

Middle-Income Families Needing More Help With Costs of College

IN PAST generations, families saved money to buy a house, or a car, or to take a long-anticipated vacation trip.

Today's families probably own a house, two or more cars and take trips often, but they may need to save money even more diligently than their forefathers, if they expect to send their offspring to college.

A financial counseling firm in Virginia calculates that if inflation continues, as expected, a child now 10 years old will need \$27,270 to go through a four-year course at a state university or \$47,720 at a private college. His baby brother might need twice that much when he gets there.

Along with this depressing news are some dark outlook reports on jobs available for the current year's crop of college graduates. These are based, primarily, upon frustrations graduates of previous years have encountered in trying to

enter the world of business or to crack professional circles.

One example cited tells of a 1976 graduate who said he had worked in sales, paralegal work, selling insurance and as a hospital aid, without finding work in his field.

Such varied experience could be an asset in the future. Many young people go through high school and college without becoming involved in the world of work or learning facts about earning a living. Numerous successful business people say they received valuable education by working a variety of jobs.

College costs aren't the only victim of educational inflation. Allegations have been made that some institutions have lowered standards to admit less-qualified students and have inflated grades to permit them to graduate.

Such practices do not impress prospective employers who are looking for people who know what to do and are willing to work in spite of their diplomas and degrees.

One job recruiter stated that over-grading sometimes "misleads us to invite someone who isn't on the ball." Others said they rely more heavily on references from previous employers, even if students were hired only for a season or two.

The high cost of higher education also has led to abuses of federal aid to students. The new secretary of health, education and welfare has launched a drive against leakage, cheating and "double-dipping" and is pushing for repayment of loans.

The federal loan program began in 1968 and a recent estimate indicates that by next year, total amount in default will exceed \$1 billion, many times normal commercial ratios.

At the same time, requirements are being loosened to provide more aid for middle-income families. For a time, it appeared that eventually only the rich who could pay their own way or the poor who could qualify for government aid would be able to go to college.

As costs continue upward, parents will need all the help they can get. A good start for a high-quality education is to teach youngsters to work and repay what they borrow.