

Senior Year Checklist

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ To help you finalize your college list, explore college net price calculators at collegescorecard.ed.gov
- ☐ Print out VSAC's financial aid checklist at vsac.org/finaidchecklist to keep track of deadlines and to keep you on track through the application process.
- ☐ Check college websites to find out if you need to submit the CSS Profile® or other applications.
- ☐ Check college websites for financial aid application deadlines.
- ☐ Need information or help with financial aid applications? Check out VSAC events in your area and plan to attend. Go to vsac.org/events for dates and times.

OCTOBER

- ☐ Submit the FAFSA at studentaid.gov/fafsa
- ☐ Apply for a Vermont grant at vsac.org/grants
- ☐ Submit other financial aid applications—like the CSS Profile®—that colleges may require.

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Pick up a VSAC scholarships booklet at your school (or view online at vsac.org/vsacscholarships) and begin identifying scholarships for which you're eligible.

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Watch for confirmations from colleges, VSAC, and FAFSA, along with requests for further information.
- ☐ Submit your VSAC-assisted scholarship application at vsac.org/scholarships and upload all required documents by the mid-February deadline.

MARCH-APRIL

- ☐ Watch for Vermont grant information.
- ☐ Watch for financial aid offers from colleges and visit vsac.org/collegedecision to learn how to understand the different kinds of aid in your offers.
- ☐ Read *My Education Loans*, VSAC's guide to borrowing for college and training. Visit vsac.org/loans or email publications@vsac.org to receive a copy in the mail.
- ☐ Look for decisions regarding VSAC-assisted scholarships.
- ☐ Use VSAC's spreadsheet at vsac.org/compareoffers to compare college costs and financial aid offers.

MAY

- ☐ May 1: College decisions (and deposit) usually due.
- ☐ Compare loan options at vsac.org/compare

Important! Be sure to re-apply for financial aid EACH YEAR you're enrolled in a college or training program.

Getting started

Financial aid is money to help pay for college and job training.

- **Grants and scholarships** are free money that you don't have to pay back.
- **Loans** are funds that you borrow and need to pay back, with interest.
- **Forgivable loans (workforce funding)** are interest-free and do not have to be paid back if the work obligation is completed.

The most important thing to remember is that the primary responsibility for paying lies with the family—parents and students. Financial aid is meant as a *supplement* to assist students who wouldn't be able to continue their education without help.

Costs include:

- **tuition and fees**—classes and programs
- **room and board**—living arrangements and meal plan
- **books and supplies**
- **other expenses**—transportation, personal items, computer, etc.

Cost of attendance

– grants, scholarships & other “gift” aid

= your yearly cost (net price*)

**This net price will be different for each school.*

Families pay their net price by combining:

- **savings**—even small amounts can reduce the need for borrowing
- **current income**—such as tuition payment plans, which allow you to spread payments out over the year
- **work-study**—campus jobs offered by the college to provide students with income each semester
- **future income**—education loans or other borrowing

VSAC can help you pay for college and job training.

VSAC, a Vermont nonprofit, has been helping Vermont students of all ages save, plan, and pay for college and career training since 1965. We're committed to helping families make informed decisions.

- **Free financial aid presentations** at schools and other locations
- **State grants** for Vermont residents in undergraduate full- or part-time study and for those taking non-degree courses or training to improve employability
- **Scholarships** for Vermont residents—more than 150 available
- **Interest-free forgivable loans** (workforce funding) to encourage careers in high-demand job sectors
- **Military funding**—such as the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program
- **VSAC student and parent loans** for Vermont residents attending college in Vermont, across the U.S., or internationally, and for out-of-state students attending Vermont colleges
- **Help with financial aid applications**—FAFSA, Vermont grant, VSAC-assisted scholarships
- **Financial aid videos, tips, and other resources** at vsac.org

Contact us

ONLINE: vsac.org
CALL: 800-642-3177
EMAIL: info@vsac.org
VISIT US: VSAC Resource Center



Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
10 East Allen Street PO Box 2000 Winooski, VT 05404

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 802-655-9602 in the Burlington area (TDD for hearing impaired, 800-281-3341 or 802-654-3766) if auxiliary aids or services are needed for application or participation in VSAC services.

Fall 2025



PAYING FOR COLLEGE & TRAINING

Guide to Financial Aid

What to know and how to apply



What's inside:

- Types of aid—grants, scholarships, workforce funding, military funding, and loans
- 802Opportunity and Freedom & Unity—get a degree, tuition-free
- Senior Year Checklist—what to do when



Need help paying for education or job training? There are many programs available ...

Grants

Grants are provided by the federal government, the State of Vermont, and your school. They're based on financial need and do not have to be repaid. You may be eligible for:

- a federal Pell grant or a Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity grant (FSEOG)
- a Vermont grant for a Vermont resident planning to attend college full time or part time, or for a Vermont resident enrolled in a non-degree course to improve employability or pursue further study
- a grant from your school

To apply

- 1 Complete the Vermont grant application at **vsac.org/grants**. Grants are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, so apply as soon as possible after October 1. For questions or a paper application, call VSAC at 800-882-4166.
- 2 Submit the FREE Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), available iOctober 1, at **studentaid.gov/fafsa**, or call 800-433-3243 for a paper application.
- 3 Complete the CSS Profile® at **cssprofile.collegeboard.org** and other supplemental applications if required by your schools.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded based on criteria such as degree program or major, academic achievement, extracurricular activities or other factors, and often (but not always), financial need. Look for information and applications at:

- local high schools, businesses, clubs, or town offices
- your college or training institution
- **vsac.org/scholarships**—info on more than 150 scholarships for Vermont residents and links to online scholarship search tools

To apply

- 1 In November, pick up VSAC's scholarship booklet at your school counseling office, or request a copy in the mail at **vsac.org/scholarships**. Begin identifying VSAC-assisted scholarships you're eligible for.
- 2 Contact the schools you're applying to; find out if receiving a scholarship will affect your financial aid.

802Opportunity

The 802Opportunity program, in combination with other state and federal financial aid, enables eligible Vermont residents with a family income of \$100,000 or less, who do not already have a bachelor's degree, to attend Community College of Vermont (CCV) tuition-free.

To apply

- 1 Complete a FAFSA at **studentaid.gov/fafsa** and the Vermont grant application through VSAC.
- 2 Apply for admission to CCV (if you haven't already) and register for classes.
- 3 VSAC works with CCV to pay the tuition and administrative fee.

Interest-free forgivable loans (workforce development funding)

VSAC works with the State of Vermont to offer career-specific interest-free forgivable loans to encourage students to enter the Vermont workforce in specific high-demand fields.

For instance, the **Vermont Trades Forgivable Loan Program** covers up to full tuition, initial licensing fees and exam fees for qualified students enrolled in an industry-recognized training and certification program that leads to a career in many high-demand trades sectors.

Interest-free forgivable loans in Vermont require that recipients commit to specific work obligations, usually one year of working in Vermont for each year of funding. No payment is required while the student is enrolled in the education program, and the loans are "forgiven" (meaning they do not have to be paid back) once the work obligation is completed. The loan must be repaid if the student does not complete the education program or the work obligation. These programs are open to Vermont residents and non-residents. Learn more at **vsac.org/workforce**

To apply

- 1 Complete the Unified Scholarship Application at **vsac.org/scholarships**
- 2 Complete the FAFSA for the academic year you're attending or planning to attend at **studentaid.gov/fafsa**

Freedom & Unity

The Freedom & Unity program, in combination with federal, state and institutional grants, enables full- and part-time Vermont students with a family income of \$65,000 or less, who do not already have a bachelor's degree, to attend Vermont State University (VTSU) tuition-free.

To apply

- 1 Complete a FAFSA at **studentaid.gov/fafsa** and the Vermont grant application through VSAC.
- 2 Apply for admission to VTSU (if you haven't already) and register for classes.
- 3 VSAC works with VTSU to pay general tuition.

Military funding

The federal government and the State of Vermont offer programs that help fund college and training for members of the military, veterans, and their families.

- **The Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program** can reduce or eliminate tuition for active members in good standing of the Vermont National Guard when they complete specific obligations. Learn more at **vsac.org/guard**
- **Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Scholarships**, offered by the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Space Force, are awarded for merit (vs. financial need) at over 1,000 colleges across the U.S.

Learn more about other programs, such as the Minuteman Scholarship and the Montgomery GI Bill, at **vsac.org/military**

To apply

- 1 For the National Guard Tuition Benefit Program, visit **vsac.org/guard**
- 2 For ROTC and other programs, check with a local military recruiter.

Education loans

Most families use education loans to cover at least part of the cost of college and training. All loans are borrowed money that must be repaid with interest, so it's important for you to understand the details before you borrow.

You get to choose the loans you want to borrow. Some may be listed in your financial aid offer letter, but this doesn't mean you have to accept all of them.

First, consider federal Direct student loans. These loans may offer flexible repayment options.

Then, compare all other loan options to be sure you're getting a competitive rate, and understand the repayment options and other details. Look for a loan with a low fixed interest rate. VSAC and other non-profit agencies offer student and parent loans with low rates—often lower than the federal PLUS loan (for parents of undergraduates and for graduate/professional students), so pause and shop around before you choose a federal PLUS loan. A private loan, like a VSAC loan, may be a lower cost option.

To apply

- 1 For federal loans, complete the FAFSA at **studentaid.gov/fafsa**. Your college will advise you of your eligibility and next steps.
- 2 For VSAC's student and parent loans, apply at **vsac.org/apply**. If you have questions, call VSAC at 800-226-1029.

Focus on FAFSA at vsac.org/FAFSA

Filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the starting point for:

- federal grant programs such as Pell grants
- state grants and scholarships
- work-study, federal loans and other programs



- Maximize grants, scholarships and other "gift aid" first so you borrow only what you need each year. Don't borrow the maximum that's offered just because you can.
- Your choice of interest rate and repayment option can reduce your cost of borrowing.

Have questions or need help applying? Contact us at 800-642-3177 or info@vsac.org