

# Tuition at Two-Year Public Colleges Rises at About Rate of Inflation

*Community College Students, However, Face Living Costs Higher Than Tuition*

More than four in every 10 college students are enrolled in community colleges, where average published tuition and fees for full-time students are \$2,272. These institutions enroll disproportionate numbers of low-income students and older students, as well as black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

In 2006-07, two-year public college tuition and fees increased \$90, or 4.1 percent, over 2005-06, only slightly above the rate of inflation. On average, full-time community college students receive about \$2,200 in grant aid and tax benefits, leaving net tuition and fees of less than \$100. However, the average net price of tuition, fees, housing, and food is \$6,400 per full-time student. Before taking financial aid into consideration, commuter students in this sector who do not live with their parents have total education-related budgets of about \$12,300 (which includes transportation and other expenses in addition to room and board).

As is the case in four-year colleges, there is considerable regional variation in two-year public college tuition and fees, which range from \$1,309 in the West to \$3,483 in the Middle States region. This year, geographical differences are particularly significant. Tuition and fees at two-year public colleges in California, where 22 percent of the nation's two-year public college students are enrolled, declined by 12 percent in 2006-07. If California is excluded from the calculation, tuition and fees in this sector rise from 4.1 to 5.1 percent in 2006-07.

Community college students are particularly dependent on Pell Grant funds. These students receive about a third of all Pell Grant funds, comparable to their percentage of total undergraduate enrollments. Despite their numbers, community college students receive less than 10 percent of the funds from other federal loans and campus-based aid programs.

## Student Debt

In 2003-04, one-third of students who earned associate degrees at two-year public colleges borrowed to finance their education. Among these borrowers, the median debt level was \$6,100, no higher after adjusting for inflation than it was in 1999-2000, but twice as high as it had been in 1995-96. Among this group, 71 percent had borrowed less than \$10,000. Sixteen percent had borrowed between \$10,000 and \$20,000, and 12 percent had borrowed \$20,000 or more.

## Degree Completion

Among students who began their undergraduate study at two-year public colleges in 1995-96 with the intention of earning a bachelor's degree, 23 percent had accomplished this goal six years later. Another 11 percent had earned an associate degree, 6 percent had completed a postsecondary certificate, and 22 percent were still enrolled. Thirty-nine percent had not earned a degree or certificate and were no longer enrolled.