



# Planning for Education Beyond High School



A **FREE** Resource  
for all Hoosiers!

2025 - 2026 EDITION

For over 40 years, INvestEd has provided students and families with solutions to continue and fund education beyond high school.

- 01 We're Here to Help**  
*FREE help throughout the process*
- 02 Reasons to Further Your Education**  
*Opportunities, earnings, & more*
- 03 Choosing a Career Path**  
*Finding the right fit*
- 04 Choosing Your Program or College**  
*The right choice can save you time & money*
- 05 Is the Cost Worth It?**  
*Finding the return on your investment*
- 06 Managing Costs**  
*Making wise choices*
- 07 More Education, Less Debt**  
*Understanding funding options*
- 08 Maximizing Free Money**  
*Finding Grants & Scholarships*
- 09 Saving for Your Education & Student Employment**  
*Additional ways to pay for your education*
- 10 The FAFSA**  
*Applying for Financial Aid*
- 12 Education Loans**  
*Finding the plan that works best for you*
- 13 Finalizing Your Funding Plan**  
*Making informed decisions*
- 14 Admissions & Financial Aid Timelines**  
*Stay on track*
- 16 Key Terms**



Welcome! We hope you'll find some valuable information within these pages as you plan to continue your education. You may have questions along the way, and our **INvestEd** experts are ready to help.

### Connect with us for FREE help!

**Email:** [Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org](mailto:Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org)

**Phone:** 317.715.9007

**Online:** [INvestEdIndiana.org](https://INvestEdIndiana.org)

Follow **@INvestEdIndiana**



# We're Here to Help

Whether you're just starting to plan, looking for ways to pay for your education, or need help managing student loan debt, **INvestEd** is here every step of the way!



## STEP 1:

**Investigate** career paths & choose the right program/college

## STEP 2:

**Compare** financial aid offers & understand options to fill any funding gap

## STEP 3:

**Maximize** FREE money & minimize student loan debt

## STEP 4:

**Apply** for financial aid & don't miss deadlines

## STEP 5:

**Manage** student loan debt & understand repayment options

Ready to start the conversation with our team of experts?  
Contact us at **317-715-9007** or **Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org**



# Reasons to Further Your Education

*No matter what age, Hoosiers benefit from education beyond high school.*



## ► More Job Opportunities

72% of jobs will require education beyond high school by 2031.

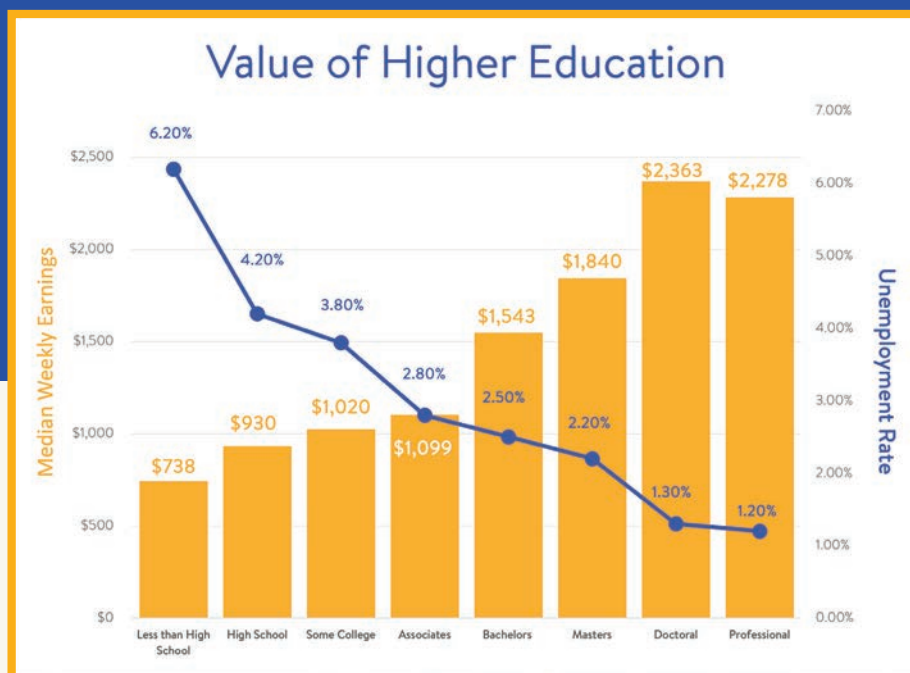
(Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2023)

## ► Higher Earnings

A person with a degree or certificate will earn more than someone with just a high school diploma. (See chart)

## ► Lower Unemployment Rate

In addition to earning more money, you are also less likely to be unemployed. (See chart)



(Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

# Choosing a Career Path

*Finding a career you enjoy that matches your skills can help reduce the cost and time to complete your education.*



## Tips to find the right career path:

- ▶ **Take a skills assessment** to help you discover your interests and strengths.
- ▶ **Explore careers** that match your personality traits, skills, and interests.
- ▶ **Research the salary** in a chosen career field as you review program/college costs.
  - Comparing future salary with anticipated debt is an important exercise throughout the planning process, and INvestEd can help!

## Gain experience by:

- ▶ **Job shadowing** different career fields to see if a job is really what you think it is.
- ▶ **Volunteering** in your community. Serving others could lead to career inspiration and looks great on college and scholarship applications.
- ▶ **Interning** with local businesses and organizations.



Check out FREE tools at [INvestEdIndiana.org/choosing](https://INvestEdIndiana.org/choosing) to help you find the right career path.

## High-Growth, High-Income Jobs

Indiana has funding to help Hoosiers attain certifications in high-demand fields.



**NextLevel Jobs**  
INDIANA



Advanced  
Manufacturing

14,900 | \$15-\$32  
JOBS AVAILABLE | HOURLY WAGE



Building &  
Construction

3,800 | \$12-\$37  
JOBS AVAILABLE | HOURLY WAGE



Health & Life  
Sciences

12,200 | \$10-\$44  
JOBS AVAILABLE | HOURLY WAGE



IT & Business  
Services

11,400 | \$14-\$64  
JOBS AVAILABLE | HOURLY WAGE



Transportation  
& Logistics

3,600 | \$14-\$45  
JOBS AVAILABLE | HOURLY WAGE

Questions on finding your career path? Connect with our team at

**317.715.9007** or [Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org](mailto:Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org)



# Choosing Your Program or College

*Finding the right fit is very important. We encourage you to consider how a school fits:*

## Academically

- Offers program or major for your career path
- Opportunities for experience like internships & practicums
- Study abroad or intercultural experiences



## Socially

- Feel part of the community (size, location, & facilities)
- Professional and personal networking opportunities
- Housing options



## Financially

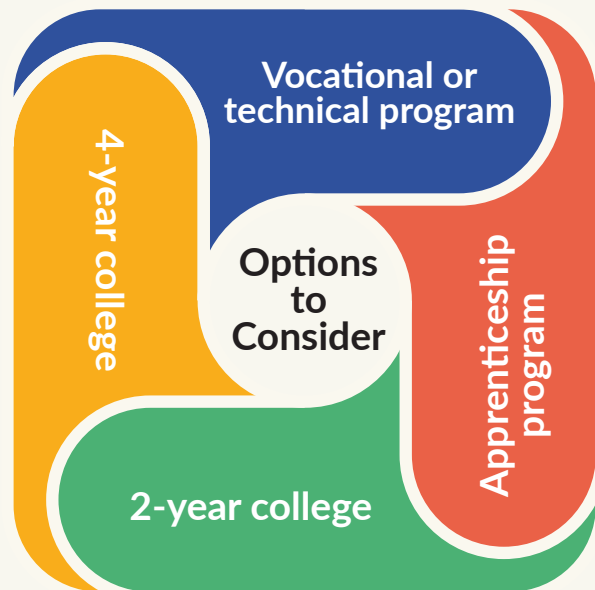
- Program or school is affordable
- Potential debt is manageable once degree or certification is obtained
- Ongoing scholarship opportunities



## Research Your Options:

Finding the right fit takes time and effort. Here are some suggestions from **INvestEd** to get you started:

- ▶ Use online tools like College Navigator & College Scorecard
- ▶ Attend College & Career Fairs
- ▶ Talk with your school counselor & teachers
- ▶ Visit program facility or college campus



Wondering what questions to ask? Check out our College Search Questions at [INvestEdIndiana.org/resources](https://investedindiana.org/resources)

Find more information about choosing your college or program at

[INvestEdIndiana.org/choosingcollege](https://investedindiana.org/choosingcollege)

# Is the Cost Worth It?

*The anticipated salary for a career plays an important role in considering any potential student loan debt.*

As you investigate career options and explore colleges or programs, it's important to "do the math" to help guide you in the decision-making process.

Research the expected salary in your field of interest from career research tools like **My Next Move**. Then, use a school's **Net Price Calculator** (see more on page 6) or visit **College Navigator** to find the actual cost to earn your degree or certificate.

These amounts serve as a guide for understanding the return on your investment when considering the costs of postsecondary education. With a strong plan, any debt is manageable to repay.



A crucial step in planning is to compare the total cost of education with the expected salary. Call us at **317-715-9007** for help!

The lower the **total cost of education** and the higher the **expected salary** the better!

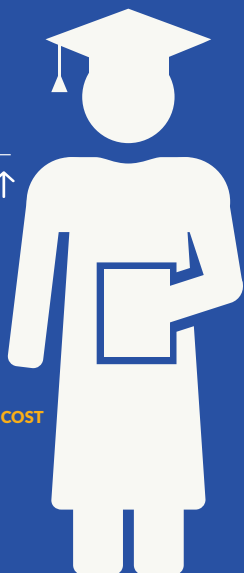
## STUDENT A

Total Cost  
of Education:

**\$200,000** ↑

Salary:

**\$30,000** ↓



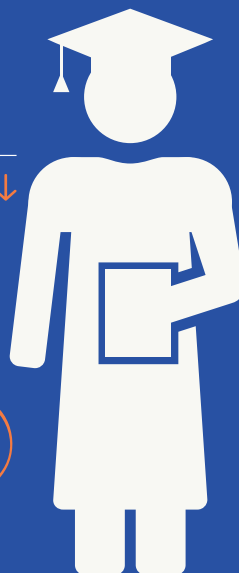
## STUDENT B

Total Cost  
of Education:

**\$100,000** ↓

Salary:

**\$80,000** ↑




**Total Cost  
of Education** includes:

- Tuition
- Fees
- Room & board
- Books
- Transportation
- Living expenses
- Loans
- Interest rates on loans

\*Total interest paid on student loans must be included in total cost.

# Managing Costs

*It's important to compare costs and understand potential aid available as you consider your options.*

 By graduating on time, you are less likely to run out of financial aid. Completing at least 30 credit hours per academic year helps you maximize your FREE money and graduate on time.

## Net Price Calculators

Use this tool to give you an estimate of the costs and financial aid that may be available. The net price shows the potential amount you'll need to fund through:

- ▶ National or local scholarships
- ▶ Student employment
- ▶ Savings/out-of-pocket
- ▶ Education loans

Find your college's net price calculator at  
[INvestEdIndiana.org/NPC](https://InvestEdIndiana.org/NPC)

## Limiting Costs

- ▶ Dual Credit and Advanced Placement (AP) courses are ways to earn college credits at a reduced rate and potentially help finish your program early.
- ▶ Commuting may help save on living expenses. Whether you commute or live on campus, consider the costs and aid impacts of each.
- ▶ Taking classes during the summer or online may help you stay on track to graduate or finish early.

## Net Price Calculators Provide Estimates As You Review Your Options

Cost of Attendance  
— Free Money  
= Net Price



Review options side by side:  
[INvestEdIndiana.org/resources](https://InvestEdIndiana.org/resources)

# More Education, Less Debt

*Relieve some of the financial stress of continuing your education by understating funding options and planning ahead.*

We've done the research, now let's pay for it:

- ▶ Maximizing FREE Money — 8
- ▶ Saving for Your Education & Student Employment — 9
- ▶ The FAFSA — 10
- ▶ Education Loans — 12
- ▶ Finalizing Your Funding Plan — 13



INvestEd travels across the state to help families year round. See when we'll be at a location near you!

[INvestEdIndiana.org/events](https://INvestEdIndiana.org/events)

**We're happy to help!**

Email: [Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org](mailto:Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org)

Phone: [317.715.9007](tel:317.715.9007) | Online: [INvestEdIndiana.org](https://INvestEdIndiana.org)



# Maximizing **FREE** Money

*Free money is a key component of wisely paying for education beyond high school.*

## Grants

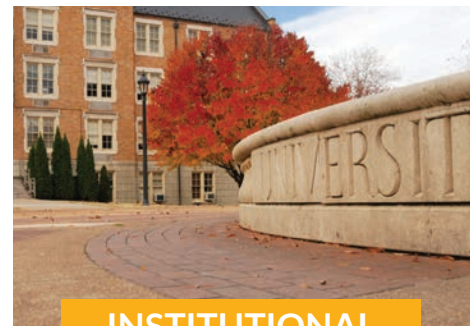
Grants can often be overlooked but should be the first type of funding considered when paying for college. They are typically based on either a student's financial need as determined by the FAFSA or the program they are pursuing. Find out more at [INvestEdIndiana.org/grants](https://investedindiana.org/grants)



FEDERAL



STATE



INSTITUTIONAL

Access ScholarTrack to monitor your state grant eligibility!



ScholarTrack

[www.ScholarTrack.IN.gov](https://www.ScholarTrack.IN.gov)

## Scholarships

Scholarships are based on all kinds of factors like career interest, volunteer activity, family heritage, academic standing, talents & abilities, and so much more!

### Scholarship Search Options:

- ▶ FREE National Search Sites
- ▶ College/University
- ▶ Local/Community
  - School Counselor
  - Community Foundation
  - Business & Employer
  - Church & Civic Organizations

Scholarships



Check out our Scholarship Search tool online at [INvestEdIndiana.org/Scholarships](https://investedindiana.org/Scholarships) and get started today!



Check out the **INvestEd**  
**\$1,000 Scholarship Drawing!**  
[INvestEdIndiana.org/1000](https://investedindiana.org/1000)



# Saving for Your Education

*Money saved means less student loan debt to repay.*

## Ways to Save:

- ▶ **Put aside some money** from gifts (birthdays, graduation, and holidays).
- ▶ **Earnings** from job opportunities during school and summer.
- ▶ **A 529 Direct Savings Plan** is a tax-free account for Indiana residents to set aside money for college. The State of Indiana provides a 20% tax credit (up to \$1,500) on annual contributions.
- ▶ **Coverdell Education Savings Account** (ESA) is an after-tax investment option with tax-free withdrawals to use for educational costs. Maximum annual contribution is \$2,000 and beneficiary must use by age 30.



## Student Employment

*Working is a great way to help pay for school, gain practical work experience, and even help you get a job after graduation!*

### Student Employment Options:

- ▶ **Working Part-Time** helps cover expenses, gain job experience, and network.
- ▶ **Federal Work Study** provides on-campus or off-campus jobs for students with financial need. Money earned does not count against you on the FAFSA.
- ▶ **Internships** may not always be paid positions, but studies show that over 80% of employers look for internship experience in their future employees.



Saving for education beyond high school comes in many forms. Check out [INvestEdIndiana.org/saving](https://investedindiana.org/saving) for more details.



*The starting point to access federal, state, and institutional money.*

# THE FAFSA

## *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*

The Federal application filed annually to determine your eligibility for federal, state, and some institutional financial aid programs. Find out more info at [INvestEdIndiana.org/FAFSA](https://www.investedindiana.org/FAFSA)

### Create Your FSA ID

*(Federal Student Aid ID)*

- ▶ The FSA ID is a username and password needed to log in and sign the FAFSA.
- ▶ This account is tied to your name, date of birth, and your social security number.
- ▶ Students completing the FAFSA are required to be U.S. Citizens or Eligible Non-Citizens, while parents of the student are not.
- ▶ The student completing the FAFSA will need an FSA ID, as well as at least one parent contributor if the student is dependent.

Circle  
this date:

APR 15

Priority deadline for  
State of Indiana grants



Create your FSA ID prior to starting your FAFSA. If you've already created an FSA ID, make sure to log in and review your account and make any necessary updates.



# Who?

- ▶ Any high school senior.
- ▶ Anyone planning to continue their pursuit of a degree or certificate in the upcoming school year.

# What?

- ▶ Create your Federal Student Aid Account (FSA ID) using our free resource.
- ▶ Check out our FAFSA Essentials resource for a list of documents to help you file.
- ▶ Find these resources and more at:  
[INvestEdIndiana.org/resources](https://INvestEdIndiana.org/resources)

**FAFSA Essentials**  
Create your FSA ID at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) and start your FAFSA!

**\$15** FAFSA priority deadline for State of Indiana grants  
FREE FAFSA filing help: 317-715-9007

What you need to start your FSA ID: Student

### Create Your Federal Student Aid Account (FSA ID)

Go to [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) and click Create Account there

- 1 Enter your Name, Date of Birth, and Social Security Number.  
Personal Identifiers without SSN will still be able to make an account by selecting the "I don't have a Social Security number" box. They may be asked some additional questions to verify identity or need to provide documents to Federal Student Aid to have the account verified.
- 2 Choose something you will remember and hasn't already been taken.  
Remember: Choose something you will remember that meets the password criteria and minimum field requirements.
- 3 Enter your Mailing Address, City, State, and Zip Code.  
Mailing Phone: Use your own phone number. You cannot use the same phone number for multiple accounts. Make sure to check the box which allows you to use your mobile phone for account recovery.
- 4 Select Your Communication Preferences.  
- Preferred Communication: Email is automatically selected to recommend.  
- Preferred Communication: Text is optional. You may have both items selected.  
- Language Preference: Select your preferred language. This automatically defaults to English.
- 5 Challenge Questions: You must select and answer all four questions.  
- Your answers must be between 3 and 33 characters.  
- Answers are not case sensitive.  
- Letters, numbers, and spaces are the only characters allowed.
- 6 Review all information and click on the check box, agreeing to the terms and conditions.
- 7 Verify Your Account Recovery Options.  
- Verify Your Backup Phone Number: You will require a 6 digit code via text to input.  
- Verify Your Email Address: You will receive a 6 digit code e-mail to input.  
- Authentication App: Optional way to get into your account.  
- Filing Code: Make sure you store this in a safe place.

**INvestEd**

Contact INvestEd with any questions!  
@investedindianaorg  
317-715-9007  
investedindiana.org

# When?

- ▶ Scheduled to open **October 1, 2025**.
- ▶ Check with colleges for their specific deadlines.
- ▶ The priority deadline is **April 15th** for State of Indiana grants.

# Why?

The FAFSA calculates the Student Aid Index (SAI) which is used by the federal government, the state of Indiana, and financial aid offices to determine what funds you are eligible to receive for the next school year. Without this information, a student will most likely pay the full cost of attendance.

# How?

File online: [StudentAid.gov](https://StudentAid.gov)

FAFSA  
is scheduled  
to open  
October 1, 2025

**Need FAFSA filing help from an expert?**

Call us at 317-715-9007 or visit [INvestEdIndiana.org/FAFSA](https://INvestEdIndiana.org/FAFSA)

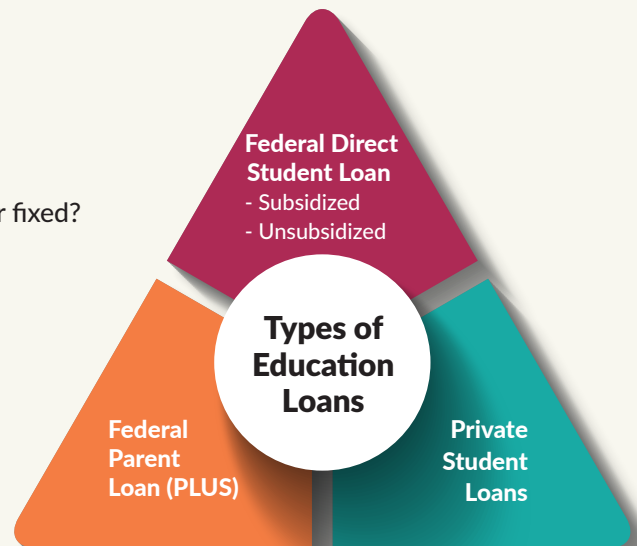
# Education Loans

*After you have exhausted all other funding options, education loans may be needed.*



## Evaluating loan options:

- ▶ **Know who the borrower is for each type of loan.**  
Is it the student, the parent, or is a cosigner involved?
- ▶ **Know the costs.**  
Do the loans have fees and are the interest rates variable or fixed?
- ▶ **Know when interest begins to accrue.**  
Does the loan debt begin to grow immediately?
- ▶ **Know when repayment begins.**  
Is there a grace period or does repayment start once the loan is disbursed?
- ▶ **Know who you are borrowing from.**  
Are the loans from the government, a bank, or a nonprofit organization?



## Avoid High-Rate Student Loans:

- ▶ Using online search tools for student loans often leads to taking a higher rate loan.
- ▶ If the interest rate for the loan is above 10% there's a good chance you can get a better rate.

Contact our experts at **317-715-9007** or [Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org](mailto:Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org)  
to get help finding your best loan options!

# Finalizing Your Funding Plan

*Deciding how you'll cover the cost is a significant factor in making your final decision.*



Make sure you are comparing different financial aid offers while keeping in mind the total amount of potential loan debt.

## Steps to finalizing your plan:

- ▶ Login to [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) and make any needed corrections or updates to your FAFSA. If no corrections are needed, review your FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS).
- ▶ Respond to requests from schools for any additional documentation.
- ▶ Compare your financial aid offers – clearly identify FREE money, student employment, and loans.
- ▶ Contact the Financial Aid Office if your family situation has changed since filing the FAFSA.
- ▶ Contact INvestEd as you review your options to cover any remaining balance.

### Finalizing Financial Aid

**After Filing the FAFSA**

- ☐ **Review FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)** by logging into your FAFSA at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) to view comments identifying errors or additional steps you need to take.  
\*To review the FSS, student must login with their FSA ID.
- ☐ **Make FAFSA Corrections** to update incorrect information or add additional schools.  
\*Any changes to the FAFSA must be signed with the appropriate FSA ID(s) and submitted.
- ☐ **Register for ScholarTrack** at [scholartrack.in.gov](https://scholartrack.in.gov) and review your state of Indiana grant eligibility. Award eligibility may not be available until after the April 15th grant deadline.
- ☐ **Contact each school** to which you are accepted and still considering to determine if they need any additional information and respond by each deadline.

#### Deadlines

Check with each school about their individual deadlines.

#### Verification

The financial aid office may need to confirm some of your FAFSA information.

#### FSS

Review your FAFSA Submission Summary anytime there are changes to your FAFSA.

**Compare and Finalize Financial Aid Offers**

- ☐ Use [InvestEd's](https://investedindiana.org) Cost Comparison Sheet at [investedindiana.org](https://investedindiana.org) to compare financial aid offers.
- ☐ Review borrowing options using [InvestEd's](https://investedindiana.org) Student Loan Comparison Sheet available at [investedindiana.org](https://investedindiana.org)
- ☐ Talk with each school's financial aid office regarding the steps required to accept your offers, obtain work study jobs, and secure loans.

Contact [INvestEd](https://investedindiana.org) with any questions!  
[Outreach@investedindiana.org](mailto:Outreach@investedindiana.org)  
317-715-9007  
[investedindiana.org](https://investedindiana.org)

Check out [INvestEdIndiana.org/finalizing](https://investedindiana.org/finalizing) or call us at 317-715-9007 for help!

# Admissions Timeline

## Fall Junior Year:

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- ☐ Talk with your school counselor to find out if you are on track to continue your education beyond high school. Take challenging coursework, the PSAT, Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit Courses.
- ☐ Check out [INvestEdIndiana.org/choosingcollege](https://investedindiana.org/choosingcollege) for resources as you investigate different schools.
- ☐ Find opportunities to volunteer in your community. Volunteering looks great on admission and scholarship applications.

## Spring Junior Year:

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- ☐ Register for the SAT, ACT, or both. Achieving a good score on these tests may reward you with more opportunities for grants and scholarships.
- ☐ Continue researching schools and begin narrowing your list to 5 or 6.
- ☐ Visit college campuses. Make appointments with both the Admissions and Financial Aid Offices, attend some classes, and spend the night, if you can.

## Summer after Junior Year:

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- ☐ Write sample essays in preparation for admission and scholarship applications. Tell your story in 300 words or less.

## Fall Senior Year:

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- ☐ Narrow your list of college options to 3 or 4. File your admission applications and make note of important deadlines. Schedule initial or return visits with faculty, Admissions, and Financial Aid.
- ☐ Gather recommendation letters and fine-tune your personal essays for admissions and scholarship applications.
- ☐ Register and prepare for the fall SAT or ACT if you are looking to improve your scores or take the test for the first time. Higher scores may lead to better financial aid offers.

## Winter Senior Year:

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- ☐ Follow up with the places you are applying and confirm that they have received your admissions application.

## Spring Senior Year:

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- ☐ Narrow down your list of schools to find the right fit. Be sure to note any college decision deadlines.
- ☐ Check deadlines for sending in your required deposit, housing application, or any other forms requested by the school and remember to let the other schools know that you won't be attending.

## Summer after Senior Year:

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- ☐ Note important dates for the upcoming school year like course registration days and freshman orientation.

# Financial Aid Timeline

## Fall Junior Year:

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- ☐ Start or continue saving money for your education and work with a trusted adult to set up a savings account like a 529 Direct Savings Plan.

## Spring Junior Year:

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- ☐ Begin searching for scholarships by:
  - Talking to your school counselor about scholarship options.
  - Reviewing community foundation scholarships so you can begin to make yourself a better applicant your senior year.
  - Registering on national search sites.
- ☐ Investigate the costs and possible aid at each of the schools you're interested in using their net price calculator. [INvestEd](https://investedindiana.org/NPC) provides links and tools to help at [INvestEdIndiana.org/NPC](https://investedindiana.org/NPC)
- ☐ Create a resume and apply for summer jobs. Find a job in an area related to your career interest, if possible.

## Summer after Junior Year:

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- ☐ Save as much money as possible from your summer job and put it into savings. Money saved now means borrowing less later.
- ☐ Begin discussions with a trusted adult regarding options available to cover education costs.
- ☐ Look for volunteer opportunities to enhance your scholarship applications.

## Fall Senior Year:

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- ☐ Continue discussions with a trusted adult about the financial options available to cover costs, as well as continuing scholarship searches. Find tips at: [INvestEdIndiana.org/scholarships](https://investedindiana.org/scholarships)
- ☐ Create the Federal Student Aid (FSA) accounts for the student and contributor(s) to be ready to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when it opens in October.
- ☐ Fill out the FAFSA as soon as it's available at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov). To be eligible for State of Indiana aid, file the FAFSA by the priority deadline of April 15th. **Note: Some schools may have an earlier deadline.**

## Winter Senior Year:

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- ☐ Continue searching and applying for scholarships. In fact, keep looking for scholarships until you have completed your degree or program. This is free money that doesn't have to be paid back, which means less you have to borrow.
- ☐ Follow up with the schools you are applying to and confirm that they have received your FAFSA. Ask about any additional financial aid forms that may be required.
- ☐ Confirm your federal, state, and institutional eligibility for scholarships and grants. Use the Finalizing Financial Aid document available at [INvestEdIndiana.org/finalizing](https://investedindiana.org/finalizing) for guidance.

## Spring Senior Year:

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- ☐ Review your financial aid offers and compare costs using our Cost Comparison worksheet available at [INvestEdIndiana.org/NPC](https://investedindiana.org/NPC)
- ☐ Finalize your funding plan with the Financial Aid Office and complete all paperwork prior to orientation.

# Key Terms

► **COA (Cost of Attendance)**

Total estimated cost of education for the year established by the school or program. Included elements: tuition & fees, food & housing, books & supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous personal expenses.

► **CSS Profile (College Scholarship Service Profile)**

Additional financial aid application used by some colleges to determine a student's eligibility for institutional financial aid.

► **FADDX (FUTURE Act Direct Data Exchange)**

Link from FAFSA to IRS to pull in student and/or contributor tax return information.

► **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**

Annual federal financial aid application that is filed each year and is used to determine eligibility for federal, state of Indiana, and some institutional aid.

► **FAFSA Contributor**

Anyone asked to provide information on the FAFSA. This could include the student, parent, parent's spouse, or student's spouse.

► **FSA ID**

Username & password FAFSA contributors make to sign and submit the FAFSA.

► **FSS (FAFSA Submission Summary)**

Output once the FAFSA is processed identifying any errors or next steps applicants need to complete.

► **SAI (Student Aid Index)**

Eligibility index calculated by the FAFSA and used by financial aid offices to determine what funds you can receive for the next school year.

## College Planning Toolbox

You can use this FREE tool to track information based on your family as a whole or individual students.

### Tools to help:

- Financial center to track savings & costs
- Calendar to set reminders
- Scholarship search engine

### Check it out here!

[INvestEdIndiana.org/resources/college-planning-toolbox](https://InvestEdIndiana.org/resources/college-planning-toolbox)



## Notes:



A **FREE** Resource  
for all Hoosiers!



OVER 40 YEARS of SERVING  
HOOSIER FAMILIES

301 Pennsylvania Pkwy  
Suite 360  
Indianapolis, IN 46280



317.715.9007  
[Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org](mailto:Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org)  
[INvestEdIndiana.org](http://INvestEdIndiana.org)