

2022
 **College Planning**
Helping Families Re-imagine College

Client Case Studies



Report versus Process

The 5-Step **CAP System™** is very different from other College Planning tools in that it is a *process*, not a *report*. CAP is the 1st digital educational tool that guides students through our '**College 58**' (a series of questions millions of students fail to ask), and parents through the **12-Point Guide**, a series of 'What If' questions to consider *before* spending a dime on college. The objectives of these unique tools are to highlight costly mistakes to avoid, alternatives to consider, and provide instant access to dozens of the latest digital resources to assist in arriving at the best decisions.

After hearing thousands of college-related financial horror stories, we saw the need to create a resource that enlightens, educates, and empowers students, and assist parents in replacing the 'emotional' side of College Planning with the latest data. It also identifies the growing number of exciting new low-cost alternatives to traditional 4-year colleges, as well as creative new paths to tuition-free solutions.

The **College Action Plan (CAP)** helps students learn how to save thousands on college, graduate quicker, and be better prepared for the job market. Their parents and grandparents are then able to see the student's commitment, as well as evaluate essential strategies to protect their financial security.

CAP was designed to help all students – regardless of their age, income level, or ethnic background – so here are four examples from very different clients who shared their stories (after adhering to their requests to edit their personal details and comments). We hope they will inspire you to open your mind to exciting new opportunities as you explore this critical step toward a brighter financial future.

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Case Study #1: Tomas

Tomas and his parents completed five campus visits, did extensive research on each, and compared their financial aid packages. The total cost of the schools he received award letters from all five schools ranged from **\$108,000 – \$225,000**. His parent’s advisor heard about the **CAP System™** and recommended they complete it before making their final decision.

After his parents completed the **12-Point Guide for Parents** with their advisor, and he completed CAP, here are just a few of the highlights they shared about their selection process:

- **Limits:** Tomas’s parents told him they’d only pay **\$16,000/year** or a total of **\$64,000**.
- **SAT:** 4 of the 5 schools are now ‘Test Optional,’ but based on what Tomas learned in CAP, he elected to submit his SAT scores anyway. This helped him qualify for additional Financial Aid.
- **ROI:** After using the tools in CAP, he found the numbers at one of the schools just didn’t work when completing **Personal ROI** in Step 3, so eliminated that option.
- **Financial stability:** When using the essential tools in CAP to help determine the schools’ financial fitness, Tomas immediately eliminate two more of the schools.
- **Costs:** Using the resources in CAP, he was able to compare his award letters and negotiate better prices (**\$12,000/year** less than their offer) at his final school choice.
- **Career:** Participating in one of the Mentorship programs noted in CAP, Tomas found his planned career track in STEM was not right for him, so changed his major to International Finance, with a minor in marketing. He’s really excited about this new direction.
- **Additional Financial Aid:** Tomas used the resources in CAP to access **\$10,000/year** more in ‘free’ Financial Aid, and clearly acknowledged that had his parents not set limits, he wouldn’t have felt the need to apply. He’s motivated to apply for more free funding which could further reduce the cost of his education, but the results are not known at this time.



Conclusion: Tomas and his parents were one of many families who stated they wished they would have completed CAP and the **12-Point Guide for Parents** prior to their campus visits and going through the application process at multiple schools. For them, it would have saved massive amounts of time and over **\$1,750**, because upon completing CAP in roughly 16 hours, Tomas rejected all five of his original choices.

He ultimately selected a small out-of-state private college that met all the key criteria covered in CAP, and by being more informed, the cost will be less than it would be to attend an in-state public university. He’s thrilled and expects to graduate with less than **\$8,500** in student loan debt, which his parents have promised to pay off if he stays on track and graduates in 4 years.

His parents stated their estimated savings could be up to **\$140,000**, and Tomas is so much more committed to his long-term future than he was prior to completing the CAP System™ process.



Case Study #2: Becky

Becky's single mother, Jill, is a Veteran and is now an executive with a pharmaceutical company. She has been saving pretty aggressively for college for her daughter, as well as retirement for herself. However, after a recent financial setback due to COVID, she feels it's only prudent to limit the support she will be able to provide for Becky's schooling. She subscribed to the **CAP System™** to help them find ways to cut college costs.

Here are just a few of the transitions they shared as they completed the process.

- **Career:** Becky originally planned to obtain a Marketing degree, but after going through the CAP System™ – and completing a Mentorship program in Science (a strategy she learned in CAP) – she switched majors to Science Research.
- **College Selection:** Becky initially selected 4 or 5 out-of-state schools where her friends were going, but after researching the costs, non-resident fees, and extra travel expenses, she switched her focus to in-state schools located within 100 miles of home.
- **Elimination:** She ultimately eliminated several 'good' schools for one or more of the following reasons: High tuition costs, they were on the HCM List, showed high debt levels for recent grads, low financial aid levels, poor graduation rates, higher-than-average fees, only offered distance learning (no science labs), or failed to exhibit a strong track record in the STEM field.
- **Veteran Benefits:** After completing her original *College Action Plan*, Becky has since revised it to identify schools and other resources that help Veteran dependents cut costs and qualify for even more financial aid.
- **ROI:** After scholarships (she's applying to more than 10, and will continue to do so every year), Veteran assistance, the GI Bill support, utilizing CLEP and other money-saving strategies, Becky has narrowed her search down to two good in-state schools. She should easily be able to repay her student loan debt if she graduates in 4 years, which is the average for students in both schools.



Becky's most recent version of her *College Action Plan* shows little of the journey she and her mother went through to arrive at the decisions they made, but both strongly stated it was an invaluable process.

Not only is Becky excited to make her final decision over the next few months, but her mother feels she will save a minimum of **\$16,000/year** over the next four years, which will help her stay on track for retirement.



Case Study #3: Faiza

Faiza's family came to America six years ago to help their children have an opportunity for a better financial future. As a first-generation college student, Faiza found the college process very overwhelming here in the U.S. While her school counselor tried to help, her family still felt unprepared for all the decisions they were making about which career fields were best, and what school she should attend.

As an average middle-income family with little saved for college, Faiza will qualify for some financial aid, but could also end up with significant student loan debt. She applied to multiple schools where her friends were going and had already been accepted at four of them when her parents heard about the CAP System. The out-of-pocket costs were going to be \$90,000 to \$148,000 for her degree ... *if* she graduates in four years.

She altered her original plans after completing the 5-Step process in CAP. Here is a simple recap of her decisions:



- **College Marketing Campaign:** Three of the four schools aggressively pursued Faiza because of her minority status. Several students in her graduating class responded to the college marketing campaigns by registering to attend in the coming year. However, when Faiza accessed the resources in CAP, she learned that none of the three were going to be the best choice for her. One is in serious financial trouble and may close before she graduates, another has a high rate of student loan debt for new grads, and the 3rd has a graduation rate of only 26%.
- **Career Options:** Faiza was not sure what to select as a major, so the 4th school suggested she enter with an undeclared major. They stated that more than 60% of their students use that strategy to ensure they have the flexibility to explore their options. After completing CAP, she realized that committing almost **\$30,000/year** was an expensive way to 'find' the best career field for her ... especially when not having a Plan in place could take an additional 1-2 years to obtain her degree.
- **Limits:** After reviewing the **12-Point Plan for Parents**, Faiza's parents stated they would only co-sign a total of **\$30,000** in student loans. This, in addition to the other data she had already gathered (above), immediately motivated Faiza to opt to attend a well-respected community college for her first two years. She plans to access the resources and utilize the strategies covered in CAP to identify the best career field while obtaining her AA degree.

Conclusion: Faiza and her parents stated that completing CAP and the **12-Point Guide for Parents** provided an invaluable new perspective on the entire college planning process today. It helped her focus on priorities, separate sales pitches from documented data, and estimates she will eventually save somewhere between **\$45,000 - \$60,000** to obtain her degree.

They also stated that had she simply decided to attend community college – *without going through CAP* – she would not have learned essential career and college planning strategies that will be invaluable after obtaining her AA degree. She plans to implement several of them while attending community college ... which will definitely place her in a stronger position for a great job offer once she obtains her bachelor's degree.

Case Study #4: Jacob

Jacob's parent's story is one of thousands of positive examples we've heard from those who attended LFE's workshops over the past two decades. This strategy is now in the CAP System™.

It opens the discussion of limiting the total contribution parents or grandparents will make toward college. It might be in the number of years they'll contribute, or the total amount they'll provide. This contribution not only includes any savings they may use, but the total amount they'll co-sign for student loans. We often don't hear the final results of this strategy until the students graduate, and since the CAP System™ is too new to have current stories, we thought you might find one family's story from five years ago helpful.

Jacob's parents worked hard to save **\$140,000** in a 529 Plan for each of their 3 children, and had originally planned to make the entire amount available to each student ... before they learned the benefits of setting limits (just one of the many money-saving strategies covered in the CAP System™).

After discussing options with their advisor, they elected to limit the total each student can spend in their 529 Plan to **\$95,000**. If they want to attend schools that cost more, or take longer than anticipated to graduate, his parents will not co-sign any loans. Currently, all 3 children either have already or are completing college at or under **\$95,000**.

Setting limits will ultimately allow Jacob's parents to use an additional **\$78,000** (after the taxes and penalties they'll pay for withdrawing these funds from a tax-advantaged educational savings plan) for their retirement goals. It has helped Jacob and his siblings take more responsibly for their college decisions and provided a stronger financial future for their parents.

