



Alvernia
University

S.O.L.A.R. Financial Aid Workshop

January 16, 2025

The Real Price of College

Sara Goldrick-Rab



“I want to get a decent job and support
my family.”

“I need to finish what I started.”

“This isn’t only about *me*.”

Those goals are undermined for many Pennsylvanians

- Priced out of education beyond high school
- Kept from steady jobs
- Struggling to stay afloat
- In debt with little to show for it
- Working but not making ends meet
- Surviving but not thriving



The *REAL* price of college > motivation
and hard work

Alvernia can help



Expanding
knowledge



Building
confidence



Promoting health
and well-being



Connecting
people to support



Creating hope

What makes today's price so *real*?

Hint: it's not just bigger than ever

It's hidden

It's unpredictable

It's harder than ever to cover

Those real prices come from the
new economics of college

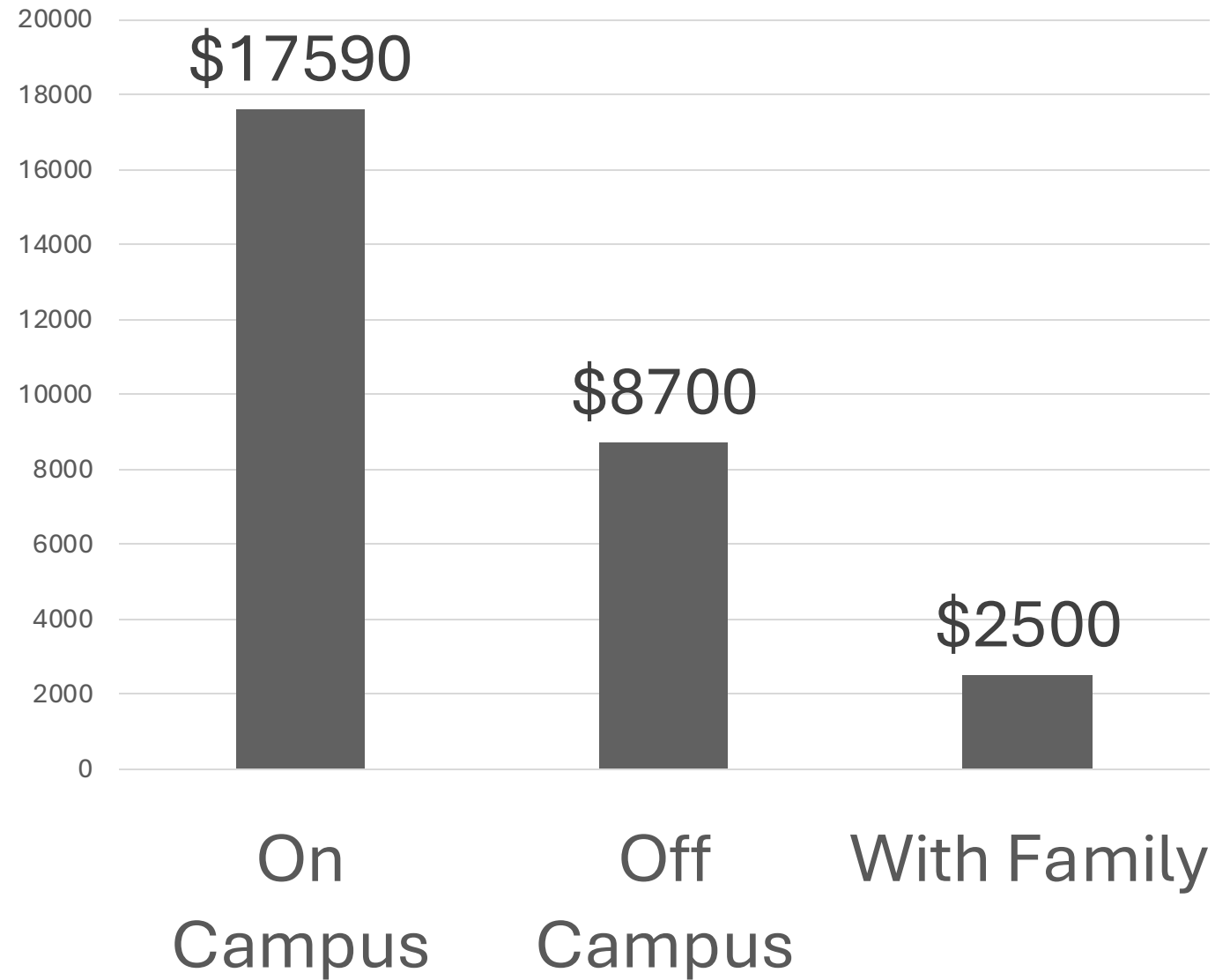
Higher ed pricing
obscures real
living expenses

Living expenses are a big part of
the institution's cost of attendance

Financial aid depends on that cost

But it's hard for institutions to
guess at students' living expenses

Alvernia's Living Expense Estimate



Financial aid misunderstands American families

The FAFSA is limited info but is used to make big judgments

Parents support students, not the other way around

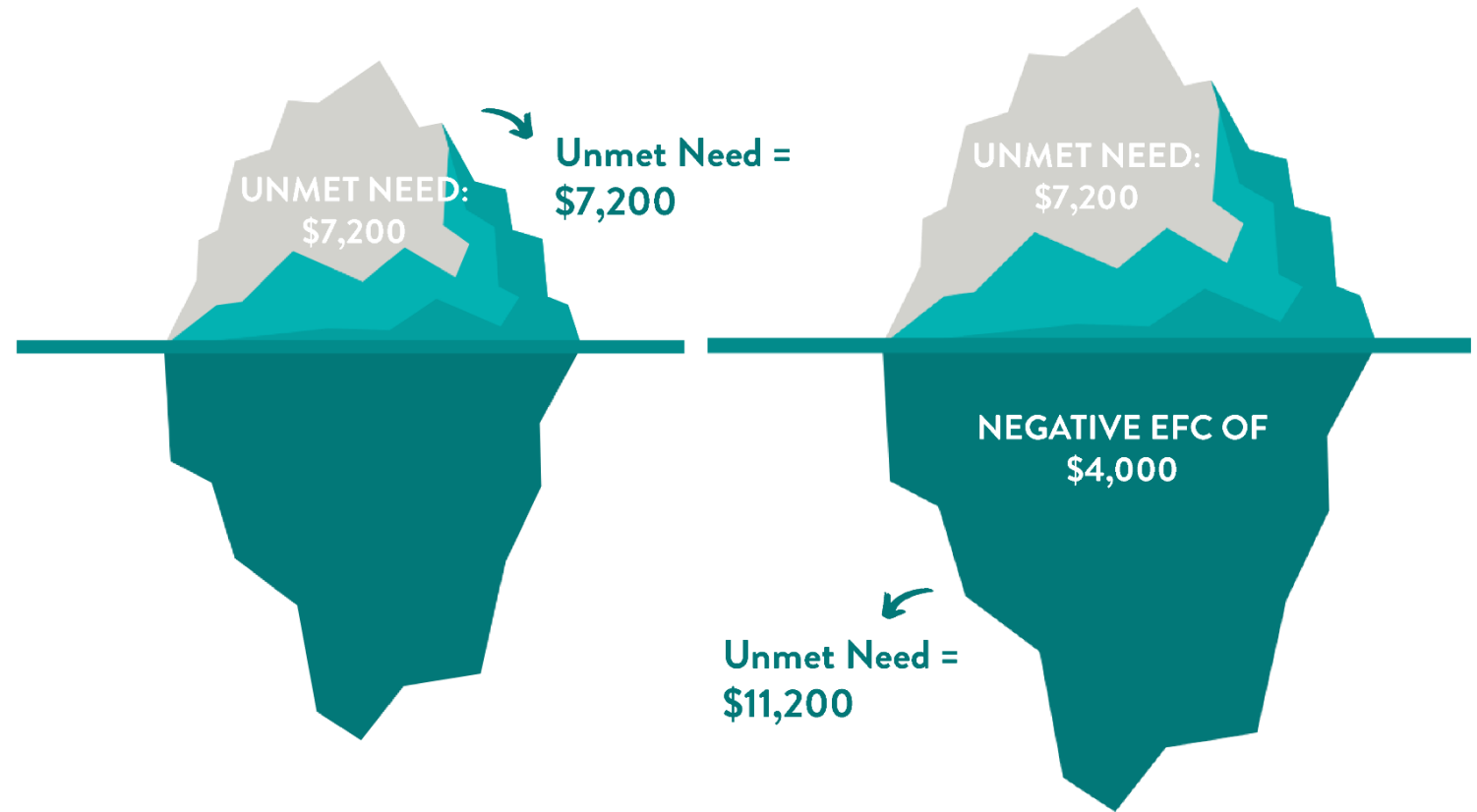
Assets matter, but debt doesn't

For many, the need calculation is based on parental resources not student resources

Both the *real*
price– and
students' *real*
need- are
obscured

Need = COA - EFC

Unmet Need = Remaining financial need after grants and scholarships, otherwise known as net price



Income volatility is widespread

More than 1 in 3 Americans had an income change of > 25%

Families earning < \$50K are especially affected

Non-white families are far more affected

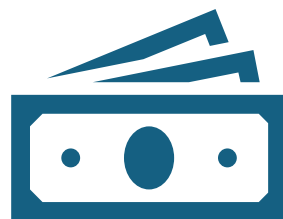
Makes it hard to plan or save, and difficult to survive emergencies

Contributes to fear of loans or other investments with delayed payoffs

Work during college is undermined by schedule uncertainty



Many students have on-call food or service jobs with instable schedules



This contributes to wage instability



Involuntary part-time work and unemployment is often overlooked

The so-called safety net is shredded

Benefits are
much less
valuable

Students are
often
excluded

Information is
complex and
hard to find

There's a
whole world
affecting
students

Social determinants of education framework



CASH RULES
EVERYTHING
AROUND ME



Housing insecurity: 50%

Food insecurity: 23%

Homelessness: 8%

With these prices, basic needs insecurity is practically a forgone conclusion

Let's discuss: How might the real price of college affect each Alvernia Ashlee?

Ashlee in Pottsville

- 34
- Majoring in Education
- Works Full-Time as an education assistant
- Mother of 3
- Household income is \$55,000

On paper Ashlee has little financial need, but she can't afford her books.

What might be going on?



Ashlee in Pottsville's *REAL* price of college

Includes childcare, and transportation to childcare, but her estimated budget might not fully recognize that

Depends on her full-time income— what if she gets sick?

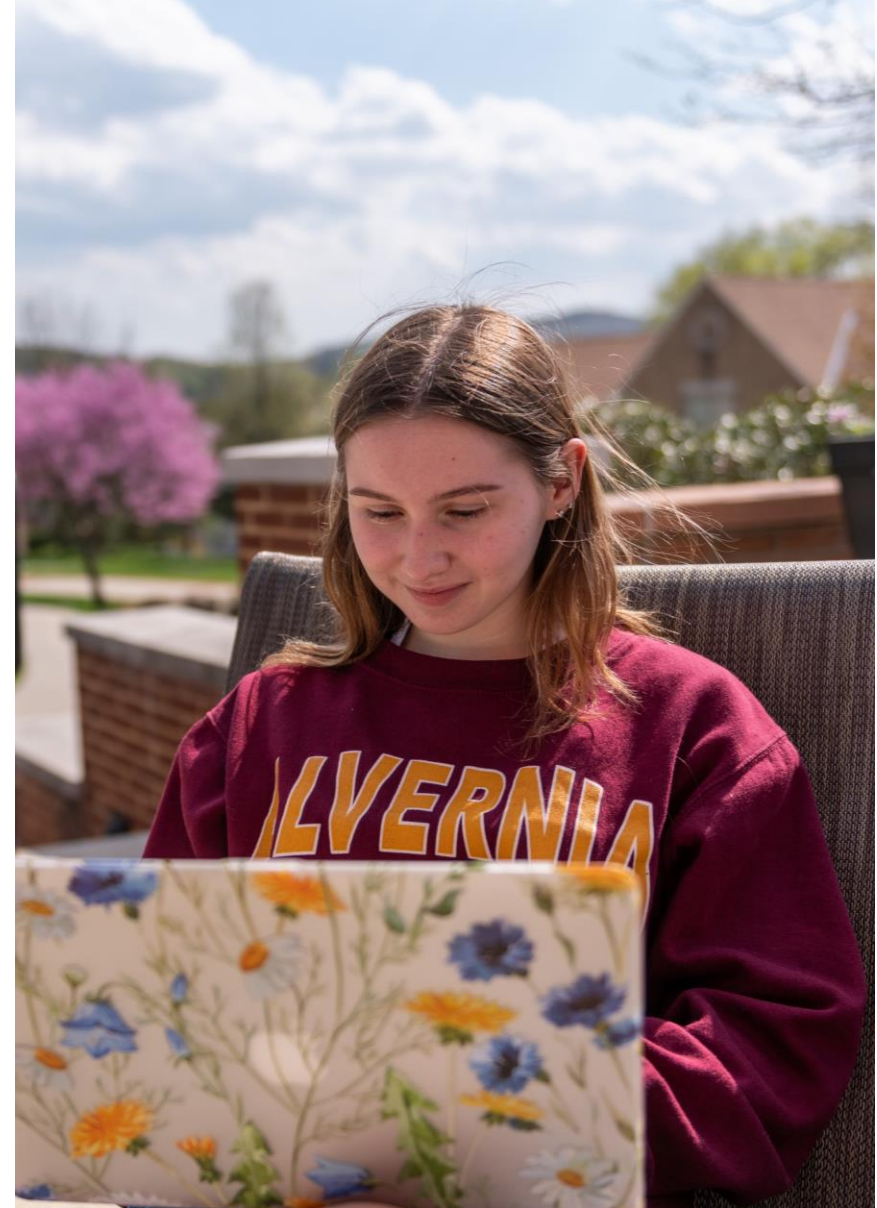
Ashlee in Reading

- 20
- Full-Time Student
- First Generation College Student

According to FAFSA, she has parental support and aid.

But she took a new job and is failing 2 classes.

What might be going on?



Ashlee in Reading's *REAL* price of college

Depends on parental income – what if a parent loses a job or gets sick?

Reflects her first-gen status – she likely has family obligations

Ashlee in Philadelphia

- 47
- Mother of 2
- Majoring in Social Work
- First-Generation College Student
- Household income of \$60,000

She is one semester from the finish line but has missed several classes.

What might be going on?



Ashlee in Philly's *REAL* price of college

Depends on local housing market – Philly is unaffordable but her estimated budget may not reflect that

Her income may depend on a spouse (her job isn't mentioned) – what if they are estranged?

Even middle-class students struggle with the real price of college



If the real price of college is allowed to derail students, we won't have any left

Good news: We can help



Structural change *is* needed– and federal and state reforms are on the table



In the meantime, we turn to:
Institutional practice
Institutional policy
Mutual aid (culture of caring)

Treat students as humans first

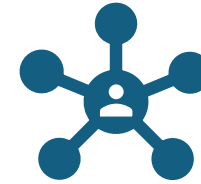


Practice a humanistic mindset

Be there *with and for* students
and their lives

Think of students as people
not just numbers

Same goes for staff & faculty!



Seek connection

Talk with students, not at
them

Engage in compassion and
empathy

Our jobs are easier when we approach our work this way

Connect students to help

>75% of students
dealing with basic
needs insecurity
don't access
supports

Why?

- Don't know programs exist
- Don't think they are eligible
- Don't know how to apply

Connect students to help

Alvernia has a range of basic needs, financial aid, and health programs and is creating more

Connecting students to those programs is essential

Make connections and warm handoffs

- Add resource info to the syllabus
- Place info in the LMS too

Financial Aid has many tools to help

Updated FAFSA

Professional judgement

SAP appeals

Work study

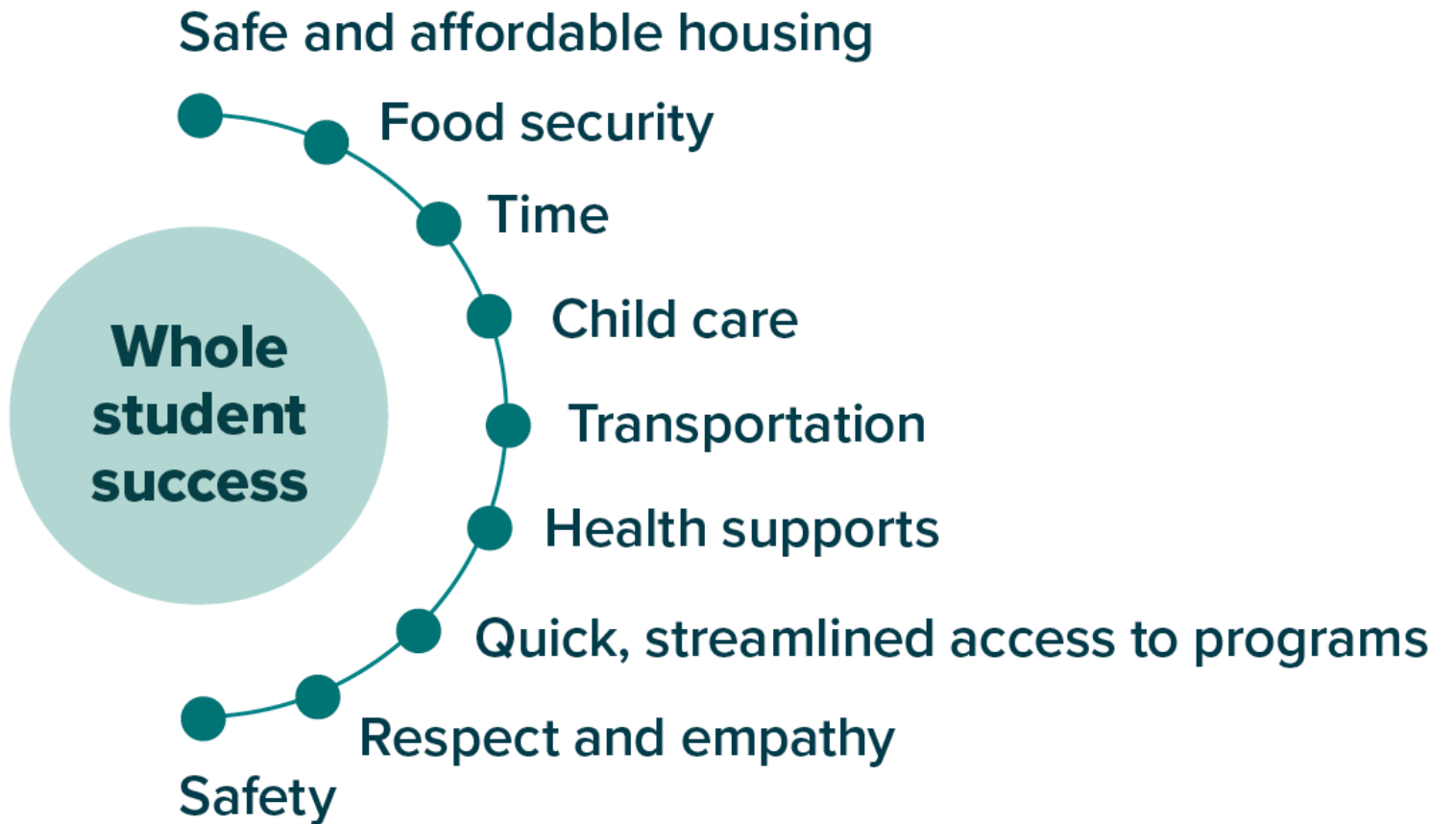
Referrals to public benefits

Subsidized loans

Emergency grants

We can learn to teach the students
we have, not those we might wish
we had


Broadening
our lens also
helps



Together we
will fix
systems - not
people

Basic needs insecurity is a structural failure
affect students *and* many working in higher
education

- Wealthy inequality
- Out of control living expenses
- Flawed safety net
- Racism
- Elitism



“Acknowledging that students are whole people isn’t the same thing as involving yourself in every aspect of their lives.

In fact, an essential part of caring for students is appreciating that you will **never** know everything that is going on with them.”

- Michael McCreary

The same goes for staff, faculty, and administrators

Be patient and kind
with yourself.

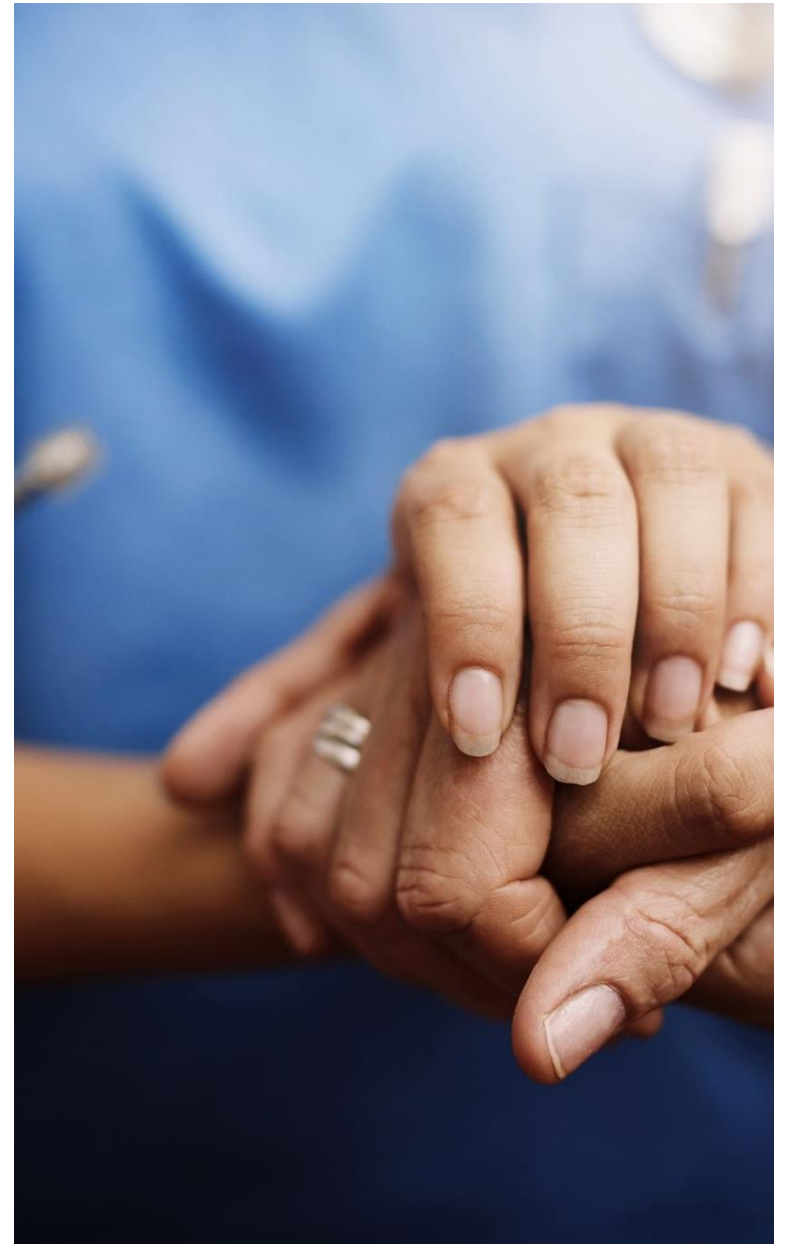
You deserve grace.

And thanks.

Stay in touch:

SaraGoldrickRab.com

@saragoldrickrab





Alvernia
University

HOPE FUND

Tom Minick '98/M'10

Vice President for Advancement
& Government Affairs

Hope Fund | Alvernia University

PURPOSE: In recognition of our foundresses and in our Bernadine Franciscan tradition of serving those in need, Alvernia has created the Hope Fund. The fund will assist **all** students (undergraduate, graduate and adult) and families in financial need and provides the university with the flexibility and resources necessary to address student hardships as they arise.

How does the Hope Fund Impact Our Students?



Clare's Cupboard, Alvernia's food pantry, provides groceries and meals at each of our campuses



Scholarships Provide financial aid to any (undergrad, grad, or adult earner) Alvernia Student.



Emergency aid provides support to students in times of crisis



Educational resources provide students with funding for testing costs, accommodation, books, and more

Your gift will ensure a current Alvernia student can excel inside and outside the classroom and walk across the stage at graduation!

Hope Fund | Alvernia University

Total raised:

\$2.1 Million

Hope Fund | Alvernia University

Total contributed from faculty and staff:

\$175,000



Jamel Flemming

- **Senior, Communications Major**
- **Mount Vernon, N.Y.**
- **O'Pake Fellow**
- **Football**

How You Can Help

- **Support the Hope Fund**

- Payroll deduction
- One-time gift

Contact Denise Leininger

Director of Annual Giving

- **Refer students for support**

- One-time awards
up to \$1,000

Contact Melissa Terwilliger

Director of Social Services





Alvernia
University

S.O.L.A.R. Financial Aid Workshop

Mary-Alice Ozechoski, M.A.
Senior Vice President for Enrollment
Management & Student Affairs

Hillary Saylor Schulze, M.P.A.
Associate Director, Student Financial
Services

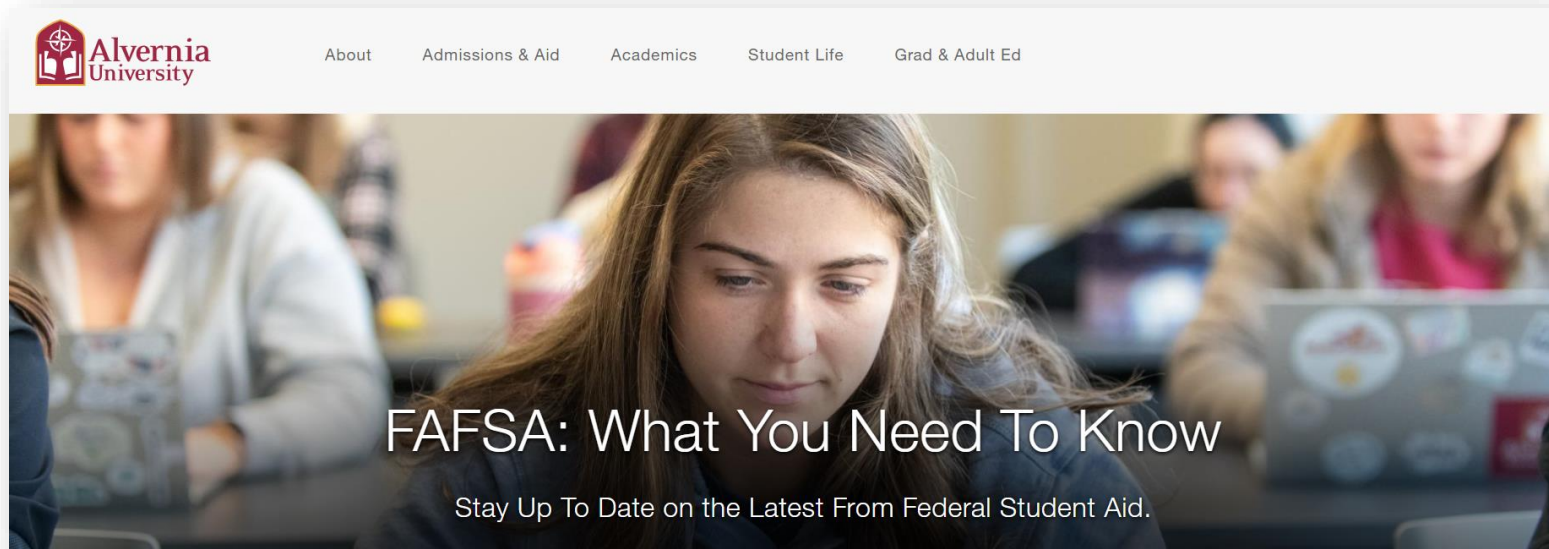
Financial Aid Overview Agenda

- All About FAFSA
- Defining Financial Aid
- Financial Aid Appeals
- Academic Progress & Aid
- Class Status Changes & Aid
- Student Financial Services Account Holds
- Timeline
- SFS Resources



All About FAFSA

(Free Application for Federal Student Aid)



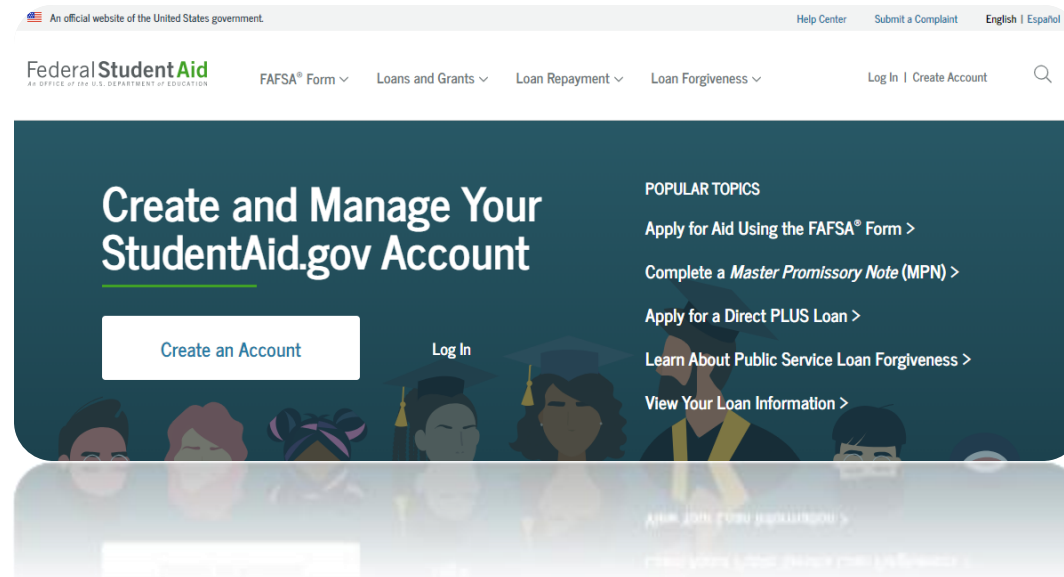
The Alvernia FAFSA site, www.Alvernia.edu/fafsa was created by SFS and Alvernia's award-winning Marketing and Communications Department.

It's updated weekly and is a resource for all students, families, faculty and staff

All About FAFSA

**100% of students receive some financial aid from
AU/FAFSA**

All undergraduate students attending during the day
receive a merit scholarship based on high school
transcript evaluations.



Student Aid Index (SAI)

- Is an eligibility number that the financial aid office uses to determine how much federal student aid you would receive if you attended the school
- This number is *not a dollar amount of aid eligibility or what your family is expected to provide*

Cost of Attendance (COA)

- COA is an estimate of a student's educational expenses for the period of enrollment
- Varies based upon enrollment and residential status
- Includes fees, books, supplies, living, and transportation expenses

Student Need

- All financial aid is ‘need-based’ or ‘non-need-based’
- DOE and institutions apply means calculations using COA & SAI to determine need
- Need-based aid
 - Federal Pell, SEOG (Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)
 - Federal subsidized loans
 - Institutional grants
 - Some endowments & scholarships
- Non-Need-Based-Aid
 - Merit or other academic scholarships
 - Federal unsubsidized loans
 - Affiliation awards – Visit, Catholic
 - Some endowments & scholarships

COA **\$65,000**

SAI **–\$5,000**

**Financial
Need** **\$60,000**



Three basic financing options are listed on each financial aid offer. They include payment plan, direct payment, and additional student and/or parent loan options

What are Financial Aid Awards?

Need-based aid is awarded based on FAFSA completion.


Non-need aid is awarded based on student information such as academics and affiliation

Type of Aid	Fund Name	Maximum or Range of Annual Award for 2024-2025	Determined By
Need	Federal Pell	\$300-\$7,395	FAFSA
Need	Federal SEOG*	\$1,000	FAFSA
Need	PA State Grant	\$250-\$5,750	FAFSA + PA State
Need	Alvernia Grant*	\$500-\$5,000	FAFSA
Need	Federal Work Study*	\$500-\$2,400	FAFSA
Need	PA State Work Study*	\$500-\$2,400	FAFSA + PA State
Need	Federal Subsidized Loan	\$3,500-\$5,500	FAFSA
Non Need-Based	Merit* – Boscov’s, Presidential, Trustee’s, Veronica, Heritage, Achievement, Provost, Dean’s, Bernardine, Transfer, ACT	\$10,000-\$26,000	High school and/or transfer school transcripts
Non Need-Based	Affiliation – Catholic, Sibling, Early FAFSA, Endowment, RCS, ESports, PA Transfer**	\$500-\$40,000	Admissions Criteria
Non Need-Based	Institutional Work Study	\$500-\$2,400	FT Day enrollment
Non Need-Based	Discounts** – GAE Partners, Senior Citizen, Alumni	Up to 100% off tuition	Admissions Criteria
Other	Employment Benefits – Tuition Remission, Tuition Exchange	Up to 100% tuition	HR
	Veteran’s	Up to 100% tuition	Dept of VA

**Fund for day population only. GAE’s price is discounted from day price; ** GAE only*

Financial Aid Professional Judgement

Federally-regulated process that allows aid offices to make FAFSA changes and/or dependency determinations using supportive documentation. This process could modify need.

Student Circumstance	Financial Aid Process	Student Action Items
Income Loss	Special Circumstance	 <p>See criteria on webpage & contact SFS</p>
Parents listed on FAFSA divorce/separate	Special Circumstance	
Custody/Legal Guardianship	Unusual Circumstance (Dependency Review)	
Student was fostered but not adopted	Unusual Circumstance (Dependency Review)	
Parents refuse to add their information to the FAFSA	No Professional Judgement Review – Counsel family or award limited eligibility	
Student is homeless	SFS will contact high school's homelessness liaison or conduct Professional Judgement	

FAFSA: Dependency Status

Financial aid is determined by SAI, COA, Need, and Dependency status

***Because of financial aid eligibility's complex criteria, being independent per the FAFSA does not necessarily mean out of pocket costs are easier to finance*



To be considered an independent student, you must meet one of the following criteria and provide documentation:

- Born before January 1, 2002
- Married (and not separated)
- A graduate or professional student
- A veteran
- A member of the armed forces
- An orphan
- Award of the court
- Someone with legal dependents other than a spouse
- An emancipated minor
- Someone who is unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless

2025-2026 Financial Aid Appeals



www.Alvernia.edu/fafsa - Scholarships

- Committee starts reviewing as soon as financial aid offers are officially published
- Reviewed weekly
- Letters should contain
 - Current plan for college financing – payments, loans, 529, etc.
 - Changes to finances/family after filing the FAFSA
 - Requested amount
 - Financing plan to attend all four/five years

Class Status Changes: Aid Implications

Class status changes require a form – myAU – Registrar

Drop

Class status change *before* add/drop of a term

Charges to '0'; Aid recalculated based on enrollment

Course does not appear on transcript

Withdraw

Class status change *after* add/drop of a term

Charges remain; No changes to aid in current term; implications for subsequent terms

'W' for course

Withdraw from the University

All classes withdrawn *after* add/drop of a term

Charges prorated up to 5th week; Aid prorated based on last date of attendance

'W' on all courses

Class Status Changes: Aid Implications

Drop A

I'm enrolled for 15 credits for the fall and I **drop** one course during the summer

I'm enrolled for 12 credits. Since day tuition is charged based on full time (12-18 credits), there are no changes to charges or aid

Drop B

I'm enrolled for 12 credits and I **drop** one course during the first week of classes

I'm now enrolled for 11 credits, am considered part time, and am charged per credit.

All full-time based aid, which includes Merit Scholarships, and Alvernia awards are cancelled

Drop C

I'm enrolled for 12 credits, but I want to be part time so I **drop** 2 courses in July

I'm now enrolled for 6 credits, am considered part time, and am charged per credit.

All full-time based aid, which includes Merit Scholarships, and Alvernia awards are cancelled

Class Status Changes: Aid Implications

Withdraw A

I'm enrolled for 15 credits for the fall, and I withdraw from one course late September

I'm still enrolled for 15 credits for financial services and charged full time. While there is no change to aid, I still need to visit SFS to make sure there I understand my financial responsibilities and can be counseled about further withdraws

Withdraw B

I'm enrolled for 12 credits, and I withdraw from one course in October

I'm still enrolled for 12 credits for financial services and charged full time

If I have a PA state grant, I need to earn 24 credits by the end of spring, so I will need to add a course in spring or take a winter course to remain compliant for that grant. If there are no other w/d or drops at the end of the term my cumulative earned credits will be divided by my attempted credits ($9/12=75\%$) and compared against 67% completion standard.

Withdraw C

I'm enrolled for 15 credits as of Week 3, but I have a medical/personal issue, and I need to leave school.

Since I withdrew before Week 6, my charges are prorated

All university term withdraws require a federal aid recalculation for all aid based on how many days the student attended. I may owe a balance regardless of the reason I had to leave school

Class Status Changes: Repeated Courses

Federal & Institutional Aid:

Students may repeat a previously passed course one time and maintain financial eligibility, assuming all other academic progress requirements have been met. Repeated coursework counts toward the 150% completion time frame.

<https://catalog.alvernia.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=54#financial-aid-standards-of-satisfactory-academic-progress>

Federal
Student
Aid

PA State Grant (need-based grant)

- 1) Students must earn a minimum of 24 credits in total by the end of the spring term to remain eligible.
- 2) Credits earned for repeated courses can only be counted once toward the degree. If a student repeats a course again, that course cannot be counted toward academic progress, even if passed.

<https://www.pheaa.org/documents/grants/ph/2023-24-policy-manual.pdf>



Financial Aid Academic Progress

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)*

**Student Financial Services still uses terminology listed in the current catalog. These are federally-defined terms per FSA Standards*



Warning

The first time a student fails to meet the SAP standards the student is placed on a warning and **all eligible aid remains**

Suspension

If, after being placed on financial aid warning status, the student fails to maintain the standards, **aid is zeroed out and student must appeal to SFS**

Probation

Students who have had a SAP appeal approved will be placed on probation for one semester. **Aid is reinstated for the probationary term.**

Academic
Improvement
Plan

If a student is unable to mathematically meet all SAP requirements, an academic plan will be developed, and **aid is reinstated for subsequent and possibly multiple terms**



Staff, Coaches and Faculty who advise
(formally or informally)

REFER TO Student Financial Services
Changes in Credits taken a semester

Retaking a class
Change of program
Withdrawal
Etc...

Persistence & Retention: Account Holds

While there are multiple holds, Financial Services holds are placed on students' accounts not financially resolved by the invoice due date. Students with balances above \$1,000 are not permitted to register forward. All term invoices are due 1 month before class starts. Invoices are available weekly through students' Self Service accounts.

Notice Code Name	Notice Code Description	Hold From Registration	Department to Clear
Academic	Academic	Yes	Contact Provost Office
Admiss GRAE	Awaiting documents for registration - Graduate and Adult Ed	Yes	Contact SGAE Admissions
AdmissDay	Lacking Official Transcripts	Yes	Contact Day Admissions
Advisor	Meet with Advisor - Graduate and Adult Ed	Yes	Contact SGAE Advisor
St Billing	Student Billing	Yes	Contact Student Financial Services
Discipline	Disciplinary (refer to Kimberly Lemon)	Yes	Contact Community Standards
Dismissal	Academic Dismissal	Yes	Contact Registrar's Office
SFS Docs	SFS Document Missing	Yes	Contact Student Financial Services
Fin Resp	Financial Responsibility	Yes	Contact Student Financial Services
HealthMed	Health Ctr Medical Leave	Yes	Contact Health & Wellness
HealthImmu	Health Immunization Compliance	Yes	Contact Health & Wellness
Write Off	Write Off	Yes	Contact Student Financial Services
COLL ARR	Collections ARR	Yes	Contact SFS
COLL ER	Collections ER	Yes	Contact SFS
COLL SC	Collections SC	Yes	Contact SFS
COLL MLR	Collections MLR	Yes	Contact SFS
DUNN	Dunning	Yes	Contact SFS

October to December

- Prospective Students: Create an FSA ID; Attend FAFSA completion event
- All Students: Fill out the FAFSA starting October 1; Visit SFS for any course status changes

January to May

- Prospective Students: Confirm by May 1st; Confirm financing option
- All Students: Complete FAFSA; Complete any documents required by SFS from FAFSA completion; Visit SFS for any course status changes; Apply for scholarships

June to August

- Prospective Students: Attend Connections Day and register for fall courses
- All Students: Complete aid documents and pay fall invoice

- FAFSA: www.Alvernia.edu/fafsa
- myAlvernia – SFS forms & how to sheets
- FAQ's - Invoices, Fees, Aid, FAFSA, Payment Plans, Refunds, Holds



Office of Student Financial Services Contact Information



**Bernardine Hall
Suite 114
sfs@alvernia.edu
610-796-8201**

Thank you.

Please join us for lunch in the dining hall.