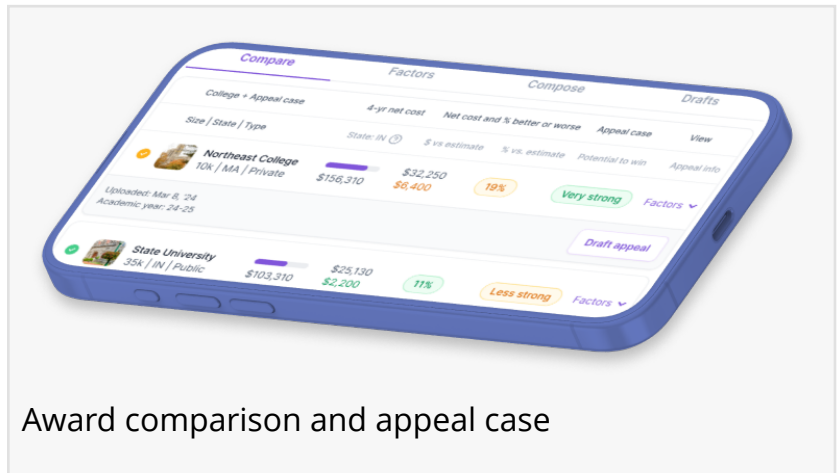


How College-Bound Families Facing Sticker Shock Can Save with Appeals

Colleges use complex algorithms to set each family's price. Families can compare their awards and appeal to reach their best aid offer.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, February 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Similar to Billy Joel's "We didn't start the fire", the rise in appeals wasn't primarily driven by parents, but rather by the colleges themselves.



Award comparison and appeal case

Specifically, the growing use of enrollment consultants to determine the lowest offer needed to enroll a family, the high discount rates at private colleges (where, on average, undergraduates pay less than half the sticker price), and the elimination of traditional practices regarding offers and Early Decision, which previously limited families' options.

“

Data suggests the highest usage is for merit-based appeals by 'donut hole' families who do not qualify for need-based aid.”

Gage Mersereau

To level the playing field, families are increasingly turning to online tools like [GradBetter's](#) free award comparison and appeal tools. These data-driven resources enable families to quickly compare their financial aid awards “apples-to-apples,” see what similar families received, and draft an appeal in just minutes.

Families have the option to appeal for additional merit and

need-based financial aid without affecting their admission status or current aid offer. According to Sallie Mae, despite only 33% of families appealing at the college they enrolled in, those who did were successful 80% of the time—with 70% of the additional aid coming as gift aid (free money).

Since financial aid is typically allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, families often act swiftly after comparing their awards.

In response to [high schools](#) seeking free financial aid resources to support families and to

aggregate merit awards for marketing purposes, GradBetter has streamlined the ability for counselors to create their own high school-branded landing page to share with families.

With U.S. student loan debt currently standing at \$1.8 trillion, GradBetter also helps families compare how college costs, major-specific earnings, and living expenses shape a graduate's [financial well-being](#) in their 20s.

Today's students have access to financial data that previous generations of borrowers lacked, offering greater transparency in planning for college costs.

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