



Tips for Planning a Paying for College Event

Educate Yourself

Many resources are available to you in acquiring knowledge about college admissions and financial aid.

Here are some recommended resources you should familiarize yourself with:

- The Sallie Mae Fund's "Mission: Possible!" Toolkit
This free guide is referenced extensively in The Fund's presentation. Presenters may download or order several copies at <http://www.thesalliemae.org/smfnew/sections/download.html> for distribution to the workshop participants.
- The Sallie Mae Fund's "Top Ten Tips for College Admissions and Financial Aid."
Available in English or Spanish from The Fund's website at <http://itl.salliemae.org/usa-ed.net/smfnew/sections/download.html>
- The U.S. Department of Education offers a guide for those advising students about financial aid for postsecondary education entitled "Counselors and Mentors Handbook on Federal Student Aid." It is available by calling 1-800-394-7084 or visiting www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/clcf/counselorsHandbook.html
- NASFAA
<http://www.nasfaa.org/Home.asp>
The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) has developed materials for financial aid administrators, high school counselors, and other interested persons to use when conducting financial aid night presentations.
<http://www.nasfaa.org/subhomes/financialaidnight/fANight.asp>
- Other important sources:
 1. FSA for Counselors provides online training and information about training.
www.fsa4schools.ed.gov/counselors
 2. Federal Student Aid Publications Ordering System, www.FSAPubs.org
 3. The Federal Student Aid Gateway (an office of The U.S. Department of Education) offers information and tools for students, parents, counselors and financial aid professionals.
www.pathwaystocollege.net/access/FederalStudentAid_Other.html

Set a Date

- Pick a date far enough in advance of the application deadline for your state's student assistance program(s) and the filing dates for schools to which students typically apply. Check state and institutional application instructions, websites, or catalogues to determine these dates and count back four to six weeks to allow sufficient time for application completion and processing.
- Pick a date that compliments other school related activities for parents. For example, you might make the Paying for College presentation part of the program for a monthly PTA meeting or a college fair. Don't pick a date too close to major holidays or holiday weekends.
- Consider holding the event during a week day evening or on a Saturday morning.
- Remember that families have different schedules during summer months so a Paying for College event will be better attended during school months.

Find A Facility

- Select a facility with a room that will comfortably accommodate the anticipated number of attendees.
- Consider providing tables, or at least chairs with writing arms, since many parents and students will take notes
- Consider using a microphone if the presenter or the size of the room requires it.
- Consider outlets for audiovisual needs such as a LCD projector and laptop computer to present the power point presentation.

Set a Time

Financial aid involves parents and students, so the presentation time needs to be convenient for both to attend, such as weekday evenings or weekends.

Plan and Tailor the Event

- The average length of the presentation is 60 to 90 minutes, with time at the end for questions.
- Consider your audience. If the majority are seniors and parents, consider modifying or eliminating the "Admissions to College" information and go right into financial aid information.

Advertise the Event

Once the date, time and facility have been determined, you are ready to advertise the Paying for College presentation.

- Begin promotion at least two to four weeks in advance. Place announcements at schools and in flyers sent home to parents.
- Consider listing the event in the local community newspaper and using public service announcements by local television and radio stations.
- List the event in PTA or school newsletters, posters in shopping areas, and public announcements at sporting events and other school or community activities.

- Send email and/or phone announcement to parents at local schools.
- Contact all local high school guidance/college counselors to invite their students and parents to attend the event.

Invite Outside Presenters

If you are making the presentation yourself and do not consider yourself an expert on all aspects of college admission and financial aid, find assistance from others with specialized information to share. Multiple presenters can make the presentation more interesting and add a change of pace and new voice to enhance the presentation's value and credibility.

- Invite a local financial aid and/or admissions counselors from a nearby college or a representative of the state student assistance agency to assist you. Start by contacting your local state higher education agencies (see the list at www.studentaid.ed.gov / click "Funding" then look under "State Aid"). For additional support, consult with your state association of financial aid administrators (for a list of regional and state associations, see www.nasfaa.org/annualpubs/regstateweb.html).
- Invite other local college access or community-based organizations to assist you.

Follow-Up Prior to the Event

- Follow up with key logistical participants and your presenters to make sure that all arrangements will be carried out as discussed.
- Confirm all your presentation's needs and status one week before the event and then again the day before.

The Day of the Event

- Arrive well in advance of the stated starting time to make sure doors are unlocked, the lights are on, the room is properly arranged, and audio-visual equipment is set up and in working order.
- Have the registration materials organized and set up by the time the first audience member arrives.
- Provide directional signs to the parking area and then from the parking lot to the building/room.