

Financial Aid 101

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation

Fall 2024









Session goals

- Applications and programs
- Federal Student Aid/FAFSA
- Vermont grants
- VSAC-administered scholarships
- Short-term training funding
- Education loans
- Information resources

Applications

- FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Vermont grant applications
- Institutional aid applications: on postsecondary institution websites and financial aid publications
 - CSS/Financial Aid Profile at https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org
- VSAC Unified Scholarship Application (MyVSAC)
- Other scholarship applications
- Loan application(s)













FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

FAFSA



Required for:

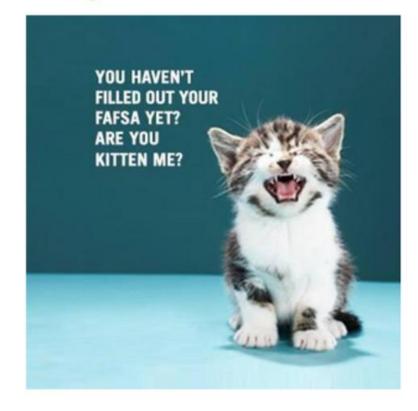
- Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs (including loans)
- Vermont Incentive, Part-Time grant and 802 Opportunity programs

May be required for:

- Institutional aid
- Scholarships



Complete the FAFSA right meow! fafsa.gov --->





FAFSA

How to apply

Electronic:

- fafsa.gov
- <u>studentaid.gov</u> FAFSA Form -> Complete the FAFSA

Paper:

• Download and print PDF FAFSA at studentaid.gov.

When to apply

• Beginning December 2024, for the 2025–2026 school year.



Who's eligible for federal aid?

From studentaid.gov

- Demonstrate financial need (for most programs);
- be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen;
- have a valid Social Security number (with the exception of students from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau);
- be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program;



Who's eligible for federal aid?

From studentaid.gov

- Be enrolled at least half-time to be eligible for Direct Loan Program funds;
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress in college or career school;
- Sign the certification statement on the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form stating that you're not in default on a federal student loan, you do not owe money on a federal student grant, and you'll only use federal student aid for educational purposes; and
- Show you're qualified to obtain a college or career school education.



Dependent vs. Independent (2025-2026 school year)

- Were you born before January 1, 2002?
- As of today, are you married?
- At the beginning of the 2025–26 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate program (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.)?
- Are you currently on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?
- Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
- Do you now have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026?



Dependent vs. Independent

- Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2026?
- At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?
- As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor?
- Does someone other than your parent or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?



Dependent vs. Independent

Are you an **unaccompanied** youth who is homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless? Determination through:

- your high school or district homeless liaison, or
- the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or
- the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program, or
- a director or designee of a Federal TRiO program



Dependent vs. Independent

- If "no" to all previous questions, the student is considered dependent for Federal Student Aid and must use parental information when applying.
- Students considered dependent whose parents refuse to contribute their information may answer a question on the FAFSA to only be considered for Unsubsidized Federal Student Loans
- Dependency override from college can still be considered.
 - Student can choose to continue to fill out FAFSA without parental information and will receive a provisional SAI (Student Aid Index).
 - Student would need to appeal and send documentation which the college financial aid office will evaluate to determine whether the FAFSA may continue to process.



FSAID

Used for completing/accessing:

- FAFSA on the Web (FOTW)
- Federal Student loan Entrance Counseling and Master Promissory Note
- TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve documents
- Annual Student Loan Acknowledgement

Students, parents, spouses, borrowers create:

- Unique username & password "Create Account"
 - Must link to unique e-mail address. NOTE: DO NOT USE school email address
- Answers to four challenge questions
- Set up two-step verification can use email, cell phone or Authentication App



FSAID

General Information/Tips:

- Each FSA ID is unique to one person.
 - Parents/students/spouses cannot share an FSA ID or use the same email address for separate IDs.
 - If a parent has an FSA ID from a previous child attending college or for their own education, the parent will use that same ID. Forgot it? Use "forgot username" prompt.
- Students/parents/spouses may create an FSA ID without a social security number.
- Student/parent must create FSA ID and have account confirmed *before starting* the FAFSA. Give 3-5 business days for this to process.
- Have suggestions for "additions" to usernames.
 - Add middle name or initial.
 - Add a year, but not date of birth (2025 or 2029).
 - Include house number or last digits of phone number.
 - YouTube video available at https://tinyurl.com/mv4bs99p.

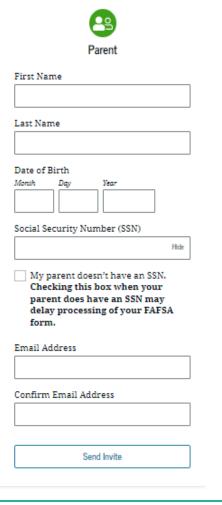


Better FAFSA changes

Roles-based process

- Each contributor enters the FAFSA separately, using their own FSA ID.
 - Whoever begins FAFSA first needs to invite the other contributor(s) using name, social security number, date of birth and email address.







Better FAFSA changes

FAFSA Contributor

- Federal Student Aid term used to describe whose information should be on the FAFSA
- Does NOT mean who is required to pay just whose information should be given on the form. Contributor of *information* to determine Federal, institution and state aid.

Consent

- Contributors on the FAFSA *must* give consent and approval for access to Federal Income Tax Returns for the student to be considered for Federal Student Aid, *even if they do not file*.
 - Without consent and approval, the student will not be eligible for federal financial aid.



Who is a Contributor?

Dependent Students: Which parent/contributor info is required?

- If biological or adoptive parents live together, both parents' information used, regardless of marital status.
- If parents don't live together, the parent who provided more support to the student in the past year.
 - If 50/50, then consider things like who carries the student on their insurance, who supplies the student with a car, etc?
 - If that parent is married, even if the marriage is recent, then parent and stepparent.
- If neither parent provided more support, the parent who has more income and assets' information should be used.

Independent Students: What contributor info is required?

- If married, student and spouse, even if marriage is recent.
- If single, separated/divorced and not remarried, student only.



Determining financial need

What is the SAI/Student Aid Index and how is it determined?

The Student Aid Index is a starting point for a college to determine financial aid eligibility — **not** what a student/family has to pay.

- Income, compared to Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Family size
- Assets
- Age of older parent; or if independent student, age of student
- You can estimate your aid eligibility now on the Federal Student Aid Estimator website: https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/



Prior-Prior year income defined

Attending college from	Submit FAFSA		Use tax info from
July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025	December 30, 2023–June 3 2025	0,	2022
July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026	December 1, 2024–June 30 2026	0,	2023
July 1, 2026–June 30, 2027	Oct 1, 2025–June 30, 202	27	2024



FAFSA frequent errors

- Parent & student Social Security numbers
- Parent & student date of birth
- Wrong year application
- Divorced/remarried/unmarried but living together parent information
- Legal guardianship/custody confusion
- Income earned by parents/stepparents
- IRA/Pension Rollover
- U.S. income taxes paid

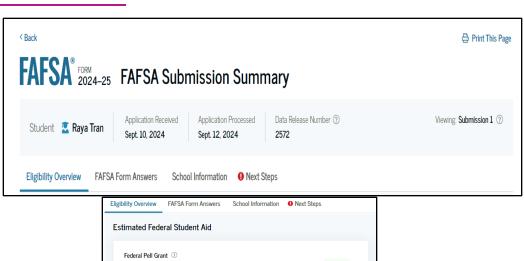
- Household size
- Real estate and investment net worth
 - including assets not to be listed on FAFSA
 - reporting value only rather than net worth
- Answering question about not wanting aid other than an unsubsidized loan
- Not signing the FAFSA
- Not submitting the FAFSA after signing

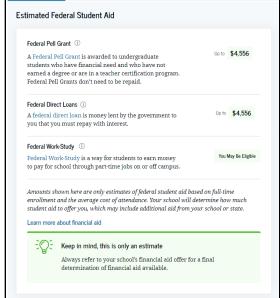


FAFSA confirmation

FAFSA acknowledgements

- FAFSA Submission Summary
- Watch confirmation e-mails from the US Department of Education donotreply@studentaid.gov or by mail. Mail will be used only if no e-mail address was listed on a paper application.
- One confirmation for submitting the FAFSA. One confirmation that FAFSA has been processed.
- Student can log in to fafsa.gov at any time to check status.







FAFSA verification

Process by which the U.S. Department of Education (ED) confirms (through the college financial aid office) that the information provided by students and families on the FAFSA is accurate.

• Students can be selected for verification by ED or by college.

Items to be verified will vary.

• Federal aid will not be disbursed until verification is complete.



Available federal student aid

Maximum amounts for the major programs for 2024–2025 first year student:

- Federal Pell Grant: \$7,395 max (pro-rated at less than full-time)
- Federal Work-Study: depends on funds available at school
- Direct subsidized and unsubsidized loans
 - \$5,500 total for dependent (maximum \$3,500 subsidized)
 - \$9,500 for independent (maximum \$3,500 subsidized)
- Direct PLUS loan (for parents): Cost of Attendance (COA) minus other aid received

Funds from other programs are available; see <u>Federal Grant Programs</u> and <u>Federal Student Loan Programs</u> for details.





Questions









Vermont grant

Vermont grants

Types

- Vermont grant
 - Full Time
 - Early College stipend
 - Part Time
- 802 Opportunity (both full and part-time study)
- Vermont Advancement Grant (non-degree or non-Title IV eligible)
- Microgrants



Who is eligible for Vermont Grant?

- Be a Vermont resident
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Be enrolled in or be enrolling in an undergraduate program leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate
- Have financial need as determined by the VSAC Grant Program
- Be maintaining satisfactory academic progress
- Be attending an eligible institution



Who is eligible for Vermont Grant?

- Not have received the equivalent of 10 full-time semesters of VT grants
 - Unless you're enrolled in the Doctor of Medicine program at the UVM Larner College of Medicine or
 - Enrolled in any accredited Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program
- Not have received your bachelor's degree
 - Unless you're enrolled in the Doctor of Medicine program at the UVM Larner College of Medicine or
 - Enrolled in any accredited Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program
- Not owe a refund to any federal or state grant or scholarship program



MyVSAC

It all begins with MyVSAC.

- Account is for the student.
- Students use same MyVSAC account when applying for VT grants and VSAC-assisted scholarships for each year of enrollment.
- Contact information must be updated (e-mail & postal addresses) for efficient communication.
- Two-step process. Student creates account with e-mail address. Link is e-mailed to student to confirm email address and create password.
- Student also needs to set up 2 factor authentication, using either a cell phone number or Okta authentication app.
- Students who lose/forget MyVSAC login should follow prompts to be reminded. Do not create a new account!



Vermont grants

Vermont grant application

- Must be filed and all requested documentation submitted for student to be eligible for Vermont grants.
- No additional application for 802 Opportunity
- Degree grant application available October 1, 2024, for 2025–2026.
- Apply at vsac.org by clicking on MyVSAC button.





Vermont grant link from FAFSA

What Happens Next



Check Your Email

You will receive an email version of this confirmation page at the following email address: raya.tran@email.com.



Track the Status of Your Form

In one to three days, your FAFSA form will be processed and made available to your schools. Check the status of your form by logging in to StudentAid.gov and selecting your FAFSA submission from the "My Activity" section of your account Dashboard.



You Will Receive School Communications

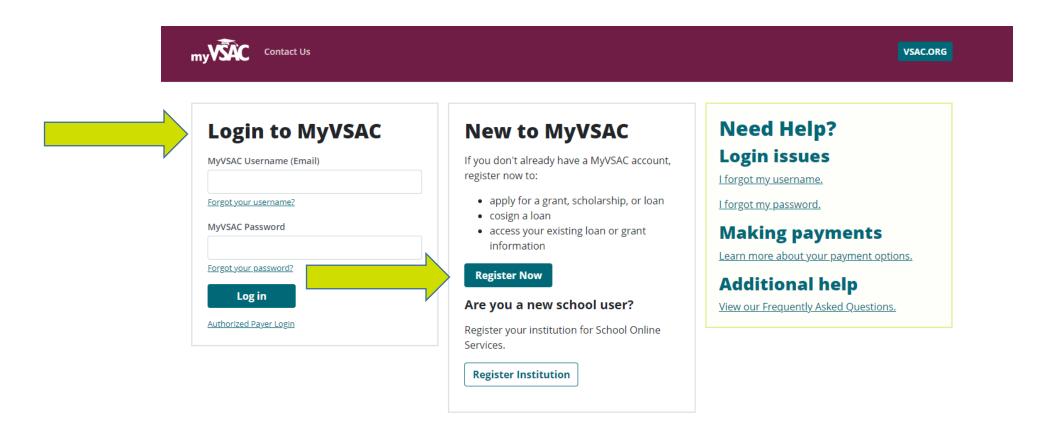
We use the information collected on your FAFSA form to calculate your Student Aid Index (SAI). The SAI lets schools determine the aid you're eligible to receive. Your schools will reach out to you if they need more information. They will also contact you with your financial aid offers. Once received, you can contact their financial aid offices directly to ask questions about their student aid packages.

Start Your Application for Vermont State-Based Aid

Apply for State Aid



Vermont grant — MyVSAC login





MyVSAC Work with Grants



VSAC.ORG

Welcome December Clause

① This is the MyVSAC TEST environment.

Loans

Loan Info & Make Payments

View loan details, make one-time or recurring payments, view statements, and set up statement notification emails.

Apply for New Loans

Apply for Student or Parent Loan

Check Pending Loar

Grants

Work with Grants

Apply for a Vermont Grant, view your To Do List and check on awards.

Scholarships

Work with VSAC Assisted Scholarships

Submit a Unified Scholarship Application (USA), check the status of your VSAC assisted scholarships, and upload documents.

News & Announcements

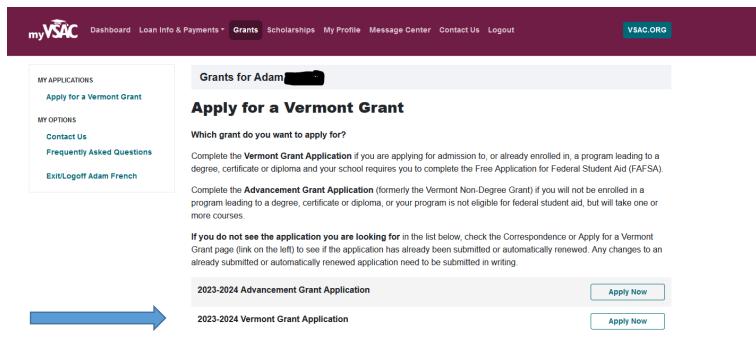
VSAC loan borrowers: If you're facing financial hardship, please call us at 800-798-8722 so we can explore which option(s) may be available to you

Looking for your amount of interest paid in 2022?

- · Click on "Loan Info & Make Payments".
- Your 1098-E will be available by January 31st.



Vermont grant



Application Help

Complete the Vermont Degree Application if BOTH:

- You are applying for admission to, or already are enrolled in, a program leading to a degree, certificate, or diploma.
- Your School requires you to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for financial aid.

Complete the Advancement Grant Application (formerly the Vermont Non-Degree Grant) if EITHER:

- You will take one or more courses but will not be enrolled in a program leading to a degree, certificate, or diploma.
- Your program is not eligible for Federal financial aid.



Vermont degree grants

Information

Much of the income and asset information for the VT Grant comes from the FAFSA — students who designate their state of residence as VT will have information come to VSAC when the FAFSA processes.

- Income: Same as FAFSA, using 2023 income information for 2025–2026 aid eligibility.
- Asset information: Most asset information comes from the FAFSA; families also need to report info not collected on the FAFSA:
 - family primary home value and debt



802 Opportunity

Details

- For Vermont resident students attending Community College of Vermont
- Funded by VT legislature, administered by VSAC
- Income guidelines as reported on FAFSA
- Same eligibility criteria as VT Grant, except
 - Income:
 - For dependent students, parent income < \$75,000
 - For independent students, student (and spouse) income < \$75,000
- Between Pell, VT Grant and 802 Opportunity
 - Tuition covered
 - \$100 administrative fee covered
- No additional application required for 802 Opportunity



Vermont grant for Early College (EC)

Students are not eligible for Federal Student Aid when still in high school.

- Grant based on financial need compared to college cost of attendance
- Maximum VT Grant for Early College is \$1000/ \$500 per semester.
- o VT Grant is paid to the college each semester after the student's enrollment is confirmed.
- College applies grant toward student bill, then refunds the remainder if any
 to student.
- o Student is also eligible for Dual Enrollment Stipend if eligible for EC grant.

File same applications as for VT Grant:

- FAFSA student will need to list a college to submit
- VT Grant Application. Answer "Yes" to the question about enrolling in Early College for the 2025-2026 school year.



Vermont grants

Notifications

- Requests for information are electronic: E-mail first.
- Paper letter is mailed if student doesn't log in within 20 days of initial request.
- Many forms can be completed online; tax returns can be uploaded.





Special/Unusual circumstances

- Change in employment status.
- Medical/dental bills not covered by insurance. High insurance costs/deductibles.
- Change in parent/student marital status.
- Unusual dependent care expenses.
- Natural disasters expenses not reimbursed by insurance or FEMA.
- Student unable to obtain parental information due to incarceration, abusive situation, or no relationship with parents and cannot qualify under other self-supporting questions.







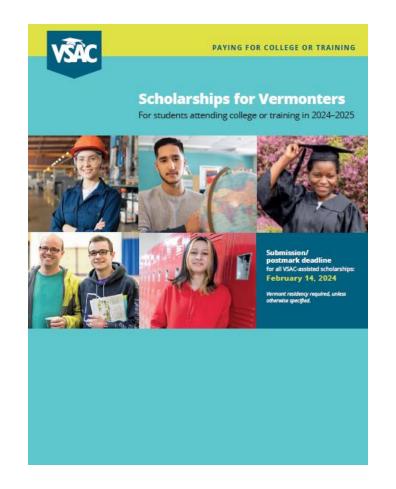




VSAC-assisted scholarships

VSAC-assisted scholarships

Available online next week for students attending college in 2025–2026 - in schools early October.





How students apply



Dashboard Loan Info & Payments ▼ Grants Scholarships My Profile Message Center Contact Us Logout

VSAC.ORG

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(!) This is the MyVSAC TEST environment.

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VSAC-assisted scholarships

Best practices

Deadlines

- Don't just meet deadlines; beat them.
- Can check if everything has been received. *Note: Need to allow 1 day for documents to show as uploaded in MyVSAC.*

Organization

- Student's responsibility to keep track of scholarships they applied for and documents that are required on MyVSAC.
- Encourage students to allow time for transcripts and recommendations to be done well and sent — NOT the last minute!
- If the school knows the student will be applying, but hasn't yet, documents can be mailed so long as postmarked by deadline.



VSAC-assisted scholarships

Best practices

Labels: Communicate with faculty, staff about requirements — and deadlines.

Follow instructions

- Meet minimum word length.
- Answer the questions asked.
- Recommendations MUST be on letterhead or signed.

DRAFT, draft, draft, REVIEW

- Common errors.
- Competitive nature.





Workforce Development funding

- State funding for initiatives to address Vermont's workforce shortages.
- Interest-free loans to be forgiven after one year working in Vermont for each year funded
- Applied for through VSAC Scholarships
 - •Programs:
 - •Vermont Trades up to full tuition (max \$23,000)
 - Vermont Teacher *
 - Vermont Nursing *
 - •Vermont Nurse Faculty
 - Vermont Mental Health Professional *
 - •Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
 - Vermont Dentist
 - Vermont Dental Hygienist *
 - •Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program

* Funding for 2024-2025 no longer available









Education loans

Federal Direct loans

- Requires the FAFSA.
- College determines eligibility and originates the loan.
- For students two types: subsidized and unsubsidized
 - Only undergraduates are eligible for subsidized
 - Based on student financial need
 - Maximums based on year in college
- Entrance Counseling completed on studentaid.gov
- Master Promissory Note (MPN)
 - Electronic completed on studentaid.gov
 - Paper school option or borrower request
- Postsecondary institution will instruct student how to complete



Federal Direct Student loans

cumulative borrowing

Dependent students

	Annual eligibility	Cumulative borrowed
first year	\$5,500	\$5,500
by sophomore year	\$6,500	\$12,000
by junior year	\$7,500	\$19,500
by senior year	\$7,500	\$27,000

Independent students

	Annual eligibility	Cumulative borrowed
first year	\$9,500	\$9,500
by sophomore year	\$10,500	\$20,000
by junior year	\$12,500	\$32,500
by senior year	\$12,500	\$45,000



Federal Direct PLUS Loans

Available for parents of dependent undergraduate students and graduate or professional students to help pay for college or career schools.

- Commonly called PLUS loan for parents of undergraduate students and Grad PLUS for graduate students.
- Maximum PLUS loan is the cost of attendance at the college minus aid offered.
- Credit check and endorser alternative.
- Some colleges will list PLUS eligibility on financial aid notifications.



Federal Direct loans

2024–2025 Direct loan interest rates & origination fees

Loan rates will change annually, based on the Treasury rate.

Direc	t subsidized & unsubsidized loan	Interest rate	Origination fee	
	Undergraduate	6.53%	1.057%	
	Graduate/professional degree students (unsubsidized loan only)	8.08%	1.057%	
Direct PLUS loan				
	Parents & graduate/professional degree students	9.08%	4.228%	



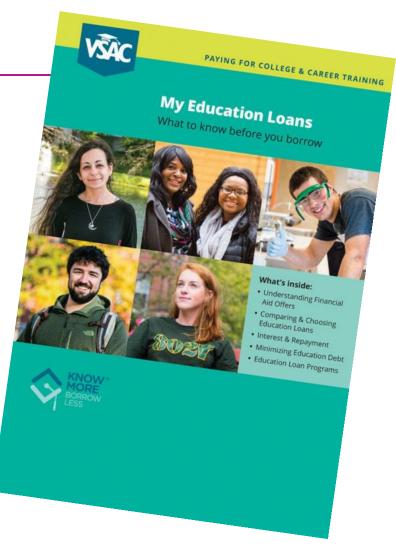
Non-federal loans

Available for eligible students who need education financing *beyond* what they can borrow in federal Direct student loans.

How to choose a private loan?

Visit www.vsac.org/learn for:

- VSAC's education loan guide
- loan calculators to compare total costs
- VSAC's Student Loan
- VSAC's Parent Loan





Non-federal loans

Choosing and comparing non-federal loans

When comparing loans, consider:

- interest rates
 - fixed
 - variable
- fees
- repayment options
- other benefits
 - Interest rate reduction for auto-pay
 - cosigner release







Questions









Short-term training and certificate funding

Dual Enrollment stipend

- For students in high school taking Dual Enrollment classes
 - •Classes need to have additional expenses, such as travel, books.
 - •Students need to be eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) due to family applying for and showing financial eligibility.
- •When student applies for Dual Enrollment voucher, the student:
 - •Says they have additional expenses for the class
 - Says they are eligible for FRL
- •When the Dual Enrollment Coordinator fills out school information, they verify:
 - •The student has additional expenses for the class
 - •The student is eligible for FRL
- •The Agency of Education sends a list of eligible students to VSAC.
- •VSAC will mail a check for \$150 to the student at the beginning of the term.



Sources of aid

https://www.vsac.org/plan/adult-learners/financial-aid

- Employer contributions*
- Veterans' Administration*
- HireAbility VT*
- Scholarships*
- Dept of Labor WIOA School
 (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)*

*May also be available for degree programs

- VT Advancement Grant
- Registered Apprenticeship
- Program/Provider Funds
- VT Trades Forgivable Loan Scholarship

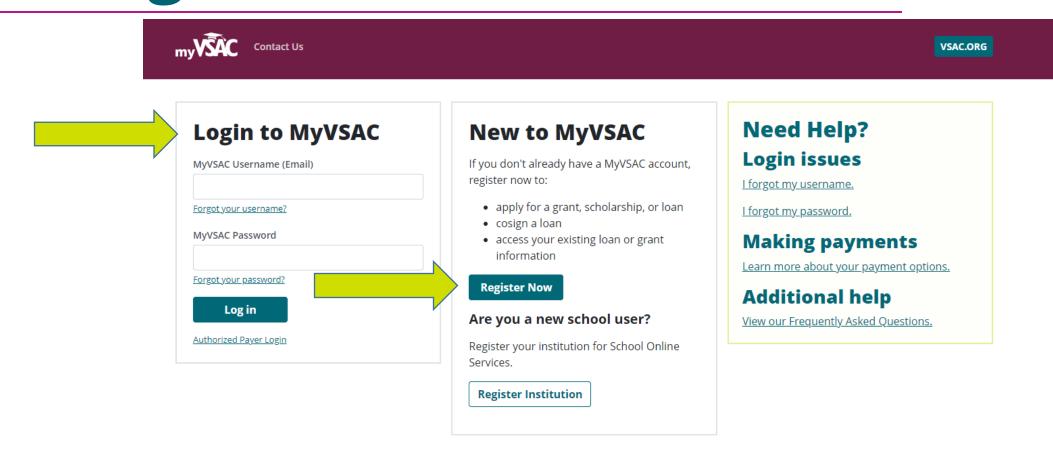


Advancement Grant

- Available now for programs starting before June 30, 2025 (2024–25 AY).
- New form May 2025 for programs starting July 1, 2025, or later (2025–26 AY).
- For non-degree coursework or short-term training programs or two college classes that either prepare students for further coursework/entrance to a degree program or increase employability.
- \$7,500 limit in the 2024–25 AY. Driver Education limit \$1,000. No more than 2 terms of ANY state grant per academic year.
- Individuals can be awarded up to 6 Advancement Grants in their lifetime.
- To be eligible, student must be out of high school.
- Prior-prior federal tax returns and W2s must be submitted (if filed) to determine income eligibility; can be mailed or uploaded to MyVSAC.



Advancement Grant — MyVSAC login





MyVSAC Work with Grants/ Advancement Grant screens



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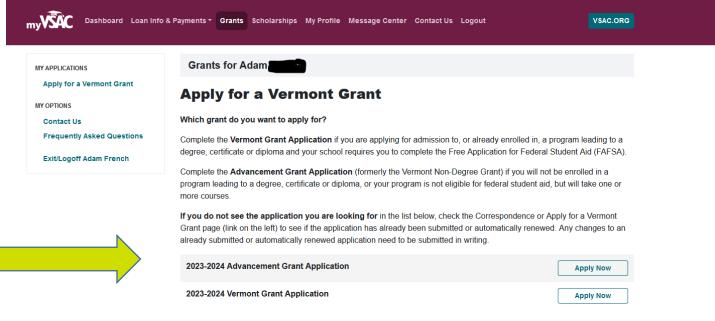
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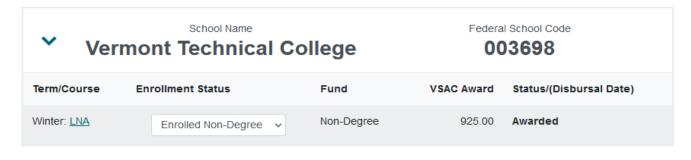


MyVSAC Work with Grants/ Advancement Grant screens

Awards & Enrollment

- > Information for Degree Applicants
- > Information for Advancement Grant Applicants
- > Status of Grant Award

Be sure to refresh the page after making changes to your enrollment to view your eligibility.



Update Enrollment Status

Cancel Changes





Questions





Information resources

Financial Aid Toolkit



- Federal aid news & updates
- College planning & federal financial aid resources
- Links to tools and resources
- Outreach/social media ideas and more



VSAC.org resources

vsac.org/edpronews



vsac.org/financial-aid-resources





Part 2: Federal and VSAC Updates



VSAC's Annual Financial Aid Training for Education and Agency Professionals: Federal, FAFSA, State, and VSAC Updates

9:00AM - 11:00AM ON ZOOM



Federal, FAFSA, State, and VSAC Updates

This virtual training session will provide important updates and changes to financial aid resources covering Federal updates, FAFSA changes, statewide initiatives, and VSAC programming. When registering, we welcome you to submit questions or comments that you would like us to try to address during this training.

In previous years, this training was split into two presentations but this year will be combined into one. To help ensure the content is not overwhelming, we moved some ongoing funding source information to our Financial Aid 101 presentation. Even if you are familiar with financial aid topics, we strongly encourage you to register for and view that training, too.

Register today. Once registered, you will receive an email with information about joining the meeting.

- MORE INFORMATION:
 - Federal Student Aid/FAFSA updates
 - State and VSAC updates
- Wednesday, October 30, 2024
 9:00 11:00 am
- Find registration link at vsac.org/events.



Contact info

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VSAC Resource Center Advisor

harlow@vsac.org 802-542-2603

Stacey King

Education Counselor, Educational Opportunity Center Program

king@vsac.org 802-777-8400

