

2026 - 2027 EDITION



Planning for Education Beyond High School

A **FREE** Resource for all Hoosiers!



For over 45 years, INvestEd has provided students and families with solutions to continue and fund education beyond high school.

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

Phone: 317.715.9007

Online: INvestEdIndiana.org

Follow @INvestEdIndiana

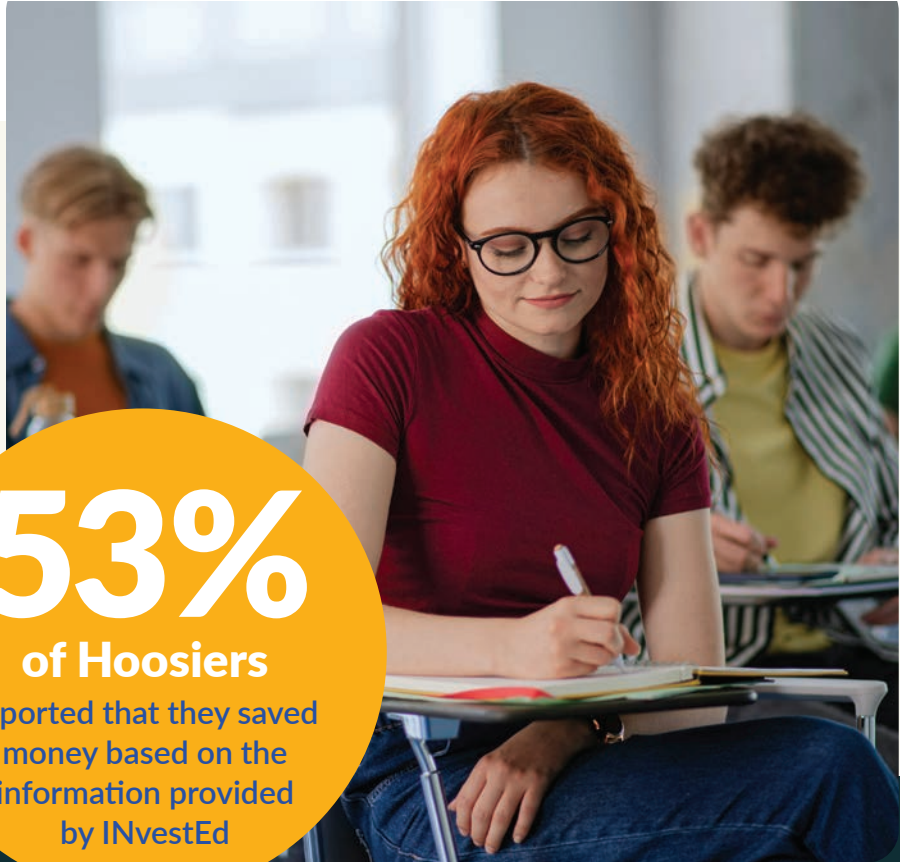


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We're Here to Help

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!



53%

of Hoosiers
reported that they saved money based on the information provided by INvestEd



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.

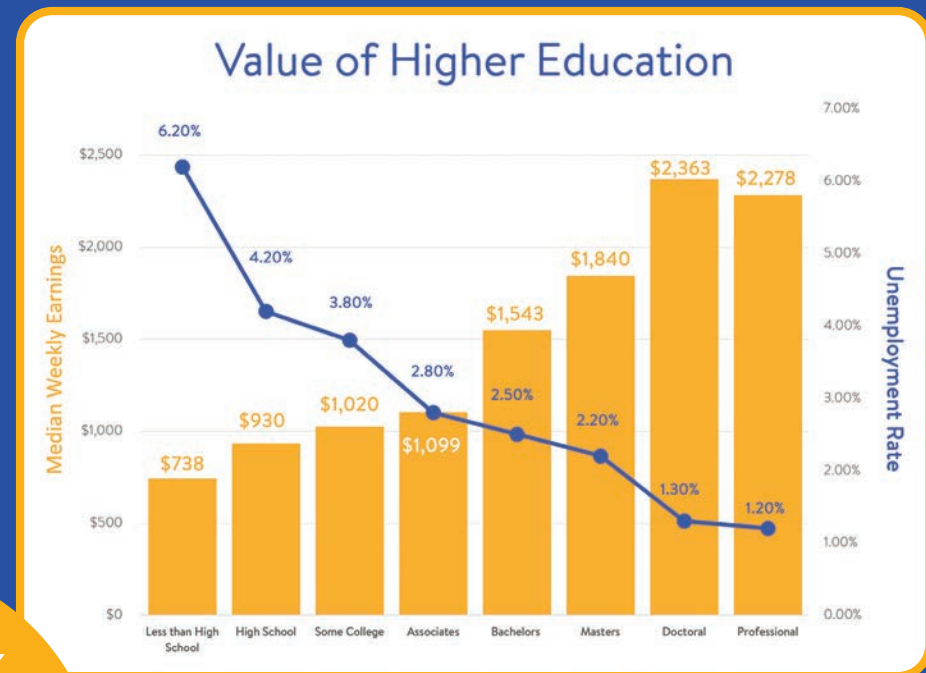
(Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2023)

► Higher Earnings

A person with a degree or certificate will earn significantly 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)

77%
of event attendees
have completed or are
continuing their
education

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 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.



Advanced Manufacturing

14,900 Jobs Available
\$15-\$32 Hourly Wage



Building & Construction

3,800 Jobs Available
\$12-\$37 Hourly Wage



Health & Life Sciences

12,200 Jobs Available
\$10-\$44 Hourly Wage



IT & Business Services

11,400 Jobs Available
\$14-\$64 Hourly Wage



Transportation & Logistics

3,600 Jobs Available
\$14-\$45 Hourly Wage

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

317.715.9007 or 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



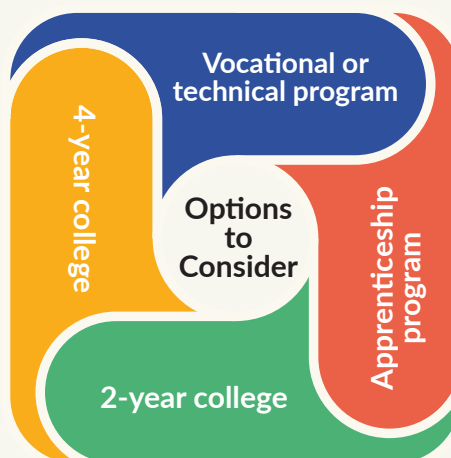
5,000+

students made more informed decisions about their college or program after researching with INvestEd

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.



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 ↓



Total Cost of Education includes:

- Tuition
- Fees
- Housing and food
- Books

STUDENT B

Total Cost of Education:

\$100,000 ↓

Salary:

\$80,000 ↑



- Transportation
- Living expenses
- Loans
- Interest paid on loans



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!

Managing Costs

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

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
- ▶ Savings/out of pocket
- ▶ Student employment
- ▶ 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.



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.

78%

of Students

working with INvestEd have
less than \$25,000 in
student loans

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

Cost of Attendance
— Free Money
= Net Price



More Education, Less Debt

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

After you've done the research, here's how to pay for your education:

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

We're happy to help!

Email: Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org

Phone: 317.715.9007 | Online: INvestEdIndiana.org



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

INvestEdIndiana.org/events



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



Federal Grants:

The largest source of need-based aid. Your eligibility is primarily determined by submitting the FAFSA.



State Grants:

Varies by location, but most apply to state residents attending an in-state school.



Institutional Grants:

Offered directly by universities and community colleges. These can be need-based or merit-based, and many schools use the CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA to determine how much to award.

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 the **INvestEd**
\$1,000 Scholarship Drawing!
INvestEdIndiana.org/1000



Check out our Scholarship Search tool online at
INvestEdIndiana.org/Scholarships and get started today!

Saving for Your Education

Money saved means less student loan debt to repay.



Ways to Save:

- ▶ **Set Aside 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** can sometimes be paid positions. Studies conducted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) 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, & 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

Create Your StudentAid.gov Account

- ▶ The StudentAid.gov account 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 a StudentAid.gov account, as well as at least one parent contributor if the student is dependent.



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



Circle
this date:

APR 15

Priority deadline for
State of Indiana grants

Need FAFSA filing help from an expert?

Call us at 317.715.9007 or visit
INvestEdIndiana.org/FAFSA

Who?

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

What?

- ▶ Create your StudentAid.gov account 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

When?

- ▶ Scheduled to open **October 1, 2026**
- ▶ Check with colleges for their specific deadlines
- ▶ The priority deadline is **April 15th** for state of Indiana grants

FAFSA
is scheduled
to open
October 1st

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

Education Loans

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

Evaluating loan options:

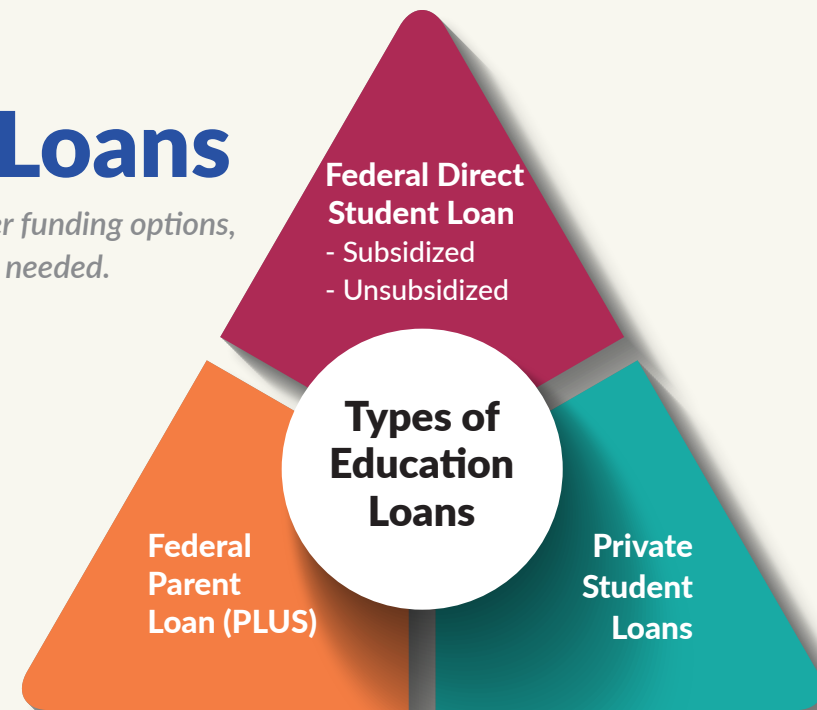
- ▶ **Know who the borrower is for each type of loan.**
Is it the student or the parent? Is a cosigner involved?
- ▶ **Know the costs.**
Do the loans have fees and are the interest rates variable or fixed?
- ▶ **Know when interest begins to accrue.**
Does the loan debt begin to grow immediately?
- ▶ **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.

Get help finding your best loan options!

Contact us at 317.715.9007 or Outreach@INvestEdIndiana.org



“As low as” is the main reason many families pay much more interest than they have to.

The eye-catching rate of “as low as 3%” gets clicks, but that rate isn’t reality for the overwhelming majority of borrowers. When the much higher actual rate is locked in, families often don’t look elsewhere.

A couple tips:

- ▶ Check the rate you are offered is under 10%. If the fixed rate is above that, check another lender.
- ▶ Search for “Indiana’s student loan”. Just a small change to your usual search will get you on your way to a much better rate.

Watch our video:



Finalizing Your Funding Plan

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

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](https://investedindiana.org) 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.
- Make FAFSA Corrections to update incorrect information or add additional schools.
- Register for [ScholarTrack](https://scholartrack.org) at scholartrack.org and review your state of Indiana grant eligibility.
- 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 to ensure there are no changes to your FAFSA.

Compare and Finalize Financial Aid Offers

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

Contact InvestEd with any questions!
Chat with us at investedindiana.org
317-715-9007
investedindiana.org



Make sure you are comparing different financial aid offers while keeping in mind the total amount of potential loan debt. Visit: [INvestEdIndiana.org/resources](https://investedindiana.org/resources)

Check out [INvestEdIndiana.org/finalizing](https://investedindiana.org/finalizing) or call us at 317.715.9007 for help!

Making sense of financial aid just got easier!



Award Advisor™

- ▶ Free tool to help students and families understand and compare financial aid offers
- ▶ Step-by-step process for evaluating college costs
- ▶ Share standardized award letters and comparison results with family, counselors, or advisors

To download, scan or visit: [INvestEdIndiana.org/AwardAdvisor](https://investedindiana.org/AwardAdvisor)



Admissions Timeline

Fall Junior Year:

- ☐ 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:

- ☐ 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:

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

Fall Senior Year:

- ☐ 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:

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

Spring Senior Year:

- ☐ 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:

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

Financial Aid Timeline

Fall Junior Year:

- ☐ 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:

- ☐ 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:

- ☐ 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:

- ☐ 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 a [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) account 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:

- ☐ 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:

- ☐ 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, housing & food, 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.

▶ 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.

▶ StudentAid.gov Account

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



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)



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