

# College Tuition Costs On The Rise

by CLAUDIO SANCHEZ

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More bad news for college students and their parents. According to the College Board's annual survey — "Trends in College Pricing" — tuition and fees have jumped significantly this past year at both public and private universities. More government aid is available, but some families say they're being priced out of a college education.

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MICHELE NORRIS, host:

College costs just keep going up. A new report by the College Board says tuition and fees jumped significantly this past year at both public and private colleges. And though the federal government has dramatically increased the amount of aid available, families say they're still being squeezed.

NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports.

CLAUDIO SANCHEZ: No doubt about it, this year's news about college costs is bad.

Ms. SANDY BAUM (Co-Author, "Trends in College Pricing"): Tuition and fees are rising rapidly particularly in the public four-year sector of higher education. The average increase was 7.9 percent this year.

SANCHEZ: Sandy Baum is co-author of the report "Trends in College Pricing." She says tuition and fees at four-year public colleges is now on average \$7,600. When you add room and board, the cost jumps to \$16,000.

Ms. BAUM: And when we look at student debt, we do see that more students are borrowing. The amount that they borrow is rising, but it's not rising as rapidly as tuition.

Ms. TABITHA GUERRA(ph): I think it's really crazy. It's outrageous.

SANCHEZ: Tabitha Guerra's 17-year-old daughter Brittany(ph) is a senior at Wheaton High School in suburban Maryland.

Tonight, they're attending a workshop learning how to navigate the maze-like college application process. Guerra says the dozen or so schools her daughter is looking at are all expensive.

Ms. GUERRA: We've got a little bit saved. With her education background and her GPA, I'm sure she'll probably get some scholarships, so she's already looked into financial aid, grants, student loans, things like that.

SANCHEZ: The good news is that the federal government has stepped in with more aid, especially for needy students - \$10 billion more in Pell Grants alone.

But if your family earns what the government considers too much money, you're not eligible for Pell Grants.

Again Sandy Baum.

Ms. BAUM: So for students who come from families with incomes above \$50,000, who are attending public institutions, they are paying that full increase.

SANCHEZ: At Wheaton High, college-bound students and their parents say they're being priced out of a college education. They're too wealthy to qualify for grants, too poor to keep up with runaway college costs.

Brittany Guerra is a straight A student with lots of advanced placement courses under her belt. She says it feels like her grades and hard work don't count when it comes to paying for college, so she's trying to be realistic about her choices.

Ms. BRITTANY GUERRA: Obviously, you want to go to a really prestigious school, but if you can't, if I can go to a school that's maybe not my reach school but a place where I know I'll learn what I need to learn to do what I want to do, then I'm going to go there.

SANCHEZ: Brittany says she may end up at a community college. Seventeen-year-old Jeslany Cabrera(ph), on the other hand, says she's worked too hard to give up on her dream school - a private women's college with a sticker price of just under \$30,000. But she has only a vague idea where the money is going to come from.

Ms. JESLANY CABRERA: Scholarships, family helping. I mean, we've seen a lot of miracles happen, and we just have faith that I'll find a way to make it.

SANCHEZ: Jeslany is eligible for federal grants, but she doesn't know how much financial aid the college she's applying to is going to offer her, which gets at another big problem, says Sandy Baum. Families wait too long before they start looking into college and how much they're going to pay for it.

Ms. BAUM: You should save. You should plan. You can't do this at the last minute in any reasonable way. That said, it's important at the same time to think about all of the financial aid that's out there.

SANCHEZ: And to get it, Baum says, parents and students are just going to have to work a lot harder.

Claudio Sanchez, NPR News.

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