



A Message from **VSAC's Board Chair and President**

Building on a foundation of change

VSAC works for Vermont students and families. We will continue to be the voice for Vermonters' rights to choose what they want to study, where they want to study it. And we'll help them figure out how to pay for it.

This past year has been a remarkable year of disruption, adaptability, and innovation. The pandemic continued to force us all to adapt the ways we learn and support each other, and to be creative about the ways we work.

The pandemic also created tremendous uncertainty for many Vermonters—some lost jobs, some had their education plans derailed by illness or finances, while others re-evaluated their life goals and career paths. Thousands of Vermonters changed course—searching for new opportunities that would better support themselves or their families.

Through all of this, Vermont has once again shown the power of community. We led the nation this past year in the percentage of eligible Vermonters who have been partially or fully vaccinated. And we have pulled together to support local businesses, to support food shelves, and to support our students.

The pandemic has proven once again that education is one of the most powerful tools during periods of uncertainty and disruption. Vermonters with higher levels of education and training were less likely to lose their jobs. And if they did lose them, they were more likely to get them back quickly. Throughout the pandemic, unemployment for college graduates and those with postsecondary training has been less than half that for Vermonters with a high school diploma or less.

Importantly, the State of Vermont has recognized the power of education for the future of Vermont's economy. Funding was secured to shore up the finances of the Vermont State College system, and just as importantly, record amounts of federal stimulus dollars were allocated to student financial aid.

This has placed VSAC at the center of Vermont's pandemic education and economic development strategy. VSAC's role in creating opportunities for all Vermont students, but particularly for those—of any age—who believe that the doors to higher education are closed to them, is perhaps more important today than it has ever been in our 56-year history.

VSAC's success this past year is a tribute to the creativity, ingenuity, and perseverance for our staff and the commitment of our many partners and funders.





Here are some of our accomplishments this past year:

Distributed \$19.4 million in need-based grants to 11,551 Vermont students of all ages. Almost two-thirds—6,972—were full-time students receiving \$14,855,229; 2,693 part-time students received \$1,770,788; 1,408 non-degree students received 2,676,421 in grants; and 478 microgrants were awarded.

Originated \$36 million in student and parent Advantage loans. VSAC was able to offer some of the lowest fixed rate loans to help families meet the gap between state and federal aid and the cost of attendance. VSAC also provided \$580,000 in loan rebates to borrowers, bringing the total amount VSAC has rebated to \$182 million.

Reached out to families to help with loan support and assistance if repayment was difficult. With many families experiencing job losses, reductions in work hours, and/or time out of the workforce to care for family members during the pandemic, financial stress was at an all-time high. Our team provided a compassionate ear as well as sound solutions to prevent these students and families from slipping deeper into debt.

Expanded participation in VT529. VHEIP was rebranded as VT529 and continued to see record participation. This past year, Vermonters contributed over \$60 million to VT529. Total assets under management are expected to cross \$600 million in the coming fiscal year. We have generated 73% growth in annual contributions and 99% growth in assets since VSAC brought marketing back in-house.

Launched 10 new scholarship programs. New scholarships were aimed at Vermont students of color and to increase the pipeline for in-demand careers in the technical and health-care fields. In all, 145 public and private scholarships, totaling \$7.5 million—a 67 percent increase—were distributed in 5,834 awards.

Launched Green Mountain Grad Gift. Modeled after a successful COVID-19 initiative created by the McClure Foundation, the Green Mountain Grad Gift allows every 2020 and 2021 Vermont high school to take a tuition-free course at any of the Vermont State Colleges. VSAC launched the expanded program with funding from the Vermont Legislature to support the career and education aspirations of two classes who graduated into the heart of the pandemic.

Launched The 802 Opportunity Scholarship. This program offers any student coming from a family earning less than \$50,000 per year the chance to attend CCV tuition free. Students from 43% of Vermont families will qualify for this program. While important for traditional age students it will be particularly impactful for working adults who need to upskill but who in the past earned too much money to qualify for state and federal aid.

VSAC's Aspirations Project received \$300,000 in two years of dedicated funding from the Vermont Legislature, providing critical resources to support the VSAC Aspirations Initiative. This initiative is designed to increase the postsecondary aspirations of students at high schools with wide aspiration gaps. The project helps support faculty, staff, and students in creating a working plan to graduate all students with a focus on their future education and career goals.

Hosted hundreds of online and Zoom webinars and virtual college fairs, taking the place of group information sessions and in-person meetings, and allowing VSAC to maintain connections with parents, students, and the education community. In some cases, our wider virtual online

offerings have allowed us to connect with more families, since travel, weather and schedule constraints are no longer barriers to attendance though equitable access to broadband certainly is. More than 1,000 parents and students attended free Paying for College sessions online, and 412 people tuned into College & Career Pathways virtual workshops. Recordings and webinars have received over 1,500 video views on YouTube.

VSAC outreach staff counseled more than 6,365 low-income and/or first-generation, college-bound Vermont students of all ages. Federally funded programs like Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, and GEAR Up increased the number of adults and high school graduates who continued their education.

Began to study the impact of COVID-19 on education outcomes through our Senior Survey. VSAC surveyed rising high school seniors and returning undergraduate college students in June 2020, and again in July 2021, about their college enrollment plans. While we were pleased to see that most students' enrollment plans remained in line with their original intent, we also found that financial aid had taken on a new urgency, particularly for first-generation students. Fully 84 percent of July's survey respondents reported that financial aid was either "absolutely critical" or "highly important" in their ability to pursue higher education. Further, seven out of 10 students reported experiencing a COVID-19-related event in their lives, with parental job losses being more prevalent among low-income students than among those of higher incomes.

We know that Vermont students of all ages will need more support in the days and months ahead. Middle school and high school students will be seeking to navigate career, education, and training choices that have been impacted by the pandemic. Adult learners will be seeking the skills they need to obtain and advance in Vermont's high-demand, high-wage careers. Borrowers with student loans will need guidance and support to navigate the complex changes to federal student loan repayment options. And families will need help to plan earlier and save more for their children's education in the future.

This year our community will continue to face significant challenges from the pandemic. But with last year as our foundation, we will continue to help Vermonters navigate the path toward achieving their career, education, training, and life goals.



Dorothy Mitchell
VSAC Board Chair



Scott Giles
VSAC President & CEO



The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation is unique in its scope and role. Created by the Legislature in 1965 as a public nonprofit agency, we advocate for students and their families to ensure that they have the information, the counseling and the financial aid to achieve their education goals.



GRANTS
\$19.4
MILLION

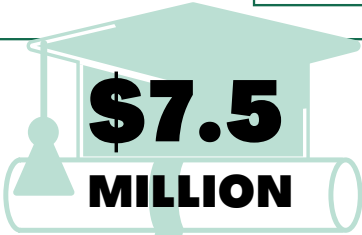
Awarded 11,551 need-based grants to Vermont students

6,972 full-time students received \$14,855,229

2,693 part-time students received \$1,770,788

1,408 non-degree students received \$2,676,421

478 microgrants awarded in the amount of \$136,421



SCHOLARSHIPS

Administers 145 public and private scholarships through 5,834 awards.

New and noteworthy Vermont scholarships:

VT Nursing Workforce Incentive Loan Program (interest-free and forgivable). Established by the Legislature for students committed to working as nurses in Vermont.



CTE Adult Training Scholarship.

Created to provide funds to eligible students enrolled in Career Technical Education courses to enhance employability.

Let's Grow Kids Scholarship for Aspiring Early Educators.

Created to increase the quality and availability of teachers working in infant/toddler and Pre-K programs in Vermont.



SAVING

The value of 25,642 accounts as of 6/30/21

\$36 million from VT529 accounts used by students to pay for qualified education expenses in FY21.



VT ADVANTAGE STUDENT LOANS

VSAC administers \$36.1 Million in Vermont Advantage Loans

\$580,000 saved by VSAC borrowers in FY21 through the borrower benefit program and \$181.8 million since 1995.

VSAC services \$610 million in federal and private loans.



The 802 Opportunity Program offers Vermonters from families making less than \$50K a year the opportunity to attend the Community College of Vermont (CCV) tuition free by combining Vermont and federal grant programs. So far this year over 1,740 students have taken advantage of this opportunity. This program will continue this spring semester and for the 2022-2023 school year. Students who started full-time this fall could earn their Associates Degree by next spring without ever paying tuition!



GRADUATION ASPIRATIONS

VSAC Aspirations Project received **\$300,000** in funding from the Legislature. The project, available to high schools across the state, supports creating a path for all students to graduate with a plan for future education and career opportunities.

Isabel Cobb,
Springfield

"Before starting the VSAC program, I thought that I might want to go to college, but I didn't know how to get there. VSAC is a life-saver!"



Cassandra Bittner,
St. Albans

"College is amazing, and I am very thankful for VSAC for helping me get here, VSAC is very close to my heart."

Learn more about programs & partners at (800) 642-3177, info@vsac.org, or vsac.org

OPENING DOORS FOR VERMONT STUDENTS

The State of Vermont, Vermont State Colleges System, and VSAC launched the **Green Mountain Grad** program allowing every 2020 and 2021 Vermont high school graduate to take one tuition-free course at any Vermont State College.



Hosted hundreds of online and Zoom webinars and **Virtual College Fairs**, taking the place of group information sessions and in-person meetings. More than 1,000 parents and students attended free "Paying for College" sessions online, and 412 people tuned into **College & Career Pathways** virtual workshops. Recordings and webinars have received over 1,500 video views on YouTube.

EDUCATING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE



The **Educational Opportunity Center (EOC)** was founded in 1991, and has helped more than 60,000 adult Vermonters get the workforce training that is vital to Vermont's economy and growth. The EOC counselors work with some 1,600 Vermonters who do not have bachelor's degrees and wish to continue their education to get a degree or certificate.

Federally funded TRIO programs like Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers and GEAR Up increased the number of adults and high school graduates who continued their education.

VSAC outreach staff counseled more than 6,365 low-income and/or first-generation, college-bound Vermont students of all ages.

TALENT SEARCH STUDENTS

The federally-funded **Talent Search** program, which has made great strides connecting modest income Vermont high school students with opportunities for college and training, works in 46 middle and high schools across the state.

VSAC Talent Search counselors work with approximately 1,000 Vermont students, supporting them in areas such as study skills, career exploration, the college research and application processes, and selection of high school courses that will best prepare them for their post-secondary track.

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Statements of Net Position

FY2021 **FY2020**
(in thousands)

ASSETS

Cash & investments	\$ 123,908	\$ 127,881
Education loans receivable (including interest)	596,598	658,589
Other assets	17,391	17,905
Total assets	<u>\$ 737,897</u>	<u>\$ 804,375</u>

LIABILITIES

Bonds & notes payable (plus interest)	\$ 501,554	\$ 565,607
Arbitrage earnings rebatable	4,565	4,254
Other liabilities	11,504	16,609
Total liabilities	<u>\$ 517,623</u>	<u>\$ 586,470</u>

DEFERRED INFLOWS OF RESOURCES

Deferred gains on early bond refunding	\$ 12,457	\$ 15,322
Deferred lease revenue	2,002	2,655

NET POSITION

Restricted	\$ 62,334	\$ 116,774
Unrestricted	131,552	70,550
Net investment in property & equipment	11,929	12,604
Total net position	<u>205,815</u>	<u>199,928</u>
Total liabilities, deferred inflows & net position	<u>\$ 737,897</u>	<u>\$ 804,375</u>

Statements of Revenues, Expenses & Changes in Net Position

OPERATING REVENUES

Interest earned from education loan financing	\$ 29,555	\$ 38,222
Other loan & guarantee program revenues	2,649	3,286
Investment interest	402	1,630
Vermont state appropriations	20,004	20,930
Federal grants	8,681	5,166
Scholarship & gift income	4,948	4,851
Facility lease revenue	711	704
529 plan revenue	699	587
Other income	2,004	617
Total operating revenues	<u>\$ 69,653</u>	<u>\$ 75,993</u>

OPERATING EXPENSES

Student aid	\$ 28,978	\$ 25,511
Interest rebated to borrowers	578	715
Interest on debt	7,903	13,243
Other loan financing costs	4,038	7,245
Corporate operating expenses & depreciation	22,387	22,802
Total operating expenses	<u>63,884</u>	<u>69,516</u>

Change in net position from operations	5,769	6,477
Contributions to permanent scholarship endowment	118	1,013
Change in net position	<u>5,887</u>	<u>7,490</u>
Total net position at beginning of year	<u>199,928</u>	<u>192,438</u>
Total net position at end of the year	<u>\$ 205,815</u>	<u>\$ 199,928</u>

A complete set of financial statements as audited by an independent public accounting firm is available on [VSAC's website](#) or by request.