



Vermont Talent Search

Since 1969, VSAC Talent Search has been providing career and college planning services to students who meet income guidelines and have an interest in pursuing education or training beyond high school.

The Talent Search program encourages students to set high academic expectations, to complete high school, and to pursue education or training programs after high school. Talent Search is a U.S. Department of Education federally funded TRIO program. More than 309,900 students are enrolled in 473 Talent Search TRIO programs across the US.

WHAT WE DO

Vermont Talent Search encourages and supports all aspects of postsecondary education and career preparation through:

- one-on-one counseling & mentoring
- academic support and enrichment
- career exploration and counseling
- field trips for career and college exploration and visits
- financial literacy
- family engagement opportunities



OUR PROGRAM

Vermont Talent Search serves approximately 1,000 students in 46 middle schools and high schools across the state of Vermont. The federally funded Talent Search program serves students from modest-income families and families whose parents have not earned a bachelor's degree.

Services for Talent Search students include:

- Academic skill-building, study skills, class advising
- PSAT, Pre-ACT, SAT, and ACT test preparation and vouchers for tests
- Career exploration
- College search and application assistance
- Financial literacy, financial aid information & assistance applying for financial aid
- College visits and summer program opportunities

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Program Director Matt "Beagle" Bourgault

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☎ 800-642-3177, ext. 299

TRIO
A federally funded program

SCAN TO LEARN MORE



2023–2024 Outcomes

- 100% of seniors graduated from high school
- 80% of seniors enrolled in a postsecondary program
- 59% of students (high school Class of 2018) earned a postsecondary credential



Vermont Talent Search Success Stories

JOSH SAMANIEGO

From Barre to Bennington: Josh Samaniego pursues change through politics and music



Josh Samaniego heads to Bennington College this fall to study political science. Inspired by a psychology class and the political impacts of COVID, Josh realized he wanted to be a force for change, not a bystander. But as the youngest of four raised by a single mom, and a first-generation college student, the college path felt uncertain and overwhelming. That changed thanks to support from VSAC's Talent Search program, which helped Josh navigate applications, understand financial aid, and find scholarships—ultimately allowing him to attend college debt-free.

Josh says VSAC was instrumental in turning confusion into confidence, especially in his junior and senior years when he began meeting one-on-one with his outreach counselor to plan his future.

With VSAC's help, he applied to 10 colleges. He found his perfect fit in Bennington's open curriculum, which allows him to explore both politics and music, another lifelong passion. Self-taught on piano and guitar, Josh sees music as a form of expression and empowerment. Looking ahead, he hopes to use both his voice and his education to run for office and advocate for real change.

From Vermont to Antarctica, Shavonna charts a course to a degree in Chemical Oceanography

SHAVONNA BENT

Shavonna Bent grew up in rural Vermont and now conducts field research on penguins in Antarctica as part of her PhD in Chemical Oceanography. A first-generation college student, she always dreamed of working in ocean science but, when she was in high school, she found the college process confusing and overwhelming. VSAC's Talent Search program helped her and her family navigate financial aid, explore colleges, and secure scholarships—support that allowed her to earn her undergraduate degree debt-free and pursue graduate school without worrying about student loans.

Beyond financial help, VSAC offered guidance and encouragement that helped Shavonna map out her ongoing academic path. Hands-on research opportunities during college led her to a National Science Foundation program and, eventually, to Antarctica, where she now studies how climate change is affecting penguin diets and ocean ecosystems. As she finishes her dissertation, she's grateful for the people and programs—especially VSAC—that helped turn her childhood dream into reality.

