

VSAAC

thinking of going
back to school?

- career exploration
- college & training
- paying for education
- financial aid programs
- education loans

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-income adults. Staff members provide counseling and objective information on college selection, in addition to financial aid and career planning services, to 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.

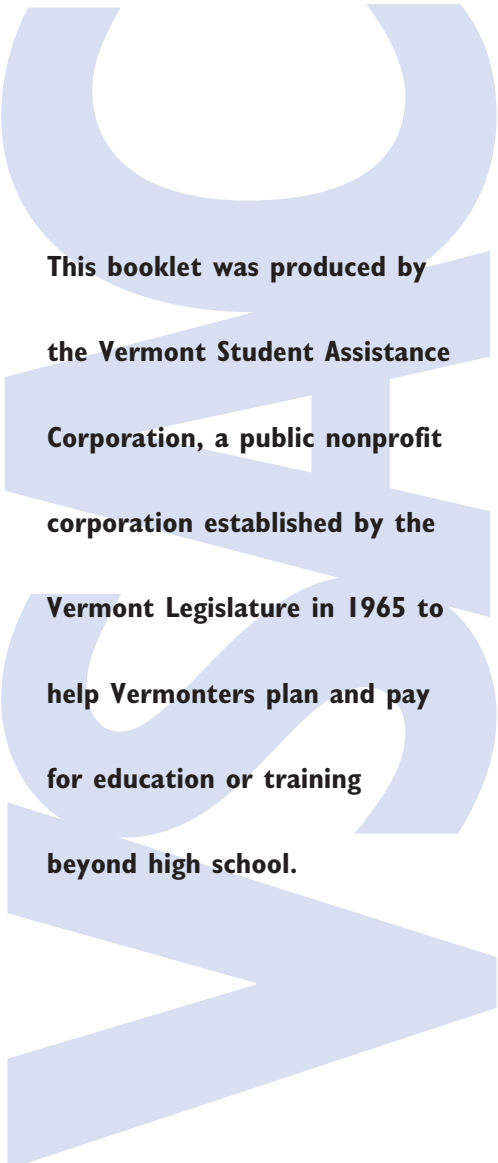
It's never too late to return to school!

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

- **In the Rutland or Bennington areas: 786-8840**
- **In the Burlington area: 654-3793**
- **In all other areas: toll-free 877-961-4369**

“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



This booklet was produced by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, a public nonprofit corporation established by the Vermont Legislature in 1965 to help Vermonters plan and pay for education or training beyond high school.

Adult student handbook

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VSAC has the resources you need and the experts to help you use them.

Paying for College presentations — free at Vermont high schools throughout the fall

College Pathways — free day-long events on Vermont college campuses for Vermont high school students and their parents

Free online career exploration & planning tools

- SAT, ACT, and graduate exam prep
- tools to identify interests, skills, and work values
- links between careers, majors, and education
- college and scholarship searches
- monthly college planning tips and to-do items at www.vsacroadmaps.org, VSAC's website for students and families who are planning for, applying to, and paying for college

Grants & scholarships

- 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 140 scholarships for Vermont residents

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

- FAFSA
- CSS Profile®
- Vermont grant application for full-time and part-time degree study
- Vermont non-degree grant application
- Unified Scholarship Application for all VSAC-assisted scholarships

Education loans for students and parents

Vermont's 529 college savings plan — the Vermont Higher Education Investment Plan (VHEIP)

Toll-free 877-961-4369

(654-3793 in the Burlington area)

www.vsac.org info@vsac.org www.vsacroadmaps.org

Career exploration: Is it time for a change?

Job and career changes happen more frequently for today's adults than ever before. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, each U.S. worker now changes jobs, on average, eight times during his or her working life.

- Sometimes the change is within the same career field.
- Sometimes a job that once provided personal satisfaction no longer does.
- Sometimes 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.
- **Career workshops** can help adults identify their skills, interests, and personal values; generate career ideas; explore careers and education opportunities; and set goals.
- **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.**
- **You may want to keep a journal in which you record your career exploration activities and contacts.**

VSAC's EOC career and 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.”

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?

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?

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.

Health care careers in Vermont

Check out the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) resources by visiting www.vthealthcareers.org or by contacting an AHEC office near you:

- Champlain Valley AHEC in St. Albans, www.cvahec.org, 802-527-1474
- Northeastern Vermont AHEC in St. Johnsbury, www.nevahec.org, 802-748-2506
- Southern Vermont AHEC in Springfield, www.svahec.org, 802-885-2126

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.)

Take action

After gathering information about several career ideas, you can now do more specific research on the careers that interest you. Taking this step may be the most challenging part of the entire process. You don’t have to have all the answers right away. You may need some time to talk to others and reflect on the information you’ve gathered. Throughout the career exploration process, a unique combination of your personal characteristics — values, strengths, limitations, attitudes, and feelings — will influence your decisions. You’ll probably also be influenced by family and friends, social values, personal circumstances, and community and education resources. You may want to start a journal to jot down ideas, to keep names and phone numbers of contacts you’ve made, and to reflect on your career history.

Activity sheets and **checklists** to assist you in career exploration and education decision-making are available online at www.vsac.org/activities.

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.



Learn about career resources for adults:

Go to www.vsac.org/adultlearners and click on “Career Exploration” for useful links, information, and online resources.

Activate your imagination

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

Create an inspiration board.

Use pieces of fabric, magazine images, news headlines, and CD covers with the same theme. Look for connections between words and images.

Hit the magazine rack. Choose 10 magazines you wouldn’t normally buy and scan them for material that intrigues you. Who knows?

A needlepoint magazine may hold the key to a video project.

Listen to a symphony. Classical music has been proven to clear the mind, relieve stress, improve focus, and generally stimulate the brain.

Tell your family history.

At <https://storycorps.me>, you can tell your family’s history. (All submissions will be archived at the American Folklife Center of the U.S. Library of Congress.)

Keep a design notebook. Start looking at the ways your environment is designed — from the family car to your furniture and kitchen utensils. Note designs you think are unusual and effective; also keep track of designs that don’t work, noting what you might do differently.

Source: *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink

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 your work? What do you like least?
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 that 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 satisfactions and rewards 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 his or her 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 immediately.
- Assess your career options in light of the information you've received.
- Contact other professionals whose careers interest you.

College and training: Are you thinking about 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.

Visit the Vermont Agency of Education (<http://education.vermont.gov/adult-education/locations>) for information on earning high school credentials. Contact a VSAC outreach counselor for assistance with this process.

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's 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 outreach counselor near you to talk about earning a high school credential.

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. For information, go to <http://education.vermont.gov/adult-education/hscp>.

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. For information, visit <http://education.vermont.gov/adult-education/general-educational-development>.

Gather information

- **www.vvac.org/adultlearners** — tools and information to help you save for college, plan for college, and pay for college
- **Vermont Department of Labor career resource centers** in several locations around the state and online at **www.labor.vermont.gov** (click on the “Job Seekers and Workers” tab to explore occupations)
- **public and college libraries** and college career development offices
- **informational interviews** and **job shadowing** with people doing the work you want to do (for guidelines, see page 6)
- **volunteer work, part-time work,** or an **internship** in your field of interest
- **classes** at community colleges, two- and four-year colleges, technical centers, and some private companies

What resources will you use to move forward?

During his or her working life, a typical college graduate earns nearly twice as much as a typical high school graduate.

Here are some other reasons for going back to school:

- **to get a better job**
- **to change careers**
- **to increase the likelihood of career success**
- **to build confidence and self-esteem**
- **to stay intellectually stimulated**
- **to set a positive example for your children**
- **to see if college is the right direction for you at this time**

Your reasons for going back to school:

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 the Consortium of Vermont Colleges online at <https://vtcolleges.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 two to three times a week
- **distance learning** that allows you to take courses and earn a degree online. Online learning requires reliable access to the Internet. **Note:** Before deciding to take an online degree program, be sure it's a good fit for you. See "Choosing an online school" (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.



Learn about non-college training opportunities:

Check out the resources and information at <http://profoundlydisconnected.com/trade-resource-center/state-resources/vermont/>.

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 outreach 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 CCV course. 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
- www.collegeboard.com/clep

For more information on earning college credit for prior learning, go to www.ccv.edu/apl, call the Vermont State Colleges Office of External Programs 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:

www.usnews.com/education/online-education

www.affordablecollegesonline.org

www.chea.org

Choosing an online school

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?** Often community colleges offer online courses at a much lower cost than some high-profile colleges that advertise online and on television.

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:

- <http://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students>
- www.testpreview.com/accuplacer_practice.htm
- www.khanacademy.org



Learn about short-term training opportunities:

Take a look at the Short-Term Training Opportunities and Certification Programs pathfinder at www.vsac.org/trainingopps.

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 non-degree grant to fund these courses. (See page 25 for information on non-degree financial aid.)

The college major and your degree

There are two parts to a college degree: the courses that meet the college's general education requirements and 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.vvac.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 use a photocopy for 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.gedtestingservice.com/testers/gedrequest-a-transcript**.
- If required, your application essay 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. To watch VSAC's online presentation "Writing an Effective Admissions Essay," go to **www.vsacroadmaps.org/online-presentations**.
- 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. Fee waivers may be available from your VSAC outreach counselor if payment poses a hardship.
- Shortly after you've mailed your application, phone the school to make sure all necessary materials have been received by the admissions office. You can also check then to see if any interviews are required.
- 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 challenges that most students right out of high school don't.

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.

Paying for education: 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 a non-degree grant administered by VSAC. (Go to page 25 for more information on applying for non-degree 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** — gifts of financial 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); the maximum award is based on cost of attendance.
- **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); the maximum award is not based on the cost of attendance.
- **scholarships** — gifts of financial aid that student 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 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 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; 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 Advantage loan programs** —
 - for students** attending college at least half time; requires a credit worthy co-signer.
 - 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 Vermont Advantage loans at lower interest rates than the federal Direct PLUS loan. See www.vsac.org/VTadvantage for details.

For additional sources of funding, see page 23.

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/publications, you can view the booklet or use our online order form to request a printed copy through the mail. All VSAC-assisted scholarships have an early March 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 <http://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 www.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, click on the FSA ID tab in the menu bar along the top of the FAFSA home page. (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 a Vermont grant application" on the left side of the screen to apply. In the future, use the "Work with Grants" link to access your grant information.

Applying for financial aid for a degree or certificate program

- Gather income information — federal tax return, W2s, and/or other income information from the previous year (Reach Up grant, child support, Social Security, 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 23 for a list of other possible sources of funding.
- Print and keep** copies of your applications for your records.

The “EFC”

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 represents 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

If there are special circumstances you feel colleges and VSAC should consider when they review your financial aid application, 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 www.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 will 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 "View Awards" link in your *myVSAC* account.

College financial aid award notification

Each college that has accepted you will send you a financial aid award notification that outlines the financial aid package it can offer you (see page 26 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.

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 a detailed explanation of major loan programs, go to www.vsac.org/loans.

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.

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.

To learn more about the factors that can affect your eligibility to continue receiving financial aid, see **Keeping your financial aid**, at right.

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 www.studentaid.gov/repay-loans for in-depth information about federal student loan repayment options.

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 his or her degree. Generally, a student can receive financial aid up to 150 percent of the credits necessary for the degree (for a 60-credit associate's 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.

Other resources

Additional sources of funding may be available for adult students.

College savings/investment plans

- the Vermont Higher Education Investment Plan
- Individual Development Accounts (IDA) through community action agencies — a two-to-one match for education savings
- the PASS program through Social Security

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

- Hope credit
- lifetime learning credit

Graduate program funding — for example, teaching or research assistantships, fellowships, or residence assistantships

Home equity loans — may be an option, depending on your situation

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 — several programs for students preparing for careers in health professions; to learn more, call 877-464-4772 or visit www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships.

Veterans' benefits — for information on major benefits programs administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, call 888-442-4551 or visit www.goarmy.com/benefits/education-benefits.html. See sidebar for more information.

Vocational rehabilitation funding — for information, visit a state vocational rehabilitation agency.

Navigating veterans' education benefits

Resources are available to help veterans obtain education benefits through the Veterans Administration. Most colleges have a staff person whose responsibility is to work with the school's students who are veterans. To find this person on your campus, 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 www.benefits.va.gov/gibill to make the switch. For more information, contact the veterans representative at your local Department of Labor office.

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

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 earn \$10,000 at a part-time job while attending college and \$1,500 of your income is from a work-study job, the FAFSA formula will use \$8,500 to calculate your eligibility for financial aid.

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.

At www.practicalmoneyskills.com, you'll find a wealth of information on personal finances. While you're there, click on the video tab at the top for *Khan Academy* videos on personal finance. For more, visit 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.

Financial aid for non-degree courses or programs

If the education or training you want to pursue is not eligible for federal financial aid and you're concerned about being able to afford the cost, you should apply for a non-degree grant administered by VSAC. The non-degree grant has two purposes — to improve employability or to encourage further study. The non-degree grant can pay for courses taken at college and at other kinds of educational institutions.

To apply for non-degree 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.vvac.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 Outreach counselor for help with the application process. If you're eligible, the amount of the non-degree 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, contact the VSAC Grant Program by phone (800-882-4166) or e-mail (info@vsac.org).

Some training programs and courses typically funded by the VSAC non-degree grant are:

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

Learn more about non-college training opportunities:

Check out VSAC's career and education pathfinder at www.vvac.org/trainingopps and the resources at <http://profoundlydisconnected.com/trade-resource-center/state-resources/vermont/>.

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 the Vermont non-degree grant application online through your *myVSAC* account.
- Be sure to mail VSAC a copy of your prior-year federal tax return with all W2s and schedules, if you filed.
- If you'll need additional funding, check with the school to see if it offers a payment plan or other options (see page 23 for a list of other possible funding sources).
- Be sure to keep a copy of your application for your records.
- NOTE: If you are awarded a non-degree 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.

Financial aid award notification

After applying for financial aid, the college(s) to which you applied will notify you regarding the financial aid being awarded to you. Each school that has accepted you will send you an award letter; some will send it by mail, while others will provide it online. Compare your awards carefully to determine the offer 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 various schools you’re considering, go to the “Pay for College” tab at www.vvac.org to use the award letter comparison tool.

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.

Watch carefully for the words *estimated* and *tentative*. These words indicate that the award has not been finalized and could change once your application is complete.

Direct loans are federal education loans in the student’s name. Visit www.vvac.org/loans to learn about the differences between subsidized and unsubsidized loans.

SAMPLE
College Financial Aid Award Notification
2017–2018 Academic Year

Terry Student
Any Old Road
Hometown, VT 05555

111-11-1111
March 15, 2017

Dear Terry:

We are pleased to offer you the financial aid indicated below. Please accept or decline each award by circling the A or D after each award. Please sign, date, and return this notification within 10 days of the date of this letter.

Award:	Fall	Spring	Total	A	D
College grant			\$ 1,000	A	D
Federal Pell grant	\$ 500	\$ 500		A	D
Fed. Supp. Ed. Opportunity grant	2,908	2,907	5,815	A	D
Federal work-study	500	500	1,000	A	D
Estimated Vermont grant	750	750	1,500	A	D
Subsidized federal Direct loan	1,450	1,450	2,900	A	D
Unsubsidized federal Direct loan	1,750	1,750	3,500	A	D
	<u>3,000</u>	<u>3,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>	A	D
	\$10,858	\$10,857	\$21,715		

I have read the enclosed information and I accept this award package as indicated above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

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.

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.

Award notifications may need to be signed and dated by the applicant and returned by a certain deadline. Follow all instructions!

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.

Financial aid tracking sheet

This worksheet will help you to keep track of how you're paying for your education. See the sample on the right. Feel free to make a copy of the chart for each year you attend college.

Please remember: It's especially important to keep track of your total loan debt from year to year so that you're not overwhelmed by the amount you owe after graduating from college. Go to www.nslds.ed.gov for information on your total federal student loan debt. You'll need your FSA username and password to access your account.

See the Loan Repayment tab at www.vsac.org for a payment calculator you can use to estimate your monthly loan payment. Also go to "Repay Your Loans" at www.studentaid.ed.gov for information on affordable loan repayment options.

Sample figures

	Fall term
GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS	
Federal Pell grant	\$1,412
FSEOG	\$0
Vermont grant (from VSAC)	\$175
College grant	\$0
Scholarships	\$125
Total grants/scholarships	\$1,712
STUDENT LOANS	
Federal Direct loans	\$500
Perkins loan	\$0
College loan	\$0
Private loan	\$0
Total student loans	\$500

	Fall term	Spring term	Summer term
GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS			
Federal Pell grant			
FSEOG			
Vermont grant (from VSAC)			
College grant			
Scholarships			
Total grants/scholarships			
STUDENT LOANS			
Federal Perkins loan			
Federal Direct loans			
College loan			
VSAC Advantage loan			
Total student loans			

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 in the University of Vermont's College of Medicine or a doctor of veterinary medicine program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible students received from \$800 to \$12,050 during the 2016–2017 academic year. 	<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"> • Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Then complete a Vermont grant application, available online through your <i>myVSAC</i> 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"> • Eligible students received from \$425 to \$9,040 during the 2016–2017 academic year. 	<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.
Vermont Non-Degree 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 a non-degree grant application, available online through your <i>myVSAC</i> 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"> • 2016–2017 awards ranged from \$598 to \$5,815 for eligible students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based upon financial need. • For an early estimate of eligibility, go to https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
Scholarships	<p>VSAC's scholarships booklet provides details on approximately 140 scholarships for Vermont residents, other scholarship resources, and tips on scholarship scams. Request one from your guidance office or e-mail publications@vsac.org to request a copy.</p> <p>Begin gathering materials in the fall; all VSAC-assisted scholarships have an early-March application deadline.</p>		<p>Search for national scholarships at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined subsidized and unsubsidized Direct loan base limits for all students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3,500 first year \$4,500 second year \$5,500 third, fourth, and fifth years \$8,500/year graduate (unsubsidized only) Dependent undergrads may qualify for an additional \$2,000/year unsubsidized. Independent undergrads may qualify for an additional \$6,000–\$7,000 unsubsidized, depending on year in school. Grad students may qualify for up to \$20,500 annually 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 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. <p><i>* If stepparent information is used to calculate expected family contribution</i></p>	<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 and 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 Vermont Advantage loans are available for students and for parents. A credit review is required. Terms may be more favorable than the terms for other loans, depending on your situation. For details, go to www.vsac.org/VTadvantage.



Vermont Student Assistance Corporation

10 East Allen Street, PO Box 2000

Winooski, VT 05404

Toll-free **800-642-3177**

In the Burlington area **655-9602**

Visit us online at www.vsac.org

E-mail us at info@vsac.org

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