



Legislative Guide 2026

Providing expert resources on higher education and workforce development to inform your policy work

STATE HOUSE RESOURCES

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Above: Students [Shavonna Bent](#), [Thurston Swarthout](#), [Hailey Bartlett](#), [O.J. Daring](#), [Jared Green](#), and [Maria Tye](#).

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For over sixty years the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) has helped students and families find, plan, and pay for postsecondary education and job training, while fostering local, regional, and statewide partnerships to make education and training more affordable. We provide expert resources on higher education and workforce development, backed by research and analysis, to inform your policy work.

And while we are often known as a college access organization, VSAC's programs and services reflect innovative education policy that evolves with Vermont's changing needs. For example, the Advancement Grant—a revolutionary commitment to adult students seeking access to non-degree workforce training—was first in the nation and a predecessor to the recent national enactment of Workforce Pell.

As Vermont navigates an evolving economic and education landscape, we face interrelated affordability challenges exacerbated by workforce shortages: housing, healthcare, and education. Equipping Vermonters with the education and training required for well-paying jobs is more pressing than ever. According to the McClure Foundation, 70 percent of the most in-demand careers in Vermont require education and training beyond high school. We must ensure that all Vermonters are prepared for careers that are critical to our state's economic well-being.

Addressing Vermont's challenges requires multiple approaches, collaboration, and creativity. Some of the ways in which we have worked to bolster Vermont's workforce include 802Opportunity and Freedom & Unity, creating exciting new options for students and their families through free tuition at the Community College of Vermont and Vermont State University. We work with the Vermont Guard through the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program, and we've continued to open pathways to trades and high-wage, critical-need jobs through forgivable loans that combine full tuition support with a work commitment.

Our North Star is the relentless pursuit of what is best for the students and families we serve. That commitment has carried us through the financial crisis, the pandemic, and years of turbulent federal financial aid policy changes. As you tackle a wide array of issues and challenges, please look to us as a partner providing policy research at the state and county level. As always, VSAC is here to help you, and help your constituents chart their path to a rewarding career.

Scott Giles, VSAC President & CEO

Our vision is to create opportunities for all Vermont students, but particularly for those of any age who believe that the doors to higher education and training are closed to them.

VSAC research informs

VSAC's Research Department plays a critical role in identifying issues related to higher education and workforce development in Vermont. For 35 years, VSAC's research team has collected and analyzed data from state and national sources—including Vermont students—to provide Vermont policymakers with deeper insights into the complexities of the postsecondary experience. VSAC's reports help to facilitate informed decision-making around education policy and investment of the state's resources.

Education Fact Sheets by County are available at vsac.org/research.

VSAC opens doors

- With the support of three federal grants, Outreach staff counseled more than **5,043 modest-income and/or first-gen students of all ages** working toward degree and non-degree programs.
- **75% of Talent Search** and **48% of GEAR UP** participants who graduated from high school in 2024 continued their education in the fall.
- **802Opportunity students were more than twice as likely** as other CCV students to graduate within four years and graduated from CCV and moved on to another learning institution at a higher rate (24%) than other CCV students (16%).
- More than 440 802Opportunity students completed a credential; **67% were first generation**, and **67% were adults**—average age 31.
- **College & Career Pathways events drew 1,830 students and parents**—1,557 in person and 273 online via livestream or recording.
- **1,140 students** attended VSAC events focused on career and STEM exploration and leadership development, and **491 education professionals** received training from VSAC staff, including **135 who participated** in the 21st annual Transition & Career Planning conference.
- **492 parents and students** attended free VSAC Paying for College and Financial Aid Forms support events.

FY25 by the numbers

VSAC Student and Parent Loans \$48M originated

VSAC borrowers saved **\$905,000** in FY25 through rebates, and more than **\$184 million** since 1995. **VSAC serviced \$382.7M** in loans in FY25.

VT529 Education Savings Plan \$764M value

The combined value of **30,722** VT529 education savings accounts was \$764 million as of 6/30/25. Since 1999, **13,290 students have used over \$482.8M** to cover qualified education expenses.

Grants \$25.3M awarded

Vermont students of all ages received **11,118 need-based education grants** worth \$25.25 million.

802Opportunity 2,700 participants

Using 802Opportunity, Vermonters from all 14 counties enrolled at all 12 CCV academic centers **tuition-free** in 2024–25, **up 28%** from the first year of the program.

Scholarships & Forgivable Loans \$21.6M awarded

Recipients of more than 150 public and private scholarships and interest-free forgivable loans across nine workforce development programs received **5,005 awards**.

Financial Aid 30,000 counseled

VSAC's financial aid counselors talked to more than 30,000 Vermonters and other borrowers.

Source: FY25 Annual Report