CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2011 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s)	Project Number
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Project Title

From Cradle to College: Which College Savings Plan Is Most Effective?

Abstract

Objectives/Goals

The objective is to help parents cope with the ever increasing tuition rates by determining which college savings plan--the aggressive, conservative, fixed income, or prepaid tuition - would result in the most earnings if they started saving while their child was young. It is also to determine which western state has the best plan.

Methods/Materials

Performance data of each of the western states' college savings plans was collected from collegesavings.org and inputted into Microsoft Excel. From each state, the various plans were separated by aggressive, conservative, and fixed income to find average earnings for each plan in each of the western states. A case study was created taking into account expenses from each state using an imaginary person who will save the same monthly amount in all five different plans for 10 years. Bar graphs were created to compare data.

Results

The aggressive plan in Arizona earned the most money, followed by the conservative plan in Idaho. This was followed by the fixed income plan in Arizona with prepaid being the less desirable of all and only offered in Washington.

Conclusions/Discussion

The hypothesis that the prepaid tuition plan would be the most effective was proven wrong, and it was even found out that only one western state offered it. Based on these results and the research information that one does not need to live in or attend a college in the state of their plan, a parent can understand that by enrolling in an aggressive plan in Arizona while their child is still young gives them the best chance of having enough tuition ready for their child by the time they are old enough to attend college.

Summary Statement

This project finds out which college savings plan and western state have the highest earnings.

Help Received

Computer teacher contacted bank for performance data of states not listing this information on the website.