



Adult Student Handbook

Thinking of going back to school?



Facts & tips:

- Career Exploration
- College & Training
- Funding for Education & Training

Thinking of going back to school? We're here to help!

VSAC provides services to all adult Vermonters through the **Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) program**. The program enables seven counselors around the state to serve more than 1,600 participants annually through individual counseling and group sessions. Two-thirds of our participants are first-generation college-bound, low- to moderate-income adults. Staff members provide counseling and objective information on education and training options, financial aid, and career planning services for adults who want to continue their education beyond high school.

Also available are free workshops on career planning, education planning, and financial aid. In addition, we provide specially designed workshops to meet the needs of the agencies with whom we work.

It's never too late to return to school!

Call now to set up an appointment with a VSAC Adult Education counselor in your area. All services are free.

- **Toll-free statewide:**
877-961-4369
- **In the Rutland and Bennington area:**
786-8840
- **In the Burlington area:**
654-3793

VSAC's adult services are funded in part through an Educational Opportunity Centers grant, a federal TRIO program.





Adult Student Handbook

This booklet was produced by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, a nonprofit state agency established by the Vermont Legislature in 1965 to help Vermont students save, plan, and pay for education or training after high school.

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“VSAC helped me assess what my previous college experience was worth, and how my professional experience and personal interests would help me. I recommend VSAC for adults who are considering continuing education, because we may not realize our own personal strengths. We also may not understand what our options are for classes, curriculum, financial aid, and those things that are really important in achieving the goals we set for ourselves.”

— ADULT LEARNER

Access these VSAC resources and many more planning tools at www.vsac.org with help from your VSAC Adult Education counselor.

To schedule an appointment in your area, call 877-961-4369.

Financial aid applications & details online
at www.vsac.org/applications

- FAFSA
- Vermont grant applications
- Unified Scholarship Application for all VSAC-assisted scholarships
- CSS Profile® (There's a fee to complete the Profile. Check with your college to see if it's required.)

Grants & scholarships for Vermont residents
at www.vsac.org/financialaid

- state grants for full-time and part-time degree programs
- state grants for non-degree courses to improve employability or to try a college class
- information on more than 100 scholarships

Education loans for students and parents at www.vsac.org/loans

- for Vermont residents enrolled in-state, across the U.S., or internationally
- for out-of-state residents attending a Vermont school

VSAC loan rates save you money. And by choosing a loan from VSAC, you're supporting career and college outreach that creates education opportunities for all Vermonters and contributes to the future economic vitality of the state.

Vermont's 529 college savings plan at www.vheip.org

- a Vermont state income tax credit
- federal and state tax-free earnings and withdrawals

Free career & education planning resources at www.vsac.org/plan

- online tools for career exploration and planning
- college planning events to guide families through the college search, selection, and application process
- financial aid presentations at schools and other locations
- financial aid forms nights at select high schools
- career exploration and financial aid specifics at

www.vsac.org/adultlearners

www.vsac.org • info@vsac.org

Career Exploration: Is It Time for a Change?

Tools and information on the following pages can help guide your career decision-making process.

Job and career changes happen more frequently for today's adults than ever before. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. workers will change jobs an average of 10 times before the age of 40. Sometimes:

- the change is within the same career field.
- a job that once provided personal satisfaction no longer does.
- a change is voluntary; other times it is not.

The VSAC Career and Education Outreach Department operates an Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) program to help adults reach their career and education goals. The program offers many ways for you to explore your options.

- **Individual appointments** can be made with our education counselors to discuss careers, education, and financial aid. Services are available statewide. Call 877-961-4369 for an appointment.
- **Career workshops** can help adults identify their skills, interests, and personal values; generate career ideas; explore careers and education opportunities; and set goals. See the tip on page 13 for a link to online workshop resources.
- **VSAC's career and education tools at www.vvac.org/adultlearners** provide career, education, and financial aid resources and information for adult students.

One definition of a career is "a consciously chosen life direction," meaning that a career is more than a job; it's the sum of one's choices about how to live one's life. So whether or not you think of yourself as having a career, all of us who make conscious decisions about our work and our lives outside of work do, in fact, have careers.

"You need to explore your options and be willing to work hard. By setting goals, you can achieve anything you want."

— ADULT LEARNER

Career Exploration in a Nutshell

- **Reflect on who you are and what experiences you've had.**
- **Take some career assessments to help you identify your interests, skills, values, and personality traits.**
- **Research careers that interest you.**
- **Speak to someone doing the work you're interested in learning more about.**
- **Research the education or training you need in order to do the work you'd like to pursue.**
- **As you explore career options, find a way that works for you to keep track of resources, questions, and the contacts you need for planning next steps.**

What shapes your career decisions?

VSAC's Adult Education counselors see people facing a variety of personal and work situations. A common theme is the experience of some kind of transition. The decisions people face are influenced by many things:

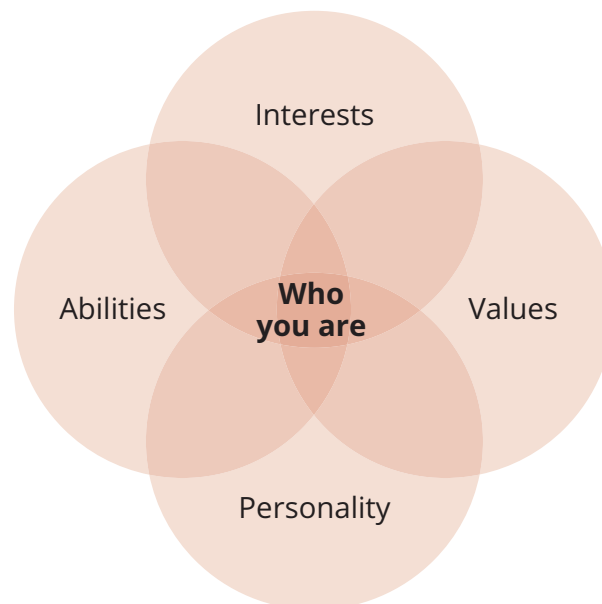
- family responsibilities
- past experiences
- willingness and ability to acquire further education or training
- personal interests, values, and skills

Even if you fell into a type of work and have stayed there—or you've drifted from one job to another for various reasons—it isn't too late to have a career. You can make a change at any point by considering the kind of work you do and by making conscious choices about how to fit it into the direction you want for your life. This process is called "career exploration."

How you can get started

There are many ways to approach career exploration. The following section provides information, resources, and activities you can use to:

- learn more about yourself
- learn more about various careers
- learn more about the resources available to help you in your exploration



Get to Know Who You Are

Think about the kind of work you're doing now; then ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I like the work I'm doing?
- Does this work use my skills and abilities as fully as possible?
- How does this work fit with my values, interests, and family?
- Will I like doing this work for the rest of my working life?
- Will this work be available in Vermont for as long as I want to do it?
- Will I physically be able to do this work for as long as I want to work?

If you think you may want to change the kind of work you do, consider these questions:

- What other kinds of work would you like to do? How could you find out more about those types of work?
- What would be the advantages/disadvantages of changing your work?
- What kinds of education and training would you need to have in order to change your work? How would that education/training fit into your life, and how would you pay for it?
- How would your life be different if you changed the kind of work you do?

Self-assessment

Knowing what you enjoy (interests), what's important to you (values), what you're good at (skills and abilities), and what you're like as a person (personality traits) will help you identify careers you may enjoy. To explore who you are and what career you might like, you can use self-assessment tools that attempt to answer some of the following questions:

Interests

- What gives you energy?
- What do you avoid?
- What do you like to read about?

Check out www.mynextmove.org

My Next Move is an interactive tool that adults can use to learn more about their career options. The site offers tasks, skills, salaries, and further information for more than 900 different careers. Users can find careers through keyword searches; by browsing industries that employ different types of workers; or by using the O*NET Interest Profiler, which offers personalized career suggestions based on your interests and level of work experience.

Take Action

After gathering information about several career ideas, you'll need to do more specific research on the careers that interest you. Remember:

- **This step may be the most challenging for you.**
- **You don't have to have all the answers right away.**
- **It's okay to take time to reflect and talk with others.**
- **Your process will be influenced by your unique personal characteristics, along with community and education resources.**
- **Have fun with the process.**

Values and environment

- What is most important to you in a learning environment: support, competitive challenges, flexibility?
- What is most important to you in a work environment: creativity, security, independence, the chance to help others, job outlook?
- What role do you want work to play in your life?

Abilities

- What comes naturally to you?
- What talents have you not had an opportunity to test or develop?
- What are your strengths?

Personality

- What characteristics make you unique?
- What majors, careers, or work environments would support those characteristics?
- In what situations have you felt a good "fit"?
- At what times in the past have you felt like a "fish out of water" or different from the people around you?

Career information

- Have you explored a wide range of career options that match your interests, abilities, and values?
- Have you investigated different academic paths to meet a particular career goal?
- Do you know the actual day-to-day activities of an occupation that you're considering?
- Have you spoken with anyone actually working in that role?
(See informational interviewing and job shadowing on page 6.)

Go to www.vsac.org/adultresources for **activity sheets** and **checklists** to use in your career exploration and education decision-making.

Learn the “High Five” Principles

In today’s world, many people entering the workforce can expect to have jobs in several occupations in a variety of industries throughout their working lives. Career experts now say that determining your future is not so much about choosing the “right” occupation; instead, it’s about learning principles that will help you make choices that lead to a fulfilling lifestyle. Known as the “High Five,” these principles are a way of thinking about and preparing for your future.

- **Change is constant.** We change constantly, and so does the world around us. A single occupation will no longer take us from the beginning to the end of our working lives, so adaptability is an important skill.
- **Learning is ongoing.** Graduating doesn’t mean your education is complete. Opportunities to learn are everywhere! Look for them and make learning a lifelong experience.
- **Focus on the journey.** Traveling through life is like driving—having a destination provides direction, but most of the time is spent watching the view. Pay attention to the journey, with its unexpected pleasures and occasional detours.
- **Follow your heart.** Dreaming about your future can help you understand what you want in life. Dealing with challenges will be easier if you remember what inspires you.
- **Identify your allies.** You don’t have to figure out life all by yourself. Friends, family, teachers, neighbors—they can all be willing allies to help you decide what steps to take.

Source: *The Real Game* website © Bill Barry
Licensed to The Real Game, Inc.

TIP

LEARN ABOUT CAREER RESOURCES FOR ADULTS:

Go to www.vvac.org/adultlearners for useful links, information, and online career resources.

Activate your imagination

Try some of the following activities to develop your powers of creative thinking.

Create a vision. Find a place to put words, images, and objects that reflect what you’d like to create in your life. Spend two minutes a day focusing on it.

Consider meditation. Meditation can open a space for new ideas. Simply sit still, focus on your breath, and see what ideas shows up.

Spend time in places you love. Make time to spend in places you love, doing what you love—taking a walk in nature, enjoying a cozy spot in your home, cooking a meal for those you care about. Enjoy and see what ideas shows up.

Listen to beautiful music. Play beautiful music while considering next steps in your career exploration process and see what ideas show up.

Create an affirmation. Repeating a simple affirmation related to your goal can help you move more easily toward that goal (e.g. “I will easily find the next resource I need to move forward”).

Sample questions to ask in an informational interview

1. What do you actually do in your job? Please describe a typical day.
2. Do you work alone, with a partner, or with a team?
3. What are your working conditions?
4. What do you like best about and least about your work?
5. What is the typical salary range for jobs like yours?
6. What kind of training or education does a person need for this job? Are there specific skills a person needs to learn?
7. What things did you learn in school that help you in this work? Is there anything you wish you had studied more?
8. How much responsibility do you have? How much freedom do you have?
9. What personal qualities (emotional, physical, and mental) does a person need to have in order to do well and be happy in your job?
10. What are the current and future chances of employment in your occupation? Is there opportunity for advancement to a higher level of responsibility and income?
11. What are some of the rewards and satisfactions of this job?
12. If I wanted an occupation similar to yours, what advice would you give me?
13. Where can I get more information about this career? Could you recommend anyone else for me to talk with?

Informational Interviewing and Job Shadowing

Two of the best ways to gather useful career information are through informational interviewing and job shadowing. An **informational interview** is a meeting with a person who currently works in a position that interests you. A **job shadow** is an opportunity to observe a person on the job in the workplace.

Why conduct an informational interview or job shadow?

- to expand your knowledge of a particular career or position
 - 1) to learn specifics about what you'd need in the way of skills and training or education
 - 2) to obtain a more realistic picture of the career in terms of job-growth potential, working conditions, pluses and minuses, environment, and responsibilities
- to help you make more informed decisions about your future
- to expand your career planning network
- to help you prepare for employment interviews and become more comfortable asking and answering questions

How do you prepare?

- Conduct a self-assessment to identify your skills, values, interests, and personal preferences.
- Identify possible careers that match your self-assessment.
- Do some preliminary research into careers you've identified.
- Find appropriate individuals to interview.
- Contact individuals and explain your purpose.
- Prepare a list of questions to use as the basis for your interview.

How should you conduct yourself?

- Dress as you would for an employment interview.
- Be on time and maintain a professional manner.
- Ask questions in a clear, concise way.
- Use active listening and observation skills.
- Let the interviewee do most of the talking.
- Bring a copy of your résumé and request feedback, if appropriate.
- Ask for names of others in the field you may contact.
- Never ask for a job!

How do you follow up afterward?

- Write a thank-you note or e-mail immediately.
- Assess your career options in light of the information you've received.
- Contact other professionals whose careers interest you.

College & Training: **Considering More Education?**

Perhaps you've been thinking about your career path and about the possibility of going back to school. Even with higher tuition and other costs, a college degree is considered a very good investment. It's likely to mean:

- **more job opportunities.** For previous generations, jobs for high school graduates were plentiful. Today, most good jobs require more than a high school diploma. A college degree or technical training will open more doors for you because employers need people who can think critically, communicate well, and solve problems creatively.
- **financial rewards.** Over a lifetime, a person with a four-year degree can earn nearly twice as much money as someone with only a high school diploma, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. A degree also pays in employability, since the more education you have, the less likely you are to be unemployed.
- **a sense of accomplishment.** Higher education and training provide the satisfaction of personal growth. Adult learners can explore their interests and develop skills. Meeting new people and participating in new activities in a new learning environment can lead to feeling more comfortable, competent, and accomplished.

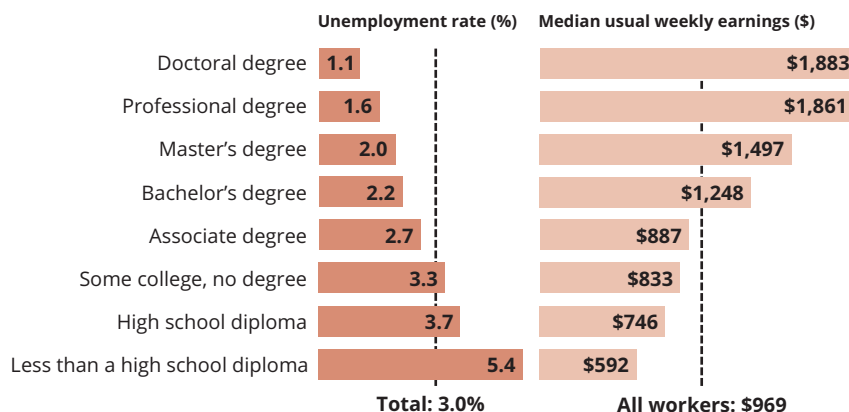
"I felt so good when I finished my first semester. It was really empowering to realize I could get it done and do better work than I'd done in the past."

— ADULT LEARNER

What Do You Want to Gain from More Education?

Whether you're considering a college degree, a short-term skills training program, a diploma, or a GED, be prepared for the challenge of a demanding workload. You'll be more likely to continue working hard if you have a firm idea of the benefits you hope to receive from your hard work. Be sure to ask yourself why more education is important to you.

Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2019



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

For information on earning your high school credential, go to <https://education.vermont.gov>. In the top menu bar, go to “Students” to find the link for Adult Education.

On the “Students” page, go to the menu on the left. Click on “Student Learning,” then click on “Adult Education.” On the “Adult Education” page, click on “Find an Adult Learning Program.”

Do Your Research

Whatever you’re planning to do, it’s vital that you carefully research the field you want training in and the education options that meet your specific needs as an adult learner.

What type and length of training is needed? Possible options include:

- on-the-job training
- apprenticeship
- a few classes
- high school diploma or GED
- vocational technical training
- several years of college

What degree, certification, or license do you want to pursue?

- high school credential
- certificate
- professional license
- associate degree
- bachelor’s degree
- master’s degree
- doctoral degree

Getting Your High School Credential

To attend college or university, all students must have either a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. If you don’t already have one or the other, review the information below and schedule an appointment with a VSAC Adult Education counselor near you to talk about earning a high school credential. See the inside front cover for contact information and locations.

Earning a high school diploma

High School Completion is an individualized graduation program for students ages 16 and up. The program is available at adult education centers statewide. To find a learning center near you, see the sidebar on this page.

GED tests

The GED tests allow those who are at least 16 years old, are not enrolled in high school, and do not have a high school diploma to earn a credential that’s equivalent to a high school diploma. The GED is accepted by post-secondary schools, businesses, and generally by the military, as a valid high school credential.

To earn a GED certificate, you must take four tests: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies.

Before choosing a college, make sure it offers the type of degree or certificate that will meet your needs.

To learn about Vermont colleges, visit www.vsac.org/VTcolleges.

To learn about some technical education options in Vermont, visit www.vtadultcte.org.

Consider the Variety of Education Options Available

There may be several ways for you to receive the education or training you want. One may fit your needs better than another:

- **short-term training** at an area technical center or trade school
- **part-time study**, which may take longer, but is often a way to fit school into a busy schedule
- **independent, guided study programs** that enable you to do a majority of your work at home or in your own community
- **cooperative education, internships** (often not paid), and **externship programs** that build work experience into your academic plan. All provide both hands-on experience and theoretical training in your field.
- **traditional programs** that may include any of the above, but usually offer degrees through classes one to two times a week
- **distance learning** that allows you to take courses and earn a degree online. Online learning requires reliable access to the Internet. Before deciding to take an online degree program, be sure it's a good fit for you. See "Choosing an online college" (page 12) for tips on what to consider when choosing an online degree program.
- **correspondence courses** that are completed entirely at home. These don't qualify for federal or state financial aid.

TIP

LEARN ABOUT NON-COLLEGE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

Check out the resources and information at:

- www.vtadultcte.org
- <https://cewd.vtc.edu>
- <https://ccv.edu/explore-ccv-programs>

Types of Colleges

Colleges come in all sizes and shapes—private and public, four-year and two-year, liberal arts and technical. What's important for you is to find a school that's a good fit and provides the education you need in order to reach your goals. Meeting with a VSAC Adult Education counselor (see inside front cover) can be a good first step in choosing the right school for you.

Earn College Credit for What You Already Know

There may be ways to shorten the time it takes you to complete your education. College-equivalent learning can take place on the job, in the military, or in the community. The best way to find out about these opportunities is to talk directly with the colleges you're considering. Below are some options that may be available.

Assessment of prior learning

In Vermont, there are a number of ways to earn college credit for life experience. Described below are three options available throughout the state college system. Many other colleges offer their own credit-for-life experience programs.

- **Assessment of Prior Learning course (APL):** APL is a semester-long, three-credit course in which students create a portfolio describing and documenting their college-level knowledge and skills acquired outside the classroom.
- **Focused Portfolio course:** The Focused Portfolio is a six-week, one-credit course in which students create short portfolios describing and documenting their college-level learning in one academic area.
- **Course Challenge:** This program provides a student with the opportunity to be evaluated by a faculty member to determine whether he or she can demonstrate passing knowledge for the content of any course at Community College of Vermont (CCV). The student does not need to be a CCV student.

Testing services

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is a national program offering the chance to earn college-level credit for life or work experiences. The Educational Testing Service sponsors a similar program called DANTES (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support). Your personal reading, on-the-job training, non-college courses, and taped courses (or those on TV) may have prepared you to earn college credit. Each school has its own policy regarding the CLEP and/or DANTES tests it will accept for credit, the minimum scores it requires, and the total amount of credit it will award. To learn more, go to:

- www.dantes.doded.mil/index.html
- <https://clep.collegeboard.org/>

For more information on earning college credit for prior learning, and for a list of upcoming webinars to learn more about prior learning assessment options, go to <https://ccv.edu/apl>, call the Vermont State Colleges Office of Prior Learning Assessment at 802-828-4064, or e-mail priorlearning@ccv.edu.

Considering an online program?

Find information and resources to help you determine whether an online education is a good fit for you, and whether the program you're considering is accredited and worth the cost:

- See “Is an Online College Degree Right for You?” at www.usnews.com/education/online-education.
- For a database of institutions and programs accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting organizations, go to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation at www.chea.org.

Choosing an Online College

When deciding if an online school is right for you, do your research and consider the following questions:

- **Does the school have regional accreditation?** This means that the school's programs meet an accepted standard for quality that should allow your credits to be transferred to other accredited schools.
- **Do you have the necessary computer equipment, software, and Internet access?**
- **What kind of academic advising, technical support, administrative assistance, and access to faculty will you have?**
This kind of support is vital in order for distance learning to be successful.
- **Do local colleges have online courses and programs that might meet your needs?** Community colleges often offer lower-cost online courses, with greater academic accountability, than many for-profit online colleges.

How Hard Is It to Get into College?

Getting admitted to college as an adult student is different from getting admitted right out of high school. Each college has its own admissions requirements, which can vary from open admissions to highly selective admissions. Admission to a college with a selective admissions process depends in part on your previous academic performance, whereas admission to a college with open admissions depends more on your readiness and ability to benefit from college-level coursework. Because of this, placement tests may be required.

An adult student who already has college credits from previous courses or programs may be able to use those credits toward a degree at another college. Such credits are called “transfer credits.” If you have credits from a previous college experience, no matter how long ago, make sure to let your academic advisor know.

Admissions Requirements for Undergraduate Studies

Requirements can vary by school and program. You'll need to check with each college you're considering, but a few of the most common requirements include:

- a GED or high school diploma
- standardized test scores (for example, the ACT or SAT) or placement tests such as Accuplacer
- an interview with a college advisor to talk about your goals and options

Placement tests

Placement tests such as Accuplacer (a skills assessment developed by the College Board) are often used by colleges with open admissions in order to place students in classes most appropriate for their academic abilities. These assessments are given individually to students free of charge in Vermont and at the student's own pace on a computer (no computer experience is needed). Assessment areas include reading comprehension, sentence skills, arithmetic, and elementary algebra.

To help you prepare to take placement tests like Accuplacer, visit these websites:

- <https://accuplacer.collegeboard.org>
- <https://ccv.edu/apply/skills-assessment>
- www.khanacademy.org

TIP

WHY SHORT TERM JOB TRAINING?

Go to www.vvac.org/trainingopps for information.

At www.vvac.org/adultlearners, watch the video "Navigating Your Way to a Better Job."

Types of degrees and programs

- **certificate program:** credential awarded after completion of coursework in a focused area of study that usually requires around 30 credit hours (about one year of full-time study)
- **associate degree:** awarded after completion of planned coursework that usually requires 60 credit hours (about two years of full-time study)
- **bachelor's degree:** awarded after completion of planned coursework that usually requires 120 credit hours (about four years of full-time study)
- **master's degree:** earned after the completion of a bachelor's degree; involves a prescribed course of study in a specific field. The length of each program depends on full- or part-time status and the number of credit hours required (varies by program).
- **doctorate:** awarded for advanced, intensive study in a specific field

Applying to a School, in a Nutshell

- **Do your research.**
- **Find out if placement tests are required.**
- **Know your application deadlines.**
- **Provide any documentation needed.**
- **Keep copies of everything.**
- **Make a list of questions to ask the academic advisor.**

Developmental skills classes

Many students need to start with developmental skills courses to help them learn new skills, brush up on existing skills, and prepare for college-level work. Based on the results of skills assessments, students may be recommended for basic coursework in reading, writing, and/or math. Adults who've been out of school for a numbers of years can often benefit from these classes.

These courses are often precollege classes and are assigned credits for schools to be able to assess academic progress and grant financial aid. The credits do not count toward a college degree. There is a limit to the total amount of financial aid a student can access toward the completion of a degree, so when you're considering developmental classes you may also want to consider starting out as a non-degree student so you can use VSAC's Advancement Grant to fund these courses. (See page 26 for information on non-degree financial aid.)

The College Major and Your Degree

There are two parts to a college degree: 1) the courses that meet the college's general education requirements, and 2) the courses in your major area of study.

General education course requirements are designed to help you develop abilities in interpreting facts, considering other points of view, investigating possibilities, discussing possible consequences, and drawing conclusions. In other words, these requirements are designed to develop strong critical thinking and communication skills that will last a lifetime and will serve you in any career or personal situation.

A college major is a particular subject or area of learning that you find interesting and have decided to study more in depth. The major you choose does not necessarily have to define your career path. It may or may not lead to a particular job. It is a body of knowledge that you can build on throughout your life with further education and through life experience.

To learn more about education planning, go to www.vsac.org/adultlearners.

College Admissions Checklist for Adult Students

Certain steps are critical in applying to college. Here's a checklist to lead you through the process.

- Log on to the college's website to submit an application online or to download a paper application to fill out and send in.
- Read the application carefully before you fill it out. It's a good idea to print a copy to use as practice.
- Set up a calendar to make sure you meet deadlines.
- Find out about testing requirements. Most colleges don't require adults to take the SAT or ACT, but they may require their own skills assessments.
- Some colleges will require an official transcript (a record of the courses you took and the grades earned) from the last high school and from every college you've attended. If so, arrange to have transcripts sent from all of your previous schools. Colleges often charge a small fee for this service. If you have a GED, you may also need to send an official copy of your scores. GED transcripts can be obtained at www.ged.com/life_after_ged.
- If an application essay is required, it should be written carefully and thoughtfully. Schools use the essay to learn more about you, so do your best. Before starting to write, be sure you understand the essay question(s). Take your time and ask for help with the editing. Spelling and neatness count. For more tips on writing an effective admissions essay, go to www.vsac.org/essay.
- Colleges often require letters of recommendation. If you're unsure about whom to ask for a recommendation, check with the college's admissions office for guidance.
- If an application fee is required, make sure you enclose the proper amount with your application. If payment poses a hardship, **fee waivers** may be available from your VSAC Adult Education counselor or from the college admissions office.
- Shortly after you've submitted your application, phone or e-mail the school's admissions office to make sure your application has been received.
- If you're seeking financial aid to help pay the costs of your education, make sure to ask the college what forms you'll need to submit. The school you're applying to may ask you to complete forms in addition to the FAFSA. (For more information, see pages 19–20.)

Where you go to school is less important than how you approach your educational experience. You never know when or where a spark will ignite your passion. What you do with your newfound passion is up to you.

Many adults feel they won't be able to keep up with younger students in classes. It isn't true. Half of the students in college programs across the country are 25 or older. They're quite successful in the classroom, bringing rich life experiences that enhance discussions and provide strong motivation to learn.

Reaching Your Goals: Ways To Ensure Your Success

Before you start your new academic venture, take time to think about how you can be a successful student even as you continue your “normal” life. As an adult student, you'll bring rich life experiences and more maturity to your studies, but you'll face different challenges than most students right out of high school.

Plan carefully

What will you have to shift in your life to make room for the additional time that school will require? You'll need to balance the competing demands of your life to make room for both class time and study time. Planning ahead and organizing your time will be essential to your success.

Prepare yourself for a change

If you've been out of school for a few years, you may need a little extra help and time at the outset to get up to speed. Keep in mind that like anything new, college may feel uncomfortable for a while; also keep in mind that you've navigated change successfully many times in your life, so give yourself some time to get comfortable with becoming a student again.

Prepare your family

Communicating openly with your family can help everyone more easily manage the changes that your going back to school will bring. Let them know what you'll need in order to be successful in college—undisturbed quiet time when studying, help with household tasks, or other kinds of support.

Speak up and ask for help

One of the most important skills you can cultivate to be successful in college is getting to know, early on, the resources available to you, and then asking for help when you need it. Instructors, your advisor, and other college staff are there to help you. Talk to them.

Take charge of your thinking

When challenges arise, you can easily redirect any pessimistic thinking with four simple words: “Next time I intend ...” Then simply complete the sentence with a positive idea. For example, if a speech in your public speaking class didn't go well, you can redirect negative thinking by telling yourself, “Next time I intend to practice more before I give a speech.” Even if there isn't a next time, you'll be training your brain to automatically look for more positive associations. You can do this in any area of your life.

Funding for Education & Training: **Help is Available**

If you want to continue your education but are concerned that you won't be able to afford it, you should apply for financial aid, which is available as a supplement to help students meet the cost of their education. Check with your college or school to find out what financial aid may be available to you.

If the school or program you'll be attending is not eligible for federal financial aid, you can apply for an Advancement Grant administered by VSAC. (See page 26 for more information on applying for Advancement Grant funding.)

Types of Financial Aid for a Degree or Certificate Program

The types of financial aid that Vermonters may have access to, depending on their eligibility, include:

- **Vermont grants** — gift aid for both full-time (12 credits or more) and part-time (11 credits or less) study. The Vermont grant is awarded in the fall and spring semesters only (no summer grant).
- **federal Pell grant** — gift aid that can be used for full-time and part-time attendance any term of the year (fall, spring, and summer)
- **scholarships** — gifts of financial aid that students search for individually and compete against other students to win. Scholarships can be based on a wide variety of criteria, not just academic or athletic achievement.
- **workplace, military, or community service benefits** — tuition benefits or loan repayment assistance based on employment, or military or community service
- **federal Direct student loans** (subsidized and unsubsidized) — money that's available for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at least half time (6 credits) and that must be paid back, with interest. Subsidized loans are interest-free while the borrower is in college; unsubsidized loans accrue interest while the borrower is in college. Loan limits apply, depending on year in college and dependency status. (See page 30 for details.)

“My VSAC counselor walked me through all of the forms and the process. She took the time to learn more about me and the direction I wanted for my life. Then she explained how I could afford to go back to school.”

— ADULT LEARNER

Eligibility for need-based financial aid is determined through a formula based on your financial data.

Campus-Based Financial Aid Programs

Financial aid is available from:

- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)** — an additional federal grant award determined by financial need
- **federal work-study** — a paying job (usually on-campus) that provides students with earned income up to a specific dollar amount determined by the college
- **Perkins loan (subsidized)** — money available for undergraduate students enrolled at least half time. The loan must be paid back to the college, with interest.
- **grants and scholarships** — gift aid that may be available from your college. This will vary from school to school, depending on available funding and eligibility criteria.

Other Loan Programs

- **federal Direct PLUS loan (parents)** — for parents of dependent undergraduate students who are attending college at least half time (6 credits)
- **federal Direct PLUS loan (graduate students)** — for graduate students who are attending eligible programs at least half time (6 credits)
- VSAC education loan programs —
 - for students** attending college at least half time. These loans require a credit-worthy cosigner.
 - for parents** of undergraduate or graduate students attending college at least half time (6 credits)As Vermont's nonprofit higher education agency, VSAC can offer its education loans often at lower interest rates than the federal Direct PLUS loan. See www.vsac.org/loans for details.

For additional sources of funding, see page 24.

Financial Aid Forms

Before financial aid is awarded, the student's ability to pay is considered. Since circumstances differ from household to household, some students will be eligible for more need-based aid than others. The only way to find out what you're eligible for is to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); this will help ensure that you get the maximum amount of financial aid possible.

Plan to complete:

- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** This application is the doorway into financial aid. It provides access, if you're eligible, to federal, state, and college financial aid (grants, loans, and, in many cases, scholarships).
- **Vermont grant application:** This application determines eligibility for the VT Incentive grant, administered by VSAC for any Vermont resident who has not yet earned a bachelor's degree. Funding is available for both full-time and part-time attendance. The grant is available to individuals who've resided in Vermont for at least 12 months.
- **VSAC Unified Scholarship Application (USA):** This application is the first step in applying for VSAC-assisted scholarships for eligible Vermont residents. At www.vvac.org/vvacscholarships you can view the VSAC scholarships booklet online, download the publication, or order a printed copy through the mail. All VSAC-assisted scholarships have an early February application deadline. In the scholarships application section of MyVSAC, you'll find helpful tip sheets for applying.

You'll also want to check with your college or school to find out if there are other financial aid forms you need to complete in order to receive financial aid through the college. Other possible forms may include:

- **supplemental forms** that your college may require
- **applications for scholarships** not administered by VSAC
- **CSS Profile®:** If this form is required, go directly to <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>. (None of the Vermont state colleges requires the CSS Profile.)

To access the FAFSA and the VT grant application

Go to <https://fafsa.ed.gov> to access the FAFSA. Beware: There are websites that require a fee for you to submit your FAFSA, so make sure you're on the **.ed.gov** site. You'll need to create an **FSA ID**, with a user name and password, in order to complete, sign, and submit your FAFSA. To create your ID, go to <https://fsaid.ed.gov>. (Dependent students will need one parent to create an FSA ID in addition to the student's ID.)

On the FAFSA confirmation page, there is a link to the Vermont grant application. Choosing this **"Start your state grant application"** link will partially prefill your grant application with FAFSA data.

If you don't link from the FAFSA to your Vermont grant application, go to www.vvac.org. Click on the MyVSAC link in the upper right corner and log on to your MyVSAC account. If you don't have a MyVSAC account, click on "Register Now" and follow the instructions. Once you've logged on, click on "Submit application" on the left side of the screen to apply. In the future, click on the "Work with Grants" box to access your grant information.

Applying for financial aid for a degree or certificate program

- Gather income-related information from two years ago (e.g. 2018 income for the 2020–2021 school year). This includes federal tax return, W2s, child support received, veteran’s non-education benefits, child support paid, etc.
- Complete the FAFSA.
- Complete the Vermont grant application.
- Check to see if the school has additional financial aid forms for you to complete.
- If you’re going to borrow for your education, check with your school’s financial aid office for information on how to apply for a federal Direct loan. Then check with VSAC if you need to borrow amounts over and above federal Direct loan limits.
- Look into other payment options. See page 24 for a list of other possible sources of funding.
- Keep** copies for your records; print or store electronically.

The “EFC” (Expected Family Contribution)

The FAFSA will enter your family size and income information into a mathematical formula that kicks out a dollar figure called an **expected family contribution** (EFC). Your EFC can be found on the FAFSA confirmation page after you’ve submitted your FAFSA.

The EFC is used to determine the amount that a family or individual can reasonably be expected to contribute toward college costs (although it isn’t necessarily expected that this amount will be immediately available). As your EFC goes **down**, your eligibility for grant money goes **up**; and as your EFC goes **up**, your eligibility for grant money goes **down**.

How the EFC works

Once your EFC is determined from the information on your FAFSA, and once you’ve submitted other documents your school may require, your eligibility for financial aid can be determined. Each school will use the EFC to determine the kind of financial aid and the amount you’re eligible to receive toward the cost of your tuition and fees.

It is possible, however, that you may not receive enough financial aid to cover your total financial need. This is because financial aid funds are limited, and some families have a greater need than others. In this case, you may have remaining “unmet need” that will have to be financed in addition to the expected family contribution.

What about special circumstances?

Sometimes special circumstances affect your ability to contribute to college costs. These include:

- reduced income due to unemployment, job change, or loss of untaxed benefits
- unusual medical or dental expenses, or expenses associated with a physical disability
- emergency or unexpected expenses

TIP

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If there are special circumstances you feel colleges and VSAC should consider when they review your financial aid application, e-mail or send a letter describing your situation in detail to the VSAC Grant Program and to the financial aid office of each school to which you’ve applied. The more information VSAC and the colleges have, the better they’ll be able to determine an appropriate financial aid award for you. **It never hurts to ask!**

What Happens After You Apply for Aid?

After you've submitted your FAFSA and a Vermont grant application, the U.S. Department of Education, the VSAC Grant Program, and the college(s) you listed on your FAFSA will notify you of the status of your applications and your eligibility. Watch for your Student Aid Report (SAR), your Vermont grant notification, and financial aid notification from the college(s) to which you've been accepted.

Student Aid Report (SAR)

After your online FAFSA is processed, you'll receive an e-mail with a secure link to your online Student Aid Report (SAR). If you didn't provide an e-mail address on the FAFSA, your SAR will be sent by mail. (Your SAR is also accessible online at <https://fafsa.ed.gov>.)

The SAR is a compilation of all the data you provided on your FAFSA. The information on your SAR includes your EFC and will be made available to the schools you listed on the FAFSA. They'll use this information to determine your eligibility for financial aid. Review your SAR carefully and follow the instructions if you need to update information.

Vermont grant notification

To determine your eligibility for a state grant, VSAC uses the data from your FAFSA and your Vermont grant application. If VSAC needs additional information to determine your eligibility for Vermont grant funding, you'll receive an e-mail requesting that you log into your MyVSAC account and complete tasks on your To-Do List. Once an award determination has been made, VSAC will prompt you by e-mail to check the "Awards and Enrollment" link in your MyVSAC account.

College financial aid award notification

Each college that's accepted you will send you a financial aid notification that outlines the financial aid package it can offer you (see page 27 for an example). It may include federal grants, work-study awards, federal education loans, any institutional aid the school can provide, and an estimate for a Vermont grant award. Not all award packages are the same; you'll need to compare them carefully to identify the package that provides the best financial aid for your needs and your family situation. Make sure you understand what you'll be receiving and what the terms are.

Remember: Pay attention to financial aid deadlines. Missing an application deadline can cost you money. Ask the college financial aid office what deadlines you need to meet. If necessary, estimate your income on your applications rather than miss a deadline; you can always update the figures once your taxes are done.

And keep in mind that there are many ways to make the cost of your education more affordable. Look into the options that will work best for you and your particular circumstances. It's your education and your money, so ask questions. Doing so could save you time and money.

See page 24 for other possible sources of funding for adult students.

If you have to borrow to get the education you need in order to move forward in life, know that it's a good, solid investment—one that you can build on for the rest of your life.

For more information about major loan programs, see page 30 and visit www.vsaac.org/loans.

Loans

Meeting college costs requires many sources of help. It would be great if all your costs were covered by grants and scholarships, but that's unlikely. You'll probably need to borrow to meet costs—either to supplement the college's financial aid offer or to meet your expected contribution.

Understanding loans

- Loans are serious, long-term commitments. You're obligated to pay back loans, both the principal and interest.
- Typically, students must begin repaying loans within six months after leaving school (regardless of whether studies have been completed) or dropping below half-time enrollment.
- Monthly loan payments are calculated by computing the amount borrowed, the interest rate, and the length of repayment.
- Subsidized federal Direct loans are less expensive for borrowers because the federal government pays the interest while a student is attending college half time or more. The interest on unsubsidized loans (and on most private loans) accrues while a student is in college.
- If you see a non-federal or college-specific loan in your award letter, contact the financial aid office to find out exactly what the terms are (reject the loan if the terms aren't favorable). Contact VSAC for loan options.
- Go to <https://studentaid.gov> and choose "Manage Loans" to explore affordable loan repayment options and find out if you can qualify for a loan forgiveness program.
- **Remember:** You can always pay extra on the principal of your loans. Over time, an extra payment of \$10 or \$20 per month can save you hundreds of dollars of interest over the life of your loan.

Additional loan resources

Go to <https://studentaid.gov> for information on:

- **Financial aid history** — Log in with your FSA ID (user name and password) to see your loan borrowing history; click "View Your Aid" on the right to see a summary of your financial aid, both grants and loans.
- **Defaulted loans assistance** — If you need help clearing up a defaulted loan, click on "Manage Loans" to find "Delinquency and Default."

Keeping Your Financial Aid

State and federal governments commit to providing financial resources to help individuals go to college. However, there are limits to the financial aid a student can receive to complete a degree. Generally, a student can receive financial aid up to 150 percent of the credits necessary for the degree (for a 60-credit associate degree, you can receive financial aid for up to 90 course credits of study). Keep in mind that basic skill courses use up some of that 150 percent without contributing credits toward your degree.

In addition, a student needs to maintain satisfactory academic progress to continue receiving financial aid. Satisfactory academic progress is affected by withdrawing from courses after the add/drop period and by not passing any of your courses. Always check with your advisor to make sure you're in good academic standing in order to keep your financial aid and complete your program.

What if I need to “stop out” after starting a semester?

You earn financial aid by attending classes. If you never attend classes or stop attending before your financial aid is in place, you may not receive any financial aid to pay your bill. And even if your financial aid is in place but you stop attending classes partway through the semester (even for a good reason), your financial aid may be reduced or canceled.

In either case, you may end up with a bill from the college because you won't have earned any of the financial aid that was awarded to you (or will have earned only a portion of it) for the semester. Because the college is required to return the portion of aid you didn't earn, it will bill you for that amount. You won't be able to register for classes again until you pay the bill.

If you have to leave the college before completing the semester, find out how your decision will affect financial aid eligibility in the future. You may be able to avoid getting a bill from the college, but not if you don't let the college know what's going on. Make certain you ask.

When you go back to school, remember that anything new may feel uncomfortable for a while, but trust that it will become more familiar and easier. Don't hesitate to ask questions, especially about your financial aid!

Financial aid is complex, and the steps that your college requires you to take enable the college to follow federal regulations so it can continue to provide the funds that help you and other students pay for college. So even if a request doesn't make sense to you, it's important that you follow up.

Additional Funding Resources for College or Training

These sources of funding may be available for adult students.

College savings/investment plans

- Vermont's 529 savings plan
- a Matched Savings Program — an education savings program through your local community action agency
- the PASS program through Social Security

Curtis Training Scholarship — for short term training programs that build job skills in a high demand industry. See a VSAC Adult Education counselor for more information.

Department of Labor funding — available through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) or the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)

Employment at a college — residence assistantships, graduate assistantships, or other employment that may provide tuition breaks

Federal income tax credits

- American Opportunity credit
- lifetime learning credit

Graduate program funding — visit www.vsa.org/graduates for funding options for graduate students

Loan forgiveness — a program through which you may be able to eliminate some or all of your student loan debt in exchange for work in certain careers and/or high-need areas of the country; to learn more, visit <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation>.

National community service through AmeriCorps/VISTA awards

Non-federal education loans — available from banks, credit unions, and nonprofit organizations such as VSAC. These loans can help make up the difference between the actual cost of education and the combined amount of your own resources and the financial aid you receive.

Reach Up/PSE programs

Tuition reimbursement through your employer

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funding — programs for students preparing for careers in health professions; to learn more, call 877-464-4772 or visit <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/loansscholarships>.

Veterans' benefits — for information on major benefits programs administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, call 888-442-4551 or visit <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply>. See sidebar for more information.

Vocational rehabilitation funding — for information, visit your local vocational rehabilitation office.

Navigating veterans' education benefits

Resources are available to help veterans obtain education benefits through the Veterans Administration. Most colleges have a staff person to assist students who are veterans. To find your college's veterans representative, check the college website, or ask in the financial aid or admissions office.

Veterans who are still eligible for Montgomery bill GI benefits may be able to switch to the Post 9/11 GI bill, which provides better benefits over a longer period of time. Veterans can go to <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill> to make the switch. For details, contact the veterans representative at your local Department of Labor office.

Veterans looking for career and job information can visit www.mynextmove.org/vets.

Be a Smart Consumer

Part of the college experience is learning how to increase value in all areas of your life. The following resources can help you become a smarter consumer, make better financial decisions, and lower your education costs.

You'll find a wealth of information on personal finance at www.practicalmoneyskills.com and www.360financialliteracy.org.

Tuition payment plans

Many colleges offer tuition payment plans, allowing students to pay in installments and reduce their need for loans.

Adjust the length of your studies

See if you can earn credit for previous life experience (see page 11). This will shorten the time it takes to complete your education.

Attend part time and pay as you go

By attending college on a part-time basis, students can continue to work and pay some college costs out of pocket to reduce their need for loans.

Savings

Setting aside monthly savings (even a small amount) for college can really add up and save you money.

Textbook costs

Search to find online resources that sell used textbooks. Your college may also have a book fund you can use.

Savvy borrowing

To reduce the cost of your loans, consider paying the interest on unsubsidized loans while in college. And once out of college, consider adding a few dollars to your minimum monthly payment. An extra \$25 per month on a \$15,000 loan with a 10-year term could shorten the term of your loan by 20 months and save you close to \$1,000 in interest.

Work-Study

You can work part time for the college to earn wages (up to a specific amount) for your education. Find out from the college how many hours of work your award will involve, and be realistic about the number of hours you'll be able to work.

One advantage of a work-study job over an off-campus job is that the amount of work-study money you earn is subtracted from your income for the next financial aid year. For example, if you earned \$10,000 one year while in college and \$1,500 of that total was from a work-study job, the FAFSA formula will subtract the work-study and will calculate your eligibility based on \$8,500 of income for the year.

Applying for financial aid for non-degree courses or programs

- Gather income information—federal tax return, W2s, and/or other income information from the previous year (Reach Up grant, child support, Social Security, etc.).
- Gather course information—title, cost, and start date, as well as the name, address, and phone number of the school.
- Complete and submit VSAC's Advancement Grant application online through your MyVSAC account.
- Be sure to mail VSAC a copy of your federal tax return with all W2s and schedules for the year requested, if you filed.
- If you need additional funding, check with the school to see if it offers a payment plan or other options (see page 24 for other possible funding sources).
- Be sure to keep a copy of your application for your records.
- NOTE: If you're awarded an Advancement Grant, VSAC will contact your school after the start date of the class to make sure you're enrolled. VSAC will send the grant funds directly to the school.
- See the tip on page 10 for links to short-term training opportunities.

Financial Aid for Non-Degree Courses or Training Programs

If the education or training you want isn't eligible for federal financial aid and you're concerned about the cost, apply for an Advancement Grant administered by VSAC. The Advancement Grant has two purposes—to improve employability or to encourage further study. The Advancement Grant can pay for courses at college and at other kinds of educational institutions, such as your local technical center.

To apply for Advancement Grant funding, log on to your MyVSAC account and complete the online application. (If you don't have a MyVSAC account, you'll need to create one. Click on the MyVSAC link in the upper right corner of www.vsac.org, then click on "Register Now" and follow the instructions to create your account.) You can also call VSAC's Grant Program at 800-882-4166 to request a paper application. In either case, you can schedule an appointment with a VSAC Adult Education counselor for help with the application process. If you're eligible, the amount of the Advancement Grant awarded will be based on your financial need and the cost of the training—up to a maximum award, determined each year by VSAC. Due to limited funds, a student will be considered for only two courses per enrollment term, up to two enrollment terms per year (and six terms in a lifetime). After verifying enrollment, VSAC will send grant funds directly to your school.

Remember: Check your e-mail regularly because VSAC will communicate with you by e-mail if you need to provide additional information to complete your grant application. Applications are considered on a first-come, first-served basis, so respond in a timely manner to any request. If you have questions, call the VSAC Grant Program at 800-882-4166 or e-mail grants@vsac.org.

Some training programs and courses typically funded by the VSAC Advancement Grant are:

- commercial drivers license, class A or B
- licensed nurse assistant
- computer coursework through area technical centers
- welding
- a "college tryout" course
- pre-college developmental skills courses

TIP

NEED HELP?

VSAC Adult Education counselors can help with all your funding options. Call 877-961-4369 for an appointment. And check out the video "Funding Your Certificate or Technical Training Program" at www.vsac.org/adultlearners.

College Financial Aid Offers

After applying for financial aid, the college(s) to which you applied will notify you regarding the financial aid being offered to you. Each school that has accepted you will send you an offer; some will send it by mail, while others will provide it online. Compare your offers carefully to determine the one that best meets your needs. Make sure you understand all the obligations associated with each type of offer. Call each college's financial aid office if you have questions.

If you want to compare your financial aid awards from the schools you're considering, use the Financial Aid Award Comparison Tool at www.vsac.org/comparisontool.

My Awards

You can accept or decline awards, and update your loan amounts.

Ms. Terry P Cloth Colleague ID: 1234567

Select an Award Year: 2020/2021 Academic Year ▼

You have the following Awards

Your eligibility and award amounts may change depending on the number of credits you enroll in. Please contact your Financial Aid counselor if you have questions.

1 58% Scholarships and Grants — Money you don't have to pay back \$5,324.00						
Award	4 Status		Total Awarded	FALL 2020	SPRING 2021	SUMMER 2021
PELL Grant	Accept	Decline	\$2,324.00	\$1,549.00	\$775.00	\$0.00
Vermont Grant from VSAC	Accept	Decline	\$750.00	\$500.00	\$250.00	\$0.00
Scholarship	Accept	Decline	\$750.00	\$500.00	\$250.00	\$0.00
Federal SEOG	Accept	Decline	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$0.00
2 Federal Workstudy	Accept	Decline	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

3 42% Loans — Money you have to pay back \$3,900.00						
Award	Status		Total Awarded	FALL 2020	SPRING 2021	SUMMER 2021
3 Subsidized Loans	Accept	Decline	\$3,900.00	\$3,900.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Award	Status	Total Awarded	FALL 2020	SPRING 2021	SUMMER 2021
5 Total Awards		\$9,224.00	\$7,649.00	\$1,575.00	\$0.00

▼ Accept or Decline All

Loan Requirements Checklist

Complete [Complete Direct Loan Entrance Counseling](#)
You completed the Direct Loan entrance counseling on 8/25/2010

Complete **6** [Sign a Direct Loan Master Promissory Note](#)
Your active MPN expires on 8/22/2020

1 Ask if there are any conditions and/or requirements for free funds from grants, scholarships, or other sources. These may include maintaining a certain grade point average, a service commitment, or work in a specific field after graduation.

Watch carefully for the words *estimated* and *tentative*. If you see these words, it means that the award has not been finalized and could change once your application is complete.

2 Federal work-study funds represent an employment opportunity. Be sure to check with your college to see when and how you receive your job placement. Remember: The best jobs go very quickly, so sign up promptly.

3 Student loans can be subsidized or unsubsidized. See the Federal Direct Loan information (page 30) to learn the differences.

4 Your college may require that you accept or decline your awards. Read all instructions carefully.

Don't say "YES" to any college until you compare the award notification with the cost of attendance. Include estimated out-of-pocket expenses (travel, books, personal items), as well as costs for tuition and fees, and (if applicable) room and board.

5 Your total award may consist of grant, loan, and work-study funds. Read the fine print on your award notification and on any additional forms included with the notification! Also, identify the funds that are gifts and the funds you'll be expected to repay.

6 If you decide to accept loan funds in your financial aid offer, you'll need to follow your school's instructions to access, complete, and sign a master promissory note. Loan entrance counseling is also required.

Major Financial Aid Programs

Programs	Who is eligible to apply?	How much are awards?	How are they awarded?	How do I apply?
Vermont Incentive Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time undergraduate Vermont residents enrolled or accepted for enrollment in eligible degree programs who have not already received bachelor's degrees. Vermont residents enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a medical student in the M.D. program at the Larner College of Medicine at the University of Vermont or a doctor of veterinary medicine program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards have ranged from \$1,000 to \$12,500 for eligible students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need; applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to https://fafsa.ed.gov to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Then complete a Vermont grant application, available online through your MyVSAC account at www.vsac.org. A paper version is available from VSAC.
Vermont Part-Time Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vermont residents enrolled or accepted for enrollment in eligible undergraduate degree programs who have not already received bachelor's degrees and are taking fewer than 12 credit hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards have ranged from from \$500 to \$9,380 for eligible students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need and number of credit hours taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same procedure as for Vermont Incentive grant.
Advancement Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vermont residents who are not enrolled in high school and are enrolled in non-degree courses that will improve employability or encourage further study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amounts vary; contact VSAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need and cost of course. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to www.vsac.org/grants to complete an Advancement Grant application, available online through your MyVSAC account. A paper version is available from VSAC.
Federal Pell Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduates who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment in eligible degree programs and have not already received bachelor's degrees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards have ranged from \$639 to \$6,345 for eligible students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to https://fafsa.ed.gov to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Scholarships

Search for nationwide scholarships at:

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college>
- www.cappex.com/scholarships
- www.fastweb.com

Campus-based Financial Aid Programs

The following programs are federal financial aid programs offered through your college. Many colleges also offer their own loan, grant, and scholarship programs. Check with your financial aid office for information.

Programs	Who is eligible to apply?	How much are awards?	How are they awarded?	How do I apply?
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same criteria as for Pell grant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants range from \$100 to \$4,000 a year. Not available at all schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need and availability of funds at the school. Priority given to Pell grant recipients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult your college catalog for financial aid deadlines and forms that may be required in addition to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
Federal Work-Study Program (FWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate or graduate students who attend or plan to attend approved post-high school degree programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends upon the number of hours the student works. Not available at all schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need and availability of funds at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same procedures as for Pell grant and FSEOG.
Federal Perkins Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same criteria as for Federal Work-Study Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to \$5,500 a year for undergraduates; up to \$8,000 a year for graduates. Not available at all schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon financial need and availability of funds at the school. Fixed interest rate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same procedures as for Pell grant and FSEOG.

Education Loan Programs

In order to apply for any federal education loan, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For instructions, see page 19.

Programs	Who is eligible to apply?	How much are awards?	How are they awarded?	How do I apply?
Federal Direct Loan (subsidized and unsubsidized)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate and graduate* students enrolled or accepted for enrollment at least half time in eligible programs at eligible institutions. <i>* Graduate students are not eligible for subsidized loans.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined subsidized and unsubsidized base limits for all students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5,500 first year \$6,500 second year \$7,500 third, fourth, and fifth years \$8,500/year graduate (unsubsidized only) Independent undergrads and some dependent undergrads may qualify for an additional amount up to \$5,000 in unsubsidized loans, depending on year in school. Graduate students may qualify for up to \$20,500/year in unsubsidized loans. Cumulative limits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent: \$31,000 Independent: \$57,500 Graduate: \$138,500 Fees are deducted from loan proceeds at time of disbursement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidized Direct loans are based upon financial need. Borrower is not charged interest while enrolled at least half time, or during grace period or deferment. Unsubsidized Direct loans are based upon cost minus financial aid. Student is responsible for interest from disbursement date. Repayment begins six months after student is no longer enrolled at least half time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow school procedure to request a federal Direct loan, and sign and submit a Federal Direct Loan Master Promissory Note. Federal Direct loan funds cannot be disbursed by the college until the student completes entrance counseling at https://studentaid.gov/h/complete-aid-process. For current rates and fees, go to https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/interest-rates.
Federal Direct PLUS Loan (for parents of undergraduate students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent or stepparent* of dependent undergraduate students enrolled or accepted for enrollment at least half time in an eligible program. <i>* If stepparent information is used to calculate expected family contribution</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to cost of education minus financial aid. Fees are deducted from loan proceeds at time of disbursement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit approval required. Repayment begins following final disbursement. May defer payment while dependent student is enrolled at least half time, and for six months following, upon request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow school procedure to request a federal PLUS loan, and sign and submit a Federal Direct PLUS Loan Application and Master Promissory Note.
Federal Direct PLUS Loan (for graduate & professional students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate and professional students enrolled or accepted for enrollment at least half time in eligible programs. Must apply for maximum federal Direct unsubsidized loan first. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to cost of education minus financial aid. Fees are deducted from loan proceeds at time of disbursement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit approval required. Repayment begins following final disbursement. May defer payment while enrolled at least half time and for six months following. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow school procedure to request a federal PLUS loan, and sign and submit a Federal Direct PLUS Loan Application and Master Promissory Note.

VSAC education loans

VSAC's education loans are available for students and for parents. A credit review is required. Terms may be more favorable than the term for other loans, depending on your situation. For details, go to www.vsac.org/loans. For a loan comparison, visit www.vsac.org/compare.

Who is VSAC?

The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), a Vermont nonprofit, has been helping Vermont students of all ages save, plan, and pay for college or training since 1965. We offer:

- career and education planning services
- Vermont's 529 college savings plan
- grants and scholarships for Vermont residents
- education loans, with personalized education debt counseling from our Advantage Loan coaches

Contact us

ONLINE: vsac.org
CALL: **800-642-3177**
E-MAIL: info@vsac.org
VISIT US: **VSAC Resource Center**
10 East Allen Street
Winooski, Vermont

The content of this guide was developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, this content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.



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VSAC does not discriminate in employment or the provision of services on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, place of birth, age, veteran or military status, genetic information, disability, or any other legally protected status. Please contact VSAC at 800-642-3177 or 655-9602 in the Burlington area (TDD for hearing impaired, 800-281-3341 or 654-3766) if auxiliary aids or services are needed for application or participation in VSAC services.

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