



FINANCIAL AID 101

FOR WEST VIRGINIA STUDENTS ATTENDING COLLEGE IN

2026-2027

COLLEGE IS AFFORDABLE.

Going to college is one of the best financial investments you can make. Students who earn a college degree earn hundreds of thousands of dollars more over a lifetime. Attending college in West Virginia is one of the best bargains in the nation! West Virginia consistently ranks among the top states for providing financial aid for students. Plus, tuition at West Virginia public colleges and universities is often much lower than at similar schools in other states.

Most West Virginia students receive some form of financial aid to help pay for college. Read this guide carefully to learn how you can begin finding and applying for money to finance your education!



GET THE FULL FINANCIAL AID 101 GUIDE ONLINE!

The full Financial Aid 101 guide has more information regarding financial aid opportunities for West Virginia students, including steps for filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), different sources for financial aid, and details for in-state grant and scholarship opportunities. Check it out online at cfwv.com.



College for West Virginia (CFWV) is proud to support West Virginia's attainment goal to equip 60% of West Virginians with a certificate or degree by 2030. Find out more at wvclimb.com.

WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID?

Financial aid is money that the federal or state government or other organizations either give or loan you to help pay for college. In order to receive financial aid, you must apply. Financial aid comes from a variety of sources, including state and federal governments, colleges, organizations, companies, and banks.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID?

Grants are generally free money, which doesn't have to be repaid. Generally, grants are based on financial need, which means that they are given based on your family's financial circumstances.

Scholarships are also free money and don't need to be repaid. Scholarships may be given based on your financial need, academic achievements, community service, athletic talent, and many other factors.

Loans are money you borrow from a bank, government, or private lending company. A loan must be paid back with interest. Loans offered by the government often have lower interest rates and can be paid back over an extended period of time.

Work study programs allow you to get paid through part-time employment while you are enrolled in college and can help you pay part of your college costs.

HOW DO I APPLY?

To qualify for financial aid, you must apply. The most important application is the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA). All federal financial aid programs, most programs offered by the State of West Virginia, and many programs offered by colleges require you to submit the FAFSA. You can file the FAFSA for FREE at studentaid.gov/fafsa.

IMPORTANT FAFSA FACTS

- ✓ Make sure you visit the official FAFSA webpage at studentaid.gov/fafsa. You do NOT have to pay to file the FAFSA! If you submit online, the program will check your data before it is transmitted so that you're less likely to make an error. If you don't have internet access, you can get a paper copy by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID (433-3243).
- ✓ You'll need to fill out the FAFSA to qualify for the federal Pell Grant Program. Pell Grants are need-based grants given to help meet the cost of college. Last year, Pell awards ranged from \$740 to \$7,395 for the academic year! To learn more about Pell, visit studentaid.gov. Check out the back of this guide for an overview of some of the financial aid programs available in West Virginia.
- ✓ If you are planning to attend college for the first time or as a returning student during the 2026-2027 academic year, complete the 2026-2027 FAFSA.
- ✓ File the 2026-2027 FAFSA online at studentaid.gov/fafsa.

**FILE THE FAFSA YEARLY!**

You should file the FAFSA for each year you attend school. For example, if you are currently a college freshman, you should complete the 2026-2027 FAFSA to receive aid for your sophomore year.

AFTER SUBMITTING THE FAFSA...

- ✓ Check your FAFSA status and make corrections if necessary. Visit studentaid.gov/fafsa or call 1 (800) 433-3243 to check the status of your FAFSA.
- ✓ Be on the lookout for your FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS). You will receive it electronically if you filed online. Read it and follow any directions. Once you've received your FSS, check out your Student Aid Index or SAI. The SAI is a calculation based on the information you reported on your FAFSA. Colleges use the SAI to determine the amounts of federal student aid you may be eligible for. It's important to note the SAI is NOT the amount of money you and your family will have to pay for college, nor is it the amount of aid you will receive.
- ✓ The colleges you listed on the FAFSA will receive your FAFSA. Those schools use information from your FAFSA to figure out how much federal student aid you may receive, and colleges will generate award letters for students. Make sure you review each award letter carefully. If you have any questions regarding your award letter, call the financial aid office at the college. Your institution might also tell you that you've been selected for verification. Be sure to respond to your institution in a timely manner so there are no delays in processing your financial aid!
- ✓ Once you make a final decision regarding where you will attend college, you'll need to decide which aid to accept and which to decline.

GETTING YOUR MONEY

The financial aid staff at your college will explain exactly how and when your aid will be provided. They also will tell you whether you need to fill out more paperwork or meet other requirements. For instance, if you're receiving a federal student loan for the first time, you will be required to sign a promissory note and go through entrance counseling. Be sure to respond to requests from your college in a timely manner so your awards are not delayed.

**DON'T WAIT UNTIL TAX SEASON TO FILE THE FAFSA!**

To file the FAFSA, you will need tax information from last year's taxes, which were filed by April of last year. For example, if you are planning to attend college in the fall of 2026 you should file the 2026-2027 FAFSA using tax information from 2024.

ACTUAL COST OF COLLEGE

STICKER PRICE VS. NET PRICE

Know the difference between sticker price and net price. A college's sticker price is the full published cost of attendance. The net price of a college, however, is the cost of attending minus grants and scholarships that you receive. This difference is key, as most students don't pay the sticker price of a college.

Don't shy away from applying to a college because the "sticker price" seems too expensive. A college that may have high tuition might just offer you a generous financial aid package. It might end up being even more affordable than colleges that have a lower sticker price.

Want to know how much you might have to pay if you attend a particular college before you even apply? Colleges are required to have net price calculators on their websites.

AVERAGE COST OF ATTENDANCE

The following is an estimate based on the average cost to attend a public school in West Virginia for one academic year:

Estimated cost of attendance for WV institutions (2025-2026)*			
Two-year colleges		Four-year colleges	
Tuition and fees:	\$5,019	Tuition and fees:	\$9,071
Room and board:**	\$9,318	Room and board:**	\$13,040
Books and supplies:	\$1,699	Books and supplies:	\$1,103
Total:	\$16,036	Total:	\$23,214

* Costs were calculated based on rates available as of spring 2025. Costs may change over time. Visit cfwv.com for current tuition and fee information.

** Costs were calculated based on the average cost for non-commuters of either on-campus housing or off-campus housing, depending on whether or not the institution offers housing.

STUDENT LOANS

Completing the FAFSA allows you to be considered for federal student loans. Federal student loans can be a good option to pay for college costs not covered by grants, scholarships, or work study. Federal loans often have lower interest rates and more flexible repayment options than private loans. However, students and parents should be careful not to borrow any more than is absolutely needed to cover education expenses, and, when possible, they should accept subsidized loans before unsubsidized loans. To learn more, visit studentaid.gov.

PLANNING TIMELINE

July 15, 2025

- **Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholars** application opens for students entering the senior year of high school.

Early September 2025

- Sign up to receive free college reminders via text at cfwv.com.

FOR WEST VIRGINIA SENIORS

- Follow CFWV online to receive scholarship updates and opportunities in your social media feeds and email inbox! You can visit cfwv.com to sign up for email updates or follow us on social.

Facebook: facebook.com/collegeforwv

X: x.com/cfwv

Instagram: instagram.com/collegeforwv

- Check the community calendar on cfwv.com to find financial aid workshops in your area.

October 1, 2025

- The 2026-2027 applications launch for the **Promise Scholarship**, the **WVSTEM Scholarship**, and the **West Virginia Invests Grant**.

October 2025

- The **2026-2027 FAFSA** opens.

November 15, 2025 - Deadline!

- Deadline to apply for the **West Virginia Health Sciences Service Program**.

Early November 2025

- Check the community calendar on cfwv.com to find FAFSA workshops in your area.

December 31, 2025 - Deadline!

- **Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholars** application deadline.

March 1, 2026 - Deadline!

- Deadline to apply for the **Promise Scholarship** and the **WVSTEM Scholarship**. Don't forget to file the FAFSA by this deadline for these programs!

April 15, 2026 - Deadline!

- Deadline for a student's FAFSA to be submitted to be considered for the **West Virginia Higher Education Grant Program**.
- Priority deadline to apply for the **West Virginia Invests Grant**. Both the West Virginia Invests application and FAFSA need to be submitted.
- **West Virginia Nursing Scholarship** application opens.

June 1, 2026 - Deadline!

- **West Virginia Nursing Scholarship** application deadline.

June 2026

- Last date to take the SAT to establish eligibility for the **Promise Scholarship**.

July 1, 2026

- The **HEAPS Workforce** application will be available. Contact the financial aid office at your college to apply.

July 2026

- Last date to take the ACT to establish eligibility for the **Promise Scholarship**.

Mid July 2026

- If you are planning to attend college this fall, you should have received your initial financial aid award package from your school. You must review this information and accept any awards you plan to use.

FINANCIAL AID OPPORTUNITIES

FOR ALL WEST VIRGINIA STUDENTS ATTENDING COLLEGE IN THE 2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR

PROGRAM NAME	ESTIMATED 2026-27 AWARD AMOUNT	APPLICATION DEADLINE	ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Federal Pell Grant	\$740 - \$7,395 per year	2026-27 FAFSA - studentaid.gov/fafsa	For more information, visit studentaid.gov
WV Higher Education Grant Program	up to \$3,400 per year	2026-27 FAFSA - studentaid.gov/fafsa by April 15, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a high school graduate or have earned a high school equivalency diploma such as the GED/TASC/HiSet Demonstrate academic promise Enroll as a full-time undergraduate student at a participating institution Do not have, nor previously earned, a bachelor's degree For more information, visit cfww.com/wvgrant
Promise Scholarship	up to \$5,500 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2026 Promise Application - cfww.com/promise by March 1, 2026 2026-27 FAFSA - studentaid.gov/fafsa by March 1, 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain both a core and cumulative gpa of 3.0 or above Achieve minimum test score requirement for the ACT or SAT by June/July 2026 For more information, visit cfww.com/promise
WV STEM Scholarship	up to \$3,000 per year	2026 Application - cfww.com/wvstem by March 1, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0 or above while graduating high school or 3.0 or above cumulative GPA after completing two semesters of coursework at an eligible institution Be enrolled/accepted in an approved STEM program leading to a certificate or an associate/bachelor's degree at an eligible institution Recipients must agree to work full time in an approved STEM field in West Virginia for one year for each year the scholarship was received OR recipient must repay the scholarship plus interest and collection fees if service requirement is not fulfilled For more information, visit cfww.com/wvstem
Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholars Program	up to \$10,000 per year	2026 Application - cfww.com/underwoodsmith by December 31, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school senior or recent graduate enrolled full-time in an approved program that will lead to a teaching certificate at the preschool, middle, secondary level in West Virginia Automatically renewable; recipients can receive up to four years with a minimum 3.0 GPA Recipients must agree to work in a WV public school for five years after college graduation in the fields of math, science, elementary education, or special education For more information, visit cfww.com/underwoodsmith
West Virginia Invests Grant	Award Varies*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2026 WV Invests Application - priority deadline April 15, 2026 - cfww.com/wvinvests 2026-27 FAFSA - studentaid.gov/fafsa priority deadline April 15, 2026 Application becomes available October 1, 2025 for 2026-27 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be enrolled/accepted in an eligible certificate or associate degree program Must take an approved drug screening within 60 days prior to the beginning of the first term in which you are eligible for the academic year (summer, fall, spring) and enroll at least half-time Must complete two hours of community service each term funds are received Recipients must agree to reside in West Virginia for two years after no longer being enrolled at least half-time and provide documentation when requested Award amount varies depending on the remaining tuition, mandatory fees, and approved academic program fees not covered by other scholarships and grants For more information, visit cfww.com/wvinvests