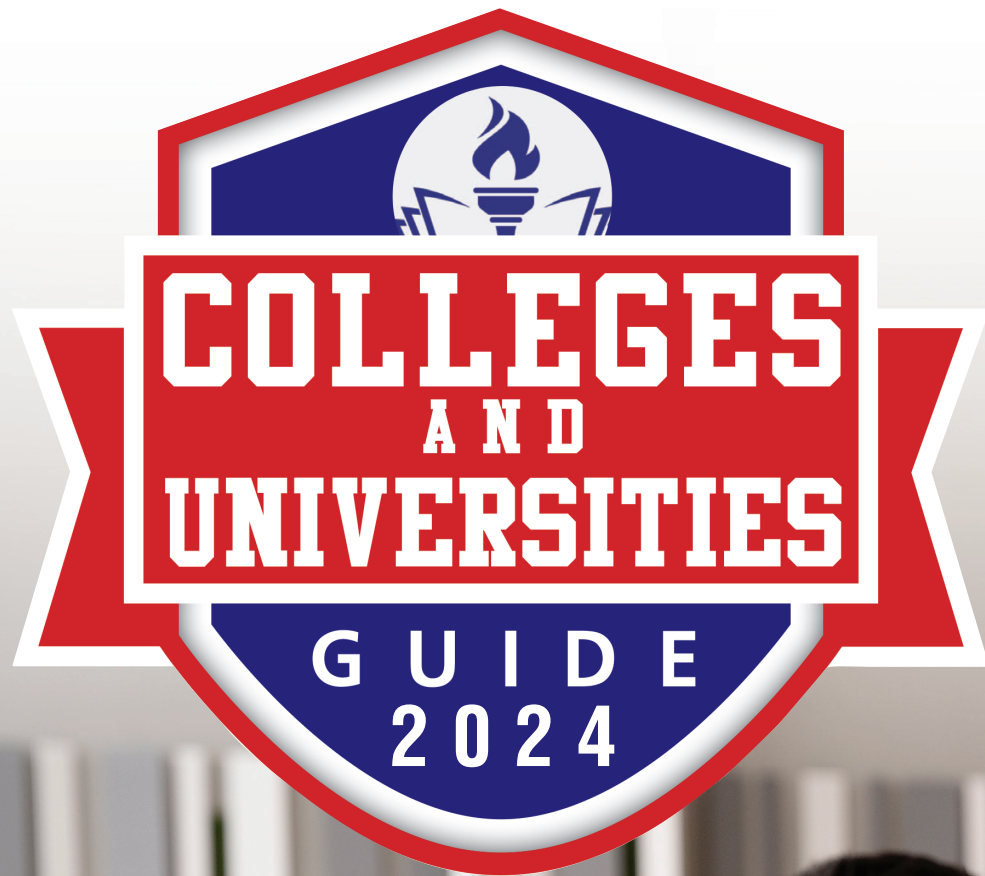
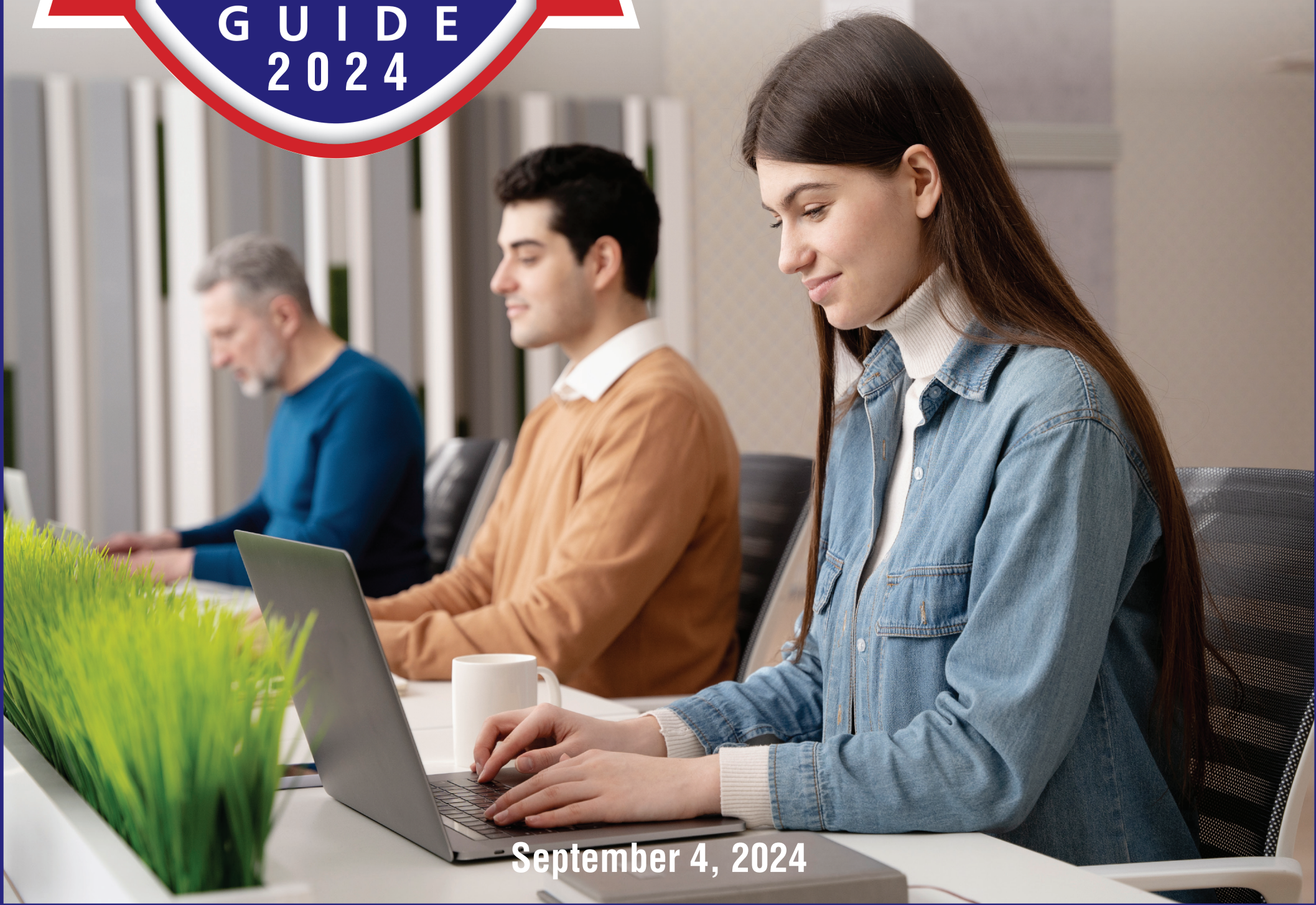




A PUBLICATION OF



September 4, 2024



# Tennessee Reconnect: Free Tuition for Adult Learners

For many adults, debt concerns often stand as a barrier to pursuing higher education.

Fortunately, Tennessee offers a solution: Tennessee Reconnect. This program allows eligible Tennesseans aged 23 and older to attend college tuition-free.

The scholarship is available for eligible adults pursuing an associate degree or technical certificate at a Tennessee community college or technical college.

“In today’s competitive job market, having a degree or credential is more important than ever. It can lead to higher wages and open doors to new career opportunities,” said Jim Henrichs, a Northeast State Community College recruiter. “With TN Reconnect, you can take that next step toward achieving your goals with less financial stress.”

The process to benefit

from Tennessee Reconnect is simple and consists of four easy steps:

1. Complete the TN Reconnect scholarship application at [www.tnreconnect.gov](http://www.tnreconnect.gov).

2. Apply to Northeast State Community College at [www.northeaststate.edu/apply](http://www.northeaststate.edu/apply).

3. File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov). Need help? Northeast State is here to assist.

4. Enroll in a degree or certificate program with at least part-time status (6 credit hours).

To qualify, individuals must have been a Tennessee resident for at least one year and not already hold an associate or bachelor’s degree. Current adult students at Northeast State who meet these qualifications are also eligible for the program.

“The demand for higher education is more urgent than ever,” Henrichs said. “By 2025, 55 percent of jobs in Tennessee will require a degree or credential. At Northeast State, we’re committed to removing the obstacles that keep adult learners from returning to college.”

Henrichs said the college provides personalized support for students. Each adult learner is paired with a dedicated success coach to help navigate scheduling, financial aid, and academics.

Investing in your education is also an investment in your family’s future. Research shows that one of the strongest predictors of a child’s attainment of a college degree is the educational attainment of their parents.

“Earning a degree is not just about improving your life—it’s about creating a lasting impact on the next

generation,” Henrichs said.

To maintain eligibility for Tennessee Reconnect, students must:

- Stay continuously enrolled, attending at least part-time (6 hours).
- Maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA throughout the academic year.
- Renew the FAFSA annually.

Tennessee Reconnect is a key component of the state’s Drive to 55 initiative, which aims to increase the percentage of Tennesseans with a post-secondary degree or certificate to 55 percent by 2025.

Henrichs noted that TN Reconnect would not cover the costs of some fees, textbooks, travel, and childcare.

For more information, visit [www.northeaststate.edu/reconnect](http://www.northeaststate.edu/reconnect) or email [tnreconnect@northeaststate.edu](mailto:tnreconnect@northeaststate.edu).



EARL NEIKIRK

## Consider these community college benefits

College is the next natural step for many students after they finish high school. The process of finding a school begins in junior year of high school, and students and their parents may visit many different colleges and universities throughout the next year. Even though the bulk of the focus might be on four-year schools, students who may not yet have everything all figured out should not overlook the many benefits of community colleges.

The United States Department of State’s Education USA says community colleges offer two-year programs that lead to the Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree. Some community colleges also have vocational programs.

Community colleges are a viable option for students



interested in continuing their education.

Undergraduate students studying at community colleges can earn academic credit that will eventually go toward a bachelor’s degree should they choose to continue schooling. The following are some of the benefits of community college.

- Flexible admissions

process: Community colleges do not have the same time restrictions and other requirements as schools offering four-year degrees. Interested parties may be able to register for classes at any time and not have to worry about being accepted or not.

- Part-time scheduling: Community colleges often offer part-time academic

coursework, which means students do not have to take a set number of credits each semester to remain enrolled. This allows students to attend college classes according to their own schedules and work at their own pace.

- More affordable tuition: Lower tuition is one of the major draws to

community colleges. The career planning resource Indeed says that many community colleges further discount their offerings to in-state students. This helps make post-secondary education much more affordable, particularly for those who are not sure about what they want to study.

- Relationships with four-year schools: A number of community colleges have partnerships with sister schools to facilitate the transfer of associate degree credits for a student working toward a four-year degree. Education USA says in this “2+2” process, a student can earn a bachelor’s degree with two years of community college, followed by two years of university study. Some community colleges also serve as satellite locations for other schools, meaning

one can take classes for a four-year school right on the community college campus if the location is more convenient.

- Smaller class sizes: Many community colleges have smaller class sizes that make it easier for students to adjust to the pace of college life.

- Proximity to home: As the name implies, community college is a school that serves a particular community. That means it is likely close to home for the majority of students. Students who may not be willing or able to go away to school may appreciate the convenience and proximity of a community college.

Community college is an option that students may want to explore as they pursue post-secondary education.



## Popular majors among modern college students

College students' choice of majors can set them on a path toward rewarding and lucrative careers. Though a career may not be foremost on the minds of students as they graduate high school and inch closer to the start of college, choice of major merits consideration, even among students who have yet to receive their high school diplomas.

Many college students enroll in school as undeclared, while others may pick a major without realizing what it requires and which career path it might set them on. That might explain why it's so common for college students to switch majors. Though data indicating how many students switch majors is somewhat dated, one study from the U.S. Department of Education indicated about one in five students changed their majors at least once while pursuing a bachelor's degree. With that in mind,

students may want to consider some popular majors as they try to determine which path to take in college. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than half of the 2.1 million bachelor's degrees awarded at United States colleges and universities in the 2020-21 school year were concentrated in six fields of study. In addition, the NCES reports that the following are the six most popular degrees from that academic year.

1. Business: Almost one in five bachelor's degrees awarded in 2020-21 were in the field of business.

2. Health professions: This field accounted for 13 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded in 2020-21. Common specializations include health sciences, health care administration, nursing, and sports medicine.

3. Social sciences and history: NCES data indicates nearly one in 10 students

majored in a social science in 2020-21. This includes specializations such as history, political science and sociology.

4. Engineering: Demand for engineers is expected to rise in the coming decades, and that should bode well for the 126,000 students who earned bachelor's degrees in engineering in 2020-21.

5. Biological and biomedical sciences: Bachelor's degrees awarded in biological and biomedical sciences increased by 46 percent between the 2010-11 and 2020-21 school years.

6. Psychology: NCES data indicates degrees in psychology accounted for 6 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded in 2020-21.

Choice of major is a significant decision for college students. Students are urged to discuss potential majors with their parents as they seek to lay the foundation for their professional futures.



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# Variables to consider when deciding where to apply for college

Students' college decisions are among the most significant choices they will make over the course of their lifetimes. Many students lay the foundations for rewarding careers during college, and the friendships formed during university years often last a lifetime.

Students cannot utilize a magic formula to ensure they choose the right college or university.

However, on-campus visits and discussions with current and former students can provide invaluable insight into what life is like at a given college or university. In addition, students and their families can consider a host of variables as they try to decide where to apply for college.

· **Cost:** The high cost of college is well documented, but prices vary significantly. According to



the Trends in College Pricing 2023 report from the College Board, the average cost of tuition and fees at a public, four-year, in-state school was \$11,260 in the 2022-23 school year. The average cost of tuition and fees and a private, nonprofit, four-year

school during that same academic year was \$41,540. That's a price difference of more than \$30,000 annually. Many students borrow money to finance their college educations, and high schoolers must consider the amount of debt

they're willing to take on when making this pivotal life decision.

· **Campus life:** The atmosphere on and around campus is another variable to consider when deciding where to apply to college. College is the first taste of independence many young people experience. Though students are often excited by that prospect, it's important to recognize that the atmosphere on campus will go a long way toward determining how enjoyable life at a given college or university may be. For example, students who are looking forward to living on campus may not find that transition as enjoyable if a school has more commuter students than resident students. In addition, some students may prefer an insulated college environment, while others may be looking for oppor-

tunities to engage in city life that goes beyond campus activities. Students can identify what they want out of campus life and then choose schools based on how closely their environments align with those priorities.

· **Curriculum:** Curriculum merits ample consideration, even among students who are uncertain about what they want to study. For those who know what they want to study, arrange to speak with department faculty and current students when visiting the campus to identify if a given program aligns with your academic interests. Curriculums are designed differently at each university, so programs under the same major can be vastly different from one school to the next. Students who are not sure

what they want to study can look for colleges and universities that offer a wide range of majors, minors and concentrations.

· **Reputation:** A school's reputation is another factor that merits consideration. Reputation is a somewhat fluid variable, and it's not always the best barometer to use when assessing a college or university. However, if a school has an especially strong reputation among businesses and professionals in the field a student hopes to enter, then this can be a crucial variable when deciding where to apply.

These are just a handful of the variables students and their families can consider as they try to decide where young men and women will end up during the next phase of their academic journeys.

## Master the college essay

Aspiring college students can expect to do a lot of writing as they travel down the path to college admissions. Many schools require applicants to submit an essay or personal statement. Some schools may have an entire list of separate writing prompts that need to be answered. For example, Princeton University requires five supplemental pieces of writing: one of up to 500 words, one that is up to 250 words, and three short responses of up to 50 words, in addition to an essay that is a mandatory component of the standard application. Princeton also requires applicants submit a graded written paper.

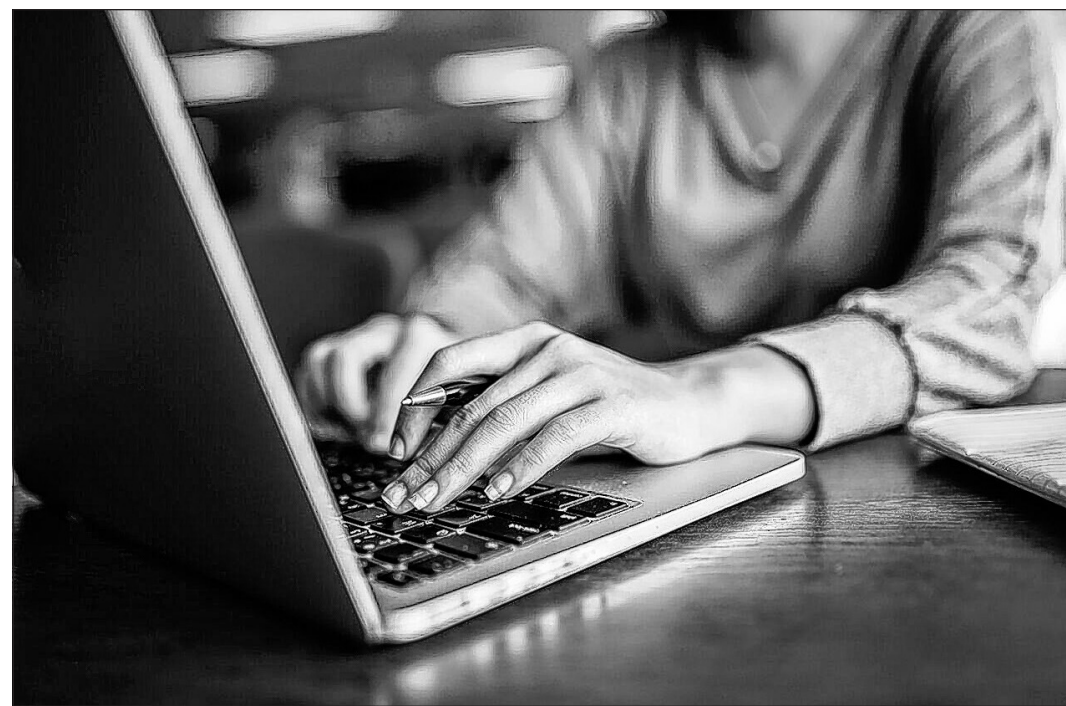
It is never too early for high school students to begin thinking about the college essay experience and start formulating ideas about topics they would like to cover. A vast array of schools utilize the

Common Application to receive student applications. The Common Application offers a full set of essay prompts (which remained unchanged for the 2023-2024 academic year) to spark thought. An example of one prompt was: "Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?" Students also have the option to share an essay of their choice.

Essay writing is important. The essay should be original and genuine, and applicants can use it to share their voice. Some additional essay-writing tips also can help students stand out.

· **Choose a topic that is consistent with your authentic self.** Select a topic that is consequential and shares much about who you are as a person.

· **Avoid line after line that**



seems pulled out of a thesaurus. Rather, choose words you might use in general conversation.

· **Write about something that is important to you that had a meaningful**

impact on your life.

· **Making an admissions officer laugh is a rare feat, and it's generally best to avoid using one-liners or clichés when writing an admissions essay.** However,

those who feel that levity is needed and humor indicates who they are as a person can weave it in carefully.

· **The essay is not a place to list your awards and**

accomplishments, particularly if they are mentioned elsewhere on the application.

· **Write a strong opening that draws in the reader.** Many admissions personnel are reading scores of essays per day. To ensure they get through yours, you'll need to command their attention.

· **Answer the prompt accordingly.** Avoid incorporating previously written pieces into what the essay prompt is asking. Start fresh on each prompt.

· **Always proofread and edit, then do it again.** Colleges want to see that you can write and that you have command of spelling and grammar.

· **Make sure you stick to the recommended length.**

Essay writing is something that high school students will do with greater frequency as they begin applying to college.

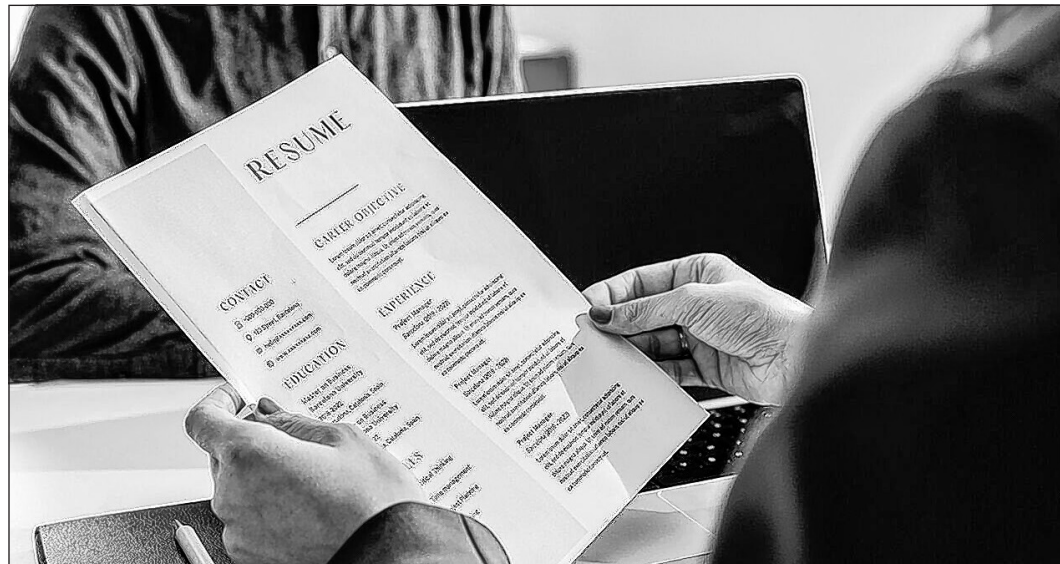


# How to land a job after graduation

The road to graduation can be long and winding. Graduation often is an exciting time in a person's life. However, it also may spark some anxiety as newly minted grads prepare to look for jobs and begin their careers.

An unpredictable economic climate coupled with the rising cost of education can make soon-to-be graduates curious about what awaits them after graduation. According to the market data reporting firm Gitnux, 86 percent of college graduates can expect to find jobs within six months of graduation.

While the economy can affect how quickly new grads begin their careers, it's not the only variable that affects where grads go after tossing their caps in the air. Students on the cusp of graduation can employ various strategies to increase their chances of



finding a job.

- Start while in school. It's never too early to think about the hiring process and what can be done to improve your profile as a candidate. Maintain a grade point average that will impress employers, suggests Indeed. Also, part-

time jobs and internships in your field will help you gain valuable experience and determine if working in a particular field is a good fit.

- Select an off-peak time to search for a job. Many people start searching and applying for jobs at the same time, typically after

graduation ceremonies in December and May. That floods the market with applicants. Increase the chances your résumé is read by staggering when you apply for jobs and sending out inquiries before you graduate.

- Streamline your résumé.

Many companies receive thousands of applications per position, so it is essential to cater your résumé to the specific job to which you are applying. Include key words that match those in the job listing and will attract the attention of hiring managers. If you do not yet have experience, replace that section on the résumé with your accomplishments or special projects you have worked on.

- Network as much as possible. Many job openings are learned about through personal relationships. Employers may not advertise widely and hope that word of mouth will bring applicants to their doors, or through recommendations from other employees. Reach out to academic advisors, former professors and colleagues in your academic department. Be sure to maintain these networking relationships.

- Consider growth-stage companies. The University of Missouri Career Center says growth-stage companies tend to hire entry level professionals who do not necessarily have a lot of experience. These are fast-growing companies looking to expand their operations and build company culture.

- Utilize networking social media apps. Indeed and LinkedIn enable people to network and make it easy to apply for jobs directly through their sites or apps. There's even the option to passively apply for jobs by having a résumé uploaded where companies can search and find you if your skills are a match.

Finding a job after graduation is a priority for graduates anxious to begin their careers. Various strategies can help new grads find work sooner rather than later.

## How to determine if graduate school is the right next step after graduation

Millions of students will walk across a stage at graduation ceremonies and receive their bachelor's degrees this spring. That feeling can be unlike any other, marking the culmination of years of hard work and schooling that began nearly 20 years earlier. Though many students look forward to entering the workforce upon receiving their bachelor's degrees, some ponder if graduate school should be their next step.

A 2021 report from the American Council on Education revealed that more than 1.7 million students were enrolled in graduate education in Fall 2020 at institutions that participated in a survey conducted for the report. A decision regarding graduate school is seldom easy.

In addition to the academic rigors of graduate school, tuition is costly.

Cost is no small consideration, as the ACE survey

found that 43 percent of grad students in Fall 2020 were part-time. Part-time students are typically ineligible for financial aid, which means students will have to pay out-of-pocket or apply for loans to finance their schooling (Note: Lenders may restrict student loans to full-time students.) Paying out of pocket is a significant commitment, as the Education Data Initiative indicates the average cost of a Master's degree in Business Administration in 2022 was just under \$62,000.

Much is at stake as graduates ponder whether or not graduate school is the right next step for them. The following are some factors students can consider as they try to make this decision.

- Professional need: Certain professions require more than a bachelor's degree to gain employment. For example,

a student who aspires to teach at a college or university will likely need more than a bachelor's degree. Adjunct professors, who are part-time faculty members hired on a contractual basis, typically need a master's degree (though a bachelor's degree and professional experience is sufficient for some positions). A doctoral degree is often a requirement to become a full-time tenure-track professor. When considering grad school, prospective applicants should determine if an advanced degree is a requirement to work in their desired field. If so, the decision is essentially made for them. If not, applicants must decide if the cost and rigorous workload is worth it.

- Candidacy: Another consideration is each individual's candidacy. Students considering grad school should realistically



assess their academic performance as an undergrad. Was the performance strong enough to gain entry into a top-tier graduate program? This is an important consideration, as top-tier programs typically have much higher endowments, which means they can more effectively help students offset grad school costs through grants and

other types of financial aid. Students can still gain a lot from grad school if their undergrad performance wasn't enough to earn financial aid for postgraduate work. But in such instances, students may need to finance the degrees on their own.

- Earning potential: Earning potential also merits consideration. As noted, some professions

require postgraduate degrees. But many do not. However, that does not mean students have little to gain from earning an advanced degree in a field where no such degree is required. For example, a recent analysis from the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that the average starting salary for individuals with a master's in Finance was 15 percent higher than the average starting salary for individuals with just a bachelor's degree. The same survey found that a master's in Computer Science translated to a 32 percent higher starting salary than a bachelor's. In such instances, a master's could be well worth the investment.

Recent college graduates can consider a host of variables as they try to decide if graduate school is the right next step after receiving their degrees.



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King University is certified by SCHEV to operate in Virginia. King's primary location in Virginia is Southwest Virginia Community College, 724 Community College Rd, Cedar Bluff, VA 24609.



# King University receives \$14 million gift from The Bill Gatton Foundation

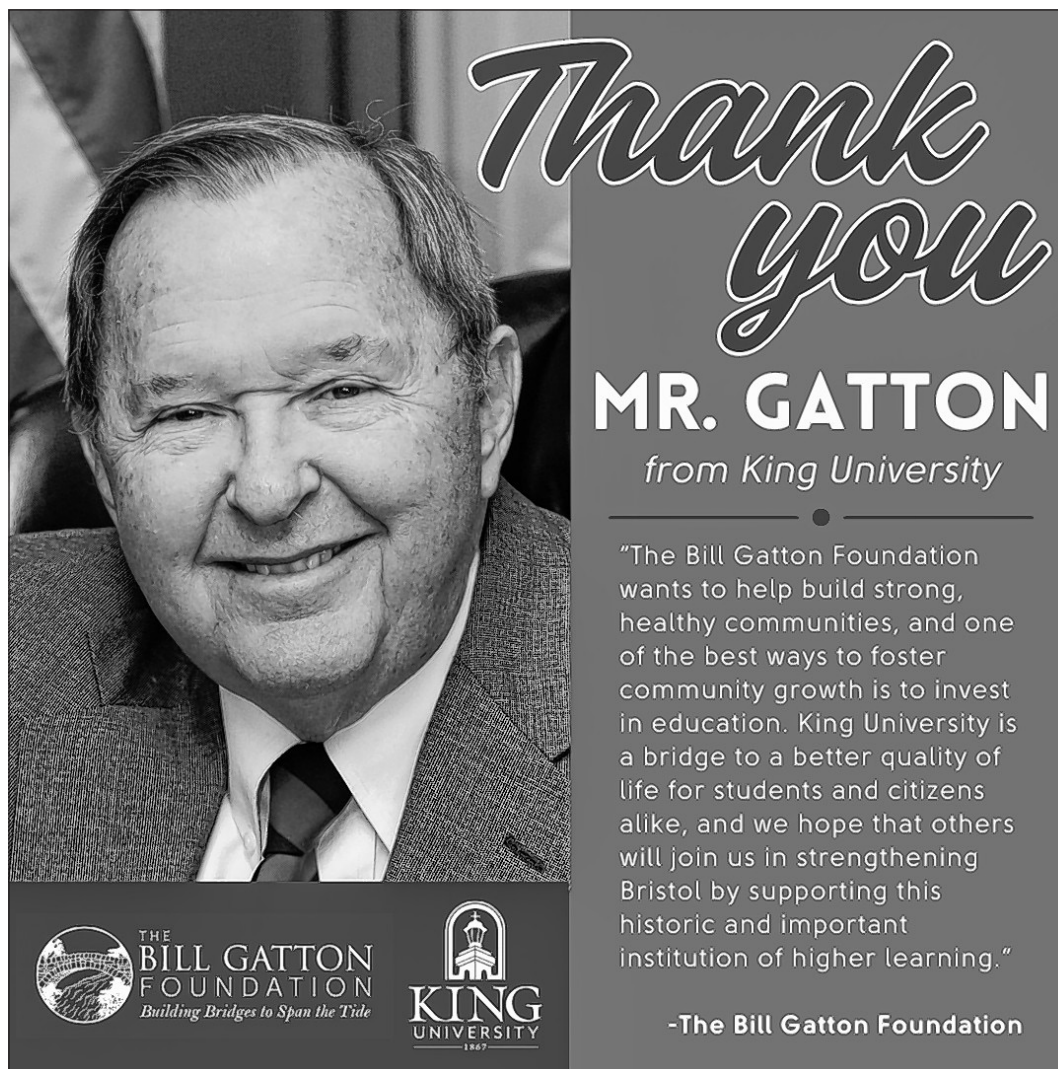
By Contributed

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Bill Gatton's enduring advocacy of higher education is again benefiting students in Bristol and throughout the region, this time through transformational philanthropic support of King University.

Carol Martin "Bill" Gatton was an entrepreneur and philanthropist whose generosity and passion for education and health impacted thousands during his lifetime. A Kentucky native, Gatton received his bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky and his master's in finance and banking from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. His distinguished career led him to operate numerous car dealerships and invest in banks and real estate across the country. He made northeast Tennessee his home for 55 years — from his purchase of the Bristol Chevrolet and Cadillac franchises in 1967 until his death in 2022.

Bill Gatton never lost focus on those in need and believed strongly that education was the key to life improvement and success. Through the success of his businesses and his personal philanthropy, Gatton shared his wealth in many impactful ways during his lifetime. His philanthropic legacy now continues through the foundation bearing his name and vision.

On Wednesday, Aug. 14, King University announced a gift of \$14 million from The Bill Gatton Foundation, \$4 million of which is for matching gift opportunities over the next two years. Funds are being used mainly for scholarships for students in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia, in continuation of Gatton's



*Thank you*

**MR. GATTON**  
*from King University*

"The Bill Gatton Foundation wants to help build strong, healthy communities, and one of the best ways to foster community growth is to invest in education. King University is a bridge to a better quality of life for students and citizens alike, and we hope that others will join us in strengthening Bristol by supporting this historic and important institution of higher learning."

**-The Bill Gatton Foundation**

vision of uplifting others through education and opportunity.

"We are overwhelmed with gratitude to Mr. Bill Gatton and his foundation for this momentous gift, which has been thoughtfully structured to

encourage others to join in supporting King," said Andy Tooley, Ph.D., president of King. "That the Foundation sees the incredible value in the power of education to transform lives is reflected not only in the \$10 million gift, but also in the matching gifts for the next two fiscal years. We are enormously encouraged and look forward to the multiplying effect these gifts will have on our university, its students, and surrounding communities."

Critically, the Foundation's support

comes at a time when small, private institutions across the nation are experiencing an array of challenges, including a reduction in the number of those attending college, rising inflation, and increasing regulatory costs.

King alumni, friends, local businesses and foundations are encouraged to participate in the matching gift program, The Gatton Challenge, by contributing to King. Gifts may be earmarked for any area of the institution such as the School of Nursing, School of Business, Economics and Technology, College of Arts & Sciences, School of Education, or a specific athletic team. The Foundation will then mirror those gifts with an unrestricted match, dollar for dollar, up to \$2 million

in 2024 and \$2 million in 2025.

"The Bill Gatton Foundation wants to help build strong, healthy communities, and one of the best ways to foster community growth is to invest in education," said Foundation co-trustee Danny Dunn. "King is a bridge to a better quality of life for students and citizens alike, and we hope that others will join us in strengthening Bristol by supporting this historic and important institution of higher learning."

King's focus of providing a quality private education at a cost similar to public institutions has garnered national attention for the many opportunities it offers to low- and mid-income families. Many of those attending King are first-generation college students, and 100%

of students receive some type of financial aid, helping to reduce post-collegiate debt.

The majority of King's students come from northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia, and in turn, the university's most popular degree

programs — nursing, business, and education — deliver highly qualified graduates to the regional workforce.

According to Dunn, the spirit of this gift can be summed up in Bill Gatton's own words, "I know that money is not the most important thing in life, but I hope these students are successful financially and then give back to their community someday. In the next 20 to 30 years, if they are prosperous, they can help out the next generation."

For more information,



or to support King University with a qualifying, tax-deductible gift through The Gatton Challenge, contact King's Office of Advancement at 432.652.4864, visit [www.king.edu/give](http://www.king.edu/give), or mail contributions to 1350 King College Rd., Bristol, TN 37620.



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# ETSU Gatton College of Pharmacy soars to No. 2 in the nation for NAPLEX

By Contributed

In the past year, ETSU Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy has established itself as one of the nation's elite institutions for pharmacy education. A new year brought new highs for the college, which saw its Class of 2023 soar to among the top accredited pharmacy schools in the country with their incredible 95.4% first attempt pass rate on the North

American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX).

That pass rate ranked second in the nation among accredited pharmacy schools—and nearly 20 percentage points higher than the national average of 77.5%. ETSU ranked number one in the Southeast, Appalachian Highlands, and Tennessee—its core recruitment zones. ETSU surpassed the top 27 schools featured in U.S.

News and World Report's pharmacy school ranking.

"These scores are phenomenal and a testament to the quality of education that our student pharmacists are receiving at ETSU Gatton College of Pharmacy," said Dr. Debbie Byrd, Dean of the college and Interim Dean of ETSU College of Nursing. "I am so proud of our Class of 2023, as well as our faculty and staff, who all worked so hard for these results."

In addition to NAPLEX, other recent successes include:

- No. 6 in the country for its Post Graduate Year 1 Match Rate in 2024 (No. 1 in Tennessee, No. 1 in Southeast).
- Top national award for service to the community, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Lawrence C. Weaver Transformative Community Service Award.
- Home to the nation's

leading substance use disorder patient care committee as recognized by the American Pharmacists Association-Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP). This year marked the 11th consecutive year that the committee has been recognized either regionally or nationally.

- Full reaffirmation of its accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE).

In addition to recent state funding which significantly decreased the cost of tuition for our students, faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to make significant changes to the curriculum and to the support services offered to students, including a revamped NAPLEX exam preparation process, faculty mentorship, recently hired student success coordinators, and a director of student success.

## Emory & Henry Receives Accolades for Affordability, Equity & Inclusion, Business and Education Programs

Emory & Henry receives national acclaim as a 2024-2025 College of Distinction and earns additional awards for exemplary undergraduate business program, top-tier undergraduate degree in education, affordable college of distinction and robust equity & inclusion initiatives.

Emory & Henry is proud to announce its recognition as a 2024-2025 College of Distinction, a prestigious honor that highlights its unwavering commitment to providing an exceptional undergraduate education. The award reflects Emory & Henry's dedication to fostering hands-on learning, strong student-faculty relationships,

an active campus community, and stellar student outcomes.

Since its founding in 2000, Colleges of Distinction has awarded schools for their successful implementation of high-impact educational practices and hands-on learning. Unlike traditional ranking systems based on numerical data, its rigorous selection process involves extensive research and detailed interviews with the institutions, accepting only those that adhere to the Four Distinctions: Engaged Students, Great Teaching, Vibrant Community, and Successful Outcomes. Emory & Henry has demonstrated exceptional

### EMORY & HENRY UNIVERSITY



performance in each of these areas, ensuring a supportive and enriching environment that equips students for future academic and career success. Additional awards of distinction were given for the business and education programs as well as E&H's affordability and equity and inclusion initiatives.

"A college degree opens the door to Emory & Henry many opportunities," said Tyson Schritter, Chief Operating Officer at Colleges of Distinction.

"But a truly worthwhile education prepares students to thrive once they walk through that door. Emory & Henry's curriculum encourages meaningful student-faculty collaboration through experiential learning that is relevant and applicable to the real world." To be listed among the Colleges of Distinction, Emory & Henry demonstrated its unique ways of helping students be active in their education.

"We've never ranked our

schools," said Schritter. "No student is alike, so there can't be a number-one school for everyone. We are much more focused on the innovative ways that colleges are offering their own brand of a truly rich undergraduate education." Emory & Henry's individual approach to education helps students achieve success in unique ways that cannot be ranked against others.

Schritter continued, "We are so impressed to see how Emory & Henry brings life to the traditional undergraduate experience. With a welcoming community, an immersive curriculum, and strong support networks, Emory & Henry is undoubt-

edly nurturing the growth of tomorrow's leaders."

To view Emory & Henry's profile or to find more information about the programs it offers, visit [www.emoryhenry.edu](http://www.emoryhenry.edu).

#### ABOUT COLLEGES OF DISTINCTION

Since 2000, Colleges of Distinction has been committed to honoring schools with a dedicated focus on the undergraduate experience. Its website provides dynamic college profiles, customized tools, and resources for students, parents, and high school counselors. For more information, and to learn how to become a College of Distinction, visit [CollegesofDistinction.com](http://CollegesofDistinction.com)





# Dr. Stephen Waers assumes office as Milligan University's 16th president

Dr. Stephen Waers officially assumed office as Milligan's 16th president on Aug. 1 following the retirement of Dr. Bill Greer.

Waers began the day by hosting an informal reception for the campus community inside Little Hartland. The event included a time of prayer asking God to bless the work that lies ahead during the Waers presidency.

"I am excited to lead Milligan in ways that allow it to grow into the plans and purposes God has in store for it so the university can continue to flourish," Waers said.

Answering the call to become Milligan's next president is a homecoming of sorts for Waers and his wife Katie. They spent their first years as a married couple in Johnson City while Stephen finished his Master of Divinity with a concentra-

tion in Church History at Emmanuel. They returned to Northeast Tennessee this summer with their two daughters, Vivian and Ellie.

The Waers were strong supporters of Milligan University and Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan following Stephen's graduation from Emmanuel. They were drawn back by the opportunity to help preserve Milligan's rich tradition and advance its long-standing mission of providing men and women with a Christ-centered liberal arts education.

"When I think about what it means to be faithful as I serve Milligan as its president, I am conscious of the tradition, history and excellence of Milligan," Waers said. "I am cognizant of the fact that this history, tradition and excellence are rooted most deeply in Milligan's faithfulness to Christ and

determined adherence to its Christ-centered mission of educating men and women to be servant-leaders."

Waers is grateful to Greer for the strong leadership he provided during his 13 years as Milligan's president and thanks him for staying on as president emeritus and chancellor. In these roles, Greer will work with Waers and university leadership to maintain important external relationships.

"Thanks to Dr. Greer's faithful leadership, Milligan is stronger than it has ever been," Waers said. "The university has experienced a great deal of growth that came about through judicious decisions made by Dr. Greer and his excellent team, and Milligan remained both faithful and on mission during that time."

Inaugural festivities for Waers will take place from Oct. 24-26.



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# ETSU prepares students for lifelong success

East Tennessee State University strives to ensure students transition seamlessly from enrollment to employment.

From the development of in-demand programs to the university's focus on hands-on, real-world experience, ETSU is focused on preparing students for lifelong success.

ETSU grads land jobs at Fortune 500 companies, launch their own businesses, and secure job offers immediately after graduation. The university's brand-new Mechatronics program and its nationally recognized Gatton College of Pharmacy offer two examples of how ETSU is positioning its students to excel in their careers.

## WITH MECHATRONICS, ETSU PREPPING STUDENTS FOR THE WORKFORCE

ETSU is launching its new mechatronics engineering program this fall to address the growing need for skilled professionals in the region's manufacturing and tech-

nology sectors.

"Our students can graduate, be educated here and work here after graduation," said Dr. Keith Johnson, chair of ETSU's Department of Engineering, Engineering Technology and Surveying. "Which is what they want; they don't want to leave."

Mechatronics, an interdisciplinary field, combines mechanical, electrical, control and computer engineering to create intelligent systems. Students in the program will gain expertise in robotics, automation, control systems, sensors, embedded systems and more.

The program has already garnered significant interest from both students and local industries, including Y-12 in Oak Ridge and Siemens in Johnson City.

Paul Sims, a professor in the department, highlighted the overwhelming desire of students to stay in the Northeast Tennessee area for higher

education.

"Our responsibility is to serve the region – the students and the businesses – and I think both will benefit," Sims said.

Both Johnson and Sims believe the mechatronics engineering program will help alleviate the shortage of engineering graduates in the workforce, not just in Tennessee but nationwide.

To apply, visit [etsu.edu/bachelor/mechatronics.php/](https://etsu.edu/bachelor/mechatronics.php/).

## ETSU PHARMACY RANKED 2ND IN THE NATION FOR LICENSURE EXAM PASS RATES

ETSU's Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy ranked among the top accredited pharmacy schools in the country with the latest results from the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX), which graduating pharmacists must pass to receive their license to practice.

ETSU Gatton College of Pharmacy's Class of 2023 achieved an incredible 95.4% first-attempt pass



East Tennessee State University earned the Military Friendly designation for the 14th consecutive year.

rate on their NAPLEX exam, placing the college at No. 2 in the country for accredited pharmacy schools. Nationally, the Class of 2023 averaged a 78.6% pass rate.

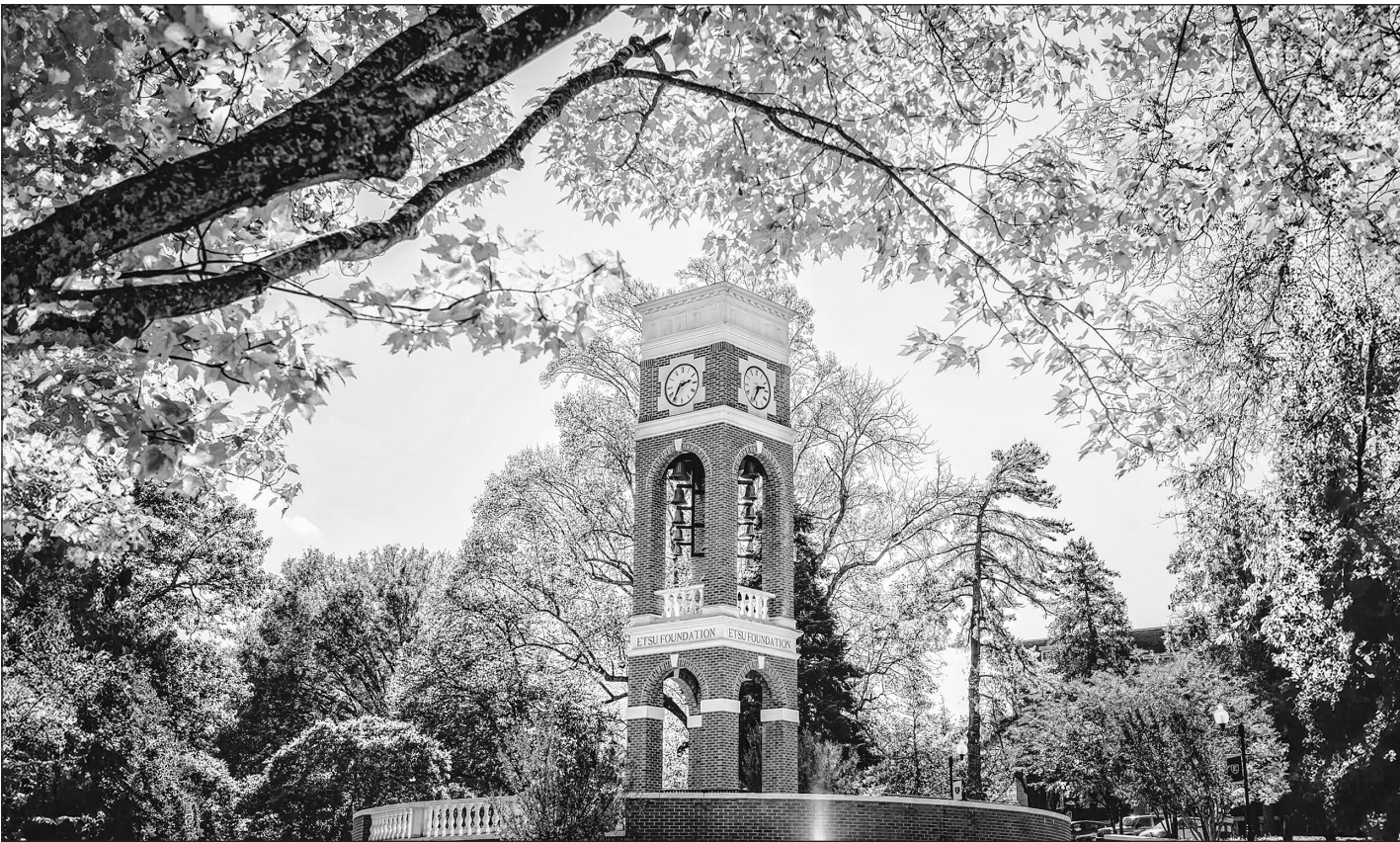
ETSU ranked No. 1 in Tennessee and our region and was the top-performing school in the Southeast. ETSU Gatton College of Pharmacy's NAPLEX pass rate was also higher than each of the 27 schools named in U.S. News and World Report's pharmacy school rankings.

"These scores are phenomenal and a testament to the quality of education that our student pharmacists are receiving at ETSU Gatton College of Pharmacy," said Dr. Debbie Byrd, dean of the college and interim dean of ETSU College of

Nursing. "I am so proud of our Class of 2023, as well as our faculty and staff, who all worked so hard for these results."

ETSU Gatton College of Pharmacy has made significant changes to its curriculum and to the support services that it offers students, including a revamped NAPLEX exam preparation process, faculty mentorship, new student success coordinators, and a director of student success.

High school seniors and first-year students at ETSU can even gain early admission through the college's Early Admission Pathway, which allows students the opportunity to earn both a bachelor's degree and a doctor of pharmacy in just six years. Visit [etsu.edu/pharmacy](https://etsu.edu/pharmacy) to learn more.





# How to pay for college

College has become the traditional next step for many of today's students despite its high price tag. According to information from Education Data Initiative, the average cost of college in the United States is now \$35,551 per student per year, including books, supplies, and daily living expenses. However, many schools cost much more annually.

Colleges in Canada are not free to attend, but they are considerably less expensive than American schools, particularly because some are subsidized by provincial governments. International students will pay more for Canadian colleges and universities than domestic students.

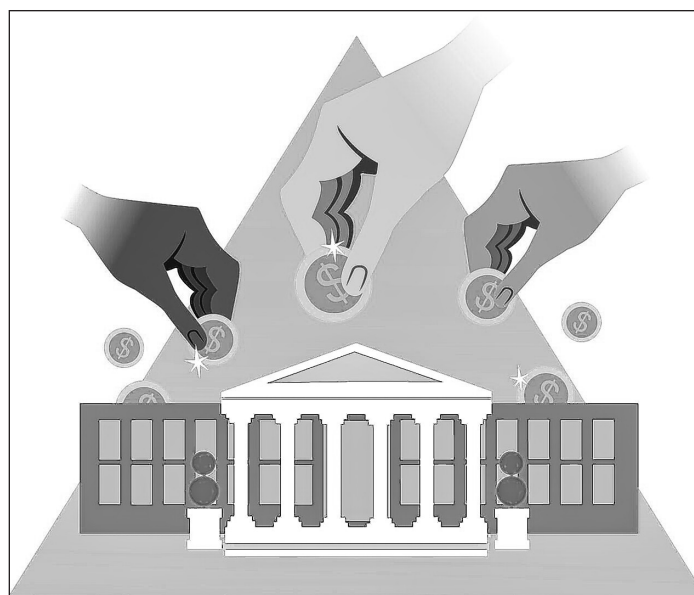
Families facing the prospect of college on the horizon would undoubtedly like to do all they can to make college more affordable. There are many

different ways to pay for college tuition. The following are some of the paths students and their families can take.

**Savings and investment accounts**

Some guardians feel that it is their responsibility to pay for college, while others say that it is up to the students to handle some, if not all, of the costs. Most people cannot afford to pay college tuition bills each semester as they would a utility bill or mortgage. That makes it essential for families to begin saving for college very early on.

People can put funds in bank accounts or tax-advantaged investment opportunities, and Education Savings Accounts, such as Coverdell accounts and 529 Plans. It's important to note that investment accounts have a higher percentage of risk than



low-interest savings accounts, particularly because they are tied to investments. However, such accounts boast the potential for greater growth. Families must weigh the pros and cons accordingly.

**Financial aid**

One of the first steps prospective college students in the United States who need help paying for college should do is fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This form will help the government, as well as individual schools, determine finan-

cial need and aid eligibility. The FAFSA will ask for personal and family income information as well as tax records to determine eligibility. It also will establish an Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which will be renamed a Student Aid Index (SAI) for a given school year. It is a formula that the Department of Education uses to crunch family financial data and determine eligibility for financial aid, says Lending Tree. Those with lower EFCs/SAIs generally receive more financial aid. There are ways to lower EFCs if families start well before the college application process.

**Grants and scholarships**  
Some schools offer grant money or scholarships to students based on academic performance, alumni ties or other factors, which does not have to be paid back. Students also can pursue private

scholarships and grants through outside organizations, such as parents' employers.

**Loans**

After all financial aid, personal savings, investments, and scholarships/grants have been exhausted, student or parental loans may be needed to round out the cost of attendance. If possible, students should opt to, at the least, make interest payments on student loans while in school. In the U.S., lenders require students to take out a Federal Direct Loan prior to applying for private loans. It's essential to shop interest rates and payback rules for each loan to secure the best deal.

College tuition is expensive, but students and their families have various options to plan for and potentially mitigate those costs.

## How students can benefit from study abroad programs

Study abroad program participation understandably dipped in recent years as the world confronted a global pandemic, during which many countries closed their borders to non-residents for a period of time. In fact, according to NAFSATM: Association of International Educators, the number of students from the United States studying abroad in the 2020-21 academic year declined by 91 percent from the year prior. Since then, the world has largely returned to normal, and that means tens of thousands of students are once again considering study abroad programs.

Participation in a study abroad program can be a life-changing experience for young students. As students and their families consider study abroad programs, they can consider these notable benefits of



signing up to study overseas.

· **Experience a foreign culture:** The chance to experience foreign cultures firsthand compels many students to study abroad each year. Data from NAFSATM indicates that 44 percent of American study abroad students study in just five countries: Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and Ireland. But study abroad programs are

active in just about every corner of the globe. That means study abroad participants can experience foreign cultures similar to their own or go to school in countries with cultures vastly different from their own homeland.

· **Enhance your career prospects:** Study abroad programs can help students enhance their career prospects after graduation. NAFSATM notes that a

2014 survey found that nearly 40 percent of companies indicated they missed out on overseas business opportunities due to a lack of personnel capable of working abroad. Students who study abroad can stand out in crowded applicant pools, particularly among employers looking to expand their international operations.

· **Build networks:** Networking is perhaps

more valuable to professionals than ever before. Students who enroll in study abroad programs may ultimately graduate with both domestic networks and international networks through their universities at home and abroad. Career placement offices at both schools can help students connect with alumni and professionals. In addition, students can build relationships with

professors and fellow students they meet while studying abroad, further expanding their professional and personal networks.

· **Improve your earning potential:** The Institute for the International Education of Students, also known as IES Abroad®, reports that its alumni earn an average of \$6,000 more in starting salaries compared to recent college graduates in the United States. That's a significant benefit for students on the cusp of graduating who will have to confront a rising cost of living that has made it as challenging as ever for young adults to establish their financial independence.

Study abroad programs have much to offer. Students who enroll in such programs may find the benefits of studying overseas pay dividends for the rest of their lives.





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# Momentum Grows at UVA Wise: Enrollment Surge, Apple Distinction, and Pioneering Research Kick Off Fall Semester

This fall, the University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA Wise) is experiencing an impressive surge of momentum, driven by a combination of increased student enrollment, reaffirmation as an Apple Distinguished School, and groundbreaking undergraduate research. These achievements not only highlight the College's commitment to academic excellence but also its innovative approach to education both in the classroom and around campus.

## Enrollment Increase Highlights Growing Appeal

Preliminary reports show that UVA Wise is seeing another uptick in enrollment this fall, both from the five-year average of the College's enrollment and from the previous fall which, also saw growth for the College from the year prior. This increase reflects the institution's growing appeal and successful recruitment strategies, which include a simplified admissions application, the elimination of application and deposit fees, and highly competitive financial aid packaging.

This momentum is also fueled by new academic programs at the College, which debuted three new academic programs in 2023-24: a Master of Education, an undergraduate major in hospitality and tourism management, and an online program designed for associates degree holders to finish their bachelor of science degree in business administration and management in two years or less. This fall featured the debut of an early childhood teaching endorsement add-on program for those already licensed to teach or currently completing licensure.

The new programs com-



CONTRIBUTED/UVA WISE

**With a preliminary 9% enrollment increase this fall, UVA Wise is looking at expansion of its mission with new undergraduate and master's programs in 2024-25.**

plement a growing Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN) online program as well as 34 undergraduate majors, 41 minors, and a variety of pre-professional programs.

## Apple Distinguished School Reaffirmed

Adding to its list of achievements, UVA Wise has also been reaffirmed as an Apple Distinguished School. This prestigious designation, first earned by the College in 2021, recognizes UVA Wise's excellence in integrating technology into the classroom through its Innovate to Elevate initiative, which began in 2019 and provides all undergraduate students with an iPad, smart

keyboard and Apple Pencil.

The reaffirmation is largely due to UVA Wise's development of a portfolio ecosystem within Innovate to Elevate. While the initial work of the program revolutionized the learning experience for students by providing them with iPads as essential educational tools to not only take classes and turn in assignments, subsequent work is providing the tools for students to also track their experiential learning achievements and reflect on their academic careers as well.

"While our initial goals were to level the technological playing field while fostering creativity, critical thinking, and prob-

lem-solving skills, we are now setting a high standard for digital learning," says UVA Wise Chancellor Donna P. Henry. "Seeing the integration of iPads across campus from the classroom to student activities and athletics while also observing students deepening their abilities to find and chart their path is truly awe-inspiring. It also affirms what UVA Wise stands for: continually growing student success."

## Pioneering Undergraduate Research

In addition to technological advancements and enrollment growth, UVA Wise is celebrating the publication of faculty and student research in the national journal.

"Nature." UVA Wise students Tina Etoll and Rachael Sproles and then-students, now graduates, Isabella Maggard and Kayla Deel were the article's lead authors along with Tim Lane, director of mussel recovery at the Commonwealth of Virginia's Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center, and Bruce Cahoon, UVA Wise Buchanan Endowed Chair of Biology, who oversaw and guided the experiments aimed at freshwater mussel conservation. The recently published, groundbreaking research shows that one species of freshwater mussel (Pheasantshell, *Ortmanniana pectorosa*), which has been suffering severe declines since 2016, has a different diet from the other mussels studied—which could offer a clue as to why it has been dying.

This research not only showcases the students' scholarly capabilities but also reflects the high quality of education and mentorship provided at UVA Wise.

"After beginning the mussel research, I quickly gained new friendships with the other girls I was working with. These friendships allowed me to grow and flourish in both social and academic viewpoints. I am beyond grateful for the friendships made and how positively my life has been impacted from these people. This experience, as a whole, has truly been the best and most rewarding experience and I have been so fortunate to be a part of it," Sproles said.

A first-generation student, Sproles said she never dreamed of accomplishing something like this in her first year at the College.

"Coming from a smaller

high school, I always admired accomplishments similar to this, but never thought them to be attainable," Sproles said. "However, just a few semesters later I found myself realizing that these goals were within reach."

The publication of this and other undergraduate research demonstrates UVA Wise's commitment to providing students with opportunities to engage in meaningful and impactful ways. It underscores the College's dedication to fostering a learning environment where students can contribute to important scientific discoveries and advancements.

## Be A Part of UVA Wise's Momentum

As UVA Wise enters the fall semester, the College stands out for its dynamic achievements and forward momentum. The rise in enrollment, the reaffirmation as an Apple Distinguished School, and the groundbreaking research by undergraduates alongside faculty all contribute to a vibrant and thriving academic environment. These accomplishments reflect the College's ongoing commitment to excellence in education, innovation, and student success.

With these milestones, UVA Wise is well-positioned for continued growth and success, making it an exciting time for students, faculty, and the broader college community.

Prospective students can learn more about the transformative educational experience and how the College prepares students for future success by registering for a campus visit at [www.uvawise.edu/visit](http://www.uvawise.edu/visit) or by applying for admission online at [www.uvawise.edu/apply](http://www.uvawise.edu/apply).



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