

# A Guide to Paying for College

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**Questions? Please contact Ms. Feldman in the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria Office (Room A-121)**  
margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us | 703.824.6730

## 1. How much does college cost?

College costs generally range from about \$7,000 to \$60,000 per year. Costs include more than just tuition. The Cost of Attendance (COA) is also room (where you live), board (what you eat), books, fees, transportation and personal expenses. You can see the COA for your favorite colleges by using the Net Price Calculator: <http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx>

## 3. My family can't pay all that. Can we get help?

Yes! FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is an application, filled out by you and your parent(s) that will show your eligibility for Federal Financial Aid. You can find the form online at [www.FAFSA.gov](http://www.FAFSA.gov), starting in January. The financial aid you receive from the Federal Government is based solely on income, not grades! Every senior should fill out the FAFSA!

Before the FAFSA application opens up in January, you can apply for scholarships directly through the colleges on your list, and you can apply for private scholarships with different scholarship funds.

## 4. What are the types of financial aid?

There are three types of aid – grants, loans and work-study. Grants (AKA, scholarships) are free money which you do not have to pay back. Loans must be repaid with interest. Work-study is a campus job that helps pay your college costs. Grants are the best. Work-study is second best. Loans are the least favorable. *Your goal is to get as much aid as possible in the form of grants!*

## 5. Where can you get grants?

You can either get grants/scholarships from the Federal Government, the state, or from private organizations. Scholarships come in two different forms, need-based and merit-based. Need-based financial aid is awarded to low-income families, and merit-based financial aid is given to students who excel in a specific area of interest. Most scholarships are awarded based on some combination of both financial need and academic merit.

## 6. Do scholarships usually cover the entire cost of college?

No. It is a misconception that scholarship awards usually cover the entire cost of college. The reality is that there are many more small awards out there, and it often requires several of them to add up. Applying for scholarships is just one part of the financial aid process, but the most important piece is *choosing a college that will be affordable for you and your family. Most students should look in-state first!*

## 7. Where can I find a list of private scholarships?

Ms. Feldman sends out a monthly scholarship email with upcoming local and national scholarship deadlines, and she would be happy to help you determine which scholarships might be a good match for you. Sign up at: <http://goo.gl/forms/WXSMkGRKpl>

# Step 1 – Choose Colleges Wisely

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## Use the Net Price Calculator:

- Find your college’s net price calculator at: <http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx>
  - You will answer questions about your GPA and your family income.
  - At the end, the tool will estimate what the total cost of attendance will be for you, based on your academic qualifications and family income. Cost of attendance (or COA) includes housing, food, tuition, fees, and estimates for books, personal, and transportation expenses.
  - The tool takes into account the federal, state, and institutional aid you may be eligible for.
- Generally, *Virginia public colleges will be the least expensive* because your taxes support them. Public colleges in North Carolina, Maryland, etc., will be much more expensive.
- You can make sure there are some schools on your list that will be affordable for you and your family!

## Don’t rule out private colleges:

- Just because the “sticker price” of a private colleges is very high, doesn’t mean it will turn out being the most expensive school for you.
- **Private colleges sometimes give out the best financial aid** – for example, the University of Richmond is free for students whose families make \$60,000 per year or less.
- Use the Net Price Calculator to see how much financial aid you might receive!

## Don’t rule out NOVA:

- If you qualify for Free or Reduced lunch, you most likely also qualify for a Pell Grant from the government (through filling out the FAFSA). This grant covers almost the entire cost of tuition at NOVA, so you can **knock out your first two years of college for free!**
- Then you only need to pay for two years of college at a four-year university to receive your Bachelor’s Degree!
- Many professors that teach at community colleges also teach at four-year schools. And many intelligent, high-achieving students go to NOVA because it makes financial sense!
- You can transfer from NOVA to the Virginia four-year college of your choice under the Guaranteed Admissions Agreement that in-state universities have with community colleges.
  - For example, if you maintain a 3.4 GPA at NOVA and take the required classes, you can be guaranteed acceptance to UVA for your final two years of college!
  - For more information, check out: <http://www.nvcc.edu/current-students/transfer/Search/GAAAdmission.aspx>

## Pay attention to a college’s graduation and retention rates:

- You want to make sure that the money you are paying in tuition actually goes towards a degree!
- A Bachelor’s degree typically takes four years to complete, but **at many Virginia colleges, less than 50% of students obtain their degree even after 6 years!**
- Take a look at the chart on the next page, “Average GPA and Test Scores of Students Accepted at Virginia Colleges” (orange = graduation rate under 50%, yellow = graduation rate between 50-60%, green = graduation rate above 60%), or check out <http://collegerealitycheck.com> to evaluate your schools.

## Average GPA and Test Scores of Students Accepted at Virginia Colleges

*Please note that these test scores and GPAs are provided to show you how your scores compare to those of students enrolled in Virginia colleges. Some students had lower scores and GPAs, while other students had higher scores and GPAs.*

### GPA 3.24 and below

College	SAT 25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	SAT 75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	Average GPA	6 Year Graduation Rate
Averett University*	870	1050	3.2	41%
Bluefield College*	823	1030	3.2	35.9%
Ferrum College*	800	990	2.6	31.2%
Marymount University*	1350 <sup>^</sup>	1610 <sup>^</sup>	3.1	47.9%
Norfolk State University	800	940	2.8	33.2%
Radford University	920	1090	3.2	55.8%
Virginia Intermont College*	870	1070	3.2	26.2%
Virginia State University	1100 <sup>^</sup>	1340 <sup>^</sup>	2.8	39.7%
Virginia Union University*	690	850	2.6	29.2%

### GPA 3.25 – 3.49

Bridgewater College*	1405 <sup>^</sup>	1670 <sup>^</sup>	3.4	58.5%
Hampden-Sydney College*	1020	1220	3.4	66.6%
Hampton University*	940	1110	3.3	54.9%
Liberty University*	1390 <sup>^</sup>	1700 <sup>^</sup>	3.4	46.7%
Longwood University	940	1110	3.4	60.3%
Lynchburg College*	1340 <sup>^</sup>	1653 <sup>^</sup>	3.3	52.1%
Mary Baldwin College*	1270 <sup>^</sup>	1610 <sup>^</sup>	3.3	49.4%
Old Dominion University	920	1120	3.3	50%
Roanoke College*	1480 <sup>^</sup>	1750 <sup>^</sup>	3.4	68.7%
Shenandoah University*	890	1120	3.4	44.6%
University of Virginia's College at Wise	1240 <sup>^</sup>	1560 <sup>^</sup>	3.3	38.8%
Virginia Military Institute	1570 <sup>^</sup>	1810 <sup>^</sup>	3.4	69.4%
Virginia Wesleyan College*	890	1110	3.3	48.3%

\*<sup>^</sup>See key on the following page.

Contact Ms. Feldman at [margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us) with any questions!

## GPA 3.5 – 3.74

Christopher Newport University	1070	1240	3.7	63.2%
Eastern Mennonite University*	890	1180	3.5	66.3%
Emory and Henry College*	1320^	1640^	3.5	59.2%
George Mason University	1050	1250	3.7	64.5%
Hollins University*	960	1240	3.6	62.5%
Jefferson College of Health Sciences*	1300^	1557^	3.5	10%
Randolph College*	980	1210	3.5	63%
Randolph-Macon College*	1470^	1770^	3.6	60%
Regent University*	960	1180	3.5	33.3%
Sweet Briar College*	960	1180	3.5	69.6%
University of Mary Washington	1570^	1830^	3.5	70.6%
University of Richmond*	1820^	2078^	3.7	82.7%
Virginia Commonwealth University	1510^	1780^	3.6	53.1%

## GPA 3.75 and above

College of William and Mary	1250	1460	4.0	90.7%
James Madison University	1050	1250	3.8	81.4%
University of Virginia	1910^	2170^	4.2	93.9%
Virginia Tech	1130	1300	4.0	81.7%
Washington and Lee University*	1940^	2210^	Not Available	90.9%

Numerical Grade	Letter Grade	Standard Classes	Honors Classes	AP or DE Classes
93-100	A	4	4.5	5
90-92	A-	3.7	4.2	4.7
87-89	B+	3.3	3.8	4.3
83-86	B	3	3.5	4
80-82	B-	2.7	3.2	3.7
77-79	C+	2.3	2.8	3.3
73-76	C	2	2.5	3
70-72	C-	1.7	1.7	1.7
67-69	D+	1.3	1.3	1.3
60-66	D	1	1	1

6 Year Graduation Rate Below 50%

6 Year Graduation Rate between 50-60%

6 Year Graduation Rate Above 60%

Unless otherwise noted, SAT Scores are a combination of Critical Reading and Math – calculated out of 1600

^SAT Scores include the Writing section – calculated out of 2400

\* Indicates Private College or University

# Step 2 – FAFSA

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## **Myth #1: “... only students with good grades get financial aid.”**

While a high GPA will help a student get into a good school and may help with academic scholarships, all of the federal student aid programs do not take a student's grades into consideration.

## **Myth #2: “... the application is too complicated.”**

It's really not. The form takes less than 30 minutes to fill out, and there are many resources available at T.C. to provide free, confidential assistance before school, during lunch, and after school:

- The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria (A-121) – [margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us) or (703) 824-6730
- College and Career Center (A-114) – [patricia.braun@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:patricia.braun@acps.k12.va.us) or (703) 578-6250
- Your counselor, AVID, BBF, College Summit, etc...

## **Myth #3: "...I don't know if I'm going to college, so I don't need to fill out the FAFSA yet."**

Financial aid money is awarded first come, first served. If there is any chance you might decide to pursue further education, you need to submit your FAFSA between January 1<sup>st</sup> and **February 15<sup>th</sup>** to meet colleges' priority deadlines!

## **Myth #4: "... my parents make too much money, so I won't qualify for aid."**

There is no income cut-off to qualify for federal student aid. Many factors besides income—from the size of your family to the age of your older parent—are taken into account. Your eligibility is determined by a mathematical formula, not by your parents' income alone.

When you fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you're also automatically applying for funds from your state, and possibly from your school as well. In fact, some schools won't even consider you for any of their scholarships (including academic scholarships) until you've submitted a FAFSA.

## **Myth #5: "...I'm not a US Citizen, so I don't qualify for aid."**

You may be an eligible non-citizen if you have a (n):

- Permanent Resident Card (Green Card, I-551)
- Arrival Departure Record (I-94) that says:
  - Refugee
  - Asylum Granted
  - Parolee
  - T-Visa Holder (victim of human trafficking)
  - Cuban-Haitian Entrant

If you are not a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, there are still many scholarships available to you. We are happy to provide free, confidential assistance to you and your family. Please see Ms. Feldman for more information.

## **FACT: "...OK, you've convinced me...what do I need to fill it out?"**

- You and your parents' social security number (or alien registration number), date of birth, & address.
- You and your parents' most recent tax information (W-2 and 1040), OR information about you and your parents' income if you do not file taxes.
  - If your parents are going to file taxes this year, but haven't yet done so, go ahead and submit using estimates from the previous year's taxes. The important thing is to submit your FAFSA as early as possible!
- Current bank statements and information about retirement funds, investments, savings accounts, etc.
- Go to [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) to fill out your FREE Application for Federal Student Aid!

# Step 3 – Next Steps after Submitting the FAFSA

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After you submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR), a summary of what you submitted.

- You will receive an email with instructions on how to access your SAR at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) after 3-5 days
- Carefully read all comments on your SAR and review your results for accuracy.
  - Your SAR should display your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).
    - **EFC = Expected Family Contribution.** The Department of Education uses the financial information you provided in the FAFSA to determine how much money they expect your family to contribute toward your education each year. That amount of money is called the EFC.
    - This number affects what federal and state financial aid you will receive.
  - If your application was incomplete, the SAR may not include an EFC, but will display comments that identify any issues you need to resolve, such as missing signatures or updating information.

## If corrections or updates are needed:

- Make corrections to your electronic SAR at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).
  - Click “Make a Correction”,
  - Enter your PIN,
  - Add or update any information required to complete your FAFSA,
  - And make sure to resubmit your FAFSA to resend your SAR to each school on your list.
- *Make sure to update and resubmit your SAR with your 2014 tax return if you initially filed using estimates from 2013.*

## If your SAR does not request additional information:

- Once your FAFSA is processed, the colleges you listed on your application will have access to your information electronically.
  - If you were ineligible to use the **IRS Data Retrieval Tool**, or otherwise chose not to do so, your college may require that you submit a copy of your (and your parents) IRS Tax Return Transcript.
  - Your FAFSA may be selected for a process called **verification**, which verifies the accuracy of your information. If you are selected for verification, your college will request that you submit additional documents to their office.
- Your colleges will review your information to determine the amount of federal and state grants, loans, work-study, and any available school-based aid for which you may be eligible.
  - **Check with your colleges to see if any additional forms are required** for state and school-based aid – such as the CSS Profile.
  - Not submitting additional required forms can prevent you from receiving financial aid from the college!
  - *Make sure to do your research and know the exact deadlines and required forms for each college!*
- Your colleges will send you a **financial aid award letter** that details the financial aid you are eligible to receive.

- Once you receive your award letters, you should review your financial aid packages from each school and determine which is the best offer for you and your family. Determine which aid you want to keep and respond to the letter by the college's deadline.

### How to Interpret Your Financial Aid Award Letter:

1. The best type of financial aid award includes mostly **grants** – those grants could be from:
  - a. The Federal Government (The Pell Grant),
  - b. The State of Virginia (VTAG, CSAP, VCAP, VGAP, or CTGP), or
  - c. The college itself.

All of these grants provide you with free money for college that you do not have to pay back.

2. Your package may also include a **work-study** component. Work-study means that the college will give you a job that will help you afford your tuition bill.
  - a. The money you earn goes directly to you, and then you can save it and apply it towards your tuition bill.
3. Your package may also include **Federal Loans** – these loans are borrowed in your name, not your parent's. *So it is your responsibility to pay them back.* There are three different types, and you may be offered all three in your financial aid package:
  - a. **Direct Subsidized**
    - i. Best kind of loan because it has the *lowest interest rate* AND the *government pays the interest* for you while you're in college.
  - b. **Direct Unsubsidized**
    - i. Second best kind of loan because it has the same *low interest rate* as the Subsidized Loan. The only difference is that the interest starts accruing immediately, while you're still in college.
  - c. **Perkins Loan**
    - i. Third best kind of loan because the *interest rate is slightly higher* than both of the Direct Loans above.

4. You may also be offered a Direct **Parent PLUS Loan** – this loan is in your parent's name, not yours. It is the fourth best kind of loan because the *interest rate is slightly higher* than all three of the Federal Loans that can be borrowed in your (the student's) name.
  - a. Your parents must qualify for this loan and be willing to accept it on your behalf in order for you to receive it.
  - b. *If you don't see the Parent PLUS Loan on your financial aid award letter, you should call the college to request the loan.*
  - c. If the college will not offer the PLUS Loan to your parents, they must offer to increase the amount of Direct Loans that they offered to you, the student.
5. It is **ok to borrow a manageable amount of money in Federal Loans** to pay for your college tuition – college is an investment for your future because *it will help you earn more money* in the long run.
6. However, **you should NEVER borrow private loans**. If you can't afford to pay your tuition bill after all the grants, work-study offers, federal loans, and private scholarships you have received, then that college is not a good choice for you.

### Apply to the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria:

1. Application is **due February 8<sup>th</sup>**. Last year's applicants had a *1 in 2 chance of receiving a scholarship* and the average award was \$2,600 per year, renewable for 4 years. Go to [www.AlexScholarshipFund.org](http://www.AlexScholarshipFund.org)!

# Resources for Undocumented Students

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**Are you a Dreamer, or do you have any questions about how your immigration status impacts your college and scholarship options?**

*Stop by the Scholarship Fund to see Ms. Feldman for confidential assistance and helpful resources!*

## The Benefits of Applying for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals):

- Become eligible for **in-state tuition** at Virginia colleges!
- Get a **Social Security Number!**
- Receive a **work permit** and the ability to have a job with benefits (like **health insurance**)
- Apply for a **driver's license**
- Ability to pass a **background check**
- You can apply for a credit card and begin to build your **credit history**
- Obtaining this status DOES NOT qualify you for federal financial aid, BUT it often makes it **easier to obtain scholarships from private colleges**

## You May be Eligible for DACA if You:

- Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
- Came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday;
- Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
- Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
- Entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or your lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012;
- Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and
- Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

## Where to Go for More Information:

- Speak with Margaret Feldman in the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria Office (Room A-121)
  - [margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:margaret.feldman@acps.k12.va.us) or (703) 824-6730
- USCIS: <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process>
- Legal Aid Justice Center: <https://www.justice4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/deferred-action-fact-sheet-english-8-20-FINAL.pdf>
- E4FC: <http://e4fc.org/legalservices/deferredactionresources.html>

## Some Scholarships Just for You:

First, make sure that you are applying to some private colleges – they are sometimes able to give you financial aid even though most public universities cannot. For a specific list of colleges that have historically given significant financial aid to undocumented students, see the next page.

Next, make sure you are applying to some scholarships outside of the college.



- MALDEF: [http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/2012-2013\\_MALDEF\\_Scholarship\\_List.pdf](http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/2012-2013_MALDEF_Scholarship_List.pdf) - Scholarship List
- E4FC: [http://www.e4fc.org/images/E4FC\\_Scholarships.pdf](http://www.e4fc.org/images/E4FC_Scholarships.pdf) - Scholarship List
- Scholarships A-Z: <http://www.scholarshipsaz.org/scholarships.html> - Scholarship List
- Questbridge: <http://www.questbridge.org/for-students/ncm-national-college-match>
  - Full-ride scholarship for high-achieving, low-income students. Some partner colleges will award scholarship to undocumented students. See Ms. Feldman for a list.
- Posse: <http://www.possefoundation.org/>
  - Full-tuition scholarship for high-achieving, low-income students. Must be nominated to apply. Some partner colleges will award scholarship to undocumented students. See Ms. Feldman for a list and nomination information.
- Haz La U: <http://hsf.net/en/scholarships/programs/hsf-haz-la-u-scholarship-program>
  - Open to students with Hispanic heritage, including students with DACA status; 3.0 GPA +
- The Dream US : <http://www.thedream.us/scholars/>
  - Scholarship for DACA or TPS eligible students, must be admitted to a Dream US partner college (colleges marked by \* below)
- Dream Scholarship: <http://www.dreamproject-va.org/dream-scholarship/how-to-apply/>
  - Open to students who were born outside of the United States or have at least one parent who was born outside of the United States
- Davis Putter Scholarship: <http://www.davisputter.org/apply/apply-for-scholarships/>
  - Open to students who actively participate in struggles for civil rights, economic justice, international solidarity or other progressive issues
- Esperanza: <http://www.esperanzafund.org/scholarship/>
  - Local scholarship open to students born outside the US, or students who have two parents born outside the US (including undocumented students)
- Next Gen Scholarship: <http://www.perkconsulting.net/about/nextgen/>
  - 3.0 GPA or higher, non-citizen or international student enrolled in a US school in the DC area

## Colleges that Have Historically Given Financial Aid/Scholarships to Undocumented Students:

*\* Denotes a Partner College for the Dream US Scholarship*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amherst College (Massachusetts)</li> <li>• Bard College (New York)</li> <li>• Bates College (Maine)</li> <li>• Berea College (Kentucky – Christian)</li> <li>• Broward College (Florida)</li> <li>• Brown University (Rhode Island)</li> <li>• Bryn Mawr (Pennsylvania – Women’s College)</li> <li>• California State University, Long Beach (California)*</li> <li>• California State University, San Bernardino (California)*</li> <li>• Claremont McKenna College (California)</li> <li>• College of the Holy Cross (Massachusetts)</li> <li>• Columbia University (New York)</li> <li>• Cornell University (New York)</li> <li>• Dartmouth College (New Hampshire)</li> <li>• Dominican University (Illinois)*</li> <li>• Dominican University of California (California)</li> <li>• South Texas College (El Rio Grande)*</li> <li>• Florida International University (Florida)*</li> <li>• Franklin Marshall College (Pennsylvania)</li> <li>• Kaplan University (Online)*</li> <li>• Lehman College (New York)*</li> <li>• Miami Dade College (Florida)*</li> <li>• Mount Holyoke (Massachusetts – Women’s College)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount St. Mary’s (California – Women’s College)</li> <li>• Mount Washington College (Online)*</li> <li>• National Hispanic University (California)</li> <li>• Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)</li> <li>• Notre Dame University (Indiana)</li> <li>• Occidental College (California)</li> <li>• Pomona College (California)</li> <li>• Princeton University (New Jersey)</li> <li>• Reed College (Oregon)</li> <li>• Santa Clara University (California)</li> <li>• South Texas College (El Rio Grande)*</li> <li>• Stanford University (California)</li> <li>• Swarthmore College (Pennsylvania)</li> <li>• Trinity Washington University (DC – Women’s College)*</li> <li>• University of La Verne (California)*</li> <li>• University of North Texas (Texas)*</li> <li>• University of Puget Sound (Washington)</li> <li>• University of Texas, El Paso (El Paso)*</li> <li>• University of Texas, Pan American (El Rio Grande)*</li> <li>• Wesleyan University (Connecticut)</li> <li>• Whitman College (Washington)</li> <li>• Yale University (Connecticut)</li> </ul> |
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**Please meet with Ms. Feldman so that we can confidentially come up with the best plan for you and your family! Contact [margaret.feldman@acps.12.va.us](mailto:margaret.feldman@acps.12.va.us), 703.824.6730, or Room A-121.**