Financing Higher Education



Disclaimer

We are not certified financial planners. This presentation is for educational purposes only. Nothing in this presentation constitutes personal, financial, or legal advice.



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Introductions

Name

What do you hope to learn today?

Welcome & Grounding



- Paying for university can feel overwhelming!
- Feeling confused does not mean you're behind.
- This session is about understanding your options, strategy, and clarity - not perfection.
- Let's dive in!

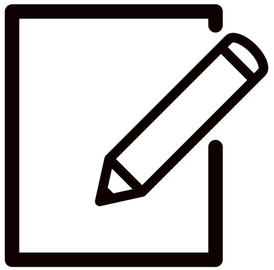
Opening Reflection

When you think about paying for university, what's comes to mind?

What's one thing you've heard about paying for university that worries you?

Where are people in their journey?

Takeaways



- A clearer understanding of what university actually costs
- A simple framework for how STEM degrees are financed
- A snapshot of what financing could look like for you
- More confidence asking questions and making informed decisions

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Understanding the Cost

- The price listed on a college website is called the sticker price
- Most students do not pay the sticker price
- Understanding what makes up the cost helps reduce fear and confusion
- STEM programs often have additional costs that require planning



Sticker vs Net “Real” Price

Sticker Price

(Cost of Attendance)

The full, advertised cost including tuition, fees, room and board, books, and personal expenses.

Real Price

(Net Price)

The actual amount a student pays after grants, scholarships, and financial aid are subtracted.



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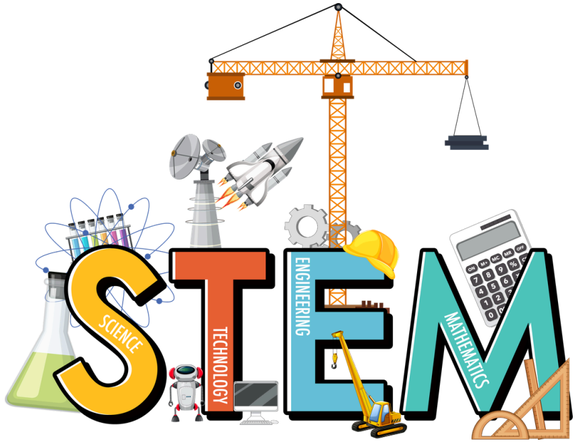
STEM Specifics

STEM fields like engineering and computer science often have higher-than-average costs due to lab equipment and specialized faculty.



Breaking Down the Cost

- Tuition & Fees: What schools charge for classes and enrollment
- Housing & Food: Living on campus, commuting, or living at home
- Books & Supplies: Textbooks, lab materials, software, equipment
- Transportation & Personal Costs: Gas, transit, daily living expenses



Example of Sticker Price: SJSU

**TUITION & CAMPUS FEES (6.1 or more units)	$8,846		
STANDARD STUDENT BUDGET ALLOWANCES	**WITH PARENTS**	**CAMPUS HOUSING***	**OFF CAMPUS**
FOOD AND HOUSING	$10,820	$21,890	$20,138
TRANSPORTATION	$1,901	$1,078	$2,113
MISCELLANEOUS / PERSONAL	$2,868	$2,564	$3,351
BOOKS & SUPPLIES	$958	$958	$958
UNDERGRADUATE TOTAL	**$25,393**	**$35,336**	**$35,406**

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Sticker Price can be Misleading

- Colleges list the maximum possible cost
- Financial aid reduces what students actually pay
- Grants and scholarships lower the net price
- The sticker price is not what you owe

Key Takeaway: Sticker price ≠ your price

Why STEM Can Cost More

- Some STEM majors take longer to complete
- Required labs, books and materials increase costs
- Heavy course loads can reduce time available for work



Differences by Type of Institution

- CSU campuses generally have lower tuition and fees
- UC campuses cost more but often offer research funding and paid opportunities
- Private colleges may have higher sticker prices, but sometimes offer larger institutional grants
- Key Point: A higher sticker price does not always mean a higher out-of-pocket cost.

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How Degrees Are Financed



Applying for Financial Aid

1 FAFSA

Students should fill this application out to apply for federal student aid such as:

- federal grants
- work study
- loans

FAFSA is the gateway to federal aid and is also used for many state and institutional aid programs

2 CA DREAM Act

Allows undocumented and nonresident students to:

- pay in-state tuition at any public college in California
- receive state offered financial aid
- apply and receive private scholarships

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Grants

Sources of free money that DO NOT have to be paid back and are often provided based on FINANCIAL need



Pell Grant

- Max: $7,395 per year
- Eligible for 12 terms

Cal Grant

- Up to $15,588 per year for eligible UC students
- Up to $6,838 per year for eligible CSU students
- Up to $9,358 per year at eligible private nonprofit colleges
- Generally available for up to 4 years

*Graduate Students are not eligible for these

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Scholarships

Types of Scholarships

- Financial need
- Merit based
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Talents
- Region
- & more!

How do I find scholarships? →

Search Engines:

Scholly Fastweb
Chegg Niche
Locally College Board

When / How do I apply? →

Scholarships have their own deadlines and requirements.
Read the applications carefully!

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On Campus Jobs

On Campus Jobs:

- Front desk receptionist
- Research Assistant
- Mail Room Assistant
- Dining Hall Assistant
- Barista
- & more!

Work Study: part-time jobs for students with financial need

Residence Life: work here in exchange for housing / food

Resources

- Job boards
- Career center
- Faculty in your department
- Ask friends



Off-Campus Jobs

Jobs Commonly Worked











Pros

- Higher wages
- More variety
- Less Rules

Cons

- Commute
- Time
- Scheduling

Paid STEM Opportunities

- Research Assistant Roles
- Internships
- Research Lab
- Summer programs



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How Time Impacts Cost – STEM Example

Example:

- Engineering student plans for 4 years
- Needs an extra year due to math sequencing

Estimated Impact:

- Additional tuition & fees: $8,000–$15,000
- Additional housing & living costs: $12,000–$18,000
- Possible increase in borrowing or delayed graduation

Key Takeaway:

- Planning your course path early can save thousands of dollars

Student Loans



Types of Student Loans

Subsidized

- Based on financial need
- Not charged interest while in school

Unsubsidized

- Both undergrad and grad students eligible
- Charged interest while in school

Let's Go to College!

Federal vs Private Student Loans

Federal Loans

- Need-based
- Provided by the government
- Conditions mandated by law
- Fixed interest rates
- Income-driven repayment plan
- Loan Forgiveness Programs
- Default Rehabilitation

Private Loans

- Credit history-based
- Provided by a bank or lender
- Conditions mandated by lender
- Possible variable interest rates
- No affordable repayment plans
- No loan forgiveness programs
- No default rehabilitation

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Tips for Student Loan Borrowers

- Understand your loan agreement
- Manage your borrowing
- Track your loans online
- Keep good records



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Manageable Borrowing Means

- Borrowing only what you need, not the maximum offered
- Understanding how much you'll owe before you borrow
- Having a general sense of what repayment could look like

Understanding ROI



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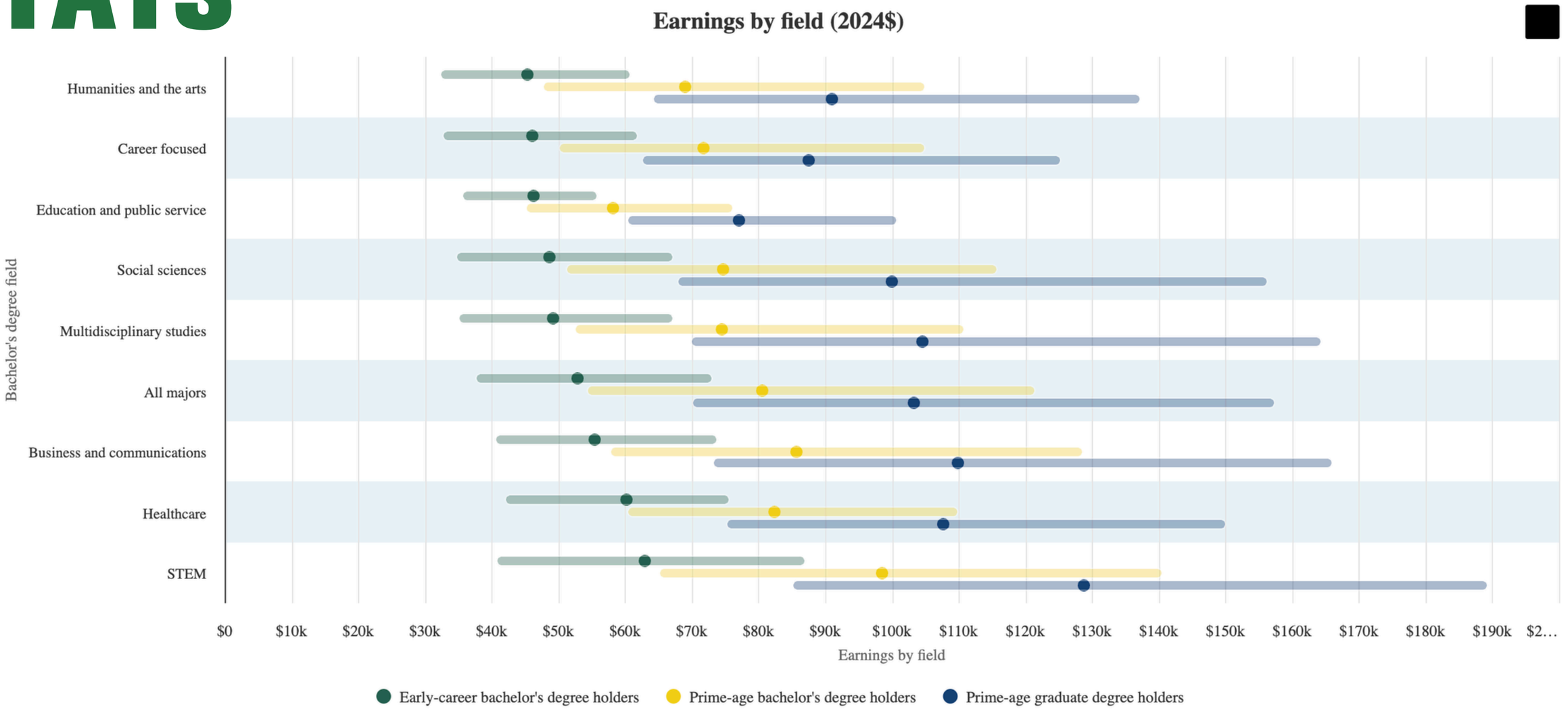
STATS



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–23 (pooled).

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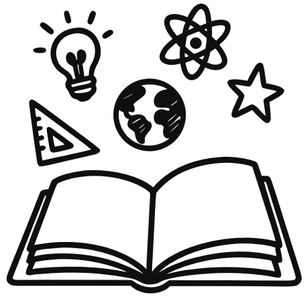
Return on Investment

Comparing the cost of your degree to the earning potential it opens. Thinking long-term, not just about your first job.

ROI can include:

- Job stability and demand in your field
- Opportunities for growth or graduate school
- Benefits like health insurance and retirement
- Ability to support yourself and your family
- Access to careers you care about
- Higher paying industry



Loans + ROI: Reframing

- Loans are not a sign you did something wrong
- Loans can be a bridge to long-term opportunity
- The goal is intentional borrowing, not zero borrowing



Reframing

The question isn’t ‘Can I avoid debt?’—it’s ‘If I need to take out a loan, can I manage it wisely?



Let's Build Your University Money Plan!

Scan the QR code or click the link to create your own worksheet.

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Questions?



Thank You!

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