



How to Cash Flow College and Graduate Debt Free

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This book was written for one purpose: to help you pay for college.

Whether you're a parent looking to properly equip your student, a working professional trying to move up in your company, or a late teen trying to get through college on your own dime, **this book will equip you with the basic knowledge and tools you need to earn your bachelor's degree entirely debt free.**

If you've done any college cost-cutting research, you know the basics—go to a less expensive school, don't live on campus, pick a degree with a high ROI, look for scholarships, and make sacrifices in order to achieve an affordable education. You may have even looked into Tuition Assistance and asked your employer to help pay for your education.

That's a great start, but those traditional methods barely scratch the surface of saving money on college.

In this ebook, we're going to show you the tools and resources we've used to help more than 13,000 students pursue their degrees debt free. In fact, our students can **graduate for less than \$20,000 in total by using the cost-reducing tactics we're about to discuss.** Compare that number to the estimated \$46,760 price tag of your average in-state public college.¹

Buckle up. We're about to cut your college costs in half.

1 . C. (2016). Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2016-17. Retrieved March 20, 2017, from <https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2016-17>
Estimate includes Public 4-Year In-State Tuition and Fees and Books and Supplies

UNBUNDLING COLLEGE

Traditional college tries to be your ultimate one-stop degree shop. From its inception in the early 1600s until the late 20th century, that made sense. Back then, bringing students and teachers together under one roof was the most economic way to educate large groups.

However, the arrival of the 21st century and advent of the internet turned education on its head. Now, maintaining large campuses for students and teachers to gather is more costly than the modern alternatives.

But if you want to cut your college costs in half, you have to change your outdated mindset. Don't think about "buying" a degree from a college. Think about building your degree from the ground up, much like building a house.

Let me explain...

If you want to build a house, you're going to need a lot of supplies—everything from a concrete foundation to that perfect cream-colored light switch cover. Would you expect to find every resource for your project at a single store? Of course not.

You'll probably purchase drywall from a different store than your flooring tiles. You may not find the exact color of paint you want at the same store that sells window frames. And maybe two stores sell the exact carpeting you want, but one offers it wholesale—a clear winner.

It's the same for your degree. Taking every course you need from one school is often one of the most expensive ways to graduate. What if, instead of relying on a single university for your entire degree, you shopped around the world for the best prices on the best courses to support your future?

We call this unbundling your degree. It's the process of finding affordable courses that fit your degree from wherever you can and transferring that credit into one school for graduation. **Unbundling is the most effective way to save tens of thousands of dollars on your degree.**

Why Unbundling Works

According to Radio Open Source, only 27% of your college tuition directly pays for academic instruction.² 7% funds other academic support (administrators, deans, libraries, etc.) **The other 66% of your tuition money supports everything else** your college invests in, everything from scholarships to research funding to equine sports teams (yes, those exist) to building and maintaining campus facilities.

That means if your course costs \$1,170 (based on that 2016-2017 in-state average we quoted earlier), only about \$400 of it is actually paying for your education. The rest is supporting school functions programs you may never (and likely won't) benefit from.

This is where unbundling via transfer credit comes in.

Most colleges accept 60-90 transfer credits (up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of your degree). The remaining 30-60 credits required for your 120-credit degree are called a **Residency Requirement**, and these courses must be taken at the school you plan to graduate from.³

The more credit you can earn outside of your college, the more money you'll save.

“But why?” You ask. “I still have to pay for that credit. I'm just paying someone else now.”

Yes, you do still have to pay for that credit. But with a little searching, **you can find transfer credit for significantly less than you would pay at a state college—as little as \$160 per course in some cases.**

And every frugal dollar you spend pays directly for your education.

2. Lyndon, C., & Frank, T. (2014, May 26). Where Does All That Money Go? Retrieved March 20, 2017, from <http://radioopensource.org/college-budgets/>

3. C. (n.d.). How does college transfer & the course credit assessment process work? Retrieved March 20, 2017, from <http://www.collegetransfer.net/AskCT/Howdoesthecoursecredittransferprocesswork/tabid/2411/default.aspx>

HOW TO UNBUNDLE YOUR DEGREE

Step 1: Research Transfer Policies



Earning credit that doesn't transfer is a waste of time and money. If you want to avoid wasting money, **you must first ensure all your credit will transfer** into your desired school.

According to a 2014 report by the NCES, nearly 40% of transfer students lose almost every credit they earn (an average of 26.6 credits, or a full year of college).⁴ Credit transfer is tricky business!

Every institution holds different educational standards and different requirements for degree completion. They don't accept all credit equally, and this is where most of the issues surrounding transfer credit arise.

Accreditation is how colleges measure the academic standard of their course material. There are several levels of accreditation, but **regional accreditation** is the highest. It's the accreditation of every state and Ivy League school.

So it's important to focus on taking regionally accredited courses, as they are the most widely accepted form of credit.

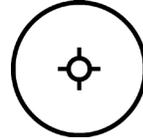
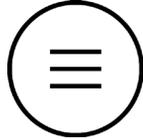
But, there's more to unbundling than just enrolling in regionally accredited courses. When dealing with transfer credit, it's important to remember **your final college has final say over whether something does or does not count toward your degree.**

4. N. (2014, August). Transferability of Postsecondary Credit Following Student Transfer or Coenrollment Statistical Analysis Report. Retrieved March 20, 2017, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014163.pdf> Page 24

Technically, it's up to your college's registrar to decide how your course transfers (a process called **articulation**). However, your school's transfer policy is what your registrar will reference for the articulation process. **Transfer Policies** explain everything about how your school accepts transfer credit, and should be available online. **Knowing your school's transfer policy before completing any transfer credit is the best way to ensure your credit will actually transfer when the time comes.**

Understanding and negotiating transfer policies requires knowledge of course codes and university standards, and the process usually isn't completed without a call (or five) to the registrar's office. The good news is, you don't have to do it all yourself. Unbound can help you navigate all these transfer credit negotiations, and if you already have credit to transfer, we can [**audit your transcripts for free**](#) to help you find a school that will accept most (if not all) of that credit, saving you thousands of dollars.

Step 2: Build a Plan of Attack



Once you know what degree you want, which college you're going to graduate from, and what credit you can transfer, it's time to build your plan of attack. This plan is the foundation of your entire degree. It's important to choose exactly what courses you'll take, when, from where, before you start earning credit. This way you can check transfer policies and get a picture of what kind of budget your degree will require.

120 Credits Make a Degree

The vast majority of bachelor's degrees are composed of 120 credits, with most semester-long courses totalling 3 credits. (So your whole degree will consist of roughly 40 courses.)

60 of these credits are "general education" credits: basic maths, sciences, social studies, and the like. These are standard courses every student is required to take, no matter what their major is. Because of that, these courses are the easiest to transfer into your college, and they're also the easiest on your budget.

6-18 of these credits (depending on your major) are "electives." You can choose any course you're interested in as elective credit, as long as it transfers into your college. That freedom makes this section another easy one to transfer, and another easy place to save money.

The final section is known as your "area of study." These are the courses that align with the name of your degree. If you're a communications major, they will be communication courses. Business majors require business courses, etc. This section is the hardest to transfer. Often these courses are the most intensive ones, and make up the bulk of the residency requirement we talked about earlier. That means most of these courses will be completed at your college, not transferred in.

Finding Affordable Transfer Credit

There are 3 major categories to consider when finding affordable transfer credit for your degree:

#1: Community College

Community college is a well known way to save money on your degree. Courses taken at a community college are famously more affordable than those at a university. Why? Community colleges have far fewer “extras” to support, so they can get afford a lower price.

Earning the first portion of your degree in community college can knock several hundred dollars off the price tag, and it’s a common tactic even for traditional students.

However, it has clear downsides.

Due to differing standards, transferability can be questionable between community colleges and universities. Most of the students who lose transfer credit are coming from community college.

Community colleges have limited options to offer a student, since they are still only one campus (and a small one at that).

Even though this credit is cheaper than universities, it still follows the outdated traditional model—lectures, inflexible class times, commuting, and fluff homework assignments aren’t valuable enough to justify taking time away from your job, family, or other important endeavors.

So, let’s move on to...

#2: Online Course Providers

Online courses can be hundreds of dollars cheaper than on-site university courses, even less than community college too. (Again—the fewer frills, the less you pay.)

There aren't many downsides to online courses. You can pay as you go, purchasing only what you can afford right now. They can fit easily into a busy schedule, since they don't have specific class times and provide everything you need online. The most affordable online courses will be entirely self-paced—just you and the material, no professor required (test and quizzes can be proctored online). This allows the price of these courses to drop by hundreds more dollars.

#3: Credit by Exam

The most economic way to earn transfer credit is to just skip the class entirely.

Using credit by exam, you can “test out” of subjects you've already mastered. These exams are the equivalent of college finals. They're not easy, they're not a way to “cheat” the system, but they are incredibly powerful tools for the frugal student.

Often the best way to prepare for one of these exams is by using a fluff-free study book that won't run you more than \$30. This material will teach you everything required to understand the subject without wasting your time. If you need more help, it's as simple as signing up for online flashcards or finding a used college textbook at a resale bookstore.

Considering these exams usually total \$130 a pop, they're a no-brainer for the self-directed learner.

You can find highly transferrable, self-paced courses for as little as **\$477 per course** through Unbound. (That's 40% lower than the national average for an in-state, public institution.)

Here are some of the most popular credit by exam providers:

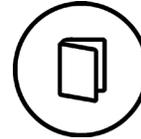
CLEP

DSST

TECEP

By filling your degree plan with inexpensive coursework like this, you can easily reduce the total cost of your degree to as little as \$18,000.

Step 3: Cash Flow Coursework



Once you've [worked with a professional to build your Degree Plan](#), it's time to start cash flowing.

The key to cash flowing is simple: only work on the coursework your budget can handle right now.

If this means enrolling in one course at a time, that's fine! Enroll in that course, work hard, and save up for your next. Many students actually find completing one course at a time is more effective than taking on a whole semester's-worth of credit simultaneously. The fewer courses vying for your attention, the more energy you have to learn. As a result, most of our students master material faster than average, decreasing the total time they spend working on their degrees.

“Most people seem to be able to magically find money when they feel it's a life-or-death situation. ‘Magically’ means that you do a budget. You make a written game plan where every dollar has a name before the month begins. When you write down every dollar... you're going to have an aha moment that feels like you got a raise. If you're normal, you waste a bunch of money because you don't budget and have a written plan.” - **Dave Ramsey**⁵

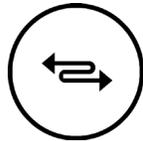
No matter how much you're making now, you probably have more wiggle room than you think. You don't have to find an extra \$1,000 a month to afford college, just make a budget and save what you can.

A little awareness goes a long way.

5. Ramsey, Dave (2015, July). “Dave Ramsey: First Step to Paying off Debt Is Increasing Income | Money.” Dallas News. The Dallas Morning News, 19 July 2015. Web. 21 Mar. 2017, from <http://www.dallasnews.com/business/money/2015/07/19/dave-ramsey-first-step-to-paying-off-debt-is-increasing-income>

Cash flowing your coursework is simple. But don't get so comfortable that you pay for the courses you can afford and slack on saving each month. Once you transfer all this credit into your college, you won't have as much financial freedom as you do now. So use this time to prepare for the pricier portion of your degree, which is coming up next.

Step 4: Transfer and Graduate



It's time to enroll in your institution, transfer everything you've earned thus far, and run the final stretch toward graduation.

This will be your most expensive step, as you will be faced with some of those hefty enrollment fees. But since you've already completed up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of your degree independently, those fees will be significantly less daunting than if you were starting from scratch and enrolling for the next 4-6 years.

And since you were able to save hundreds of dollars on every course you're transferring in, you hopefully put away a little money to, make this final stretch just as affordable as the first.

Applying for the college you want to graduate from is pretty straightforward. Just follow the instructions on their website. Most are quite friendly to transfer students. After all, the fact that you've completed so much coursework on your own proves you're a good candidate, and the fact that you're transferring in at the end of your degree means you'll help raise their graduation rates (colleges like having high graduation rates).

During the process, you'll be asked to gather transcripts from your various sources of credit-earning. Fortunately, the plan you made earlier should specify where you earned all your credit, so you know exactly who to contact for those transcripts. And if you chose to enlist help, [this is a conversation we'll help you navigate.](#)

Once you've enrolled and negotiated all your transfer credit, you're last steps are to simply purchase your final courses from your college, complete them, and apply for graduation.

Your Degree: Unbundled

That's it! Using this process, you'll be able to significantly reduce your cost of college, cash-flow coursework, and complete your degree according to your budget and schedule.

You won't need to find scholarships or apply for grants. You won't need to save for years, and—most importantly—you won't need a single penny of borrowed money to afford your degree.

Unbundling is the future of higher education. The old model is simply too bloated and too expensive to last. Don't even think about wasting your precious time and money pursuing your degree the old way.

Start unbundling right now, and complete your degree debt free. We'll help you get started.

GETTING STARTED

If you're interested in unbundling your degree, your very first step is to contact us at Unbound.

We're transfer credit experts. Helping students save money by transferring credit is what we do all day, every day. **We've worked with thousands of students and over 300 colleges, and 98% of our students graduate debt free.**

We can help you too.

Start with a Free Degree Plan.

Just like we discussed earlier, your Degree Plan will outline your college experience—what classes to take, when to take them, where to find them, and how to transfer all this credit into an accredited college to earn your degree.

This plan will be tailored to your background and your goals. Do you want to graduate quickly? Save as much money as possible? Keep your study schedule flexible? Graduate from a particular college? Do you already have credit you want to use? Your advisor takes all that into account to create a plan that's optimized for you.

And it's absolutely free! We'll help you calculate exactly how much time and money you can save through us before you make any final decisions.

Your Degree Plan will use all of your existing credits (if applicable) and be customized for your school, degree, and course preferences.

Your **Degree Plan** will use all of your existing credits (if applicable) and be customized for your school, degree, and course preferences.

BS Business Administration

Information Literacy		6/6 Credits	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Introduction to Literature ENGL 102 Lumerit Course	3.0 Credit	\$477 Cost
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Western Civilization I HIEU 201 CLEP	3.0 Credit	\$80 Cost

Math, Science & Technology		6/9 Credits	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Principles of Statistics MAT 201 Lumerit Course	3.0 Credit	\$477 Cost
<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Science ENVR 215 Lumerit Course	3.0 Credit	\$597 Cost

Major Core		0/42 Credits	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Finance BUSI 400 Liberty University Online	3.0 Credit	\$995 Cost
<input type="checkbox"/>	International Business BUSI 303 Liberty University Online	3.0 Credit	\$995 Cost
<input type="checkbox"/>	Macroeconomics ECON 214 Lumerit Course	3.0 Credit	\$477 Cost

[Click here for a free Degree Plan](#)

Then earn affordable **transfer credit**.

The specific coursework you'll complete through Unbound will align with the most cost-saving options we discussed in this book:

Affordable Online Courses

We offer our own line of flexible, online college courses for a fraction of the list price. (As I mentioned earlier, since we don't have the same overhead a traditional college would, **we can afford to pass those savings directly to you, the student.**)

You'll have access to these courses with just a few clicks through your online portal.

And if we don't offer the specific course you want, we'll help you find it elsewhere. Over the past 13 years, we've curated a catalog of over 36,000 affordable college courses from various universities and institutions. This ensures you will always find a course that perfectly fits your college and degree while still saving you hundreds of dollars.

Credit by Exam

We're **big fans** of affordable credit, and with an exam like this costing about \$160 per exam, it's one of the more affordable and efficient credit-earning options on the market. If you're a good test taker, we'll add these exams into your Degree Plan and provide you with all the support and resources you need to absolutely crush them.

Your Student Success Team will help you along the way.

Your success coach will assist you by phone throughout your college experience. If you're feeling stuck, a quick call with your coach will get you back on your feet. They can help you diagnose productivity issues, keep you accountable for your academic goals, make sure you're taking the right classes at the right time, help you navigate college transfer policies, and provide practical advice for any situation.

You can schedule as many coaching calls as you need through an online scheduling app. Each call lasts 15 minutes, encouraging you and your coach focus on solving one hurdle at a time so you can get back on track as quickly as possible.

And if you have questions about things like **replacing courses, changing majors, retaking tests, or requesting transcripts, your Student Success Team is ready to help.** Call or send in a chat anytime for speedy assistance.

Transfer and graduate debt free.

At the end of your time with Unbound, your coach will help you transfer all the credit you've earned into your college for graduation. They'll help you navigate the entire process, so you can rest assured you're not missing any steps.

Our priority at Unbound is to take the stress out of college and **help you earn your degree as quickly, efficiently, and inexpensively as possible** so you can put your degree behind you and start tackling your other life goals.

YOUR NEW COST OF COLLEGE

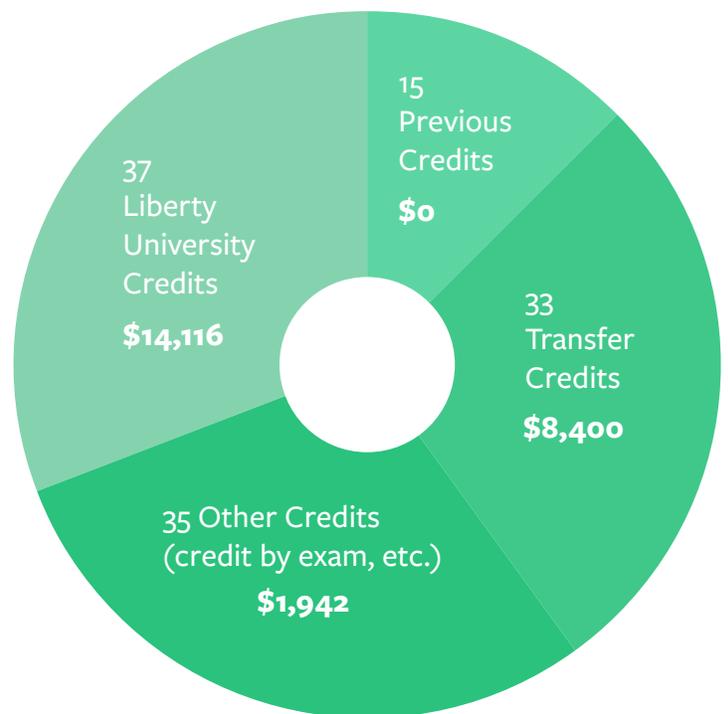
We've mentioned many times that unbundling your degree with the help of Unbound will save you thousands of dollars. But what will it actually cost? Where does all that money go?

This is a sample cost breakdown for a degree in Early Childhood Education from Liberty University. Assuming this student already has 15 credits under her belt, we've calculated the most cost-effective way for her to complete this degree. Unbound students can earn their entire degrees for between \$20,000 and \$30,000, depending on the degree. That's half the price of a traditional college degree from your local state school.

Early Childhood Education Liberty University



Degree Total: \$40,200



Degree Total: \$24,458

Estimated savings with Unbound

\$21,742

In addition to that, by taking most of their courses outside of the college system, Unbound students learn as quickly or slowly as they like. By choosing flexible course options, they can fit college around their lives, eliminating wasted time (commuting or listening to bloated lectures). By taking fluff-free courses or credit by exam, our students complete college courses much faster than the average college student.

In fact, most **Unbound students graduate in 2-3 years** while holding down full-time jobs, taking care of their families, or spending their time volunteering.

Unbundling college is more than saving money on your degree. It's taking control of your education, making it work for you and no one else.

Interested in becoming one of the thousands of Lumerit Scholars who are saying “no” to college debt? [Click here to sign up for a free Degree Plan](#) and find out exactly how much you will save on college.

GOOD LUCK!

About the Author



Abigail Endsley is passionate about books, music, art, and people. When not chasing her newest creative project or belting show tunes, she spends her time empowering others to achieve their goals.

A former Unbound Student Counselor, she has advised hundreds of college students, helping them make the best college choice for them, their goals, and their futures.

Abigail lives and works in sunny San Antonio, Texas, which she insists is the best place in the world despite its distinct lack of “real” trees.