

# Price of higher education too high for many

by Art Goldschmidt

The high cost of higher education has become a national scandal. Gone are the days when students and their parents expected land-grant universities, normal schools, and community colleges to provide low-cost schooling. Without financial aid, the annual cost of attending a private college may reach \$34,000 just for tuition, and of course students must sleep and eat. Even Penn State charges Pennsylvania residents \$11,508 (\$21,744 tuition for out-of state students), but add \$7,560 for room and board.

Private colleges allay “sticker shock” by offering grants and scholarships. Vassar College charges \$33,800 tuition and \$7,800 room and board, but its financial aid covers 100 percent of documented student need. If you know anyone who is seeking a four-year college or university, refer him or her to [apps.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp), which covers almost every U.S. institution, what it charges, its academic programs, and how much aid it offers.

Nearly all aspiring college students qualify for some form of financial aid and should apply for it. Both the students and their parents must file their income tax returns as well as the Financial Aid Form promptly. The Internet will refer students to guides like [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) or [www.college-scholarships.com](http://www.college-scholarships.com). A high school student should consult a competent guidance counselor, if possible.

If the college costs are scandalous, the issue is further enhanced by the difficulty many students face in graduating within four years. Although students may have made poor choices, some universities fail to offer enough sections of required courses or

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the academic advising they need.

Higher education costs will keep on rising. Students—and their parents—must learn to make informed choices.

Does anyone tell first-year college students, or their parents, that most white-collar jobs require more than a BS or BA degree? Applying to graduate, law, or medical school for admission and financial aid is daunting, and parents and guidance counselors may not be accessible.

Again, use the Internet, which includes such resources as [www.gradschool.about.com](http://www.gradschool.about.com) for graduate schools and also most medical and business schools. As for law school, see [www.lisac.org](http://www.lisac.org). Make sure to apply for whatever loans, scholarships, or assistantships you can qualify for. Seek recommendations from teachers or other adults who can write well about you. Give your resume to your recommenders; they often must complete recommendation forms and write letters for dozens of students. They welcome concise information.

Write those graduate and professional school applications and essays carefully. An admissions officer reads hundreds of them and may seek reasons to reject an unwary applicant.

Our educational system is creating a growing population of young and middle-aged adults with huge student loans to pay off. Many an indebted graduate weds another former student encumbered by educational loans. Their married life starts with a negative dowry that discourages buying a car, making the down payment on a mortgage loan, or having a baby.

One skyrocketing educational cost is that of textbooks. Students rarely can choose which ones they will buy, and their prices at a college bookstore are astoundingly high. Students blame greedy store owners, publishers, authors, and even their professors.

Bookstore owners don't get rich from selling new textbooks, for many publishers offer them only a 10 percent reduction for texts (versus 40 percent for trade books). Textbooks occupy much shelf or storeroom space until the students buy them, and stores are not generally made of rubber. College bookstores make more money from selling athletic clothing, souvenirs, and office supplies.

Some publishers do profit from textbook sales, but about 90 percent of the profits go to five publishing conglomerates. Competition with the used book market

leads them to demand new editions from textbook writers every three years. Some publishing houses produce textbooks to offset what they lose by printing scholarly monographs professors write to report their research findings and to achieve tenure.

Most authors cannot make a living from textbook royalties. Some do well, but only if their books are about subjects having a huge student demand: introduction to accounting, basic biology, calculus and analytical geometry, and principles of economics. And in those fields competition among textbooks is intense.

Professors know how publishers try to persuade them to adopt their textbooks. We get illustrated brochures, visits from book salespeople, examination copies, and fancy exhibits at our professional meetings. But rarely can they learn how much the book will cost their students. Teachers who assign their own books should not pocket the royalties they earn from what their students pay. Those who assemble and assign “readers” should not add to their price a percentage for themselves. But some do.

Students should not buy course books until they see their syllabi and can be sure they will need them. Check out [www.campusbooks.com](http://www.campusbooks.com) to save on textbooks.

We wish more government and corporate money went to higher education. We urge universities to apply cost containment strategies in delivering their product. We advise students to find online courses, proprietary colleges, and night or summer schools where they can save themselves money. But we have no magic wand to bring costs down. Students, be wary, be wise, and, above all, be well informed.

from Candidates, pg. 21

## Donna Queeney: Incumbent

The State College Area School District, recognized at state and national levels for its excellence, currently faces a number of challenging issues, including the following:

Financial concerns are critical with an unprecedented number of unfunded state mandates and significantly escalating fuel,

insurance, and other unavoidable costs. State and federal support is minimal, with approximately 83 percent of the District's budget funded locally.

Maintenance and enhancement of educational quality is challenged by the rapid growth of technology, changing state and federal regulations, curriculum issues, and decreasing pools of qualified teachers and administrators.

The District's physical facilities require renovation and/or remodeling to accommodate the aging infrastructure, technology, state-mandated programs, and curricular changes. The school environment, includ-

ing student and staff safety and diversity issues, is an ongoing concern.

Now in my 16th year on the board, I've demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of these and the other issues that we face. I listen to students, parents, staff, and community members and make good, informed decisions.

Parent and community trust in the board and the District is critical. I am open to the comments, recommendations, and ideas of students, parents, staff, and community members, and will continue to be a strong proponent of public discussion of District concerns and decisions.

As a board member, I encourage and support board operations focused on policy-making responsibilities, recognizing that a board member's role is not to micromanage District operations, but rather to make appropriate policies and hire well-qualified personnel to implement them.

Competent, conscientious board members are needed to guide the District through these particularly challenging times. I have the skills, knowledge, experience, strong relationships with School District personnel and the community, and

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