

APPLYING TO COLLEGE ON A TIGHT BUDGET

The college application process can seem discouragingly expensive, but plenty of money-saving options exist for low-income students.

- **ACT Fee Waiver:** The ACT offers a limited number of waivers, which cover the basic registration fee, and include up to four college reports. Students should request a fee waiver form from their school counselor. **Applicants must register for the test by mail to use a fee waiver.** Students may use a fee waiver for **one** ACT test registration in either junior or senior year. Once registered, a student is no longer eligible for a new waiver, even if the student does not end up testing. See the ACT website (www.act.org) for more information.
- **AP Test Fee Waiver:** The College Board offers fee reductions for students with financial need. Also, virtually all states offer federal- and/or state-funded exam subsidies to cover all or part of the cost for low-income students. Check the fee reduction options at the College Board website under AP: Calendar & Fees (www.collegeboard.com).
- **College Application Fee Waiver:** Most colleges offer fee waivers for their applications. Students may qualify for a school's fee waiver based on their eligibility for the College Board's fee waiver. Applicants usually submit a fee waiver request along with their college application, but fee waiver policies vary by college. **Some colleges grant application fee waivers only to students who receive SAT/ACT fee waivers.** Check colleges' websites for more information.
- **College Visits:** Some colleges hold unadvertised "flyback weekends", "visitation programs", or "preview weekends" for targeted students and/or interested students who send letters of interest and an overview of their test scores, grades, etc. The college pays for all or part of the transportation and room/board expenses. These visits take place in the fall to encourage students to apply, and in the spring to encourage accepted applicants to enroll. Colleges may also offer travel vouchers to accepted students, in which the colleges reimburse students for travel expenses to the campus. Others have diversity open houses (programs that invite minority students to campus for information sessions and activities) which pay for prospective students' expenses. Contact college admissions offices for more information.
- **CSS PROFILE Fee Waiver:** The College Board's CSS PROFILE service offers fee waivers to college applicants from low-income families. Waivers are automatically awarded online based on family financial information that is provided at the time the student completes the PROFILE; the student does not need to apply for a fee waiver. A student can qualify for up to six fee waivers for six college choices.
- **SAT Fee Waivers:** Students may request SAT fee waiver forms from their school counselor. Juniors and seniors can receive up to four fee waivers (two for the SAT, two for SAT Subject Tests). See the College Board website (www.collegeboard.com) for details.
- **Free Standardized Test Prep:** Test prep is valuable because it familiarizes students with the SAT and ACT test format and material, which can improve students' scores and lessen anxiety. Students can avoid paying hundreds of dollars for online courses by accessing free SAT and ACT preparation guides from websites such as:
 - www.number2.com (this test prep website has received awards and favorable reviews in the media, including the *New York Times*)
 - www.collegeboard.com,
 - www.kaptest.com (offers a free practice test)
 - www.majortests.com/sat (offers free practice mini tests and practice problems)

