Obama's pitch is aimed squarely at young voters who overwhelmingly favored him in 2008, along with their parents.

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) -- President Barack Obama charged rival Mitt Romney with being oblivious to the burdens of paying for college on Tuesday, telling young voters in battleground Ohio that his opponent's education policies amounted to having students borrow from their parents or "shop around" for the best deal.

"That's his plan. That's his answer to young people who are trying to figure out how to go to college and make sure that they don't have a mountain of debt," Obama said at Capital University in Columbus. "Not everybody has parents who have the money to lend. That may be news to some folks."

Turning to young voters, a key part of his 2008 coalition, the president sought to draw a bright line with Romney on education policy in his latest attempt to meld Romney with the House Republican budget blueprint offered Rep. Paul Ryan, Romney's running mate.

Obama and Romney remain locked in a tight presidential campaign a week before the former Massachusetts governor formally claims his party's nomination at the GOP convention in

Tampa, Fla. Both campaigns have broadened their message to voters in recent weeks beyond the economy, which remains the most pivotal issue for voters less than three months before the election.

Romney sought to distance himself from Missouri GOP Senate nominee Todd Akin, who apologized after saying in an interview that women's bodies are sometimes able to prevent pregnancies after what he called "a legitimate rape." Romney said in a statement that fellow Missouri Republicans had urged Akin to quit and "I think he should accept their counsel and exit the Senate race."

Romney was raising money to bolster his campaign in Texas, where he told donors that his campaign was "a little wiser in our spending of dollars" than Obama's campaign, pointing to new finance documents released by Obama's campaign on Monday that showed it spent more money in July than it brought in.

Romney and Republicans have outraised Obama and Democrats for the past three months, a sign of broad GOP interest in defeating the incumbent president.

"I'm not managing their campaign for them, but we're going to spend our money wiser," Romney said in Houston, where he was expected to pull in more than $6 million. "We're going to spend it to win."

In a nod to oil-rich Texas, Romney told donors he planned to announce a "comprehensive energy plan" during a stop in New Mexico later this week but offered few details beyond a focus in part on fossil-based fuels. Romney said his aim was to "fully take advantage of our energy resources."

Romney's campaign countered the president's education critique, saying college costs had skyrocketed under Obama's watch and his economic policies had made it difficult for recent college graduates to find work. Romney spokeswoman Amanda Henneberg said Obama's policies were "just more of the same from a president who hasn't fixed the economy or kept his promises to the young people who supported him four years ago."

Obama's line of criticism dovetailed with his campaign's unrelenting effort to cast Romney as out of touch, playing off his wealth and his background in private equity. Ryan, meanwhile, sought to reassure voters about his and Romney's stance on Medicare and sustained the GOP's efforts to cast Obama as a divisive figure.

Ryan tried to blunt criticism of his plan to overhaul Medicare, saying his plan would protect the program for seniors' grandchildren.

"You're going to hear a whole lot of distortions because that's all he has to offer," Ryan told a rally in the hull of Beaver Steel near Pittsburgh. He reminded voters in western Pennsylvania of a comment Obama made during the 2008 campaign, saying some voters in small towns "cling to guns or religion."

"I'm a Catholic deer hunter. I'm happy to be clinging to my guns and my religion," said Ryan, who walked on stage swinging a black-and-gold Pittsburgh Steelers Terrible Towel, a nod to the popular hometown football team.

Democrats have tried to use Ryan's budget proposal to undermine Romney's pitch to blue-collar voters, and Obama's appeal on higher education was no different.

Democrats contend that Ryan's budget proposal, which failed to pass the Democratic-controlled Senate, would cut $115 billion from the Education Department, costing 1 million college students their Pell Grants over the next decade. Democrats argue those moves would punish many middle class and low income families trying to gain an education.

Those estimates, however, assume the cuts in Ryan's budget are applied evenly across all programs starting in 2014 - something Ryan aides say would not happen. His budget does not directly address Pell Grant funding, and his aides say the cuts would not take a one-size-fits-all approach.

Ryan, who prefers that students take loans instead of receiving grants, would keep the top Pell Grant award in the coming school year at $5,500 but in future years reduce the number of

students eligible, not the award sums. In other words, fewer students would receive them but the neediest would not see their awards changed.

More than 9.7 million students are expected to get grants for the academic year that is about to begin.

Following a lunchtime stop at Sloopy's, a diner at nearby Ohio State University, Obama made a personal pitch to college students at nearby Capital University, recalling that he and first lady Michelle Obama had to dig out of a "mountain of debt" after finishing law school.

He pointed to Romney's remarks on higher education at a Youngstown, Ohio, town hall meeting in March, when the GOP candidate suggested that college students would do better to "shop around" for tuition rates and college loans or borrow money from parents.

"He doesn't think investing in your future is worth it," Obama said. The president was campaigning later in the day at a community college in Reno, Nev., another important state to his re-election map.

Obama's pitch is aimed squarely at young voters who overwhelmingly favored him in 2008, along with their parents. The president continues to enjoy a sizable lead in polls among young voters, but not as wide as four years ago. Their parents are less convinced, and they are as much Obama's audience as their children.

In Minneapolis, Vice President Joe Biden also tried to portray Romney as unsympathetic to the concerns of many middle-income Americans, reprising the campaign's request that Romney release more extensive tax returns.

"I've never run across a presidential candidate who is a decent guy but is more out of touch than Mr. Romney right now," Biden said.