The cost of a college education is one of the best investments a person can make. Statistics show that the average college graduate earns $1 million more over the course of his or her lifetime than a high school graduate does.

About half of Eastern Connecticut State University’s students are the first in their families to attend college, and most come from families of middle income or less. Many Eastern students are paying all or nearly all the costs of their education themselves.

Higher education costs have increased by 439 percent since 1982. A recent study found that college tuition and fees increased 439 percent from 1982 to 2007, adjusted for inflation, while median family income rose 147 percent. *

At public institutions, state appropriations per student declined from 2002 to 2005.

The net cost of sending a student to college last year amounted to 28 percent of the median family income for a four-year public university, and 76 percent of the median family income for a four-year private university.

Families in the lowest 20 percent of income pay 55 percent of the family’s income for a local public university, up from 39% in 1999.

The percentage of family income needed to pay for college in Connecticut was 33 percent in 2006 (twice that of the top state’s in the National Report Card on Education), and 85 percent for families in the lowest 20 percent of family income, two-thirds higher than the national average.

Students are paying more of the total cost of their education. From 2002 to 2006, the share of educational costs represented by student tuition rose from just over one-third to nearly one-half at public four-year institutions.

Student borrowing has more than doubled in the last decade. *

Eighty-five percent of current Eastern applicants say they will need to apply for financial aid next year, an increase from this year’s figures.

*Indicates information taken from a report issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, a nonpartisan organization that promotes access to higher education.