Net Price Calculator
A Guide for Students and Families

A net price calculator (NPC) is an online tool that provides estimates of college costs for prospective students, based on a set of inputs, such as family income, size and assets. The NPC calculates estimated grant and scholarship aid and subtracts that total from a college's cost of attendance, resulting in an **estimated net price**. Most NPCs go the next step and subtract a prospective student's estimated "self-help" (i.e., loans and work), resulting in a figure called **estimated remaining cost**.

For many years, there have been calculators online that allow families to calculate their expected family contribution. With an NPC, the difference is that the other half of the equation — how colleges distribute their financial aid and scholarship money — is now available. Families can estimate bottom-line college costs and plan accordingly.

The results of NPCs can vary. These tips should help students and their families interpret and understand NPC results.

1. **Not all NPCs will deliver the same results**. Colleges and universities have three options when choosing an NPC: using a federal NPC, developing their own NPC or subscribing to one from a third-party provider. Depending on the number and type of questions asked, the results will vary in accuracy. Typically, the fewer the questions, the less accurate the results.

2. **Timing is a factor**. The closer the student is to actually enrolling in college, the more accurate the results will be — because the financial information inputted will be most current.

3. There is no uniform way that colleges and universities are required to display results, so **use caution when comparing results to make sure that "apples-to-apples" comparisons are being made**. (See "Compare Your Net Prices" on the back for an example.)

4. If loans are subtracted from the net price, **be aware that loans vary in pricing, terms and conditions**.

5. **Colleges and universities have different funding levels, types of funds and criteria for distributing their funds**. A student may receive a scholarship at one institution and not at another for a variety of reasons.

6. **The amount of time and effort required to complete each NPC will vary**, based on the number and types of questions asked.

7. **Do not only look at what it will cost to attend college**. Students should not "race to the bottom" and only focus on what it will cost them to attend a specific college. To be successful, it is more important that the institution is the best educational fit.

8. After completing an NPC, **always keep a copy for your records**.

9. **Input the most accurate information when completing an NPC**. The results of the NPC are only as valid as the accuracy of the data entered.

10. **It is not necessary to enter personal identifying information while using an NPC**. Some colleges may prompt students to enter personal identifying information. By law, that is not required. A student can remain anonymous to the NPC to protect his or her privacy.

For further information on how to use NPCs, see the next page of this document.

For more information on using the College Board's Net Price Calculator, please visit netpricecalculator.collegeboard.org.

A Guide to Compare Net Prices

Net price calculators vary from institution to institution. Using the guide below can help ensure that valid comparisons are made, no matter what NPC is being used.

Compare Your Net Prices
Enter the student's cost and aid information in the blank fields.

Costs and Financial Aid

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
College or University Name				
Cost of Attendance				
Tuition and Fees				
Room and Board				
Books and Supplies				
Transportation				
Personal Expenses				
Estimated Total Cost of Attendance				
Gift Aid				
Grants and Scholarships				
Other Gift Aid				
Estimated Total Gift Aid				
ESTIMATED NET PRICE (Estimated Total Cost of Attendance minus Estimated Total Gift Aid)				
Self-Help Aid				
Student Loans				
Federal Stafford Loans				
Federal Perkins Loan				
Other Student or Parent Loans				
Work				
Work-Study/Job Offer				
Estimated Total Self-Help				
ESTIMATED REMAINING COST (Estimated Net Price minus Estimated Total Self-Help)				