NET PRICE CALCULATORS (NPCs) CAN HELP PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS LEARN THE COSTS OF ATTENDING AN INSTITUTION

But more must be done to increase the usefulness and usability of NPCs.

**Characteristics of useful and usable NPCs**

**DISCLOSE FULL CURRENT COSTS**

Useful and usable NPCs:

1. Are findable and working on an institution’s website.  
2. Prominently display one net price that meets the federal definition.  
3. Include all costs of attendance.  
4. Use cost and aid data that can be reconciled with information on other institutional websites.  
5. Use data from the current or previous academic year.  
6. Note variation in costs based on meal plan, housing, major, and course load.  
7. Indicate to whom the estimates do and do not apply.  
8. Provide estimated costs for particular populations (e.g., financially independent students, non-US citizens, and part-time students).

**DEFINE AND DESCRIBE MECHANISMS TO PAY COSTS**

Useful and usable NPCs:

1. Make clear the difference between loans and grants.  
2. Specify that loans are optional and must be repaid.  
3. Disaggregate grants by federal, state, and institutional sources.  
4. Indicate the eligibility and renewability requirements of all sources of aid.

**SHARE KEY INFORMATION**

Useful and usable NPCs:

1. Encourage students to complete the FAFSA.  
2. Disclose deadlines.  
3. Encourage students to contact the financial aid office to address questions.

To learn more about Questioning the Calculations, visit www.ahead-penn.org/research-projects/questioning-net-price-calculators.