

Student's forum

What College Applicants Should Know About California's Budget Cuts

By Michelle Lanphere Green

The budget situation in California has impacted not only our K-12 schools, but also our public college system. The University of California system is facing a triple hit of fee increases, which began in May 2009, another next Spring, and the last one to take effect in Fall 2010. These fee increases add up to around \$3000 more per year per student. The California State University system has faced similar, though smaller, fee hikes, a reduction in numbers of qualified students admitted, furloughs for university employees, fewer courses and larger class sizes.

This is bound to hit those students struggling, the most. While those with need-based aid may see no change to their financial aid packages, there is no way to gauge how this will impact the bulk of students attending a University of California school now - or in the future.

zzWith families impacted by corporate downsizing, employee furloughs and a loss of income in the economic downturn of last fall, things just got a whole lot tougher for students who dream of a UC education.

This hurts our students in many ways. These fees aren't providing more services for our students...but less. Fewer qualified students will be admitted; class sizes and majors and minors, and course availability will likely be impacted in the next few years. It may take longer than the typical "four years" to graduate with an undergraduate degree; if a student cannot get a needed class, this could delay their degree progress, as well as increase the overall cost of the college education, in the long run. It will be hard to predict how long our students will be squeezed by these budget woes. It doesn't look good.

What does this mean for the coming college application season? What was once considered a "safety" school may no longer be likely, even if a student is eligible for admissions to that college.

Students applying to Cal State campuses should complete and submit their applications as soon as the filing period is "open". This could make the difference between getting in, or not. The CSU campuses begin accepting applications on October 1 and are accepted until November 30. No personal essays or recommendations are required on the application, and students self-report their grades on the CSU application site. This makes the process easier for students to complete this task early. Admissions decisions may take months, but odds are good that the early filing will increase an applicant's chances for admissions.

Students who will be applying to the UC system should complete those applications closer to the beginning of November, if possible. Applications are accepted in the UC system from November 1 through November 30. Students must complete a more complicated application, including personal statements (but no recommendations). If you are a senior, and applying to one of these schools, you should be working on those UC approved statement topics, now.

Don't wait to complete and submit these college applications. Getting those apps in early might make the difference between an admit - or a deny.

My College Admissions Coach offers personalized help for students and their parents as they navigate the college search and admissions process. Follow my new blog at: <http://collegeoptions.blogspot.com/> •

Student to Student

This Week's Question: *Do you take advice from your friends? Or your family?*

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