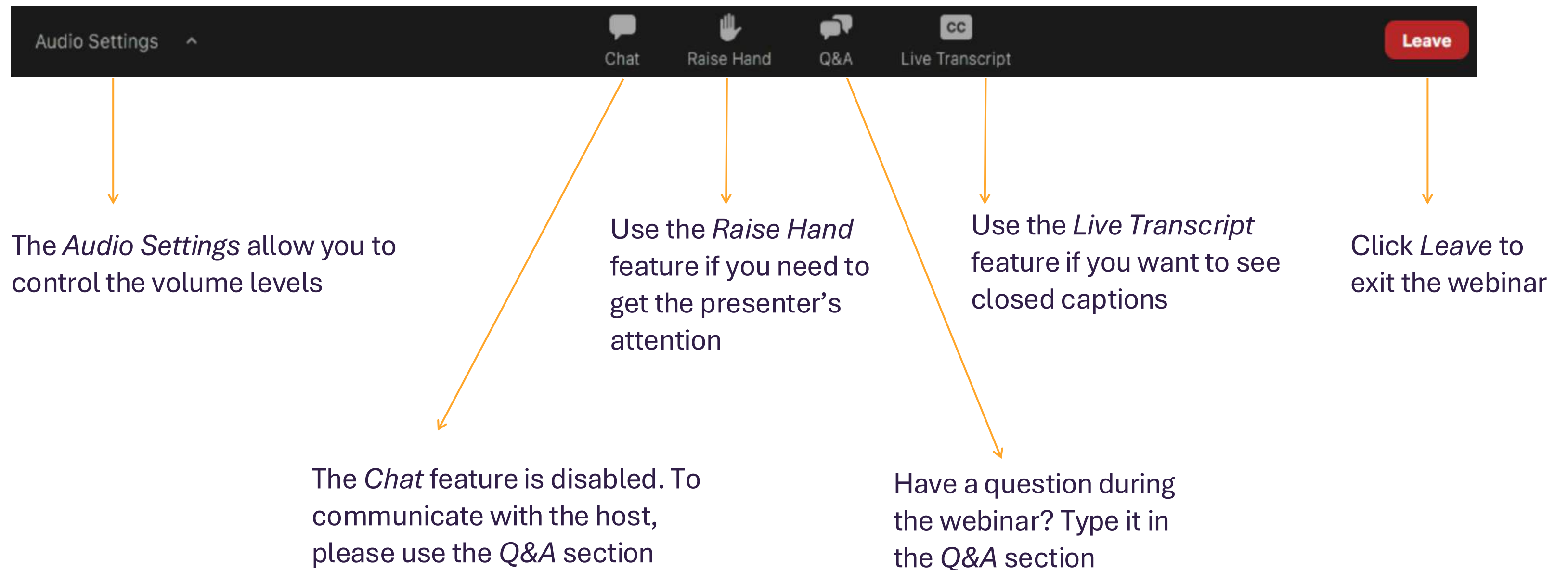


Early College Planning



How to Participate



About MEFA

State authority created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1982, helping families plan, save, and pay for college



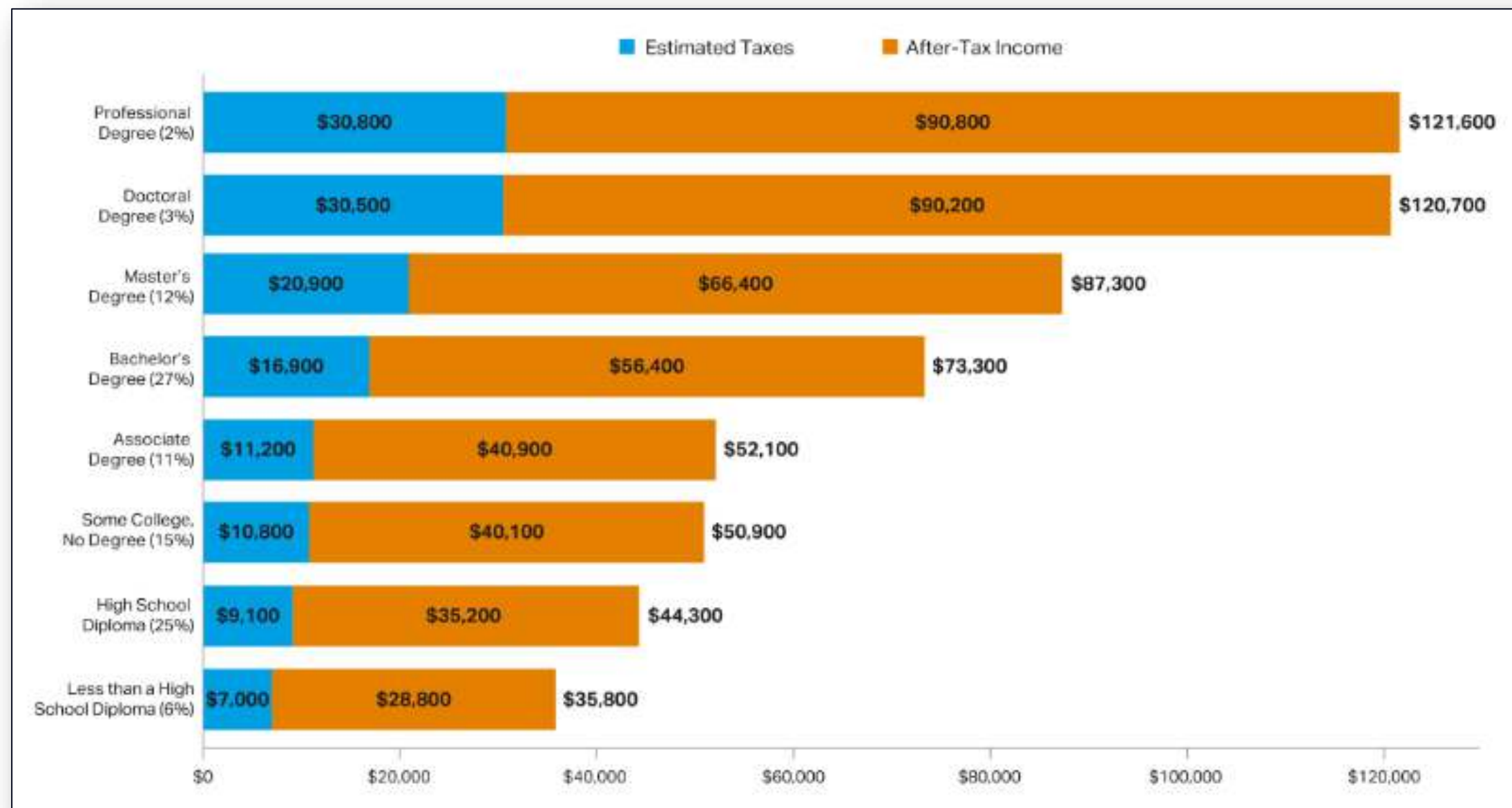
Webinar Topics

- Researching postsecondary options
- College is an important investment
- How much might college cost for my family?
- Paying for college
- Strategies for saving
- Two Massachusetts savings options: U.Fund and U.Plan
- What can students and parents do right now to prepare?



Education Pays

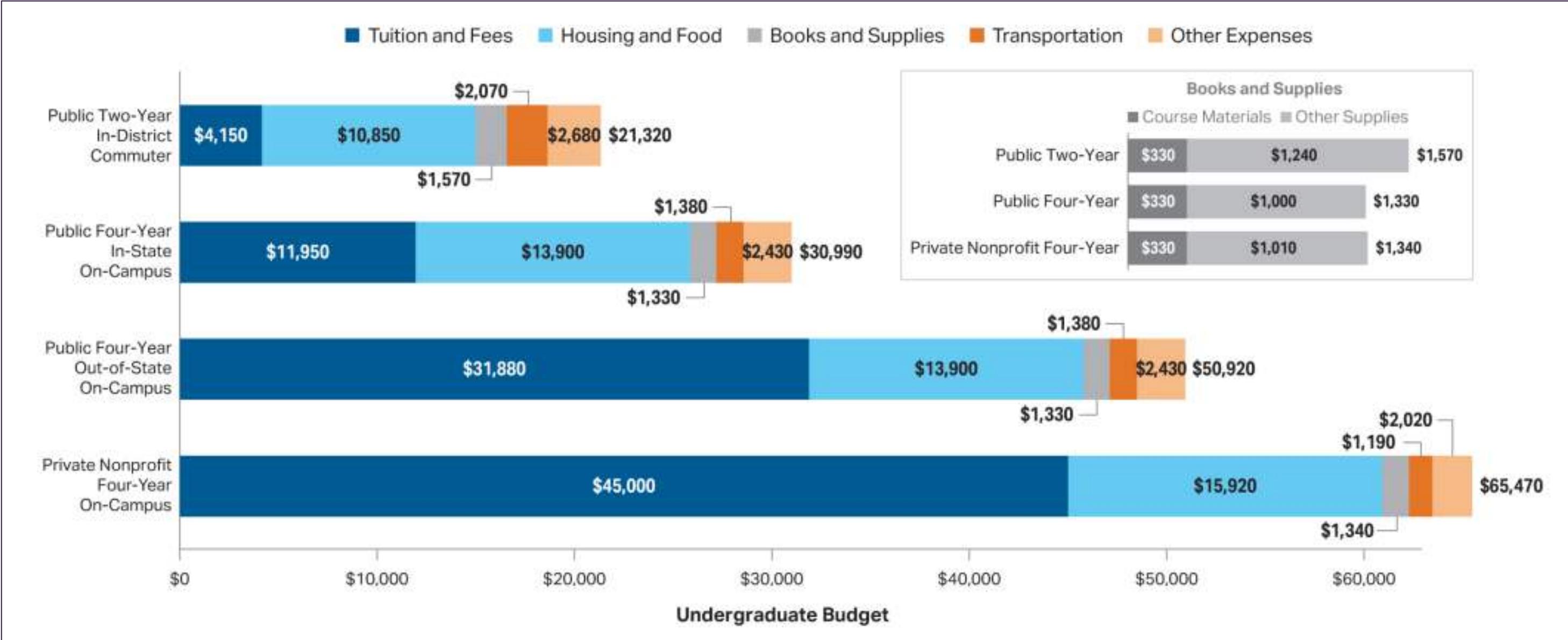
Median Earnings and Tax Payments of Full-Time Year-Round Workers Age 25 and Older, by Education Level, 2021



Source: Trends in Higher Education Series, Education Pays 2023, Figure 2.1, The College Board

Current College Costs by Type

Average Estimated Full-Time Undergraduate Budgets
(Enrollment-Weighted) by Sector, 2025-26



Source: Trends in College Pricing, 2025, Figure CP-1, The College Board

Postsecondary Options

Costs include tuition, fees, housing, food, books, supplies, transportation, & other expenses

\$65,470 per year*

4-year
private

\$15,070 for tuition
only**

Vocational
school

\$30,990 in-state per
year* and \$50,920
out-of-state per year*

4-year
public

\$21,320 per year*

2-year public
community
college

* The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2025*

** <https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/how-much-does-trade-school-cost/>

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MEFA Pathway

- FREE college and career planning tool for students in grades 6-12
- Resources include:
 - Skills and interests assessments
 - Career exploration
 - College search
 - Scholarship information
 - Personalized digital portfolio
- Visit mefapathway.org to get started

MEFA | pathway™



Researching Colleges

Research Thoroughly

College Navigator: [CollegeNavigator.gov](https://collegenavigator.gov)

College search with admissions, academic, & cost info

College Scorecard: [CollegeScorecard.ed.gov](https://collegescorecard.ed.gov)

College info including average net price, student debt, grad rate, & alumni salary

Big Future: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search

College search with info on academics, applying, & paying

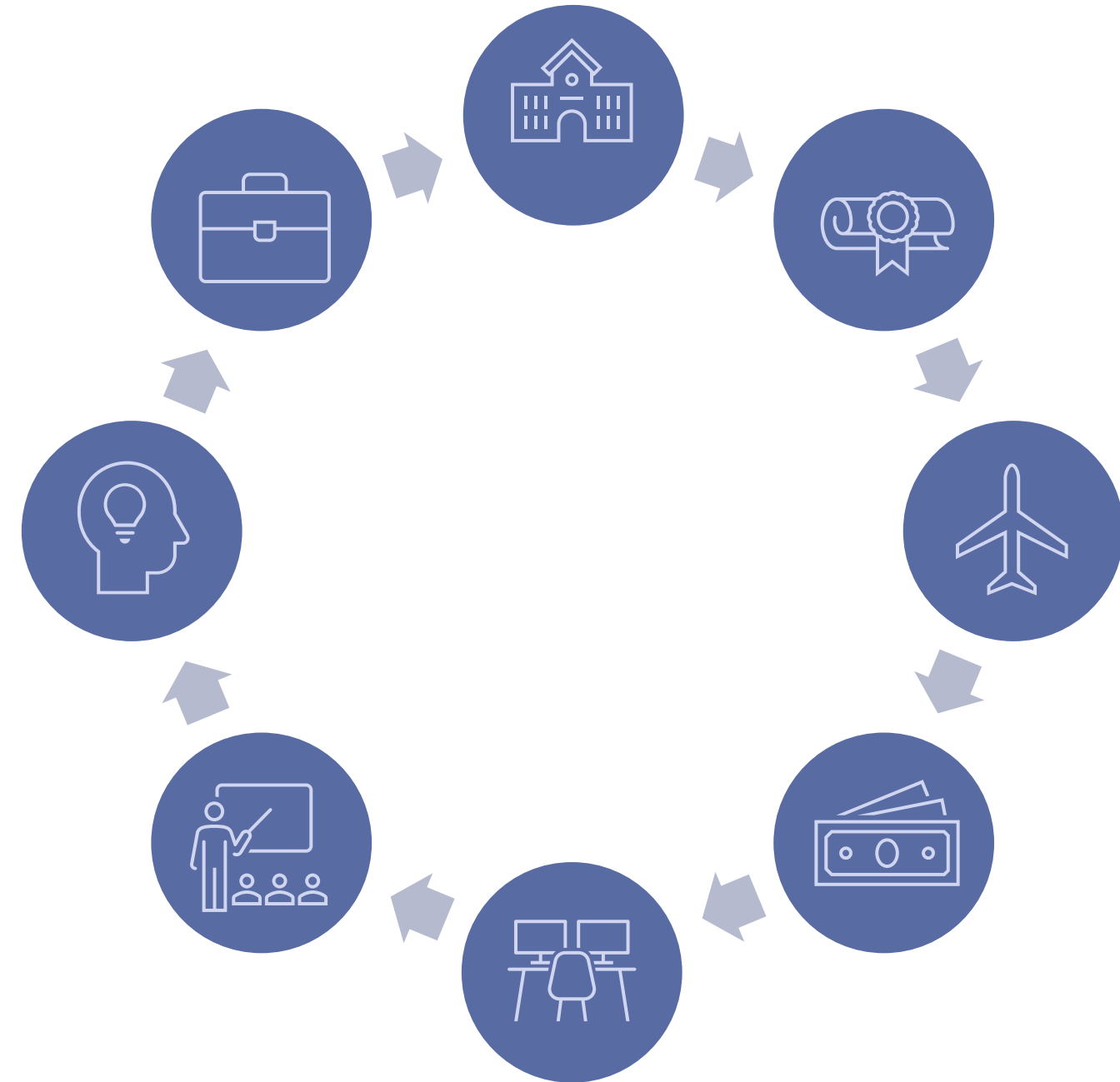
MEFA Pathway: mefapathway.org

College search and matching tool based on preferences

The screenshot displays the College Navigator website interface. On the left, there are search filters including 'Name of School' (set to 'boston college'), 'States' (set to 'No Preference'), 'ZIP Code', 'Miles from', 'Programs/Majors', 'Level of Award' (with checkboxes for Certificate, Bachelor's, Associate's, and Advanced), and 'Institution Type' (with checkboxes for Public, Private non-profit, Private for-profit, 4-year, 2-year, and < 2-year). A 'Show Results' button is visible. The main content area shows details for 'Boston College', including its address (140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts 02467), phone number ((617) 552-8000), website (www.bc.edu/), type (4-year, Private not-for-profit), and awards offered (Less than one year certificate, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Postbaccalaureate certificate, Master's degree, Post-master's certificate, Doctor's degree - research/scholarship, Doctor's degree - professional practice). It also lists campus setting (City: Small), campus housing (Yes), student population (15,280 (10,083 undergraduate)), and student-to-faculty ratio (13 to 1). A list of expandable sections is shown at the bottom, including General Information, Tuition, Fees, and Estimated Student Expenses, Financial Aid, Net Price, Enrollment, Admissions, Retention and Graduation Rates, Outcome Measures, Programs/Majors, Servicemembers and Veterans, Varsity Athletic Teams, Accreditation, Campus Security and Safety, and Cohort Default Rates.

College Factors to Consider

- Institution size & location
- Academic fit
- Intended major
- Learning style
- Campus culture
- Activities
- Study abroad programs
- Career & internship services
- Affordability

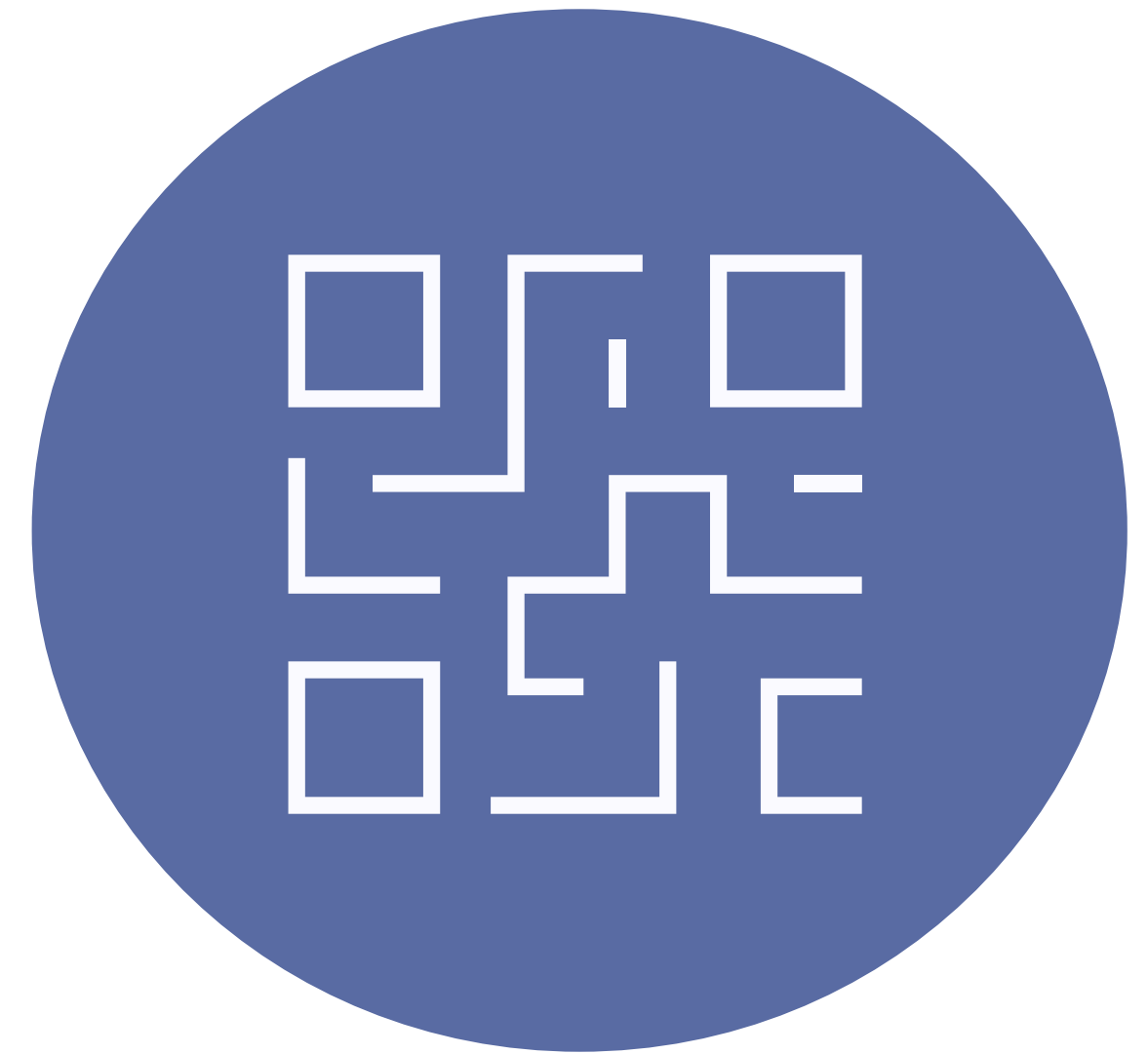


Informal & Formal Campus Visits

Informal Visits	Formal Visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size• Setting• Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academics• Activities• Housing• Food• Q&A

College Fair Tips

- Sign up
- Check out the college list beforehand
- Have a plan of attack before you start
- Take advantage of information sessions
- Schedule 1-on-1 meetings with colleges if available
- Check nacacfairs.org & neacac.org for upcoming events

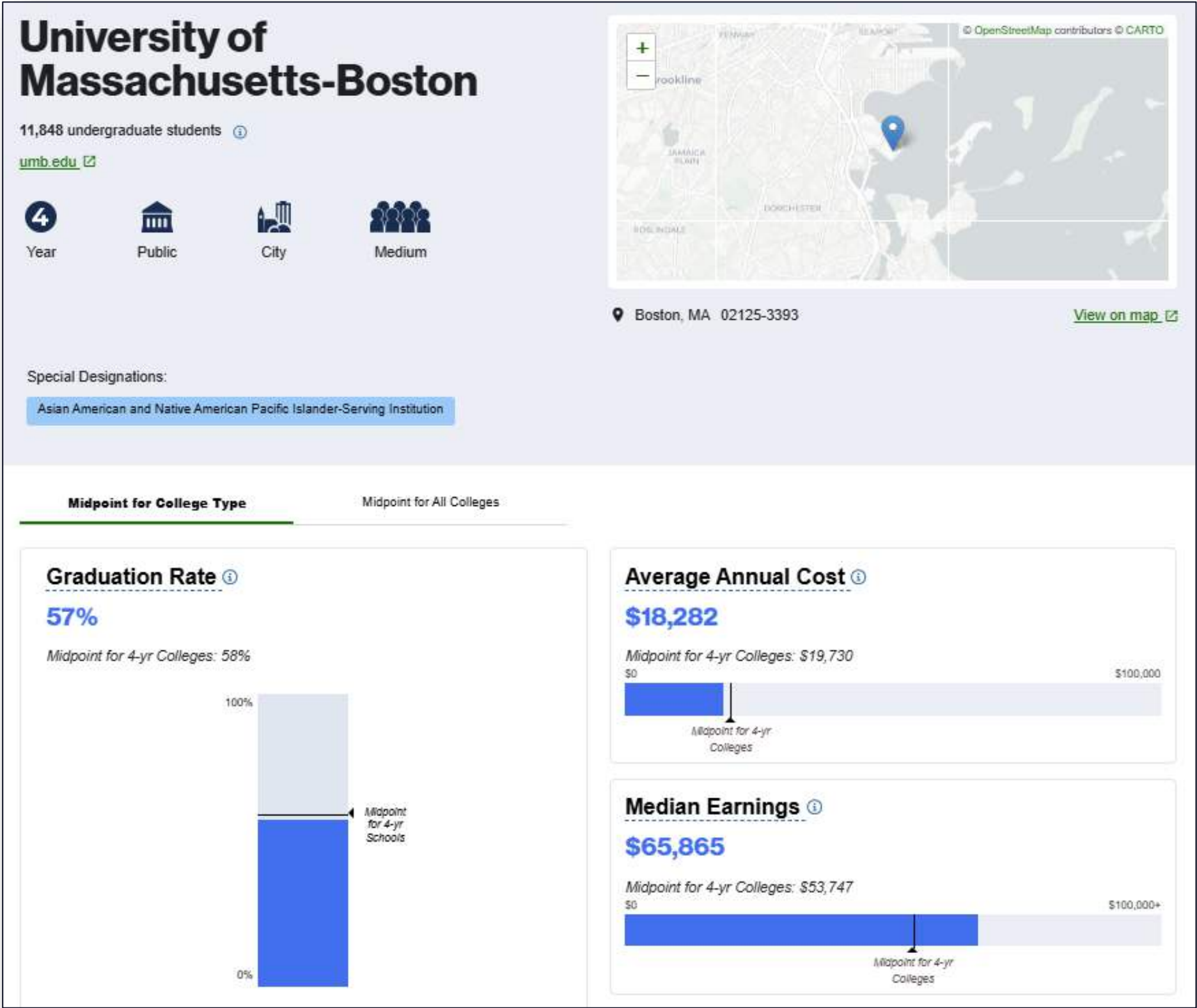


Understanding College Affordability

- What is the real cost to you as a family?
 - Student Aid Index (SAI) Calculator: mefa.org
 - Net Price Calculators on college websites
 - College Navigator: CollegeNavigator.gov
 - College Scorecard: CollegeScorecard.ed.gov
 - MEFA's [College Cost Projector](#)



College Scorecard



Net Price Calculator on Each College's Website



FRAMINGHAM
STATE
UNIVERSITY

Net Price Calculator Results

The estimate provided using this net price calculator does not represent a final determination, or actual award, of financial assistance.

Estimated net price for
Academic Year 2025-2026

\$15,340

Results as of 1/8/26, 4:23 PM

Estimated Cost of Attendance

Tuition & Fees	\$11,920
Food & Housing	\$15,310
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, and Equipment	\$2,200
Transportation	\$750
Miscellaneous Personal Expenses	\$1,560
Total	\$31,740

Estimated Grant/Gift Aid

Institutional Merit Scholarship	\$3,000
Need Based Grant	\$13,400
Total	\$16,400

Estimated NET PRICE

\$15,340

Paying for College in MA: You Have Options

MassTransfer

- Makes transfer from community college to a 4-year MA public college more affordable
- Benefits include guaranteed credit transfer, tuition credit, & freeze on tuition

MassEducate

- Covers tuition and fee costs for all community college students in MA

Tuition Break

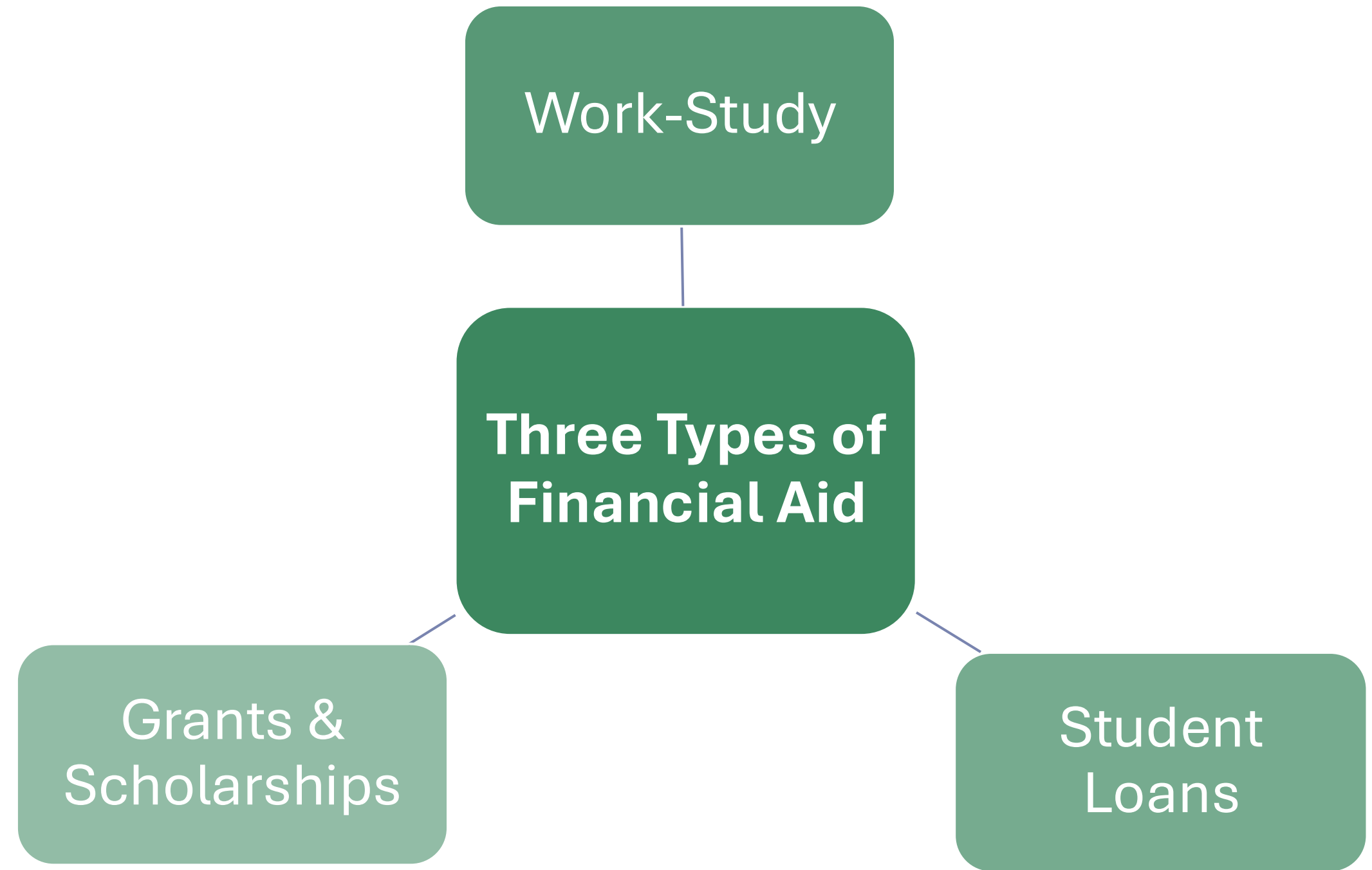
- Reduction on out-of-state tuition costs at New England colleges for certain program

MA Tuition Equity Law

- Allows undocumented students to receive MA state financial aid & in-state tuition rates

What is Financial Aid?

Financial aid is
money to help
students pay for
college



Applying for Financial Aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®):

- Required by every college and university
- 2027-28 FAFSA will be available on Oct 1, 2026
- Will ask about 2025 income

CSS Profile™:

- Required by ~200 colleges and scholarship agencies
- 2027-28 Profile will be available Oct 1, 2026
- Will ask about 2025 income

College-specific financial aid applications

- Posted on each college's financial aid website



Sources of Financial Aid

Federal

- Grants, work-study, loans, tax incentives
- [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov)

Massachusetts

- Grants, scholarships, tuition waivers, loans
- mass.edu/osfa

College/University (institutional aid)

- Grants, scholarships, loans

Other Agencies

- Scholarships: Search through mefapathway.org and fastweb.com, and check with your school counselor

\$205 billion*: The total amount of aid undergraduate students received in 2024-25

**Trends in Student Aid 2024, The College Board*

Merit vs. Need-Based Financial Aid

Merit-Based Aid

- Awarded in recognition of student achievements (academic, artistic, athletic, etc.)
- Criteria differs from school to school
- Often has requirements for renewal

Need-Based Aid

- Awarded based on family's financial eligibility
- Determined by standardized formula
- Very likely not to receive full amount of eligibility
- Includes most federal, state, and institutional (college) aid

Federal Direct Student Loans

- Student is the sole borrower
- No credit check
- Subsidized and Unsubsidized
- 6.39% fixed interest rate for 2025-26
- Repayment:
 - No payments due while enrolled
 - Multiple options (many tied to income)
 - Total borrowed for 4 years: \$27,000 max
 - Estimated payment: \$300/month for 10 years
 - Estimated total debt: \$32,000-\$34,000
 - Deferment, forbearance, and forgiveness opportunities

Annual Loan Limits	
Freshman Year	\$5,500
Sophomore Year	\$6,500
Junior Year	\$7,500
Senior Year	\$7,500

Financial Aid Formula

**Colleges fill in
Financial Aid
Eligibility with
financial aid from
all sources**

Cost of Attendance (COA)

-

Student Aid Index (SAI)*

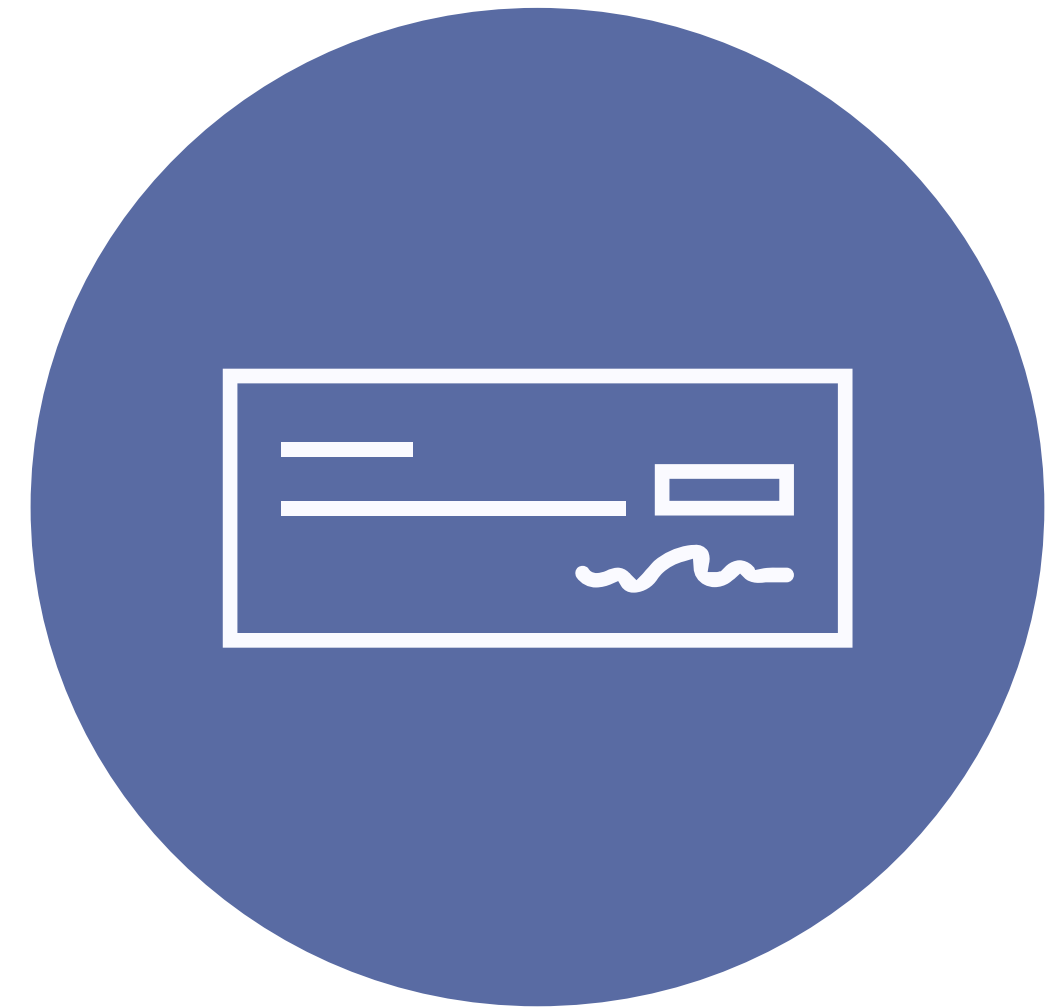
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Financial Aid Eligibility

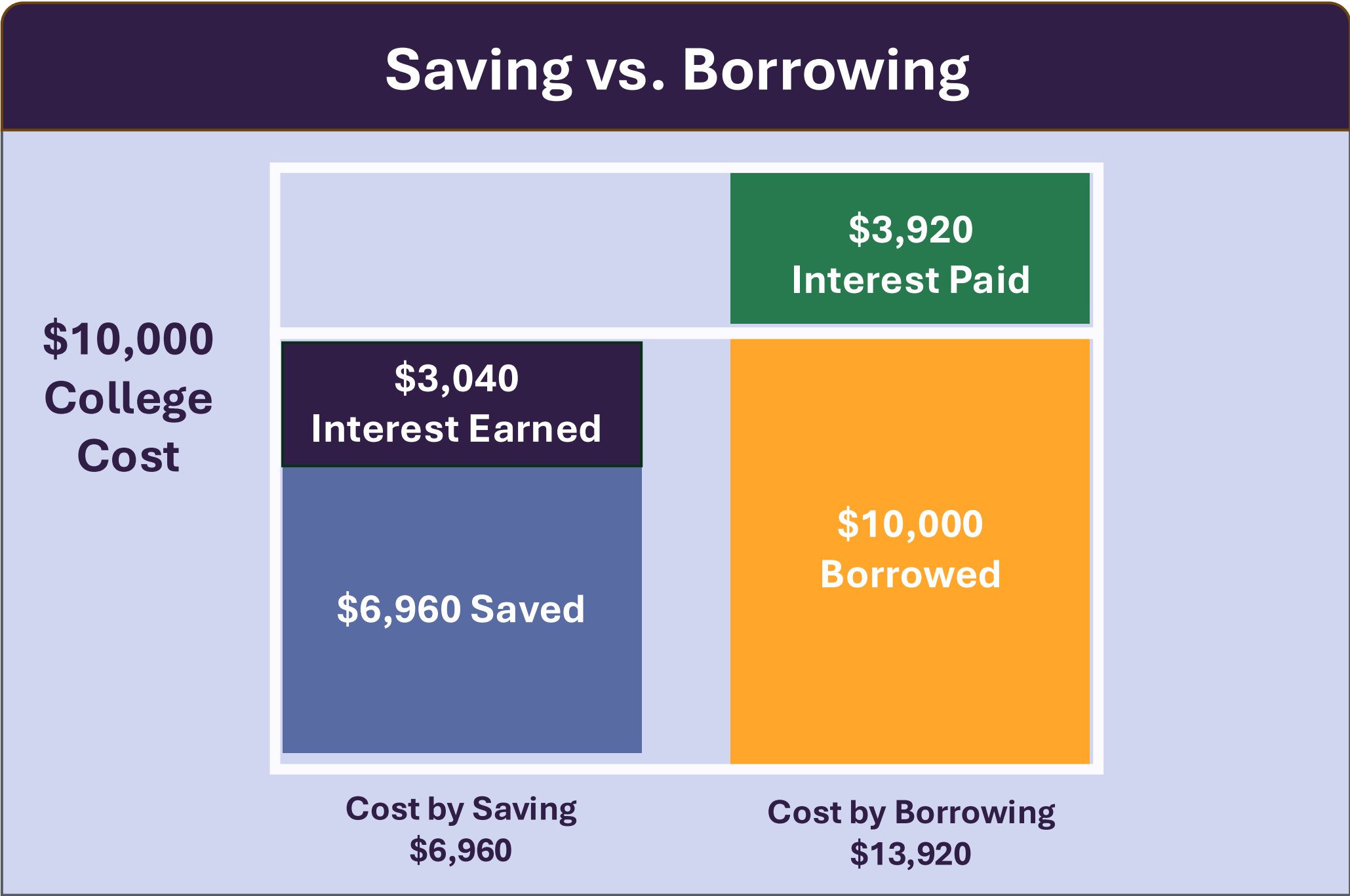
*Note that a negative SAI is treated as zero in this formula

How Do Families Pay for College?

- Financial Aid
- Past Income
 - Savings
 - Other Assets
- Present Income
 - Salary (Payment Plans)
- Future Income
 - Parent Loans
 - Student Loans



Saving vs. Borrowing



This hypothetical example assumes a 7% interest rate over 10 years This example is an estimate only and market conditions may change.

Myths We've Heard About Saving for College

“My savings will hurt my financial aid.”

The Truth: Income is the biggest factor in determining financial aid eligibility, not savings. Your savings will help you when it comes time to pay for college.

“It’s not worth saving for college if I can’t save the entire cost.”

The Truth: Every little bit saved toward college will help. Even saving a small amount over time can add up and help cover costs such as books.

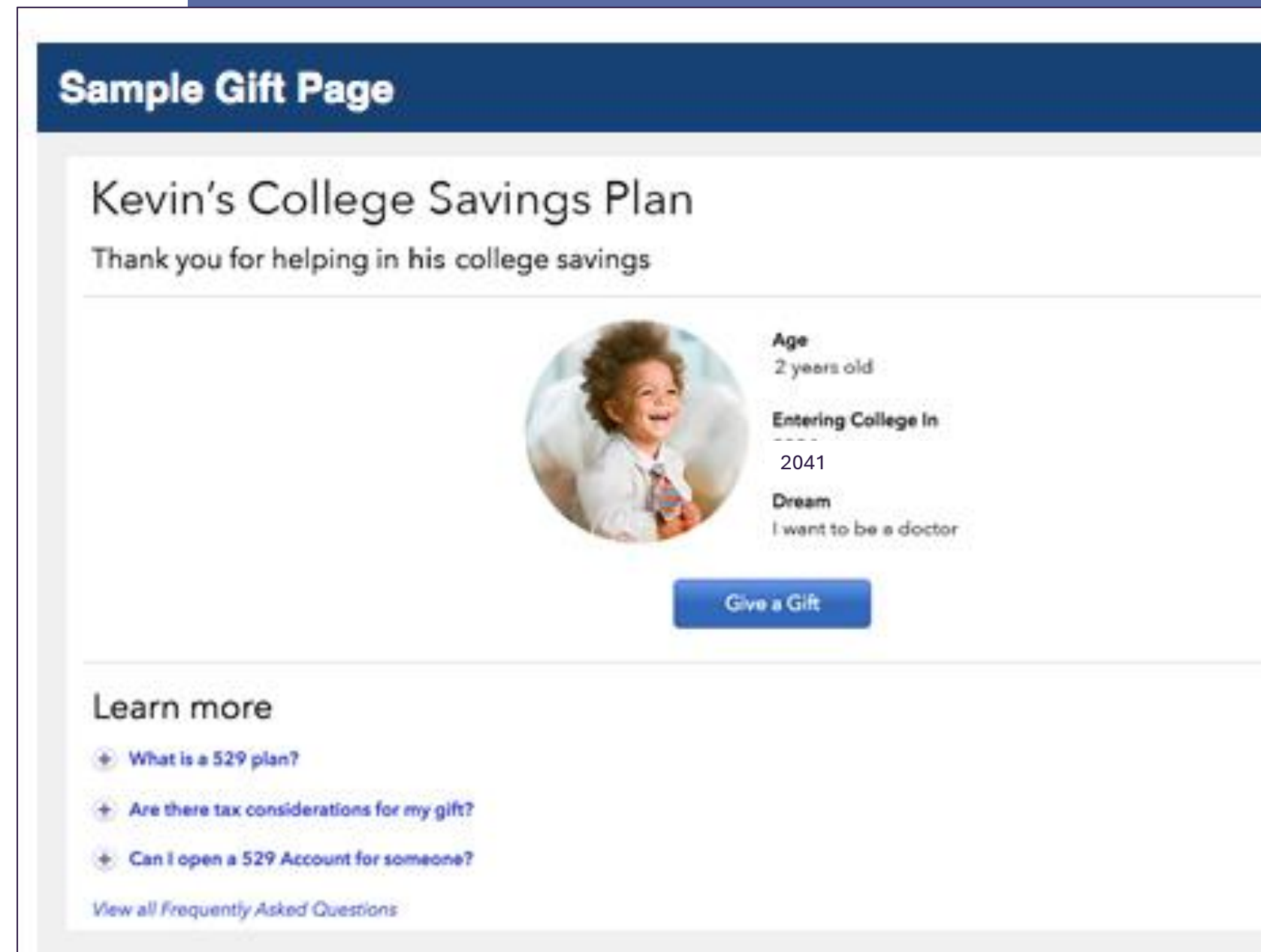
Your College Savings Will Help You

- Give you more education options
 - Different types of colleges
 - Special programs such as study abroad
- Reduce or eliminate the need to borrow loans
- Allow the student to work less and study more
- Have a minimum impact on aid eligibility
- Motivate your child



Strategies for Saving

- Start saving as early as possible
 - Use time to your advantage
- Start with a goal in mind
- Take advantage of unexpected funds
- Use automatic transfers
- Get the word out
 - Ask your family and friends to contribute
- Involve your child in the process



Two Massachusetts Savings Options



U.Plan Prepaid Tuition Program

- Allows you to prepay up to 100% of tuition & mandatory fees at participating schools
- Large network of MA public and private colleges and universities
- Purchase Tuition Certificates to lock in today's tuition and mandatory fee rates
- U.Plan Tuition Certificates:
- Represent interest in Commonwealth General Obligation Bonds
- Are backed by the full faith and credit of the Commonwealth of MA
- Are not subject to market fluctuation
- Require \$300 minimum to get started (but can save this over one year)
- Save all year
- Bonds are purchased and percentages locked in July each year
- To learn more about the U.Plan visit mefa.org/uplan

U.Fund College Investing Plan

- Save for qualified higher education expenses
- Tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, and equipment
- Savings can be used at any accredited college or university nation wide
- Combined account maximum: \$500,000
- No annual account maintenance fee or minimum investment
- Multiple investment options
- Active management, indexed portfolio, individual allocation portfolios, FDIC insured
- Enroll online at fidelity.com/ufund or by calling (800) 544-2776

Participating U.Plan Colleges & Universities

American International College
Amherst College
Anna Maria College
Assumption College
Babson College
Bay Path College
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
Bentley College
Berklee College of Music
Berkshire Community College
Boston College
Boston University
Bridgewater State University
Bristol Community College
Bunker Hill Community College
Cape Cod Community College
Clark University
College of the Holy Cross
Curry College
Dean College
Elms College
Emerson College
Emmanuel College
Endicott College
Fisher College

Fitchburg State University
Framingham State University
Gordon College
Greenfield Community College
Hampshire College
Hellenic College
Holyoke Community College
Laboure College
Lasell College
Lesley University
Massachusetts Bay Community College
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Massachusetts Maritime Academy
Massasoit Community College
Merrimack College
Middlesex Community College
Montserrat College of Art
Mount Holyoke College
Mount Wachusett Community College
New England Conservatory of Music
Nichols College
North Shore Community College
Northeastern University

Northern Essex Community College
Quinsigamond Community College
Regis College
Roxbury Community College
Salem State University
Simmons University
Smith College
Springfield College
Springfield Technical Community College
Stonehill College
Suffolk University
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Massachusetts Boston
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Wellesley College
Wentworth Institute of Technology
Western New England University
Westfield State University
Wheaton College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester State University

Saving for College State Tax Benefits

- Contributions to the U.Plan and U.Fund are state tax deductible
- State tax deduction
 - Up to \$2,000 in payments for married filers
 - Up to \$1,000 in payments for individual filers
- Limits are per filer, not per account



Staying on Track Through Senior Year

Spring/Summer Junior Year

- Research Colleges
- Visit campuses and college fairs
- Ask teachers for letters of recommendation
- Take the SAT/ACT
- Start writing the college essay

Fall Senior Year

- Retake the SAT/ACT
- Secure letters of recommendation
- Finalize the college essay(s)
- Attend MEFA's *Financial Aid 101* webinar
- Complete all admissions applications
- Submit the FAFSA
- Submit the CSS Profile if required

Winter Senior Year

- Submit admissions applications
- Apply for private scholarships
- Send in mid-year grade reports

Spring Senior Year

- Receive admissions and financial aid offers
- Attend MEFA's *Financial Aid Offers & the College Bill* webinar
- Attend college open house programs
- Choose your college by May 1st

View an extended timeline at: mefa.org/college-admissions-and-financial-aid-timeline

Things To Do



**Watch live & recorded
webinars**

(mefa.org/webinars)



**Sign up for MEFA
emails**

(mefa.org/sign-up-for-emails)



**Learn about
saving for college**

(mefa.org/save)

Connect with MEFA on Social Media



Thank You!

Questions?



(800) 449-MEFA (6332)



collegeplanning@mefa.org