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## Ways to Foot the Bill For Graduate School

By Jennifer Sterling

From [The Wall Street Journal Online](#)

Before the academic year begins, it's time to bone up on changes to U.S. financial aid regulations. This year, the interest rates on Federal education loans increased and the two biggest federal student loan programs, Stafford and PLUS, switched from variable rates to fixed interest rates.

**WHAT TO DO:** Despite the rate increase, federally guaranteed loans still usually carry the lowest rates, says Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of [FinAid.org](#). Most students can apply. But the annual limit on Stafford loans for graduates or professionals is \$18,500. So if law or medical school is in your future, you'll need additional loans. Discounts can be found through bank programs, like [Citibank's Student Loan Corp.](#), or [state guarantee agencies](#). [MyRichUncle](#), a national student loan company, offers [upfront discounts](#). Loan [calculators](#) can help you compare discounts or figure out how much to borrow. Grad PLUS loans are generally cheaper than private education loans, which carry variable rates. CollegeJournal.com can offers [advice](#) about loan shopping.

### STUDENT DEBT

*Average level of debt to pay for graduate education, based on data from the 2003-2004 academic year.*

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS	PERCENT BORROWING	CUMULATIVE DEBT
Total	60.1 %	\$37,067
Master's Degree	58.4%	\$26,895
Doctoral Degree	51.0%	\$49,007
Professional Degree	86.5%	\$82,688

MBA	53.0%	\$35,525
PhD	40.0%	\$36,917
EdD	53.4%	\$49,050
Law (LLB or JD)	87.7%	\$70,933
Medicine	95.0%	\$113,661

Source: *Finaid.org*

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