

# Making **SENSE** of **FINANCIAL AID**



..... and the **VALUE** of a  
**COLLEGE EDUCATION**

# The **VALUE** of a **THIEL** Education

*Greater career opportunities. Higher earning potential. Better quality of life.*

A college education is like getting a driver's license. Driving gives you more freedom and opportunities to explore. College expands your knowledge and opens doors to better career options.

## IS COLLEGE WORTH THE COST?

In short, the answer is yes. For many, a college education is the most important investment they will ever make, offering a high return on investment, helping to secure high salaries and building a dream career. According to Forbes Advisor (2024) a college degree yields:

- Higher earnings over one's lifetime
- More career options
- Opportunities to gain further credentials and to earn more money
- Access to influential alumni networks
- Recession resilience
- Lower unemployment rates
- Personal growth
- Better health
- Higher likelihood of home ownership and being partnered  
*(married or in a committed relationship)*
- Lower risk of becoming delinquent on debt obligations
- Career satisfaction

75% of students report career networking through Thiel's extensive global alumni network.



THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS THAT MAKE THIEL SPECIAL.

"For some, it's its small size. But for me, and others, it's the personal attention students receive from the faculty and staff that sets the College apart.

When I first started thinking about attending college, I was nervous about how different my learning experience would be from the one I received in high school. I grew up in a small town and attended a small high school. Everyone knew all the teachers, and vice versa—which allowed for every student to feel as if they had a personalized relationship with their teachers.

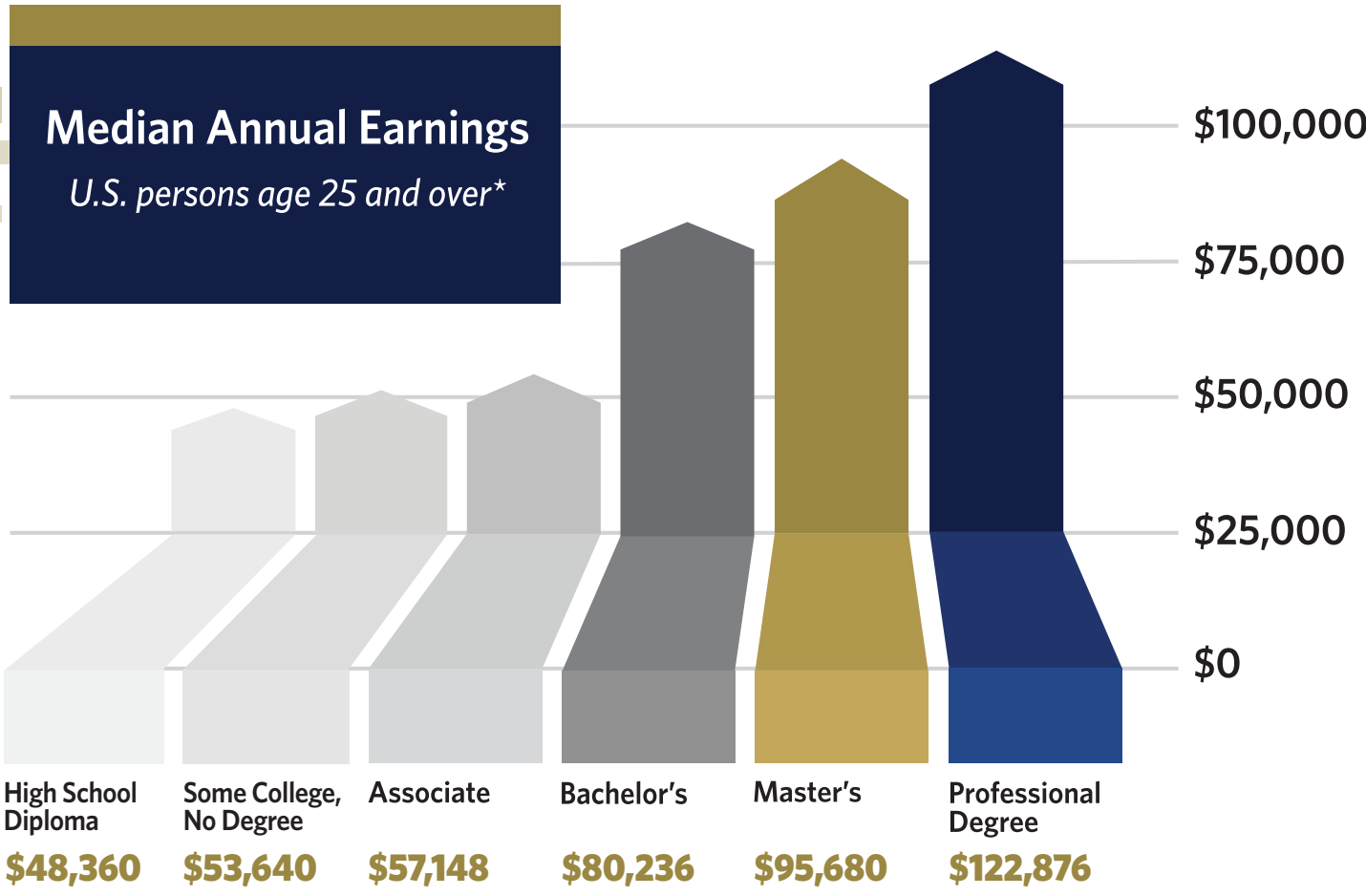
During my first semester at Thiel, I knew I made the right choice about which college to attend. One of my professors saw that I was stressed over an assignment. She took the time to address how I was feeling and helped me feel better about the work I was turning in.

As my time at Thiel continued, I've had more professors who take a similar approach to me and other students. They are interested in our school lives as well as our personal lives. I feel as if I have had the best learning experience possible. Everyone genuinely cares for students and takes time to help in any way they can."

Emily S.

66% of Thiel students benefit from unique internships with local, regional & national companies and institutions.





\* 2024 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

According to *Forbes*, students who graduate with a bachelor's degree often **EARN SIGNIFICANTLY MORE** than peers with only a high school diploma. Think of college as an investment in your future, like planting seeds that will grow into something valuable. It's an investment in a secure future with lower unemployment rates and higher pay - about **\$1 MILLION MORE** over a lifetime.

There is a lot to consider when choosing a college. It's understandable that the cost of college could seem confusing. When you see the published price on the tuition and fees webpage, don't worry! The price you'll end up paying out of pocket is often different and varies from student to student.



The good news is that there are several ways to make college more affordable. Most colleges offer financial aid which comes from different places like the government, the college, or other organizations. In 2024, 98% of Thiel College students received some form of financial aid.





## HOW DOES THIS WORK?

College financial aid goes a long way to help students and families cover higher education expenses such as tuition and fees, room and board, books, and other coursework supplies.

### There are several types of financial aid:

- Grants
- Scholarships
- Federal or private loans
- Work-study and other programs



To make sense of financial aid, Vice President for Enrollment, Student Life, and Athletics Mike McKinney '02, Ed.D. recommends filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or **FAFSA**. *“Filling out the **FAFSA** is an important first step. It will give you a better understanding of your overall cost of education,”* McKinney explained. *“The more you know and understand about the funding process, the more confident you’ll feel.”*

He also recommended filing early. The **FAFSA** portal opens each year on October 1. link: <https://www.thiel.edu/fafsahelp>

At Thiel, students receive award and aid packages that outline the combined **FAFSA** allotments and the institutional awards. This helps families determine their student’s actual out-of-pocket cost.



## ASKING QUESTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEEDS

Although there are many factors to consider when choosing a college, including cost and financial aid packages, many students and families are unsure of where to start.

*“Too often students wonder ‘can I even ask this question?’”* Director of Financial Aid Kim Peters said. *“At Thiel, the answer is always yes. No one should feel like they must figure this out alone.”*

Work maintains that what families hear “on the street” about financial aid can make concerns about funding seem more daunting and complicated than they are.

*“Many families mistakenly think they won’t qualify for aid based solely on income. In fact, many variables come into play,”* Peters said. *“I find that many Thiel families are pleasantly surprised by the outcomes of their aid packages.”*

It’s true that financial aid can seem complex, but asking questions can help minimize the confusion that often surrounds funding college. Peters encourages questions. *“Don’t leave your questions unanswered, getting the right answers will help you see the whole picture and make the idea of paying for college less intimidating.”*

But who can you ask? College admissions counselors and high school counselors are just a couple of good resources for aid-related questions.

**\$4 billion in Pell Grants are unclaimed each year.\***

## MAKING IT ACHIEVABLE WITH DIFFERENT FORMS OF AID

A college degree does pay off. According to *The New York Times*, most degrees do pay for themselves in less than 10 years, and an undergraduate degree is more likely to show a return on investment than no college, a two-year degree, or certificate.

However, a loan is just one way to help pay for college. *“Financial aid is not just student loans; it also includes gift aid like grants and scholarships,”* Work explained. *“Under the financial aid umbrella, financial aid is divided between merit-based and need-based aid as well as gift aid like grants and scholarships and self-help like student loans and work-study.”*

Ultimately, it is up to individual students or families to determine what is financially feasible for their specific situation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

*“If you feel as though your situation is complicated, talk to our financial aid team and have that conversation sooner rather than later,”* McKinney advised. **Getting an expert’s perspective on your unique situation can help minimize any confusion.**



## TYPES OF AID (AND WHAT THEY MEAN)

**SCHOLARSHIPS** are funding that students are not expected to repay. Did someone say, “free money”?

At Thiel, for example, our scholarship program is supported by endowment funds from generous donors who understand the value of a Thiel education and are committed to making your education as accessible as possible.

Scholarships also can come from a variety of sources. There are thousands of civic, corporate, and private organizations that offer scholarship awards ranging from **\$50 TO \$20,000** and more based on residency, academic achievement, or intended field of study.

**NEED-BASED AID** is often determined by **FAFSA** and based on an individual family's prior year income.

- **GRANTS** are usually awarded based on “financial need” and do not need to be repaid. Grants come from several sources including the College, some states, and the federal government.
- **LOANS** are forms of funding that must be repaid along with interest. While the “best” loans are federal loans based on financial need and require the annual completion of the **FAFSA**, there are programs for virtually every family, regardless of income. Many loans do not require repayment while the student is enrolled.

**WORK-STUDY** is a federal program where students earn money for on-campus employment.

**FINANCIAL AID FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS** The College provides significant financial aid to international students. Conditions vary by country so a conversation with Thiel's Financial Aid Office is in order.

**OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS** can provide scholarships and grants to help fund education. These can be based on a variety of factors including academic merit, essays, cultural heritage, place of residence, religion, and more.

## MAKING SENSE OF THE NUMBERS

Understanding how to read your award letter is crucial to getting a complete picture of a financial aid package. At Thiel College, we try to make the letter as clear as possible; there are no hidden fees or loans disguised as grants. The letter offers a breakdown of estimated costs, financial aid eligibility, estimated payment and payment options, important messages about your financial aid, and next steps. Your Admission Counselor will gladly walk you through your package and answer all your questions.

*Thiel College graduates carry less student loan debt than the average American college graduate. “For example, our Class of 2025 graduated with an average of 27% less student debt than the national average\*,” Peters said. One of the College's goals is to make a Thiel education attainable for all academically qualified students.*

## MAKING DECISIONS

When deciding on where to enroll, it's important to have all the information to make an informed decision. That must include a financial aid award letter. Make sure you have all award letters from institutions you applied to before deciding to commit to your institution of choice. If you need help comparing your offers, Thiel is available to help.

**McKinney** advises families to understand their financial situations before committing to a school: “Make sure you have a strong sense of what it means to pay for college and how you're going to pay for it.”

Understanding the types of financial aid will help make those decisions seem less daunting. A college degree is a path toward the completion of countless milestones, achievements, and goals, and planning and understanding financial aid can only help to reinforce the value of a degree.

\*According to Sallie Mae, the average student loan debt was \$38,375



Scan the **QR Tommy** for a list of **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**  
about applying for financial aid at Thiel College.



**THIEL**<sup>™</sup>  

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C O L L E G E

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