How Am I Going to PAY for My Undergraduate Degree?

Yes, you’re right: University is going to be expensive. Whether you go away to study, or stay in your home community, the financial implications are considerable. But it’s not impossible—if you plan carefully, thoroughly research all possible forms of financing <http://www.aucc.ca/can_uni/student_info/can_student/financing_e.html> and work strategically.

Self-funding (or parent-funding), student lines of credit <http://www.campusaccess.com/financial-aid/credit-lines.html>, and federal and provincial student loans <http://www.canlearn.ca/en/shared/pay/school/gov_stu_loans/nlhostulowk.shtml> are the usual way that students pay for their education. But other sources of financial support may be available to you. These include:

Scholarships, Awards, Bursaries and Grants

Universities offer a range of scholarships, awards, bursaries and grants for incoming students. Each has its own set of criteria, so pay close attention to the descriptions. But do not stop here. Community-based clubs, professional associations, business, charities, and individuals also offer funding. Diligently investigate the possibilities. Here are some starting points: AUCC Scholarship Tips <http://www.aucc.ca/can_uni/student_info/can_student/scholarships_e.html>, ScholarshipsCanada.com <http://www.scholarshipscanada.com/>.

Cooperative Education and Internships

An excellent way to partly finance your education is through cooperative education and internships <http://www.aucc.ca/can_uni/student_info/can_student/coop_education_e.html>. Not only will paid employment be integral to your university program, you will develop real-life, job-related skills in a variety of work environments. Plus, you will have access to important professional networks that will prove invaluable to you during your studies and after you graduate. Check out these links <http://www.aucc.ca/can_uni/student_info/can_student/add_info_e.html>.

Work-Study Programs and Other Part-Time Employment

Government-funded “work-study” programs <http://www.campusaccess.com/financial-aid/financial-aid.html> exist at most universities and offer students employment on campus while pursuing their degrees. The wages are often higher than minimum, schedules take into account students’ class times, and
commuting to an off-campus location is eliminated. Enquire at the universities’ career services departments and financial awards offices.

There may be other employers at the university and in the community (not involved in the work-study program) that may need part-time help. Examples include the university Welcome Centre, bookstore, student pub, etc., as well as local pubs and restaurants, retail stores, and the like. Apply to them directly, as you would for any summer job.

So is it expensive to earn your university degree? Yes. But there ARE ways of financing it. Thoroughly research the possibilities and apply, apply, apply. The investment in your future as a scientist will be well worth the effort.

**Our topic next month will be on:** Summer job search (1): Tapping into the hidden job market

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