

MARIA: Welcome back to College Bound Notre Dame admissions podcast. We're super excited to talk about financial aid with you today.

This will be our last episode focusing specifically on the application. Before we move our kind of “Why Notre Dame” section and what it's like to be a student on campus. I'm Maria Finan. I'm a double Domer at Notre Dame. I studied English and was a European studies minor. And I'm super excited to have my co-host introduce himself and our special guest today as well.

MATT: Yes. Thank you, Maria. My name is Matt Greene. I am also an admissions counselor in the undergraduate admissions office. I am a Notre Dame grad. I graduate in 2016. I studied American studies while I was on campus and we, as Maria just mentioned, are going to be talking about financial aid and our merit scholarship process. That is the main topic for today's episode. And it's not just going to be Maria and myself speaking today.

We have brought in a very special guest. And I want to have our special guest introduce himself. So, Zach...

ZACH: Hey! Thanks for having me Maria and Matt. My name is Zach Klonsinski. I am in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I'm starting my third year in the office. I'm a graduate of Notre Dame in 2017. Originally from Belgrade, Montana. While on Notre Dame's campus, I studied history with minors in business economics and journalism. And do I have it right that I am the first ever guest on the College Bound podcast?

MATT: That is correct, Zach.

ZACH: I am honored, flattered, so thank you so much for having me.

MATT: Well we are very honored to have you be our first guest, Zach. With our financial process, would you mind talking about our two main financial aid terms or phrases you might hear, which are need-blind and then demonstrate financial need?

ZACH:

Yes, basically need-blind means that when we're reading a student's application we know nothing about that student's financial situation unless the student chooses to share something in their application. So when we're reading need-blind that means that we're not making decisions based on a student's ability or inability to pay. And that situation does not factor into our admissions decisions one way or another. We then also meet 100 percent of the family's demonstrated financial need for domestic students.

We're using the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, as well as the CSS Profile, which is run by the College Board, the same organization that does the SAT, and then we also will look at some of your family's tax documents. Our Office of Financial Aid will put all that together, look at it and say, this is kind of the family's estimated contribution, and then basically everything between that estimate and the total cost of attendance at Notre Dame is the family's demonstrated financial need and Notre Dame is committed to meeting 100 percent of that number.

MATT: That's fantastic. Zach, thank you and you mentioned the financial aid office doing great work in putting together the financial aid packages. Could you describe for everybody what a financial aid package might look like?

ZACH: Yeah, so typically a financial aid package from Notre Dame, while we do have families reapply every year just in case your family situation changes, but your financial aid package from Notre Dame, also known as your financial aid notification or FAN, is going to be composed largely of scholarships and grants. There may also be some work study if you're eligible for federal work study programs and then we do offer loans as part of our packages as well. That is an option that you can elect to have. I do want to be very clear that the median need-based University scholarship for those students, first-year students entering in the fall of 2019, the median need-based University scholarship was \$42,600.

I do want to say the average debt for a Notre Dame graduate after four years of a Notre Dame education is just under \$22,500 after four years combined. So combine that with the median starting salary of \$65,000 at Notre Dame you can see very quickly that while this is an investment in yourself and an investment that your family is making in something that is very important to think through, but an investment in Notre Dame can very quickly start to pay off for you as well. And then also love to note that the financial aid budget actually in recent years has grown at three times the rate of tuition at Notre Dame.

So even though tuition has increased our financial aid budget has kept growing even faster than that too. So we're really, really excited to be able to make Notre Dame as affordable as possible for as many people as possible too.

MATT: Zach, that's fantastic news for our families that are looking into financial aid. So for those families, and you've talked a little bit about the opportunities that are there on a financial aid package, what are some of the deadlines and documents that are needed so that families can get their correct amount of financial aid?

ZACH: Yeah so I've hit on that a little bit already with the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, if you are eligible to fill that out, as well as the CSS Profile and some tax documents as well. I say that because Notre Dame does treat undocumented students and students with DACA status as a domestic student but obviously those students and their families are not able to fill out the FAFSA. In that case we'll just have you fill out the CSS Profile. I should also mention that this process I'm describing is for domestic students and for domestic students, at Notre Dame we consider those U.S. citizens, U.S. permanent residents, as well as those undocumented and or DACA U.S. residents as well.

To be counted eligible for financial aid, all you have to do is apply for it and apply to the University. We look at everything and make that determination through our financial aid office. Restrictive Early Action—that deadline for applying to the University is November 1st. The priority deadline for financial aid, the FAFSA and the CSS Profile, is November 15th.

So for Regular Decision, that's a January 1st application deadline. For financial aid, the priority deadline is February 15th. I do want to make sure that those are just priority deadlines in that if you hit them you will hear from our financial aid office sooner with your financial aid notification.

It's not a matter of “if I don't apply for financial aid by November 15, if I have applied Restrictive Early Action to Notre Dame, that I'm somehow going to miss out on need-based funding. Because we're still

committed to meeting that need. It might just mean that at that point it's going to be on a rolling basis that they get those decision—that you might not receive your financial aid package as quickly as if you had hit that priority deadline. So priority in terms of when you receive the decision not priority in terms of the funding available to you.

MATT: Thank you so much for that information Zach. And you talked a little bit about domestic students and the policies that were put in place there, but can you talk a little bit about financial aid that could be available for international applicants?

ZACH: Yeah. So for our international applicants we do have to read need-aware and that is when we are kind of making the final decisions. A family's ability to pay can factor into our admissions decision. And we do have some financial aid available for international applicants as well though. What you have to do is you have to fill out the CSS profile as well as some certification of finances forms kind of proving with bank statements or salaries of your parents that you have the funds available to come to the University of Notre Dame and to make sure if you are applying for financial aid as an international student you need to do all four years upfront.

And if you apply to Notre Dame and not and do not apply for financial aid, no financial aid will be available to you at any point during your four years. So we really want to emphasize that you be very upfront, very realistic with what you are submitting to Notre Dame. We do have to read need-aware, but we do have some financial aid available for those students who do have some demonstrated need. So more information can be found on our financial aid website under our international students section. So I'd highly encourage you to check that out. It will also give you some examples of documents that are used to help fill out—for example the certification of finances.

MATT: Could you describe for us what families could do to estimate their cost of attendance at Notre Dame?

ZACH: Yes, definitely. Right on our financial aid website is actually a couple charts that we're laying out based on parental income kind of what a financial aid package from Notre Dame might look like. Certainly parental income is not the only thing that our financial aid office is looking at but that's a nice quick at-a-glance. But two tools I want to highlight, and I included these in a blog post to accompany this this podcast episode so please feel free to use that as a resource as well. We've got MyIntuition. Notre Dame is one of 67 schools across the country that is part of this program.

It is seven questions long. You probably won't need any tax information. You may not even need your parents are to be around to answer some of the questions. And at the end of those seven questions you're going to get an estimate of what a financial aid package might look like at Notre Dame. And again estimate is the key word there. Obviously in seven questions we cannot program everything that we're looking at into you know seven questions and so this is an estimate. And please keep that in mind.

One other very in-depth tool that we have is the Net Price Calculator. Actually every school across the country that receives federal funding is required to have a Net Price Calculator tool. It will take more time and tax information to get through but, again, because it's going to take more time or require some tax information, you're going to get a more accurate estimate. But, again, keep in mind it's just an estimate still. But those two tools, MyIntuition and the Net Price Calculator tool, both of which have links in my

blog post to take you right to those again their estimates. They're a great way to see “what does a financial aid package and learning might that look like for me and my family?”

MARIA: Thanks so much for that, Zach. I know the financial aid process can be kind of confusing for students and their families and I really think that's a great overview. I'm going to shift us a little bit to talking about merit and those types of scholarships since we get a lot of questions about what is available. How can I be considered for it? Do I need to fill anything out? So, Zach, would you mind talking about how does our merit process work at Notre Dame knowing that it's a little bit different that it works at some other schools?

ZACH: Yes. So at Notre Dame all you have to do to be considered eligible for a merit scholarships is apply to the University. Your application to Notre Dame serves as your initial application for the Notre Dame Scholars Program which oversees all of our merit scholarships. If you want to be very up front, I think the total number of students in each first-year class that receives a merit scholarship and earning maybe around 5 percent is only about 3 percent of the total aid that we award every year, so these are very competitive very selective programs. Which is why we want to make sure that everyone is considered for them. But you're not putting in a lot of extra time on separate applications for these few programs.

MARIA: Yeah, I think that's really great. And we've had questions about this, but applicants do not need to submit test scores to be considered for our merit process. So we really want to emphasize—you do not have to submit a test score for our merit process.

Zach, would you mind walking us through, if a student is selected as a semifinalist, kind of, what does that process look like? What is the timeline for that process as well?

ZACH: Semifinalists will be notified in late January, there may be a couple of rounds of notification so between late January early February, you'll only be invited to fill out this additional application...Previously these have had video responses to questions as well as maybe additional essays and then from there the Notre Dame Scholars' Program will select finalists who actually come to campus and in non-corona times to actually do the final interviews right on campus. So what usually happens that weekend is usually early to mid-March, so shortly thereafter maybe a week two weeks, most finalists will then receive a kind of notification of whether or not they received a merit scholarship to Notre Dame.

So I appreciate you having me on today Matt and Maria. But I do have a question for you now. The students that we admit are highly qualified they have a lot of great options and some of them may receive better scholarship opportunities than they may receive from Notre Dame. But why should a student invest in a Notre Dame education?

MARIA: Kind of reflecting on my own Notre Dame experience. I did take loans to be able to afford to come to Notre Dame. That was something that I had to choose to invest in myself and I always describe it kind of as the best investment I've ever made for me. I really think of it not as a four-year decision, I mean, but a forever decision. Notre Dame is one of those experiences, one of those places that really stays with you. No matter where I go I feel like people want to talk to me about Notre Dame. It's just such a formative experience, not just in the classroom but kind of in terms of who you will be as a person. And I don't know that a lot of universities can kind of really match that aspect.

Zach thank you so much for joining us and sharing all of that information about financial aid and marriage. It's been really great to have you as our guest this week.

Next week it'll just be Matt and I back to talk to you about Notre Dame traditions and lore and some of those fun legends that exist on campus.

In the meantime you can visit our website, or if you'd like to connect with us, feel free to send us a message on Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat @ndadmissions. You can also follow Notre Dame Admissions on Facebook.