



Student Loan Tips

How to Fill the Financial Aid Gap After Scholarships and Federal Aid

Learn what to do when scholarships and federal student aid don't cover your full cost of college — and how to close the gap responsibly.

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Even after scholarships, grants, and federal student loans, many students still face a frustrating reality: there's a gap between what school costs and what their financial aid package covers. This is called a "financial aid gap," and it's more common than you might think.

Whether you're a new student or returning for another year, here's how to identify and fill that gap responsibly.

Start by reviewing your school's cost of attendance (COA), which includes tuition, housing, meals, books, supplies, and other essential expenses. Subtract your total financial aid — including scholarships, grants, federal loans, and work-study. What's left is your funding gap.

The first step is to talk to your school's financial aid office. They can double-check your eligibility for additional grants or institutional aid and help you explore options like payment plans that spread out your balance over time.

Some families may consider using savings, 529 plans, or part-time student income to help bridge the gap. These can reduce the amount you need to borrow — which is a smart financial move when possible.

Private student loans are a common way to fill the remaining need. These loans are credit-based and often require a cosigner, especially for undergraduate students. They can be used for any school-certified cost of attendance, and many lenders offer flexible repayment terms.

If you've already applied for a private loan but didn't get approved, you're not out of options. GradBridge offers a second-look student loan designed specifically for near-approval borrowers. If you narrowly missed approval with another lender, we can provide a responsible second chance at securing the funds you need to stay in school.

You don't have to delay your education due to a funding shortfall. With the right approach and support, it's possible to close the gap and keep moving forward toward your degree.