

Impact of Inflation on College Costs

What Is the Impact of Inflation on College Costs?

College costs have historically risen at a faster rate than the general inflation rate. More recently, however, after adjusting for inflation, the average published tuition and fees at both public and private nonprofit four-year colleges peaked in 2019-20. Since then costs have increased at about the same as the rate of inflation.

Over the 30-year period from 1995-96 to 2025-26, the average published tuition and fees increased from \$5,940 to \$11,950 at public four-year institutions and from \$25,820 to \$45,000 at private nonprofit four-year institutions, **after adjusting for inflation**. (source: The College Board Trends in College Pricing 2025).

Failing to consider the impact of inflation on college costs could undermine your ability to provide for your child's education.

Consider the funds that may be needed when an 8-year-old child is ready to attend college on a full-time basis in 10 years:

	Today's Average Annual Cost	Average Annual Cost in 10 Years Assumed College Inflation Rate:			
		3%	4%	5%	6%
Public College:					
Resident Student *	\$25,850	\$34,740	\$38,264	\$42,107	\$46,293
Commuter Student **	\$11,950	\$17,689	\$17,186	\$19,465	\$21,401
Private Nonprofit College:					
Resident Student *	\$60,920	\$81,871	\$90,176	\$99,232	\$109,098
Commuter Student **	\$45,000	\$60,476	\$66,611	\$73,300	\$80,588

* Includes tuition, fees, room and board; in-state residency is assumed for public schools.

** Includes tuition and fees only.

Source: The College Board Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025