Undergraduate Financial Aid Handbook for 2025-2026

CWRU Financial Aid Philosophy
A Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) education is an investment in your future. To support this, we offer a combination of merit scholarships and need-based aid, reflecting our commitment to making CWRU accessible and valuable.

Since 2017, CWRU has met each student's demonstrated financial need, determined through the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the CSS Profile. We meet need by combining scholarships, grants, loans, student employment, and outside resources.

This handbook provides an overview of financial aid at CWRU. Because policies may change, please contact the Office of University Financial Aid at financialaid@case.edu or 216-368-4530 with any questions about your eligibility or current policies.

Cost of Attendance (COA)
The Cost of Attendance (COA) is an estimate of how much money you'll need to cover all your school-related expenses for one year. It includes both:

- Costs payable to the school (direct or billable expenses): Charges paid directly to the university, such as tuition, fees, on-campus housing, and meal plans.
- Costs paid to others (indirect or non-billable costs): Estimated expenses paid to others, including books, supplies, transportation, off-campus housing, and personal expenses.

According to federal regulations, the COA determines the maximum amount of financial aid a student may receive, regardless of the aid source. COA amounts vary by academic level and may be adjusted for specific programs, such as Nursing, to reflect additional required expenses.

A standard undergraduate COA breakdown is available on our Estimated Cost of Attendance website. Additional components may be considered upon request.

Important notes:

- ***Not all charges on a student's bill are included in the COA. For example, the university medical plan may be waived and is not automatically factored into the COA.***
- ***Costs paid to others estimates are based on typical local expenses and are set amounts that can't be adjusted for individual students.***

Student Medical Plan
All students at CWRU who are enrolled in one or more credit hours are required to have a medical plan. Upon registration, students are automatically enrolled in CWRU's Student Medical Plan and are charged the associated fee.

Students with coverage comparable to the university's can choose to waive this fee through University Health Services. Waivers must be submitted by the billing due date and will remain effective for the remainder of the academic year, but they must be **resubmitted** annually.

Students who are unable to waive the medical plan and face financial hardship should contact the Office of Financial Aid for assistance. Upon request, the cost of the medical plan can be added to the student's COA, allowing for additional loan eligibility to help cover the expense.

CWRU Merit Scholarships

All first-year applicants are automatically considered for merit scholarships during the admission process. Selection is based on academic performance, test scores (if submitted), leadership, artistic talent, and other distinguishing qualities.

Incoming first-year fall students are also invited to apply for other scholarship competitions that require additional information.

Merit scholarships are awarded for up to eight semesters or until a bachelor's degree is completed, whichever comes first. They apply only to full-time undergraduate enrollment in fall and spring semesters and end if a student transfers or is permanently separated from the university.

CWRU Merit Scholarships may cover costs beyond tuition as outlined in the COA. If outside funding covers full tuition, CWRU scholarships are limited to the student's annual housing and meal plan allowance, based on year and housing type.

Students enrolled in their final semester on a less-than-full-time basis should notify the Office of University Financial Aid, with confirmation from Undergraduate Advising Support, to ensure their scholarship is prorated.

Students requesting a one-semester leave must seek a scholarship deferral in advance through the Undergraduate Advising Support office. Longer leaves require Academic Standing Board approval and are reviewed individually.

Determining Financial Need

Students concerned about affording a CWRU education may apply for need-based financial aid. Financial need is met through a combination of scholarships, grants, loans, student employment, and external resources. CWRU need-based aid is available for up to 10 semesters.

To determine eligibility, students must submit both the FAFSA (for federal funding) and the CSS Profile (for CWRU funding). Incoming students must apply before admission to remain eligible in future years. Returning students must reapply annually by the posted deadlines.

Note: Students relying only on merit scholarships in future semesters do not need to submit additional forms, but should notify financialaid@case.edu of their decision.

CWRU expects the cost of education to be shared by the student and both parents, regardless of marital status. When parents are separated, divorced, or remarried, financial information is collected from no more than two parents. Need is determined using:

- Parents' income and assets
- Noncustodial parent's income and assets when the custodial parent is separated, divorced, remarried, or never married to the student's other parent
- Student's income and assets

As the primary beneficiary, each student is expected to contribute toward their education. A minimum contribution is required based on year in school and may be met through earnings (especially summer work), outside scholarships, or savings.

Eligibility for Financial Aid

Federal financial aid is only provided to U.S. citizens or permanent residents who meet all of the following criteria:

- Possesses a high school diploma, GED certificate, or has completed a high school education in a homeschool setting approved under state law
- Are admitted to and enrolled in an eligible degree program
- Have a valid Social Security number
- Are not in default on a federal student loan
- Do not owe a refund on a federal grant
- Enroll on at least a half-time basis (the Federal Pell Grant is excluded from this requirement)
- Will use federal student aid for educational purposes only
- Meet the requirements of Satisfactory Academic Progress

Institutional CWRU financial aid is provided to students who meet the same criteria for federal aid and enroll in at least 12 credit hours, a full-time basis. International students may also qualify for institutional CWRU financial aid, provided they are deemed eligible at the time of admission.

Financial Aid Offer

Financial aid offers are valid only for the academic year in which they are made. Students must accept, decline, or reduce their aid before funds can be applied to their university account. Declined or reduced aid cannot be replaced with additional institutional funding unless a documented change in circumstances is reviewed and approved by the Office of University Financial Aid.

Revised aid offers may be issued if funding from CWRU or external sources changes, or if updates are made to the information initially used to determine financial need. For questions about the status of an aid offer, students should contact the Office of University Financial Aid directly.

Other Types of Financial Aid managed by CWRU

Grants are awarded based on financial need and do not require repayment. They include:

- Federal Pell Grants – Provided by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) based on FAFSA information.
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) – Funded by the ED and awarded by CWRU to Pell Grant recipients with additional unmet need.
- CWRU Grants – University-funded aid available only during the fall and spring semesters.
- Endowment Funds – Supported by the generosity of CWRU alums and friends, these funds serve as the source of some CWRU Grants. These funds may carry specific restrictions and are determined during the academic year.

Student employment offers opportunities to work on campus and, in some cases, at nearby nonprofit organizations to help offset educational costs. Through CWRU's employment program, students may serve as research assistants, tour guides, library aides, tutors, and more.

There are two types of student employment:

- Federal Work-Study (FWS) – Partially funded by ED, it enables CWRU to employ more students while ensuring they earn the same hourly rate as peers in non-FWS positions. About one-third of our student employees are hired through this program.
- Campus Employment – Fully funded by the hiring department, roughly two-thirds of our student employees work through these non-FWS positions.

Student Loans are borrowed funds that must be repaid according to the terms of the loan. They may be subsidized (interest is paid by someone other than the borrower for a set period) or unsubsidized (interest is the borrower's responsibility from the start). The main types include:

- Federal Direct Subsidized Loans – Offered by ED, interest is subsidized until repayment begins, typically six months after graduation or after a student is no longer enrolled at least half-time.
- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans – Also offered by ED, interest starts charging immediately on the portion of the loan that has been paid. Repayment begins on the same timeline as subsidized loans; however, students may choose to pay interest while they are enrolled.
- Federal Direct Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) – Available to biological or adoptive parents of undergraduate students. These loans are credit-based and unsubsidized. Parents may begin repayment immediately, wait until the student graduates or drops below half-time enrollment, or delay for six months after that point. Applicants with adverse credit may still qualify with a credit-worthy endorser.
- Private Student Loans – Offered by private lenders (not the federal government). These loans are typically credit-based and unsubsidized. Repayment terms vary by lender. The university's preferred lender list is available through FastChoice.

Other Educational Resources

The Office of University Financial Aid encourages students to explore all available sources of support. By federal regulation, the office must coordinate every type of funding a student receives. This process ensures that:

- Need-based aid does not exceed a student's documented financial need.
- Total aid does not exceed the student's official Cost of Attendance (COA).

The type and amount of outside resources a student receives may require adjustments to their existing financial aid package. Students who wish to maintain eligibility for loans or student employment should notify the Office of University Financial Aid in writing as soon as they become aware of additional resources being received.

The following adjustments will be followed for any external funding:

- Student loan and employment expectations will be replaced according to the following schedule
    - 1st-year students will have $8,500 replaced
    - 2nd-year students will have $9,750 replaced

  - 3rd-year (and older) students will have $11,000 replaced
- Once loan and work expectations have been replaced, any remaining additional funding will replace CWRU-based grants on a dollar-for-dollar basis.
- Once CWRU-based grants have been entirely replaced, any remaining additional funds will be added to the financial aid offer up to the student's cost of attendance.
- If additional funds remain after the COA is reached, any CWRU-based scholarships will be reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis to ensure the COA is not exceeded.

Note: Unless restricted by the awarding organization, CWRU may adjust its merit scholarships to ensure that:
- ***A student's total financial aid does not exceed their COA.***
- ***Students can fully benefit from their outside funding.***

When a CWRU merit scholarship is reduced, it will be restored to its original amount for the next academic year in which the student remains eligible. Students who believe their scholarship has not been reinstated should contact the Office of University Financial Aid beginning in early August so that the adjustment can be completed.

Some outside resources come with specific rules that CWRU must follow. Here are the most common examples:
- Army and Air Force ROTC Scholarships
  - Full four-year ROTC scholarship: CWRU adds a scholarship to cover the standard room and board rate.
  - Partial ROTC scholarship: CWRU covers the standard room and board rate, and students may also qualify for additional scholarships or need-based aid.
  - Any existing CWRU merit scholarship is replaced with an ROTC-specific scholarship for housing and meals.
- **Tuition Benefits from Other Institutions**
  - Usually applies only to tuition (and sometimes fees).
  - Students should report these amounts on the CSS Profile or CWRU Financial Aid Form if known.
  - Once received, aid is adjusted in this order:
    - Student loan and employment expectations are reduced.
    - Any remaining amount reduces the CWRU Grant.
  - Since these benefits are processed at different times, adjustments may occur after aid has already been disbursed.
- Tuition Exchange
  - A consortium of 600+ colleges and universities offering tuition assistance.
  - For students entering the fall 2025 semester, the award is $43,000 annually.
  - Receiving a Tuition Exchange Scholarship replaces any other CWRU scholarship.
- Veterans Educational Benefits and Yellow Ribbon Program
  - Benefits vary by program.
  - For Yellow Ribbon, CWRU matches funds for students who are 100% eligible.
  - Students should contact the University Registrar's Office (vabenefits@case.edu, 216.368.4310) for details.
- 529 College Savings Plans
  - Reported on the FAFSA and CSS Profile and factored into financial need.

- When used, it will appear as payments on the student account.
- They do not cause additional changes to financial aid for that academic year.

How and when will you receive your financial aid?

Each student has a university account managed by the Office of Student Financial Services. This account houses billing, payment, and financial aid information. Students can access their account through the Student Information System; detailed instructions are available in the SIS Financial Guide.

- Once your aid file is complete, financial aid is posted to your university account on the first day of fall and spring classes, or on July 1 for summer, and is used to pay that semester's charges.
- Refunds are issued either by direct deposit or by mailed check to the student's address listed in SIS, while excess funds from a Parent PLUS Loan are refunded to the parent borrower. Refunds are typically processed within two weeks.
- Earnings from student employment are not applied to the university bill. Instead, they are paid directly to the student. These wages are intended to help students cover personal expenses, including but not limited to books, supplies, and student organization membership dues, throughout the academic year.

Note: CWRU can only have aid paid to a student's university account for aid it has received and controls. For example, outside scholarships cannot be paid until the funds have been received from the scholarship organization.

Special Programs and how they are handled

The Office of University Financial Aid supports students in taking advantage of the many academic opportunities available at CWRU. Aid eligibility and processing may vary by program. Below are some of the most common examples.

- **Combined Undergraduate/Graduate Programs** – Students in a combined program will receive aid through various methods, depending on the source of their funding and the school of enrollment, to meet federal funding requirements.
  - ***Combined Bachelor's/Master's, Senior Year in Professional Studies, and Senior Year in Absentia*** – Students will receive CWRU funding at the undergraduate level through the end of their 4th year. Graduate-level CWRU funding (available only through the academic department) may be available for the 5th year. Students will receive federally based graduate funding for both the 4th and 5th years.
  - ***BA/BS and Master of Accountancy (MAcc), Business Analytics and Intelligence, Finance, or Supply Chain Management*** – Students with undergraduate status will receive CWRU and Federal funding at the undergraduate level for both the 4th and 5th years.
- **Cooperative Education and Practicum** – Students must complete the required registration (including a fee) before beginning these programs. While enrolled, students are considered full-time but are not eligible for financial aid and do not earn course credit. Any CWRU-managed funding is placed on hold and reinstated upon the student's return. Federal loans remain in in-school status, so the grace period and repayment do not begin.

- **Cross-registration (aka Collaborative Programs, Consortium Agreement, and Transient Enrollment)** – With preapproval from the Undergraduate Advising Support Office, students may take courses at other institutions and transfer credits back to CWRU. To qualify for aid, a consortium agreement must be completed and approved by both institutions. This agreement specifies which school will administer federal aid (for CWRU students, this is CWRU). Aid is released on the same schedule as for CWRU courses, and any excess funds are refunded to the student, who is then responsible for paying charges at the host institution. Students must plan to meet the host school's payment deadlines. To maintain future aid eligibility, students must submit an official transcript once coursework is complete.

  To begin the process, students must provide the Office of University Financial Aid with:
  - A completed and signed Cross-registration form from the Undergraduate Advising Support Office
  - Documentation of tuition costs for the course(s)
  - Name and address of the Financial Aid Office of the school to be attended

  The Office of University Financial Aid may decline to prepare a consortium agreement if a student has past-due charges or other restrictions on their CWRU account that prevent registration.
- **Study Abroad** – Students studying abroad are not eligible for student employment while away. Financial aid is determined using the same process and timeline as for students remaining at CWRU. Students seeking additional support should submit a Study Abroad Cost Sheet (available in the forms library) with supporting documentation. Once university charges are covered, any excess funds are refunded to the student. Enrolling in direct deposit is strongly recommended to speed up the receipt of refunds.
- **Summer Enrollment** – Although the summer term marks the start of the academic year, tuition is generally 50% of the cost of the preceding spring semester. Current figures are available on the Undergraduate Tuition & Fees page of the Student Financial Services website. Only federal funds are available for students enrolled in summer courses.