

Yadkin Valley Regional Career Academy

Senior and Super Senior Planning Guide

Class of 2026

Hours:	7:45 am - 3:15 pm
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SENIOR and SUPER SENIOR TIMELINE

Many of you have already begun your journey by looking into various school options and noticing the important deadlines. For those who haven't yet, now is the perfect time to dive in and refine your choices! Be sure to research application, scholarship, and financial aid deadlines, as they can vary greatly between colleges. Staying ahead of these timelines will help set you up for success in your college plans. Embrace the adventure ahead—exciting opportunities await!

September

- Narrow your choices to the top three or four colleges you are most interested in. Begin your applications! Two excellent websites for applying to college are The Common Application (www.commonapp.org) and CFNC (www.cfnc.org), which allow you to apply to multiple colleges easily. If you have a weighted GPA of 2.8 or above, check out [NC College Connect](#) for more information on how to expedite the application process at some North Carolina colleges and universities.

- It's essential to adhere strictly to all deadlines. This is a critical part of the application process and demonstrates your responsibility and accountability. Think of your application as a representation of your best work—colleges will view it that way. Applications will require the **CEEB code 342266**.

Great news! If you're using the [Common App](#), be sure to fill out your profile completely. Check out the helpful table below to guide you, especially for the Education and Grades sections. You've got this!

Enter graduating class size	GPA scale reporting: Select 4
Class rank reporting: Select exact	Enter individual GPA as of June 1, 2025
Enter individual class rank as of June 1, 2025	GPA weighting: Select weighted
Rank weighting: Select weighted	

- **College Application Week** will take place **October 20-26**. Valley Academy will hold **College Application Day** on **Tuesday, October 21**. This day is designed to make the application process as convenient as possible for you, seniors, and Super Seniors. You can visit Student Services (schedule an appointment via email or stop by) to complete your college applications, and I will be available to assist you. This day is all about making the process easy and stress-free for you.

* Stay tuned for the list of schools that will waive their application fees on CFNC.org during College Application Week.

* Please be advised to start on CFNC.org to ensure they benefit from the fee waivers. CFNC cannot guarantee that fee waivers will be extended to other application platforms, such as the Common App.

- You should apply as a **first-year student** or a **first-year student with some transferable credits**, even if you graduate from DDCC with an AAS degree. Why? Being a first-year student allows you to remain eligible for housing, learning communities, honors, scholarships, and other special programs reserved for new first-year students.

- Apply for admission to the colleges in which you are most interested. Early October is typically the time for early decision/early action. It's essential to understand the difference between these two and determine which one is best for you. Applying early shows your proactive approach and can give you a competitive edge. Early decision plans are binding, meaning a student accepted as an ED applicant must attend the college. Early action plans are nonbinding — students receive an early response to their application, but do not have to commit to the college until the expected reply date of May 1. Obtain financial aid and scholarship information from those colleges.
- Some limited enrollment programs at community colleges, especially health careers, have required information sessions and very early application deadlines. Check on any programs of interest.
- Register for an upcoming SAT (<https://www.collegeboard.org/>) or ACT (<https://www.act.org/>) IF planning to submit scores to a four-year college. Fee Waivers are available for eligible students.
- **NOTE:** A first-year student with a weighted GPA of 2.8 or higher does not have to submit SAT or ACT scores for the 2026 application cycle and beyond, making it test-optional for those students. Submitting scores is optional and can only be used to enhance the application. This policy is designed to reduce your stress and give you more control over your application. You can now focus on other aspects of your application without the pressure of standardized tests.
- Students applying to community colleges are not required to take the SAT or ACT.
- Complete the RDS process! To determine in-state residency in North Carolina, every student must complete the Residency Determination Service (RDS). This process is now a required part of the college application process for all NC schools. Once completed, you will receive a Residency Certification Number (RCN). The RCN is a required item in all NC College Applications, so **it is recommended that you complete the process before you begin your application process**. To complete the RDS process, visit www.ncresidency.org and follow the instructions. You may also complete the process by logging in to your account at CFNC.org.
- Create your [FSA ID](https://studentaid.gov/), for you will need it to create your own account to apply for, receive, and manage your federal student aid. To make your FSA ID, visit the Federal Student Aid website (<https://studentaid.gov/>) and follow the instructions. Keep your FSA ID in a safe place, as you will need it throughout your college application process.

Athletics

If you are interested in pursuing the possibility of an athletic scholarship, ask your high school coach for an assessment of your chances of obtaining athletic aid and how they can help you with that process. In most cases, college coaches will contact high school coaches directly for information about your abilities, so it is crucial to let high school coaches know of your interest. You can also write a letter to a college athletic department.

If you are planning to participate in Division 1 or 2 college athletics, the NCAA Clearinghouse must certify you. The NCAA Clearinghouse is an organization that ensures student-athletes meet the academic and amateurism standards necessary for participation in college sports. At the beginning of your senior year, register via the internet at www.eligibilitycenter.org. This registration is a crucial step if you are considering playing college sports, as it allows colleges to verify your eligibility.

After the College Applications are Completed

● **Request a Transcript.** You may request a transcript by visiting the Davidson County Schools website (www.davidson.k12.nc.us) and clicking on the transcript icon. On the left-hand side of the page, click on "Current Student". You will then fill out your information and create an account. You will indicate whether you want your transcript mailed to your residence, a specific college/university, or if you would like to pick it up in the main office. **NOTE:** If you are applying through the Common Application, your transcript will be uploaded as part of the *School Report* completed by your counselor.

Send a transcript to any North Carolina College/University & Community College

Transcripts must be sent electronically by the student through the CFNC.org website. There is no charge for transcripts to be sent from CFNC.org.

1.	Go to CFNC.org	
2.	Log into your account	• If you do NOT have an account, please create a new one. • If you DO have an account and forgot your username and password, visit Student Services. • If you are UNSURE if you have an account or not, visit Student Services. DO NOT CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT!
3.	Click "Apply to College"	
4.	Click "Application Hub"	Select "Request a Transcript"
5.	Verify information	Verify the following information is correct: • First and last name • Student number • Email address • Gender • Date of birth • Current high school • Your demographic information must match 100% with your information in your high school's database. You can pull up your demographic information in Infinite Campus to match with your CFNC. You can make changes to your profile by going to "My CFNC"> "Your Profile"> "This is Me"
6.	Search for campus	Once the school is found, select "Request my transcript"
7.	Monitor transcript	In "Application Hub," you can monitor when the transcript is uploaded by the receiving university/college.

College Essay

- Begin working on your college essay if it is required. **Remember**, this essay is your opportunity to showcase your unique experiences and perspectives. Avoid merely restating information from your transcript. Instead, focus on an experience or activity that has profoundly impacted you, allowing your individuality to shine through.

Recommendations

- If your college requires a "Counselor Statement" or "Secondary School Report" as part of the application, you will need to provide your counselor's email address. Mrs. Hanes' email address is: **chanes1@davidson.k12.nc.us**.

- Make sure to complete the Letter of Recommendation Request form, often known as the 'Brag Sheet.' This form is not simply a formality; it is an effective tool that can assist teachers, counselors, or other adults as they write recommendation letters for you. Use it to highlight your strengths and achievements.

- When requesting a recommendation, please do so **at least two weeks in advance**. Remember that counselors, teachers, ministers, employers, and others have their own responsibilities. Be considerate of their time and do not expect them to write a recommendation on short notice. It's helpful to provide them with a copy of your completed Teacher/Counselor Recommendation form to make their job easier.

MINIMUM COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Class of 2026

MINIMUM COURSE REQUIREMENTS		
Content Area	Units	Future Ready Core
English	4	4 units in English – Emphasizing grammar, composition, and literature
Mathematics	4	NC Math 1, 2, and 3, and one (1) higher level math course
Science	3	1 unit in Life or Biological Science 1 unit in Physical Science 1 laboratory course
Social Studies	2	1 unit in US History
Additional Courses	2	Two additional academic courses from English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, or Computer Science. Completion of two sequential world language courses is not required but highly recommended.
MINIMUM GPA & SAT/ACT REQUIREMENTS		
Minimum High School GPA	2.5 cumulative weighted GPA	
Minimum SAT	SAT score is only required if GPA is between 2.5-2.8 (930 or higher)	
Minimum ACT Composite	ACT score is only required if GPA is between 2.5-2.8. (17 or higher)	

Please note that, while these are the minimum requirements for consideration, *they do not guarantee acceptance*

SAT/ACT

- If you are applying to a four-year school, ensure that your SAT/ACT scores are sent if you have not done so already and if you wish to submit your scores. Keep in mind that these scores must be sent directly from the testing agencies for colleges to consider them official. To send your ACT scores, visit the '[Request Official ACT Scores](#)' page, and to send your SAT scores, visit the '[Request Official SAT Scores](#)' page. Additionally, note that all 16 UNC System universities and most private schools are test-optional for the fall of 2026, as long as your weighted GPA is 2.8 or higher. It's also worth noting that all 16 UNC System universities and most private schools are test-optional for the fall of 2026, provided your weighted GPA is 2.8 or higher.

Fee Waivers for SAT and ACT

- Great news! Fee waivers for the SAT and ACT are offered to students facing economic challenges, ensuring that everyone has access to these important assessments. For further details, I invite you to visit the College Board and ACT websites. It's essential to note that these waivers cannot be applied to late registrations for the ACT, so plan accordingly.
- If you're utilizing a fee waiver for your SAT or ACT, you might also qualify for College Application Fee Waivers. These waivers can significantly reduce the cost of applying to college. To apply for these waivers, you'll need to meet specific eligibility criteria, which often include being from a low-income family or participating in a federal assistance program. Don't hesitate to reach out to your school counselor for guidance and assistance—they're there to help you navigate these opportunities!

Exploring Testing Accommodations for Disabilities

- If you have a disability, it's wonderful to know that testing accommodations might be available for you! These adjustments can make a significant difference in your testing experience; I encourage you to explore the available resources. For detailed information on specific accommodations, I recommend visiting the testing center's website or checking the registration bulletin for more details. Mrs. Duncan is the SSD Coordinator at YVRCA. You're not alone in this, and there are options designed to support your needs!

https://mysat.collegeboard.org/login SAT 2025-2026 -Cost is \$68.00-	
Test Date	Registration Deadline
October 4, 2025	September 19, 2025
November 8, 2025	October 24, 2025
December 6, 2025	November 21, 2025
March 14, 2026	February 27, 2026
May 2, 2026	April 17, 2026
June 6, 2026	May 22, 2026

www.act.org ACT 2025-2026 -Cost is \$68.00- plus \$4.00 science add-on	
Test Date	Registration Deadline
October 18, 2025	September 12, 2025
December 13, 2025	November 7, 2025
February 14, 2026	January 9, 2026
April 11, 2026	March 6, 2026
June 13, 2026	May 8, 2026
July 11, 2026	June 5, 2026

College Admissions Considerations

- Grades: Both weighted and unweighted GPA
- Class Rank
- Standardized Test Scores: SAT and/or ACT
- Extracurricular Activities (Anything you have been involved with since the summer before 9th grade to present)
- Coursework Difficulty: Considered in relation to offerings at other similar high schools
- Recommendations: From counselors, teachers, and other community members
- Interviews: Not required by all schools
- Essays: Not required by all schools
- Community or Volunteer Service

Tips on Completing Your College Application

- Be Mindful of Your Online Presence: Ensure your social media reflects a positive image, and use a professional email address (e.g., firstname_lastname@).
- Complete Your Applications Independently: Colleges can usually tell if a parent has filled out the application for you. They will closely read your essays and personal statements, and AI detectors may be used.
- Extracurricular Activities: If your list exceeds the available space, prioritize your top activities or those in which you held a leadership role. These activities reflect your dedication and interests, significantly impacting your application.
- Essays and Personal Statements: Treat any requested essay or personal statement as a valuable opportunity to showcase your unique experiences and perspective. **Even if an essay is labeled as 'optional,' you should always include it.** Additionally, have a teacher review your essay before submission.

Additional Application Resources

CFNC C2D and CAW planning for students (video)

<https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/nc-countdown-to-college/for-students/>

Campus Visit

● Schedule campus visits. Teacher Workdays would be an excellent time to visit college campuses. This year, Davidson County Schools will allow seniors two college/military visits, which will not count against the students' absences (or exam exemptions) if proper documentation is submitted.

Campus Visit Checklist

Gather Information

- Take part in a group information session at the Admissions Office.
- Interview with an admission counselor.
 - What is the retention rate?
 - Ask about campus safety.
- Sit in on a class that interests you.

Explore the Campus

- Gain insight into student life and assess whether this college is a good fit for you.
- Talk to the coaches of the sport you may want to play.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.
- Take a campus tour. Visit the dining hall, fitness center, library, career center, bookstore, and other campus facilities.

For schools you are genuinely interested in, try to visit twice.

October/November Financial Aid

- Financial Aid, a crucial aspect of college planning, is awarded based on need. It's the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college and what your family can afford to pay. All students applying for federal financial aid must complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) as soon as possible after **October 1****.

(** See Beta Testing)
The earlier you complete it, the better your chances of securing financial aid will be, empowering you to take control of your college financial planning.

- Did you create your [FSA ID](#)? You will need it to create your own account to apply for, receive, and manage your federal student aid. To make your FSA ID, visit the Federal Student Aid website (<https://studentaid.gov/>) and follow the instructions. Keep your FSA ID in a safe place, as you will need it throughout your college application process.

- You should fill out the FAFSA even if you're not certain about your college choice for fall 2026.

- If you're eager to get ahead of the game, consider the chance to [Request Access](#) to the 2026-27 FAFSA
**Beta Testing!

- Starting **October 1**, visit www.fafsa.gov to get started on your FAFSA. This application is essential for accessing federal loans, grants, and various forms of financial assistance. Remember, you'll need to provide details regarding your family's income and assets based on tax information from two years before the academic year for which you're applying. For example, when applying for the 2026-2027 school year, you will use tax info from 2024.

- Conversations with your parents or guardians about your college goals and family finances can pave the way for a smoother process, so be sure to include them in these discussions!

- If you need assistance with the FAFSA, please get in touch with the Office [of Financial Aid](#) at Davidson-Davie Community College (DDCC) at 336-249-8186 or finaid@davidsondavie.edu. They're ready to provide support and ensure you navigate the process with confidence!

Additional FAFSA Resources

CFNC FAFSA: A line-by-line helpful video walkthrough of the FAFSA process

<https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/nc-countdown-to-college/for-students/>

A comprehensive website to answer a various question:

<https://studentaid.unc.edu/fafsa-simplification/>

- Determine if the schools you are applying to require the CSS Profile form for financial aid. The CSS Profile is a form some colleges use to determine eligibility for non-federal aid, including institutional money. To complete a profile form and view a list of schools that use the CSS Profile, visit [CSS Profile - CollegeBoard](#). The colleges in North Carolina that currently require a profile are Davidson College, Duke University, Elon University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and Wake Forest University.

Scholarships

●Each year, Valley students receive academic and a few athletic scholarships from various sources. Investigating possible sources of financial aid and completing applications requires time and effort, but a significant number of students do receive some form of financial assistance. Scholarship money and financial aid are typically categorized into two main types: need-based and merit-based. Need-based assistance considers a family's financial status, while merit-based scholarships are awarded based on a student's academic qualifications, regardless of their financial need. Some scholarships (usually local) consider both academic success and financial need. For instance, a need-based scholarship might be awarded to a student from a low-income family. In contrast, a merit-based scholarship could be given to a student with exceptional academic achievements.

●**Apply early:** One of the best sources of scholarship opportunities is the college to which you are applying. Most schools offer their own institution-specific programs and privately sponsored awards that are specifically designated for students at those institutions. Apply early; many scholarships have deadlines in November and December of your senior year. Don't wait, start applying now! By being proactive and applying early, you can increase your chances of receiving financial assistance.

●**Utilize the Valley Scholarship Newsletter:** The next important step in searching for scholarships is to check the Valley scholarship newsletter, which is updated and posted as new scholarship information is received. This newsletter is available in the Student Services office and can also be accessed via email. It contains information about local, statewide, and national scholarships. The majority of local scholarships that are not as competitive are announced in the spring. Therefore, it is essential to make your scholarship search a year-long process. Many students become tired of pursuing scholarship money by the spring and give up at precisely the time when there are more opportunities.

●**Explore National Scholarship Listings:** An additional source to investigate is national scholarship listings via the Internet. A free, searchable scholarship database is available at www.fastweb.com. Other great sites are www.finaid.org and www.cfnc.org. Different websites can be found in each scholarship newsletter and at the end of this document.

●**Reach out for additional opportunities:** Do not forget to contact your employers, your parents' employers, civic groups, and religious organizations in which you are involved, in search of scholarships.

●Please beware of scholarship scams! Avoid programs that "guarantee" scholarships or require fees for matching you with scholarships. Many solicitors invite you to meetings at local hotels or try to arrange private meetings at your home. It is advisable to steer clear of such organizations.

Two rules of thumb to safeguard you from most scholarship scams:

1. If you have to give money to get money, it might be a scam.
2. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

●Stay informed, stay optimistic, and remember that countless opportunities are waiting for you on your journey to higher education!

November/December/January

- **Fall Exhibition – November 20, 2025**
- **Super Senior Applications** for the 2026-27 school year will be made available in mid-November. Student-led conferences will take place in December.
- **Seniors – Fall WorkKeys Testing – December 1-December 5**

●The WorkKeys Certificate, officially known as the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), is a portable, evidence-based credential that verifies essential workplace skills. It is earned by demonstrating proficiency in three core WorkKeys assessments: Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents. The certificate is available at four levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum, based on the scores achieved in these assessments.

●During Grade Checks, we will meet with every Senior and Super Senior to ensure we have the correct spelling of names for diploma purposes.

If your name on your diploma differs from the one listed in Infinite Campus,
Now is the time to make the change.

- Make sure that you have ordered your cap/gown for graduation. If you participate in graduation at DDCC, you can wear that cap/gown for the Valley ceremony.

February through May

●If requested by colleges, send first-semester grades. Remember, second-semester grades are essential. Your college acceptance is conditional upon a satisfactory final transcript. Make a final decision regarding the college you plan to attend and send your acceptance (deposit money).

●It is an excellent idea to write thank-you note(s) for scholarships received.

●On the end-of-year senior survey, indicate where we should send your final transcript.

Applications Options

●**Early Decision** - A plan under which you may submit your credentials early to one college, usually around October 15 of your senior year. You are notified of your status **by December 1**. As part of an early decision plan, **you are required to sign a statement agreeing to accept the college's offer of admission**. You must also withdraw your application from other colleges if accepted under Early Decision.

●**Early Action** - An admission procedure to notify students of early admissions to the college. Students do NOT need to accept the college's offer of admission. They may apply to other colleges/universities. **Points to remember are that early action and early decision candidates can be rejected. Financial awards are typically announced in April, and candidates must have outstanding records, as the selection process is highly competitive.**

●**Regular Admission** - Candidates submit their applications from November to February, depending on the individual and college. Check the deadline for each school.

●**Rolling Admission** - Candidates submit their application at their convenience up to a specific date. They typically receive an offer of acceptance or rejection within 4-6 weeks (used by Community Colleges).

Decisions

●**Offer of Conditional Admittance** - An acceptance to a college, **provided you maintain your academic performance throughout the year**. A college can withdraw its offer if your grades fall significantly, if your course rigor changes after admission, or if you are involved in an activity that results in disciplinary action by the school or law enforcement.

●**Denial** - A final decision by the college not to offer admission. Students who are denied can apply again after completing at least one semester of college coursework elsewhere.

●**Deferment** - A delay of the admissions decision until a later time. Many competitive schools will defer fall applications to the spring to receive additional grades and other information.

●**Waitlisted** - Occurs after the regular admissions process is complete. There is no guarantee that a college will place an applicant on the waitlist or that an applicant will rank where they expect. Students on a waitlist for one college should plan to attend another college and then reconsider their options if they are later admitted.

COLLEGE FAIRS

Students will need to register via [StriveScan.com](https://strivescan.com) in advance to get a barcode or QR code so that colleges can scan their information to stay connected.

Rather than filling out paper cards at each table if you want to connect with an organization, the representative will scan your premade barcode. The following day, you will receive a report with information on the organizations with which they scanned.

Using StriveScan will allow you to:

Explore: View an interactive list of attending colleges and filter by size, location, majors, and more.

Plan: Save favorite schools and arrive ready to meet reps

National Christian College Fair		
September 23	Wesleyan Christian Academy, High Point, NC Register online at FindYourChristianCollege.com to receive a barcode and college recommendations.	6:00 – 8:00 pm
Local College Fairs StriveScan.com		
September 14th	Catawba College, Salisbury, NC (GYM)	3:00 – 5:00 pm
September 18th	Davidson Davie Community College, Lexington, NC (GYM)	9:00 – 12:00 pm
September 29th	Greensboro Coliseum, Greensboro, NC	5:30 – 7:30 pm
October 2nd	Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, NC	5:00 – 7:30 pm
Virtual College Nights – For Transfer Students – MUST Register by Friday, September 26		
September 30th to October 2nd	UNC System Virtual Open House	3:00 – 4:30 pm
Register at https://myapps.northcarolina.edu/conferences/unc-system-virtual-transfer-fair/		

RESIDENCY DETERMINATION SERVICE (RDS)

Why RDS?	To qualify or be eligible for:	1. In-state TUITION at NC public colleges and universities 2. State GRANT consideration at <u>all</u> NC colleges and universities
Do RDS first!	Before you begin applications:	You will need parent/guardian assistance. NC law requires RDS to ask for parent information.
Go to RDS	Step 1	LOG IN to RDS using your CFNC account
	Step 2	UPDATE your Profile (Be accurate – SSN and Date of Birth are critical)
	Step 3	RDS ONLINE APPLICATION • Social Security number (or other identifiable number) • Tax return information, vehicle registration, and driver's license • Voter registration and other information about residency in North Carolina
	Step 4	UPLOAD documents if required
REMEMBER	Don't guess	1. RDS Checks your answers with NC State Agencies 2. Guessing = NON-Resident
	Submit documents	1. RDS shows if you need documents and which ones – not everyone does 2. UPLOAD or send to RDS
RDS STATUS SCREEN – When finished, you will see:	Your RCN & Classification Documents	1. Residency Certification Number (unique identifier never changes) 2. "Resident" or "Non-Resident" AND "In-State" or "Out-of- State" tuition
DON'T AGREE?	RECONSIDERATION is for students who: • Need to correct certain errors in the data submitted during the RDS application • Have had a change in personal circumstances since completing their current determination, or • Did not submit the required documentation within the initial consideration deadlines, or • Were requested by their campus to complete a reconsideration APPEAL is for students whose circumstances have not changed but believe their residency classification is incorrect.	

	- Students have the ability to provide additional information and documentation relating to their appeal request and participate in a face to face hearing with RDS. - Students have 10 calendar days from the date of the determination they are appealing, or a status change due to a failed validation, to submit a Notification of Appeal through the RDS online system. - Requests for appeals are not accepted after the deadline, and the student's classification will remain non-resident. Questions? Call RDS toll-free: 844-319-3640
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ADDITIONAL RDS RESOURCES

- CFNC RDS: Understanding the basics for students and families (video)
<https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/nc-countdown-to-college/for-students/>

SCHOLARSHIP WEBSITES & SEARCH ENGINES

American Indian College Fund	https://collegefund.org
Asian Pacific Islander American	www.apiasf.org
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators	www.nasfaa.org
Black Excel	www.blackexcel.org
Broke Scholar	www.brokescholar.com
College Net	www.collegenet.com
College Parents	www.collegeparents.org
College View	www.collegeview.com
Go College	www.gocollege.com
Career One Stop	www.acinet.org
US Department of Labor	https://www.bls.gov/ooh/
Big Future	http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org
NC State Education Assistance Authority	www.ncseaa.edu

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities	www.naicu.edu
National Center for Education Statistics	https://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/
Scholarships	www.scholarships.com
United Negro College Fund	www.uncf.org
US Department of Education	www.ed.gov
Chegg	http://www.chegg.com/
Hispanic Scholarship Fund	https://www.hsf.net/scholarship
O*Net	www.onetcenter.org
North Carolina Department of Commerce	www.nccommerce.com/lead