



WASHINGTON FINANCIAL AID ASSOCIATION 2026-2027 STUDENT BUDGETS



Proposed to WFAA Executive
Committee October 2025

	Dependent, living with Parent (Off Campus)	Dependent/Independent (Off Campus)	Not living with parent (On Campus)
Tuition & Fees			
Books & Supplies	\$528	\$528	\$528
Housing	\$3,834	\$12,648	\$13,464 ¹
Food	\$5,610	\$5,610	\$5,610
Transportation	\$2,580	\$2,796	\$1,716
Personal	\$1,968	\$1,968	\$1,968
Loan Fees	\$58 ²	\$58 ²	\$58 ²

Purpose of WFAA Student Budgets

WFAA student budgets are intended to serve as benchmarks for assessing student costs within the state and are not intended to replace or supplant student expense studies or budget development at the institutional level.

¹This is a base estimation. Actual housing may be different for your institution regarding the calculation of on-campus housing based on updated federal guidance. See: [FSA Dear Colleague Letter 22-11-04](#) and [NASFAA Monograph May 2025](#)

Annual Budgets

The student budgets listed above are based on a nine-month academic year. Aid administrators should include tuition and fees for their respective institutions and evaluate the remaining line items to adjust for costs and conditions as determined at the institutional level. To read more about the federal rules and regulations regarding the development of cost of attendance components, refer to Volume 3, Chapter 2 of the Federal Student Aid Handbook at [FSA Handbook - Cost of Attendance](#)

Analysis of Data and Methodology

Last year's budgets were adjusted based on the results of a comprehensive survey sent to students across Washington state. The budgets for this year were updated with the percentage changes for the August 2024 to August 2025 Consumer Price Index (CPI), using +3.1% for housing and personal, +3.2% for food, and +0.3% for transportation.

From August 2024 to August 2025, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) rose 2.9 percent.

“The index for all items less food and energy rose 3.1 percent from August 2024 to August 2025, while the food index rose 3.2 percent. Transportation-related expenses showed mixed trends: while vehicle and fuel prices declined, transportation services such as insurance and maintenance rose sharply. Overall, transportation costs increased modestly by 0.3 percent, reflecting offsetting movements within the category. Energy prices overall edged up 0.2 percent, with gasoline prices decreasing 6.6 percent and electricity prices increasing 6.2 percent over the 12-month period.” — [U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

The average rent in the Washington rental market as of September 2025 is approximately \$1,659/month, according to Zillow, reflecting a \$64 increase from the prior year per [Zillow](#).

All amounts were rounded to the nearest dollar and are divisible by two and three in order to accommodate quarter and semester schools.

High-cost Regions

The WFAA Budget Committee recommends broadening the application of the high-cost area calculation, which is currently determined using a limited and unspecified set of counties within the Puget Sound region. Recent analysis demonstrates that elevated housing costs are increasingly burdening communities across many counties, while higher transportation costs in rural areas remain unaccounted for in the existing high-cost framework.

Therefore, we’d like to incorporate a clause stating that if your area has been determined by the local municipality to be considered a high-cost area, the addition of 10% to the Housing, Food or Transportation category can be considered.

²Federal Education Loan Fees

The law provides for the inclusion of federal loan fees in the student’s COA. An institution must include a loan fee allowance if the student or parent borrower borrows a Federal Direct Loan. Nonfederal student loan fees cannot be included in the COA. Fees in this example are based on actual fees for 1st year undergraduate student maximum loan limit of \$5,500.

When including Federal Direct Loan fees, an institution may use the actual loan fee amount, or an average based on the same type of loan borrowed for attendance at the school. The institution may choose to use the actual or an average loan fee amount based on the type of loan borrowed (that is, Federal Direct Subsidized Loan, Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan, or Federal Direct PLUS), the type of loan borrowed for different categories of students, or on a case by-case basis. From NASFAA Monograph May 2025: [NASFAA Monograph May 2025](#) and [FSA Dear Colleague Letter 22-11-04](#)