

“NEXT UP” The Road to College

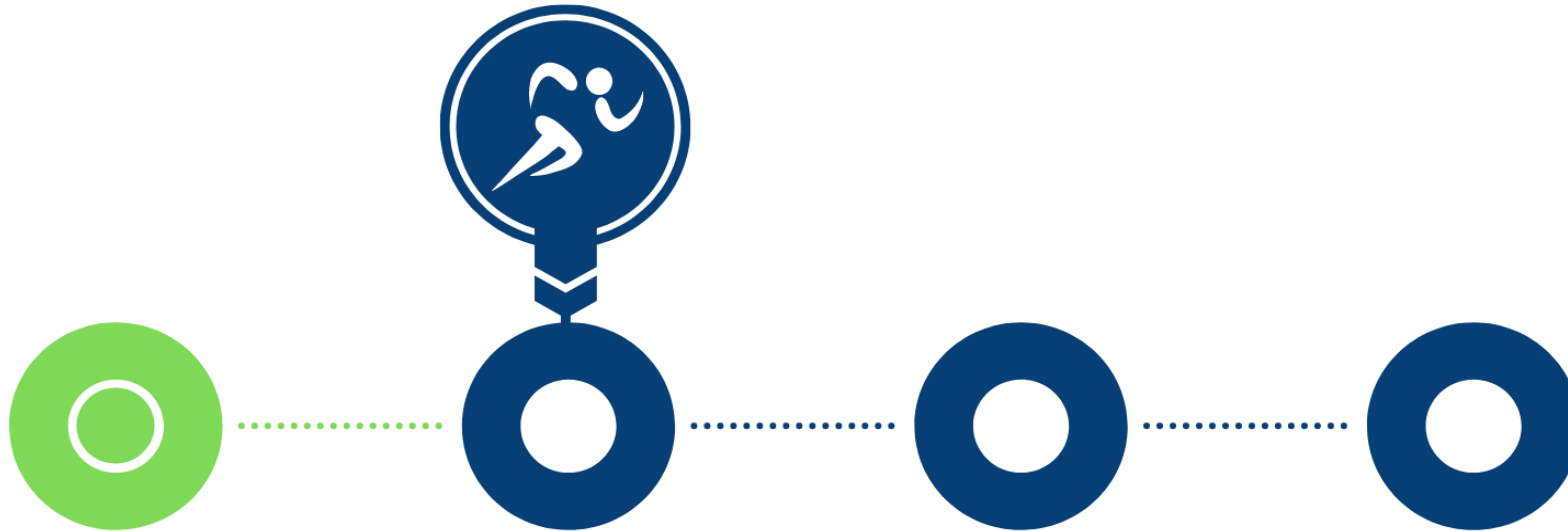
DCPS Prep & Persists



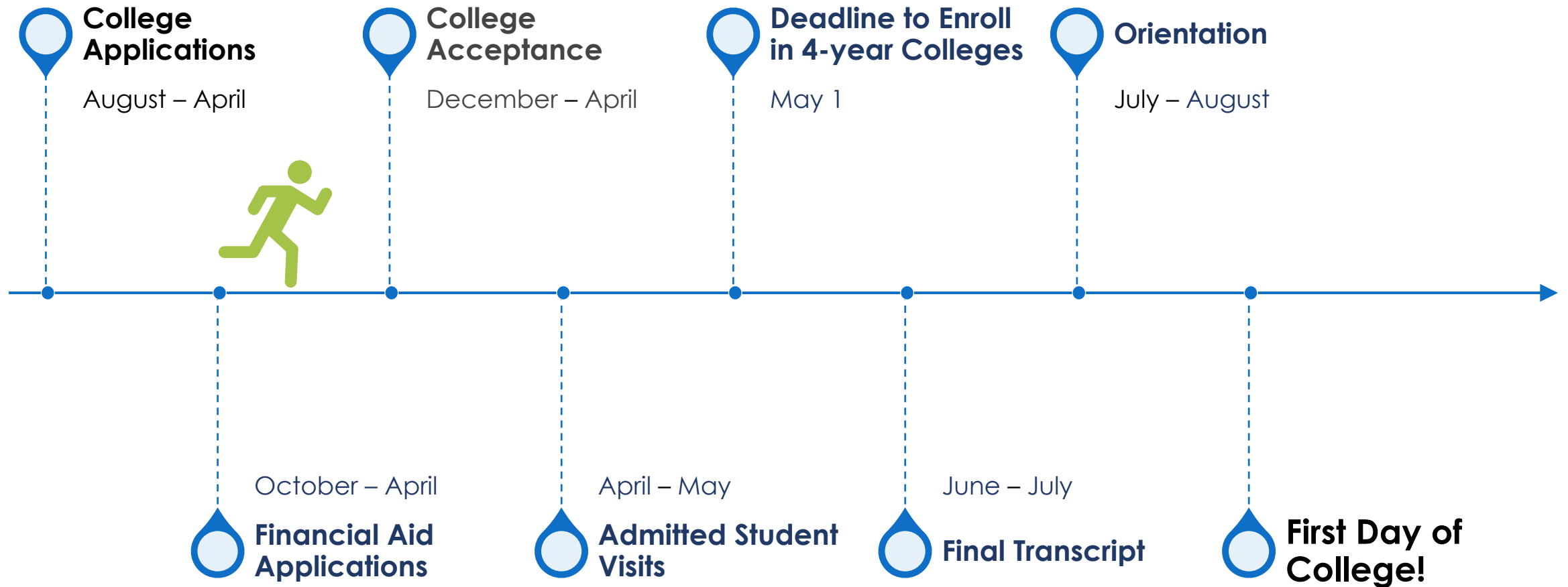
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What is the Next Up Series?

The Next Up series aims to inform, prepare, and empower students and families to take the next step toward college. From financial aid awards to orientation, these sessions will provide a roadmap to your first day of college.



The Road to College



College Dollars & Decisions

Maximizing Your Financial Aid & Understanding Admissions Decisions



DCPS
PERSISTS

- **Understanding Admission Decisions:**

- **Maximizing and Securing Financial Aid:**

- **Navigating Scholarships:** Understanding scholarship types and how to find them.



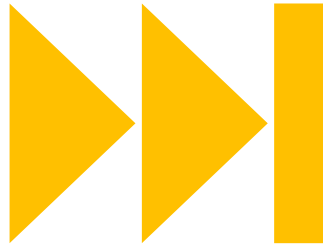
Understanding Admission Decisions

Accepted, Deferred, Waitlisted, Denied

4 Types of Admission Decisions



**Accepted
Or
Admitted**



Deferred



Denied



Waitlisted

What it means to be Accepted

CONGRATULATIONS!

- Be sure to **read the letter in full** and make note of any next steps
- If you were accepted Early Decision or you're going to a community college, make sure you understand all the steps needed to enroll
- If you've been accepted to multiple colleges, now you have the chance to **compare your offers** and find your best academic, social, cultural, and financial fit
- After comparing your offers, you **must enroll into your top choice by May 1st**
 - Don't feel pressured to make a decision before May 1st



Special Acceptances

- Spring – Admitted to start in Spring 2026
- Conditional – Admitted, but must fulfill additional requirements

What it means to be **Deferred**

- A deferral is a simply **a second chance at admission; it is not a denial**
- Instead of deciding with the early applicant pool, the college wants to see how your application **compares to other students who submit for Regular Decision**
- **Read the letter carefully** and follow any next steps



Next Steps:

- Most colleges will ask for additional information like an updated transcript to help them make a decision
- You can also submit a "Letter of Continued Interest" to show that you're still interested and provide any updates

What it means to be Waitlisted

- You're **neither accepted nor rejected**, instead, you've been put on a waitlist
- If spots become available, the college **may** offer you admission
- Read the letter carefully for instructions on how to **indicate continued interest**
- Decide if you want to wait knowing you may not be accepted, or **pivot and compare your other offers and choose a different college**



Note:

- A waitlist is not an actual list with a specific order.
- Being pulled from a waitlist to be admitted depends on many factors.

What it means to be Denied

- It's important to understand that this decision **does not define your potential** or future success
- Allow yourself to **feel your feelings**
- Being denied gives you the opportunity to **explore other options**



Note:

- While you can challenge or "appeal" an admissions decision by providing more information, it's important to know that most appeals are not successful.

Securing Financial Aid

FAFSA, DC Aid, CSS Profile, and Verification

4 Types of Financial Aid

Federal Aid

- FAFSA
- Federal Grants
- Work-Study
- Federal loans

Institutional Aid

- CSS Profile
- School-Specific Scholarships, Grants, and Loans

DC Aid

- DC TAG
- Mayor's Scholars

Other Aid

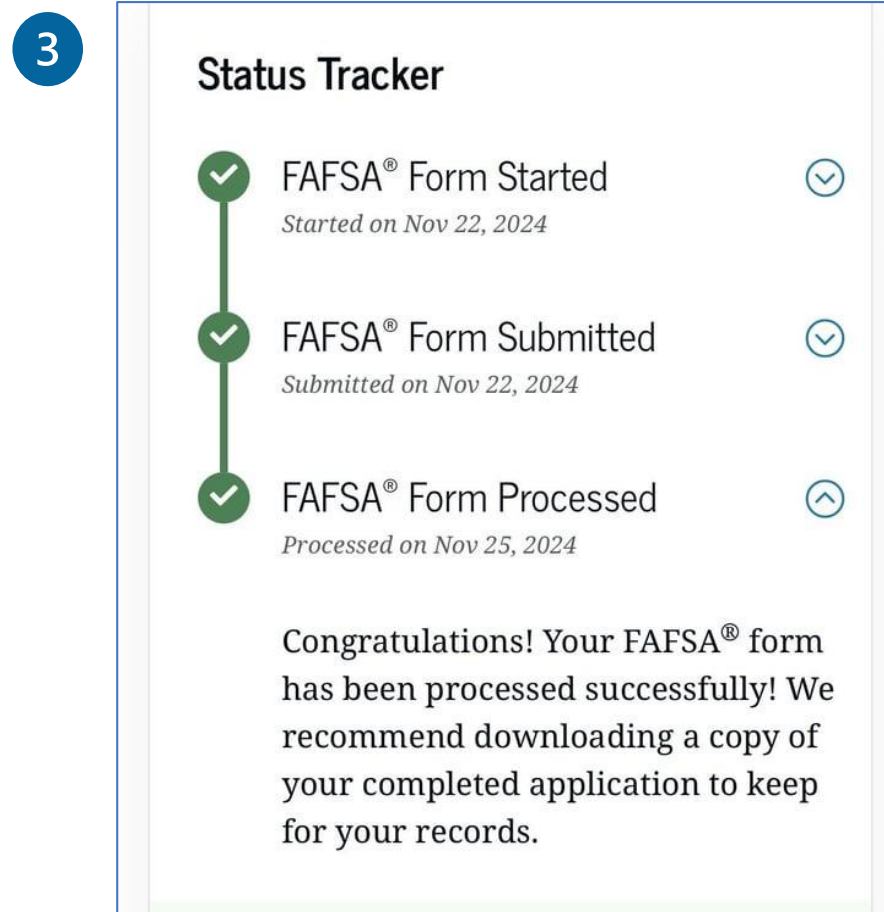
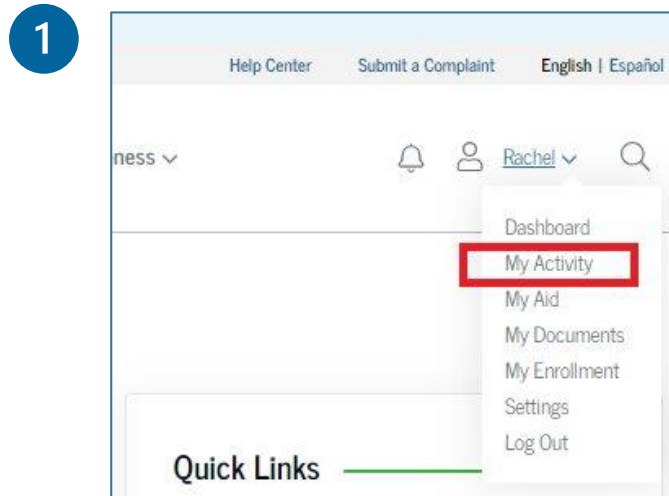
- Outside Scholarships
- Private Loans

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

- The FAFSA is the key to accessing all different types of need- and merit-based financial aid:
 - Federal student aid (i.e., grants, loans, work-study)
 - DC aid (e.g., DC TAG)
 - Institutional aid
 - Other scholarships
- Anyone with a Social Security Number (SSN) can complete the FAFSA, but only US citizens and [eligible non-citizens](#) can receive federal student aid.
- No one makes too much money to complete the FAFSA!



Checking Your FAFSA Processing Status



Your FAFSA Submission Summary

The screenshot shows the FAFSA Submission Summary page for a student named Victoria Lee. The page is titled "FAFSA FORM 2024-25 FAFSA Submission Summary". It includes a header with the student's name, application status (Application Received Jan. 27, 2024), application processing status (Application Processed Jan. 27, 2024), data release number (1005), and viewing status (Viewing: Submission 1). Below the header, there are tabs for Eligibility Overview, FAFSA Form Answers, School Information, and Next Steps. The main content area is titled "Estimated Federal Student Aid" and contains three sections: Federal Pell Grant (up to \$1,935), Federal Direct Loans (up to \$9,500), and Federal Work-Study (You May Be Eligible). A note states: "Amounts shown here are only estimates of federal student aid based on full-time enrollment and the average cost of attendance. Your school will determine how much student aid to offer you, which may include additional aid from your school or state." Below this, there is a "Keep in mind, this is only an estimate" section with a lightbulb icon and a note: "Always refer to your school's financial aid offer for a final determination of financial aid available." At the bottom, there is a section for "Your Student Aid Index (SAI)" with a value of 5462. To the right of the main content area, there are two additional sections: "View All of Your Federal Student Aid in One Place" with a "Visit My Aid" button, and "Find the Right College or Career School" with a "Visit College Scorecard" button and an illustration of a person looking at a phone.

FAFSA FORM 2024-25 FAFSA Submission Summary

Student: Victoria Lee Application Received Jan. 27, 2024 Application Processed Jan. 27, 2024 Data Release Number 1005 Viewing: Submission 1

Eligibility Overview FAFSA Form Answers School Information Next Steps

Estimated Federal Student Aid

Federal Pell Grant
A Federal Pell Grant is awarded to undergraduate students who have financial need and who have not earned a degree or are in a teacher certification program. Federal Pell Grants don't need to be repaid.
Up to **\$1,935**

Federal Direct Loans
A federal direct loan is money lent by the government to you that you must repay with interest.
Up to **\$9,500**

Federal Work-Study
Federal Work-Study is a way for students to earn money to pay for school through part-time jobs on or off campus.
You May Be Eligible

Amounts shown here are only estimates of federal student aid based on full-time enrollment and the average cost of attendance. Your school will determine how much student aid to offer you, which may include additional aid from your school or state.

[Learn more about financial aid](#)

Keep in mind, this is only an estimate
Always refer to your school's financial aid offer for a final determination of financial aid available.

Your Student Aid Index (SAI)
Your SAI is a number used by your school to determine your federal student aid eligibility and to build your financial aid offer. Your SAI may change due to verification or if you update or correct your FAFSA information.
5462
[What does this mean?](#)

View All of Your Federal Student Aid in One Place
View detailed information about your federal loan and grant aid, including your enrollment history, payment history, and subsidized usage.
[Visit My Aid](#)

Find the Right College or Career School
Use the College Scorecard to compare schools by size, location, graduation rate, and more.
[Visit College Scorecard](#)

The FAFSA Submission Summary provides a summary of the information provided in the student's FAFSA form.

It includes:

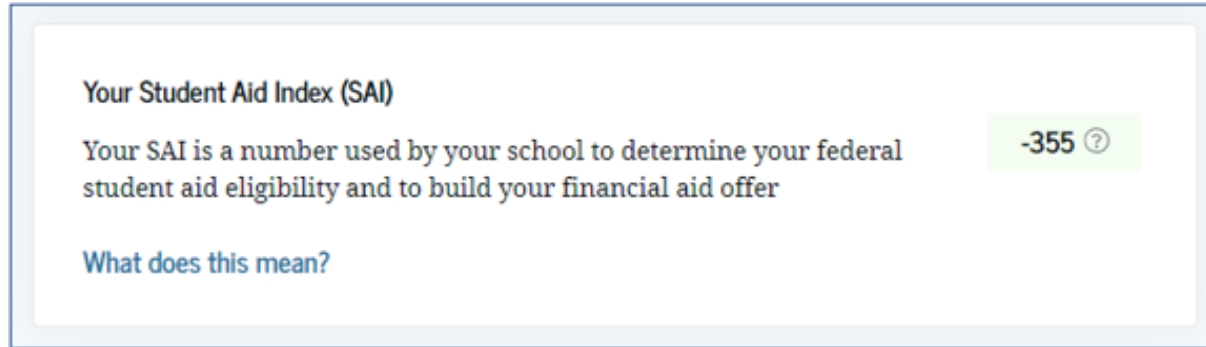
- Estimates of the student's eligibility for federal student aid, such as Pell Grants and Federal Loans.
- Notification if the student has been selected for verification.
- Information on how to make corrections to the FAFSA if necessary.

Reviewing Your FAFSA Submission Summary

The screenshot displays the 'Estimated Federal Student Aid' section of the FAFSA Submission Summary. At the top, there are four tabs: 'Eligibility Overview' (selected), 'FAFSA Form Answers', 'School Information', and 'Next Steps'. Below the tabs, the section is titled 'Estimated Federal Student Aid'. It lists three types of aid: Federal Pell Grant (up to \$4,556), Federal Direct Loans (up to \$4,556), and Federal Work-Study (You May Be Eligible). Each item includes a brief description. At the bottom, there is a disclaimer: 'Amounts shown here are only estimates of federal student aid based on full-time enrollment and the average cost of attendance. Your school will determine how much student aid to offer you, which may include additional aid from your school or state.' and a link to 'Learn more about financial aid'. A green box at the bottom contains a lightbulb icon and the text: 'Keep in mind, this is only an estimate. Always refer to your school's financial aid offer for a final determination of financial aid available.'

- **Four tabs:** Eligibility Overview, FAFSA Form Answers, School Information, and Next Steps
 - **Eligibility Overview** tab shows estimated federal student aid eligibility (i.e., grants, loans, and work-study) and Student Aid Index (SAI)
 - **Next Steps** tab offers guidance on what students should do next in the financial aid process and will tell you if you need to fix something with your FAFSA.
- **The Summary is not a financial aid offer.** Final financial aid award offers come from colleges' financial aid offices

Interpreting Your SAI (Student Aid Index)



The screenshot shows a section of a FAFSA form. It has a title "Your Student Aid Index (SAI)" followed by an explanatory sentence: "Your SAI is a number used by your school to determine your federal student aid eligibility and to build your financial aid offer". To the right of this text, the value "-355" is displayed in a green box with a question mark icon. Below the explanatory text is a link that says "What does this mean?".

Your Student Aid Index (SAI)

Your SAI is a number used by your school to determine your federal student aid eligibility and to build your financial aid offer

-355 ?

[What does this mean?](#)

- FAFSA now uses **Student Aid Index (SAI)** instead of Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
- SAI does not correlate to a dollar amount; it's a measure of your financial need relative to other students – the lower your SAI, the higher your financial need.
- The minimum SAI is -1500
- Students with SAIs between -1500 and 0 will receive the max Pell Grant of \$7,395
- Students with SAIs greater than 0 may receive a partial Pell Grant

Making Corrections & Resubmitting Your FAFSA

There are required corrections and voluntary corrections:

- Required corrections
 - Answered question incorrectly
 - Used incorrect SSN
 - Missing consent to direct data exchange
 - Missing signature
- Voluntary corrections
 - Adding or changing colleges
 - Mailing address, email address, and contact information

How to make corrections:

- Student logs in to StudentAid.gov account
- Student selects processed FAFSA submission in the “My Activity” section
- Student makes corrections, re-signs, and re-submits the FAFSA
- If student changed parent(s) information, the parent(s) must re-sign and re-submit the FAFSA

Contact colleges' financial aid offices in case of:

- Significant change to family income or finances
- Situation that isn't reported on the FAFSA
- Change in student dependency status

College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile)

The CSS Profile is a financial aid application used to award college-specific grants and scholarships or institutional aid

- Goes more in-depth into a family's income and finances, compared to the FAFSA
- Used by over 300 colleges, mostly private schools
- A school may require both the FAFSA and the CSS Profile
- No citizenship requirement
- Costs \$25 to fill out and submit to one school, and then \$16 each to submit to additional schools.
 - Free for students who qualify for a fee waiver
- Often requires Verification where students submit tax documents through IDOC



The CSS Profile is not required by all colleges. Visit cssprofile.collegeboard.org to learn which colleges require it.

Financial Aid Verification



- Purpose is to **verify or confirm the information submitted on financial aid applications**
- Documents requested can include 1040s, W-2s, 1099s, etc.
- Don't assume you're being accused of doing anything wrong. Some students are randomly selected for verification, and some schools verify all students' forms.



Students check the email you applied to college with to see if you've been selected for Verification!

- **Students will not receive a financial aid award if they do not complete Verification**
- Not required for everyone

Financial Aid Application Process



FAFSA

(Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

- **Required for DC TAG**
- Eligibility: US Citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen
- Next Step: Review the FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)
 - Once processed, make any FAFSA corrections if needed, including adding more colleges, and resubmit the FAFSA
- Student and parent(s) submit tax documents required for FAFSA **Verification** directly to college(s), if needed

CSS Profile

(College Scholarship Service Profile)

- **Required by some colleges, not all**
- Eligibility: Everyone is eligible
- Next Step: Review CSS Profile status
 - Once processed, you can only correct the CSS Profile and resubmit once; for any further corrections, contact the colleges directly.
- Student and parent(s) upload any required documents for CSS Profile **Verification via IDOC** and/or directly to college(s), if needed

The CSS Profile is not required by all colleges. Visit cssprofile.collegeboard.org to learn which colleges require it.

DC Financial Aid Programs

Applications opened February 3rd and close August 15, 2025.

DCTAG

- **Contact:** Assigned [DCTAG Advisor](#)
- **Eligibility:** DC residency, income threshold, FAFSA eligible, attending an eligible public or private college/university (graduating high school seniors *and* currently enrolled college students)
- **Application:** [DC OneApp](#)
- **Amount:** Up to \$10,000 (public) or \$2,500 (local private/any private HBCU) annually; tuition only
- **Notes:** First-come, first-served; Complete ASAP; must reapply every year

Mayor's Scholars

- **Contact:** [Melanie Fleming](#) or OSSE.MayorsScholars@dc.gov
- **Eligibility:** DC residency, income threshold, 2.5+ high school GPA, attending Mayor's-eligible institution (graduating high school seniors *and* currently enrolled college students)
- **Application:** [Application for Postsecondary Studies](#)
- **Amount:** Up to \$4,000 annually; last-dollar funding
- **Notes:** First-come, first-served; must reapply every year; Undocumented students/non-US-citizens are eligible; upload DCTAG award letter in lieu of other documents

DC Futures

- **Not accepting new applicants**
- Only current DC Futures participants are eligible to apply for the 2025-2026 academic year, due to funding constraints.

DC TAG

The **DC-TAG (D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant)** is a program created by the U.S. Congress to help college-bound students in Washington, D.C.

Since D.C. only has one public university, UDC, the program gives D.C. residents **access to in-state tuition at other colleges**, making it easier for them to afford a higher education.

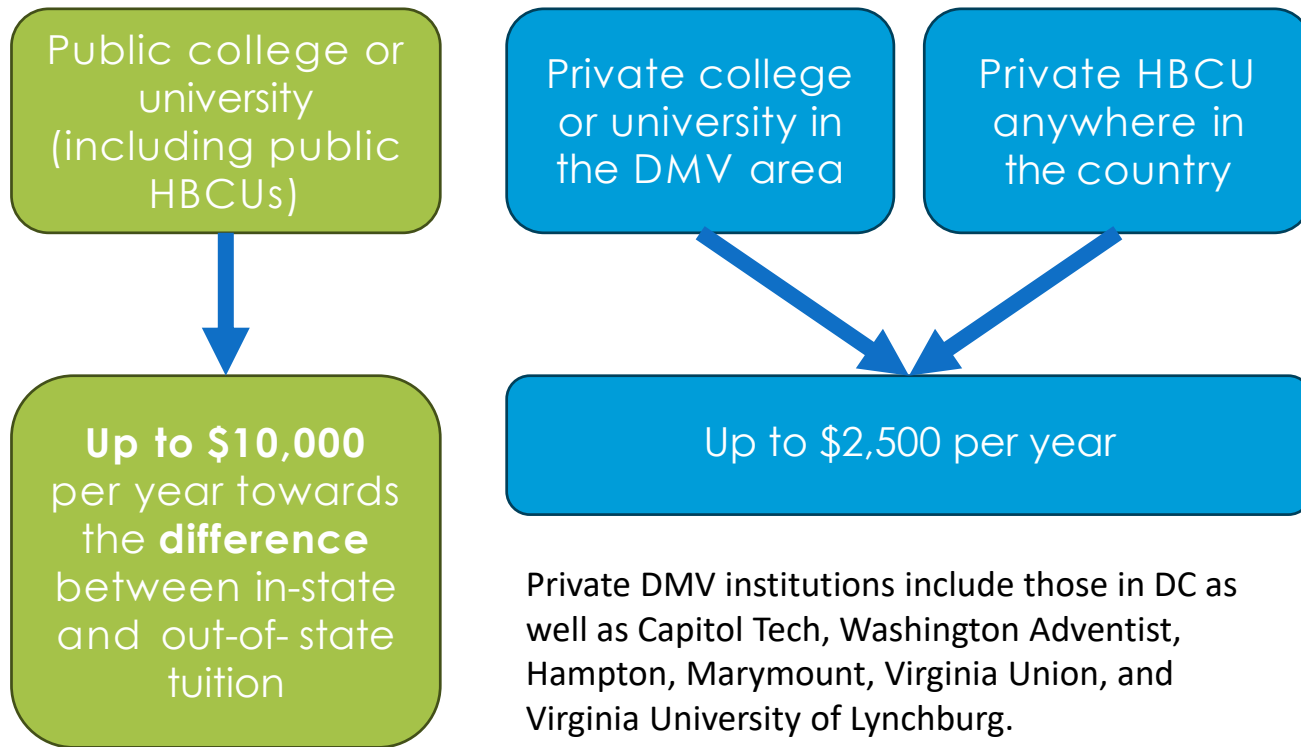
Eligibility:

- FAFSA Eligible (US citizens and Permanent Residents)
- DC Resident
- Income threshold
- Attend an eligible public or private college/university

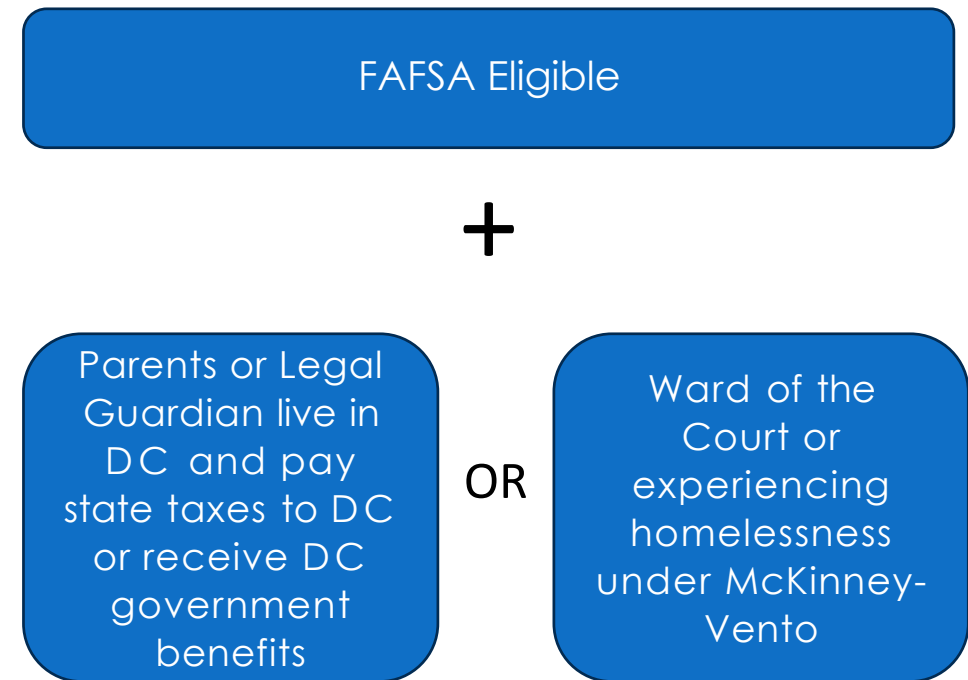
DC TAG – Award & Eligibility

Note: **DCTAG funds ONLY cover tuition**
(does not include room & board, books, or other college costs)

POST-SECONDARY PLANS



RESIDENCY



DC TAG – Income Eligibility

Depending on the year in which a student started college, the student's family taxable annual income must be below the income threshold in the table below.

Award Year	Fiscal Year	Year used for CPI	Consumer Price Index (CPI)	Income threshold for students who start(ed) college:		
				Prior to SY 2015-16	In SY 2016-17, 2017-18, or 2018-19	In or after SY 2019-20
2018-19	FY19	October 2016 – October 2017	2.0%	\$1,036,320	\$777,240	N/A
2019-20	FY20	October 2017 – October 2018	2.5%	\$1,062,228	\$796,671	\$500,000
2020-21	FY21	October 2018 – October 2019	1.8%	\$1,081,348	\$811,011	\$509,000
2021-22	FY22	October 2019 – October 2020	1.2%	\$1,094,324	\$820,743	\$515,108
2022-23	FY23	October 2020 – October 2021	6.2%	\$1,162,172	\$871,629	\$547,045
2023-24	FY24	October 2021 – October 2022	7.7%	\$1,251,660	\$938,745	\$589,167
2024-25	FY25	October 2022 – October 2023	3.2%	\$1,291,713	\$968,785	\$608,020
2025-26	FY26	October 2023-October 2024	2.6%	\$1,325,297	\$993,973	\$623,829

DC TAG – Supporting Documents

2025-2026 Supporting Documents Check List

Proof of Residency / Domicile Verification

- Parental D-40 (2024 DC tax return)
- Child Support Statement
- SNAP Statement
- TANF Statement
- Unemployment or Workers' Comp Statement
- Social Security Statement
- Homeless/Unaccompanied Youth Form

Second Proof of Residency

- Must be **no older than 45 days** and include **parent/legal guardian's name** or independent student's name, date, and address
- Bank or Mortgage Statement (no credit card statements)
 - Pay Stub
 - Utility Bill (no cell phone bill)
 - Utility Letter (must state that utilities are included in rent)

FAFSA Submission Summary

- Downloadable from FAFSA.gov
- Should include the Student Aid Index (SAI)

All documents must be correct and submitted at the same time.

Contact the student's DC TAG Advisor with questions.

DC TAG – How to Apply



Step 1: Complete the FAFSA



Step 2: Complete the [DC OneApp](#) (application for DC TAG; requires one parent SSN or ITIN and DOB)



Step 3: Upload all the [DC OneApp Required Supporting Documents](#)



Step 4: Allow 7 business days for review and processing

First-come, first served

Student must apply EVERY year; not automatic funding

APPLY EARLY

Mayor's Scholars

The **Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Program** (Mayor's Scholars) provides need-based funding for eligible District of Columbia residents earning their first associate or first bachelor's degree at select area colleges and universities.

Eligibility:

- DC residency
- Income threshold
- 2.5+ high school GPA
- Attending Mayor's-eligible institution
- Undocumented students / non-US citizens **ARE** eligible

Mayor's Scholars – Awards

Associate or two-year degree

- Up to \$4,000
- Up to four years
- Lifetime Award Cap of \$16,000

Bachelor's or four-year degree

- Up to \$4,000
- Up to six years
- Lifetime Award Cap of \$24,000

Mayor's Scholars – Income Eligibility

For families/households with more than eight persons, add \$16,500 for each additional person.

Household Size	Maximum Annual Income
3 or fewer	\$79,950
4	\$96,450
5	\$112,950
6	\$129,450
7	\$145,950
8	\$162,450

Mayor's Scholars – Supporting Documents

2025-2026 Supporting Documents Guide

Proof of Residency / Domicile Verification

- Parental D-40 (2024 DC tax return)
- Child Support Statement
- SNAP Statement
- TANF Statement
- Unemployment or Workers' Comp Statement
- Social Security Statement
- Homeless/Unaccompanied Youth Form

Second Proof of Residency

Must be **no older than 45 days** and include **parent/legal guardian's name** or independent student's name, date, and address

- Bank or Mortgage Statement (no credit card statements)
- Pay Stub
- Utility Bill (no cell phone bill)
- Utility Letter (must state that utilities are included in rent)

Proof of Financial Need

FAFSA Submission Summary, if **eligible**, or alternate documents if not FAFSA eligible

Final High School Transcript

- Must indicate a minimum of 2.5 GPA
- Must include final grades
 - If students complete the application prior to their final transcripts being available, current (non-final) transcripts should be uploaded as placeholders. Mayor's Scholars staff will then request a final transcript prior to approval.

If you have completed a DCTAG application AND received your DCTAG award letter, you are not required to submit residency or financial supporting documents again for the Mayor's Scholars application, and may, instead, upload your DC TAG award letter.

Mayor's Scholars – Eligible Institutions

To participate in and receive funding from the Mayor's Scholars program, students must be pursuing their first associate degree OR first bachelor's degree.

- American University
- Bowie State University
- Capitol Technology University
- Catholic University of America
- College of Southern Maryland
- Gallaudet University
- George Mason University
- George Washington University
- Georgetown University
- Howard University
- Marymount University
- Montgomery College
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Prince George's Community College
- Trinity Washington University
- University of Maryland-College Park
- University of Maryland Global Campus
- University of the District of Columbia
- Washington Adventist University
- Yeshiva College of the Nation's Capital

Mayor's Scholars – How to Apply



Step 1: Complete the FAFSA, if eligible



Step 2: Complete the [DC TAG](#) application, if eligible



Step 3: Gather [Supporting Documents](#) or DC TAG award letter



Step 4: Upload documents and Submit the [Application for Postsecondary Studies](#) (application for Mayor's Scholars)

First-come, first served

Undocumented students / non-US citizens **are** eligible for Mayor's Scholars

Student must apply EVERY year; not automatic funding

APPLY EARLY

DC Financial Aid Programs

Applications opened February 3rd and close August 15, 2025.

DCTAG

- **Contact:** Assigned [DCTAG Advisor](#)
- **Eligibility:** DC residency, [income threshold](#), FAFSA eligible, attending an eligible public or private college/university (graduating high school seniors *and* currently enrolled college students)
- **Application:** [DC OneApp](#)
- **Amount:** Up to \$10,000 (public) or \$2,500 (local private/any private HBCU) annually; tuition only
- **Notes:** **First-come, first-served; Complete ASAP;** must reapply every year

Mayor's Scholars

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Scholarships

Types and Where to Find Them

Scholarship Types



Need-based

Awarded to students with demonstrated financial need.



Merit-based

Awarded based on academic achievement, leadership, or special talents.



Specialty

Minority and Underrepresented
Athletic
First-Generation
Major/Career Specific
Employer or Corporate
Competition / Talent



Combination

Award that incorporates multiple eligibility criteria, blending aspects of merit, need, background, service, or career interests

Where to Find Scholarships

DCPS Dollars4College Newsletter & Scholarship Database



Welcome to DCPS Goes to College!

The DCPS College Preparedness and Persistence team is here to support your full college journey! From 9th grade through college graduation, we work closely with your school's counselors to prepare you for success now and in the future. We provide tools and resources to assist with the college application process and beyond, ensuring you have everything you need to achieve your higher education goals.



Where to Find Scholarship

- Naviance via Clever
- School Counselor / CCC
- Local & Community Organizations
- Parent/Guardian Employers
- National Companies
- Search Engines
 - BigFuture by CollegeBoard
 - FastWeb
 - Scholarships.com
 - Cappex
- College/University
 - Some colleges automatically consider you, while others have additional scholarships with separate applications

Top 10 Questions to Ask When Searching

1. Am I eligible?
2. Is this scholarship need-based, merit-based, or both?
3. How do I apply? What materials are needed?
4. What is the deadline, and do I have enough time to apply?
5. How competitive is this scholarship?
6. Is the scholarship renewable, and what are the renewal requirements?
7. How will this scholarship affect my financial aid package?
8. Do I need to reapply next year?
9. Are there any restrictions on how it can be used? (Tuition only, books, housing, etc.)
10. How are the funds distributed? (To me or directly to my college?)

Scholarship Tips & Mistakes to Avoid

Tips

- Update your resume
- Ask for help with essays
- Create a scholarship tracker
- Tailor your applications

Mistakes to Avoid

- Missing deadlines
- Ignoring small or less competitive scholarships
- Not staying organized
- Using the same essay for every application

Recap / Next Steps

Read your decision letters carefully and take any next steps.

Complete your FAFSA ASAP, if eligible. Remember, the FAFSA is required for DC TAG.

Complete the CSS Profile, if any of your colleges require it. Non-US Citizens are eligible.

Check your college portal, email, or IDOC to see if you've been selected for Verification. You won't be given a financial aid letter until your information has been verified.

Gather all your documents and submit DC TAG, if eligible (Up to \$10,000 for public | \$2,500 for private)

If you have at least a 2.5 GPA, apply for Mayor's Scholars (Up to \$4,000). Non-US Citizens are eligible.

Subscribe to DCPS Dollars4College Newsletter and check out our Scholarship Database.

Don't make a college decision without reviewing financial aid letters!