

TOPIC: FY 2016 – 2017 STUDENT BUDGET PARAMETERS

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I. SUMMARY

This consent item presents the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Student Budget Parameters.

In compliance with federal regulations, postsecondary education institutions that participate in federal financial aid programs are required to determine average costs that they then use to determine federal financial aid (grants, work study, and loans) to students. The cost of attendance for a student is an estimate of a student's educational expenses for the period of enrollment. The allowable costs include tuition and fees, books, supplies, transportation, personal expenses, and room and board with additional supplemental budgets specific to certain circumstances.

Annually, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) recommends guidelines for student budget parameters to be used by financial aid administrators, in determining cost of attendance at their respective institutions.

II. BACKGROUND

Institutional financial aid administrators conduct a student need analysis estimating the amount of assistance a student will require after accounting for the expected resources available from that student and his or her family. The need analysis has two basic components: (1) the student's cost of attendance (COA), which is a reasonable estimate of what it will cost the student to attend a given institution for a given period of time; and (2) an estimate of the expected family contribution (EFC), which is calculated by a federally-approved formula that accounts for income, assets, number of family members attending college, and other information. The difference between the COA and the EFC determines the eligible amount of need-based financial aid an eligible student will be awarded.

The Commission provides recommended statewide cost guidelines for institutions to use in defining the COA. The Department's recommended guidelines use published data from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and www.craigslist.com to determine housing costs. Child care costs are based on Colorado data as reported from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and local inquiries. Food costs are based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, specifically the consumer price index for food costs. Book costs are derived using the guidelines from the Trends in College Pricing report from the College Board and information collected from colleges.

While the state guidelines establish a reference point, the U.S. Department of Education allows institution's discretion to determine reasonable cost elements from empirical data,

such as data based on valid student surveys and housing cost norms from a local realty board. Institutions that wish to modify costs must use actual data to support their adjusted budget and file adjusted student budgets with the Department.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Each year, Department staff conducts research in each student budget area to ensure that student budgets remain reasonable. The following tables summarize the recommended guidelines for FY 2016-2017, with further information provided below.

Table 1 shows the Student Budget Base for FY2016-2017 for Student Living with Parents, Students Living on Campus, and Students Living off Campus. The student monthly budget base includes monthly costs typically incurred by all students.

Table 1: Student Monthly Budget Base for FY 2016-2017

	Students Living with Parents	Students Living on Campus	Students Living off Campus
Housing	\$215	Actual	\$682
Food	\$274	Actual	\$395
Local Transportation	\$156	\$156	\$156
Personal Expenses	\$134	\$151	\$151
Total	\$779	\$307	\$1,384

Note: the total for students living on campus does not include housing and food costs.
Totals rounded to nearest dollar.

Table 2 lists the guidelines for the annual cost of books and supplies and discretionary costs that apply to certain students:

Table 2: Supplemental Student Budget Expenses for FY2016-2017

	Lower Range		Upper Range
Book & Supplies Per Year	No lower limit		\$1,800*
Child Care if appropriate per month	\$419		\$1,096
Non-local Transportation	Amount determined by Institution		
Computer Allowance	\$500		\$1,800
Medical	\$175	Actual cost at campus health center	\$270

*To be determined at institution and may vary by course of study

The recommended FY 2016-2017 student budget guidelines are described in more detail below.

Housing Costs

Housing budget guidelines vary for three groups of students:

- *On Campus:* For students living in dormitories, the housing budget is the actual room expense that the campus charges students.
- *Off Campus:* The Department's student budget parameters define the housing budget for students living off campus as 50 percent of the average rent and utility costs for a two-bedroom apartment. The FY2015-2016 student budget guideline for housing was \$682. According to the 2015 Apartment and Rental Properties: Vacancy and Rent Surveys rents increased in the Denver Metro area during 2014 and into 2015, but the average rent for a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment was \$1,192 in the metro area.

Regionally, outside of metro Denver and Boulder, housing costs remain lower. Utility costs decreased substantially according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This is largely tied to the decrease in oil prices, but due to the volatility associated with fuel prices and utilities, the Department does not recommend a decrease in the housing price as a result of a decline in utility prices.

Staff recommends not adjusting the monthly budget of \$682. This amount covers half of the rent for a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment (\$596), and leaves \$86 per month to cover utilities. Department staff used internet research and reports from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to determine that the fair market rate for a two bedroom apartment in metropolitan areas fell within the FY2015-2016 budget guideline.

- *With Parents:* For students living with parents, the FY2015-2016 housing budget guideline was \$215. Due to low inflation and stagnant utility costs, staff maintains the FY 2015-16 budget line for FY2016-2017.

Food Expenses:

Food budgets vary for three groups of students:

- *On Campus:* For students living in dormitories, the food budget guideline is the actual cost of board.
- *Off Campus:* For students living off campus the annualized November 2015 CPI measure from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, food costs away home have increased by 2.7% for the year in 2015. Department staff recommends the FY 2015-2016 budget guideline reflect this increase, or \$395 per month (a \$10 monthly increase).

- *With Parents:* For students who live with their parents, the Department's student budget parameters assume that food is a shared cost. The FY 2015-2016 student budget guideline was set at \$273 per month. According to the November 2015 CPI measure from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, annualized food costs at home have increased by .3% in 2015. As a result of this small, albeit impactful price increase, the FY 2016-17 recommendation is to increase this guideline to \$274.

Local Transportation Expenses Excluding Non-local Transportation:

The student budget parameters define local transportation expenses as the cost of using public transportation or sharing the operation of an automobile. For FY 2015-16, the Department set the monthly local transportation guideline at \$144. Staff recommends increasing the rate for FY 2016-2017 to \$156. The rate allows for daily roundtrip transportation by bus or light rail (RTD rates), which increased substantially in the past year, plus an additional budget for recreation, or the approximate cost of commuting and parking a car at \$6.00 per day.

Personal Expenses:

The student budget parameters define personal expenses to include the costs of laundry, dry cleaning, toiletries, clothing, recreation, and recreational transportation. The annualized Consumer Price Index for commodities minus food and energy commodities (which are accounted for elsewhere in the parameters) decreased slightly as reported in November 2015. Department staff recommends holding the parameters for personal expenses constant as the decrease was small and not proportional across all commodities. The monthly budget is \$134 for students living at home and \$151 for all other students; the main difference between the two groups is that students living at home do not typically incur laundry expenses.

Books and Supplies:

For books and supplies, Department staff recommends the upper budget limit for FY 2016-2017, (Academic Year 2016-17) be set at \$1,800, the same rate as the FY2015-2016 limit. This amount is based on information from the institutions. The average amount spent on text books nationally in FY 2014-2015 varied by sector, but it remains under the \$1,800 proposed parameter. The book allowance at each institution may vary, depending on course of study. The Department will continue not recommending a minimum amount for books in FY 2016-17. There are more affordable options for textbooks than purchasing all books. Students may choose to rent textbooks, borrow, or share.

Child Care:

Child care in Colorado continues to be expensive. The child care budget guideline is based on the range of the actual cost of care per child, per month, from \$419 up to a maximum of \$1,096 per child. A report from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies published the average cost for child care in the United States. The annual average cost in Colorado is \$13,154 for an infant and \$5,022 for a school aged-child. The

recommended range is the monthly average associated with the costs for an infant and for a school-aged child.

Medical Expenses:

For institutions that do not have health insurance or medical care funded through student fees, the Department recommends a maximum health expense guideline of \$270 per month or use the actual costs at campuses that offer campus based insurance plans. The upper limit is based on health insurance data from major health care providers with a data on the web for an older, higher-risk population, and then adding medical care inflation to the cost to capture growth throughout the year. The amount accounts for differences in population traits. The lower limit of \$175 per month is based on the published amount for individual plan for a 20 year old student.

Non-local Transportation:

The Department does not establish this guideline. Institutions may include the cost of plane fare for two round trips home per year for students who live outside a normal travel range.

Computer Allowance:

The cost of attendance regulations in the Federal Higher Education Amendment of 1998 provide for a reasonable allowance for the documented rental or purchase of a personal computer. Institutions may include this cost in their student budget for determining eligibility for state financial aid. With the decrease in hardware prices, few students rent computers. For FY 2016-17 the proposed parameter is price range for computers is \$500 to \$1,800, remaining constant from the previous fiscal year as prices for technology remain constant or decline.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approves the FY 2016-2017 Student Budget Parameters.

V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(1.5) "Cost of attendance at a nonpublic institution of higher education" means:

(a) Allowances specified by the commission for room and board and miscellaneous expenses, which shall be the same for nonpublic institutions of higher education as for a representative group of comparable state institutions, as determined by the commission