



Funding the Way to Your Future

It's perfectly natural to have questions about the cost of a postsecondary certificate or degree. Whether you're planning for higher education immediately after high school; or you're already in the workforce looking for your next, better-paying job; or you're temporarily out of work and thinking about upgrading and expanding your skills; it's useful to be aware of the many financial aid programs available to help make college more affordable for those who most need the support.

Keep in mind that few students pay full "sticker price" for a college degree. Instead, most students pay for their postsecondary education with a combination of savings, scholarships, grants and loans.



Start with FAFSA

Securing financial aid starts with FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). It's the key to federal student financial aid, it's often used to determine eligibility for grants. Completing FAFSA makes good sense. Students who complete a FAFSA form are 63 percent more likely to go to college than those who don't. Ohio's class of 2018 has a FAFSA completion rate of 66.6 percent. That means about 33.4 percent of Ohio's graduating seniors who were eligible for financial aid but didn't complete the FAFSA. For 2017-18, Ohio ranked 14th nationally for percentage of eligible students who completed FAFSA.

According to the Ohio Department of Higher Education, on average, more than \$3,583 is left on the table for each financial aid-eligible high school graduate who does not complete the FAFSA.

A snippet of a FAFSA form showing fields for "Applicants Name:", "Present Address:", "Phone:" (with sub-fields for Home and Mobile), "Fax number:", "E-mail:", "Place of Birth:", and "Date of Birth:". A black pen is resting on the form. To the right of the form is a teal triangle containing a white icon of a person.

Students (youth and adults), parents, guidance counselors and others are encouraged to visit <https://fafsahelpoh.org/> for information and assistance, including when and where to complete a FAFSA form. Note that adult learner students may use the FAFSA to apply for Pell Grants and Ohio College Opportunity Grants.

Available Programs & Resources

There are many ways to lower the cost of postsecondary education. Here are a few:

- **PELL Grants** are federal grants primarily for undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need. Since 1972, Pell Grants have been the primary source of federal needs-based financial aid for students, and still are today. The amount of a Pell Grant can change yearly. The maximum award in 2017-18 was \$5,920. The amount a student receives depends on factors such as financial need, cost of attendance, and full-time or part-time status.



- **Ohio College Opportunity Grants (OCOG)** are Ohio's only need-based student financial aid program. The grant provides aid to Ohio residents with the highest levels of financial needs who enroll at Ohio public university main campuses or Ohio private, nonprofit or for-profit colleges and universities. OCOG award amounts are based on an expected family contribution. To be eligible, individuals must have a maximum annual family income of less than \$75,000. For FY 2016-17, OCOG awards ranged from \$1,416 to \$2,832.
- **Ohio's College Credit Plus** program enables students to earn high school and college credits at the same time, thereby reducing the cost of earning a postsecondary degree. College Credit Plus is free for all public high school students who wish to attend a public Ohio university or college. That means no cost for tuition, books or fees if the student attends a public school in the state of Ohio. (Students who choose to attend a private college, or are homeschooled, may have limited costs.) Through the program's first two years (2016-17), the 64,482 participating students realized more than \$262 million in tuition savings for Ohio families. 90 percent of those students earned passing grades and college credits.
- **Workforce for Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** resources help fund a network of agencies and organizations that assist veterans, youth and displaced workers in accessing employment, career education, career training and support services.
- **Grants and Scholarships** are available from the federal government, state government and individual colleges and universities. Awards are based on factors such as areas of study, academic merit, financial need, military status and more. See www.ohiohighered.org/sgs.
- **Community Foundations** often award postsecondary scholarships to vocational, technical and nontraditional students, and are especially prevalent in small, rural communities.
- **Employers** increasingly offer tuition reimbursement for training for specific in-demand jobs.