

# **Net Price Calculator Quick Start Guide**

*For use in configuring and hosting a customized version of the U.S. Department of Education's Net Price Calculator application on your institution's website.*

**\*For use with Internet Explorer 7.0 and above.**

## Introduction

In accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA), beginning on October 29, 2011, each postsecondary institution in the United States that participates in Title IV federal student aid programs and enrolls full-time, first-time degree- or certificate-seeking undergraduate students will be required to post a net price calculator on its website that uses institutional data to provide **estimated** net price information to current and prospective students and their families based on a student's individual circumstances.

In order to assist institutions in meeting this obligation, the U.S. Department of Education, in cooperation with IT Innovative Solutions Corp., has designed and developed a fully functional net price calculator available to all Title IV postsecondary institutions for use on their institutional websites.

Using both institution-provided and student-entered data, this calculator will allow prospective students to calculate an estimated net price at an institution, defined as **cost (price) of attendance minus grant and scholarship aid**, based on what similar students paid in a previous year. The calculator was developed with input from the IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP), which met on January 27-28, 2009, and included 58 individuals representing the federal government, state governments, student financial aid and institutional research offices at postsecondary institutions from all sectors, association representatives, and others. There was also a 30-day public comment period following the meeting of the TRP from which additional feedback was received.

Institutions may use either the Net Price Calculator developed by the U.S. Department of Education, or develop their own, so long as the calculator includes "at a minimum the same data elements" found in the Department's calculator. For more information about the minimum elements required of institutionally developed calculators, visit [http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/resource/net\\_price\\_calculator.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/resource/net_price_calculator.asp).

**The following instructions are designed to walk you through the steps required to configure and host a customized version of the U.S. Department of Education's Net Price Calculator application on your institution's website. For immediate assistance with any additional questions or problems related to system usage, please contact Ruba Nuwayhid of IT Innovative Solutions Corp. at (240) 252-1707, or [Ruba@inovas.net](mailto:Ruba@inovas.net).**

## How it Works

The U.S. Department of Education's Net Price Calculator is comprised of two components:

1. **Institution application:** Institutions input the data used to calculate estimated institutional net price via a web-based application. This includes price of attendance data (including values for tuition and required fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other related expenses) and the median amount of grant and scholarship aid awarded to, and accepted by, first-time, full-time degree/certificate seeking students by expected family contribution (EFC) ranges.

2. **Student application:** Based on the data entered by the institution, a customized net price calculator is generated for use on the institution's website. The calculator asks nine questions of the student to determine: dependency status, approximated EFC, and estimated cost (price) of attendance (see table below). The approximated EFC is used to identify a median grant and scholarship aid amount as was entered by the institution. Based on this information, an estimated net price is generated.

Determining a student's dependency status	Determining a student's approximate EFC	Determining the student's cost (price) of attendance
<p>A student's dependency status is determined based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Age:</u> If the student's age is &gt;23, then the student's dependency status is <b>Independent</b></li> <li>• <u>Marital status:</u> If the student is married, then the student's dependency status is <b>Independent</b></li> <li>• <u>Dependents:</u> If the student has dependent children, then the student's dependency status is <b>Independent with dependent children</b></li> </ul> <p>If a student does not meet any of these criteria, the student's dependency status is considered <b>Dependent</b> for the purposes of the calculator.</p> <p>The student's dependency is then used to help determine the approximated EFC.</p>	<p>The calculator uses a look-up table populated with data compiled from FAFSA applications to identify a median EFC based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependency status</li> <li>• Number in family</li> <li>• Number in college</li> <li>• Income level</li> </ul> <p>The approximated EFC is used to identify a median grant and scholarship aid amount as was entered by the institution.</p>	<p>The calculator determines the appropriate cost of attendance to use based on the student's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility for in-state/in-district tuition</li> <li>• Planned living arrangements</li> </ul>

# Technical Information

## Section 508 Compliance

The U.S. Department of Education's Net Price Calculator application complies with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended 29 U.S.C. § 794d. The current amendment went into effect June 21, 2001 and requires that federal agencies make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education's Net Price Calculator application was designed to fully integrate with any additional adaptive equipment or software that may be required.

## Javascript

In order to use both the institution and student Net Price Calculator applications, you must have Javascript enabled in your browser. To enable Javascript, please follow the instructions below:

1. Click the **Tools** menu.
2. Select **Internet Options**.
3. Click the **Custom Level** button.
4. Scroll down until you see the "Scripting" section.
5. Select the "Enable" radio button under "Active Scripting."
6. Click the **OK** button.

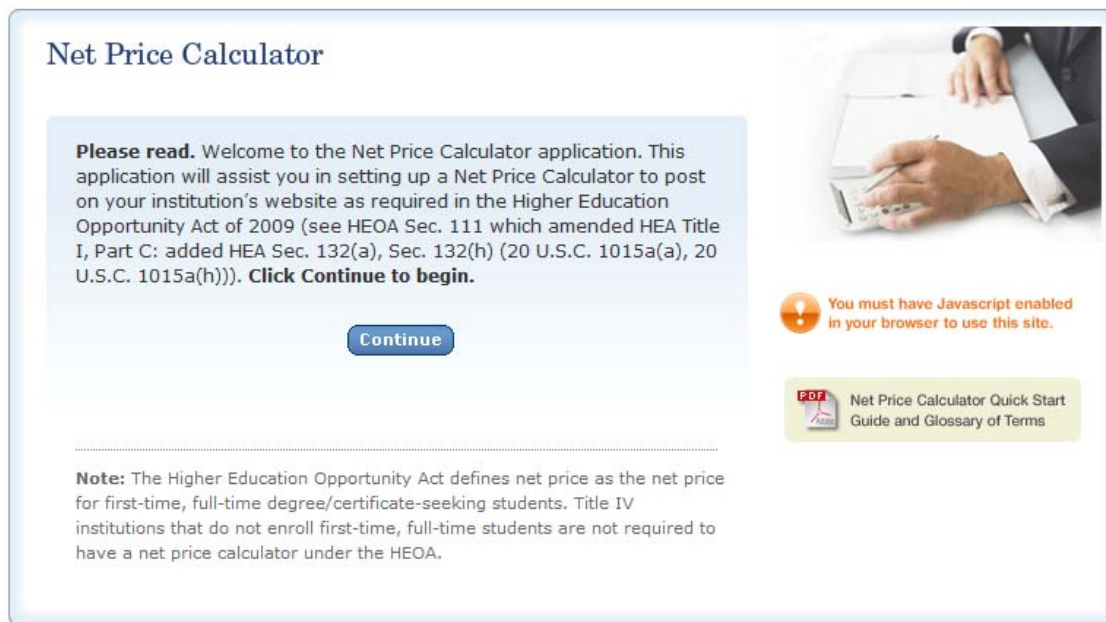
# Using the Net Price Calculator Template

## Step 1: Access the Net Price Calculator Template

Click on the link below to access the Institutional Data Maintenance portion of the U.S. Department of Education’s Net Price Calculator template. Here you will answer a series of questions and enter the data necessary to produce a calculator customized for your institution.

<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/netpricecalculator>

Once you have accessed this link, the opening screen is displayed:



Carefully review the information on this screen; then click **Continue** to begin creating your institution’s Net Price Calculator.

## Step 2: Enter Institutional Data

1. You must start by completing all screening questions applicable to your institution. Your responses here will determine which data elements you will be required to provide in the subsequent data input tables.

**Note:** Which screens you see will vary based on your institution’s predominant calendar system. This is indicated in the screenshots shown below:

## Step 1: Representative Year and Calendar System (applicable to *all* institutions):

### Net Price Calculator

**Step 1: Determine representative year and calendar system**

HEOA requires that your institution use the data from the **most recent year available** when setting up this calculator. Data should be provided for **full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students**. Price and aid data must be for the same year – e.g., the most recent year for which data are available for both.

**1. The data you are entering are representative of the year:**

2007-08  
 2008-09

**2. What is your institution's predominant calendar system?**

Academic (semester, quarter, trimester, 4-1-4, or other academic)  
 Program (differs by program, continuous basis)

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## Step 2: Set up your data entry screens (for *academic year tuition reporters* - based on your response to question 2 above):

### Net Price Calculator

**Predominant Calendar System: Academic**  
**Representative Year: 2008-09**

**Step 2: Set up your data entry screens**

To get started, answer the questions below. Your responses will determine which data elements you are required to provide in the subsequent data input screen.

**1. Does your institution offer institutionally controlled housing (either on or off campus)?**

Yes  
 No

**2. If yes, are all full-time, first-time degree/certificate seeking students required to live on campus or in institutionally-controlled housing?**

Yes  
 No

**3. Does your institution charge different tuition for in-district, in-state, or out-of-state students?**

Yes >> check all that apply:  In-district  In-state  
 No

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## Step 2: Set up your data entry screens (for program tuition reporters):

### Net Price Calculator

**Predominant Calendar System: Program**  
**Representative Year: 2008-09**

**Step 2: Set up your data entry screens**

To get started, answer the questions below. Your responses will determine which data elements you are required to provide in the subsequent data input screen.

- 1. Does your institution offer institutionally controlled housing (either on or off campus)?**  
 Yes  
 No
- 2. If yes, are all full-time, first-time degree/certificate seeking students required to live on campus or in institutionally-controlled housing?**  
 Yes  
 No
- 3. Please specify the largest program your institution offered to entering students during the 2008-09 data year, and the average number of months it took a full-time student to complete the program. This is the program that will appear on the output screen for the calculator, and upon which all calculations will be based.**

Note: The largest program is the program with the most students, not the program with the longest length.

**Largest Program:**

**Average number of months it takes a full-time student to complete this program:**

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2. Once you have completed the screening questions in Steps 1 and 2, the data input tables are displayed. Enter the amounts requested for your institution, as shown in the example tables below.

- Fill in each table as completely as possible.
- Data in both tables should be for **full-time, first-time degree-certificate-seeking undergraduate students**, and should be for the **same year** (e.g., the most recent year for which both price and aid data are available.)
- Review the on-screen instructions carefully for additional information related to what data to include/exclude in the construction of the data tables.

**Please note:** The example shown below is for an academic year tuition reporter with institutionally controlled housing and variable tuition rates for in-district, in-state, and out-of-state students. This is simply an example of one version of the data input tables and is not representative of the information required from all institutions. Certain columns (e.g., on-campus housing, variable tuition rates, etc.) will not be displayed if you have indicated that your institution does not offer these options.

**Step 3: Enter your institution’s data; Table 1: Price of Attendance for Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Students 2008-09:**

### Net Price Calculator

**Predominant Calendar System: Academic**  
**Representative Year: 2008-09**

**Step 3: Enter your institution’s data**

For the tables below, please provide data for **full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students**. Data for both tables should be for the **same year**. Please fill-in each table as completely as possible. These tables will be used to look up the appropriate price of attendance and grant aid data for users of the calculator based on information they enter. When you have completed the data entry for both tables below, click **Continue**.

**Table 1: Price of Attendance for Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Students: 2008-09**

Enter the amounts requested below. Estimates of expense for room and board, books and supplies, and other expense should be those from the Cost of Attendance report used by your financial aid office for determining financial need. (Note: These estimates are reported by your institution in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) on the Institutional Characteristics survey form – Part D- Student Charges- Price of Attendance).

**Report in whole dollars only**

Price of attendance	In-state			In-district			Out-of-state		
	On-campus	Off-campus not with family	Off-campus with family	On-campus	Off-campus not with family	Off-campus with family	On-campus	Off-campus not with family	Off-campus with family
<b>Total</b>	19722	19850	11826	19722	19850	11826	29010	29138	21114
Tuition and required fees	7234	7234	7234	7234	7234	7234	16522	16522	16522
Books and supplies	7896	7896	0	7896	7896	0	7896	7896	0
Room and board	948	948	948	948	948	948	948	948	948
Other (personal, transportation, etc.)	3644	3772	3644	3644	3772	3644	3644	3772	3644



**Step 3: Enter your institution’s data; Table 2: Grants and Scholarships for Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Students 2008-09:**

**Table 2: Grants and Scholarships for Full-time, First-time Undergraduate Students: 2008-09**

Enter the amounts requested below. Data should represent the **median** amount of both need and non-need grant and scholarship aid **from Federal, State, or Local Governments, or the Institution (exclude private source grant or scholarship aid)** awarded to, and accepted by, all **first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students** with the indicated living and residency category for each Expected Family Contribution (EFC) range. If you have fewer than three (3) observations for a cell, leave the cell blank. The system will calculate and insert the average of the surrounding cells. In the bottom row of the table, report the median amount of grant or scholarships aid for students for whom you do not know an EFC (i.e., they did not file a FAFSA or apply for need-based financial aid).

Report in whole dollars only

EFC Range	In-state			In-district			Out-of-state		
	On-campus	Off-campus not with family	Off-campus with family	On-campus	Off-campus not with family	Off-campus with family	On-campus	Off-campus not with family	Off-campus with family
\$0	16500	16500	8500	16500	16500	8500	24000	24000	16000
\$1-1,000	15250	15250	7250	15250	15250	7250	22250	22250	14250
\$1,001-2,500	14000	14000	6000	14000	14000	6000	20500	20500	12500
\$2,501-5,000	9000	9000	5500	9000	9000	5500	19000	19000	11000
\$5,001-\$7,500	7250	7250	5250	7250	7250	5250	18000	18000	10000
\$7,501-\$10,000	5500	5500	5000	5500	5500	5000	17000	17000	9000
\$10,001-\$12,500	4750	4750	4000	4750	4750	4000	16000	16000	8000
\$12,501-\$15,000	4000	4000	3000	4000	4000	3000	15000	15000	7000
\$15,001-\$20,000	3000	3000	2000	3000	3000	2000	12000	12000	4000
\$20,001-\$30,000	2700	2700	1700	2700	2700	1700	11300	11300	3700
\$30,001-\$40,000	2300	2300	1300	2300	2300	1300	10650	10650	3300
>\$40,000	2000	2000	1000	2000	2000	1000	10000	10000	3000
Non-FAFSA filers/unknown EFC	1000	1000	500	1000	1000	500	5000	5000	1500

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Once you are satisfied with all entries, click **Continue**.

**Note:** An opportunity to review your input data will be available in Step 5.

## Blank Cell Averaging

Blank cell averaging is used in Table 2 of the data input tables so that if one or more cells are left blank, the system will calculate and insert an appropriate value based on the average of the surrounding cells. The formula for this is as follows:

### **Where:**

X = The difference between the values of the two closest *filled* cells in the column ( $X_1$  and  $X_2$ ).

Y = The difference between the mid-point (median) of the corresponding EFC ranges for  $X_1$  and  $X_2$ .

Z = The difference between the mid-point of the EFC range for  $X_1$  and the mid-point of the EFC range for the missing cell.

### **Then:**

$Z * (X/Y)$  = The deviation of the value of the missing cell from  $X_1$ .

So that  $(Z * (X / Y)) + X_1$  = The value of the missing cell.

**Note:** In order for this functionality to work, data must be entered in at least **two** cells per column of the Estimated Total Grant Aid look-up table for the EFC ranges \$0 to \$30,001 - \$40,000.

*\*\*The only exception to the above rule relates to the last two rows of the Estimated Total Grant Aid look-up table (>\$40,000 and Non-FAFSA filers / unknown EFC). For these two rows, blank cells will automatically be replaced with a value of **zero**.*

3. On the next screen, enter any additional information you wish to display in the form of Explanations and Caveats at the bottom of the calculator output screen.

--Review the on-screen instructions carefully for information on the recommended use and placement of each *optional* Explanation field.

## Step 4: Enter Explanations and Caveats:

### Net Price Calculator

Predominant Calendar System: Academic  
Representative Year: 2008-09

#### Step 4: Enter Explanations and Caveats

The following information will appear at the bottom of the output screen for the calculator:

**Please note:** The estimates above apply to **full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students only.**

These estimates do not represent a final determination, or actual award, of financial assistance or a final net price; they are only estimates based on price of attendance and financial aid provided to students in 2008-09. Price of attendance and financial aid availability changes year to year. These estimates shall not be binding on the Secretary of Education, the institution of higher education, or the State.

Not all students receive financial aid. **In 2008-09, XX% of our full-time students enrolling for college for the first time received grant/scholarship aid.** Students may also be eligible for student loans and work-study. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to determine their eligibility for Federal financial aid that includes Federal grant, loan, or work-study assistance. For more information on applying for Federal student aid, go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>.

1. **Please enter the following information to fill in the XX% above:** What percentage of all first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students received any grants or scholarship aid from Federal, State, or Local Governments, or the Institution (exclude those who only received private source grant or scholarship aid)?
2. **Would you like to add explanations to appear on the output screen (e.g., exclusions, URL for your financial aid web site, assumptions regarding room and meal-plan type; range of credits; level of personal expenses; etc.)? Please enter text for institutional explanations below. When you are done, click Continue.**

**Explanation #1**, which appears at end of first paragraph on the output screen, is optional but can be used to describe any groups excluded from the calculator (e.g., athletes, students receiving employee tuition remission grants).

**Explanation #2**, which appears after the URL for the FAFSA site, is optional but can be used to provide 1) instructions on how to access your institution's financial aid web site, 2) possible advice on how to use this estimate (e.g., particular factors, such as the year of the estimate, to keep in mind when comparing with estimates from other institutions, expenses you include that other institutions may not), or 3) notification of any major planned changes to price or grants that could affect the validity of these estimates.

**Explanation #3**, which appears at the very end, is optional but can be used for any other explanations or caveats you want to include, such as explaining parameters underlying price estimates (e.g., number of credits covered by tuition estimate, room and board plan included in on-campus estimate, expenses covered in "other expenses"); explaining of types of costs not reflected (e.g., differential tuition rates associated with certain academic programs or guaranteed tuition plans); or explaining types of grants not included, (e.g., private scholarships, employee tuition remission, ROTC scholarships not included); or other caveats.

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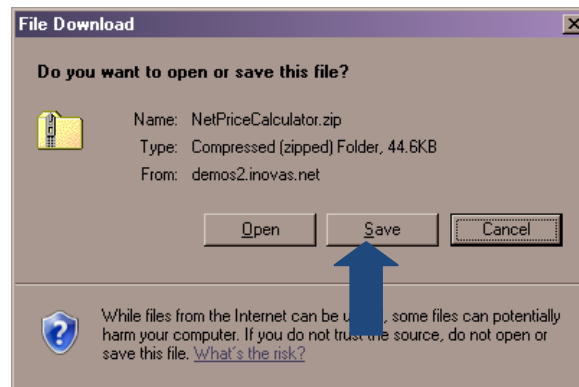
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### Step 3: Review the Data You Have Provided

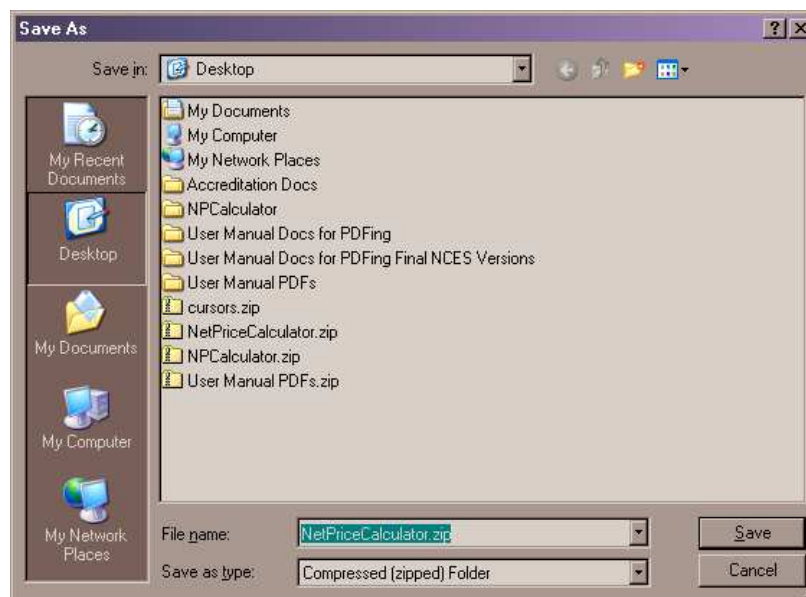
A summary screen will be displayed, detailing the information you have provided. You can click **Modify** to return to Step 1 and edit this information as needed, or if you are satisfied with your responses, click **Continue** to generate your institution's Net Price Calculator based on the specifications shown.

### Step 4: Download and Extract the Net Price Calculator Files

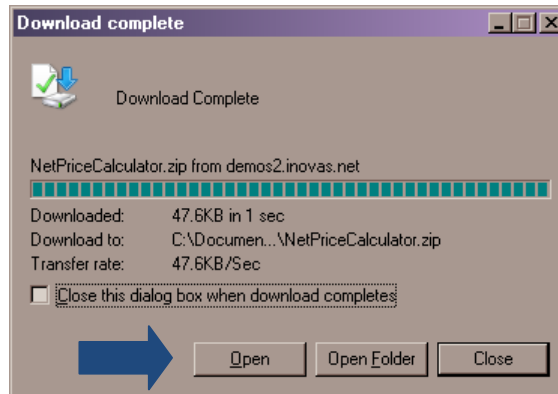
1. A zip file will be produced containing the files necessary to host the Net Price Calculator on your institution's website. When prompted, click **Save** to save the zip file to your computer's hard drive, as shown below:



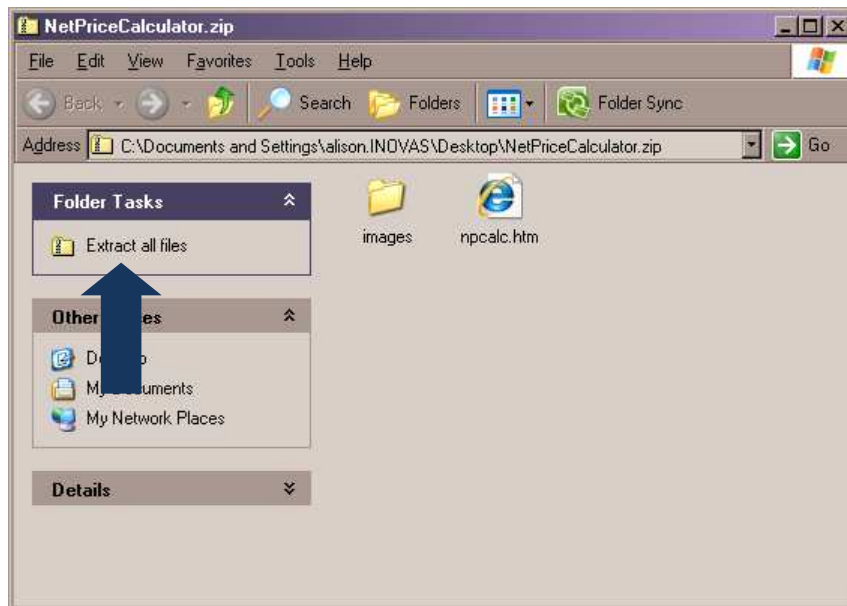
2. Enter the desired file name and destination; then click **Save**.



- When prompted, select **Open** to view the downloaded zip folder on-screen:



- Then, click “Extract all files” to unzip the files, as shown below:



**Note:** While extracting the files, be sure to preserve the structure of the directory. In the example shown above, this is done automatically. When using Winzip, you will need to make sure that the box marked “Use Folder Names” is checked.

- You may preview a local version of your institution’s customized Net Price Calculator at this time by double-clicking the HTML document that appears as a browser link within the unzipped folder (in the example shown above, this is the file named *npcalc.htm*). If after previewing the calculator you wish to modify any of the data provided for your institution, you may do so by returning to **Step 1** of this Quick Start Guide and repeating the process outlined above to generate a new version of the Net Price Calculator for your institution.

## Step 5: Host the Application on your Institution's Website

Once you have downloaded and extracted the necessary files, you are ready to host the application on your institution's website.

1. Start by creating a new folder for the Net Price Calculator within your website's home directory.

**Note:** The name chosen for this folder will be included in the link used to access the application, therefore a simple name, such as *NetPrice*, is recommended.

2. Move the files extracted in **Step 4** of this Quick Start Guide from their previous destination to this new folder.

3. The Net Price Calculator should now be accessible on your institution's website! You can verify this by entering the URL into your web browser as follows:

**http://[Homepage URL]/[Folder Name]/[File Name]**

For example, in the case illustrated above, the URL would look something like this:

**http://institution.edu/NetPrice/npcalc**

**Tip:** To change the URL above, you can rename the folder created within your home directory, or you can rename the HTML file within that folder. Just be sure to preserve the structure of the directory when making these changes.

**Disclaimer:** *If you choose to modify the files provided in any way, please be aware that we will no longer be able to guarantee assistance with any questions or issues regarding system usage.*