



2023-2024

College & Career Readiness Guide

Access the 2023-2024 TeamMates National Office Scholarship Application Online

Available at <https://teammates.org/>
Under the "Mentoring" tab, click "Scholarships"

Application Opens: **October 1st, 2023**

Deadline: **January 20th, 2024**

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to help mentees and mentors better understand what skills are necessary to be ready for the workforce and higher education, and to provide resources around those two key areas. This guide will define what post-secondary education and career readiness are, highlight the benefits of furthering your education and honing the skills it takes to be career ready, provide guidance on the post-secondary admission process, and share information about financing your education. Throughout this guide, you will find links and QR codes to various resources that can assist you in your pursuit of your career goals and/or post-secondary education.

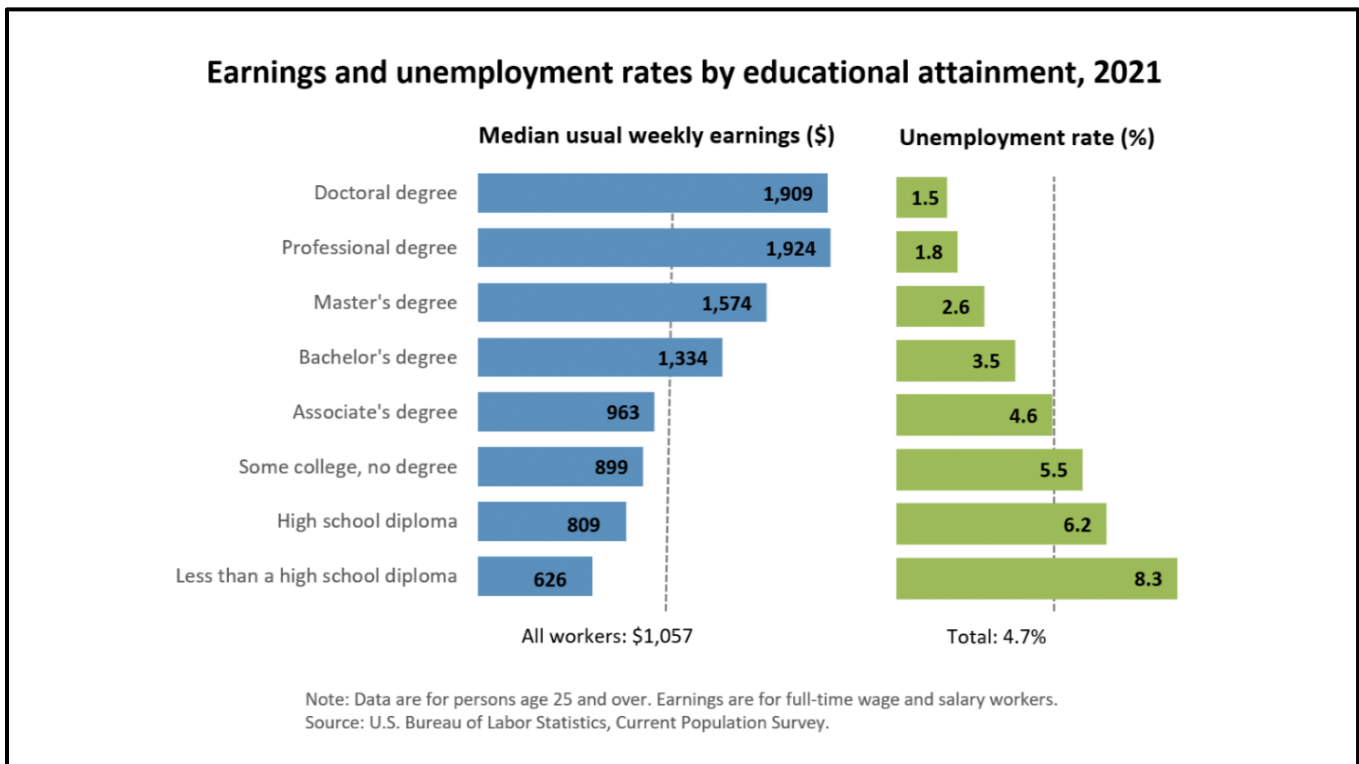
WHAT IS "POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION"?

Post-secondary education is any additional education or training after high school that is needed to attain a career that fits your interests and talents. Institutions of post-secondary education include not only four-year colleges and universities but also two-year community colleges, certification programs, cosmetology, trade, military schools, etc. At the end of a prescribed course of study or program, a degree or certificate is awarded.

Examples of post-secondary education include:

- **4-year Bachelor's Degree** (UNL, UNO, UNK, UNMC, Wayne State, Hastings College, etc.)
- **2-year Associate's Degree** (Community Colleges (CC) such as Metro CC, Central CC, Northeast CC, Western NE CC, etc.)
- **Certification** (cosmetology, computer technology, welding, auto mechanics, etc.)
- **Military** (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, National Guard, Military Reserves, etc.)

In the U.S., more education/training equates to being more likely to be employed and to higher income. Here's a look at the average weekly earnings and unemployment rates in respect to the different education levels:



Trade Schools

Quick Facts

- Definition: A post-secondary institution that provides training for specific occupations.
- May also be referred to as a technical or vocational school.
- The length of time to complete a trade school program is typically less than that of a four-year college or university program.
- Some example trade school occupations: electrician, mechanic, machinist, pharmacy technician, dental hygienist, cosmetologist.
- The average cost of a trade school degree or certificate is typically much less than an associate's or bachelor's degree.
- Due to demand in the U.S., the job outlook for many trade school occupations is promising.

Source: [The Simple Dollar: Why You Should Consider Trade School Instead of College?](#)

Military Opportunities

Federal Military Academies

- A post-secondary institution that provides individuals with an education while also preparing them for the military.
- The government will pay the full cost of the degree.
- Upon completion of training, a period of military service is required of graduates.
- Students may choose to apply to one of the five academies: U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Military Colleges

- A post-secondary institution that allows students to complete military leadership training (Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program) while pursuing a traditional degree.

Source: [The Best Schools: The Best Military Colleges](#)

National Guard

- The purpose of the National Guard is to protect a designated territory (such as a state), but it may also assist in addressing federal issues.
- It consists of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard.

Military Reserves

- The purpose of the Military Reserves is to support active-duty forces during conflict or declared war.
- They fall under the authority of the active-duty branches of military.

Source: [Military.com: National Guard and Military Reserves Explained](#)

Below, you will find some resources to learn more about educational and career opportunities offered by various branches of the military. It is also recommended to speak with a recruiter and/or your school counselor to learn more.

**U.S. Department of
Defense QR Code**



**Military Reservist QR
Code**



PLANNING FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: WHERE DO I GET STARTED?

This section provides suggestions to help you get started right away this fall with the post-secondary education planning process. By scanning the QR code below, you will access a timeline developed by the EducationQuest Foundation that shares important to-do items for your senior year.

EducationQuest College Timeline QR Code



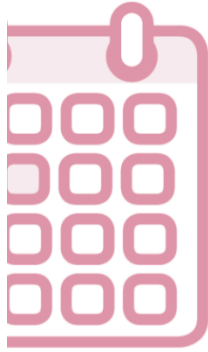
We have also provided guidance on some key steps that will put you in the best position to be admitted into post-secondary institutions and receive financial aid for your education.

Key Steps to Plan for Post-Secondary Education

1. **Create a personal e-mail account.** You will primarily receive communication from any institutions or scholarships that you have applied to via email. You want to be sure you have created a professional email address. It is suggested to use some variation of your name and possibly numbers (refer to examples below). Email addresses that are unprofessional look unfavorably upon you. It is also recommended to only use one email address for all post-secondary communication to keep this information organized! It is recommended to use a personal email account because you will probably not have access to your school email account after you graduate.
 - a. Good examples: joesmith@gmail.com; joesmith2022@yahoo.com; jsmith@gmail.com; jsmith22@yahoo.com
 - b. Bad examples: lgotswag2022@hotmail.com; prettyprincess@gmail.com
2. **Aim for a cumulative GPA of 2.50 or higher.** Your cumulative GPA is one important factor when considering you for admission to post-secondary institutions and for scholarships. Many scholarships require a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50 to be considered. High schools also use students' cumulative GPAs when determining class rank.
3. **Research post-secondary institutions and complete the application process.** To find the post-secondary institution that will be the best fit for you, take time to research various institutions. Consider factors such as educational programs offered, admissions requirements, cost, financial aid, and environment when doing your research. Ideally, visit institutions that you are interested in to get a strong sense of what they can offer you. Each post-secondary institution that you want to apply to will have its own specific admissions and scholarship application process. Pay attention to the requirements of the process and deadlines by which you must submit your application materials. ***Note: Some institutions will waive the application fee for students who meet financial need criteria.***
4. **Take the ACT Exam.** Many four-year colleges require that you take the ACT, and a strong ACT score can potentially help you earn scholarships. You will find upcoming ACT test dates in the chart on the following page. You can take the ACT as many times as you would like, and colleges will accept your highest score. The cost of the test is \$66, or \$91 if you add the writing portion. ***Note: Waivers may be available through your school counselor's office if you cannot afford to pay for the test, and you can use up to two waivers per academic year to take the ACT free of charge.*** To sign up for the exam and access test prep resources, visit <https://www.act.org>, scan the QR code below, or speak with your school counselor.

ACT Products & Services QR Code





TEST DATES

United States, US Territories, and Puerto Rico



2023|2024

Test Dates	Regular Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline	Photo Upload and Standby Deadline
September 9, 2023	August 4	August 18	September 1
October 28, 2023	September 22	October 6	October 20
December 9, 2023	November 3	November 17	December 1
February 10, 2024	January 5	January 19	February 2
April 13, 2024	March 8	March 22	April 5
June 8, 2024	May 3	May 17	May 31
July 13, 2024*	June 7	June 21	July 5

*No test centers are scheduled in New York for the July test date.

Test Information Release for the 2023–2024 testing year will occur in September, April, and June. See www.act.org/the-act/tir for more information.

5. **Draft your personal statement/essay.** Many college and scholarship applications request students to submit a personal statement. Your personal statement is an essay that gives you an opportunity to describe your family background, challenges you have faced, accomplishments, activities, college goals, and/or career aspirations amongst other topics. The personal statement allows you to convey who you are and why it's important for you to be considered for admission to a college or for a particular scholarship. Some applications will ask you to respond to specific essay questions. If this is the case, you will likely have to modify your personal statement or create new essay responses to adequately answer the questions.

Below you will find QR codes to resources that provide guidance on how to write a strong personal statement/essay.

MyFuture Writing a College Essay QR Code



Vanderbilt Howto: Personal Essay QR Code



6. **Request references and letters of recommendation.** A reference is someone who knows you well and can speak highly of you. A reference can be a teacher, school counselor, coach, etc. This person should be able to write a detailed letter of recommendation about you, explaining why you should be considered for admission or a scholarship.

When applying for colleges and scholarships, you may be asked to provide up to three letters of recommendation. These letters should be written by a reference who can speak to your strengths, skills, personality, work ethic, accomplishments, activities, future goals, career aspirations, potential, and other important factors. In the letter, your reference should also explain how you would benefit from attending college or earning a scholarship. Sometimes these letters can be the determining factor as to whether a student gets into a particular college or receives a scholarship.

Letters of recommendation are valued by colleges and scholarship committees because they:

- Reveal positive attributes that grades and test scores cannot.
- Provide personal opinions of your character, motivation, and potential.

The steps below detail the process for requesting letters of recommendation from your references:

1. Identify who you will request to write letters of recommendation.
2. Ask these references if they are willing to write a letter of recommendation for you. This should be done at least four weeks before your deadline. Your references should be given plenty of time to write you a quality letter. Remember, they are doing you a favor by writing a letter for you so please be respectful of their time. Also, remember to provide them with the exact date the letter of recommendation needs to be submitted by.
3. If these individuals agree to write a letter, provide them with any specific instructions and relevant details they should know about the scholarship or college you are applying to. Also, offer to provide them with additional information about yourself if needed. Below are some points that may be helpful to your reference so they can write the best possible letter on your behalf. If you have compiled this information in an activities resume, then you can provide them a copy of that.

The following is helpful information to share with your references to aid them in writing a letter of recommendation for you:

- Strengths, skills, and talents
 - Personality, motivation, work ethic, and potential
 - Accomplishments
 - Activities
 - Future goals and career interests/aspirations
 - Any other relevant information
4. Politely remind your references five to seven days before the deadline that the deadline is approaching. It may be most convenient to send this reminder via email, but you can determine whether there is a better way to communicate with your references.
 5. Within a week after the deadline, please be sure to send a thank you card or letter to each of your references for the time and effort they took to write you a letter.

COLLEGE PLANNING RESOURCES

EducationQuest Foundation

“EducationQuest Foundation is a nonprofit organization with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska.” With locations in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and Scottsbluff, EducationQuest offers the following **free college planning services**:

- Researching post-secondary institutions
- Exploring career fields
- Locating scholarship opportunities
- **Completing and filing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**

Note: Appointments can be scheduled to assist with the above listed services.

EducationQuest has also established need-based scholarship programs. Additionally, it also conducts webinars, college fairs, and other programs regularly for families to learn more about college planning and financial aid. Please note that EducationQuest also makes college planning materials available for free. Materials may be obtained at a school counselor’s office or they can be ordered through the EducationQuest website. **Note: Some materials are also available in Spanish.**

To learn more about EducationQuest’s services, programs, and resources, visit their website <https://www.educationquest.org/> or scan the QR code below.

**EducationQuest QR
Code**



Comparison of Nebraska Post-Secondary Institutions

The link below shows a table that compares tuition, enrollment, etc. at the different college and career institutions in Nebraska with links to those college websites for more information.

<https://bit.ly/3ynmukQ>

WAYS TO PAY FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

There are several resources that may be available to assist students in paying for some or all of their post-secondary education:

1. **Grants** – Grants are funds provided by the U.S Department of Education to assist students with financial need in paying for post-secondary education. Grants may come from a college, the state, or the federal government. Eligibility for grants is determined after students complete and file the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. More information about the FAFSA is provided below. Students are usually awarded grants based on financial need and DO NOT have to pay back these funds.
2. **Scholarships** – Scholarships are funds provided by post-secondary institutions or other organizations to assist students in paying for post-secondary education. Scholarships are often awarded based on academics, financial need, involvement, athletics, and/or other factors. Students must complete specific application requirements for each respective scholarship. Students DO NOT have to pay back scholarship funds. *Note: If there are any scholarships that you have that your college's financial aid office is unaware of, you must report those scholarships so that it can be determined if and how that will affect your overall financial aid package.*

Reminder: TeamMates Mentees are strongly encouraged to apply for TeamMates scholarships offered through the National Office and through individual college partnerships. Local chapter scholarships may also be available to mentees. To find out about chapter scholarship opportunities, mentees should talk to their local Program Coordinator or a TeamMates post-secondary staff member.

3. **Work-Study Programs** – Work-Study is a federally funded program that provides students with a part-time job on campus. Eligibility for work-study is determined after filing of the FAFSA. Work-study may be offered as part of a student's overall financial aid package.

Some of the benefits of a work-study job include:

- Flexible scheduling around students' class schedule
- Possible opportunity to use part of their paid work shift to study if all job responsibilities are completed for the day
- Opportunity for a student to gain work experience that they can list on their resume
- Opportunity to work with and learn from professionals in a specific, campus department

4. **Federal Student Loans** – Federal student loans are provided by the federal government to assist students in paying for their post-secondary education. Eligibility for loans is determined after the filing of the FAFSA. Students DO have to pay back loans. There are different types of loans available, such as unsubsidized and subsidized.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be completed to apply for federal and state financial aid. Many colleges also use the FAFSA to determine what financial aid the college can award you. Be aware of the deadline when you must submit your FAFSA by (each college can establish its own deadline). Once the FAFSA is open (December), students are encouraged to complete it as soon as possible as financial aid is awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. Students should complete the FAFSA for each year they're enrolled in college. For detailed guidance on completing the FAFSA, please visit <https://studentaid.gov/>

EducationQuest also provides a wealth of resources on the FAFSA. Remember that your EducationQuest representative can help you in completing your FAFSA.

Scholarships

A scholarship is a fund provided by a post-secondary institution or organization designed to assist a student in paying for part or all of their post-secondary education. Most scholarships are paid directly to the post-secondary institution the student attends rather than being issued directly to the student. Scholarships DO NOT have to be repaid by the student. Often students don't believe they are eligible to earn scholarships, so they don't apply. It is very likely that students are eligible for some scholarship funds. Completing a scholarship application does not take much time, and it could potentially be very beneficial, so students are strongly encouraged to apply.

Scholarships are often awarded to students based on the following factors:

1. Academics and/or Involvement – These scholarships are based on students' academic achievement and involvement in extracurricular activities and community service.
2. Financial Need – These scholarships are based on students' financial need. Federal scholarships and many private scholarships will require students to have completed their FAFSA to be considered.
3. Student-Specific – These scholarships are based on student-specific factors such as gender, race, religion, family and medical history. Minority scholarships are the most common type within this category.
4. Career-Specific – These scholarships are awarded to students who plan to pursue a specific field of study.
5. College-Specific – These scholarships are awarded to highly qualified students that meet specified criteria. Often, students' academic and personal achievement are considered for these scholarships.

The table below lists common criteria considered in the awarding of scholarships. Please keep in mind that each scholarship will have its own specific criteria.

<i>GPA</i>	<i>Financial Need</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>ACT/SAT Score</i>
<i>Field of Study</i>	<i>First-Generation Student</i>	<i>Talents</i>	<i>Community Service</i>
<i>Employer</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>College Choice</i>	<i>Activities</i>
<i>Military Service</i>	<i>Disability</i>	<i>State of Residence</i>	<i>Gender</i>

ScholarshipQuest

ScholarshipQuest is a "FREE database that contains over 2,000 scholarships". After creating a profile, you will be notified on which scholarships you are eligible for. To learn more about this resource, you can scan the QR code below.

ScholarshipQuest
QR Code



Source: [EducationQuest Foundation: Pay for College: Finding Scholarships](#)

WHAT IS “CAREER READINESS”?

The Nebraska State Board of Education has defined a career ready person as someone who capitalizes on personal strengths, talents, education and experiences to bring value to the workplace and the community through his/her performance, skill, diligence, ethics, and responsible behavior. Career readiness skills help ensure that students are prepared for the next step in their lives, whether that’s their first job or going to college (which will eventually lead to a career).

There are 11 characteristics that the Nebraska Department of Education has identified as being essential for students to develop in order to be the most successful after high school.

1. Applies appropriate academic and technical skills
2. Communicates effectively and appropriately
3. Contributes to employer and community success
4. Makes sense of problems and perseveres in solving them
5. Uses critical thinking
6. Demonstrates innovation and creativity
7. Models ethical leadership and effective management
8. Works productively in teams and demonstrates cultural competency
9. Utilizes technology
10. Manages personal career development
11. Attends to personal and financial well-being

Source: [Nebraska Standards for Career Readiness: Nebraska Department of Education](#)

CAREER READINESS RESOURCES

Most Nebraska schools provide students with opportunities to learn about and develop their career readiness skills both in and out of the classroom. Our goal is to provide additional resources and support to TeamMates matches in this area to facilitate further conversations and development of these skills if the mentee desires. Specifically, many of these resources aim to give students more information about career opportunities today and to help students determine what they want to do after high school graduation with their college and/or career path.

There are many resources available online and from high school counseling offices, but we have selected a handful below that we feel would be most beneficial and relevant to matches.

Videos

- 4 Skills & 4 Steps to a Successful Career: bit.ly/3Nwx29P
- Career One Stop - Informative Videos by Career Cluster (includes average salary and education/training required): bit.ly/3paDs5h
- Virtual Industry Tours (includes salary and educational requirements): <https://www.nebraskacareerclusters.com/>
- Road Trip Nation – Stories that give students the confidence and tools to find a career that matters to them: <https://roadtripnation.com/>

Interactive/Informative Websites

- Nebraska’s H3 Occupation Information (High Wage. High Demand. High Skill.): <http://h3.ne.gov/>
- My Next Move – Search career information by key words, industry, or interests: <https://www.mynextmove.org/>
- My Plan – Career and College Information: <https://www.myplan.com/>

Interest Inventories

Students should have several interest inventory resources offered at their high school. Visit with your school counselor to see what’s available (i.e. the ASVAB and ACT have interest inventory components, many schools have student accounts through Kuder, etc.)

- Career One Stop: <https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/Toolkit/interest-assessment.aspx>
- My Plan: bit.ly/3NxJAhk
- Comprehensive List of other Interest Inventory Providers: <https://www.ksde.org/Home/Quick-Links/Career-Interest-Inventory>



Overview: TeamMates+ is a post-secondary mentoring program created specifically to support students pursuing post-secondary education.

Mission: To positively impact the world by inspiring students to reach their full potential through mentoring.

Vision: To provide post-secondary students with the support and guidance they need to achieve their academic, career, and life goals through mentoring.

TeamMates+ Mentor Expectations

- Aim to contact your mentee twice a month (one face-to-face meeting in-person or virtually; one text, email, or phone communication)
- Support and encourage your mentee with resources and personal experiences as they explore their talents and career path.
- Become an advocate of their potential and have a genuine interest in how they are doing.
- Assist them in developing their career readiness skills.

TeamMates+ Mentee Expectations

- Aim to contact your mentor twice a month (one face-to-face meeting in-person or virtually; one text, email, or phone communication)
- Let your mentor know how they can help support you with school, relationships, time management, career planning, etc.
- Allow your mentor to advocate for your potential in and outside of school.
- Respond and be honest!

How to Sign Up

- During your senior year, you will receive an email with the enrollment form link to sign up to participate in TeamMates+ or you can scan the QR code below.
- On the form, please indicate if you want to continue with your current mentor or be matched with a new mentor.

More Information

- Visit <https://teammates.org/> for more information about TeamMates+.
- Scan the QR code below to hear a testimonial video about post-secondary mentoring.

TeamMates+ Enrollment Form



TeamMates+ Testimonial

