

Financial Aid 101

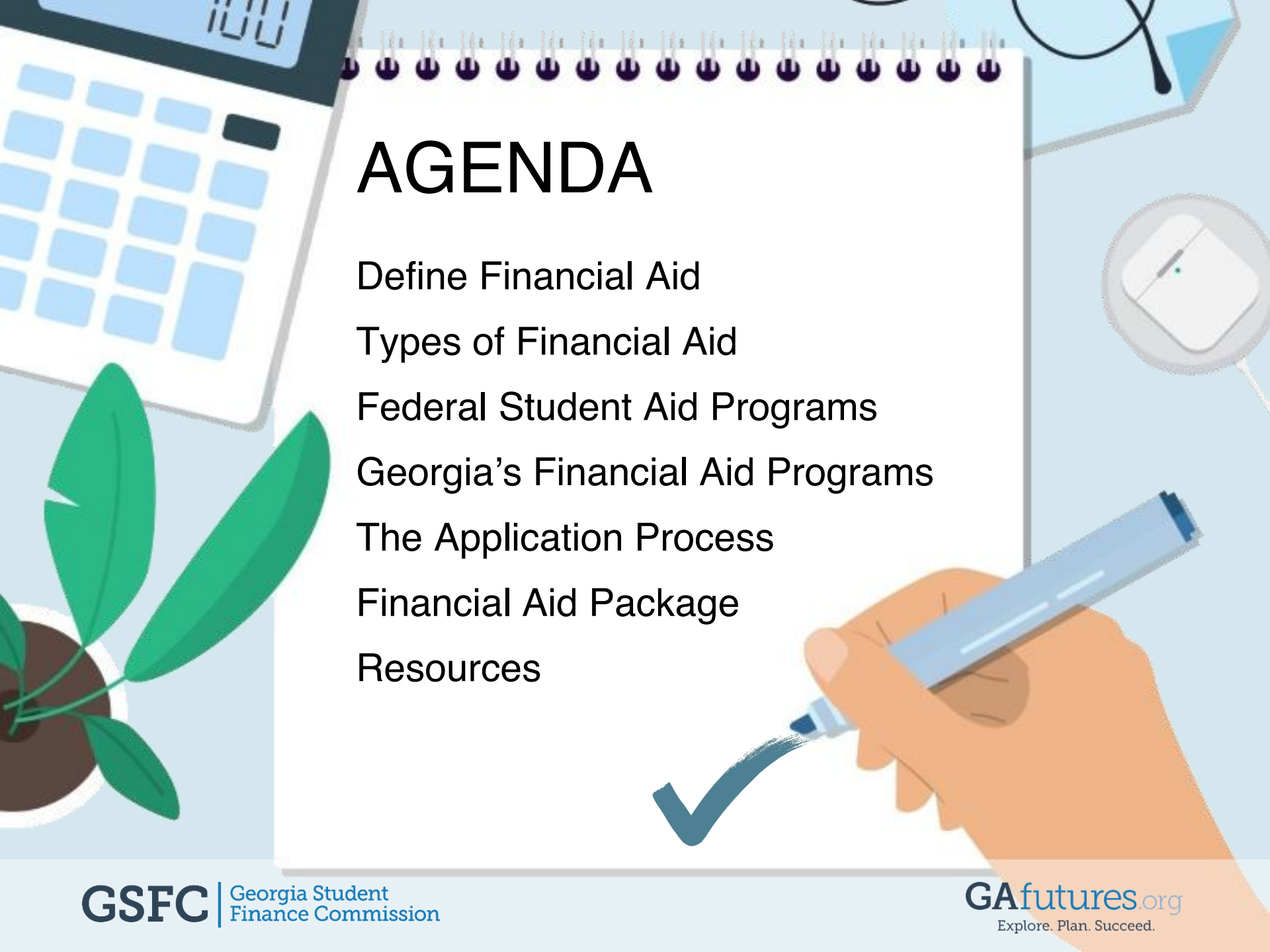
FEDERAL AND STATE AID

AUGUST 2025

GAfutures.org
Explore. Plan. Succeed.

GSFC | Georgia Student
Finance Commission





AGENDA

Define Financial Aid

Types of Financial Aid

Federal Student Aid Programs

Georgia's Financial Aid Programs

The Application Process

Financial Aid Package

Resources



Financial Aid

Financial aid is money to help pay for college or career school.

FINANCIAL AID DEFINITION

Financial aid: Money offered to help assist students in funding their post-secondary education.

Costs of Attendance (COA): Costs associated with attendance established by the college/university.



DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS



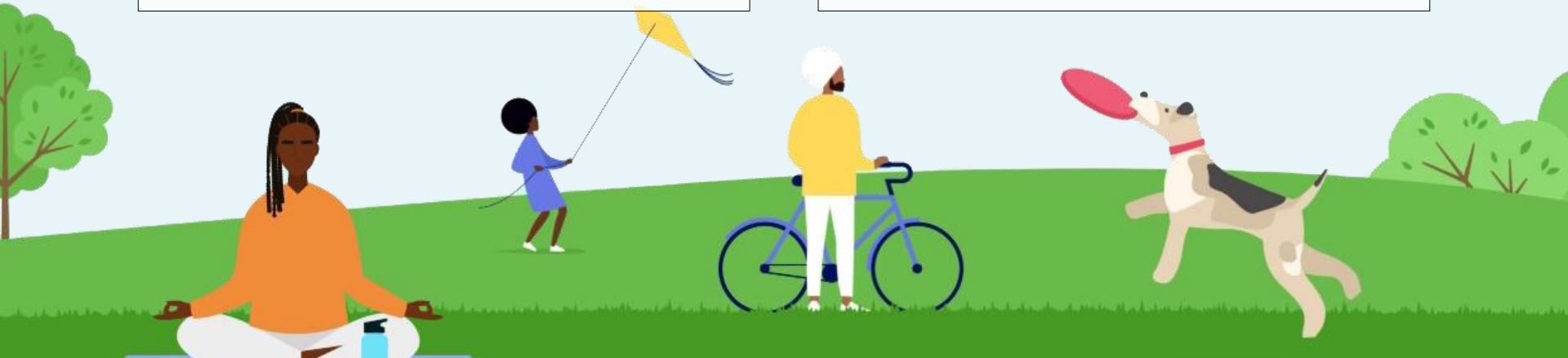
Direct Costs

Tuition
Student fees
On-campus housing
Meal plan
Parking permits



Indirect Costs

Books
Rent for off-campus
Housing
School supplies
Groceries



FINANCIAL AID

COST OF ATTENDANCE (COA)

- Tuition and fees payable to the institution
- Books and supplies
- Housing and meal plans
- Personal costs
- Transportation to and from the institution

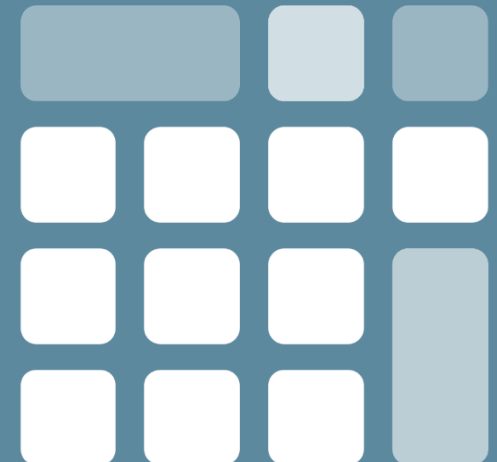


TECHNOLOGY FEE

ATHLETIC FEE

DOC PROCESSING FEE

ENVIRONMENTAL FEE



Types of Financial Aid

Financial aid is available in the form of grants, scholarships, work-study funds, and loans.



FINANCIAL AID FORMS AND SOURCES

Forms of Financial Aid:

- Scholarships
- Grants
- Loans
- Work-study programs

Sources of Financial Aid:

- Federal and state government
- Colleges and universities
- Professional and service organizations
- Employers and private foundations/companies

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

- Merit-based (HOPE Scholarship)
- Need-based (Pell Grant)
- Non-need based (HOPE Grant)
- Student or parent loans
- Employment opportunities (Federal Work Study)
- Military aid and grants (Georgia National Guard Service Cancelable Loan; UNG ROTC Grant)
- Savings plan (Path2College 529; traditional savings)

GAFUTURES SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

Scholarship Search Tips

- Start search early!
- Don't stop at one, two, or three!
- Be creative!
Consider family, hobbies, career interests, medical history, or college major
- Look for scholarships even after beginning college!



DO NOT PAY ANYONE TO HELP YOU
FIND OR APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS!

Federal Student Aid Programs

Federal student aid programs provide financial assistance to students attending a college or career school.



HOW TO GET FEDERAL STUDENT AID

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Be a high school graduate or GED recipient
- Be enrolled in an eligible degree/certificate program
- Have a valid Social Security number
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

- Pell Grant
 - Undergraduate student with financial need
 - Maximum amount for 2025-2026 is \$7,395

- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
 - Undergraduate student with exceptional financial need
 - Pell Grant recipients receive priority
 - Up to \$4,000

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

- Federal Work Study Program
 - Full-time or part-time undergraduate or graduate student
 - Earn at least minimum wage
 - On-campus positions
 - Campus tour guide
 - Library
 - Sporting events
 - Office assistant



FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

- Direct Subsidized Loan
- Direct Unsubsidized Loan
- Federal PLUS Loan
for parents of dependent undergraduate students
- Grad PLUS Loan
for graduate and professional students



DIRECT SUBSIDIZED LOAN

Direct Subsidized Loan

- Available to undergraduate students with financial need
- Interest is paid by the government while enrolled (at least half time)
- Amount determined by institution and based on COA, financial need, other aid and loan limits
- Current interest rate 6.39% (undergraduate)

DIRECT UNSUBSIDIZED LOAN

Direct Unsubsidized Loan

- Available to undergraduate/graduate students
- Institution determines the amount based on COA, other financial aid awarded, and loan limits
- Student responsible for paying the interest
Can choose to defer interest while enrolled at least half time, but interest will be added to the principal amount of loan
- Current interest rate 6.39% (undergraduate)
- Current interest rate 7.94% (graduate/professional)

DIRECT PLUS LOAN

- Parent PLUS loan for a parent of dependent
 - Only one parent will be the borrower
 - Can have more than one loan for additional dependent student
 - Approval based on credit history
 - Maximum amount is COA minus any other financial aid awarded
 - Current interest rate is 8.94%
- Grad PLUS loan for graduate or professional student

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

FEDERAL LOAN PROGRAM LIMITS

2026 - 2027 Academic Year

Initial Loan Amount for dependent students whose parents are eligible for a PLUS Loan	Base	Additional Unsubsidized	Annual Maximum Amount
Freshmen	\$3,500	\$2,000	\$5,500
Sophomore	\$4,500	\$2,000	\$6,500
Junior/Senior	\$5,500	\$2,000	\$7,500

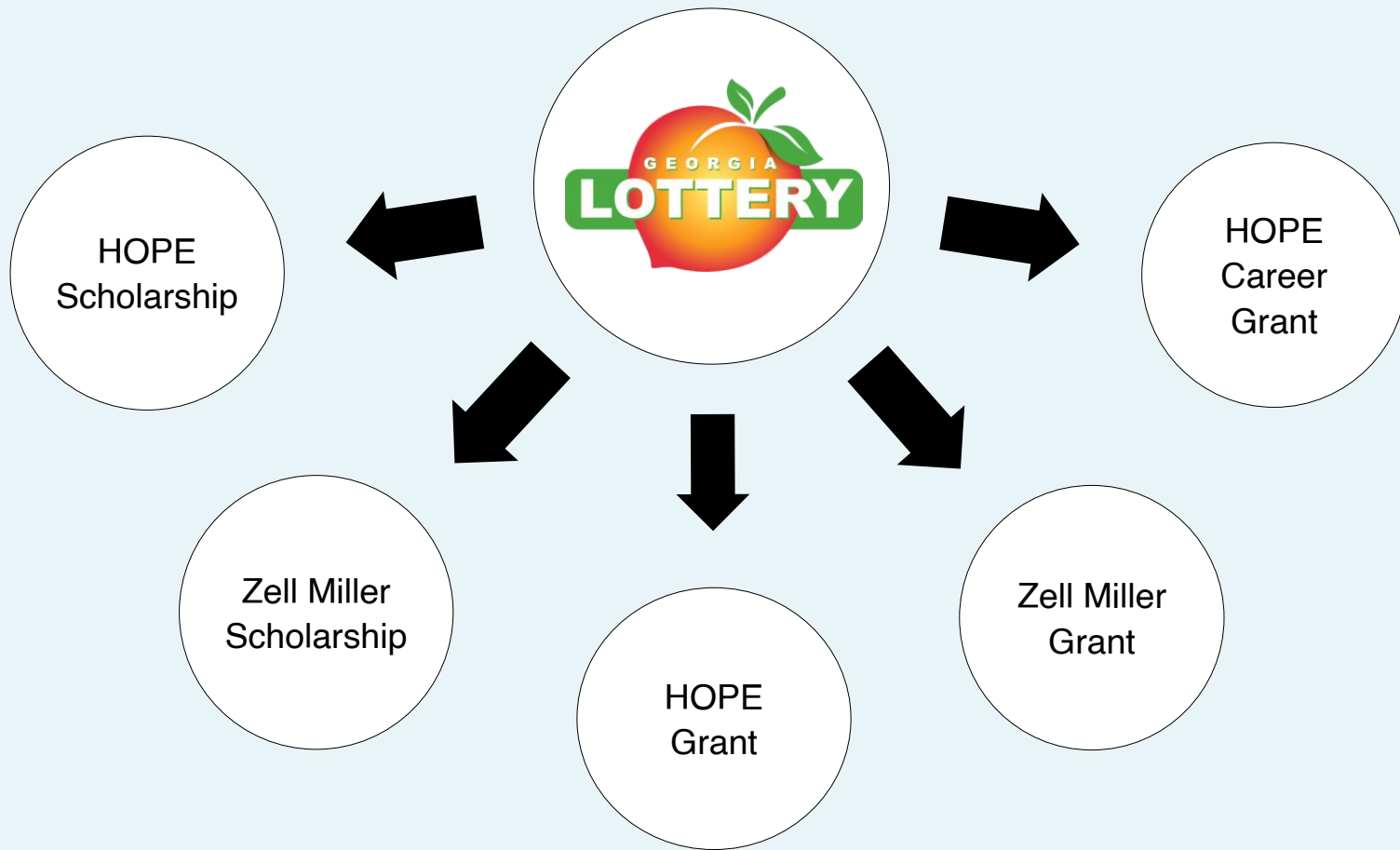
Independent Students and Dependent Students whose Parents were Denied a PLUS Loan	Base	Additional Unsubsidized	Annual Maximum Amount
Freshmen	\$3,500	\$6,000	\$9,500
Sophomore	\$4,500	\$6,000	\$10,500
Junior/Senior	\$5,500	\$7,000	\$12,500

HOPE Program

Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally Program



Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally Program



HOPE PROGRAM

BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Student must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Be a Georgia resident (as determined by College/University)
- Be working towards the first undergraduate program
- Be in Good academic standing (SAP)
- Attend a HOPE eligible institution



ATTENTION MALE STUDENTS: Georgia state law requires Selective Service registration for males (18+ years old) to qualify for state aid programs.



HOPE PROGRAM

BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

PUBLIC

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
Albany State University
Atlanta Metropolitan State College
Augusta University
Clayton State University
College of Coastal Georgia
Columbus State University
Dalton State College
East Georgia State College
Fort Valley State University
Georgia College & State University
Georgia Gwinnett College
Georgia Highlands College
Georgia Institute of Technology
Georgia Southern University
Georgia Southwestern State University
Georgia State University
Gordon State College
Kennesaw State University
Middle Georgia State University
Savannah State University
University of Georgia
University of North Georgia
University of West Georgia
Valdosta State University

TECHNICAL

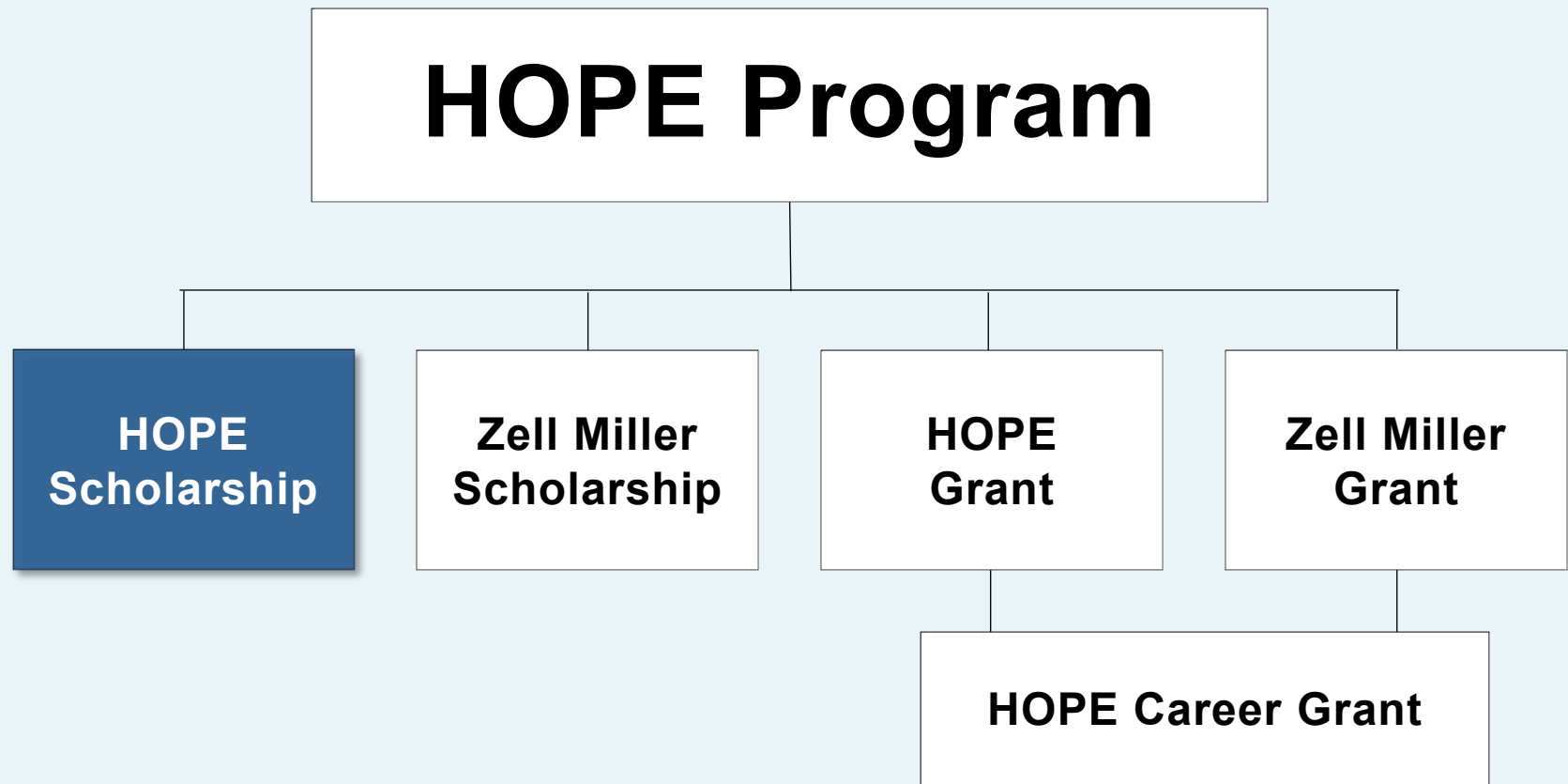
Albany Technical College
Athens Technical College
Atlanta Technical College
Augusta Technical College
Central Georgia Technical College
Chattahoochee Technical College
Coastal Pines Technical College
Columbus Technical College
Georgia Northwestern Technical College
Georgia Piedmont Technical College
Gwinnett Technical College
Lanier Technical College
North Georgia Technical College
Oconee Fall Line Technical College
Ogeechee Technical College
Savannah Technical College
South Georgia Technical College
Southeastern Technical College
Southern Crescent Technical College
Southern Regional Technical College
West Georgia Technical College
Wiregrass Georgia Technical College

PRIVATE

Agnes Scott College
American InterContinental University
Andrew College
Berry College
Brenau University
Brewton-Parker Christian University
Clark Atlanta University
Covenant College
DeVry University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Emmanuel University
Emory University
Georgia Military College
LaGrange College
Life University
Luther Rice College & Seminary*
Mercer University
Morehouse College
Oglethorpe University
Paine College
Piedmont University
Point University
Reinhardt University
Saint Leo University
Savannah College of Art & Design
Shorter University
South College
South University
Spelman College
Thomas University
Toccoa Falls College
Truett McConnell University
Wesleyan College
Young Harris College

Visit GAfutures.org to view the complete list.

HOPE SCHOLARSHIP



HOPE SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Student must:

- Be enrolled in a degree program
- Graduate with a 3.0 high school HOPE GPA
 - High school HOPE GPA is different from cumulative high school GPA
 - High school HOPE GPA is calculated from grades in core curriculum courses 9th – 12th grade
 - After high school graduation, HOPE Scholarship may also be earned in college
- Complete four (4) academically rigorous course credits during high school

ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS COURSES

Courses must be on the Academic Rigor Course List.

This includes:

- Advanced Placement (AP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Dual Enrollment in degree level core subjects
- Advanced math
- Advanced science
- Foreign language II or higher



MY HIGH SCHOOL HOPE GPA

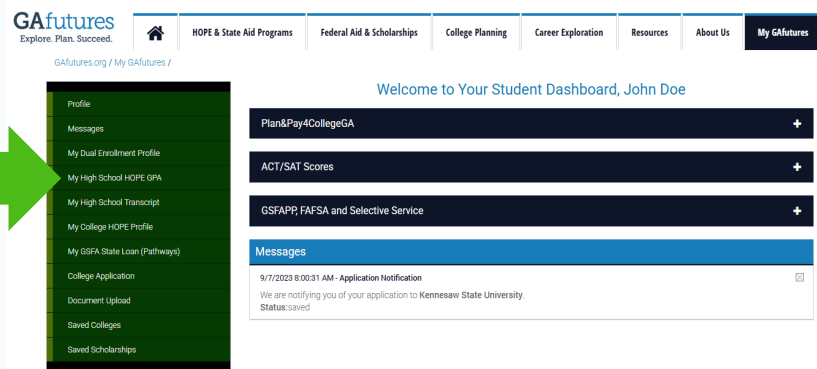
HOPE GPA:

- ONLY calculated by GSFC
- Only core courses from 9th through 12th grade
- AP, IB, and Dual Enrollment college level courses weighted .5 for all grades except for A and F
- Transcripts are uploaded by the high school
- 4 academically rigorous course credits

HOPE PROGRAM

MY HIGH SCHOOL HOPE GPA

Log in to GAfutures.org
account to access your
HOPE GPA.



The HOPE GPA Calculation is used for HOPE Scholarship and Zell Miller Scholarship eligibility upon graduating high school.

Student Information

Report Type: Preliminary

Name:

SSN: XXX-XX-

Student ID:

As of the most recent transcript data received at GSFC:

Based on your preliminary GPA calculation, you may be eligible for the HOPE Scholarship or Zell Miller Scholarship. A final GPA will be calculated when the high school submits your final transcript. If you have a minimum 3.7

Factors Determining Your Scholarship Eligibility

The following information is based on the most recent transcript record provided by your high school.

HOPE Calculated GPA: **3.789**

Date High School

Academic Rigor Credits earned (4 credits are required by High School Graduation): **4**

Valedictorian: No

Salutatorian: No

To qualify for the Zell Miller Scholarship, acceptable SAT or ACT scores must have been earned prior to high school graduation and submitted to GSFC. To be eligible you must have at least a 26 composite score on the ACT or have at least a 1200 for Math and Reading on the SAT on one date.

Standardized test score report(s) received:

Date:	Type:	Score:
No test scores currently available.		

Contact your high school with questions about your transcript record or grades and courses.

Your chosen college or university will determine final eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship or Zell Miller Scholarship.

[View Your Detailed GPA Report](#)

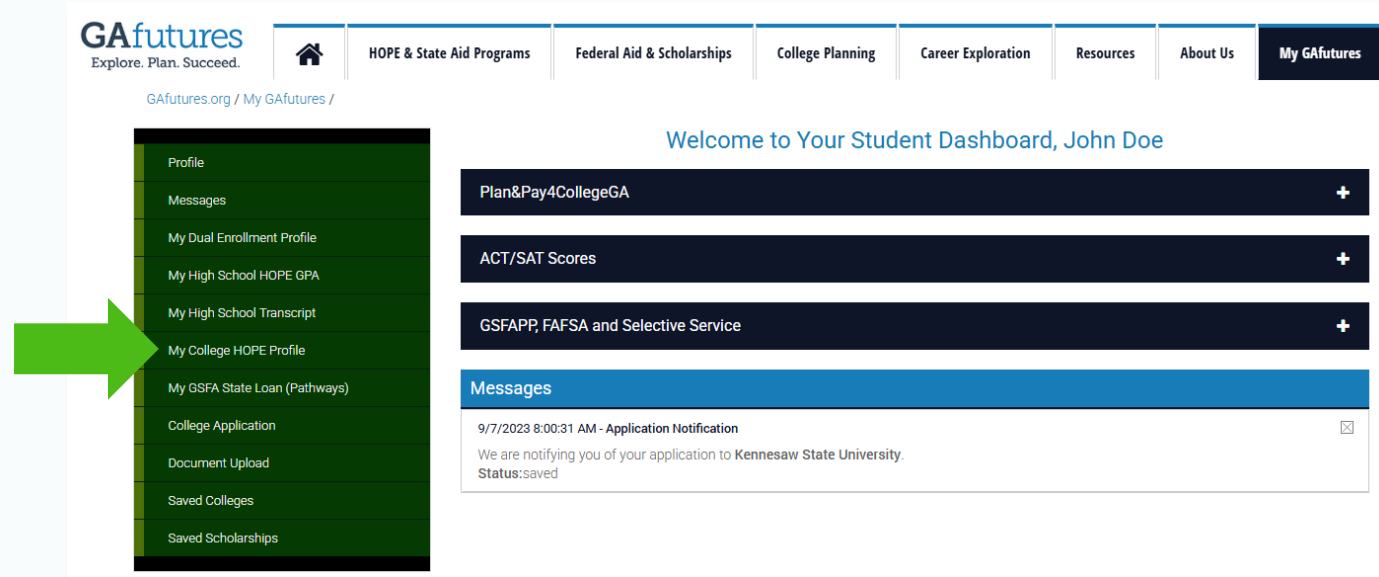
COLLEGE HOPE GPA

Maintain 3.0 college HOPE GPA at all checkpoints:

- End of every Spring semester/quarter
- 30/45 attempted semester/quarter hours
- 60/90 attempted semester/quarter hours
- 90/135 attempted semester/quarter hours
- Three-term Checkpoint, if enrolled less than full-time for first three semesters/quarters

COLLEGE HOPE GPA

College students can check their college HOPE GPA by accessing their GAfutures account.



COLLEGE HOPE GPA

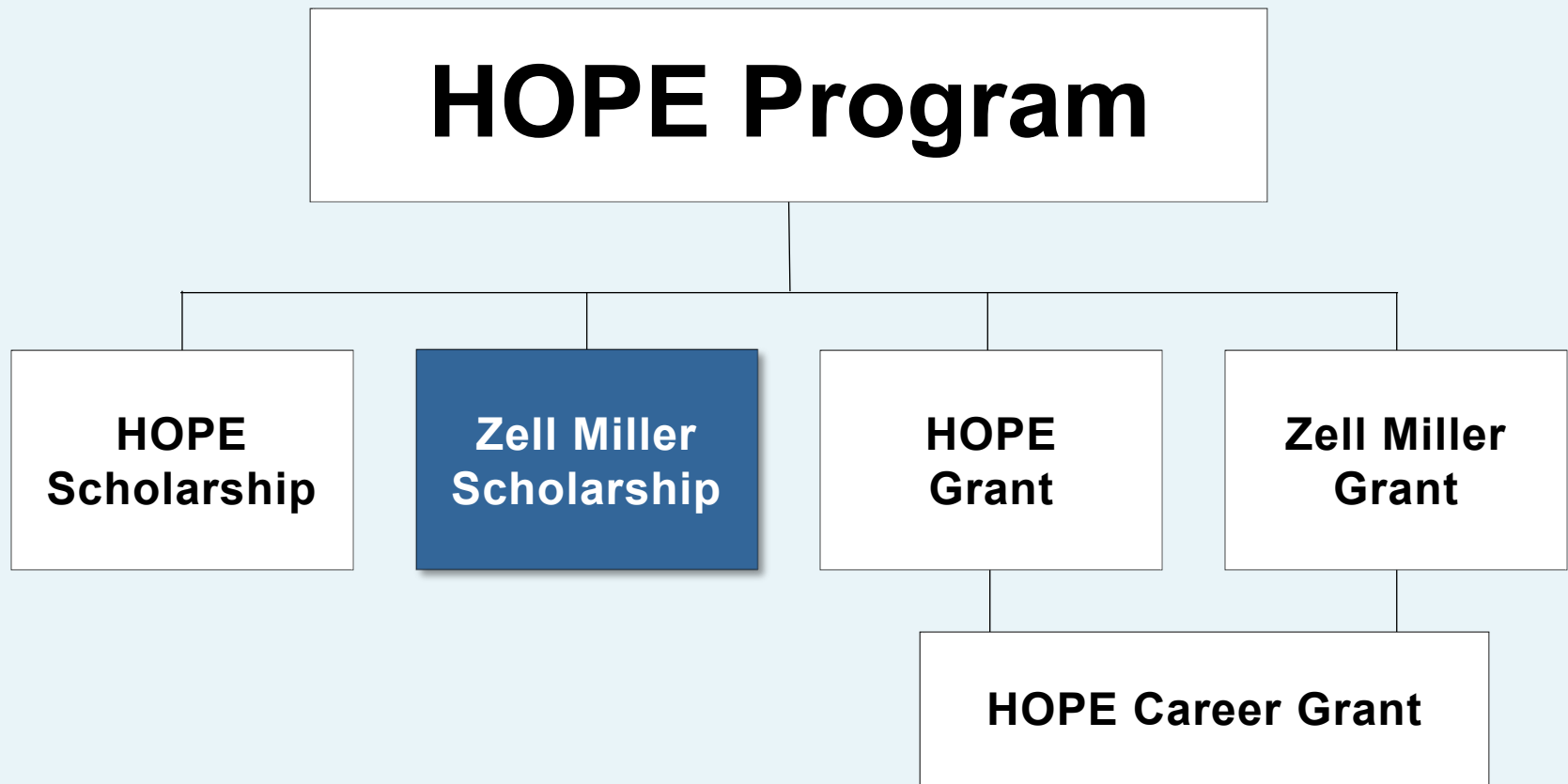
College HOPE GPA:

- ONLY calculated by GSFC
- Calculated each semester/quarter
- STEM courses are weighted .5 for all grades except an A and F
- High school Dual Enrollment courses are not included

HOPE SCHOLARSHIP KEY NOTES

- Regain HOPE Scholarship eligibility one time, only at an attempted hours checkpoint
- Dual Enrollment courses are not counted towards:
 - College HOPE GPA
 - Attempted HOPE hours
- HOPE Scholarship can be earned while attending an eligible institution

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP



ZELL MILLER SCHOLRSHIP

Rigor Requirements and one of the following:

Designated valedictorian or
salutatorian

AND

Meet minimum HOPE
eligibility requirements



Minimum 3.7 high school HOPE
GPA, as calculated by GSFC, in
core curriculum courses

AND

1200 SAT total test score

OR

25 ACT composite score for
students graduating after
December 31, 2023

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP

Maintain 3.3 college HOPE GPA at all checkpoints:

- End of every Spring semester/quarter
- 30/45 attempted semester/quarter hours
- 60/90 attempted semester/quarter hours
- 90/135 attempted semester/quarter hours
- Three-term Checkpoint, if enrolled less than full-time for first three semesters/quarters

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP KEY NOTES

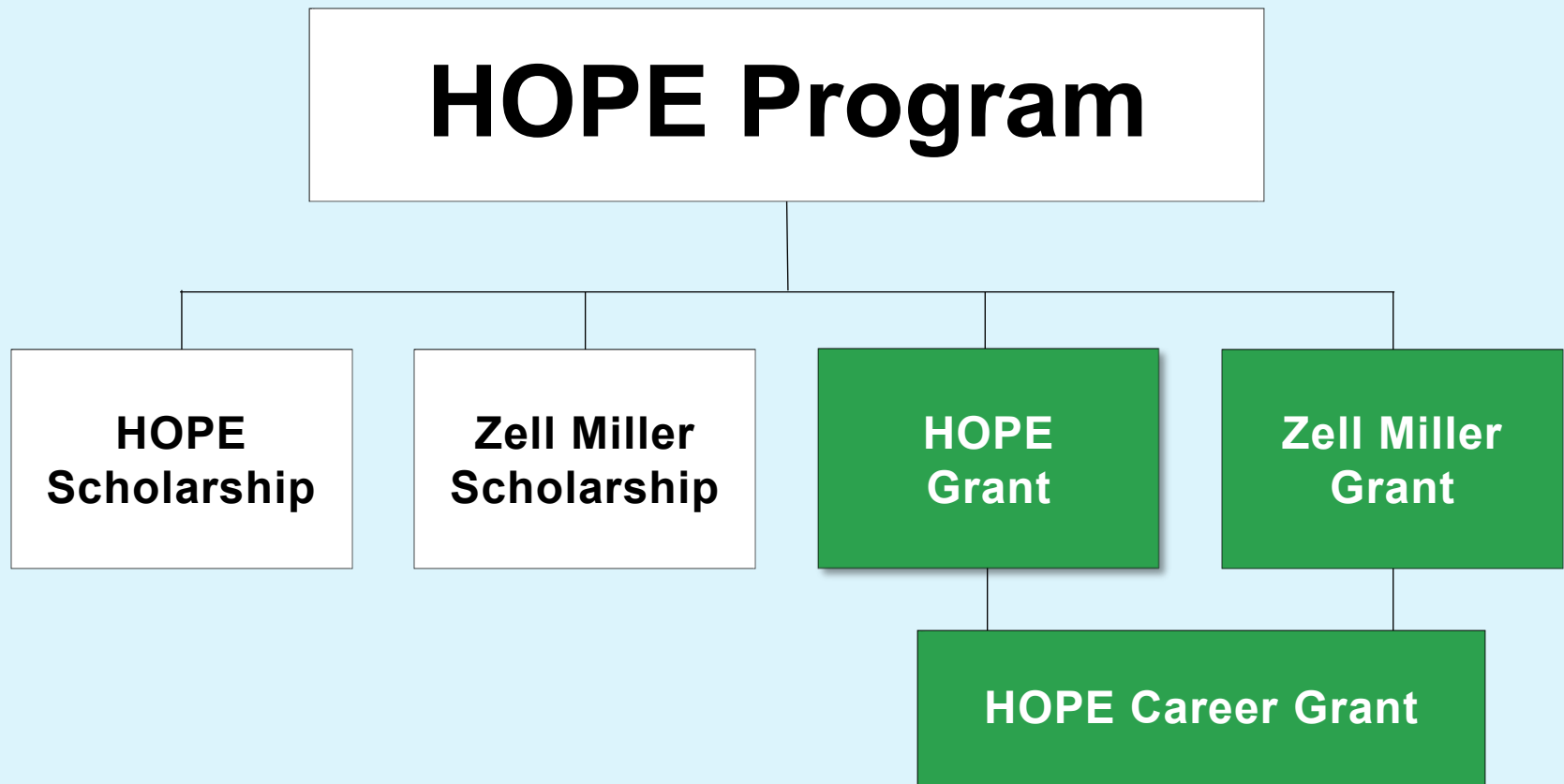
- Regain Zell Miller eligibility one time only at an attempted hours checkpoint
- Dual Enrollment classes are not counted towards:
 - College HOPE GPA
 - Attempted HOPE hours
- Zell Miller Scholarship can be only earned at high school graduation
- Submit test scores to GSFC
 - SAT code 0472, ACT code 2225
 - May also be submitted via student document upload on GAfutures.org

HOPE PROGRAM

HOPE VS ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP

	HOPE Scholarship	Zell Miller Scholarship
High School HOPE GPA	3.0	3.7
Rigor credits	4	4
SAT Score	N/A	1200
ACT Score	N/A	25

HOPE PROGRAM GRANTS



HOPE GRANT BASIC ELIGIBILITY

- Enrolled in certificate or diploma program
- High school diploma/GED not required
- No high school GPA and/or test scores required

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Types of Programs

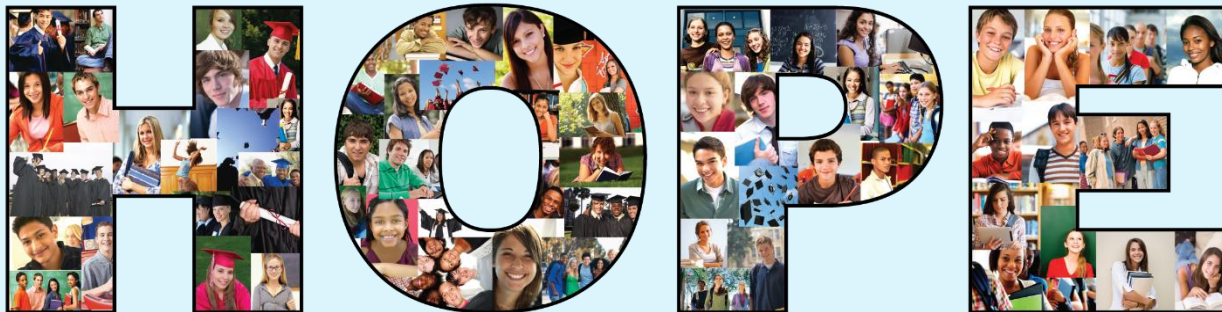
Diploma programs are designed to be completed in about 1 to 2 years.

Certificate programs are designed to be completed in a shorter time frame compared to degree programs. They can range from a few months to a year.



HOPE GRANT BASIC ELIGIBILITY

- Maintain 2.0 college cumulative GPA at the following checkpoints:
 - 30 paid semester credit hours
 - 60 paid semester credit hours
- Maximum 63 paid semester hours



HOPE PROGRAM

AWARD AMOUNTS

	HOPE Scholarship	Zell Miller Scholarship
Public Institutions	portion of tuition	full standard tuition
Private Institutions (full-time)	\$2,496 per semester (fall, spring, summer) \$1,664 per quarter (fall, winter, spring, summer)	\$2,985 per semester (fall, spring, summer) \$2,034 per quarter (fall, winter, spring, summer)

	HOPE Grant	Zell Miller Grant
Public Institutions	portion of tuition	full standard tuition

HOPE CAREER GRANT BASIC ELIGIBILITY

The HOPE Career Grant is available to HOPE Grant-qualified students who enroll in select majors specifically aligned with industries in which there are more jobs available in Georgia than there are skilled workers to fill them.

- Automotive
- Aviation
- Certified Engineer Technician
- Commercial Truck Driving
- Computer Programming
- Computer Technology
- Construction
- Diesel Equipment Technology
- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Electrical Line Worker
- Health Sciences
- Industrial Maintenance Technology
- Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
- Logistics
- Movie Production and Set Design
- Practical Nursing
- Precision Manufacturing
- Welding and Joining Technology

OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

- **Georgia National Guard Service Cancelable Loan**
Tuition assistance to eligible members of the Georgia National Guard for undergraduate and graduate programs. Member agrees to service repayment.
- **Public Safety Memorial Grant**
Assistance to dependent children of Georgia public safety officers permanently disabled or killed in the line of duty
- **Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG)**
Grant for Georgia residents enrolled full-time at an eligible private college or university

OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

- Georgia Military College State Service Scholarship
- HERO Scholarship
- REACH Scholarship (scholars selected during middle school)
- Georgia College Completion Grant (GCCG)
- Inclusive Postsecondary Education Grant
- University of North Georgia Military Scholarship
- University of North Georgia ROTC Grant for Future Officers

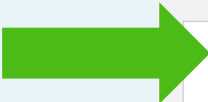
GEORGIA STUDENT FINANCE COMMISSION

APPLY FOR STATE PROGRAMS

HOPE & State Aid Programs

[GAfutures.org / HOPE & State Aid Programs](#)

HOPE & STATE AID PROGRAMS



State Aid Applications

Learn how to properly apply for state financial aid programs administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

HOPE & Zell Miller Scholarships

Georgia's HOPE Program provides merit-based scholarships for eligible in-state postsecondary institutions.

HOPE & Zell Miller Grants

The HOPE and Zell Miller Grants provide financial assistance for college that does not have to be paid back.

State Loans

GSFC also administers State Loan programs for Georgia residents pursuing specific professional careers or participating in state military programs.

State Scholarships and Grants

Learn about other Georgia scholarship and grant programs including Dual Enrollment and the Public Safety Memorial Grant.

State Military Programs

Trending

Shortcuts

GEORGIA MATCH

GSFAPP

2025-2026 Award Amounts

Promise Scholarship

Your HOPE GPA

College Money Matters

Learnings & Earnings

Cost of Attendance

Spending Plan

Paying for College

Debit to Salary Ratio

College Money Matters can help you get financially fit before, during and after college.

Learn more

Credit Transfer Tool

EMBARK Georgia

The Application Process

Federal and State Aid



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

THE GEORGIA STUDENT FINANCE APPLICATION (GSFAPP)

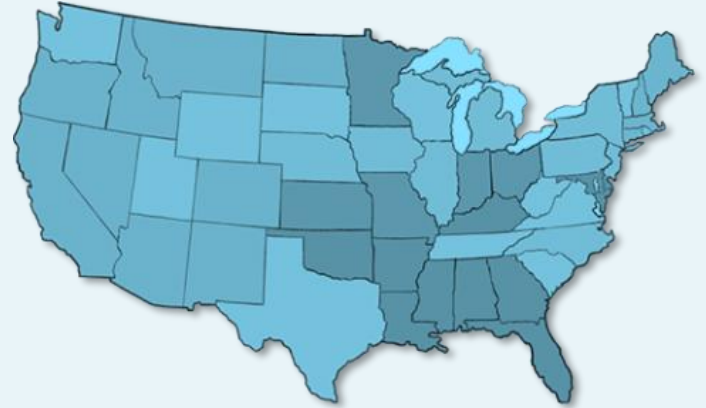
- Determines eligibility for state aid **only**
- One-time application
- GAfutures account



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)

- Renew annually
- Determines eligibility for federal and state aid
- List up to 20 institutions



Completing the FAFSA

FAFSA stands for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is a form that students in the United States complete to determine their eligibility for financial aid.



COMPLETING THE FAFSA

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID

- Application is free
- Begin by creating a studentaid.gov account
 - Used to sign your FAFSA
 - If dependent student, parent will also need a studentaid.gov account
- Find a FAFSA Completion event for help
 - Check with your high school counselor for financial aid nights or FAFSA workshops
 - Visit GAfutures.org for events nearby



DO NOT PAY ANYONE TO COMPLETE THE FAFSA!

COMPLETING THE FAFSA

WWW.FAFSA.GOV

FederalStudentAid
AN OFFICE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FAFSA® Form ▾

Grants and Loans ▾

Loan Repayment ▾

Loan Forgiveness ▾

  BILL ▾



Get Money To Help Pay for School

Use the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form to apply for financial aid for college, career school, or graduate school.

Start a 2026–27 FAFSA® Form
[Start New Form](#)

Edit a 2026–27 FAFSA® Form
[Edit Existing Forms](#)

Accept an Invitation for a 2026–27 FAFSA® Form
[Accept an Invitation](#)



Need the 2025–26 FAFSA Form?

[Start New Form](#) | [Edit Existing Forms or Accept an Invitation](#)

Check FAFSA® Deadlines for the State You Live in

Some states and schools use information from the FAFSA® form to determine your eligibility for their grants, scholarships, and loans. Check your state's deadlines here!

Missing a state deadline doesn't impact your eligibility for federal student aid, so fill out your FAFSA form even if your state deadline has passed.

School Year

▾

State of Residence

▾

[Find Deadlines](#)
[View All FAFSA Deadlines](#)

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Finance Commission

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COMPLETING THE FAFSA

WHICH FAFSA® FORM DO I COMPLETE?

2025 – 2026 FAFSA

IF ATTENDING:

Fall 2025

Spring 2026

Summer 2026

Use 2023 tax returns

Available:

December 2024

2026 - 2027 FAFSA

IF ATTENDING:

Fall 2026

Spring 2027

Summer 2027

Use 2024 tax returns

Available:

October 2025



Comparing Financial Aid Packages

A financial aid package is the total amount of financial assistance offered to a student to help cover the costs of their education.



COMPARING FINANCIAL AID PACKAGES

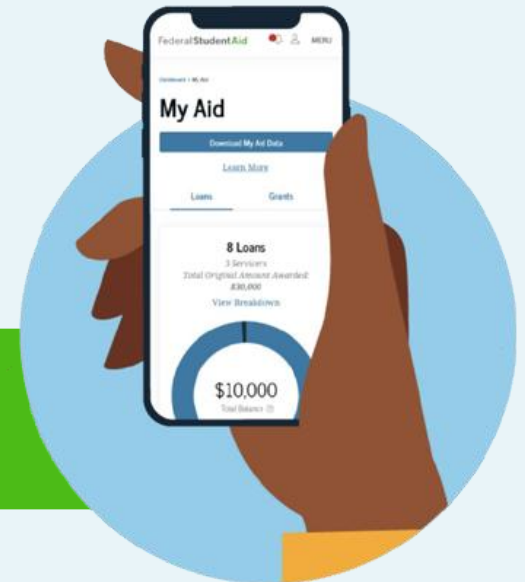
RECEIVING A FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTER

To receive a Financial Aid Package, a student must:

- List the institution on the FAFSA
- Complete verification process, if selected
- Apply for admission
- At some institutions, be accepted



Each institution is different. For more information, check with your college's Financial Aid Office.



FINANCIAL AID AWARD OFFERS

Financial aid awards will all have basically the same information included:

Cost to attend the
institution for the year

Amount of financial aid
the institution is providing

Amount family is
expected to contribute

Additional need to be
funded through other
sources

COMPARING FINANCIAL AID PACKAGES

COMPARE AWARD OFFERS



SCHOLAR UNIVERSITY

Housing: On Campus	Cost of Attendance (COA)	\$29,086
	Student Aid Index (SAI)	- 1,000
Residency: In-State	Estimated Financial Need	\$28,086

Type of Aid	Fall	Spring	Total
Pell Grant	\$3,698	\$3,697	\$7,395
HOPE Scholarship	\$3,840	\$3,840	\$7,680
Band Scholarship	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Volunteer Organization	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Something Church	\$200	\$200	\$400
Subsidized Loan	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$3,500
Unsubsidized Loan	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Total for Academic Year			\$24,975



HALLMARK COLLEGE

Housing: On Campus	Cost of Attendance (COA)	\$20,185
	Student Aid Index (SAI)	- 1,000
Residency: In-State	Estimated Financial Need	\$19,185

Type of Aid	Fall	Spring	Total
Pell Grant	\$3,698	\$3,697	\$7,395
FSEOG	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
HOPE Scholarship	\$1,335	\$1,335	\$2,670
Volunteer Organization	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Something Church	\$200	\$200	\$400
Subsidized Loan	\$1,295	\$1,295	\$2,590
Unsubsidized Loan	\$565	\$565	\$1,130
Total for Academic Year			\$20,185

THE BEST ORDER TO ACCEPT AID

1

Scholarship and Grants

(e.g., money that you
don't have to pay
back!)

Understand all the
conditions.

Make sure it's truly free.

2

Earned money

(e.g., Work Study)

Does not have to be paid
back.

Money is paid through
paycheck based on hours
worked.

Considers class schedule
and study time.

3

Borrowed money

(e.g., federal student
loans, state
government loans,
college loans, private
loans)

Must be paid back with
interest.
Understand all conditions.

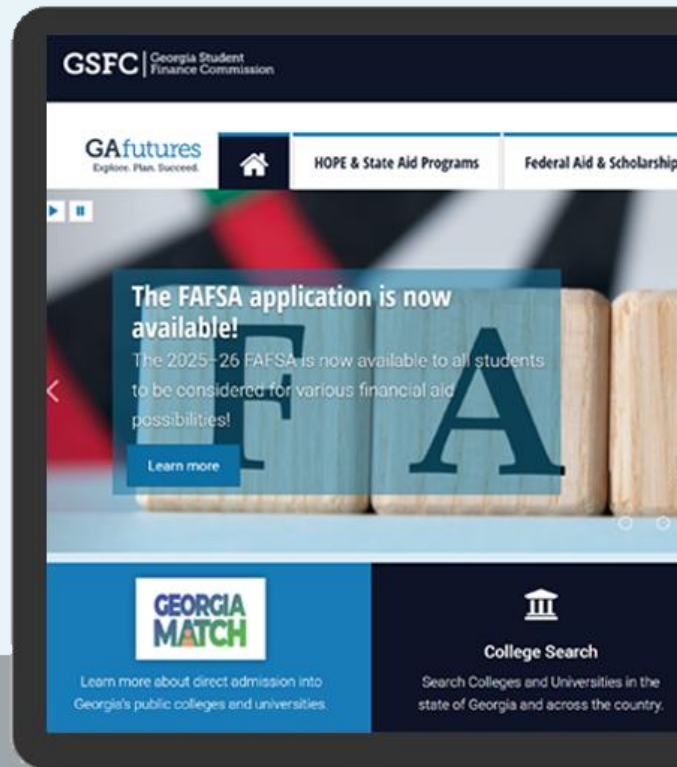
Resources

Learn about financial aid resources to help pay for college.



GAfutures.org

Explore. Plan. Succeed.



COLLEGE SEARCH TOOL

Search for colleges and universities in Georgia and across the country, using attributes such as public/private, size of school, programs offered.



COLLEGE MONEY MATTERS

Financial literacy education so you are better equipped to make smart financial choices in relation to planning, applying, and paying for college.





GEORGIA MATCH identifies up to 45 Georgia public colleges and universities that are an academic match based on a high school senior's HOPE GPA.

Request Info

Asks for more information to be sent to the student about that institution. (pamphlets, brochures, emails).

Claim Your Spot

Notifies the college of the student's intent to begin the admission process for next Fall.

The letter will list all USG and TCSG institutions for which the student meets preliminary academic eligibility for admission (based on their calculated HOPE GPA GSFC has on record at the time of the letter).

Letters are mailed by the end of October so that students can take advantage of November's Apply to College Month.

LEARN MORE



Federal Student Aid

An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

www.studentaid.gov

Federal Student Aid offers resources and tools to help students manage their financial aid, including loan repayment options and the FAFSA application.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID ESTIMATOR

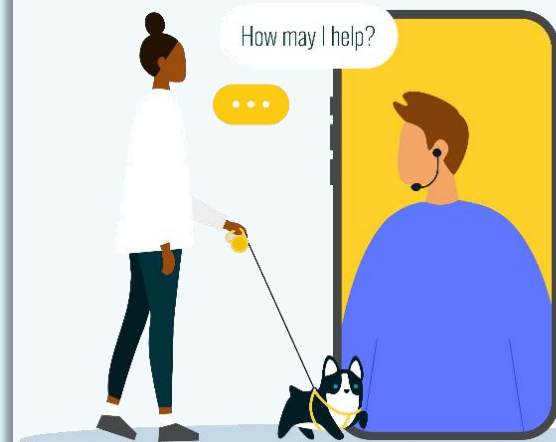
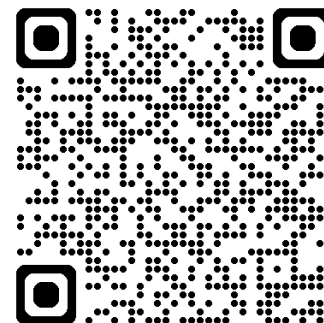
Estimate types of federal student aid you may be eligible for before you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) Form.

LOAN SIMULATOR

Loan Simulator helps you estimate monthly student loan payments and choose a loan repayment option that best meets your needs and goals.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID
INFORMATION CENTER:

1-800-433-3243



RESOURCES

NEXT STEPS

- Create an account at **GAfutures.org**
- Check your HOPE GPA to see if you are on track to be eligible for the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship

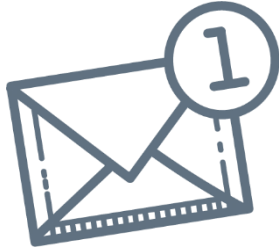
SENIORS:

- Complete GSFAPP on GAfutures.org today!
- GA MATCH letters arrive in October
- Free Apply To College Month is November and March!
- Complete the FAFSA on Studentaid.gov – available on October 1st!



RESOURCES

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