2026-2027

College & Career Readiness Guide

TeamMates National Office Scholarship Application

Available at: https://tmscholarships.communityforce.com/Login.aspx

Application Opens: October 1, 2026

Application Deadline: January 20, 2027

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Purpose

This guide is designed to provide information and resources related to post-secondary education planning and career exploration.

What is "Post-Secondary Education"?

Post-secondary education (also known as "higher education") is any additional education and/or training pursued after graduating high school. Such education can help you attain a career that fits your talents, interests, and goals. Upon completion of a program of study, typically a degree or certificate is awarded. There are many types of post-secondary education institutions/programs, including, but not limited to:

Type of Post-Secondary Education	Degree/Certificate Awarded
4-Year College/University	Bachelor's Degree
2-Year College (may be referred to as a community college or junior college)	Associate's Degree Certificates
Trade/Career/Technical School	Certificates

A Deeper Look into Trade Schools

- May also be called a career or technical school.
- Prepare students for a specific occupation.
- Usually take less time to complete than bachelor's degree programs.
- Usually cost less than bachelor's degree programs.
- A variety of trade school programs are available. Some examples of trades include cosmetologist, welder, auto mechanic, HVAC, electrician, and dental assistant.

Planning for College/Post-Secondary Education

These are important steps to take to put yourself in the best position to be admitted to college and receive financial aid.

1. Keep emails and files organized
   a. Email – Create a personal email account. Colleges and scholarship applications primarily communicate with you through email.

      Helpful Tips:
      - Do not use your high school email account because you will lose access to it after graduation.
      - Create a professional email address. Email addresses that are unprofessional will create a bad impression.
        Good email address examples: joesmith@gmail.com; jsmith25@yahoo.com
      - Have one email account designated specifically for your college/scholarship communications. Using multiple email accounts can become confusing.

   b. Files – Create separate file folders for your college/scholarship materials. You may utilize file folders on your computer and/or physical file folders.

2. Aim for a strong cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)
   Your cumulative GPA is one important factor that colleges and scholarship committees consider. Some colleges and scholarship applications may have a minimum GPA requirement.

3. Take the ACT or SAT
   Many four-year colleges require you to take the ACT or SAT. You may take the ACT as many times as you would like. There is a fee to take the ACT. *Note: ACT fee waivers may be available for students who meet eligibility requirements. Talk to your school counselor to find out more.*

   For ACT information and test prep resources, visit: https://www.act.org/
   For SAT information and test prep resources, visit: https://www.collegeboard.org/

4. Research Colleges
   To find the college that is the best fit for you, you will want to do some research. As you conduct your research, consider factors such as educational programs offered, admissions requirements, cost, financial aid, location, environment, and support resources.

   How to Research Colleges:
   - Read about the college on its website.
   - Read about the college on websites that provide reliable institutional profiles such as the College Search feature on the BigFuture website: College Search by BigFuture
   - Go to a college fair.
   - Speak with an admissions representative.
   - Visit the campus (take a tour and talk to programs/departments you are interested in).

5. Apply to College

   The is a multi-step process so start applying early in your senior year. Make sure your applications are submitted by the colleges' deadlines. As part of the application process, colleges will require you to provide various materials including, but not limited to:

   - Admissions application and fee*
   - Scholarship application for the college
   - High school transcript
   - ACT/SAT scores
   - Personal statement and/or essay responses
   - Letters of recommendation

   **Note: College application fee waivers may be made available by colleges for students who meet certain eligibility requirements*.

Resources for the College Application Process

Personal Statement/Essays

- Guide to College Application Essays by ACT
- How to Write a College Application Essay by BigFuture

Letters of Recommendation

- How to Request Letters of Recommendation by ACT
- How to Get a Great Letter of Recommendation by BigFuture

The Common App

The Common App is a general college admissions application that can be used to apply to multiple colleges by filling out one application. Not all colleges accept the Common App. You will want to check if the colleges you are interested in accept the Common App. Find more information about the Common App at the following link:

- Common App

College Planning Resources

National Websites

- TeamMates National Office
- BigFuture
  - College and Career Planning Checklist
  - College Search
- ACT
- SAT (CollegeBoard)
- Federal Student Aid: FASFA
- Common App

National Scholarships

- Horatio Alger Undergraduate Scholarships
- Career & Technical Education Scholarships

Nebraska Students

- EducationQuest Foundation

Iowa Students

- Iowa College Access Network (ICAN)

Kansas Students

- Kansas Board of Regents

Missouri Students

- Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development

South Dakota Students

- Dakota Dreams
    - South Dakota Scholarships

Wyoming Students

- Wyoming Department of Education: College & Career Ready
- Daniels Fund

Ways to Pay for College

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is the application you must complete to determine what federal, state, and college financial aid you are eligible for. The different types of financial aid include:

1. Grants – Grants are funds awarded to students who demonstrate financial need. These funds do not need to be paid back. You may be considered for federal, state, or college-based grants.

2. Scholarships – Scholarships are funds awarded by donors, organizations, or colleges based on specified criteria. These funds do not need to be paid back. Some common criteria that scholarships are based on include, but are not limited to, those listed in the table below.

Academics, GPA, ACT/SAT Scores	Area of Study / Career Field	College	Demographics
Disability Status	Employer	Extracurricular Activities / Athletics	Financial Need
First-Generation Student	Military Service	Overcoming Adversity	State of Residence

First-Generation Student – A student is considered first-generation if neither of their parents/guardians graduated from four-year college/university.

3. Work-Study – Work-Study is a program that offers on-campus jobs to students who demonstrate financial need to help them pay for educational expenses. These funds are earned by working and do not need to be paid back.

4. Student Loans – Student loans are funds lent to a student to help them pay for their education. These funds must be paid back. Students should be aware of all the terms and conditions of loans they are considering.

Important Information about Completing the FAFSA

- Access the FAFSA at: https://studentaid.gov/
- **The FAFSA should be completed during the fall of your senior year in high school and each year you are attending college**.
- Both the student and their parent will be required to create an **FSA ID**. You will use this same FSA ID for each year you apply.
- You will have the opportunity to indicate on your FAFSA which colleges you would like to receive your FAFSA results.
- Be aware of colleges' FAFSA submission deadlines. Ideally, submit your FAFSA as early as possible to get the most financial aid opportunities.

About the Military

Visit these websites to learn more about opportunities offered by the various military branches. It is also recommended to speak with a recruiter and/or your school counselor.

Army: https://www.goarmy.com/

Marine Corps: https://www.marines.com/

Navy: https://www.navy.com/

Air Force: https://www.airforce.com/

Space Force: https://www.spaceforce.com/

Coast Guard: https://www.gocoastguard.com/

Other Military Opportunities

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Programs (at select colleges/universities)

- A leadership training program that prepares full-time, college enrolled students for military service. Scholarships and tuition assistance may be available.

National Guard (not associated with post-secondary education institutions)

- Offers aid and protection for various situations that may occur at both the federal and state levels.
- Consists of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard.

Military Reserves (not associated with post-secondary education institutions)

- Reserves are activated to provide an additional layer of support to active-duty forces as needed.
- They fall under the authority of the active-duty branches of the military.

Source:
National Guard vs. Reserves: What's the Difference?
https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/national-guard-vs-reserves

Additional Resources

Today's Military: https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/gov/todays-military-education-and-training/

Career Exploration

Career exploration is the process of learning about various career paths. Utilizing career exploration methods, such as the ones listed below, can help you find a fulfilling career. High school students are encouraged to try these career exploration methods.

- **Enroll in school courses that are related to careers you are interested in.**
    - Research what course offerings are available at your school.
    - Talk to your school counselor/advisor for guidance on courses that can help you explore careers you might be interested in.

- **Read about a variety of careers using reputable career websites.**
    - My Next Move: https://www.mynextmove.org/
    - CareerOneStop: https://www.careeronestop.org/
    - CareerExplorer: https://www.careerexplorer.com/
    - ASVAB Career Exploration Program: https://www.asvabprogram.com/career-cluster

- CareerPathway: https://www.careerpathway.com/

- **Take an interest inventory/career assessment to discover how your talents and interests match up with various careers.**
  - My Next Move O*Net Interest Profiler: https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip
  - CareerOneStop Self Assessments: https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Assessments/self-assessments.aspx
  - CareerExplorer Career Test: https://www.careerexplorer.com/career-test/

- **Conduct an informational interview to learn directly from someone working in a career of interest. For guidance on how to do an informational interview, review the resources below.**
  - CareerOneStop Informational Interviews: https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/informational-interviews.aspx
  - Indeed's Informational Interview Guide: https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/informational-interview-guide

- **Participate in experiential learning opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in careers of interest. Experiential learning may include participating in:**
  - School or community organizations
  - Volunteer service
  - Job shadowing/Internships
  - Part-time jobs or internships
  - Career related programs or projects

For more information and resources related to career exploration, talk with your school counselor.

CareerPathways

- **Career Exploration Tools** – Provides industry insights, career assessments, and job pathway information to help them make informed career decisions.
- **Job Readiness Training** – Offers resources on resume building, interview preparation, and workplace skills to ensure mentees are prepared for employment opportunities**.**
- **Workforce Connections** – Connections to potential internships, apprenticeships, and entry-level job opportunities aligned with career interests.
- **Customized Learning Pathways** – Provides access to skill-building courses and certifications tailored to their chosen career fields.

https://www.careerpathway.com/

Internships: InternNE

InternNE, powered by the Aksarben Foundation, is an innovative program designed to connect Nebraska students with local businesses through meaningful internships.

https://aksarben.org/scholarships-and-internships/

What is TeamMates Post-Secondary Mentoring?

- TeamMates Post-Secondary Mentoring is a program designed to provide continued support, resources, and soft-skill development for students as they pursue higher education. We encourage all our graduating mentees planning to pursue post-secondary education or training to become involved with TeamMates Post-Secondary.
- Post-secondary education includes all facets: 4-year degrees, 2-year degrees and certificates, trade schools, military, etc.
- As a TeamMates Post-Secondary match, the expectation for the mentor and mentee is to meet in person once a month in a safe public location, either on or off campus. Other communication throughout the month will involve text messages, phone calls, and/or emails.
- Mentees entering the TeamMates Post-Secondary program can choose to stay with their current mentor or be matched with a new mentor in their desired career field or on campus.
- TeamMates Post Secondary offers benefits such as:
    - Support, guidance, and accountability provided by a caring mentor
    - Scholarship opportunities
    - Educational Success Emergency Fund to help students overcome financial hardships and stay in school
    - Gallup CliftonStrengths Assessment and coaching for mentors and mentees
    - College resources
    - Special events for mentors and mentees
- Next Steps:
    - Senior matches, and parents/guardians will receive information from the TeamMates National Office and the chapter Program Coordinator during the spring semester, and mentees will have the opportunity to enroll in the program.

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