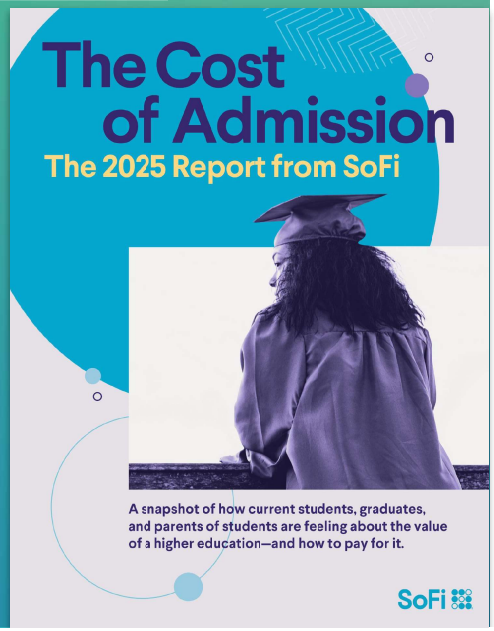
The Cost of Admission

Empowering students for financial success



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Florida Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

2026 FASFAA CONFERENCE

May 26-29, 2026

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ALL HANDS ON DECK

Students still face blind spots when planning for college.

- Lack of cost transparency
- Shifting economic pressure
- Evolving student priorities

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Key themes.

Financial confusion

Shifting priorities

Need for better guidance

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We heard 3,500 voices.

95.5
struggle to understand the true cost.

97%
changed financial plans due to economic instability.

88%
say student debt delays major life decisions.

63%
prioritize affordability over prestige.

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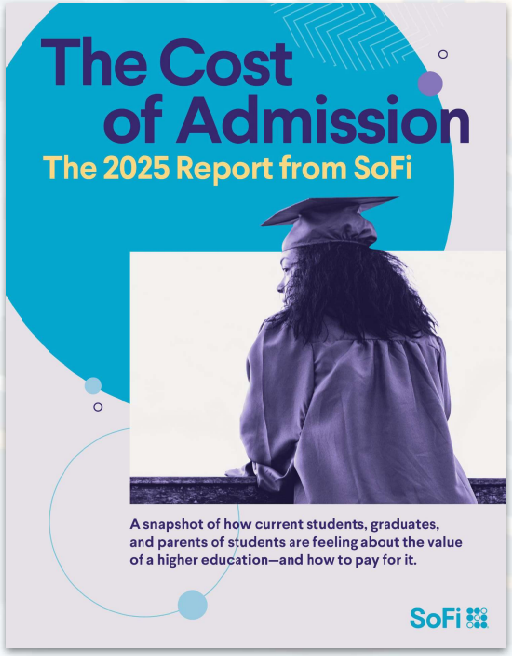
The research.

- Identify knowledge gaps, emotional stressors, and decision-making patterns
- Hear directly from people navigating college decision making today



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ALL HANDS ON DECK

The transparency crisis.

Many families underestimate college costs, are uninformed about loan options, and rely on unreliable sources for financial planning.

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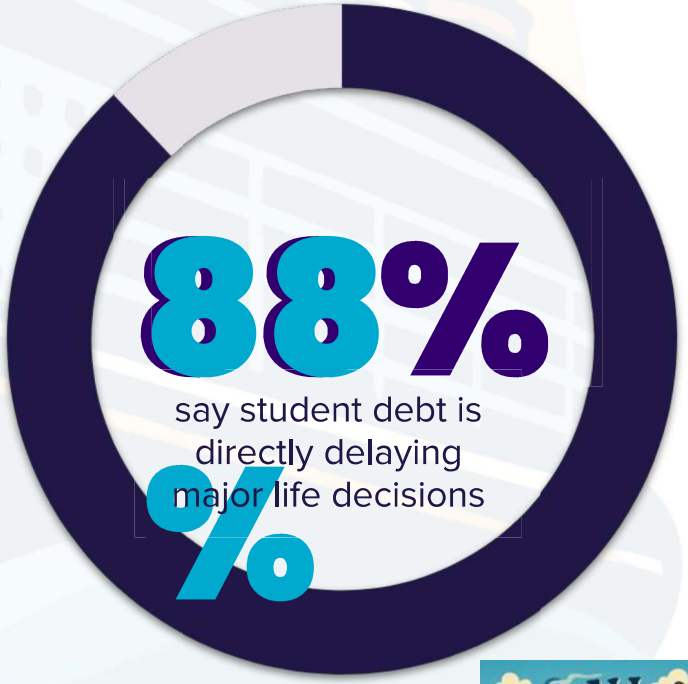
Economic pressures.

Students are confused about financial planning, often relying on social media or peers instead of official resources. This confusion leads them to prioritize cost over prestige when choosing schools and degree tracks.



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Affordability > Prestige

There's a major shift in mindset

- 63% now choose based on affordability, not reputation.
- Re-evaluating the ROI.
- 57% would choose a lower-cost school.

The opportunity: schools with transparent pricing and strong ROI can stand out in a competitive landscape.

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Expert and member spotlights.

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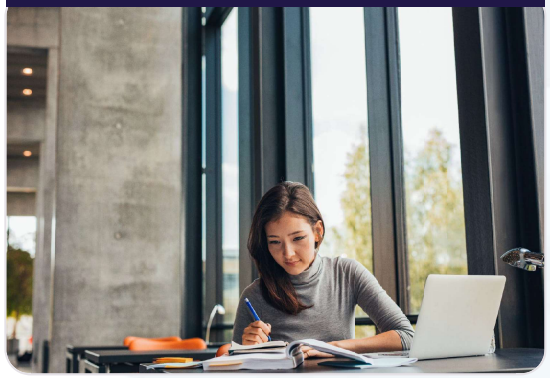
Alternate paths are gaining ground.

1

Community college

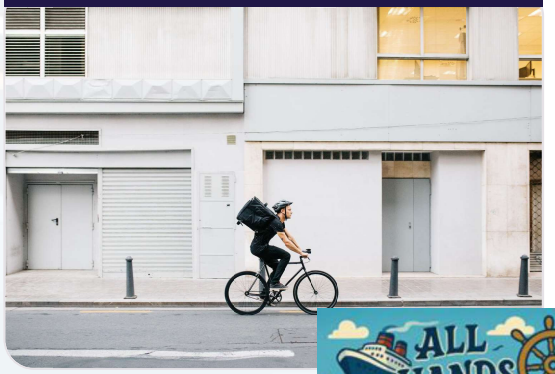


2

Certification or trade program

3

Deferring enrollment



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Building on existing efforts.

- **Provide personalized estimates** and 4-year cost visualizations
- **Host workshops** on FAFSA®, scholarships, and loan literacy
- **Partner with lenders** and tech platforms that offer financial guidance
- **Highlight the long-term impact** of borrowing strategies before loans are taken out.

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Why
it matters.

When families are informed, they borrow smarter, students stay enrolled longer, and feel less regret. This translates into **stronger academic performance** and **long-term trust** in your institution.

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Let's hear from you.

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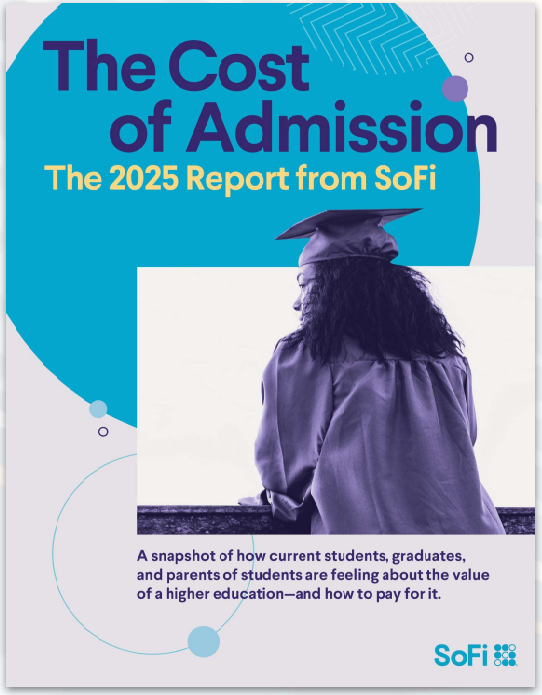
View the full report here:



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QUESTIONS?

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THANK YOU!

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