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Enroll at our College and We'll Give You Lots of Stuff!

October 30, 2009 06:31 PM

American high-school students worry about getting into college. And their parents worry about paying the bills.

But colleges are worried, too. Unless they're *crème de la crème* schools that can pick and choose whom they like, colleges must vigorously compete to attract the brightest, the wealthiest, the top minority candidates, and, of course, the best athletes. So vigorously that they're offering extra inducements if these kids will just sign with them.

Not just loans and scholarships. Nowadays, schools are laying out a smorgasbord of goodies in hopes that Johnny, Jane, Jose, or Jamal will choose them rather than the halls of ivy down the road.

The *Chicago Tribune* recently listed a few of these plums:

Boston University, for instance, has a big pool with a wave machine, so young scholars can jump waves with their boogie boards. A University of Houston facility offers a hot tub and rock-climbing wall. Massages are available at the student union of the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh.

Yes, young men and women, our university will give you your own iPod portable music players, free cable television service and computers in your dorm rooms, Starbucks coffeehouses on campus, or juice bars -- if you'll just sign here.

Given the average \$10,000-a-year annual tuition and fees for even a state-supported college, these trifles are bit like the extra cupholder that the car salesman says he'll throw in if you'll buy from him.

Americans who got through school in an earlier day can only shake their heads at the extra perks that colleges are using to lure students. All it would have taken to get most of them to pick another school was a keg of beer and a couple of large pizzas!