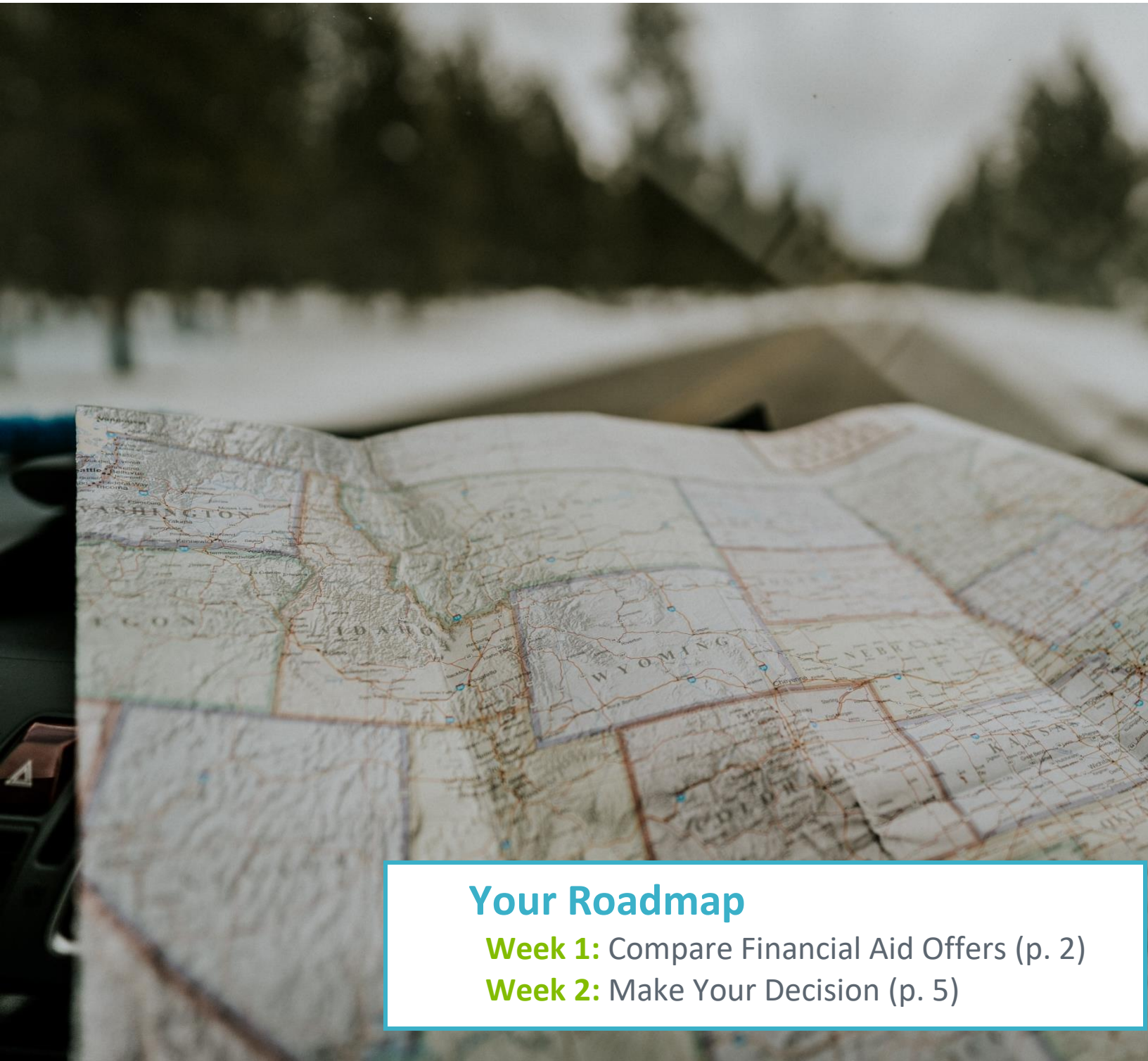


Senior Series

Select your next adventure



Your Roadmap

Week 1: Compare Financial Aid Offers (p. 2)

Week 2: Make Your Decision (p. 5)

WEEK 1

COMPARE FINANCIAL AID OFFERS

How you'll pay for your school of choice will be a big factor in your final decision. Follow the directions below to evaluate financial considerations of your top choices.

Your Task: Use the tools and Award Comparison Chart below to evaluate the financial impact of your decision.

STEP 1: Fill out the Award Comparison Chart on the following page.

- **Gather your offer letters:** Before you begin, gather your acceptance letters from each school. If you filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the school's financial aid office should have sent you an **offer letter** that outlines the financial aid support they can provide you, including scholarships, grants, work study opportunities and student loans. Enter the school name and the information from each offer in the **Choice** columns.
- **Cost of Attendance:** Add up the costs in the first table. This gives you the total cost of attendance for each school of choice.
- **Financial Aid Awarded:** Add up any grants, scholarships, work study and loan opportunities in the second table to get the total financial aid award for each school.
- Enter the amount of money from savings you can contribute in the **Savings for Education** area.

Putting It All Together: Add your **Total Financial Aid and Savings** for each school. Subtract this total from the cost of attendance to figure out the **Left to Pay** amount. If your **Left to Pay** amount is greater than \$0, you or your parents may want to consider additional loans. Multiply your annual loan amount by two or your depending on how many years you will attend school.

If you're attending a Colorado college, university or technical school, you will be eligible for a stipend through the **Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF)**. Check the [COF website](#) to see the current stipend amount per credit hour and multiply that by the number of credit hours you plan to take. A full-time student takes anywhere from 12-15 credits per semester (about four or five classes).

STEP 2: Use the [SLOPE Calculator](#) to assess student loan payments.

The **SLOPE Calculator** helps you compare the salary of careers you may land when you get out of college to your student loan payment burden. Keep in mind that debt isn't always bad. Depending on your career field, you can expect to pay off any student loan debt in a manageable timeframe. In fact, students who take on a **moderate** amount of debt tend to finish college faster than those who do not. Experts recommend that no more than 8 percent of your future **take home** pay should go to student loans.

Look at your SLOPE findings. Are you skiing the greens, blues or blacks? If your percentage of loan burden is high, you may want to think about whether your career choice matches the expense of school you plan to attend. Are there less expensive school alternatives that will offer you a great education?

You can also complete the information on the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau tool](#) to see the financial impact of your financial aid package down the road.

Award Comparison Letter
COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES AND TECHNICAL
SCHOOLS

Choice #1

Choice #2

Choice #3

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COST OF ATTENDANCE

Hint: Make sure that all your entries use the same length of time; for example, one school year.

Tuition & Fees			
Room & Board			
Books & Supplies			
Personal			
Health Insurance			
Transportation			
TOTAL COST			

FINANCIAL AID AWARDED

Grants/Scholarships

College Opportunity Fund (COF)*			
Pell Grant			
Other Grant(s)			
Private Scholarship			
Private Scholarship			
Other Scholarships			
Work Study/Student Employment			
Subtotal Free Aid (Do not pay back)			

Loans

Federal Direct Subsidized Loan			
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan			
Other Loans			
Subtotal Loans (Must pay back)			
Other (e.g., Parent PLUS Loan)			

TOTAL FINANCIAL AID

SAVINGS FOR EDUCATION

*COF may already be deducted from Tuition and Fees. If so, do not include it here.

LEFT TO PAY: Total Cost – (Total Financial Aid + Savings)			
Loan Debt after 2 years: enter Subtotal Loans X 2			
Loan Debt after 4 years: enter Subtotal Loans X 4			
Estimated monthly loan payment after completion – See SLOPE calculator			

WEEK 2

MAKE YOUR DECISION

Now that you've finished applying and evaluating financial factors for each school, it's time to make a decision among your options. To jog your memory, write down your top three choices.

Institution	Planned Program/Major(s)

STEP 1: Read all about your schools of interest above by using the following resources as applicable:

Colorado Bachelor's	Colorado Associate	Certificates	Out-of-State Schools	Military
College Admissions Tool	College Admissions Tool	Colorado Training Providers	College Navigator	Army Navy
College In Colorado	College In Colorado	College In Colorado	College In Colorado	Marines
College Navigator	College Navigator	College Navigator		Air Force

STEP 2: Think about your career and program preferences. Is the school strong in your program/major area? How does each school stack up on cost vs. benefits to you?

Other important things to note as you review schools:

- Does it offer the level of education and major/program you need?
- Are there clubs and organizations that interest you?
- How big is the college? Are classes large or small?
- What's the housing situation like? Will you live on campus, in an apartment nearby or at home?

If you have the time, it's wise to visit the campus to get a better sense of the student experience. Ask the school if you can sit in on a class or talk to a professor in your planned program. Many schools offer virtual visits, too.

Jot down what you like and dislike about each school:

College or School Name	Positives (Pros)	Negatives (Cons)

STEP 4: Weigh all these factors and make your decision!
Jot down your decision below!

Institution	Program	Education Level*

*Bachelor's degree, associate degree, certificate, military branch, apprenticeship program