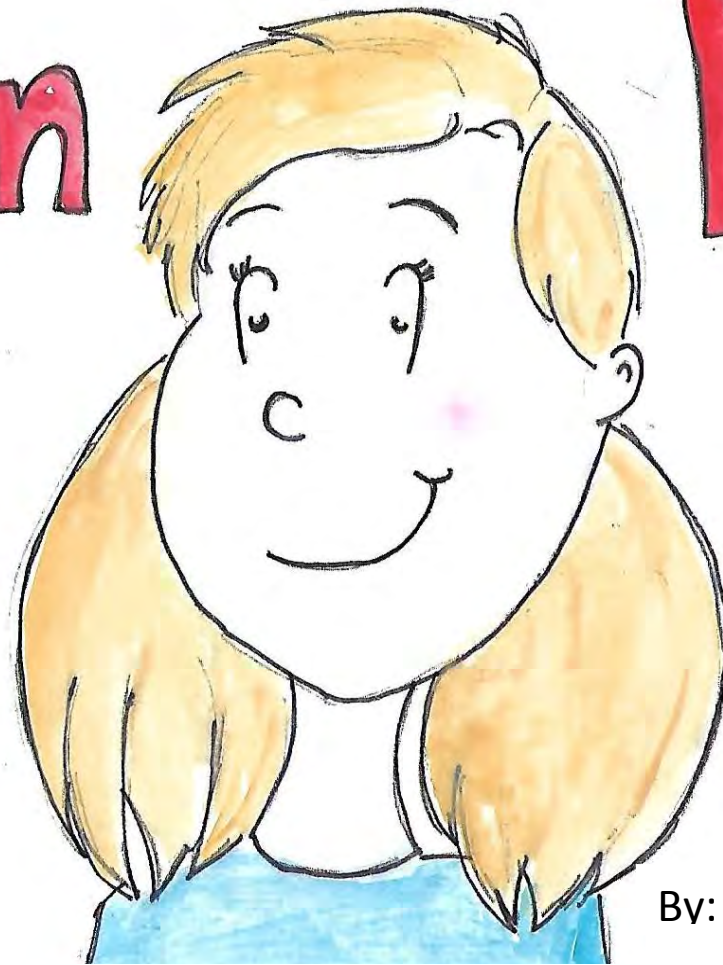
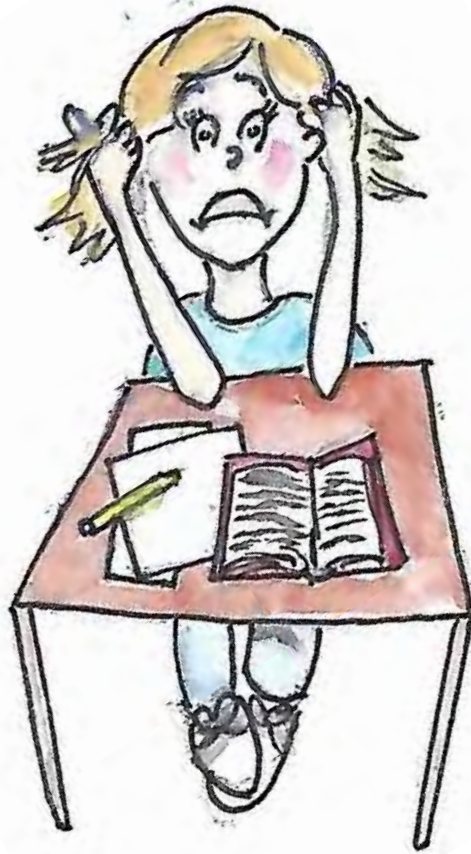


How Do You Plan To Pay For College?



By: Ellen Lewis

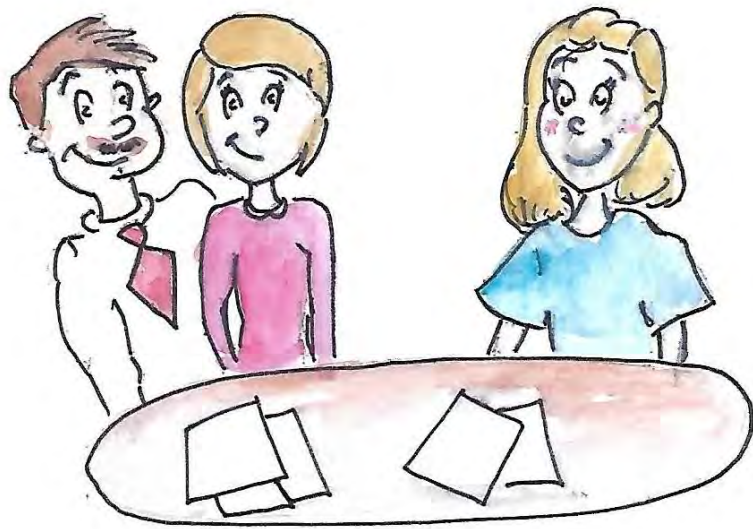


I'm sitting in class, and I'm freaking out because I really don't know what this paying for college thing is all about.

I jumped on a computer and explored, asking myself, “How much am I going to be able to afford?”

Then I stumbled across the “Make College Happen” challenge online, and decided it was a sign, to really ask myself how I was going to pay for college. I knew avoiding the problem was no longer fine.





I sat down with my parents
and we tried to work out
what would be, for me, the
best route.



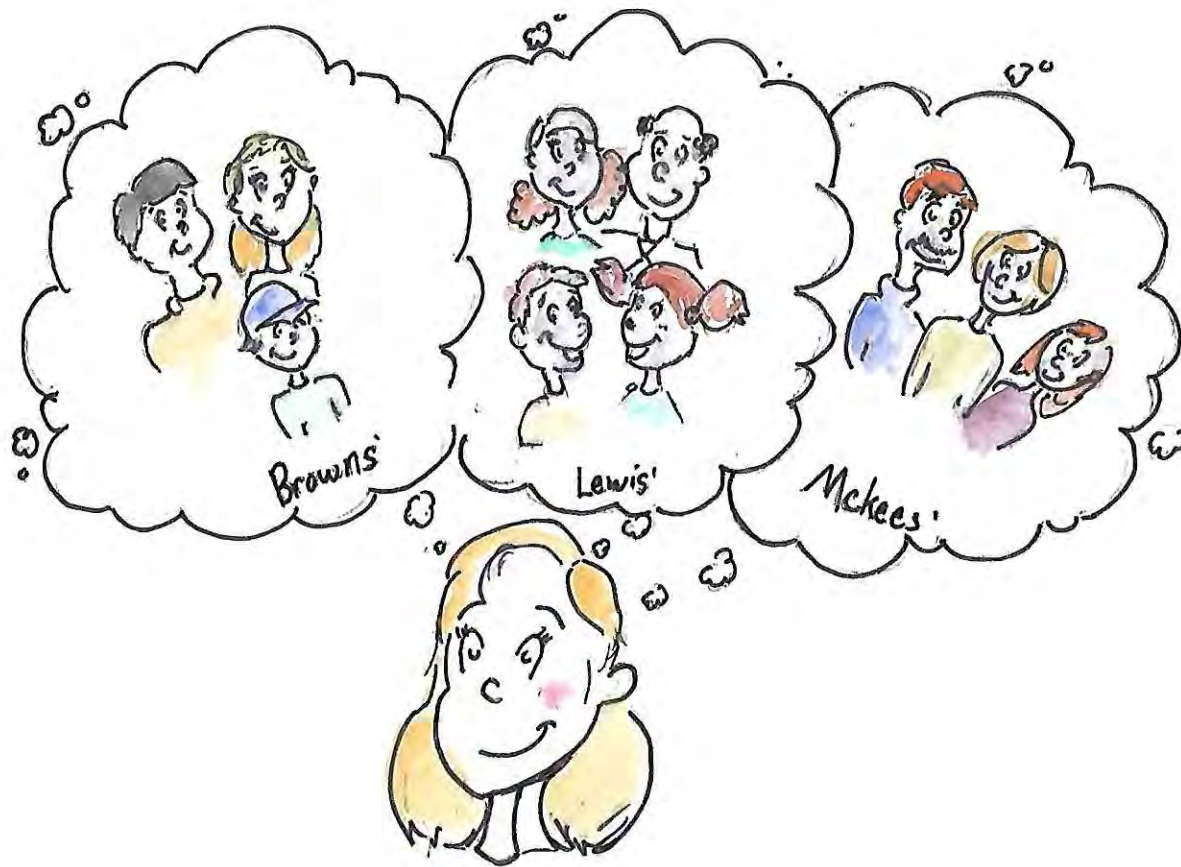
I know there is a lot of money that I lack, so first we searched for all of the ways to get money that I won't have to pay back.

I will apply for all of the scholarships that I can. That is the first part of my plan. Free money is great. Any scholarships I get will be a big helpmate.

I know I will have to keep studying and working hard to do my best on the achievement test.

I am working for my state's opportunity scholarship. Getting the money that it will entail will really help, so I'll try hard not to fail. I went through two hard years of Spanish class for a chance at getting this scholarship to help my finance. I still am not sure if, "Yo estoy feliz," means, "I'm happy!" or, "May I have a pickle please?"





Financial aid is available to all sorts of families, such as the Browns, Lewises, and the McKees. We come from different walks of life and have different salaries, so I'll try to find the financial aid that works for me. My parents certainly agree.

My Application for Federal Student Aid will have to be completed. With it, I will see if I qualify, and if I will be treated with financial aid so part of my college costs will be paid.



I said, "This is a lot of new information, but we are almost there. Just a few more options we need to compare."

We found all of the things that make the cost of college much lighter, then we looked for federal student loans that will ensure my future is brighter. These loans will allow us to borrow money at a low interest rate which will help me predict my payments after I graduate.



But here my heart started to beat fast and vibrate. “Will I have to pay them off forever?” I inquired, “Will I still be paying them off when I’m old and tired?”



My father smiled and shook his head. He reassuringly said, “When you are done getting scholarships and financial aid, we will see the total price that will have to be paid. This will be the cost remaining, or the net price, and it will help us find a loan that is more precise.”



With that comforting statement, I calmly said, “So, we can find a loan that will fit me and borrow only what is absolutely necessary. We can factor in some of my savings, income and a contribution from you guys,” I added with a smile in my eyes. “Then we can find the total cost and get a loan that will make sure none of my money is lost!”



My mom then chipped in, “Getting a loan is the decision we’ll probably have to choose, but when the assistance from our first option is put into use, there is a lot of stress you’ll be able to lose. Of course you’ll still have to live cheaply for a while. You’ll have to make regular payments, and work a financial budget into your lifestyle. But in the end it will all be worth your while when you can say ‘I’m debt free’ with a big smile!”



This completed my plan. I was relieved! All my previous misconceptions about paying for college that I had believed were gone with the plan we had drawn.

I would be able to go to college, that was an absolute. Now if only I could decide on what career path would be my pursuit....