

# Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief

## Dollars for Scholars — Postsecondary Costs and Financing

Finding a way to finance a higher education may be as much of a challenge as the course material! Fortunately, many students — though not all — are able to obtain financial assistance.

Using data collected by the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), this Brief examines how likely it was for a postsecondary student to have received financial aid during the 1990-91 school year. These statistics are shown by income level, sex, race, enrollment level, and dependency status. It also examines the sources and amounts of aid they got.

Postsecondary students are high school graduates aged 17 and over who were enrolled in postsecondary school at some point during the 1990-91 school year. Those who took only one course or dropped out before completing the term are included. In 1990-91, just over one-third of these students were enrolled in the first two years of college, one-quarter in the third or fourth years, and about one-fifth each in the fifth year or higher and in some type

of noncollegiate postsecondary school.

### Schooling isn't cheap.

During the 1990-91 school year, postsecondary students paid an average of \$2,653 for their schooling. This sum included tuition and fees, textbooks and educational supplies, and (if they lived away from home) room and board. The cost varied by level of enrollment, from \$1,066 for noncollegiate (i.e. vocational, technical, or business) schools to \$3,825 for the third and fourth years of college.

Costs were much higher for "dependent" students (\$4,387) than for "independent" ones (\$1,923). Dependent students (usually young undergrads) are assumed to still be a part of the family in

which they grew up. Independent students, on the other hand, have struck out on their own and are less economically bound to their original family. The former group may be more likely to be full-time students and attending a higher-cost college or university. Students in the latter group, meanwhile, are supporting themselves and perhaps a family too, and are probably more likely to be attending a low-cost school, part-time.

### Financial aid helps many, but not all.

About one-half of the 21 million postsecondary students received some kind of financial assistance to help them pay for the costs of schooling. They received an average of \$2,919. This aid covered,

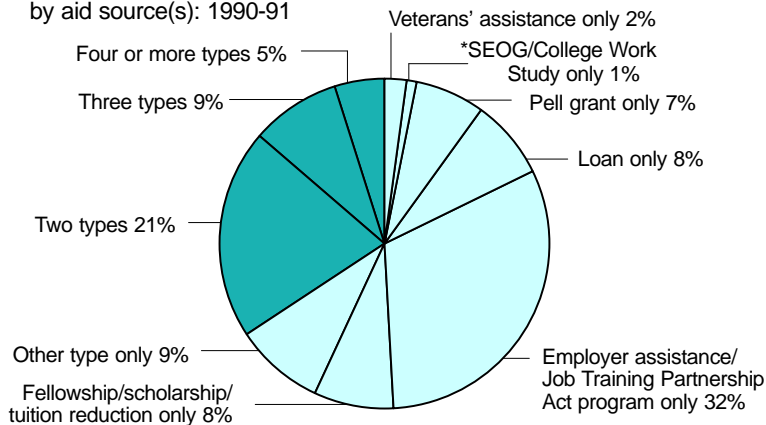


SB/94-21  
Issued October 1994

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

### One-Third of Financial Aid Recipients Get Aid From More Than One Source

Percent distribution of financial aid recipients, by aid source(s): 1990-91



\* SEOG stands for Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.  
Note: Figures do not add to 100 due to rounding.

on average, about 75 percent of their expenses. For about 1 in 5 students, financial aid covered all of their costs and more.

### Multiple aid packages aren't unusual.

Though most students who received aid got it from a single source, about one-third of them received it from *more than one* source. (See graph on front.) Multiple sources were more common with decreasing family income and among dependent students. The most common "assistance package" was the combination of a Pell grant and a loan. This package was held by 6 percent of aid recipients.

Employer assistance, received by 18 percent of all students, was the single most common source of aid; employers, though, provided the lowest average *amount*. (See graph at bottom right.) In many situations, employers may only pay for a course or two, a fairly small expenditure on their part.

### Low-income students are likelier to be aid recipients.

The proportion of students receiving aid declined as family income rose. While 60 percent of those with "low" monthly family income (below \$2,100) got assistance, 44 percent with "high" income (\$4,100 or more) were aid recipients. The average amount varied too, from \$3,622 for lower-income students to \$2,427 for the higher-income group.

Among those receiving it, aid covered 80 percent of low-income students' costs; for high-income students, the figure was 69 percent. Pell grants, which are need-based, were the most common source of aid for lower-income students. Employer assistance was the main source for those from "middle"- (\$2,100 to \$4,099) and higher-income families.

Similarly, independent students were a bit more likely to get aid than dependent students were (53 percent compared with 46 percent). But independent students

who got aid received less of it (an average of \$2,619 versus \$3,729). Dependent students were more likely to have received a Pell grant, loan, or fellowship; it was more common for independent students to receive employer assistance.

The proportions receiving aid were very similar across all enrollment levels. But the amount received was not. It ranged from \$1,673 for students enrolled in noncollegiate institutions to \$4,233 for those in the fifth year or higher of college.

### Sex and race make a difference too.

Half of both men and women received aid; both got comparable amounts. But the sources varied. While women were more likely to receive aid from a Pell grant or a loan, men more frequently received aid from a veterans' program or their employer.

When we look at different racial groups, we see that Black students were a bit more likely than Whites to receive aid (58 percent versus 50 percent); yet they received less (\$2,527 compared with \$2,927). While Pell grants were the largest source of aid for Black

students, employer assistance led the way for White students.

### More information:

*Dollars for Scholars: Postsecondary Costs and Financing, 1990-1991.* Current Population Reports, Series P70-39. Contact Customer Services (301-763-4100) for ordering information.

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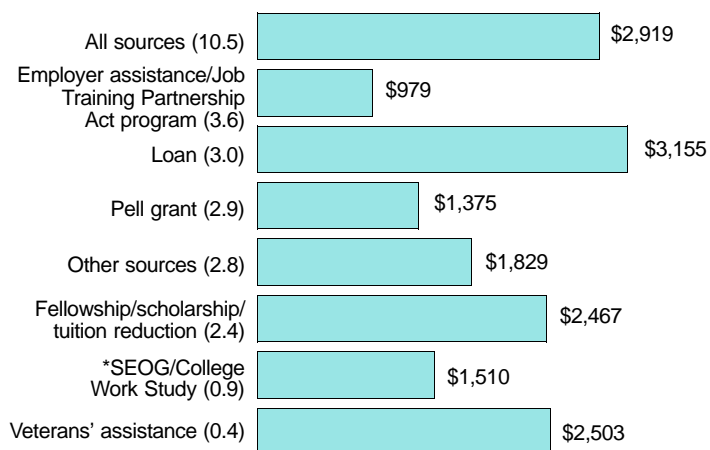
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### Loans Provide Largest Amount of Aid

Mean amount of financial aid received, by source: 1990-91  
(Number of recipients in millions is in parentheses)

**Total number of postsecondary students = 20.6 million**



\*SEOG stands for Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.