Financial Aid 101

FEDERAL AND STATE AID

AUGUST 2025

GAfutures.org
Explore. Plan. Succeed.

GSFC | Georgia Student Finance Commission

AGENDA

Define Financial Aid

Types of Financial Aid

Federal Student Aid Programs

Georgia's Financial Aid Programs

The Application Process

Financial Aid Package

Resources

Financial Aid

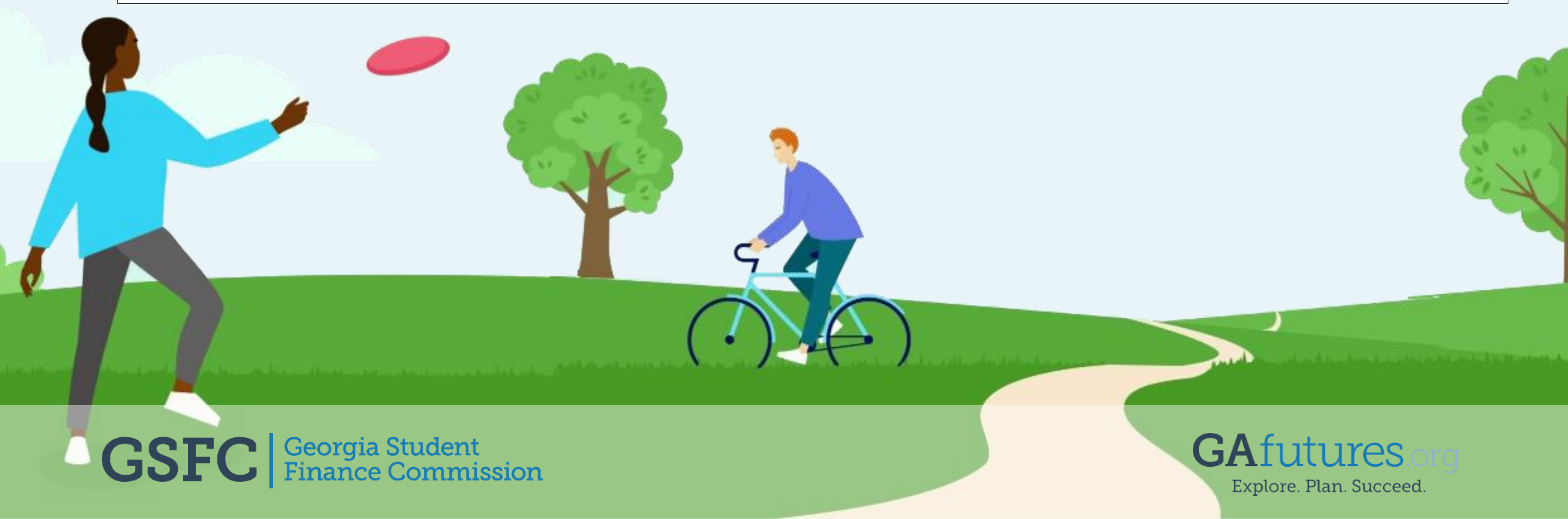
Financial aid is money to help pay for college or career school.

FINANCIAL AID

DEFINITION

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

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



FINANCIAL AID

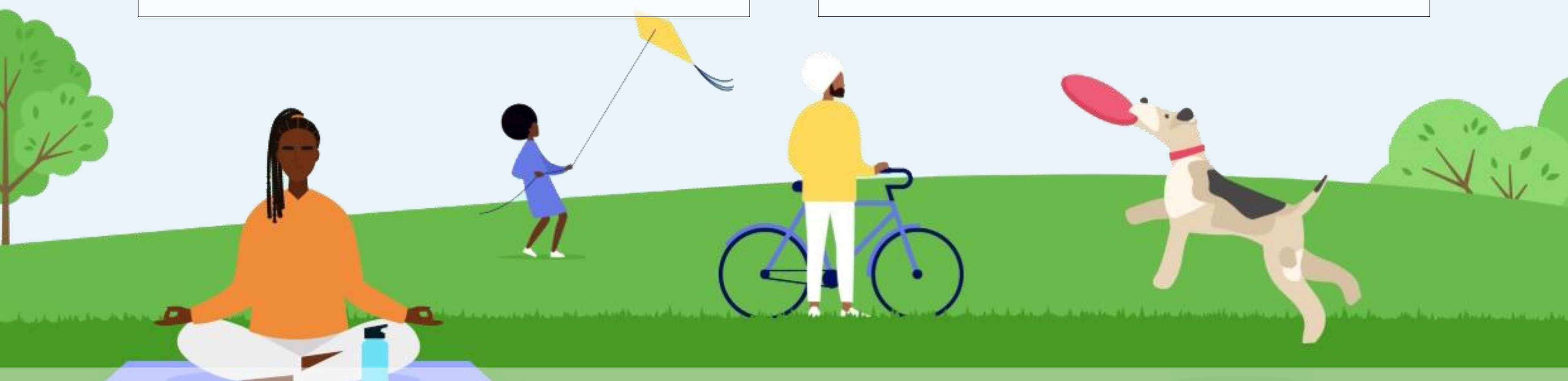
DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS

Direct Costs

Tuition
Student fees
On-campus housing
Meal plan
Parking permits

Indirect Costs

Books
Rent for off-campus
Housing
School supplies
Groceries



FINANCIAL AID

COST OF ATTENDANCE (COA)

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

Types of Financial Aid

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

FINANCIAL AID FORMS AND SOURCES

Forms of Financial Aid:

- Scholarships
- Grants
- Loans
- Work-study programs

Sources of Financial Aid:

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

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

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

GAFUTURES SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

Scholarship Search Tips

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

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

Federal Student Aid Programs

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

HOW TO GET FEDERAL STUDENT AID

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

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

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

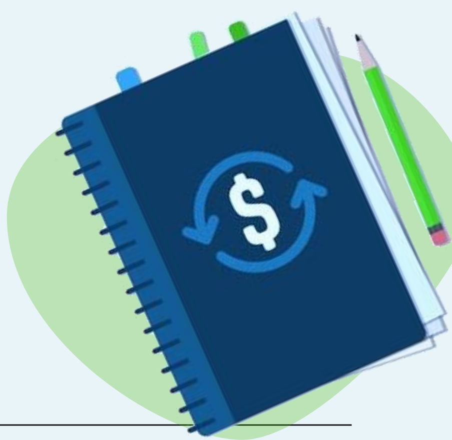
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
  - Undergraduate student with exceptional financial need
  - Pell Grant recipients receive priority
  - Up to $4,000

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

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

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

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



DIRECT SUBSIDIZED LOAN

Direct Subsidized Loan

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

DIRECT UNSUBSIDIZED LOAN

Direct Unsubsidized Loan

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

DIRECT PLUS LOAN

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

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

FEDERAL LOAN PROGRAM LIMITS

2026 - 2027 Academic Year

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

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

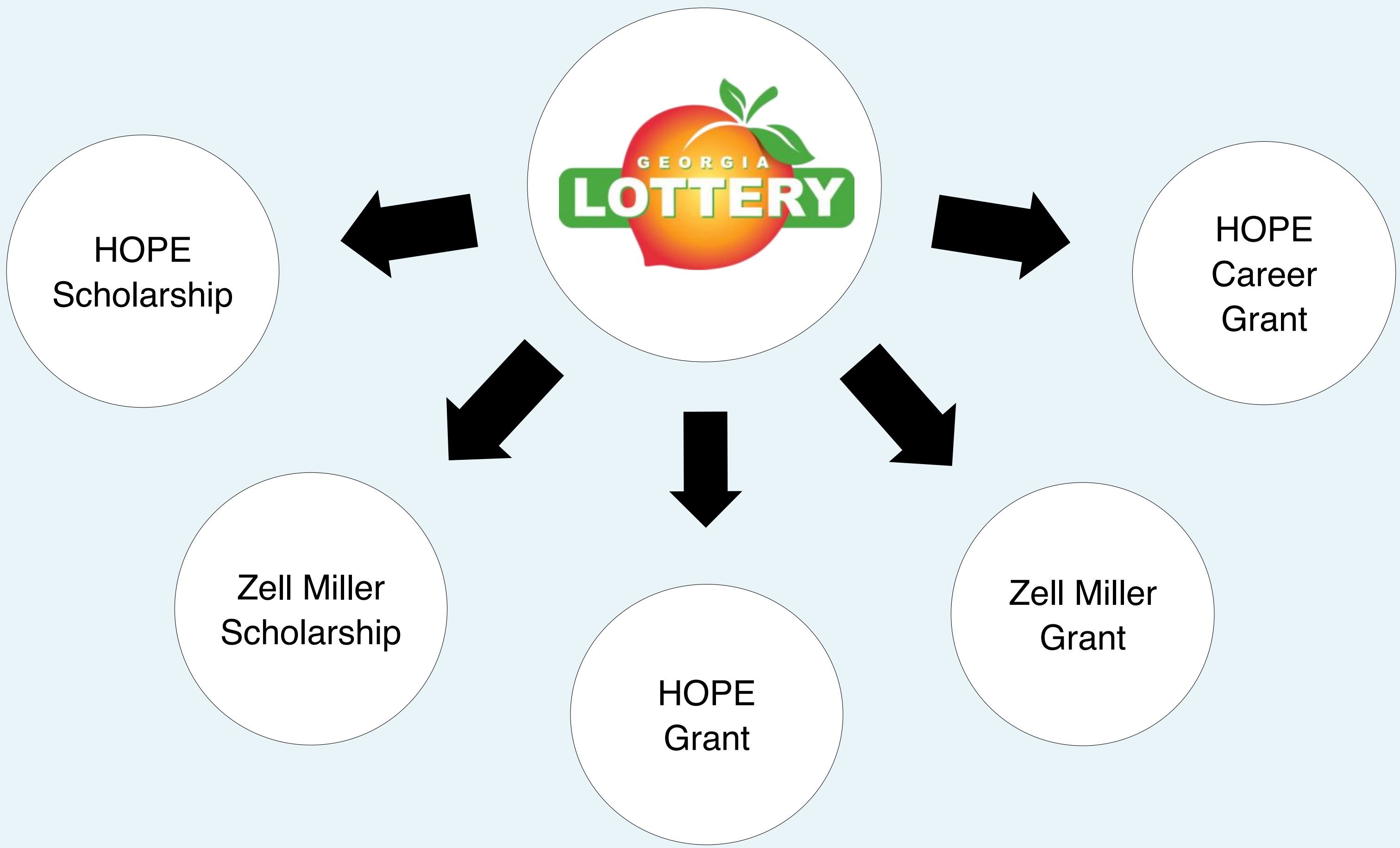
HOPE Program

Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally Program

GSFC | Georgia Student Finance Commission

GAfutures.org
Explore. Plan. Succeed.

Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally Program



GSFC | Georgia Student Finance Commission

GAfutures.org
Explore. Plan. Succeed.

HOPE PROGRAM

BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Student must:

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

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

HOPE PROGRAM

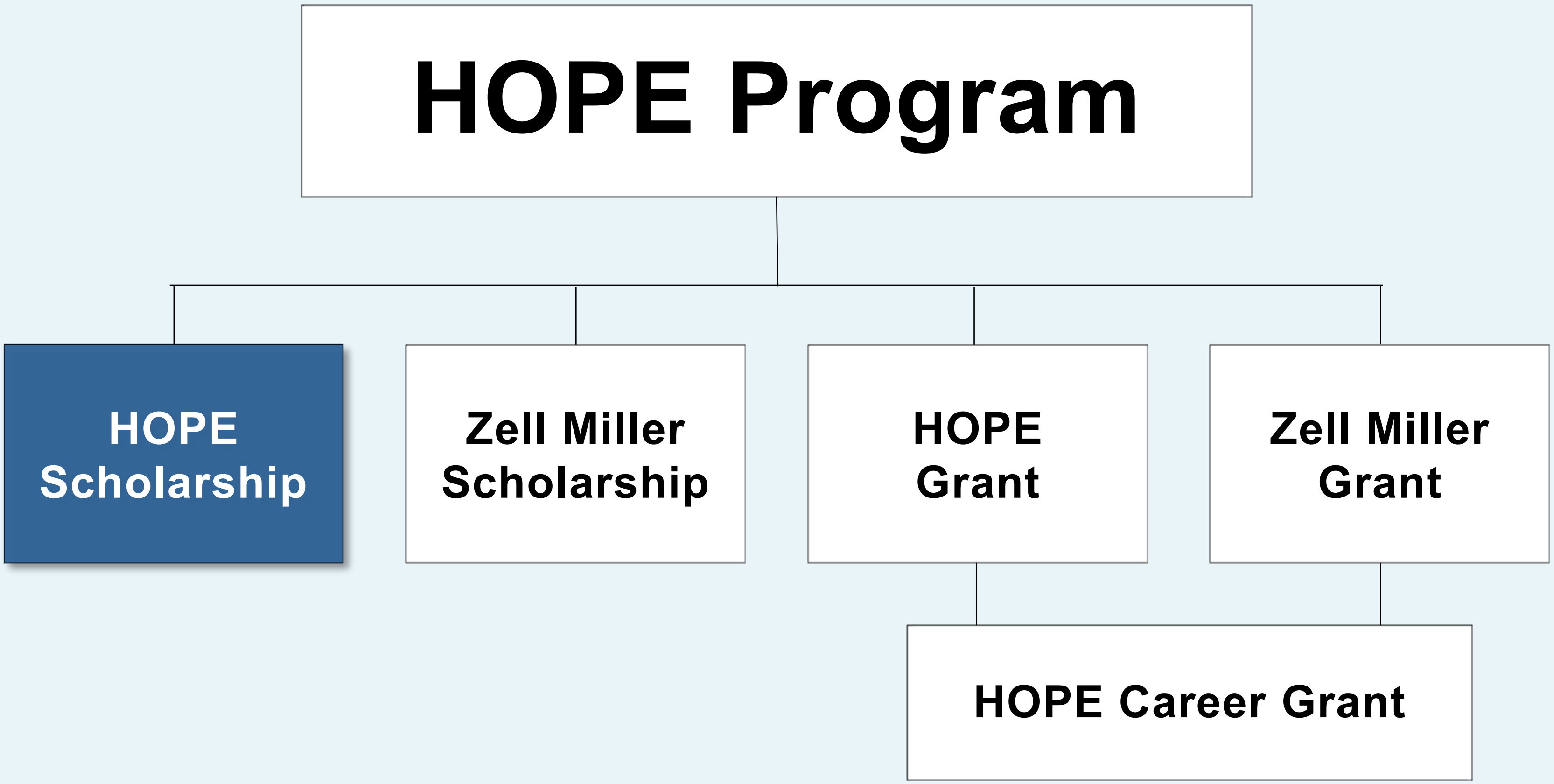
BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

PUBLIC	TECHNICAL	PRIVATE
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College	Albany Technical College	Agnes Scott College
Albany State University	Athens Technical College	American InterContinental University
Atlanta Metropolitan State College	Atlanta Technical College	Andrew College
Augusta University	Augusta Technical College	Berry College
Clayton State University	Central Georgia Technical College	Brenau University
College of Coastal Georgia	Chattahoochee Technical College	Brewton-Parker Christian University
Columbus State University	Coastal Pines Technical College	Clark Atlanta University
Dalton State College	Columbus Technical College	Covenant College
East Georgia State College	Georgia Northwestern Technical College	DeVry University
Fort Valley State University	Georgia Piedmont Technical College	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Georgia College & State University	Gwinnett Technical College	Emmanuel University
Georgia Gwinnett College	Lanier Technical College	Emory University
Georgia Highlands College	North Georgia Technical College	Georgia Military College
Georgia Institute of Technology	Oconee Fall Line Technical College	LaGrange College
Georgia Southern University	Ogeechee Technical College	Life University
Georgia Southwestern State University	Savannah Technical College	Luther Rice College & Seminary*
Georgia State University	South Georgia Technical College	Mercer University
Gordon State College	Southeastern Technical College	Morehouse College
Kennesaw State University	Southern Crescent Technical College	Oglethorpe University
Middle Georgia State University	Southern Regional Technical College	Paine College
Savannah State University	West Georgia Technical College	Piedmont University
University of Georgia	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	Point University
University of North Georgia		Reinhardt University
University of West Georgia		Saint Leo University
Valdosta State University		Savannah College of Art & Design
		Shorter University
		South College
		South University
		Spelman College
		Thomas University
		Toccoa Falls College
		Truett McConnell University
		Wesleyan College
		Young Harris College

Visit GAfutures.org to view the complete list.

HOPE PROGRAM

HOPE SCHOLARSHIP



HOPE SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Student must:

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

ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS COURSES

Courses must be on the Academic Rigor Course List.

This includes:

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

MY HIGH SCHOOL HOPE GPA

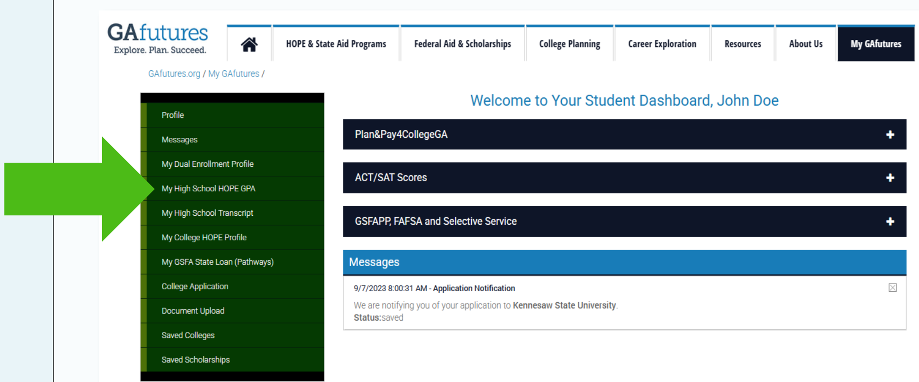
HOPE GPA:

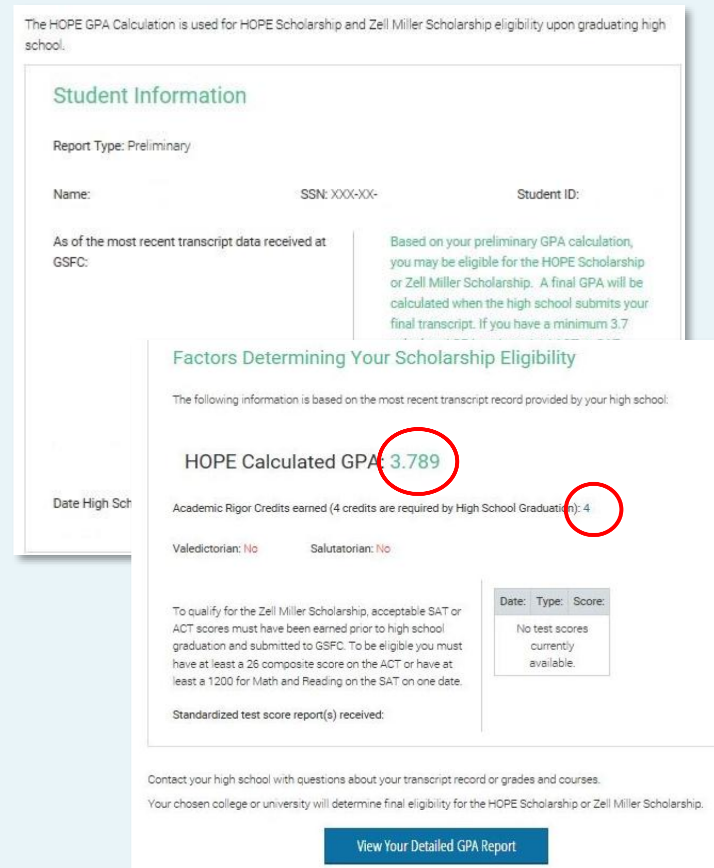
- ONLY calculated by GSFC
- Only core courses from 9th through 12th grade
- AP, IB, and Dual Enrollment college level courses weighted .5 for all grades except for A and F
- Transcripts are uploaded by the high school
- 4 academically rigorous course credits

HOPE PROGRAM

MY HIGH SCHOOL HOPE GPA

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





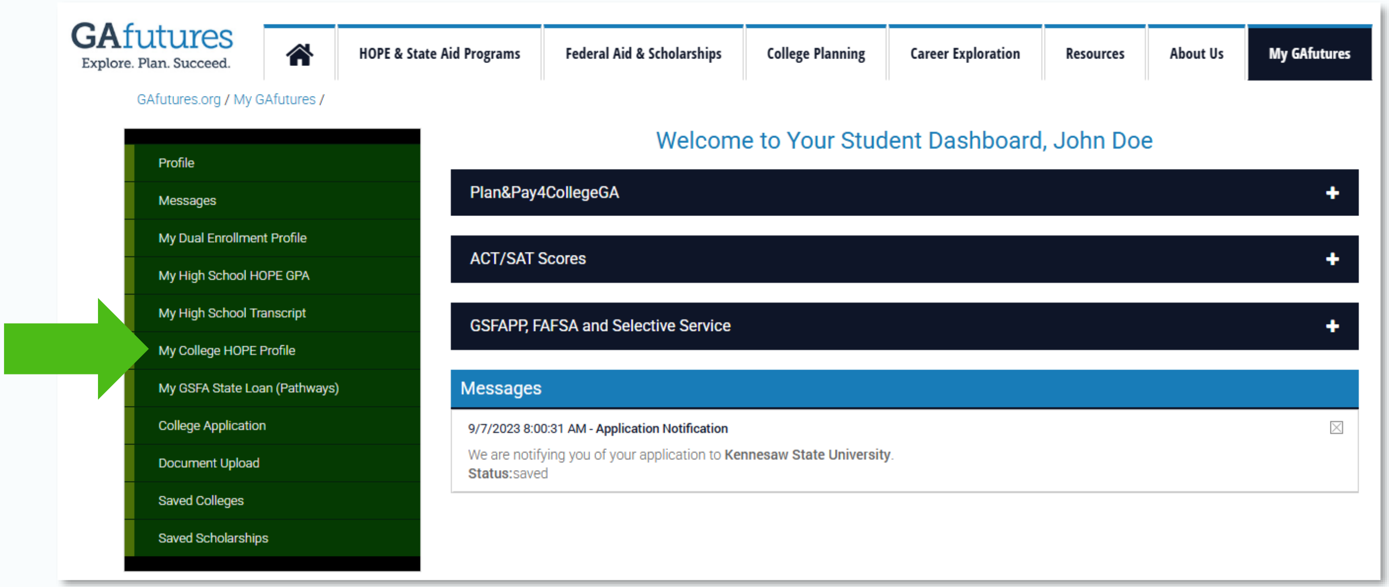
COLLEGE HOPE GPA

Maintain 3.0 college HOPE GPA at all checkpoints:

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

COLLEGE HOPE GPA

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



COLLEGE HOPE GPA

College HOPE GPA:

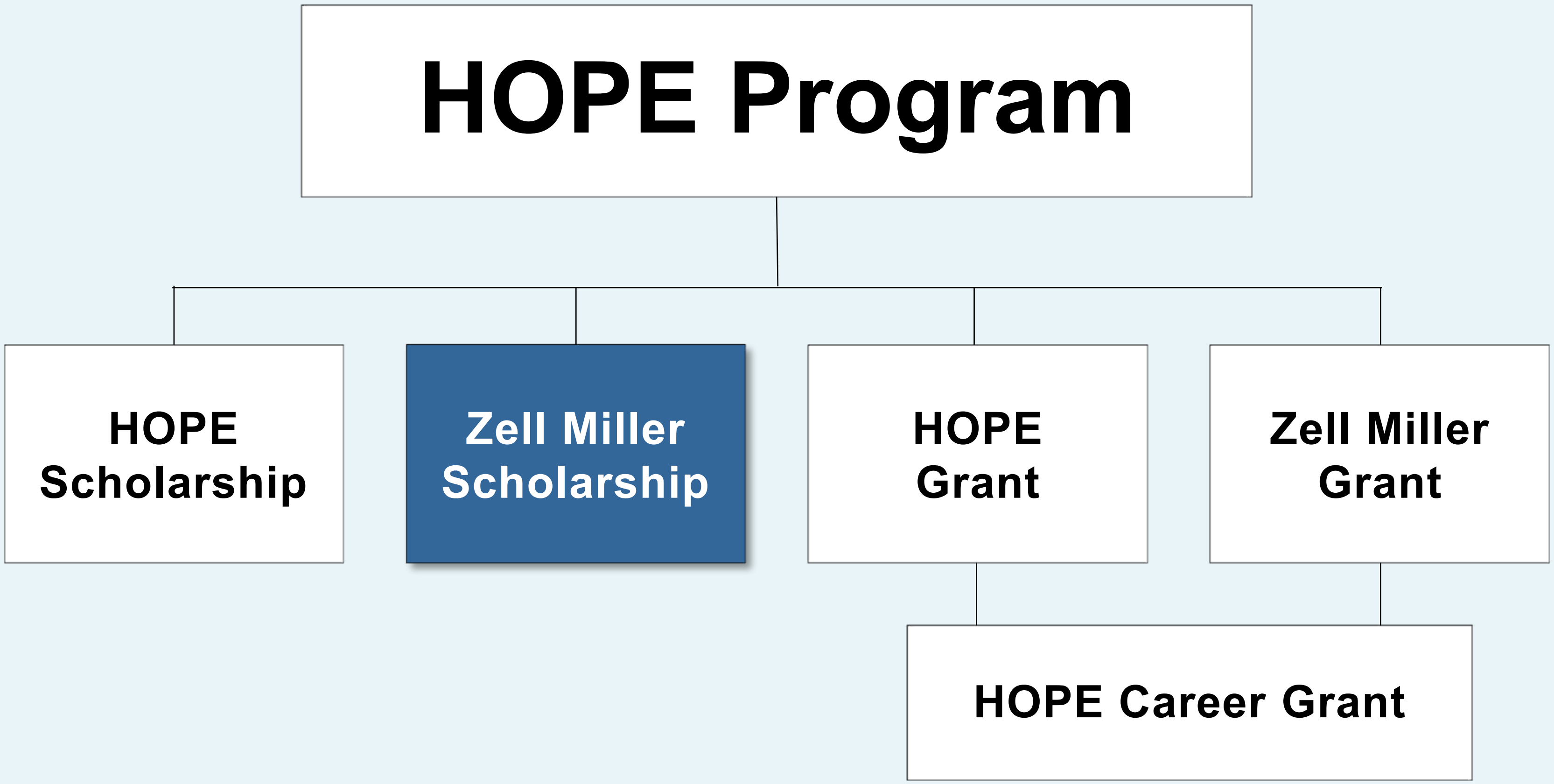
- ONLY calculated by GSFC
- Calculated each semester/quarter
- STEM courses are weighted .5 for all grades except an A and F
- High school Dual Enrollment courses are not included

HOPE SCHOLARSHIP KEY NOTES

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

HOPE PROGRAM

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP



HOPE PROGRAM

ZELL MILLER SCHOLRSHIP

Rigor Requirements and one of the following:

Designated valedictorian or salutatorian

AND

Meet minimum HOPE eligibility requirements

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

AND

1200 SAT total test score

OR

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

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP

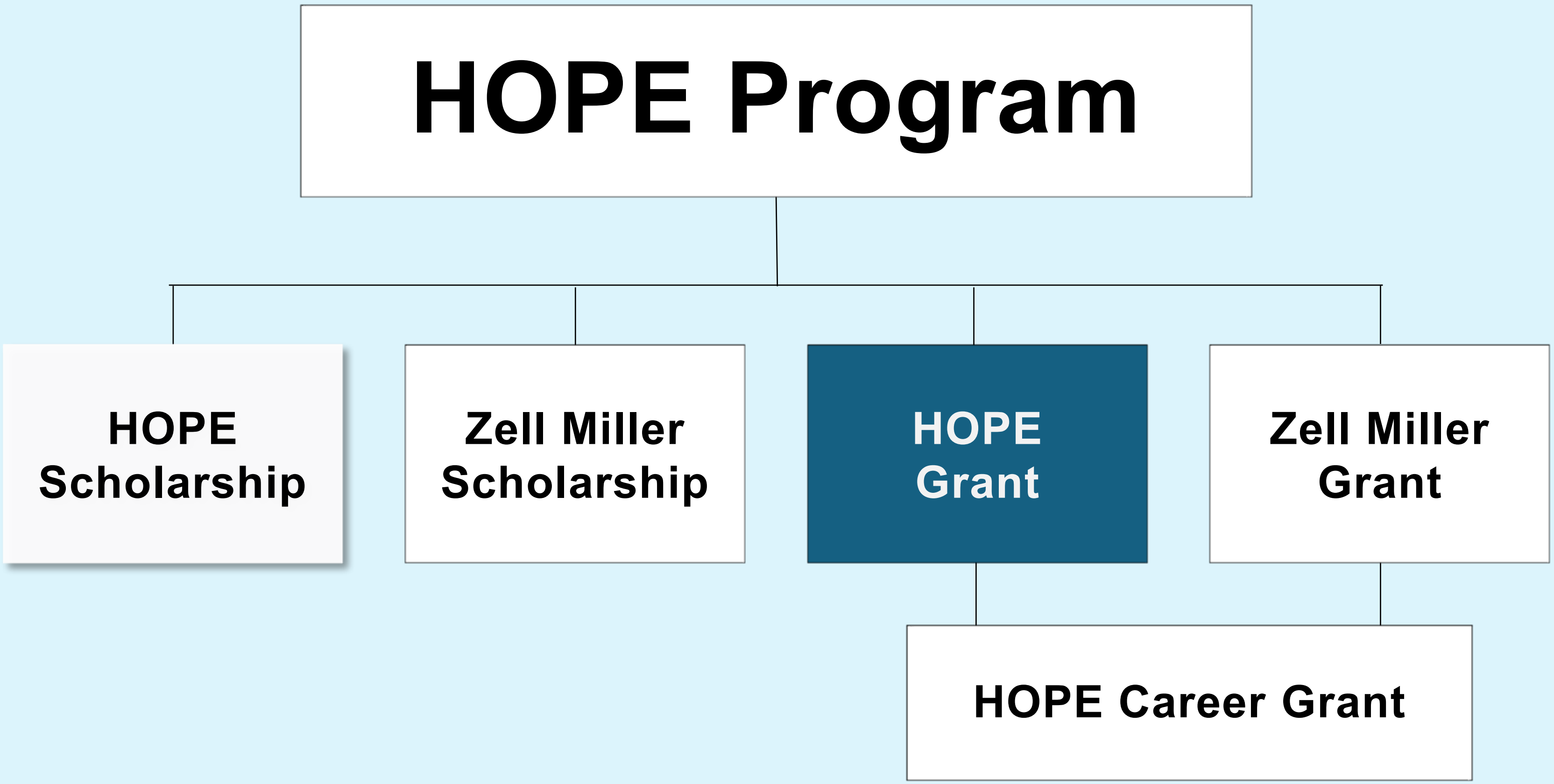
Maintain 3.3 college HOPE GPA at all checkpoints:

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

ZELL MILLER SCHOLARSHIP KEY NOTES

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

HOPE SCHOLARSHIP



HOPE GRANT

- Students pursuing a certificate or diploma program
- Must meet general HOPE requirements:
  - No HOPE GPA required
  - No test score
  - No High School diploma
- Must have a 2.0 GPA to maintain eligibility
- Eligible for the Zell Miller grant after one term.

OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

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

OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

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

APPLY FOR STATE PROGRAMS

HOPE & State Aid Programs

GAfutures.org / HOPE & State Aid Programs

HOPE & STATE AID PROGRAMS

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

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

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

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

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

State Military Programs

Trending | Shortcuts

- GEORGIA MATCH
- GSFAPP
- 2025-2026 Award Amounts
- Promise Scholarship
- Your HOPE GPA

College Money Matters

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

Learn more

Credit Transfer Tool

EMBARK Georgia

The Application Process

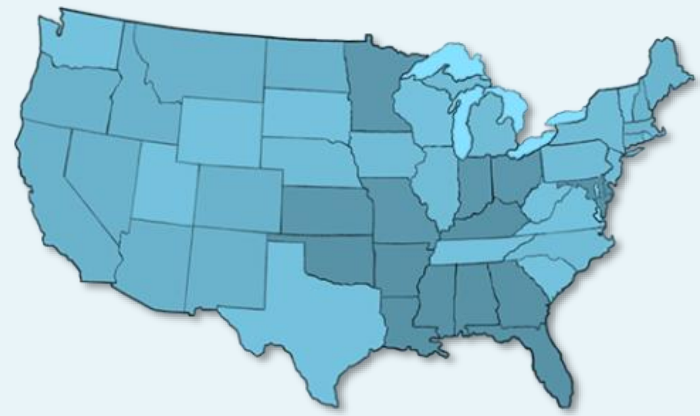
Federal and State Aid

THE GEORGIA STUDENT FINANCE APPLICATION (GSFAPP)

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

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)

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



Completing the FAFSA

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

COMPLETING THE FAFSA

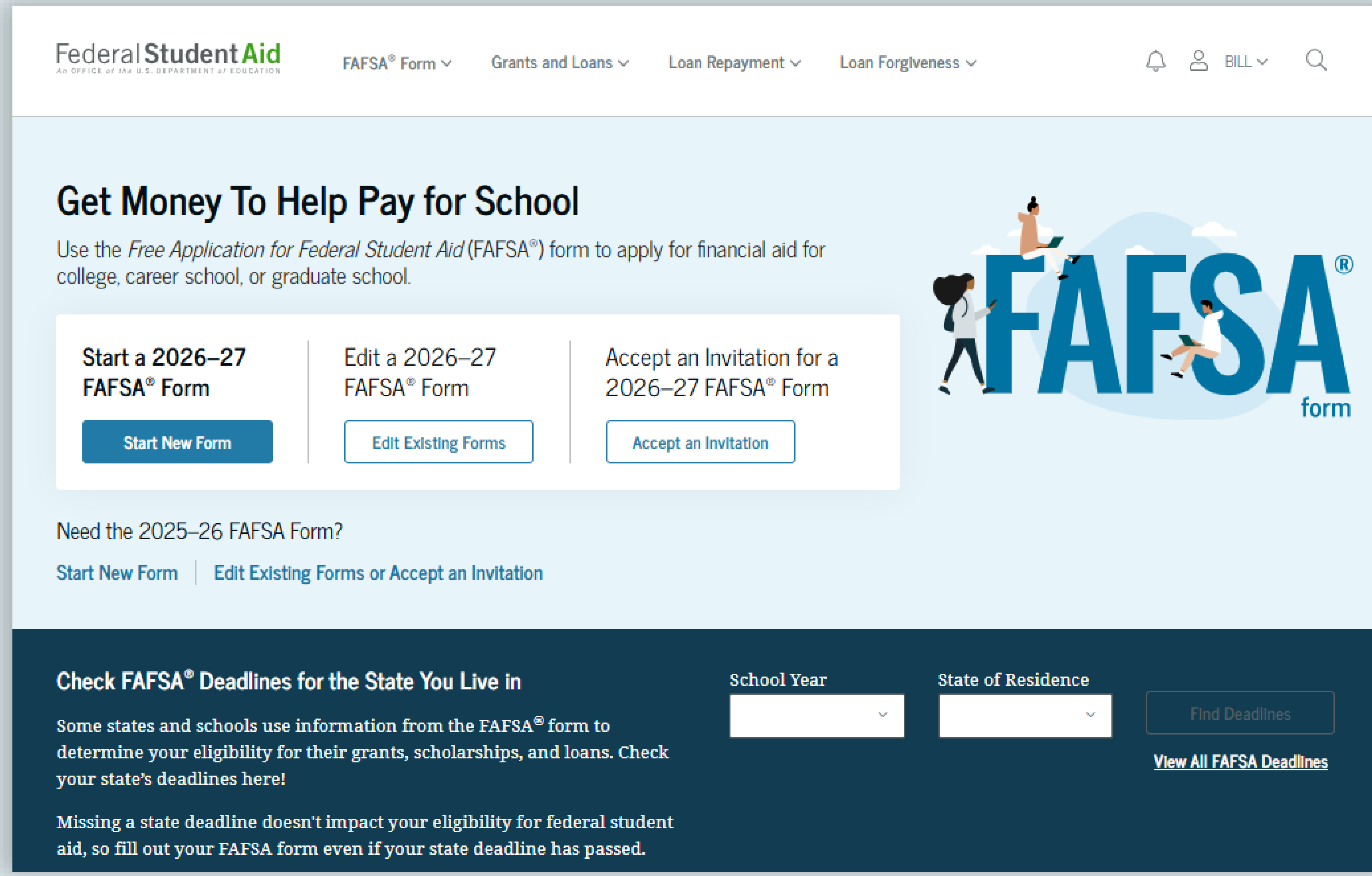
FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID

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

DO NOT PAY ANYONE TO COMPLETE THE FAFSA!

COMPLETING THE FAFSA

WWW.FAFSA.GOV



COMPLETING THE FAFSA

WHICH FAFSA® FORM DO I COMPLETE?

2025 – 2026 FAFSA

IF ATTENDING:

Fall 2025

Spring 2026

Summer 2026

Use 2023 tax returns

Available:
December 2024

2026 - 2027 FAFSA

IF ATTENDING:

Fall 2026

Spring 2027

Summer 2027

Use 2024 tax returns

Available:
October 2025

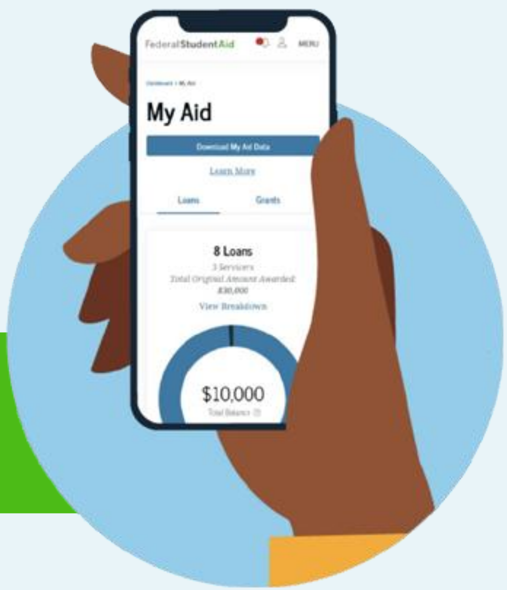
Comparing Financial Aid Packages

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

RECEIVING A FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTER

To receive a Financial Aid Package, a student must:

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



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

FINANCIAL AID AWARD OFFERS

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

Cost to attend the institution for the year	Amount of financial aid the institution is providing
Amount family is expected to contribute	Additional need to be funded through other sources

COMPARE AWARD OFFERS

SCHOLAR UNIVERSITY

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

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

HALLMARK COLLEGE

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

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

COMPARING FINANCIAL AID PACKAGES

THE BEST ORDER TO ACCEPT AID

1 Scholarship and Grants

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

Understand all the conditions.

Make sure it's truly free.

2 Earned money

(e.g., Work Study)

Does not have to be paid back.

Money is paid through paycheck based on hours worked.

Considers class schedule and study time.

3 Borrowed money

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

Must be paid back with interest.
Understand all conditions.

Resources

Learn about financial aid resources to help pay for college.

RESOURCES

FINANCIAL AID 101

GAfutures.org Explore. Plan. Succeed.	Georgia's FREE online resource to help students plan, apply, and find affordable ways to pay for college.
GSFC Georgia Student Finance Commission www.gsfc.org	The Georgia Student Finance Commission maintains **GAfutures**, promotes financial literacy and administers most state scholarships, grants and loans, including the nationally-acclaimed HOPE Scholarship.
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 FAFSA application.

RESOURCES

NEXT STEPS

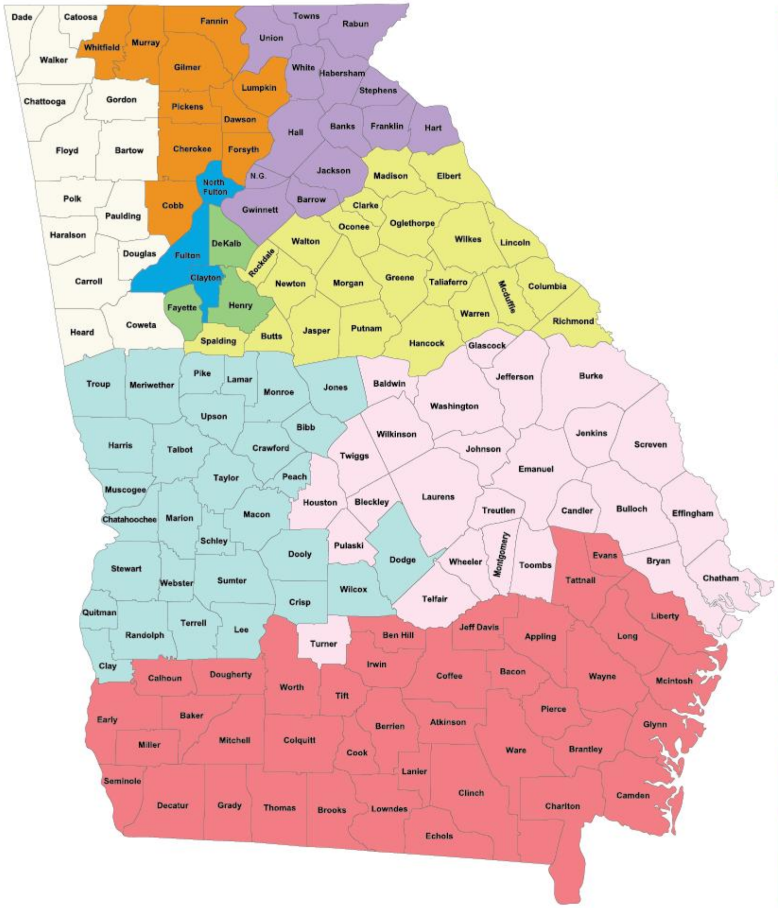
- Create an account at **GAfutures.org**
- Check your HOPE GPA to see if you are on track to be eligible for the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship

SENIORS:

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

RESOURCES

GSFC REPRESENTATIVE MAP



Contact your GSFC Representative

Adrienne Langford
alangford@gsfc.org
678.218.7770

Jonita Coleman
jcoleman@gsfc.org
770.749.8008

Ben Meadows
benm@gsfc.org
678.495.8103

Brenda Vaughn
brendav@gsfc.org
770.570.2204

Gabrielle Poss
gposs@gsfc.org
404.706.1997

Hal Wilkinson
halw@gsfc.org
678.495.8965

Katie Minich
katiem@gsfc.org
404.556.0545

Lakissa Jackson
ljackson@gsfc.org
404-360-2838

Anna Roberts
aroberts@gsfc.org
404.706.1550

RESOURCES

CONTACT US

aroberts@gsfc.org

@aroberts.gsfc

(404) 706-1550