Financial Aid 101

FEDERAL AND STATE AID

2026-2027

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GSFC | Georgia Student Finance Commission





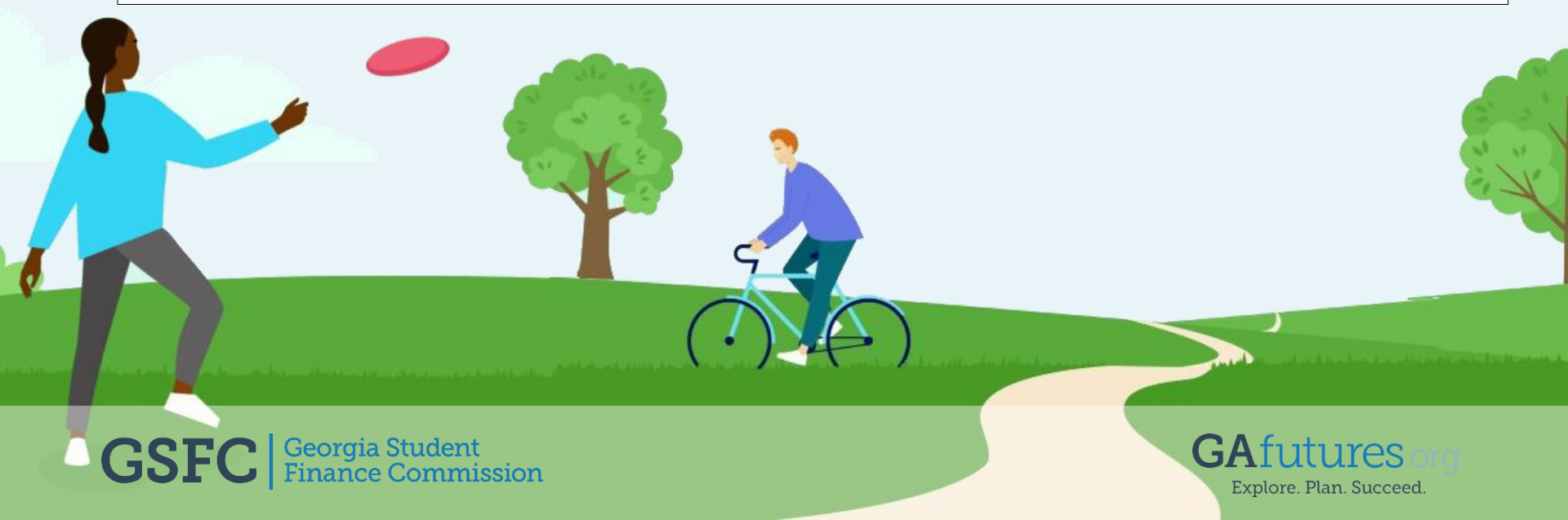
Financial Aid

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

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.



FINANCIAL AID

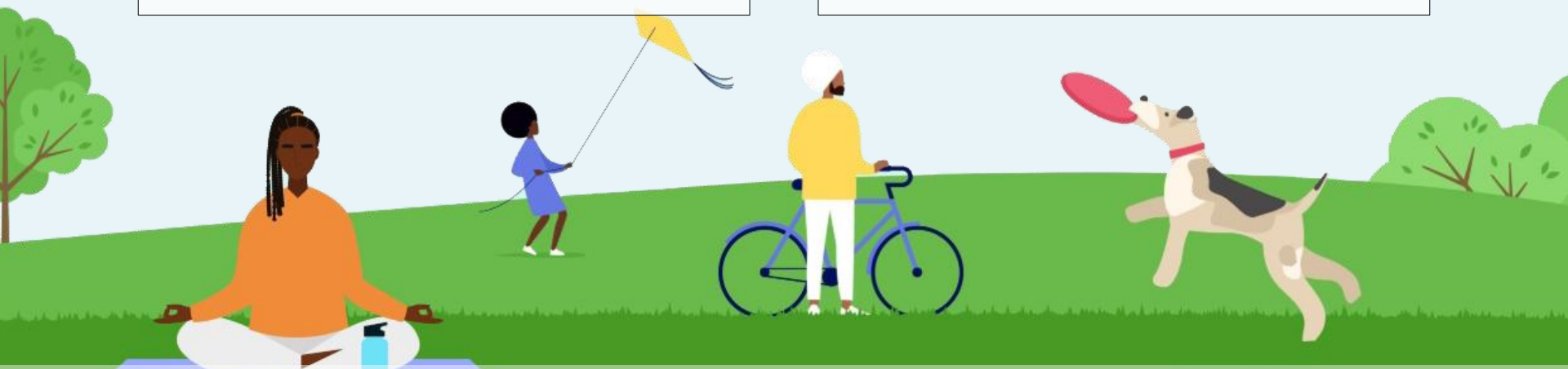
DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS

Direct Costs

Tuition
Student fees
On-campus housing
Meal plan
Parking permits

Indirect Costs

Books
Off-campus Housing
School supplies
Transportation
Groceries



Types of Financial Aid

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



FORMS OF FINANCIAL AID AND SOURCES

FORMS OF FINANCIAL AID

- Scholarships
- Grants
- Work-study Programs
- Loans

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID

- Federal and State government
- Colleges and universities
- Professional organizations
- Service organizations
- Employers
- 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)

FINANCIAL AID

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 within the United States.



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

Federal Pell Grant

- Need-based federal grant
- Undergraduate student with financial need
- Maximum amount for 2026-2027 is $7,395

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

FSEOG

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

- Undergraduate student with exceptional financial need
- Campus-based: not every school participates; funding is limited
- Up to $4,000

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Federal Work Study

Federal Work Study Program

- Full-time or part-time undergraduate or graduate student
- Earn at least Federal minimum wage
- Need-based, first-come first-serve basis (limited funds)
- On-campus or off-campus positions

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

TEACH Grant

TEACH Grant Program

- Enrolled in coursework to begin a career in teaching
- Must agree to serve as a full-time teacher in a high-need field in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves low-income students
- Up to $4,000; becomes a loan if you do not teach as required

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Loans

Federal Loan Program

- Direct Subsidized Loan
- Direct Unsubsidized Loan
- Federal PLUS Loan for parents of dependent undergraduate students

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

DIRECT SUBSIDIZED & UNSUBSIDIZED LOANS

Direct Subsidized Loan

- Available to undergraduate students with financial need
- **Interest is paid by the government while enrolled (at least half time) and during grace period.**
- Amount determined by institution and based on COA, financial need, other aid and loan limits
- Current interest rate 6.52% (undergraduate)

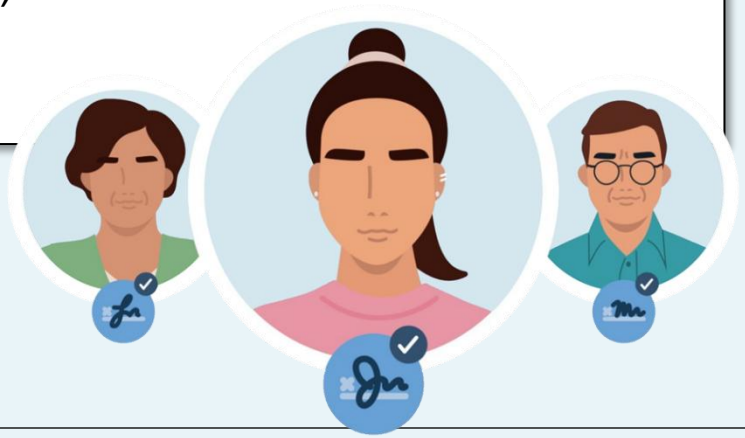
Direct Unsubsidized Loan

- Available to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students
- **The student is responsible for the interest while enrolled and during grace period.**
- Amount determined by institution and based on COA, financial need, other aid and loan limits
- Current interest rate 6.52% (undergraduate)

DIRECT SUBSIDIZED LOAN

Direct PLUS Loan for Parents

- Only one parent will be the borrower
- Can have more than one loan for additional dependent student
- Approval based on credit history
- Annual loan limit: $20,000 on behalf of each student (for those ineligible for the interim exception)
- Current interest rate is 9.07%



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



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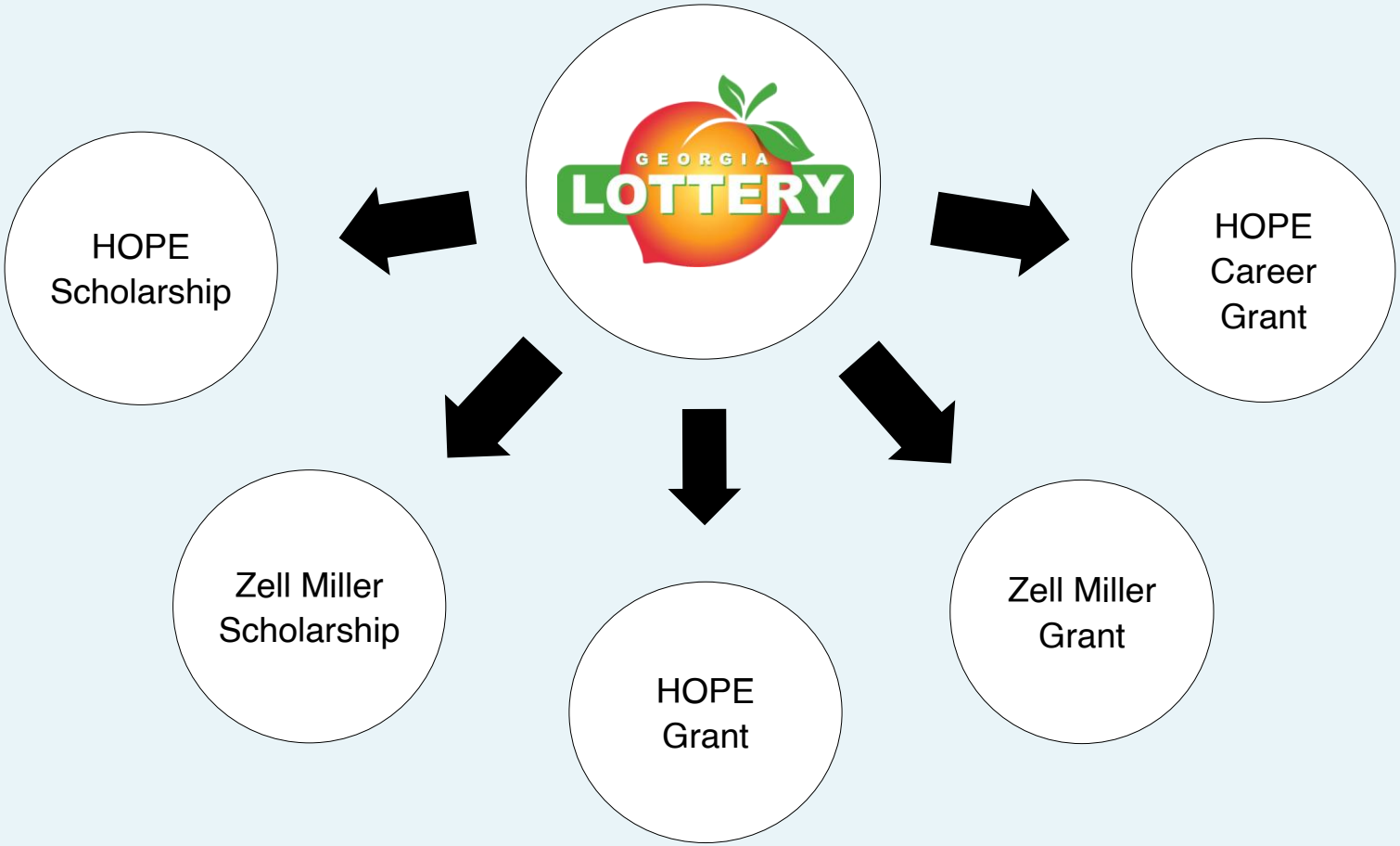
Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally Program



HOPE PROGRAM

BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

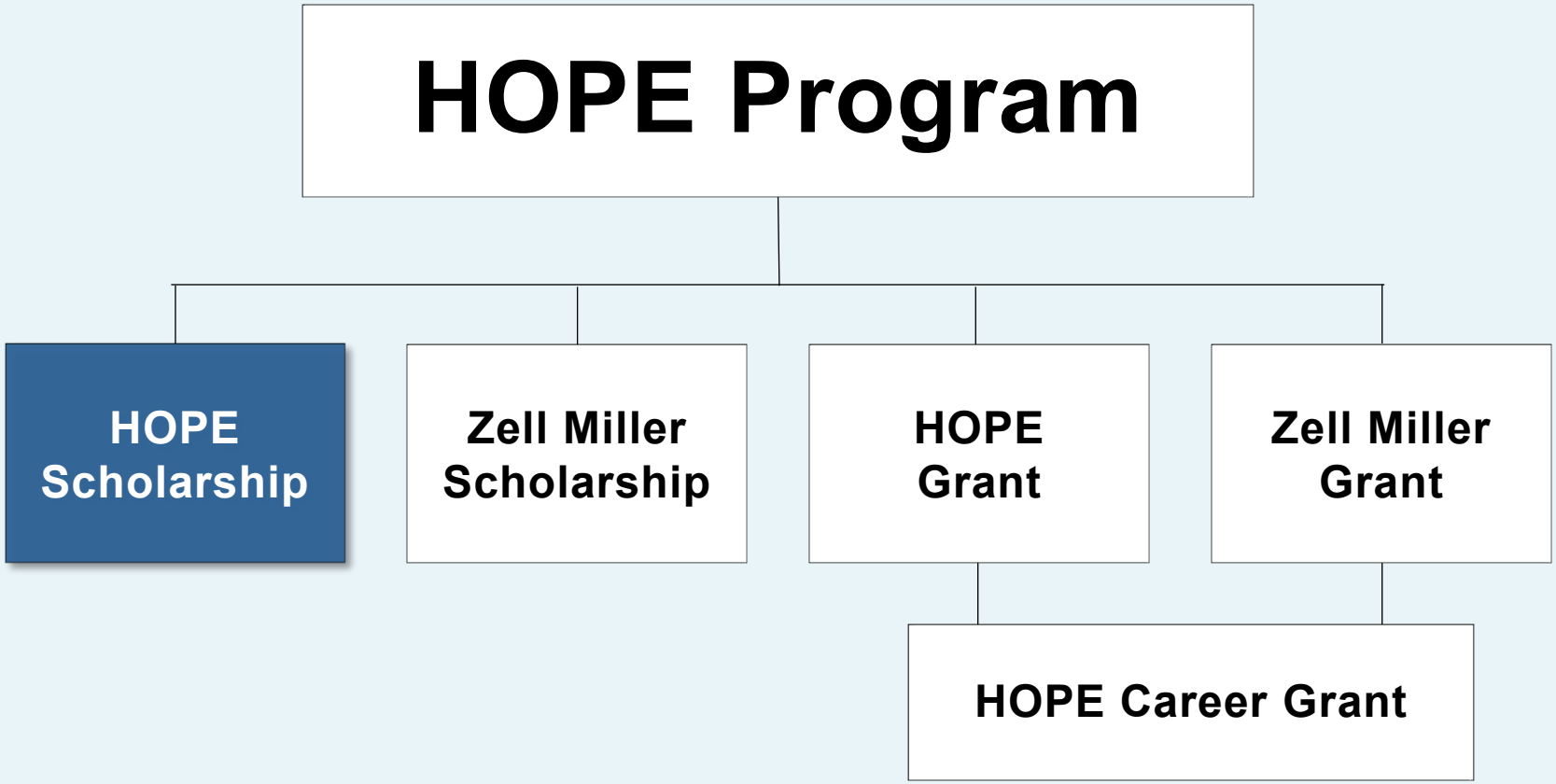
Student must:

- 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
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (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 SCHOLARSHIP



HOPE SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Student must:

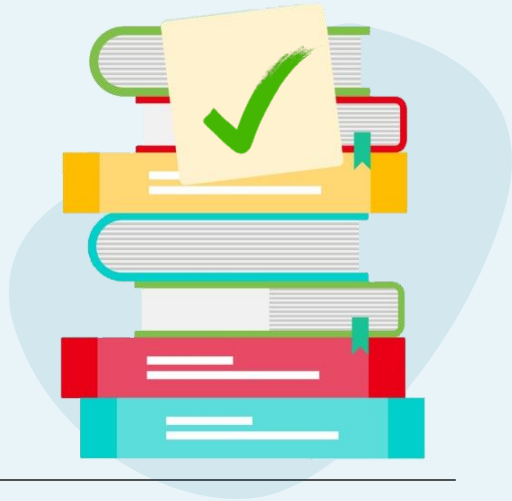
- Be enrolled in a degree program
- Graduate with a 3.0 high school HOPE GPA
  - High school HOPE GPA is different from cumulative high school GPA
  - High school HOPE GPA is calculated from grades in core curriculum courses 9th – 12th grade
  - After high school graduation, HOPE Scholarship may also 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

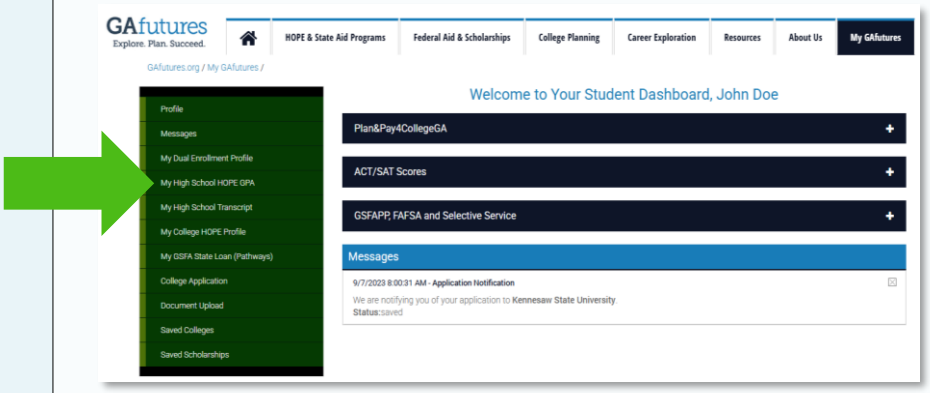
HOPE GPA:

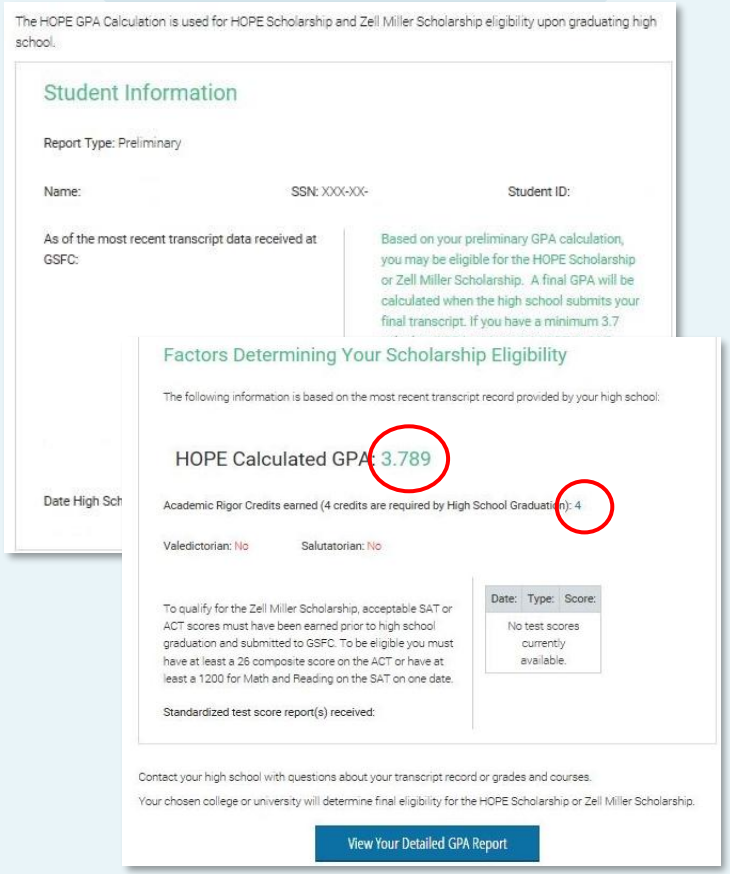
- ONLY calculated by GSFC
- Only core courses from 9th through 12th grade
- From the eligible core courses, any weighting added by the high school is removed, then half a point (0.5) is added back to grades of “B”, “C”, “D”, and “F” for AP, IB, and Dual Enrollment degree-level core courses.
- Transcripts 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.





COLLEGE HOPE GPA

Maintain 3.0 college HOPE GPA at all checkpoints:

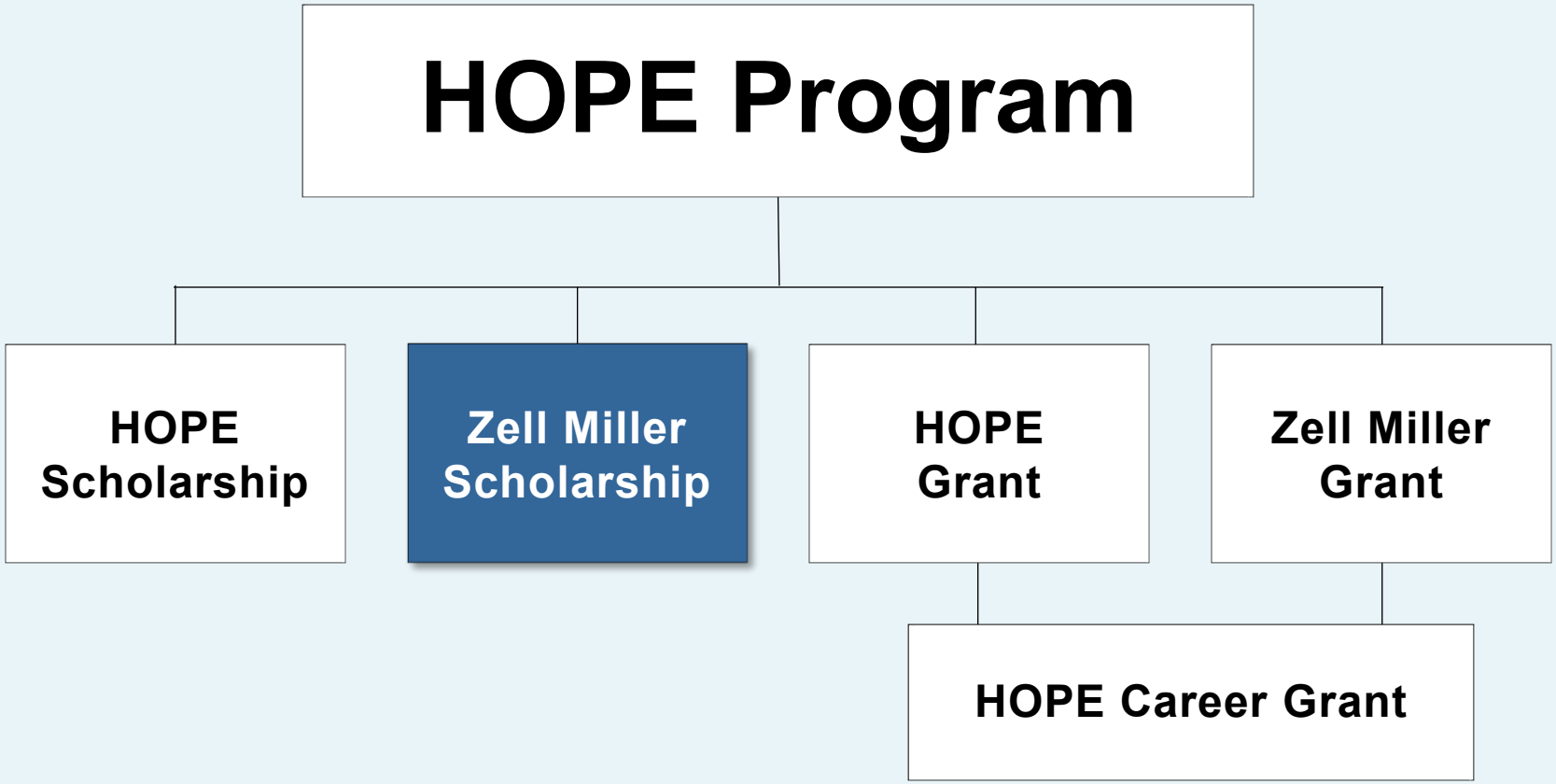
- End of every Spring semester/quarter
- 30/45 attempted semester/quarter hours
- 60/90 attempted semester/quarter hours
- 90/135 attempted semester/quarter hours
- Three-term Checkpoint, if enrolled less than full-time for first three semesters/quarters

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



HOPE PROGRAM

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP

Complete four (4) academically rigorous course credits 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

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

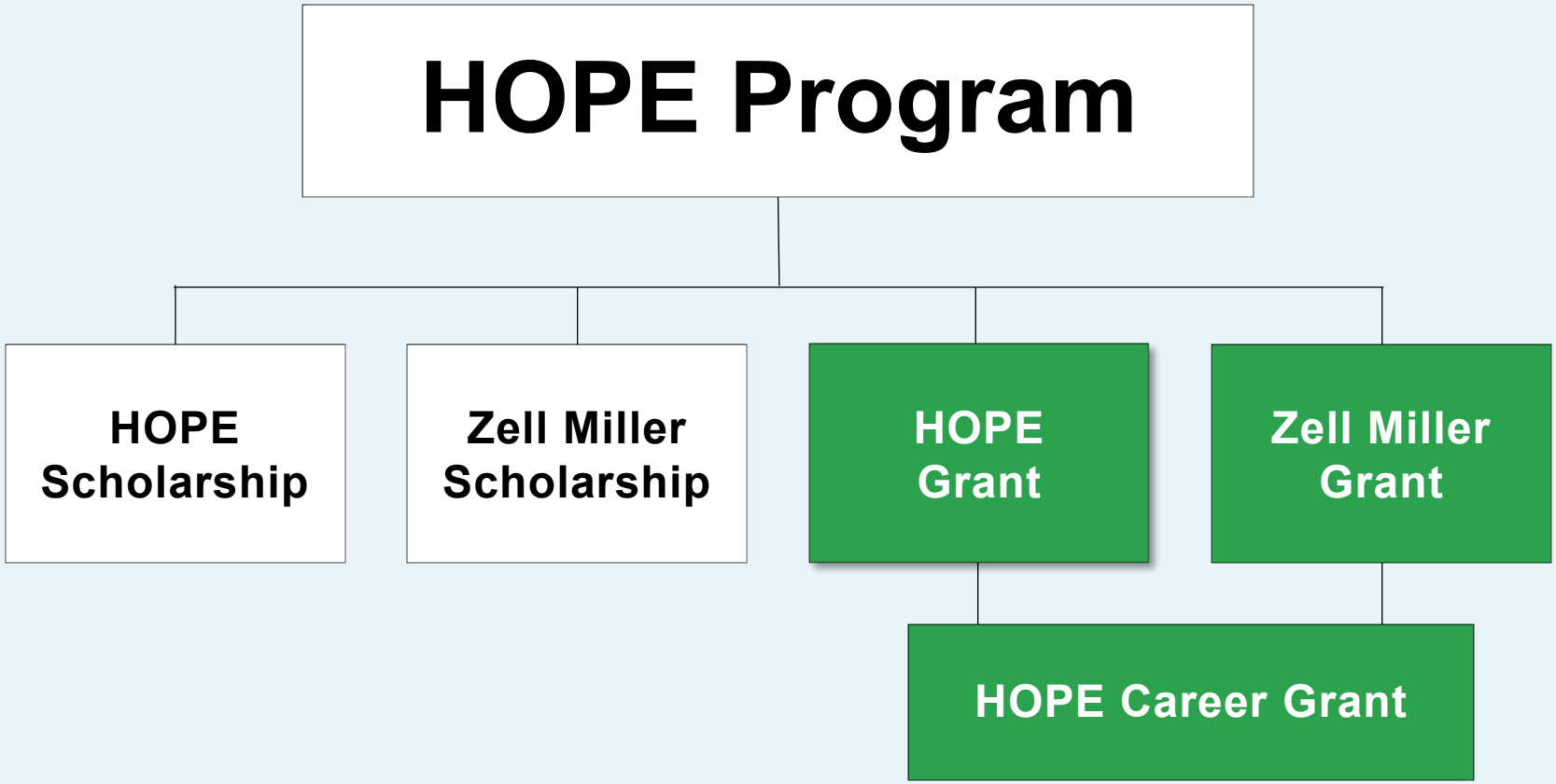
Program Eligibility	HOPE Scholarship	Zell Miller Scholarship
High School HOPE GPA	3.0	3.7
Rigor credits	4	4
SAT Score	N/A	1200
ACT Score	N/A	25

HOPE & ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIPS

Students can lose eligibility due to one of the following:

- College HOPE GPA requirement not met (3.0 for HOPE; 3.3 for Zell Miller)
- Reaching maximum attempted hours: 127 attempted semester credit hours or 190 quarter credit hours
- Failing to use funds within ten years of high school graduation or equivalent
  - Exception for active duty military service in United States Armed Forces
- Received bachelor's or first professional degree

HOPE PROGRAM GRANTS



HOPE GRANT BASIC ELIGIBILITY

- Meet general eligibility requirements for HOPE Program
- 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 CAREER GRANT BASIC ELIGIBILITY

The HOPE Career Grant is available to Georgia residents who are receiving the HOPE Grant or Zell Miller Grant and are 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 & 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

HOPE PROGRAM

HOPE VS ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP

	HOPE Scholarship	Zell Miller Scholarship
Public Institutions (full-time)	100% of previous year's standard tuition rate	100% of current year's standard tuition rate
Private Institutions (full-time)	$2,985 per semester (fall, spring, summer) $2,034 per quarter (fall, winter, spring, summer)	$2,985 per semester (fall, spring, summer) $2,034 per quarter (fall, winter, spring, summer)

HOPE CAREER GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS

ALL PROGRAMS

Enrolled Semester Hours	Award Amounts
1-2 hours	$125
3-8 hours	$250
9+ hours	$500

TRUCK DRIVING (CSQ1, CT61, CZTD or CT81)

Enrolled Semester Hours	Award Amounts
1-5 hours	$366
6-8 hours	$733
9+ hours	$1,100

BASIC LAW ENFORCEMENT (BPC1)

Enrolled Semester Hours	Award Amounts
1-12 hours	$1,875
13+ hours	$3,750

OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

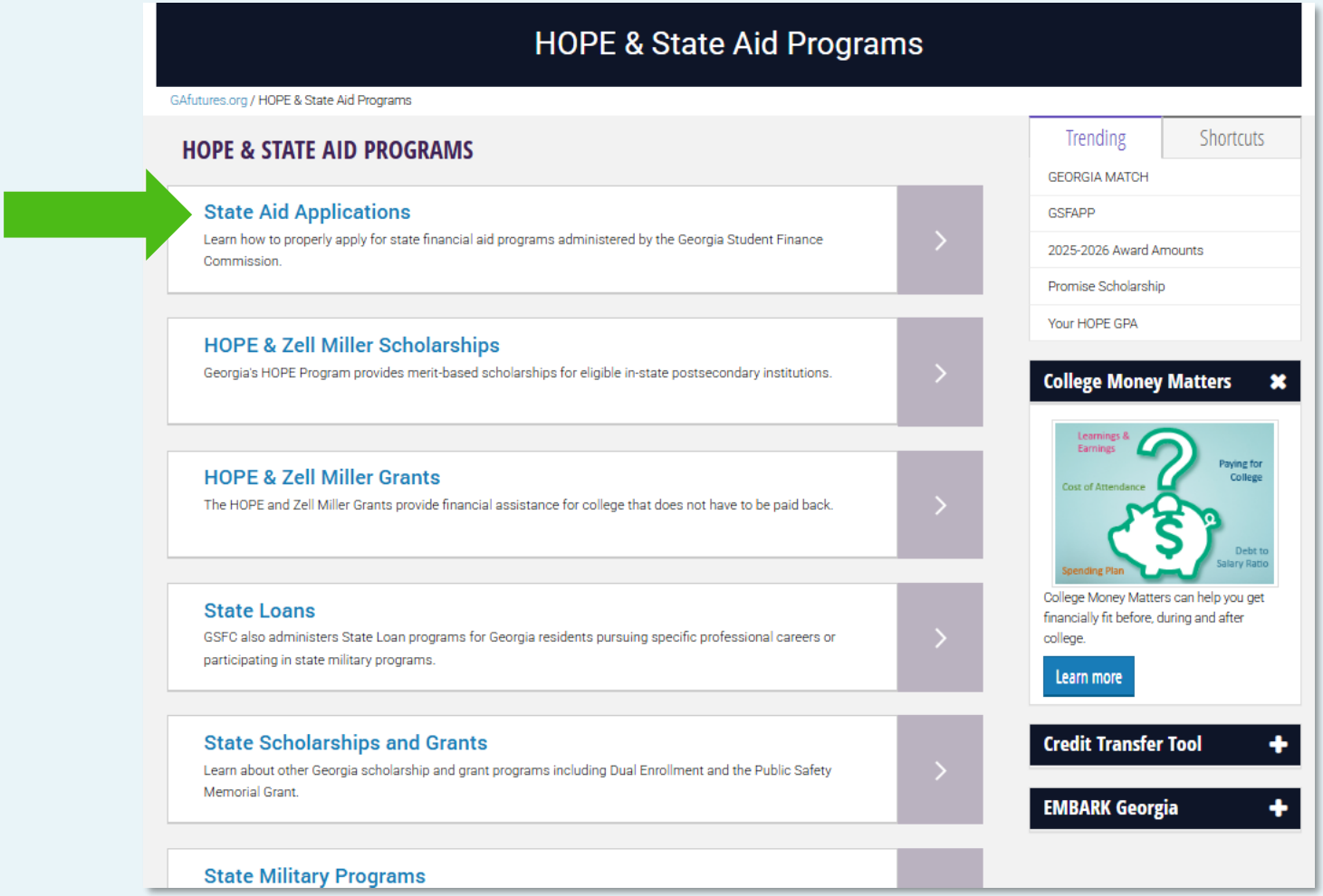
- **Georgia National Guard Service Cancelable Loan**
  Tuition assistance to eligible members of the Georgia National Guard for undergraduate and graduate programs. Member agrees to service repayment.
- **Georgia Military College State Service Scholarship**
  Provide outstanding Georgia Military College students with a full two-year scholarship loan program.
- **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

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

GEORGIA STUDENT FINANCE COMMISSION

APPLY FOR STATE PROGRAMS



The Application Process

Federal and State Aid



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

HOW TO APPLY

FAFSA

- Federal Pell Grant
- FSEOG
- Federal Student Loans
- Federal PLUS
- HOPE Scholarship/Grant
- Zell Miller Scholarship/Grant
- HOPE Career Grant

GSFAPP

- HOPE Scholarship/Grant
- Zell Miller Scholarship/Grant
- HOPE Career Grant



Resources

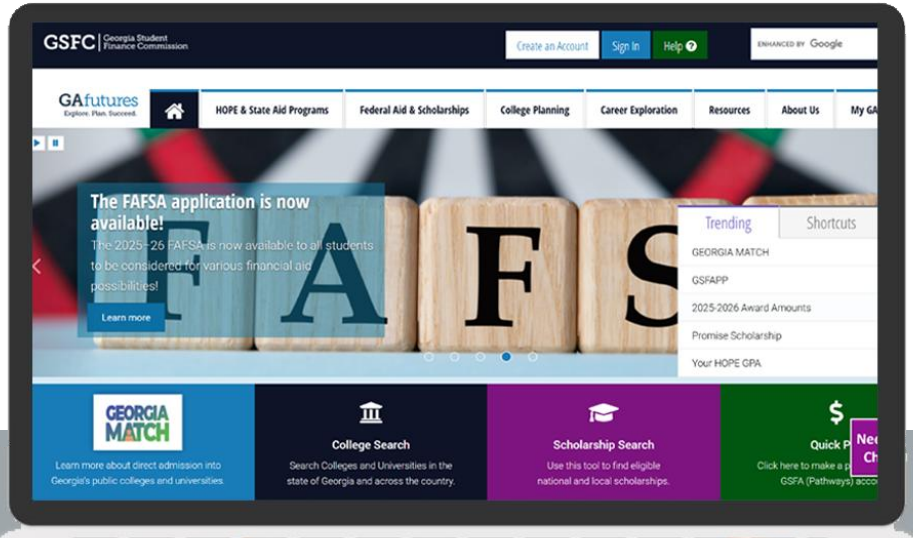
Learn about financial aid resources to help pay for college.



GAfutures.org

Explore. Plan. Succeed.

Georgia's FREE online resource to help students plan, apply, and find affordable ways to pay for college.



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.

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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

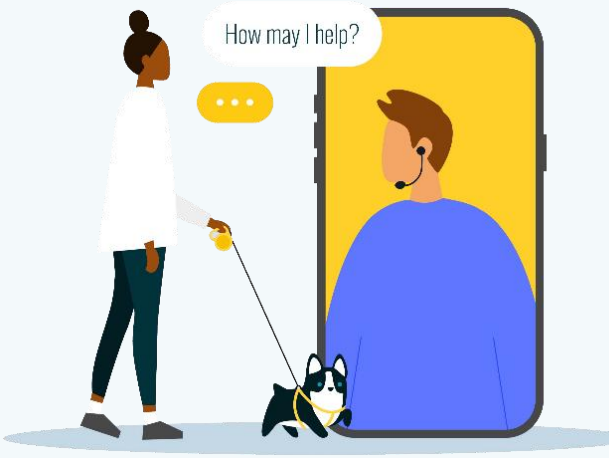
Estimate types of federal student aid you may be eligible for before you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) Form.

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



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RESOURCES

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