

CHAPTER 9

THE FINANCIAL AID PROCESS

Many colleges and universities provide scholarships and help women apply for free state, federal, or community dollars and low interest loans.

Some even offer lower tuition for adults. You know you've found a good financial aid officer when she helps you explore all your options.

That's what Carmella did.

She finally found a school that offered a balance between family, work, school, and her ministry. But, how could she pay for it? Well, her financial aid officer became her best friend. That's how she learned that her job provided tuition reimbursement. Her new best friend helped her find scholarships, grants, and loans. Carmella describes those loans as the best investment she ever made, totally "worth it!"

Women at Bay Path University tell us that their outlook on life, their confidence, self-esteem, and earning power all improved as a result of going back to school. And, that their children were more likely to go to college themselves.

Here is how to get the most support possible.

1. Carefully read the college financial aid websites.
2. Talk to your financial aid officer. The more information you share, the better she can assist you.
3. If you are not a citizen of the United States or a green card holder, you may still be eligible. Check with your college or university. Just ask!

So, what do you need to know when you apply?

First, apply for your Personal Identification Number, or PIN, online with the federal government. The PIN allows you to complete and sign forms.

Second, complete both the Free Application for Federal Student Aid online AND, your university's financial aid form. You will need last year's federal tax to answer the questions.

This makes you eligible for:

- *Grants and Scholarships*...gifts of money you don't repay,
- *Loans*...borrowed money you must repay,
- *Employment Aid*, money earned working for the university.

After you complete all the forms, your award letter arrives. It lists the total costs and the aid you are receiving. Ask lots of questions, when totally satisfied, sign and return before the deadline! If you do not, the award may be given to another deserving student.

Apply for the many other types of aid such as Veteran's Education Benefits, private scholarships and loans from banks, schools, and organizations like the Lions, Kiwanis, or Rotary. Many community foundations, corporations, and religious organizations support women returning to college. Seek out and apply to as many as possible!

Remember that this is an investment that pays many benefits in your future. The federal government offers loans and grants to college students because the investment benefits you and the country.

Ask about loan forgiveness programs for a particular major or for a location in our country. And, appeal the award if it is less than you think you deserve.

Don't overlook the tax advantages for students that can help you as well.

Your financial aid counselor will assist you. Be persistent. Check with her often. And, get all your questions answered and the help you need.

Remember these key points about the financial aid process:

- Check all available financial sources.
- Include indirect costs like books and travel when calculating expenses.
- Ask your employer about tuition reimbursement.
- Pay close attention to deadlines for applying and filing the FAFSA and other applications.
- Be alert to deadlines and payment schedules.
- And, contact your financial aid office as soon as possible if you need help or if your financial circumstances change!
- **AND...Never, never assume you can't afford college!**