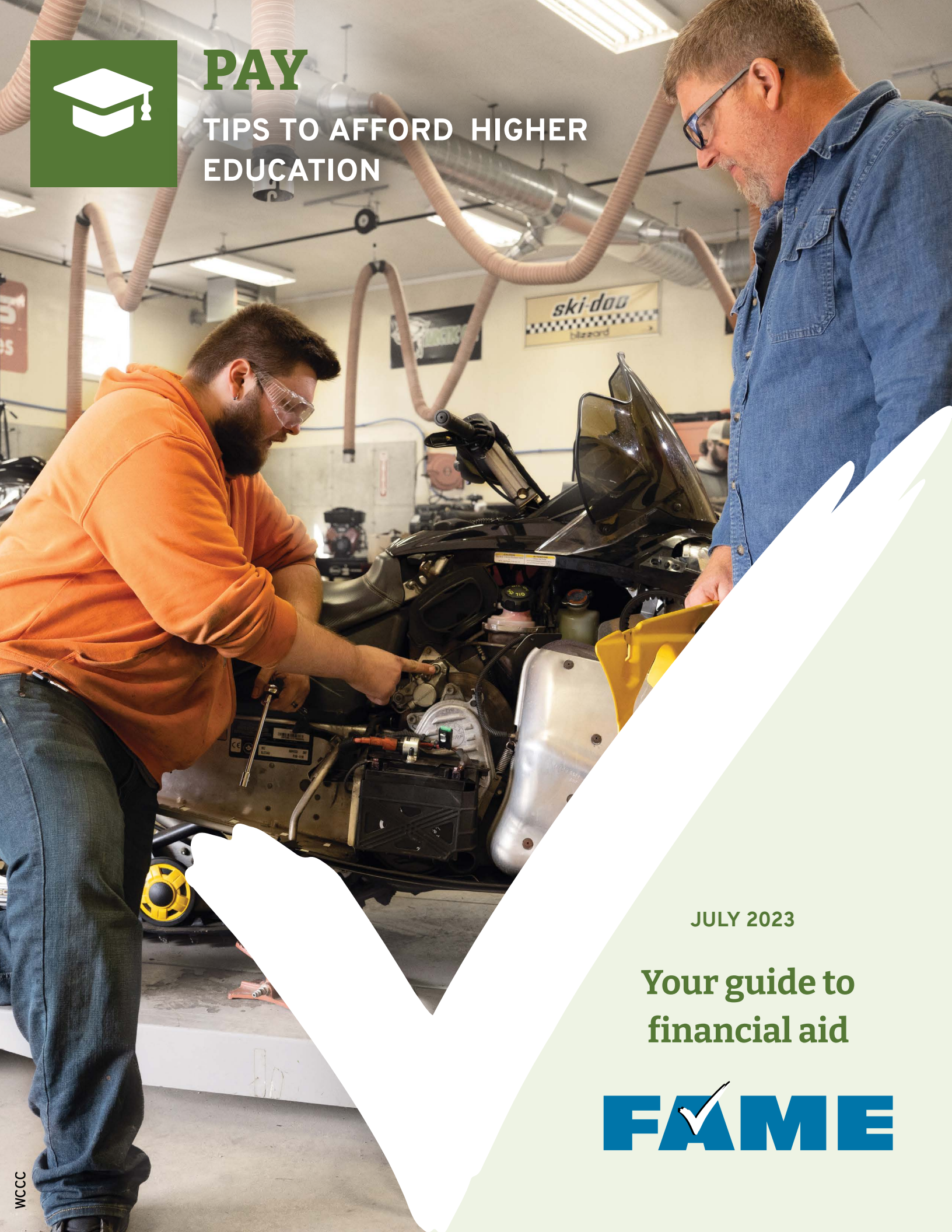




PAY

**TIPS TO AFFORD HIGHER
EDUCATION**



JULY 2023

**Your guide to
financial aid**

FAME

FINANCIAL AID

PAY: TIPS TO AFFORD HIGHER EDUCATION was designed to help you through the entire financial aid process—how to prepare, when to apply, what types of financial aid exist, how to reduce college costs, how to understand and compare financial aid offers, and much more.

Throughout this guide, we use the words “college” and “school” to refer to a wide variety of postsecondary educational institutions, including both public and private, two-year and four-year institutions, community colleges, and career and trade schools. Typically, financial aid is available at schools that are approved by the U.S. Department of Education. If you are unsure whether the school you are planning to attend offers federal or other types of financial aid, please contact the school directly.

FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE

FAME helps families afford higher education through financial planning tools and programs. No matter where you are on your path to higher education, FAME has the team and the resources to help you be successful.

ADDRESS

Mailing: PO Box 949
Augusta, Maine 04332-0949
Physical: 5 Community Drive
Augusta, Maine 04330

PHONE

1-800-228-3734, TTY 207-626-2717






EMAIL

Education@FAMEmaine.com

WEB

FAMEmaine.com
NextGenforME.com
ClaimYourFuture.org

SOCIAL

 /FAMEmaineorg
 @FAME.Maine
 @FAMEmaine
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FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid helps students and families pay for college expenses and can bridge the gap between family resources and college costs. Financial aid may be need- or merit-based.

BASIC TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID:

- 1 GRANTS** are aid that you are given by the federal or state government or your college, that you will **not** need to repay.
- 2 SCHOLARSHIPS** are aid that you are given, sometimes from private institutions or community organizations, that you will **not** need to repay.
- 3 WORK-STUDY** is aid granted through the federal government or through your college that provides an opportunity for you to work part time on or off campus. While not applied to your tuition bill, money earned throughout the course of the semester can be used toward college expenses, like textbooks or other supplies.
- 4 LOANS** are aid that you borrow from the federal government, the state, or a private institution that you **will** need to repay.





MERIT-BASED VS NEED-BASED

MERIT-BASED AID

is based on academic, athletic, artistic or other talent, not on financial need. Generally speaking, scholarships are merit-based aid.

NEED-BASED AID

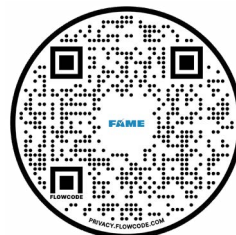
is based on family financial circumstances. All federal grants, work-study, and subsidized federal student loans are need-based aid. This guide will focus on helping you navigate the process of need-based financial aid, but be sure you seek out merit-based aid as appropriate.

THE 2024-2025 FAFSA IS DELAYED UNTIL DECEMBER!

Both the FAFSA form and the FAFSA application process are being revamped! The new FAFSA, being referred to as Better FAFSA by Federal Student Aid, will have fewer questions and be easier to complete. Because of these significant changes, the 2024-2025 FAFSA will not be available until December.

Though many of the changes related to the FAFSA simplification have been announced, there are more details yet to come. For the most up-to-date information on the 2024-2025 FAFSA, visit FAMEmaine.com/FAFSAsimplification.

Want to receive timely updates about the FAFSA and financial aid process? Sign up for texts and/or emails at FAMEmaine.com/join.



HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FAFSA? GET HELP FROM FAME:

CONTACT US 1-800-228-3734
Education@FAMEmaine.com

ONLINE FAMEmaine.com

AT AN EVENT FAME hosts FAFSA completion events across the state. Find an event near you at FAMEmaine.com/FAFSA or learn more about our virtual events.





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SHOULD I APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID?

YES! EVERYONE SHOULD APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID, regardless of income. File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and complete any other financial aid applications and paperwork required by your school(s).

THE FAFSA IS REQUIRED to access many types of financial aid. Some scholarship programs and most grant programs, including the Maine State Grant Program, require students to complete the FAFSA in order to determine need before they can be considered for financial aid. Additionally, all federal loans and some state loan programs require students to complete the FAFSA.

REAPPLY EACH YEAR. You **must** reapply for financial aid by filing a FAFSA each year that you plan to attend school.

CONSIDER THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT of the schools you are interested in and your field of study to ensure that the education you receive is worth the financial investment. To research schools and majors and to find information about financial aid, check out [CollegeNavigator.gov](https://collegenavigator.gov) and the College Board's BigFuture™ website: BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org. To research school graduation rates and career starting salaries, visit CollegeScorecard.ed.gov. To research careers and salaries, check out CareerOneStop.org.

THREE STEPS TO APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID:

- 1 GET READY
- 2 APPLY
- 3 FOLLOW UP

STEP ONE

GET READY

To make the process of applying for financial aid as easy as possible, get ready before senior year. Learn more at [FAMEmaine.com/FAFSA](https://famemaine.com/FAFSA).

RESEARCH YOUR ESTIMATED NET PRICE of each school you are interested in by using Net Price Calculator. This tool can be found on each school's website.

RESEARCH FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES and requirements for each school you are interested in attending.

DETERMINE IF ANY OTHER APPLICATIONS ARE REQUIRED.

Some schools require additional applications, such as the CSS Profile or other institutional forms. Learn more about the [CSSProfile.CollegeBoard.org](https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org).

TRACK DEADLINES using the School Requirements Tracking Sheet on page 29, or your calendar, notes app, or other tool to help you keep track.

RESEARCH AND APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS. Scholarships can help bridge the gap between the cost of school and your financial aid package and reduce the amount you have to borrow.

CREATE A FEDERAL STUDENT AID ACCOUNT (FSA ID) at StudentAid.gov.

CREATING A FEDERAL STUDENT AID ACCOUNT:

WHEN YOU CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT, YOU WILL SET UP YOUR FSA ID. Your FSA ID is a username and password used to access Federal Student Aid websites, including FAFSA on the web. It also serves as your legal electronic signature. **FSA IDs must be created and matched with the Social Security Administration (SSA) before they can be used to access the FAFSA.** Create your account at least a week before you plan to file the FAFSA.

WHO NEEDS AN FSA ID?

- All students who plan to file a FAFSA
- At least one parent if the student is considered a dependent student on the FAFSA. In some cases, when two parents live in the household, both parents will need an FSA ID. (Some parents may already have an FSA ID if they have older children or have recently applied for federal student aid themselves.)

WHEN SHOULD AN FSA ID BE CREATED?

Students and parents can create an FSA ID anytime at StudentAid.gov. Because an FSA ID must be matched with the SSA before it can be used, create your FSA ID at least a week before you plan to file the FAFSA (and have

your parent(s) do the same, if required). To create an FSA ID, you MUST provide an email address for an account you have access to. We strongly recommend you also provide your mobile phone number and be in a location where you can receive a text when creating your FSA ID.

FSA ID TIPS: Enter information carefully and use FAME's Create Your Federal Student Aid Account (FSA ID) worksheets (there's one for students and one for parents) to record FSA ID information. Worksheets and additional details can be found at [FAMEmaine.com/FAFSA](https://famemaine.com/FAFSA). Keep this information confidential and stored in a safe location. FSA IDs will be needed for multiple purposes in the coming years.

AN EMAIL ADDRESS/MOBILE PHONE NUMBER CAN ONLY BE ASSOCIATED WITH ONE FSA ID.

Each student and parent must create their own FSA ID. Students and parents cannot use the same email address or mobile phone number.

USE AN EMAIL ADDRESS OTHER THAN YOUR HIGH SCHOOL EMAIL. Your high school email will expire after graduation, and you will need access to the email associated with your FSA ID for years to come.



NET PRICE CALCULATOR

is a tool that provides an estimate of what a particular school will cost you! Net Price Calculator is student- and school-specific and calculates net price – the difference between the published price (full cost) and any grants or scholarships that you may be eligible to receive. Some of the most expensive schools offer the largest grants and scholarships, making them more affordable than you may think. Each school is required to have this tool on their website, and it can typically be found on the school's financial aid page.



SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships come in various amounts and are offered by a variety of different organizations; some may even be in your own community. To begin your search, check out:

LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE OFFICE

COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

EMPLOYER/PARENTS' EMPLOYER(S)

FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

LOCAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OR TOWN OFFICES

NATIONAL AND STATE-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

FREE SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHES:

Only use free scholarship searches. You should never have to pay for a search or to apply for a scholarship.

MAINE

- Finance Authority of Maine: FAMEmaine.com
- Maine Community Foundation: MaineCF.org

NATIONWIDE

- FAME.iGrad.com
- BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org/scholarship-search
- Fastweb.com
- Petersons.com/scholarship-search
- UCanGo2.org/scholarships.html

Visit FAMEmaine.com/scholarships to find a scholarship tracker and other resources to help with your scholarship search!

SCHOLARSHIPS

are for students of all ages, including adult and graduate students. If a scholarship doesn't specifically state it's for recent high school graduates, it's fair game to apply if you meet the criteria. **It's important to continue searching and applying for scholarships even after your freshman year.**

STEP TWO

APPLY

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step to accessing financial aid. Use FAME's checklist "Get Ready to File the 2024–2025 FAFSA" at [FAMEmaine.com/FAFSA](https://famemaine.com/FAFSA).

GO TO STUDENTAID.GOV:

USE THE REQUIRED FSA ID (username and password) to access the appropriate section of the FAFSA (student or parent).

SUBMIT THE FAFSA EVERY YEAR as soon as possible after it becomes available (typically October 1).

SUPPLY 2022 INCOME INFORMATION as required for the 2024–2025 FAFSA.

CONSENT TO RETRIEVAL OF 2022 FEDERAL TAX INFORMATION from the IRS (even if a federal tax return was not filed). Consenting to retrieval is **required** for the FAFSA to be successfully processed and will reduce follow-up after the FAFSA has been filed.

ASSET REPORTING

NOT ALL ASSETS NEED TO BE REPORTED ON THE FAFSA.

For example, these are **not** reportable:

- The home you live in
- Personal possessions, such as cars and boats
- Life insurance policies
- Retirement plans

Many families, depending on financial circumstances, will not be required to provide ANY asset information on the FAFSA.

DIVORCED OR SEPARATED PARENTS

If your biological or adoptive parents are divorced or separated, provide information about the parent who provided the greater portion of your financial support. Have other questions about listing parent information on the FAFSA? Visit [FAMEmaine.com/FAFSA](https://famemaine.com/FAFSA) for more information.

NEW MAINERS

If you are a New Mainer who is not eligible for federal financial aid, please visit [FAMEmaine.com/NewMainers](https://famemaine.com/NewMainers) for information and resources to help pay for higher education.

OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

Parents are sometimes hesitant to provide their information on the FAFSA because they're concerned it will obligate them to pay for college. That is not the case! When required, providing parent information on the FAFSA simply allows students to be considered for financial aid, which they cannot be without the required information.

If you have unusual circumstances that prevent you from being able to provide parent information on the FAFSA, please contact us to discuss your options.

Have other questions about listing parent information on the FAFSA? Visit [FAMEmaine.com/FAFSA](https://famemaine.com/FAFSA) for more information.



WHAT IS THE CSS PROFILE?

The CSS Profile®, administered by the College Board, is an application used by nearly 400 colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their own financial aid dollars. Unlike the FAFSA, the CSS Profile asks for the value of the primary residence and often asks for noncustodial parent information in the case of divorce or separation.

Check with the schools you are interested in to see if they require the **CSS Profile**, and also check the related filing deadline.

For additional information, including the cost of submitting the CSS Profile and possible fee waivers, visit CSSProfile.CollegeBoard.org.



Colby College

DEADLINES MATTER: DON'T MISS OUT

Deadlines are important because some types of aid are limited and may only be offered to those who meet their school's priority deadline. This example shows a student with a 0 (zero) Student Aid Index (SAI) for the 2023–2024 academic year.

FAFSA Submitted January 1		FAFSA Submitted after school's priority deadline		FAFSA Submitted during summer	
Pell Grant	\$7,395	Pell Grant	\$7,395	Pell Grant	\$7,395
State Grant	\$2,500	State Grant	\$2,500	Direct Loan	\$5,500
Supplemental Grant	\$2,000	Work-Study	\$1,000		
University Grant	\$3,500	Direct Loan	\$5,500		
Work-Study	\$1,600				
Direct Loan	\$5,500				
TOTAL OFFER	\$22,495	TOTAL OFFER	\$16,395	TOTAL OFFER	\$12,895

Find out (and meet) the deadlines at ALL of the schools you are applying to!

STEP THREE

FOLLOW UP WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

REVIEW YOUR FAFSA SUBMISSION SUMMARY (FSS) formerly known as the Student Aid Report (SAR). An email will be sent to the email address in the student section of the FAFSA notifying you that your FAFSA has been processed. Log in to **StudentAid.gov** with your (the student's) FSA ID (username and password) and carefully review your FSS to check for errors. We recommend downloading and saving a copy for your records and for scholarship applications.

MAKE CORRECTIONS OR ADD ADDITIONAL SCHOOLS, IF NECESSARY.

To make corrections or add additional schools, log in to **StudentAid.gov** with the required FSA ID (username and password) to access the appropriate section of the FAFSA (student or parent).

WATCH FOR REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION FROM YOUR SCHOOL(S).

Your school(s) may contact you via your school email or student portal and ask you to verify the information you provided on your FAFSA. This process is referred to as verification and does not mean you did anything wrong! Be sure to provide needed information to the school as soon as possible.

WHAT IS MY STUDENT AID INDEX (SAI)?

YOUR SAI IS:

- Calculated based on the information that you provided on the FAFSA and will be listed on your FSS.
- Used as a measure of your family's financial resources.
- Used by colleges to calculate financial aid.
- The same at each school that you apply to.

YOUR SAI IS NOT:

- The amount your family will have to pay for college.
- The amount of financial aid you will receive.



Looking for MORE answers to your financial aid questions?

Visit **FAMEmaine.com/Affording-Education** to learn how to prepare and pay for college.

Student financial aid history can be found by logging in to **StudentAid.gov** with your FSA ID. Visit **FinAid.org** to find information on loans, scholarships and other types of financial aid, as well as dozens of calculators.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION IS COMING TO YOUR EMAIL INBOX.

Once you're offered admission, each school may ask you to create a school email address. Schools want to communicate and provide information using their own email system.

It's important to check all email accounts regularly, as information may be time-sensitive. Respond promptly to requests, and share information with parents or guardians when appropriate.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

There are three types of federal aid that may be listed as part of your financial aid offer: grants, work-study and loans.

FEDERAL GRANTS

Federal grants are considered “gift aid” and, unlike loans, do not need to be repaid. The most common types of federal grants are:

- **Federal Pell Grant:** A need-based grant available to undergraduate students. The amount of the grant is based on the information provided on the FAFSA.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG):** A need-based grant available at some colleges.

FEDERAL WORK-STUDY

Federal work-study provides part-time employment for students to work on or off campus. Funds are not available at all colleges. Funds are paid to the student as earned and not applied to the student bill.

FEDERAL LOANS

Federal loans are available to students and parents to help finance college. Loans must be repaid with interest.

- **Direct Subsidized Loan** is a need-based loan that does not accrue interest while the student is enrolled in college.
- **Direct Unsubsidized Loan** is a loan that is not based on need. Interest does accrue while the student is enrolled in college.
- **Direct PLUS Loan** for Parents and Graduate Students is a credit-based loan available to parents of dependent students and to graduate students.

For the most up-to-date information regarding federal loan and grant programs, visit StudentAid.gov.

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS may also award their own scholarship, grant, work-study and loan funds. To learn more about what your school has to offer, contact the financial aid office.



Work-Study—Did You Know... There are many benefits to work-study beyond the money.

Research has shown that students who participate in the Federal Work-Study Program are more likely to graduate and be employed six years after college than similar students who don't participate in the program.*

Work-study is earned throughout the course of the year, based on the student's rate of pay and number of hours worked. As a result, it isn't applied to and doesn't reduce the student's bill. Many students use work-study earnings to cover miscellaneous and travel expenses, or even books for an upcoming semester.

*©2014 by Judith Scott-Clayton and Veronica Minaya. Should Student Employment Be Subsidized? Conditional Counterfactuals and the Outcomes of Work-Study Participation (2014 National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 20329).



NEBHE TUITION BREAK

REDUCED TUITION FOR MAINE STUDENTS

Some state universities in New England offer reduced tuition to Maine students pursuing a program that is not offered in Maine. For more information on reduced tuition at an out-of-state school, visit the New England Board of Higher Education at NEBHE.org/tuitionbreak/.

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PROGRAMS FOR MAINE RESIDENTS

These programs are designed to support Maine students and help meet Maine's workforce needs. Find more information and program applications at FAMemaine.com/Affording-Education/Pay-For-School.

UNDERGRADUATE

Maine State Grant Program is a need-based grant for undergraduate students attending an eligible school. File the FAFSA by May 1 to be considered for the grant.

Tuition Waiver Programs provide free tuition to some foster children, adopted children/wards under subsidy from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, and spouses and children of firefighters, law enforcement officers or emergency medical services personnel killed in the line of duty. The student must be attending a Maine public college/university.

Educators for Maine Program is a renewable, merit-based loan for students pursuing careers in education, including speech pathology and child care. The loan is forgivable upon eligible employment in Maine. **This loan is also available to graduate students.**

GRADUATE

Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship provides scholarships for eligible students enrolled in a qualifying Maine-based medical school program.

Maine Health Professions Loan Program is a competitive, need-based loan for Maine students pursuing eligible postgraduate medical, dental and veterinary education.

Maine Medical Education Trust Medical Student Loan Program is available to Maine residents enrolled in or accepted to approved medical schools.

Maine Dental Education Loan Program is a competitive, forgivable loan program for Maine students pursuing a career as a dentist and planning to work in Maine after graduation.

Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program is a competitive, need-based loan for Maine students enrolled in a program of study leading to a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. The loan is forgivable upon eligible employment in Maine.

FINANCIAL AID OFFERS

After you complete the financial aid application process and have been admitted to a school, you will receive a financial aid offer. Schools have different schedules for when they send (or email) financial aid notifications. We recommend not making a final school selection decision until you receive and review offers from all schools.

CAREFULLY REVIEW YOUR NOTIFICATION, including the types of financial aid that you are offered.

COMPARE THE NET COST OF EACH SCHOOL if you receive financial aid offers from multiple schools, using the “Comparing Costs and Financial Aid Offers” worksheet on page 18.

ACCEPT OR REJECT EACH TYPE OF AID once you have compared all of your offers and decided which school to attend.

RESPOND QUICKLY to any request from each school and provide any additional forms, such as loan applications and student loan entrance counseling.

CONTACT YOUR SCHOOL’S FINANCIAL AID OFFICE if you have questions.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR FINANCIAL AID OFFER

- Is your financial aid likely to stay the same for all of the following years (assuming the financial information doesn’t change dramatically)?
- Are there GPA requirements to maintain any of the types of aid?
- How will outside scholarships impact the financial aid offer? Can outside scholarships be in addition to the current financial aid? If aid has to be reduced, what type of aid is reduced first—grants, need-based loans, or work-study?



SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

CONTACT THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE DIRECTLY

to discuss special circumstances, such as:

- Unemployment
- Loss of income
- Parent(s) attending college
- Divorce or separation
- Unusual medical expenses
- Any financial change not reflected on the FAFSA

For more information on appeals, see FAMemaine.com/AppealSteps.

COMPARING COSTS AND FINANCIAL AID OFFERS:

Use this worksheet to compare estimated college costs and financial aid offers. Find the information you need to complete this worksheet in your financial aid notification or on your school's website. Costs and financial aid offers can vary significantly from one college or university to another.

COLLEGE NAME	EXAMPLE	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3
	School X			
DIRECT COSTS TO ATTEND				
Tuition & Mandatory Fees	\$11,000			
Housing & Food	+ \$10,500	+	+	+
Direct costs (Billed by school)	= \$21,500	=	=	=
FINANCIAL AID: GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS				
Grants & Scholarships	- \$11,400	-	-	-
Net Cost Before Loans	= \$10,100	=	=	=
FINANCIAL AID: FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS				
Federal Direct Subsidized Loans	\$3,500			
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans	+ \$2,000	+	+	+
Total Loan Amount¹	= \$5,500	=	=	=
ESTIMATED TOTAL COST (OUT-OF-POCKET)				
Balance Due (Direct Costs minus grants, scholarships and loans)	= \$4,600			
Indirect Costs (Books, supplies, travel)	+ \$1,500	+	+	+
Estimated Total Cost² (Out-of-pocket cost)	= \$6,100	=	=	=
FINANCIAL AID: WORK-STUDY				
WORK-STUDY³	\$1,500			

¹ Most schools do not list Federal PLUS or private loan eligibility as part of the financial aid offer as these loans are credit-based and may not be approved for everyone. If PLUS or private loan eligibility is listed, please exclude for the purposes of comparing offers.

² Estimated Total Cost would be the amount paid by the student and/or the student's family using savings, outside scholarships and/or loans.

³ Federal work-study funds are earned throughout the year so are not available to help pay the full balance.

REDUCING COSTS

For most students, financial aid does not cover the entire cost of education. Before borrowing additional loans, consider the following cost-cutting measures.

1 ENROLLMENT COSTS

SEE IF YOU'RE ELIGIBLE FOR REDUCED TUITION.

Some state university systems have agreements with neighboring state university systems to offer reduced tuition rates, especially if you are majoring in a program not offered at your state school(s). Check out [NEBHE.org/tuitionbreak](https://www.nebhe.org/tuitionbreak) for more information.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SCHOOLS WITH FLAT TUITION RATES by taking extra classes to accelerate completing your degree without paying more money.

TEST OUT OF COLLEGE COURSES or take Advanced Placement (AP) and/or dual enrollment classes in high school. Some colleges will grant you course credit for your high school AP classes if you receive high scores on the test. Additionally, some colleges will give you an opportunity to test out of general education classes.

ENROLL IN SUMMER COURSES AT YOUR LOCAL COLLEGE OR ONLINE to fulfill general education requirements at a lower cost per credit hour.

2 LIVING EXPENSES

CONSIDER LIVING AT HOME, if possible, and commuting to college.

GET ROOMMATES if you decide to live off campus. If you live on campus, skip the single room.

CHOOSE A MEAL PLAN that works for you. More importantly, if you have a meal plan, use it!

3 TRAVEL EXPENSES

LEAVE YOUR CAR AT HOME to save on parking fees and gas.

CONSIDER COMMUTING with another student or use public transportation.

4 STUDENT DISCOUNTS

TAKE ADVANTAGE of student discounts for computers, travel or entertainment.

5 BOOKS

UTILIZE FREE RESOURCES like Google Books and your school library to see if you can use a textbook for free.

CONSIDER RENTING from a source like [Chegg.com](https://www.Chegg.com), [BiggerBooks.com](https://www.BiggerBooks.com), [eCampus.com](https://www.eCampus.com), or your school bookstore, or share a book with another student.

BUY YOUR BOOKS USED AND BUY THEM EARLY. School bookstores and online sources like [Amazon.com](https://www.Amazon.com) and [BigWords.com](https://www.BigWords.com) have a limited supply of used books, which tend to go first. Also, consider selling books that you no longer need.

PURCHASE DIGITAL BOOKS. Downloadable textbooks are often cheaper than hard copies and are delivered on demand.



WANT MORE MONEY \$MARTS?

Check out FAME's companion publication ***Manage: Making Your Money Work*** for more tips on reducing costs, budgeting, building savings and staying debt-free during college and beyond.

Request a copy at
FAMEmaine.com/Publications

ONLINE FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Powered by iGrad® and Enrich®, FAME offers free online financial wellness tools to support Maine people during high school, college, and beyond. While in high school and through college, students can access the resources at **FAME.iGrad.com**, with expanded resources for after college available at **FAME.Enrich.org**.

HOW TO GET STARTED:

- Visit **FAME.iGrad.com** (or **FAME.Enrich.org** if you've finished college) to sign up for a free account.
- Complete your financial wellness checkup.
- Browse recommended videos, articles, infographics and more.
- Complete a financial wellness course. Topics include smart borrowing, budgeting, investing, and credit scores.

IF THE FINANCIAL AID ISN'T ENOUGH

Colleges aren't always able to meet the full financial need of every student. What can you do if your financial aid isn't enough and you've already reduced all possible costs?

CONSIDER THESE OPTIONS:

Scholarships are funds awarded by various organizations and don't have to be repaid. Be sure to research and apply for outside scholarships early and every year you are in school.

Savings may come from various sources. Any money available from savings is money that doesn't have to be borrowed and repaid with interest.

Tuition Payment Plans allow you to pay your tuition in installments over the semester or year and are typically offered through the college. Most plans are interest-free but may charge a small fee.

Federal Direct PLUS Loan for Parents and Graduate Students is a credit-based loan for parents and graduate students. Borrowers can request up to the cost of education minus any financial aid.

Private Education Loans are credit-based education loans offered through a bank, credit union or state agency. Usually the student is the borrower and will need a creditworthy cosigner like a parent or grandparent. Since private loans lack the benefits of federal student loans, consider them after other federal financial aid has been exhausted.

BEFORE TAKING OUT ADDITIONAL LOANS,

take the time to answer the following questions to help you find the loan that is right for you.

- Who will be the primary borrower?
- What loan features are most important to you when you think about the cost of borrowing?
 - Fixed or variable interest rate?
 - Length of repayment?
 - Smallest monthly payment?
 - Visit **FAMEmaine.com/studentloans**
 - Lowest interest rate?
 - for more information about student loans.
 - No or low origination/loan fees?
- Are you considering borrowing against the equity in your home?
- What are the various tax benefits of your borrowing options?
- Are you able to make payments while you are in school? Making any payments while in school can reduce the total amount you will repay.
- Do you know your and your cosigner's credit scores? (You can obtain credit scores at **AnnualCreditReport.com** for a fee.) Since private loans are credit-based, typically the better the credit score of the borrower or cosigner, the lower the interest rate.
- How much student loan debt can you afford? Visit **CareerOneStop.org** to get an estimate of your annual salary. Once you have that, use FAME's Student Loan/Salary Calculator at **FAMEmaine.com/calculators-tools** to calculate the maximum amount of student loan debt that is reasonable for your circumstances.



CONTACT YOUR FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

to discuss your situation if your aid isn't enough. The financial aid office only has the information that was provided through the financial aid process. If there are other special circumstances impacting your family's ability to pay for school, such as unemployment or high medical bills, report the additional information. They may be able to help. Even if you don't have special circumstances, ask if there is more aid available or ways to receive more aid in the future.



COMPARING PLUS AND PRIVATE LOANS:

	FEDERAL DIRECT PLUS LOANS	PRIVATE EDUCATION LOANS
Who Makes These Loans?	Federal Direct PLUS Loans are offered by the federal government.	Private education loans are offered by banks, credit unions or state agencies.
Who Can Be the Borrower?	Only a biological or adoptive parent, or a stepparent on the FAFSA can be the borrower on behalf of an undergraduate student.	The student can be the borrower for a private education loan but may need a creditworthy cosigner.
What Are the Interest Rates?	All borrowers, regardless of credit quality, will pay the same fixed interest rate of 8.05% for the 2023-2024 school year.	Interest rates can be fixed or variable and are generally determined by the credit quality of the applicant, and if applicable, cosigner. Chosen repayment term or other factors may also impact interest rates.
Are There Fees?	All borrowers, regardless of credit quality, will pay the same origination fee of 4.228% for loans first disbursed between 10/1/2023 and 9/30/2024.	Fees vary by lender. However, in the current market, there are many zero/low-fee private education loan options.
Can You Postpone Repayment?	Deferments and forbearances are available through federal student aid regulations.	Deferments and forbearances will vary by lender.

SELECTING A PRIVATE STUDENT LOAN LENDER

Lenders present the features and benefits of their student loans in different ways. When you compare student loans, make sure you are looking at what the loan will cost YOU. Pay particular attention to these features and benefits:

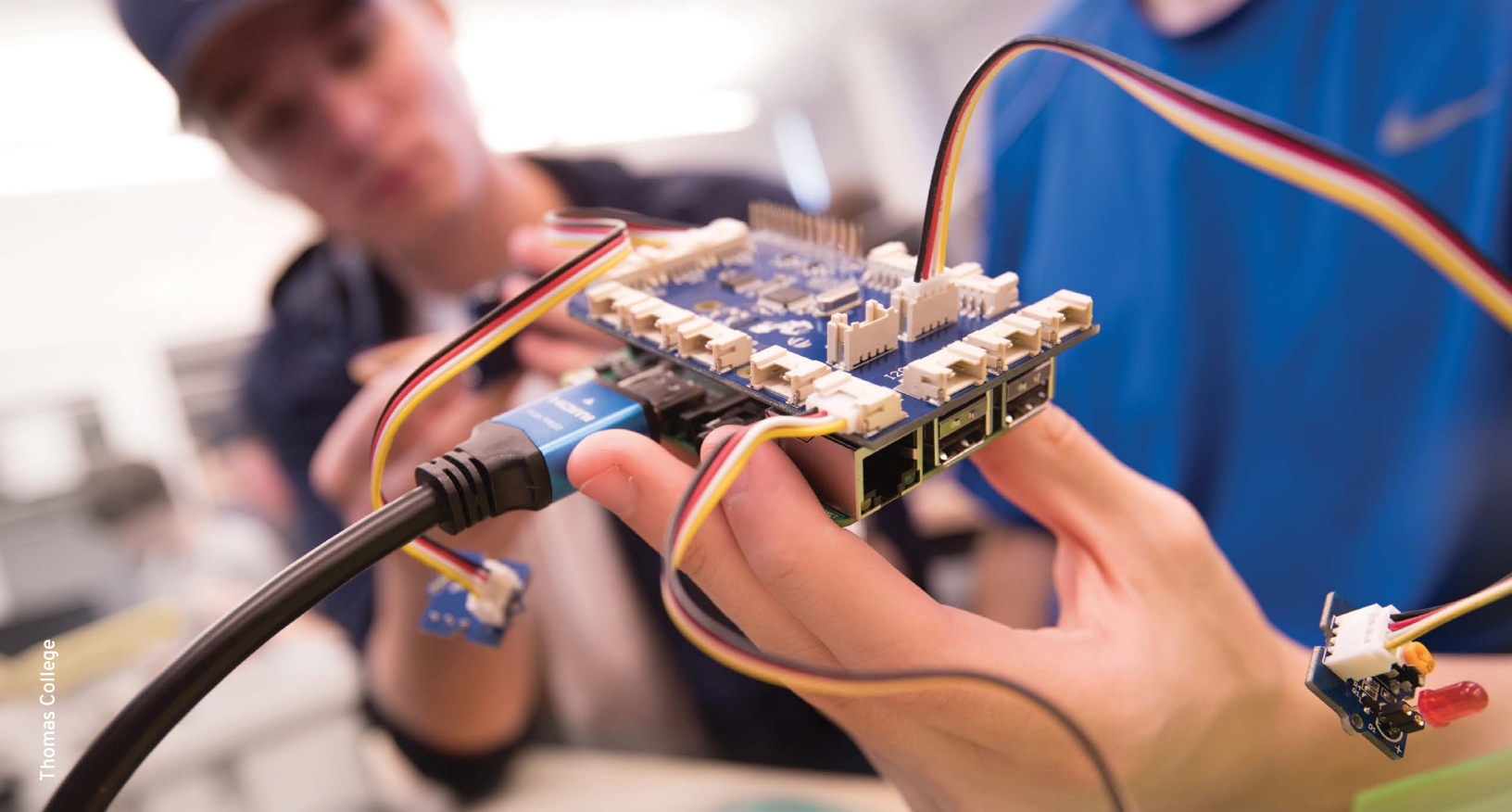
ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE (APR) The APR is the cost of interest and fees on a loan over time—how much the loan will cost you to repay. The APR is intended to assist you in comparing the cost of various loans that have different fees, rates and payback periods. Typically, APRs can be found on a lender’s website. If you have trouble finding an APR on the website, call the lender.

FIXED OR VARIABLE INTEREST RATES A fixed interest rate is set during the application process and does not change during the life of the loan. A variable interest rate (and your monthly payments) may increase or decrease if the base rate changes during the life of the loan.

REPAYMENT AND DEFERMENT OPTIONS Consider repayment options. Lenders may offer a variety of repayment options—immediate repayment, interest-only repayment, partial repayment or full deferment. If you are able to make payments while you are in school, look for a loan that offers that option. Also consider future deferment options that may be important in case you experience financial hardship while you are repaying your loan.



Visit FAMemaine.com/studentloans to find and compare Maine lenders who offer private student loans with various features, terms, and fees.



STUDENT LOAN BASICS

Many families borrow to pay for college. Successfully borrowing and paying back student loans can help build good credit and achieve other financial goals. Throughout the process, keep the following basics in mind:

LOANS HAVE TO BE REPAID,* including any interest that accrues, even if you don't graduate.

FORGIVENESS MAY BE GRANTED to some eligible state and federal student loans under limited circumstances.

UNDERSTAND THE LOAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES and repayment options before you borrow.

NEVER BORROW MORE THAN YOU NEED to pay for your direct education expenses.

LIMIT YOURSELF TO FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS IF POSSIBLE as the repayment and forgiveness terms are more flexible than with private student loans.

*Student loans are typically not dischargeable in bankruptcy.

RESEARCH YOUR FUTURE SALARY when considering borrowing. It is recommended that student loan payments be no more than 8-10% of your gross earnings. We recommend your total debt not exceed the amount you can expect to earn in your first year of employment.

VISIT STUDENTAID.GOV to retrieve federal loan information.

YOUR LOAN SERVICER IS THERE TO HELP. Contact your loan servicer if you are unable to repay due to financial hardship.

BEFORE YOU BORROW

Be informed about your options, including borrowing less; using forgivable loans; and knowing the differences between federal, private, and Maine student loans. Visit [FAMEmaine.com/studentloans](https://fame.maine.com/studentloans).

EDUCATION TAX CREDITS AND DEDUCTIONS:

AMERICAN OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT* This federal tax credit is up to \$2,500 per student. It is available for the first four years of postsecondary education. To receive it, you need to show you paid for qualified education expenses. Be sure to keep your tax records. There is a maximum income limit for this tax credit.

LIFETIME LEARNING CREDIT* You may be able to claim up to \$2,000 for qualified education expenses on your federal tax return with this credit. The number of years you can claim this credit is unlimited for eligible students. As of 2018, there is a maximum income limit for this tax credit.

* A parent or student can only claim one of the two above credits for the same student.

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST DEDUCTION You may be able to deduct interest you paid on a qualified student loan, reducing your federal taxable income up to \$2,500. This deduction has an income limit.

For additional information on federal tax credits and deductions, including income and other limitations that apply, see IRS Publication 970 – Tax Benefits for Education at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) or consult a tax expert.

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT TAX CREDIT (SLRTC) If you earned an associate, bachelor, or graduate degree from an accredited community college, college, or university after December 31, 2007, and are a Maine resident, you may be eligible for an annual refundable tax credit of up to \$2,500 on your Maine income tax return. The SLRTC replaces the Educational Opportunity Tax Credit (often referred to as Opportunity Maine). For more information, visit [OpportunityMaine.org](https://www.opportunitymaine.org).

SAVING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION:

REDUCE DEBT BY SAVING. Using savings and investment plans for higher education may help reduce the need to borrow. Families who have college savings are always in a better position when it comes to paying for college. Remember, every dollar available from savings is a dollar that doesn't have to be borrowed and repaid with interest!

A COVERDELL EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT (ESA) is a tax-advantaged investment account designed to encourage education savings. Contributions are limited to \$2,000 per year, per child.

A SECTION 529 PLAN is a tax-advantaged investment plan to help students and families prepare for qualified education expenses. To learn more about NextGen 529®, Maine's Section 529 plan, visit [NextGenforME.com](https://www.nextgenforME.com).

EARLY TRADITIONAL AND ROTH IRA WITHDRAWALS, before age 59½, are allowed without the 10% early withdrawal penalty if funds are used for qualified education expenses. These withdrawals may still be taxed as ordinary income. See IRS Publication 970 for more information.

JUNIOR YEAR PLANNING CHECKLIST

ALL YEAR

- ❑ Explore careers and their earning potential.
- ❑ Research schools using free online search tools.
- ❑ Attend college fairs or open houses.
- ❑ Visit schools.
- ❑ Research higher education costs and financial aid using the Net Price Calculator tool on college websites.
- ❑ Save any money from working or gifts at birthdays and holidays for higher education.
- ❑ Explore dual enrollment courses.

FALL

- ❑ Take the PSAT. You must take the test in 11th grade to qualify for certain scholarships.
- ❑ Create an email address to use specifically for scholarship searches and college applications. Be sure to choose an email address that makes a good first impression.
- ❑ Review some scholarship applications to see if you have “gaps” in your experience. For example, do you need to perform some additional community service? Knowing what is expected now will help you to be more successful with your scholarship search.
- ❑ Sign up for FAME’s e-newsletters, texts, tips and more at FAMEmaine.com/join.

SPRING

- ❑ Attend a financial aid information session.
- ❑ Create your FSA ID at StudentAid.gov.
- ❑ Register for and take exams for college admission and AP tests.
- ❑ Research scholarships using free online searches.
- ❑ Line up your summer job to begin earning money for college expenses.

SUMMER

- ❑ Narrow down the list of colleges you are considering attending. If you can, visit the schools that interest you.
- ❑ Contact colleges to request information and applications for admission.
- ❑ Research college admission and financial aid deadlines/requirements and develop a checklist.
- ❑ Continue researching and applying for scholarships.
- ❑ Save any money you earn over the summer.





SENIOR YEAR PLANNING CHECKLIST

LATE SUMMER/FALL

- ❑ Research admission and financial aid deadlines/requirements and develop a checklist.
- ❑ Begin college essays.
- ❑ Attend college fairs or open houses.
- ❑ Research scholarship opportunities using free online searches.
- ❑ Attend a FAME FAFSA Help Session.
- ❑ Sign up for FAME's e-newsletters, texts, tips and more at [FAMEmaine.com/join](https://fame.maine.com/join).
- ❑ Create your FSA ID at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).
- ❑ Ask teachers, coaches, or school counselors for letters of recommendation.
- ❑ Begin submitting your college admission applications.
- ❑ If required, submit the CSS Profile.

DECEMBER/JANUARY

- ❑ File your FAFSA at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov)! (Watch for exact date of release to be announced.)

WINTER

- ❑ After you file your FAFSA, review your FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) and make any necessary corrections.
- ❑ Confirm that financial aid offices received your FAFSA information.
- ❑ Submit any required documents to the financial aid office.
- ❑ Keep copies of all documents and forms pertaining to admission and financial aid.

- ❑ Begin completing scholarship applications.
- ❑ Look for your financial aid notifications to begin arriving in the mail or by email.
- ❑ Respond quickly to all requests for information.
- ❑ Once accepted for admission, check your college-assigned email address frequently. Your college may be sending important notifications to this new email address.

LATE WINTER/SPRING

- ❑ To be eligible for a Maine State Grant, submit your FAFSA by the **May 1 deadline**.
- ❑ Confirm that financial aid offices have received all necessary paperwork.
- ❑ Continue completing scholarship applications.
- ❑ Compare financial aid offers.
- ❑ Notify all colleges of your plans to attend (or not attend). Many colleges require an admission deposit and typically have a deadline of **May 1**.
- ❑ Line up your summer job to begin earning money for college expenses.

SUMMER

- ❑ If you have been awarded private scholarships, send copies of all notifications to your chosen school's financial aid office.
- ❑ Attend college orientation.
- ❑ Look for your fall semester tuition bill, and reduce expenses where you can.
- ❑ Make arrangements to pay your balance.

SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS TRACKING SHEET:

	School Name:	School Name:	School Name:
Admission Application Deadline	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:
Priority FAFSA Deadline	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:
Other Application Requirements (CSS Profile, etc.)	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:
Follow-up Requirements (If selected, complete verification requirements; if borrowing, complete loan-related documents.)	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:	Date Submitted:
Check your college email regularly!			



Open a NextGen 529[®] account today!

Start saving for higher education. Visit NextGenforME.com.

Take Advantage of Grants for Maine Residents.¹

Get
\$100

Open a NextGen 529 Account

Add just \$25 and get the \$100 Initial Matching Grant.

Make it Automatic

Set up and make six consecutive automatic contributions from your payroll or bank account and get a \$100 Automated Funding Grant.

Get
\$100

Get
\$300

Add to Your Account

Make contributions and get a 30% NextStep Matching Grant up to a \$300 match per year.

It's not too late to start saving!

Even small amounts saved now can help reduce student loan debt. Every dollar in a NextGen 529 account is a dollar that doesn't have to be borrowed and repaid with interest.

Start today at NextGenforME.com

¹ Grants for Maine residents are linked to eligible Maine accounts. Upon withdrawal, grants are paid only to institutions of higher education. See Terms and Conditions of Maine Grant Programs for details about eligibility and other conditions and restrictions that apply at NextGenforME.com. Grants may lose value.



Amany and
Sophia, Augusta
and Vassalboro

NextGen 529 is a Section 529 plan administered by the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). You may obtain the NextGen 529 Program Description by requesting a copy from your financial professional, visiting NextGenforME.com or calling the program manager at 1-833-336-4529. The Program Description should be read carefully before investing.

The Program Description contains more complete information, including investment objectives, charges, expenses and risks of investing in NextGen 529, which you should carefully consider before investing. If you are not a Maine resident, you also should consider whether your or your designated beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other state benefits such as financial aid, scholarship funds, and protection from creditors that are only available for investments in such state's 529 plan.

NextGen 529 accounts are not bank deposits and are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Returns on investments in NextGen 529 accounts are not guaranteed or insured by the State of Maine, FAME or any NextGen 529 service providers. NextGen 529 participants assume all investment risk of an investment in NextGen 529, including the potential loss of principal and liability for tax penalties that are assessable in connection with certain types of withdrawals of amounts invested in NextGen 529.

Vestwell State Savings, LLC is the program manager, The Bank of New York Mellon is the program custodian, BlackRock Advisors, LLC is the program investment manager, and BlackRock Investments, LLC, Member FINRA, is the program distributor and underwriter.

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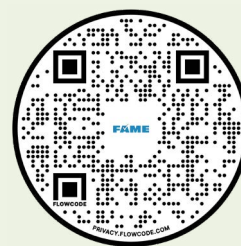
FAMEmaine.com



SMCC

DID YOU KNOW FAME OFFERS THE FOLLOWING SERVICES?

- Financial Aid Information Sessions
- FAFSA Help Sessions
- One-on-One Financial Aid Coaching
- Timely Texts and Emails



FAME's financial aid and FAFSA help are always **FREE!**

Finance Authority of Maine

Mailing: PO Box 949
Augusta, Maine 04332-0949

Physical: 5 Community Drive
Augusta, Maine 04330

1-800-228-3734

TTY 207-626-2717

FAMEmaine.com

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