**a-is-for-affordability**

**Affordability Goals**

Our goal for our students is that they are able to pay their balance each semester without relying heavily on student loans. Our overall objective is for students to **borrow less than $31,000** to finance their educations, which is the maximum amount that dependent students can borrow from the federal Stafford Loan program. The rule of thumb in higher education is that a student's loan balance upon graduation should be less than their starting annual salary at their first job.

Our advisors support students as they renew their financial aid application each year, explore options for paying off a bill, and manage their loan debt throughout college. With this long-term goal in mind, we empower students to **make sustainable decisions about paying for school**.

**Affordability Curriculum Components**

Unlike our Degree curriculum, our Affordability tools rarely follow a set meeting structure. The vast majority of students will need our help to renew their financial aid every year by their state's or college's deadline, and you will touch on the other areas of our curriculum as they become relevant to each of your students.

**Budgeting**

**Affordability Philosophy**

1. **Ask Questions and Stay Current:** It takes at least a year to understand how financial aid works and know the ins-and-outs…even then, questions will come up! So please don’t hesitate to ask a more senior staff member any questions you have. You should also feel comfortable calling experts in the field to get correct information when necessary (such as school financial aid offices, College Board, Federal Student Aid, etc.). It’s also important to remember that financial aid application processes and the ways schools handle financial aid change every year. Your training will provide a foundation, but know that changes will come unpredictably. If you discover a change, be sure to keep others informed.
2. **Persistence is Crucial:** The financial aid process can be complicated, tedious, and frustrating at times. However, it is also incredibly rewarding and has a HUGE impact on our students. We pride ourselves on our ability to do whatever it takes to help students secure financial aid and it takes persistence to get the job done. This means following through on processes, and ensuring that students are able to complete every step.