

The Daly Harold

Award Letter Edition

April 2012

WHEN THE AWARD LETTERS START ARRIVING

If a college accepts a student for admission and that college was listed on the FAFSA, the college will send you an award letter. Make sure that you are comparing apples to apples. You may want to contact the college to make sure that they have everything they need in order to issue the award letter. Some other things to consider:

- What percentage of the need did the college meet?
- What are the parents out of pocket expenses?
- What are the students out of pocket expenses? This would include both work-study and student loans.
- How much is in loans vs. grants?
- Compare the student loans vs. the parent loans? Some award letters indicate the parent loan (PLUS) as financial aid. PLUS loans are NOT financial aid.
- Are there subsidized or un-subsidized student loans? Not all award letters make this clear.
- Accept all, part, or none of your award letter.

We like to see award letters, so even if you don't have any questions or problems, send us a copy for our files.

What if I don't understand the award letter(s) we received?

Some award letters are not very clear. It is not always easy to understand what the colleges are offering. If you would like help evaluating the award letters either email, fax, or mail ALL of your award letters to us. We will review the award letters over the phone or by email.

What if the award is not what I expected?

If the award letter is not what you expected, it is possible you can appeal the decision. If the school is close by, it may be best to make an appointment with their financial aid office and go in to review your package. Some schools will allow you to make a telephone appointment to review your package. Many schools need the appeal in writing.

If you need to question or appeal an award letter, remember that you are asking them for money. Be polite. Be appreciative of what they have offered. Make sure that they have taken all your factors into account. If you wrote special circumstance letters, make sure they received them. If other similar schools make better offers, you can mention that to them. From your appointment with us, and from your award letters, you should know approximately how much of an offer to expect. If the offer was lower than your expectations, you should question it.

Things we need to know

Please let us know right away if any of the following circumstances occur.

- Loss of job or currently unemployed.
- Death of a family member.
- Divorce or separation.
- Disability or an inheritance.
- Is the student planning to become an elementary or secondary school teacher?

Things you need to know

- Parent Plus loans taken out after July 1, 2008, the parent has the option of beginning repayment 60 days after the loan is fully disbursed or can wait until six months after the student is finished with college. While we do not encourage this, it is sometimes a good option to have. For parents considering this please speak to Susan about this during the summer.
- Students can have an additional \$2000 from their Stafford loan, but at some colleges you will have to ask for it.

Stafford Loans

Students will receive the Stafford loan forms after they return the award notification letter to the college they have selected. Because most colleges administer their own loans, contact them with any questions.

Work-Study

If you are offered work-study as part of your financial aid package, be sure you contact the college immediately to determine when and where jobs are posted and how you apply for them.

Decision Time!

Colleges are going to require that you make a final decision by May 1st. If you have not received all of your award letters to make that decision, contact the colleges and ask for an extension of time.

SELECTING A COLLEGE

Meet with College Planners, Inc. Ideally parents should be meeting with us sometime in the summer between sophomore and junior year of high school. Although it is never too late, the sooner we start it will allow us to have potentially more planning options. If a student graduates from high school in the year 2014, the federal methodology looks at the student and parent's 2013 income tax returns to determine the family's ability to pay for college. We can tell you how much you can expect to pay out of pocket for college and how much the student can expect to pay out of pocket for college. We can tell you if a private school might actually cost less than a state school. We can determine how you can legally maximize your financial aid eligibility.

Meet with the guidance office at your high school. We recommend that a meeting be scheduled with the parents, the student and the guidance counselor. Expect to discuss size of the college, distance from home, acceptance criteria, price, and curriculum. High school guidance counselors have special training and experience in helping students make the college selection.

Tour the colleges. Consider taking your summer vacation this year touring the potential colleges. Call in advance to arrange a tour. You'll get more out of your visit with a guided tour. Maybe take some weekend "vacations" to go see some nearby colleges. It is prudent to look at a variety of schools such as, one big school, one small school, a school in a big city, and a school in a rural area.

How many schools should we apply to? We usually recommend six. There are about 4000 colleges in the country. In the fall of senior year the student should narrow that down to about six, and then stay open minded to all six until all award letters are received. Less than four colleges is probably not enough and more than twelve is probably getting carried away.

Out of State Public Universities are not usually strong with financial aid. If after a comprehensive search it is determined that an out of state public university is the best match for the student, then look for out of state public universities that are priced within your budget. There are a lot of those universities that even with paying out of state tuition, they are priced around the same as our in- state universities.

TO ALL 2010 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES...

College Planners wishes you the best of luck for your freshmen year at college.

TO ALL THE PARENTS...

Thanks again for your continued business, it is greatly appreciated!

TIMING

- **Financial aid planning** ideally starts with a meeting with College Planners, Inc. in the summer, between the students sophomore and junior year or sooner (although it's never too late).
- **Applications** start in the fall of senior year. We recommend six schools. Work with your high school guidance department on selection of schools. They are trained and experienced to help you and the student through the selection process.
- **Scholarships** can be started as early as junior year (each one is different). We recommend you work with the high school guidance department on scholarships. If you would like give www.fastweb.com a try, they have good reputation with the guidance community.
- **FAFSA's and Profiles** and other financial aid applications are submitted in January of senior year based on estimates of the income taxes you will file. Do not wait until your taxes are completed, you may miss deadlines.
- **SAR's** come back approximately a month after submitting the **FAFSA**. Make sure they are processed correctly including any verification that is required. At this point, we need to update tax numbers to reflect your actual federal return.
- **Financial Aid Office** of each college must have everything they need: FAFSA, SAR, signed copies of 2010 income tax returns and W-2's (parents' and students). Also, if needed, the CSS Profile and any letter regarding special circumstances.
- **Acceptance by Admissions** varies by school (usually spring of senior year).
- **Award letters** arrive around March or April.
- **Your final decision on a college** is made usually before May 1st.
- **Funding plans** should be determined in May, and monthly payments plans should be set up then. Contact the college selected to discuss your payment options for your out-of-pocket share.

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