

Universities seeking effects of tough economic times

by [Sherry Anne Rubiano](#) - Feb. 11, 2009 04:45 PM

The Arizona Republic

Arizona universities and colleges are seeing the effects of tough economic times.

More students are seeking financial aid for college this year compared to last year.

"We are seeing an increase, there's no question about that," said Craig Fennell, executive director of student financial assistance at [Arizona State University](#).

He said students who had not applied before are now applying.

And students who have applied are coming back for assistance because their family's economic circumstances have changed in some way, which is making it harder for them to afford college, he said.

"I kind of expected that," Fennell said. "When we read the news, we see layoffs, and companies aren't hiring."

Lauren Shellenbarger, dean of student services at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale, said students should do whatever they can to find a way to fund their

college education.

"Not having enough money should not be an excuse not to go to college," she said.

"College opens the door to your future."

Students have several options to finance a college education.

Filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or the FAFSA, is the first step in the financial aid process.

The FAFSA is required for federal [student financial aid](#), such as the Pell Grant, as well as student loans and financial aid packages awarded through individual schools.

Financial aid professionals advise all students to fill out the FAFSA, whether or not they think they qualify for any money.

A variety of scholarships are tailored to different majors and skills. There also are scholarships for adults going back to school, such as scholarships for single parents.

Students also can receive aid through student loans and signing up for work study jobs on campus.

For high school students, asking help from the school counselor is a good way to find funding sources.

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Navigating the financial aid process was difficult for Dysart [High School student](#) Karen Masedo. Masedo is the first person in her family to go to college.

"Definitely everything was not very clear to me, so going to my counselor helped a lot," Masedo said.

She has received several merit-based scholarships from colleges she has applied to. Masedo plans to pursue a career in psychology.

In addition to [high school](#) counselors, other resources include financial aid offices at colleges and universities and financial aid Web sites.

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