College Cost Meter®

Learn About College Cost Meter

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Introduction

Providing your students with detailed student loan and debt information empowers them to make smart college financing decisions and prepare for repayment. Whether legislation requires you to send financial aid or indebtedness data, or you simply want to empower your students to achieve better outcomes, College Cost Meter® makes it easy.

What is College Cost Meter?

Part of Ascendium's Attigo® suite of solutions designed to empower students to succeed, College Cost Meter is a versatile tool that allows you to quickly, easily, and cost-effectively send correspondence to your students containing information on cost of attendance, grants/scholarships, and student loans.

This correspondence:

- Is configurable to meet your school's needs. You can choose to provide a broad span of information, or just specific details your in-school students want to know, such as loan amount, payment amount, and interest rate and capitalization information.

- Can help you meet your state's student debt letter requirements. *A School College Cost Meter File Quick Guide* is available on Student Success Support Central for some states to provide information on state-specific requirements.

- Clearly presents information in an easy-to-understand format that's responsive to different electronic devices to help keep your students informed.

- Is created using a School College Cost Meter file generated by your school, as well as National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) data collected by Attigo, to give your students a complete picture of their federal loans received while enrolled at your school, regardless of servicer.
- Can be branded with your school name, logo, and contact information, and contain financial wellness resources you specify.

How Do I Access It?

Log in to the Ascendium Education Solutions portal at https://ascendiumeducationsolutions.org.

In the College Cost Meter tile, select *Launch College Cost Meter*.
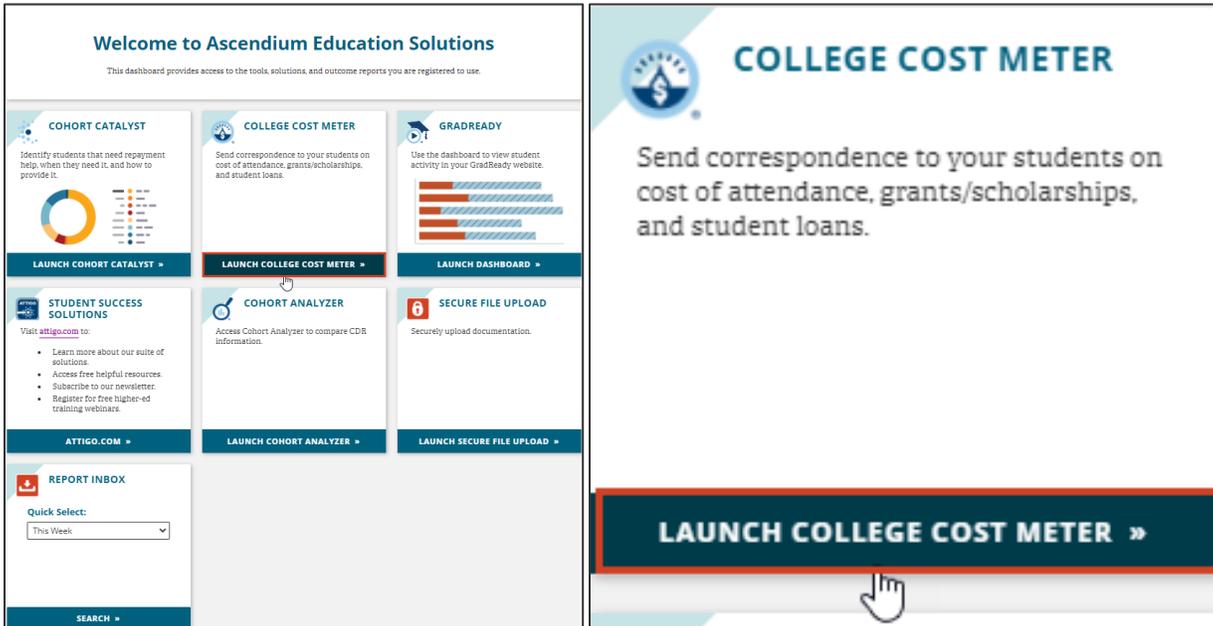
Figure 1: Example of the Ascendium Education Solutions portal and College Cost Meter tile.

How Do I Use It?

You can use College Cost Meter to provide information about students you want to send correspondence to and configure that correspondence.

How Do I Upload Files Containing Student Information?

To provide the student information and student loan and indebtedness details used to create correspondence, **you create a School College Cost Meter file**, which uses a standard format. To ensure information is populated correctly in College Cost Meter, you must provide the appropriate data in a valid format.

Note: In addition to your School College Cost Meter file, NSLDS data files can also be uploaded in College Cost Meter to give your students a complete picture of their federal student loan data. We can retrieve and upload these NSLDS files for you; or, if you choose, you can retrieve and upload them.

Resource: Refer to *School College Cost Meter File Field Details*, available on Student Success Support Central, for field details.

If you have the appropriate access rights, **you can easily upload your School College Cost Meter file in College Cost Meter**. In the Data Upload section, simply:

- **Upload your files.**

Figure 2: Example of the Load Data Files section, identifying the Choose File button.

- **Provide your email address**, if desired, so we can let you know when data has been uploaded. (This is optional.)
- **Agree to Ascendium's terms and conditions.**

Resource: Refer to *Upload Your School College Cost Meter File* in College Cost Meter, available on Student Success Support Central, for more information.

How Can I View File Statuses?

The statuses of files used to send correspondence, as well as the last file upload dates, display on the College Cost Meter Data Upload page so **you can easily see how current the files are**. The status bar only considers the most recently uploaded file; once correspondence using data from the associated files is sent, the file status resets to *Incomplete*.
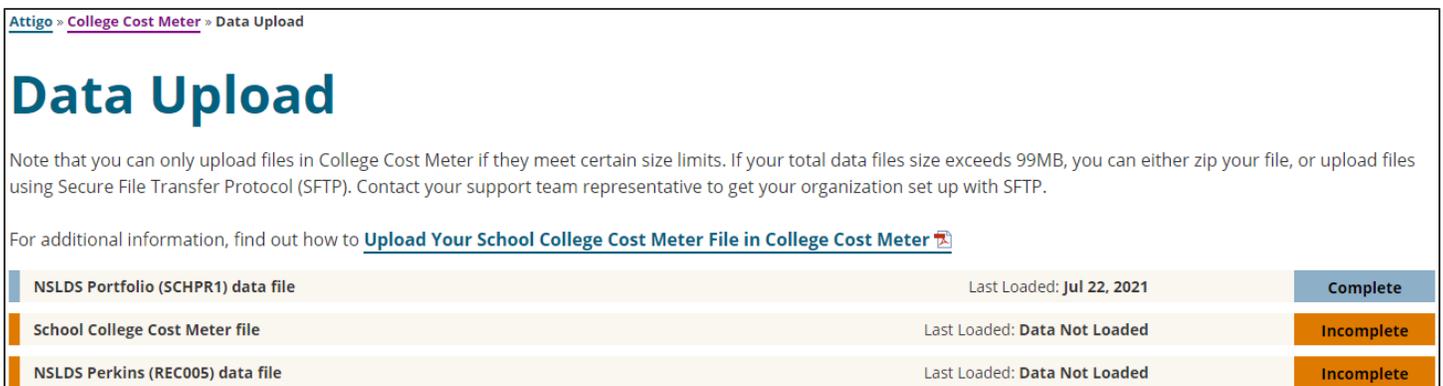

Figure 3: Example of the College Cost Meter Data Upload page, displaying files with statuses of Complete and Incomplete.

How Do I Configure the Correspondence Sent to My Students?

It's easy to configure correspondence to provide information to empower your students and/or meet your state's regulatory requirements. **If you have the appropriate access rights, you can edit correspondence content, as well as configure correspondence settings.**

Resource: Refer to *Configure College Cost Meter Correspondence*, available on Student Success Support Central, for detailed information on configuring correspondence.

How Do I Configure How My Correspondence Displays?

During onboarding, a member of our Product Support Team configures your product settings using the general account information and product-specific information you provide.

In the menu sidebar, select *Configure Settings*.
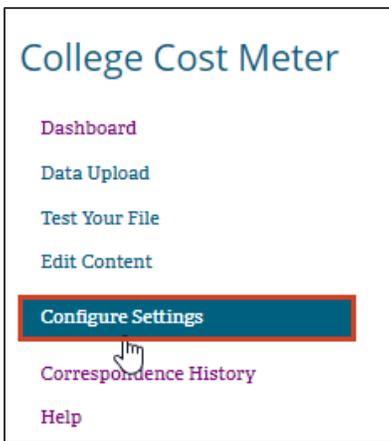
Figure 4: Example of the menu sidebar, identifying the Configure Settings menu item.

How Do I Edit Correspondence Content?

On the Edit Content page, each section displays correspondence text for a complete view of data included in your correspondence. **In most sections, you can edit or remove correspondence text.**

Important: If you don't edit correspondence content, the default text is used. The edit correspondence content functionality is limited based on access rights.

Click *Edit Content* in the menu sidebar to get started.
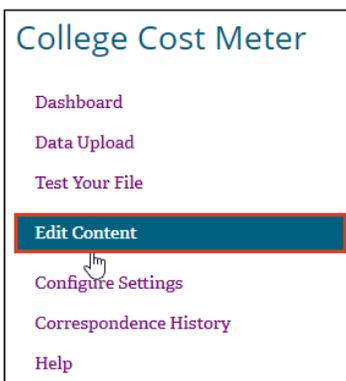
Figure 5: Example of the menu sidebar, identifying the Edit Content menu item.

How Can I View the Status of My Correspondence?

To let you **easily view the status of your school's College Cost Meter correspondence**, a message displays at the top of the dashboard.

This message lets you know:

- Whether correspondence is currently scheduled to be sent, or the last time correspondence was sent.
- How you can view more information about the status of your correspondence.

> ⓘ **College Cost Meter correspondence was last sent on 7/6/2021.**
> Please check the Emails Delivered report below to view the status of your correspondence.
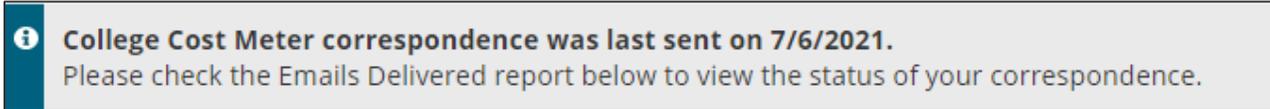
Figure 6: Example of a College Cost Meter correspondence status message.

Resource: To learn how to check the Emails Delivered report, see the *College Cost Meter Correspondence Tracking Reports* section in this guide.

How Can I Access Copies of the Correspondence Sent to My Students?

On the Correspondence History page, **you can easily search for and access copies of correspondence sent to your students**. This is useful, for example, if you need to provide correspondence copies to auditors. You can search for correspondence by either student SSN or ID.

Correspondence History

Search previous correspondence by:

- ⦿ Student SSN
- ○ Student ID#

Student SSN [__-__-____]

[SEARCH]   [CLEAR SEARCH]

Note: If you print the HTML document (student email), the information may not be properly formatted due to page breaks.
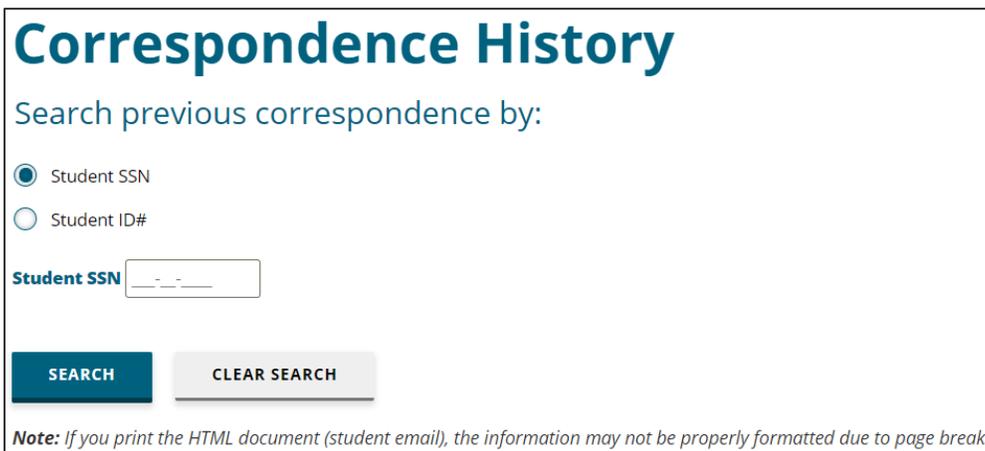
Figure 7: Example of the Correspondence History page.

Resource: Refer to **Configure College Cost Meter Correspondence**, available on Student Success Support Central, for more information.

How Is Correspondence Sent to My Students?

If you've successfully uploaded a School College Cost Meter file, **this process is followed to send correspondence**.

Note: This process assumes we upload the appropriate NSLDS files. If your school chooses to upload NSLDS files, in *Data Upload > Correspondence Preview*, you click *Send Correspondence* to initiate the process to send correspondence once you've successfully uploaded all required data files.

1. **You receive an email** letting you know your School College Cost Meter file was successfully uploaded, and the file status changes to *Complete*. The College Cost Meter Support team receives the same email, which lets them know they should request the NSLDS files.
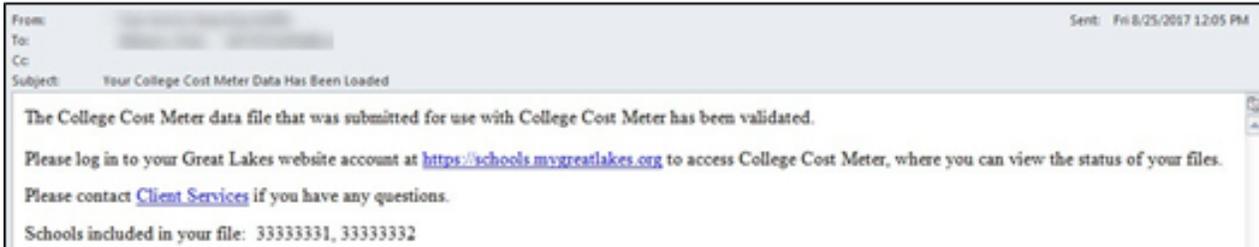
Figure 8: Example of the email notifying you the School College Cost Meter file was successfully uploaded.

2. **The College Cost Meter Support team requests the required NSLDS data files.**

Note: It can take up to 48 hours to receive these files.

3. Once the **College Cost Meter Support team receives the NSLDS data files, they upload them**. If you provided your email address in the Data Upload section, you also receive an email notifying you when the NSLDS files have been uploaded.
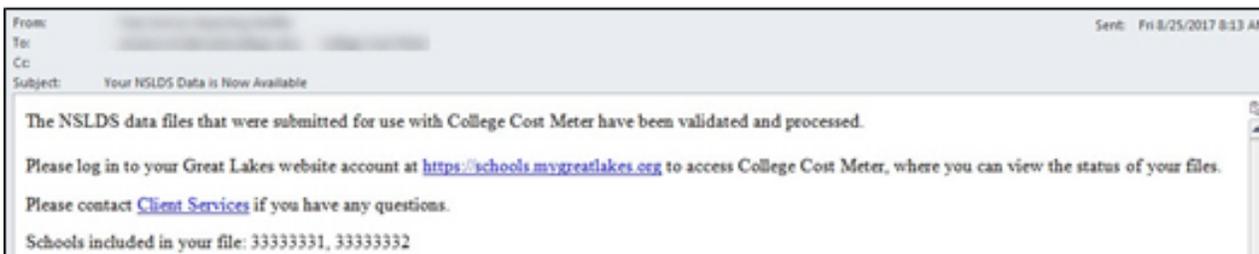

Figure 9: Example of the email notifying you the NSLDS files were successfully uploaded.

4. Once all required data files are uploaded, the College Cost Meter Support team initiates the process to send correspondence, and **correspondence is sent to all students included in the School College Cost Meter file you created**. **Note:**

   If students have questions about the correspondence they receive, they can click a reply link in the email. Clicking this link sends a reply to your school, not to us.

Resource: Refer to the *What Does the Correspondence Sent to My Students Look Like* section in this guide to see an example email.

5. Once correspondence has been sent, you can run an on-demand report containing information about the students correspondence was sent to, as well as any students correspondence couldn't be sent to. Refer to the *How Can I Track Usage* in the section to follow.

6. **If any correspondence couldn't be sent because of bad data, work with the College Cost Meter Support team** to resolve any issues so correspondence can be sent.

Note: When an anticipated completion date is missing from an NSLDS data file, it is likely because the last record a school reported to NSLDS reflects that the student withdrew from school. In this case, you must verify that the student has re-enrolled and that enrollment information is updated on NSLDS before correspondence can be sent.

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Note: Any College Cost Meter or NSLDS data that has not been used to create correspondence and is more than 30 days old is purged.

How Can I Track Usage?

The **College Cost Meter Correspondence Tracking report** displays information about College Cost Meter correspondence. You can use this report for compliance and audit purposes.

How Can I Run the College Cost Meter Correspondence Tracking Report?

Once correspondence has been sent, you can run an on-demand report containing information to help you determine receipt of correspondence and easily identify students who did not receive theirs for follow up.

1. To generate a report simply use the clickable links available in the report for the following data: *Emails Delivered*, *Bounced & Rpt SPAM*, *Est. Emails Opened*, and *Letters Mailed*.

Note: When no data is available, there will not be a clickable link.

Figure 10: Example of clicking the Emails Delivered link identified with an arrow.

2. Click **Yes, Get This Report** in the message that displays.

Figure 11: Example of the message that displays, identifying the Yes, Get This Report button.

3. A **Requested Reports** field will appear with the status indicating when loading is complete.
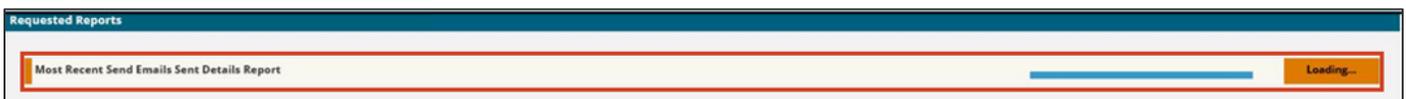

Figure 12: Requested Reports section displaying "Loading" status.

4. Once complete, an Excel spreadsheet is created. **Double-click or right click to open the report.**

   Note: By default, the report is delivered to you in Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) format and sorted by student last name and first name.

   Resource: Refer to the ***Configure College Cost Meter Dashboard User Guide***, available on Student Success Support Central, for more information on tracking usage and this report.

Each column in the report provides the following information:

A	**Organization ID**	Your school's ID.
B	**Student ID**	The student's ID, SSN, and full name.
C	**Student SSN**	
D	**Student Last Name**	
E	**Student First Name**	
F	**Date email was sent**	The date an email was sent, the email address used, and whether the email bounced as indicated by *Yes*, *No*, or *(Blank)*.
G	**Email**	**Note:** If correspondence couldn't be sent, these columns are blank.
H	**Email Bounced**	If Yes displays in the Email Bounced column, you must provide a new email address to use, or choose to mail the correspondence.
		Also refer to the [Bounced & Rpt SPAM](#) report section in this guide.
I	**Date letter was sent**	The date a letter was sent and the mailing address used.
J	**Mailing Address**	**Note:** If correspondence couldn't be sent, these columns are blank.
K	**Valid for Delivery**	An indication of whether valid email addresses and mailing addresses are available to use to send the correspondence as indicated by *Both*, *Email*, or *Invalid*.
		Note: If no data is available, *Invalid* displays.

If correspondence couldn't be sent, you can use columns (L-N) to identify potential data issues. Each column provides an indication of whether data used to generate correspondence is valid as indicated by *No Data, Valid*, or *Invalid* for columns (L-N).

Note: If no data is available to display in the correspondence, **No Data** displays in columns L-N.

L	**Demo, COA, Grants and Scholarships Details**	**Note:** If *Invalid* displays, the issue is likely due to an invalid email address or mailing address.
M	**Private and Institutional Loans Details**	**Note:** If *Invalid* displays, the issue is likely due to a loan name being included with either an invalid corresponding amount or date, or no corresponding amount.
N	**NSLDS Details**	**Note:** If *Invalid* displays, there are data issues with the NSLDS data files.

Generating a report using the **Bounced & Rpt SPAM** clickable link, each column in the report displays the following information:

A	School Code	Your school's OPE ID.
B	Social Security Number	The student's SSN and full name.
C	First Name	
D	Last Name	
E	Email Address	The email address used, the date an email was sent and the date it bounced, and whether it was reported as *Spam* or a *Hard Bounce*.
F	Date Sent	
G	Date Bounced	
H	Bounce Type	

What Does the Correspondence Sent to My Students Look Like?

Here's an example of College Cost Meter correspondence.

SCHOOL LOGO

COLLEGE COST METER

Hi John,

Your ID: ABC888888

Understanding the costs to attend college and knowing where the money comes from can help you make the best decisions for paying for college. This is your personalized College Cost Meter summary for Attigo University during the 2019-2020 academic year. Please review it, visit the financial planning resources, and contact us with any questions.

Cost of Attendance

Each year, we estimate your costs to attend school. They may include direct costs like tuition and indirect costs like transportation. This estimate is for the 2019-2020 academic school year.

Cost of Attendance	$27,824.00
Tuition	$13,680.00
Tuition Fees	NA
Housing and Meals	$10,784.00
Books and Supplies	$100.00
Transportation	$128.00
Other Education Costs	NA
Personal Education Costs	$2,912.00
Loan Fees	$220.00

Cumulative Grants & Scholarships

Grants are often need-based, while scholarships are usually merit-based. Typically, they don't need to be paid back. However, you may have to pay back part or all of a grant if, for example, you withdraw from school before finishing a semester.

Important: Amounts listed are cumulative totals you've received while enrolled at this school. However, it may not include current academic year estimates.

Figure 13: Example of the Cost of Attendance correspondence section that contains data.

Grants & Scholarships	$13,100.00
Institutional Grants	$500.00
Institutional Scholarships	$1,300.00
Federal Grants	$8,600.00
State Grants	$2,200.00
Other Scholarships	$500.00

Student Loans

There are different types of student loans available to help fund your education. Loans need to be paid back, with interest. This estimated information is for loans you've already accepted for Attigo University. Loans for the current academic year may not be included. Know your expenses to limit what to borrow and help minimize your debt.

Federal Student Loans								$16,232
					Standard Repayment Plan[1] Projected Repayment Amount			
School	Loan Date	Original Loan Amount	Interest Rate	Current Principal & Interest	Estimated Months	Estimated Monthly Payment	Estimated Total Interest	Estimated Total Principal & Interest
Direct Stafford Subsidized								$115
488200	09/15/2017	$115	4.45%	$115	3	$50	$0	$115[2]
Direct Stafford Unsubsidized								$3,048
488200	09/19/2016	$2,411	3.76%	$2,675	59	$50	$521	$2,932[2]
488200	09/15/2017	$106	4.45%	$115	3	$50	$9	$115[2]
Federal Perkins Loan								$12,027
488200	09/19/2016	$4,100	5.0%	$4,100	101	$50	$926	$5,026[2]
488200	09/15/2017	$5,500	5.0%	$5,500	120	$58	$1,500	$7,000[2]
Nursing Loan								$4,875
488200	06/29/2018	$4,000	5.0%	$4,000	98	$50	$875	$4,875[2]

Figure 14: Example of the Grants & Scholarships and Federal Student Loans correspondence sections that contains data.

Federal Student Loans					Standard Repayment Plan[1] Projected Repayment Amount				N/A
School	Loan Date	Original Loan Amount	Interest Rate	Current Principal & Interest	Estimated Months	Estimated Monthly Payment	Estimated Total Interest	Estimated Total Principal & Interest	
No data available									

Figure 15: Example of the Federal Student Loans correspondence section configured to display even if it doesn't contain data.

Estimated Total Projected Amount of Principal & Interest	**$20,067**

Estimated Total Monthly Payment	**$308**

IMPORTANT

Visit studentaid.gov for your most accurate federal student loan information and repayment information. Estimates in this letter are not an official record and may be inaccurate if, for example, you:

- Borrowed loans from multiple institutions.
- Received discharged or forgiven loan debt.
- Repaid a portion of your debt.
- Borrowed a variable interest rate loan.
- Received State Teaching scholarships and/or Federal TEACH grants that may be converted to loans if the terms and conditions are not met.
- Do not use the Standard 10-year repayment term.
- Treat your interest accrual differently than is estimated (e.g., you pay it while in school, change repayment plans, postpone your payments, etc.)
- Choose an income-based repayment plan, defer your loan, or receive loan forgiveness.
- Have private loans or credit card debt (not noted here).

If you borrowed any Federal Direct Loans, there's still time for you to reduce your debt by planning your expenses carefully and borrowing only what you really need. Did you know that Federal Direct Loans that were disbursed can be returned up to 120 days post-disbursement with no fee or interest penalty?

[1]The Federal Standard Repayment Plan is one of many affordable options, some like the income driven repayment plans are based on your income and may extend beyond 10 years. Under special circumstances, the federal government may forgive part, or all, of your federal student loans. Not all loan types are eligible for all repayment plan types. Learn more at: Repayment Plans and calculate payments at Student Loan Calculator.

State, Institutional, and Private Loans					Standard Repayment Plan Projected Repayment Amount				$11,600
Loan Date	Original Loan Amount	Interest Rate	Current Principal & Interest	Estimated Months	Estimated Monthly Payment	Estimated Total Interest	Estimated Total Principal & Interest		
Private Loan 1								$8,400	
10/16/2014	$8,400	15.0%	$8,400	0	$0	$0	$0[2]		
School Loan 1								$1,000	
11/01/2016	$1,000	5.0%	$1,000	0	$0	$0	$0[2]		
State Loan 1								$2,200	
01/15/2012	$2,200	5.0%	$2,200	0	$0	$0	$0[2]		

Figure 16: Example of the Estimated Total Projected Amount of Principal & Interest and Estimated Total Monthly Payment for federal student loans. Along with State, Institutional, and Private Loans correspondence section that contains data.

Estimated Total Projected Amount of Principal & Interest	$11,600

Estimated Total Monthly Payment	N/A

IMPORTANT: Estimates only include information available to us. It is not an official record of your student loan debt and may be incomplete and are not meant as a guarantee or promise of the actual projected amount. Please contact your lender to determine estimated amounts. Private loans may have substantially higher payments.

[2] Information shown may be inaccurate due to missing or incomplete data.

Additional Resources

Visit https://gradready.com/ and https://www.consumerfinance.gov/askcfpb/ financial literacy resources to learn about:

- Budgeting
- Credit
- Scams
- Investing

Questions?

Please contact:
School
Dept

school@school.edu

By phone
(888) 888-8888 ext. 123

By mail
123 School Avenue
City, ST 88888

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This email was sent by Attigo University.

ATTIGO by Ascendium

Figure 17: Estimated Total Projected Amount of Principal & Interest and Estimated Total Monthly Payment for state, institutional, and private loans. Along with Additional Resources with clickable links and the school's contact information students can call with questions.

Resource: Refer to the ***Configure College Cost Meter Dashboard User Guide***, available on Student Success Support Central, for more information on configuring how your correspondence displays.