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Higher Ed Can Be Affordable - Free Tuition and Low-Cost Options in Maine

Wednesday Webinar – November 12, 2025

PRESENTED BY

Jessica Whittier, College Affordability and Financial Wellness Counselor

Federal and State Grant Funding

College Specific Programs

Scholarship Programs

Other Funding Sources



Federal and State Grant Funding

Pell Grant MAX - \$7385 (SAI of 0 to -1500)

Maine State Grant - \$2500 (SAI of 10,000* or less and filing the FAFSA by May 1st)

\$9,895

- A student with an SAI of 4,895 will have tuition, books and fees covered at a Maine Community College

55%*

- A student with an SAI of ZERO or less will have a large portion of their tuition and fees covered

50%

Maine Community Colleges
\$5000 Tuition, Books and Fees

UMaine System Schools
\$10,000 -\$15,00 Tuition and Fees

*Maine State Grant cut off SAI changes from year to year based on funding but has been at 10,000 for the last two years.

*55% represents the percentage of seniors in the class of 2025 that had SAIs of 5,000 and below, the nearest cutoff to an SAI of 4895 available.



60%
of the
graduating class of 2025
was Pell eligible.



College Specific Programs in Maine





University of Presque Isle

FREE for Four Award

Selected recipients will receive a combination of both grant and scholarship funds to cover the annual cost of standard tuition and fees. Recipients are required to attend as full time students and successfully complete 12 credit hours per semester.

A limited number of awards are available for first time, full-time or transfer students from Maine who have filed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), are Pell Grant eligible, and have a Student Aid Index (SAI) of 6,655 or lower. Priority will be given to students who apply for Financial Aid by March 31st. If applying after March 31st, please contact the UMPI Admissions Office for details and availability.

For Maine Families Award

Maine applicants who are not Pell-eligible or have a Student Aid Index (SAI) of 6,656 or higher may receive significant reductions for tuition and fees (at least \$4,600 or more in financial aid grants and scholarships).



APPLY TODAY! (207) 768-9532 ★ umpi-admissions@maine.edu

The University of Maine at Presque Isle is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.



PINE TREE STATE PLEDGE

Through this tuition guarantee program, qualified and eligible entering ***in-state, full-time first-year students*** will not pay any out-of-pocket expenses for tuition (regular UMA tuition) and mandatory fees.

This program is also available to ***transfer in-state full-time Pell eligible students*** who have earned at least 30 transferable credits and are new to the University of Maine System.

Who is eligible to participate in the Pine Tree State Pledge?

- Awarded to new and transfer in-state full-time Pell recipients who have tuition and fees that are not covered by other grant aid.
- Eligibility covers 12 consecutive semesters.
- Must successfully complete a minimum of 24 UMA credits each aid year and maintain a minimum cumulative 2.5 GPA. Eligibility will be reviewed at the end of each semester.
- This pledge does not cover room and board or additional items required by the programs, such as differential tuition, program fees, flight time, or other special fees and equipment.
- A completed FAFSA with Pell Eligibility indicated



UMaine at Machias University of Maine at Fort Kent

Who IS Eligible

To be eligible for Downeast Promise funding, a student must:

- First-time, full-time student admitted for the Fall term
- Pursuing their first degree
- submit the [FAFSA](#) annually by May 1st of the appropriate year
- Be Pell Grant Eligible
- Maine Resident

- Promise Scholarship guarantees that all first-time, full-time, Pell Grant-eligible Maine residents receive sufficient grant and/or scholarship funding to cover 30 credits per year of tuition and standard fees



- The Cyr Opportunity Scholarship will provide students who have earned a 3.0 GPA in high school, have a family AGI of \$80,000 or less and who live in Penobscot County a tuition-free offer to attend Husson via a combination of federal, state and institutional aid.



St. Joseph's College of Maine

The Monk's Lantern Initiative, a free tuition program designed to make a values-based, transformative education accessible to qualifying Maine residents.



The **Monk's Lantern** Initiative is designed to eliminate a significant financial barrier to higher education by covering the full cost of tuition for up to four years of undergraduate study. The program targets students with a family income of \$100,000 or less, who demonstrate strong academic achievement with a minimum high school GPA of 3.4. To be eligible, students must also be Maine residents for at least one year and live on campus throughout their enrollment at Saint Joseph's College of Maine.



Through the Colby Commitment,

We pledge to meet 100% of your demonstrated financial need without loans.

If your family has a total income of \$75,000 or less (with assets typical of this income range), we've ensured they will have a **parent or guardian contribution of \$0**.

For families with a total income of \$75,001 to \$100,000 and typical assets, your parent or guardian contribution will be **no more than \$10,000**.

For families with a total income of \$100,001 to \$150,000 and typical assets, your parent or guardian contribution will be **no more than \$15,000**.

For families with a total income of \$150,001 to \$200,000 and typical assets, your parent or guardian contribution will be **no more than \$20,000** — which may make Colby cost less for you than any other four-year college or university.

Stackable Workforce Training



Short-term workforce training through Maine's community colleges

The Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce coordinates all short-term workforce training programs for Maine's community colleges, working closely with business and industry leaders statewide. Launched in 2021, the Alfond Center served over 28,000 Mainers in thirty months. The Center will train an additional **70,505** Mainers by 2030, significantly impacting Maine's workforce and economy through strategic private and public partnerships.



Pre-Hire Short-Term Training

Designed to equip underemployed individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to secure employment. Designed to meet the needs of regional employers and developed in collaboration with business and industry leaders. Short-term pre-hire training programs offer pathways into certificate and degree programs at Maine's community colleges.

Goal: 19,342 students



Incumbent Worker Professional Development

Maine employers can sometimes double their training budget for their frontline workforce. By joining the Compact, employers can access up to a \$1,200 match per employee per year to provide additional skills and knowledge to enhance their performance, advance their careers, and adapt to changing job requirements.

Goal: 43,721 workers



Scholarships for continued education

Enabling more Mainers to access opportunities to advance their education and careers, Alfond Center Scholarships provide 50% off two community college courses each semester for working Mainers starting or pursuing a certificate or a degree program. Students can access 4,000 courses statewide to customize their career pathway.

Goal: 7,442 workers



Maine Community Colleges



Short-term Workforce Training Programs

	CM	EM	KV	NM	SM	WC	YC
Arts, Humanities, Digital Media, and Communication							
Google UX Design	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Google Digital Marketing & E-Commerce	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Business and Hospitality							
Amazon Web Services					•		
Certified Bookkeeper & MOUS Certificate				•			
Certified Social Media Manager				•			
Creating Exceptional Customer Experience							•
Culinary / New Cook Boot Camp		•	•				•
Entrepreneurship Training			•				
Excel Associate Microsoft Certification		•					
Google Project Management	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Google Business Intelligence	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hospitality Badges							•
Intermediate Supervisor Training							•
Leadership Development					•		
Logistics and SCM						•	
Maine Guide Skills		•					
Metrix Professional Development					•		
Microsoft Sharepoint Training				•			
MOUS Certification for Excel				•			

	CM	EM	KV	NM	SM	WC	YC
Education, Human Services, and Social and Behavioral Sciences							
Alternative Pathways to Teaching						•	
Digital Literacy Badge						•	
Drug and Alcohol Supervisor				•			
Early Childhood Conference				•			
Early Childhood Education			•		•	•	
Ed Tech				•		•	
Education Technician II Apprenticeship							•
Educational Trip Leader		•					
Educator Apprentice					•		
Educator Pathway	•						
Employment and Disability Badge						•	
Intro to Substance Use Disorders						•	
Learning Facilitator		•					
Mental Health Career Academy							•
Mental Health and Rehabilitation: MHRT/C						•	
Substance Use Recovery CADC Apprenticeship						•	
Wellness and Compassion Fatigue						•	
Health Sciences							
Adv. Cardiac Life /Pediatric Adv. Life Support			•				
Advanced Cardiac Life Support							•

<https://www.mccs.me.edu/wp-content/uploads/MCCS-Workforce-Training-Programs-1.pdf>



Scholarship Programs





Scholarship Programs

Worthington Scholarship

The Worthington Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships to graduates of partnered Maine public high schools who will be attending a participating Maine college or university. Our scholarship is based upon need and merit while generally ensuring representation from a broad cross-section of partner high schools and considering academic interests and life experiences as described in essays. Scholarship amounts can be up to \$20,000. Scholars attending a four-year college will receive up to \$2,500 per semester. Scholars attending a community college will receive up to \$1,500 per semester, with the option to transfer to a four-year institution.

Maine resident and
graduating senior at
participating high
school

GPA requirement of C- or
higher for Community
College and B- or higher
for four-year Colleges

SAI at or below
30,000



Scholarship Programs



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- [Give Now](#)

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- [INITIATIVES & IMPACT](#)
- [SUPPORT/START A FUND](#)
- [GRANTS](#)
- [SCHOLARSHIPS](#)
- [ADVISORS & ATTORNEYS](#)
- [PLANNED GIVING](#)
- [🔍](#)

Scholarships

The Maine Community Foundation (MaineCF) seeks to promote respect for all people. Through its scholarships, the community foundation supports all students regardless of their race, age, ancestry or national origin, sexual orientation, gender, physical or mental disability, religion, or geographical region within the state of Maine.

MaineCF's approach is designed to reward students' strengths and to affirm the positive aspects of their lives and work.

MaineCF encourages all students seeking post-secondary, graduate, or aspirational educational goals to apply for our scholarships, regardless of citizenship status. Our awards are based on many factors including academic performance, financial need, involvement in extracurricular activities, and work experience, and do not take into consideration an applicant's citizenship or immigration status.

All applicants must submit the required documents which may include applications, transcripts or grade reports, letters of recommendation, and the Student Aid Report from the FAFSA. We will waive the FAFSA requirement for those students unable to submit a FAFSA because of visa or immigration status.

[Find a Scholarship](#)

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[🔒 Log In](#)

245 Main Street
 Ellsworth, ME 04605-1613
 Two Monument Square, Suite 403
 Portland, ME 04101

207-667-9735



<https://www.maine cf.org/find-a-scholarship/>



Scholarship Programs

Maine Scholarship Search

HOME » AFFORDING HIGHER EDUCATION » PAY FOR SCHOOL » MAINE SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

Your Guide to Finding Scholarships

Scholarships are a form of gift aid—meaning they don't need to be repaid. Most are awarded outside of the college's financial aid process, so it's up to you to search and apply. Start with FAME's Maine Scholarship Search tool below to explore opportunities.

- Stay organized with our [tracking spreadsheet](#) (.xlsx format) or [Google Sheets version](#).
- Want more options? Visit the [Maine Community Foundation's scholarship directory](#) for even more listings.

Do you currently manage a scholarship? Do you want to add a new scholarship? Find all FAME's Scholarship Administrator [resources below](#).

Filter Scholarships By

[CLEAR FILTERS](#)

Eligibility +

Areas of Study +

No Favorites Selected

Search Scholarships:

Search

Sort Scholarships By:

Deadline (Nearest First)

Showing 140 scholarships.

Frank J. Gaziano Memorial
Offensive and Defensive
Lineman Award

SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT:

\$5,000

DEADLINE: December 9th

[View Full Details →](#)

UMaine Pulp & Paper
Foundation Scholarship for
Engineering Majors (First
Year Student)

SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT:

\$8,500

DEADLINE: December 31st

[View Full Details →](#)

Camp Susan Curtis
Scholarship

SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT:

\$2,000

DEADLINE: January 15th

[View Full Details →](#)

Clyde Russell Scholarship
Fund

SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT:

\$2,000 - \$10,000

DEADLINE: February 1st

[View Full Details →](#)

■ FAMEmaine.com/Scholarships



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Other Funding

Eastern Maine Development Corp.

EMDC

Counties: Penobscot, Piscataquis, Hancock, Washington, Kennebec, Androscoggin, Somerset, Franklin, Aroostook and Oxford Counties

Workforce@emdc.org

(207) 991-0147

Workforce Solutions

Counties: York, Cumberland, Sagadahok, Lincoln, Knox, Waldo

Intake@WorkforceSolutionsME.org

(207) 930-7047

YOUTH WORKFORCE SERVICES

- EMDC offers paid mentorships and training to people ages 16-24, providing individualized support while they build the skills necessary to thrive in the workforce environment. Participants receive hands-on experience in a work setting and one-on-one career counseling — all while earning a paycheck.
- Earn a paycheck while you learn
- Explore careers with employers who are hiring in your area (including healthcare, information technology, and skilled labor)
- Work at a local business while mentored by EMDC and the employer
- Job coaching, resume building, leadership development, supportive services, and more



■ Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (Maine Career Centers)

CSSP provides funding and support services for eligible Maine residents to pursue two and four-year degree programs or employer recognized credentials leading to high-wage, in-demand jobs in Maine.

Eligibility Requirements

- Be at least 18 years old or have graduated from High School
- Live in Maine
- Seeking a degree or credential for a job in a high wage, in demand occupation
- Do not have a marketable post-secondary degree
- Have household income of less than 200% of the federal poverty level
- Can complete the education or training program

The Competitive Skills Scholarship pays for tuition and fees that are not covered by other sources, including federal financial aid. CSSP funding may also assist with other supports while you are in training including childcare, transportation, books, supplies, equipment, and remedial and prerequisite training

Eligible applicants can receive up to \$10,000 per year for a full-time student or \$5,000 per year for a part-time student each year you remain in your training program.

Other Funding

You might be eligible for the HOPE Program if you:

1. Are a parent or caretaker relative of a minor child who is living with you.
2. Are a Maine resident between the ages of 16 through 64.
3. Meet the [financial qualifications](#). See below to see what this means for you.
4. Have been accepted to or are enrolled at least half-time in a [qualifying training or education program](#) beyond high school. If you are enrolled less than half-time, the HOPE Program needs to approve this.
5. Are not currently receiving, or someone in your family unit is not currently receiving, a monthly TANF or PaS cash benefit.
6. Are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-U.S. citizen. Many non-citizens are eligible.
7. Do not already have a marketable bachelor's degree.
8. Are making satisfactory progress in your training or education (meeting or exceeding on your school's standards) and you are on track to graduate.

If you fit the description above, you may be eligible and want to apply. If you are unsure if you are eligible, you should [contact us](#) to find out more. We can help.

- Child Support Services
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE)
- Do I Qualify?**
- How Can HOPE Help?
- How Do I Apply?
- For Current Participants
- Resources For HOPE Graduates

- Programs & Services
- Child Support Services
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training
- SUN Bucks
- Health Care Assistance
- General Assistance
- Disability Determination Services
- Fraud Investigation and Recovery Unit

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides a monthly benefit to help low-income households purchase nutritious food.

If you receive SNAP you may also be eligible to participate in Maine SNAP-Ed or [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training \(SNAP E&T\)](#)

What do I need to do to apply?

Eligibility for SNAP is based on income, assets, expenses and household size. You will need to fill out an application, complete an interview and provide verification of your household's income, identity, citizenship status, assets and other items depending on your household circumstances.

How do I apply?

Option 1: Apply online through [My Maine Connection](#).

Option 2: Download and mail an [application](#).

Office for Family Independence
114 Corn Shop Lane
Farmington, ME 04938

Option 3: E-mail an application to Farmington.DHHS@Maine.gov

Option 4: Fax an application to (207) 778-8429.





Others?



Thank you for joining us today!

Find more FREE resources and information at
FAMEmaine.com/education.

Follow Us:



Contact Us:

Education@FAMEmaine.com

PH: 207-623-3263 or 800-228-3734

TTY: 207-626-2717