

# The Cost of College

This lesson is designed to help students discover the cost of different types of colleges by using the College Cost Calculator in order to compare a variety of college options.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Learn the difference between two-year/four-year colleges and private/public colleges
2. Connect their own interests to one two-year college and three four-year colleges: one private college, one public in-state college, and one public out-of-state college
3. Evaluate the cost of each of the colleges they chose
4. Create a poster detailing the differences in tuition & fees, room & board, and books & supplies for their chosen colleges, and reflect upon which they think will be the most financially feasible for them

## ACTIVITIES

### PART 1

#### Content Knowledge

Ask students to reflect in writing on the following prompt:

*If there were no monetary limitations or admissions requirements to meet, what college would you want to go to and why?*

Discuss student answers about their dream colleges to get the conversation going. Lead into the differences between two/four-year colleges and private/public colleges.

- Two-year college: an institution that offers undergraduate coursework for two years. Many programs are vocational and offer associate degrees or the equivalent of the freshman and sophomore years at a four-year undergraduate institution
- Four-year colleges/university: An institution that offers undergraduate curriculum that results in an academic degree known as a baccalaureate degree, or bachelor's degree
- Public colleges/university: A college or university that is predominantly funded through public means through a national or subnational government
- Private colleges/university: A college or university that is predominantly funded through private means. Many are operated as educational and research nonprofit organizations. Tuition and fees tend to be higher than at public universities.

Grade Level: 10 - 12

#### MEFA PATHWAY LINKS FOR LESSON:

- College Cost Calculator
- College Compare

#### SUBJECT AREAS:

- Personal Finance
- Econ

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Internet connection to work with the MEFA Pathway website
- Internet connection to research and choose colleges
- Differences in College Costs Poster and Reflection Grading Rubric (attached)

Email any questions to:  
[info@mefapathway.org](mailto:info@mefapathway.org)

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# LESSON PLAN

Lead into a discussion about the differences in cost for colleges that are in a student's home state versus outside of a student's home state. **Important:** Though this exercise will not explore financial aid options, explain to students that though a school may have a high cost, it may end up being the best financial option (and lowest cost school) based on the financial aid received.

## PART 2

### Applying Information

Knowing what they know about the different types of colleges, students should choose several colleges that they are interesting in learning more about. Students should choose one two-year school and three four-year schools: one private school, one public in-state school, and one public out-of-state school.

## PART 3

### Evaluating Information

Students will use the College Cost Calculator and their chosen schools to research the estimated costs of tuition & fees, room & board, and books & supplies for each school. Students should record this information as they will be using it to create a poster. In order to see the difference between in-state and out-of-state estimated tuition, students will need to use the College Compare page in addition to the College Cost Calculator.

## PART 4

### Critical Thinking/Creative Application

Students will create a poster that neatly displays the information that they've researched. They must include the school name, estimated costs of tuition & fees, room & board, and books & supplies for each school. They also must indicate what category or categories their schools fall into (two/four-year, public/private, and in/out-of-state). Additionally, students reflect on which of the schools (out of the ones they've researched) would be the most financially feasible for their future and thoroughly explain why.

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# College Costs Poster and Reflection Grading Rubric

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CATEGORY	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	SATISFACTORY 2	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 1
Content Accuracy	All content throughout the poster is accurate. There are no factual errors.	Most of the content is accurate but there is one piece of information that seems inaccurate.	The content is generally accurate, but one piece of information is clearly inaccurate.	Content confusing or contains more than one factual error.
Sequencing of Information	Information is organized in a clear, logical way.	Most information is organized in a clear, logical way.	Some information is logically sequenced.	There is no clear plan for the organization of information.
Effectiveness	Project includes all material needed to give a good understanding of the differences between the schools.	Project is lacking one or two key elements. Project distinguishes many differences between the schools.	Project is missing more than two key elements. Some of the differences between the schools seems unclear.	Project is lacking several key elements and has inaccuracies. The differences between the schools are unclear.
Font Choice & Formatting	Font formats (size, bold, italic) have been carefully planned to enhance readability and content.	Font formats have been carefully planned to enhance readability.	Font formats have been carefully planned to complement the content. It may be a little hard to read.	Font formatting makes it very difficult to read the material.
Reflection	The student clearly indicates which school of the researched schools would be the most financially feasible and thoroughly explains why.	The student clearly indicates which school of the researched schools would be financially feasible and explains why in simple terms.	The student clearly indicates which school of the researched schools would be financially feasible but doesn't explain why.	The student does not indicate which school of the researched schools would be financially feasible.
Conventions. Student uses proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Poster and reflection have no grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors.	Poster and reflection have 1-2 grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors	Poster and reflection have 3-4 grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors.	Poster and reflection have 5 or more grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors.