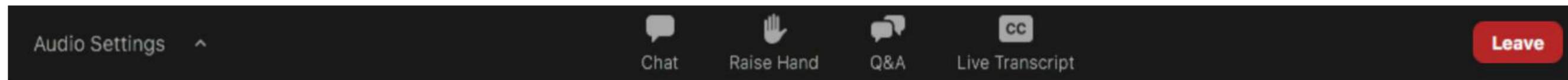




College Planning for Middle School Families

MEFA[™]

How to Participate



The *Audio Settings* allow you to control the volume levels

The *Chat* feature is disabled. To communicate with the host, please use the *Q&A* section

Have a question during the webinar? Type it in the *Q&A* section

Use the *Live Transcript* feature if you want to see closed captions

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About MEFA

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



Webinar Topics

- Academic planning
- Looking ahead to college admissions
- 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?

Academic Planning

- Review the MassCore guidelines to graduate (doe.mass.edu)
- Review admissions standards for MA state colleges (mass.edu)
- Know the course options at your high school (AP, IB, Dual Enrollment, etc.)
- Follow our academic success tips at mefa.org/article/navigating-high-school-academics/

Trends in College Admissions

- Students applying to a greater number of schools
- Demonstrated interest a factor
- Social media
- Cost a bigger factor
- More ways to interact with colleges virtually
- More test-optional schools
- More applications at test-optional schools, resulting in more selectivity
- Longer waitlists



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



MEFA Pathway

FREE college and career planning tool for students in grades 6-12

- Resources include:
 - Skills and interests assessments
 - Career exploration
 - College search
 - Financial aid and scholarship information
 - Personalized digital portfolio
 - Visit mefapathway.org to get started



MEFA | pathway™

College Factors to Consider

Institution
size &
location

Academic fit

Intended
major

Learning style

Campus
culture

Activities

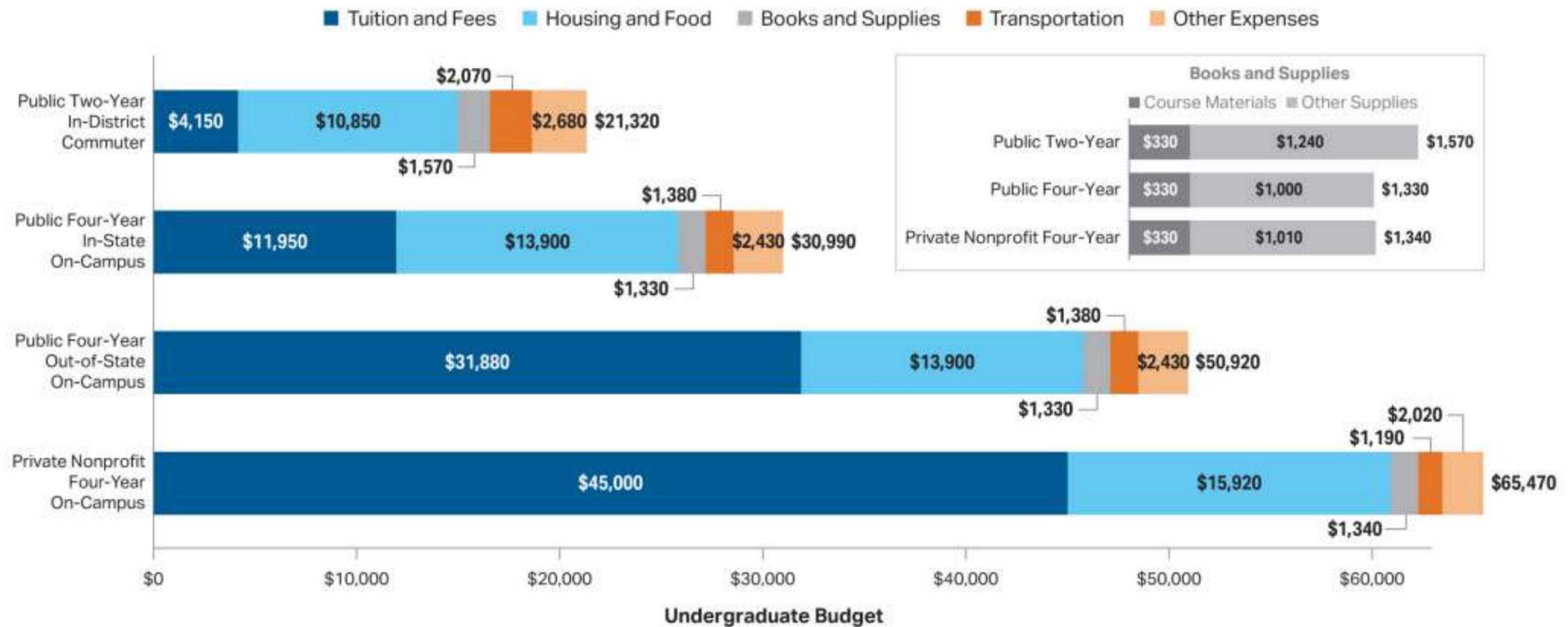
Study abroad
programs

Career &
internship
services

Affordability

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

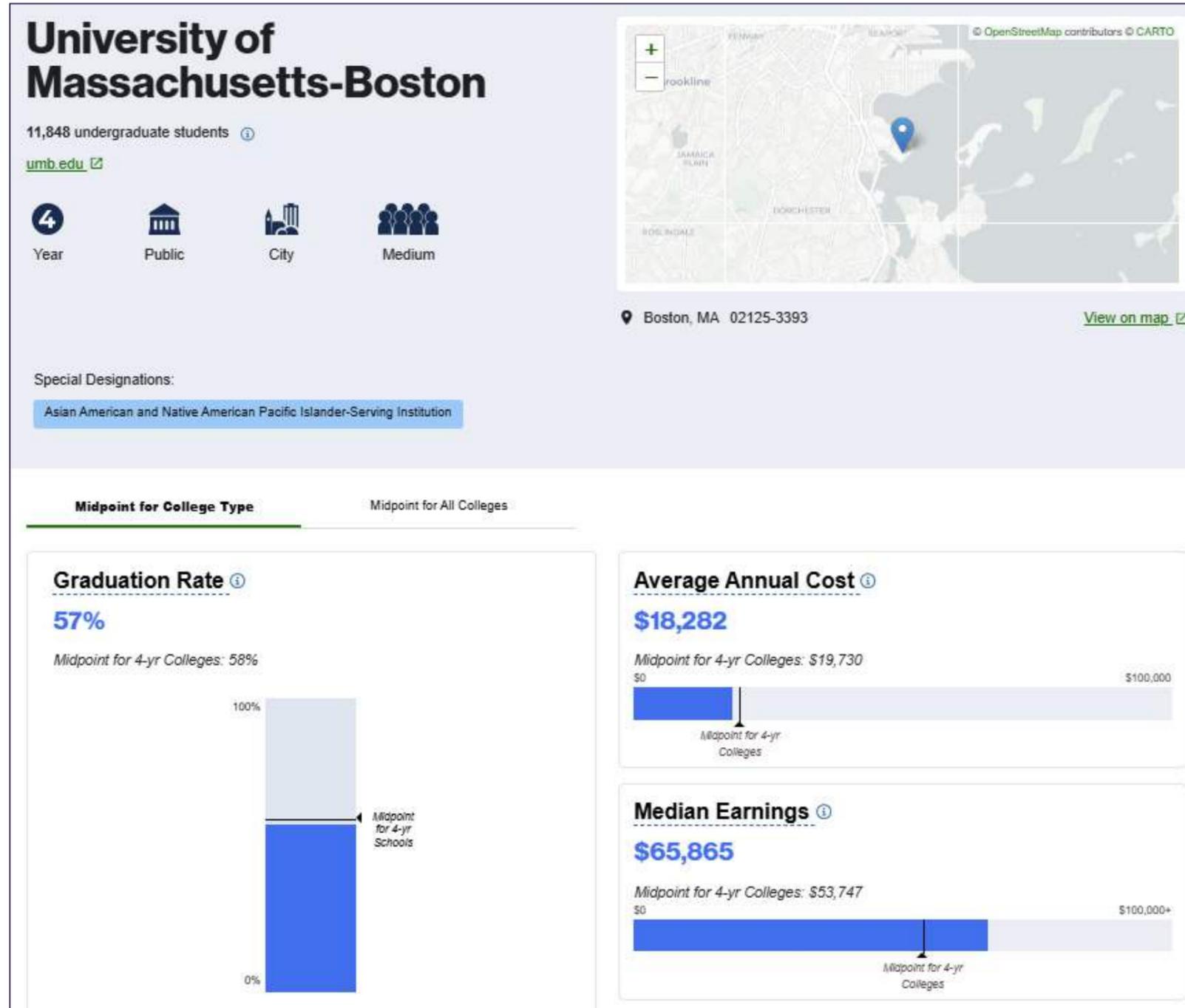
Understanding College Affordability

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

\$15,340

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.

Three Main Types:



**GRANTS AND
SCHOLARSHIPS
(GIFT AID)**



WORK-STUDY



**STUDENT
LOANS**

\$205 Billion Awarded to Students Each Year*

Merit-Based Aid

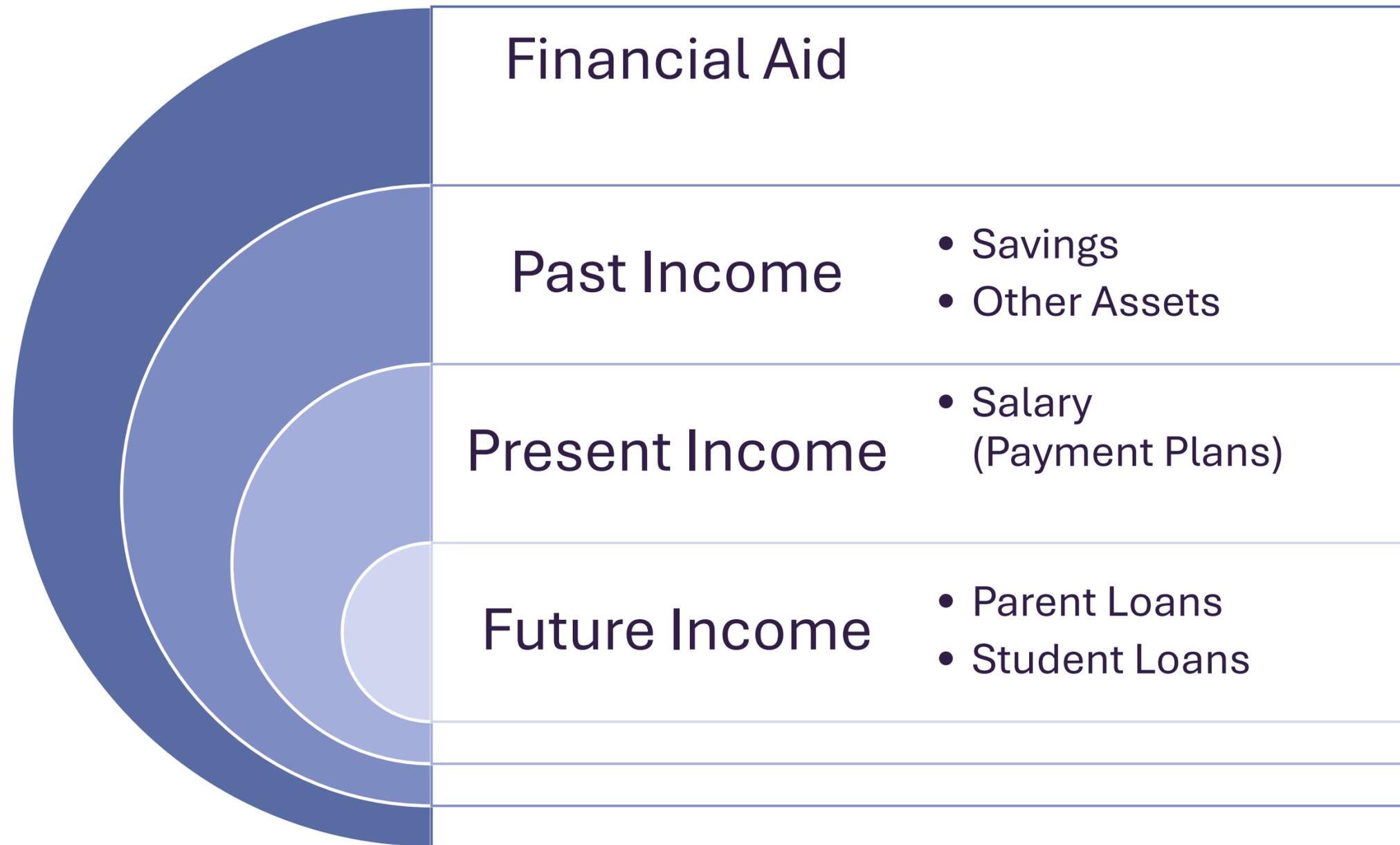
- Awarded in recognition of student achievements (academic, artistic, athletic, etc.)
- Criteria differs from school to school
- Often has requirements for renewal

Need-Based Aid

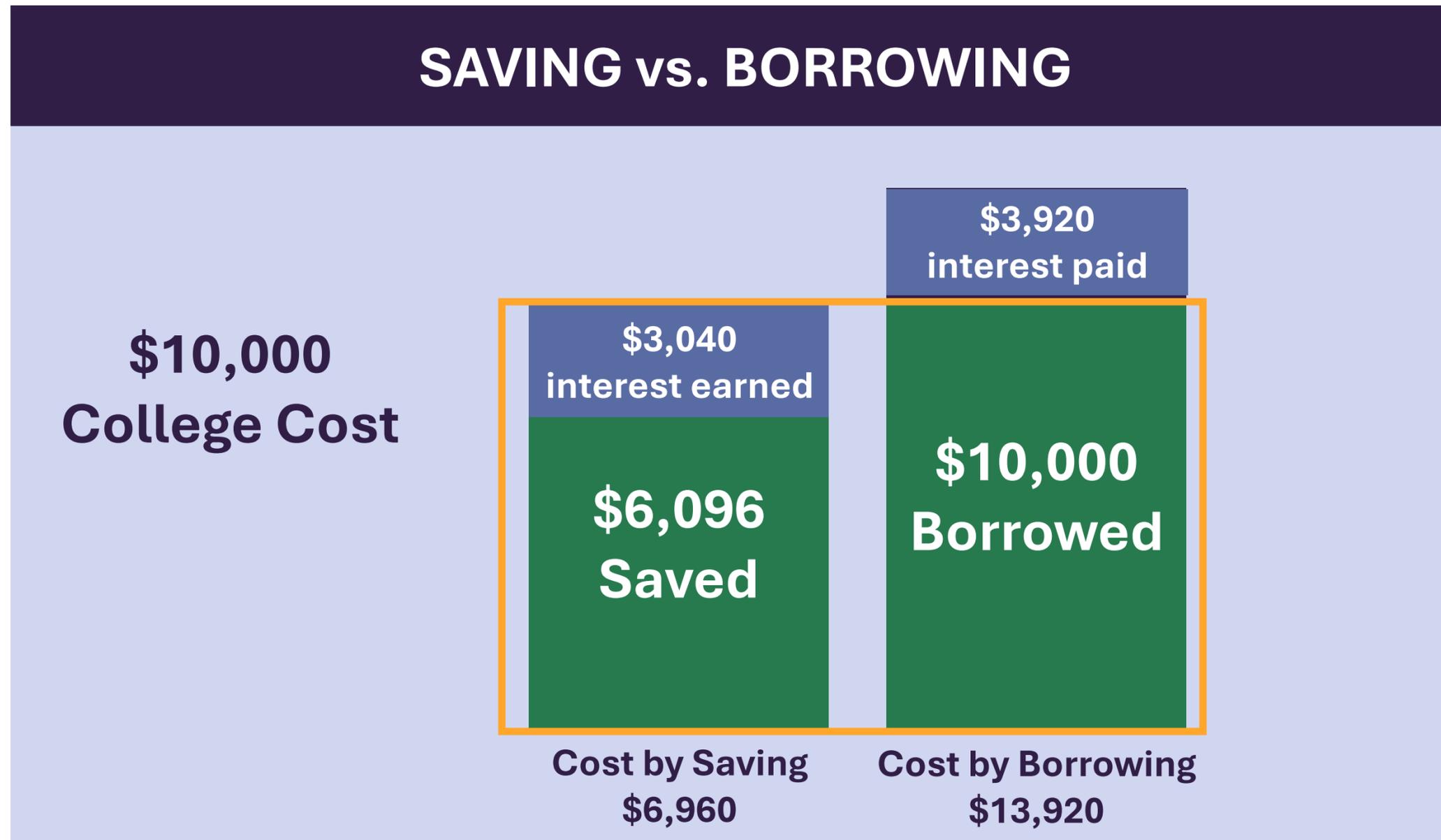
- Awarded based on family's financial eligibility
- Determined by standardized formula
- Very likely not to receive full amount of eligibility
- Includes most federal, state, and institutional (college) aid

*Source: The College Board, *Trends in Student Aid 2025*

How Do Families Pay for College?



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

1

Give you more education options

- Different types of colleges
- Special programs such as study abroad

2

Reduce or eliminate the need to borrow loans

3

Allow the student to work less and study more

4

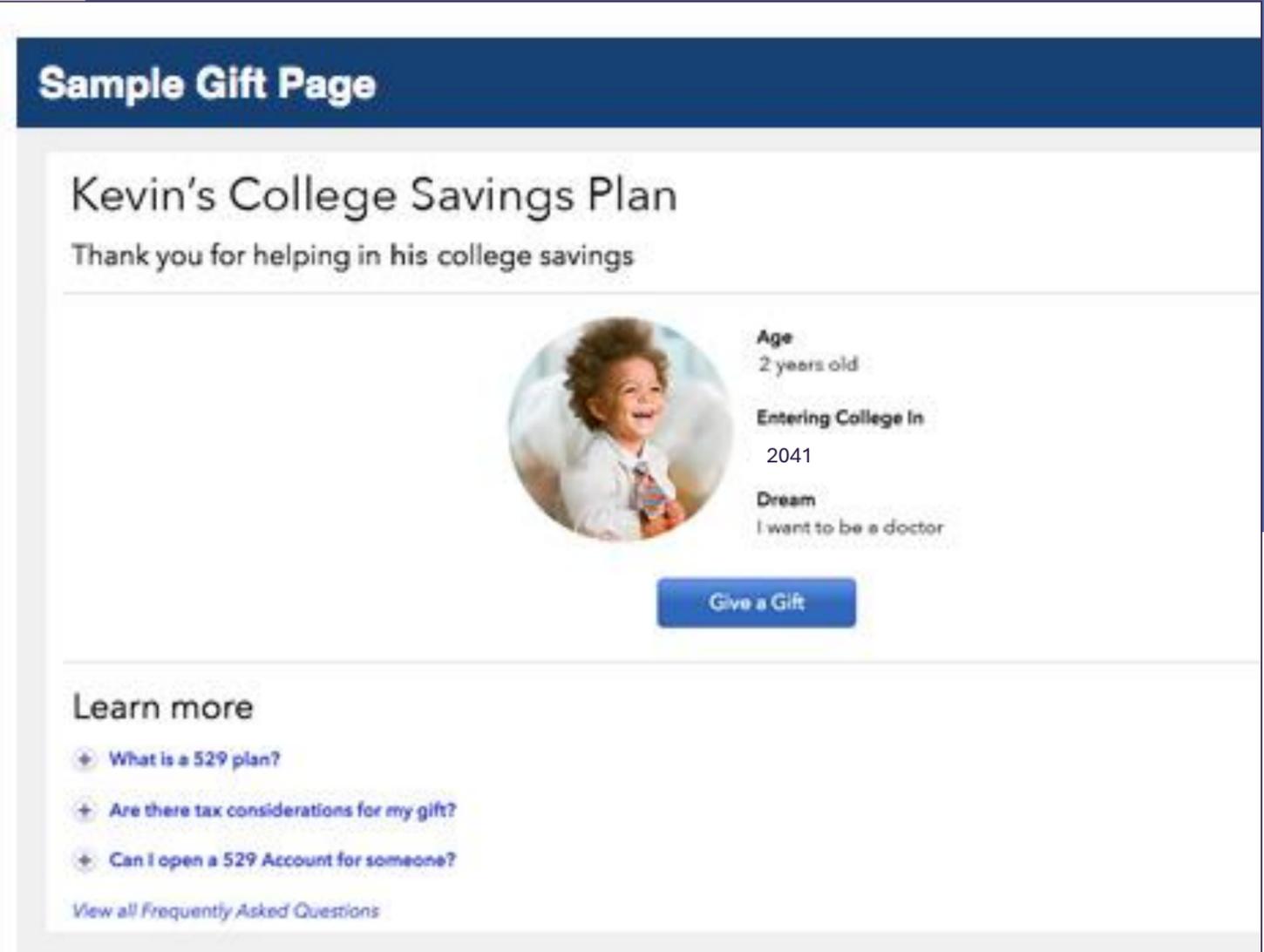
Have a minimum impact on aid eligibility

5

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



Sample Gift Page

Kevin's College Savings Plan

Thank you for helping in his college savings



Age
2 years old

Entering College In
2041

Dream
I want to be a doctor

[Give a Gift](#)

Learn more

- + [What is a 529 plan?](#)
- + [Are there tax considerations for my gift?](#)
- + [Can I open a 529 Account for someone?](#)

[View all Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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

MEFA's College Planning Tool

- Create a personal strategy to pay for your child's higher education costs:
 - Record your current college savings
 - Project your future college expenses
 - Receive guidance on meeting your shortfall



Get Started



Sign up for MEFA emails



Start (or continue) saving for college



Watch a MEFA Webinar



Visit mefa.org/save



Connect with MEFA

-  facebook.com/mefaMA
-  [@mefa_ma](https://www.instagram.com/mefa_ma)
-  [@MEFAtweets](https://twitter.com/MEFAtweets)
-  linkedin.com/company/mefa
-  youtube.com/MEFAcounselor
-  mefa.org/mefa-podcast

Thank You!

Questions?



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MEFA™