



FY
25

Testimony before Senate Appropriations Committee Regarding FY 25 Budget

March 14, 2024

Scott A. Giles, President and CEO
Vermont Student Assistance Corporation



Creating opportunities
for all Vermont
students,
but especially for
those
—of any age—
who believe that
the doors to
education and training
are closed to them.





#Here4VTStudents

- Administers VT529, Vermont's 529 college savings plan, with 28,315 accounts worth \$595.2 million
- Provides career and education counseling to 7,476 students of all ages
- Provides financial aid and forms nights, both in person and virtually
- Administers the Vermont State Grant program for low-income Vermonters, including the Vermont Emergency Micro Grant
- Administers the 802Opportunity Grant
- Administers a growing list of interest free workforce incentive programs
- Administers more than 150 scholarship programs worth \$10 million annually
- Provides \$38 million in student and parent loans to help cover the cost of education and training, plus provides comprehensive loan counseling to borrowers

Vermont State Grant programs

In the 2022-2023 academic year (FY 2023), VSAC awarded 12,214 need-based education grants to students attending school full- or part-time or enrolled in nondegree courses of study.

VSAC Micro-Grant:

Unexpected expenses can derail even the most dedicated of students. In FY23, VSAC awarded 247 grants totaling \$97,150 in emergency funds to students at risk of dropping out of school through our Micro Grant program.

A small grant of \$400 or less helps address unexpected expenses such as:

- 1. Computer issues
- 2. Car repair/tires
- 3. Food insecurity
- 4. Help with housing deposits

VT Grant Program	FY23 Grant Awards
Full-time	6,127
Part-time	2,808
Advancement	1,325
802Opportunity	1,954



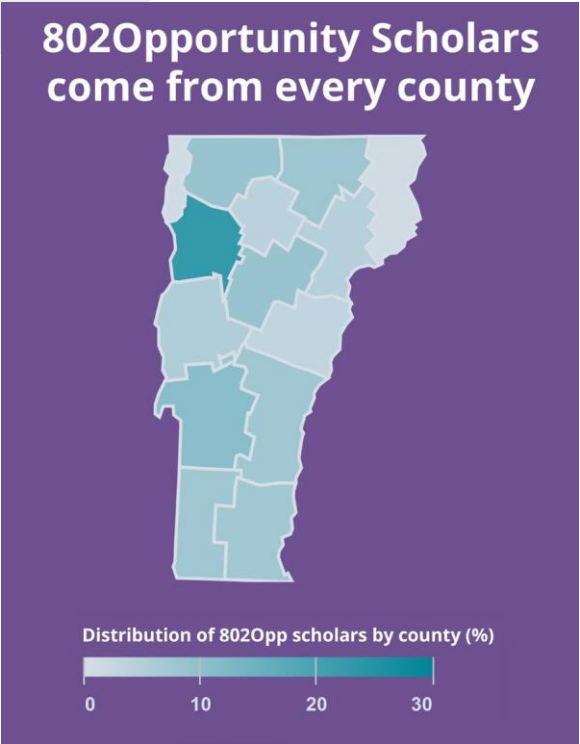
The average 802Opportunity scholar is an adult, female student enrolled part-time and pursuing an associate's degree.



270+ 802Opportunity students earned a credential in AY22-23

Student Demographics

- 74% First Gen
- 71% Adult
- 17% POC or Hispanic



Increasing Access to Higher Education

[802Opportunity](#) provides free tuition to the Community College of Vermont (CCV). Any Vermonter with a family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of less than \$75K per year qualifies.

802Opportunity opens doors for CCV students seeking:

- professional certificate programs,
- an associate degree, or
- to transfer to four-year degree programs.

FY2023 802Opportunity at-a-glance:

- Leverages federal and state grants
- More than 2,600 students attended CCV tuition-free



Vermont Trades Program

The Vermont Trades program provides an interest-free, forgivable loan that covers up to full tuition for students enrolled in industry-recognized training and certification programs that lead to careers in high-demand sectors.

- In FY23, the Vermont Trades Program disbursed \$1.08M to 163 students representing all VT counties.
- In FY24, the Vermont Trades program has awarded \$2.9M to 300 students to date.

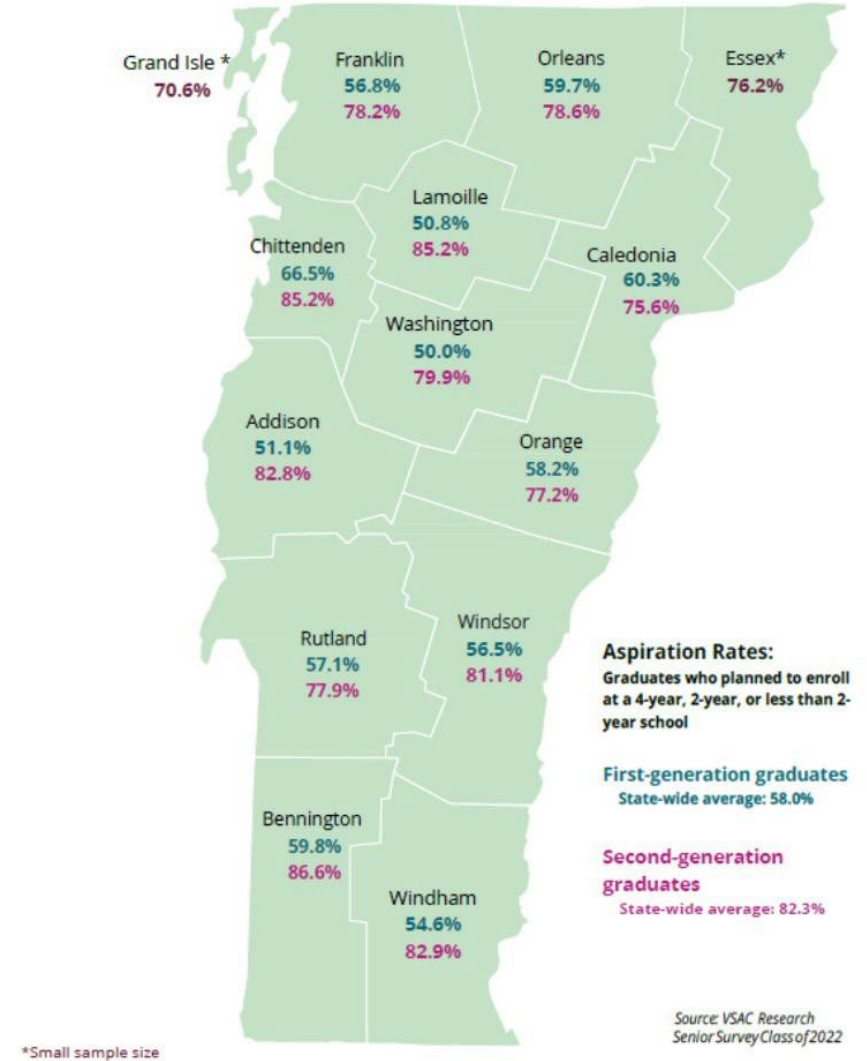
Trades/Programs
Bookkeeping
Building Trades
Computer Programming, Software Development, Web Development
Cosmetology/Barbering
Design and Media Communication
Electrician
Emergency Services
Energy Trades
Engineering
Industrial Trades
Marketing/Graphic Design
Massage Therapy
Mechanical Trades
Medical Trades
Paramedic
Teacher Certification
Transportation Trades

Aspirations Partnerships

Aspiration Partnerships work with schools to build their capacity to graduate every student with a plan for their future. During the AY 23-24, VSAC is serving the following schools:

- Harwood Union High School
- Missisquoi Union High School
- Brattleboro Union High School

“Being a member of the Harwood Union Aspiration Team has been a bright spot for me. The work our team (students, staff, and community members) are doing is energizing and exciting. School change takes time, the Aspirations partnership commits to giving us the time, tools, resources, and supports HU needs to make sustainable change.” ~ Sally McCarthy, Former Director of Counseling, Harwood Union High School



Aspirations Professional Development

Educators Supporting Post High school Planning (ESPP):

- Cohort based course designed for classroom teachers, delivered by Aspirations School Specialists.
- Graduate credit through VTSU Castleton.
- Course capstone projects have included:
 - Reflection assignment and rubric for student career exploration in science and math
 - Database of community members interested in supporting student career exploration in specific fields
 - Integration of project-based learning and post-high school planning into all courses in the connected learning department

Senior Survey Workshops:

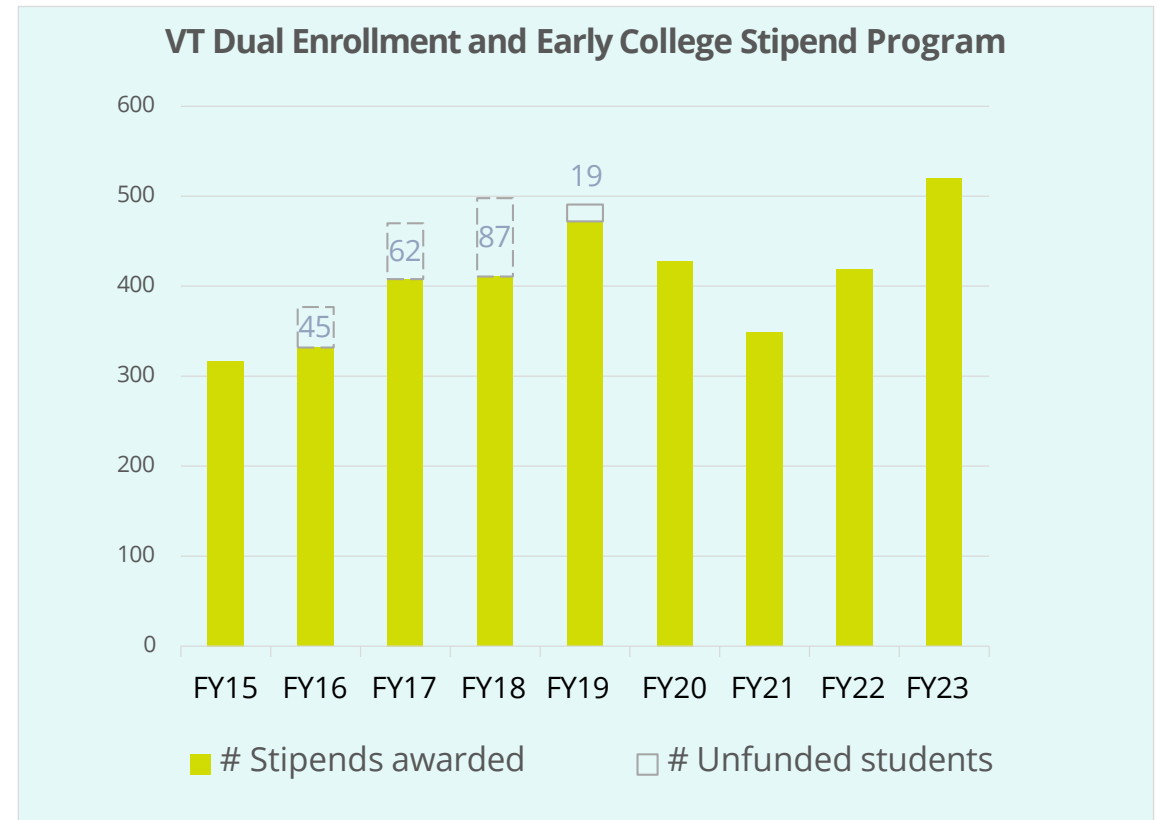
Opportunities for educators, school counselors, school leaders to deeply review their school's Senior Survey data and build action plans.

"AMAZING. The pacing, processing, collaboration, action planning... I have done a lot of PD in my day, and this is the best I have attended."

"This was time very well spent and that's partly b/c of the info but largely because of the thoughtful facilitation and protocols."

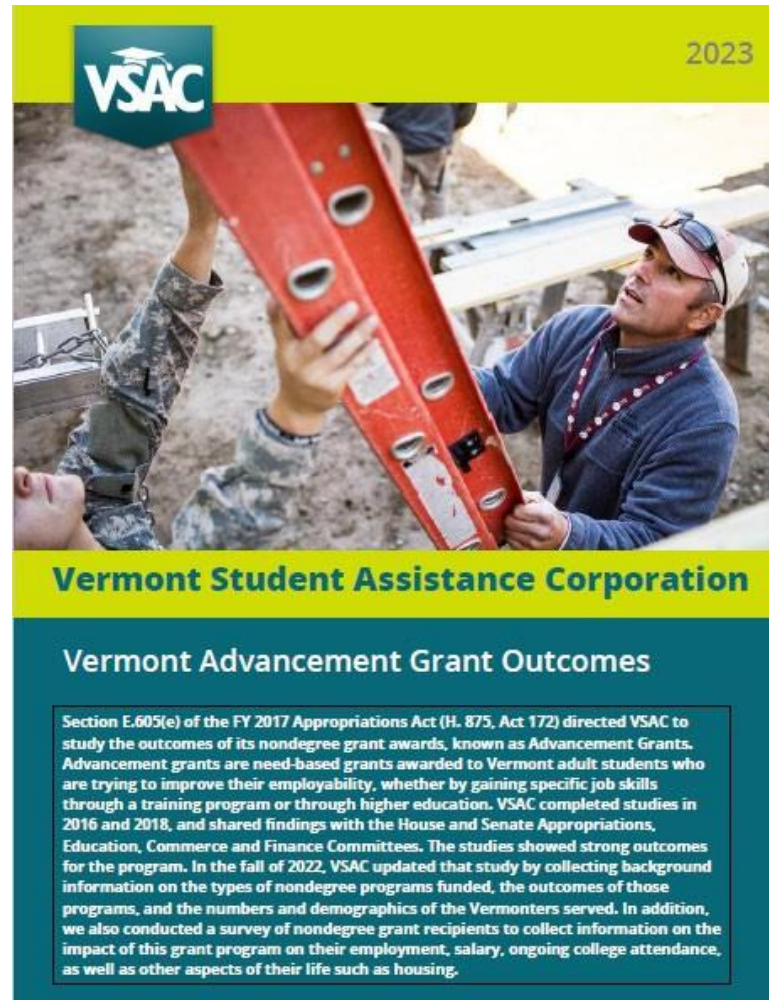
Dual Enrollment & Early College Stipend

- A need-based stipend for high school juniors and seniors who enroll in early college or on-campus dual enrollment classes.
- Awards \$150 to cover the expenses of books, fees, and/or transportation
- This program's FY24 appropriation was \$82,450.
- In the current cycle, we are seeing an increase in the number of students pursuing these programs. 15% increase in Fall DE and a 58% increase in EC. If this trend continues through spring and summer, it will put pressure on the amount of the appropriation.



Research & Evaluation Informing Program & Policy

- [FY22 County Facts](#)
- [Advancement Grant Survey](#)
- [802Opportunity](#)
- [Class of 2012 Report Series](#)
- [COVID-19 Impact on Students' Higher Education Plans](#)



VSAC 2023

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation

Vermont Advancement Grant Outcomes

Section E.605(e) of the FY 2017 Appropriations Act (H. 875, Act 172) directed VSAC to study the outcomes of its nondegree grant awards, known as Advancement Grants. Advancement grants are need-based grants awarded to Vermont adult students who are trying to improve their employability, whether by gaining specific job skills through a training program or through higher education. VSAC completed studies in 2016 and 2018, and shared findings with the House and Senate Appropriations, Education, Commerce and Finance Committees. The studies showed strong outcomes for the program. In the fall of 2022, VSAC updated that study by collecting background information on the types of nondegree programs funded, the outcomes of those programs, and the numbers and demographics of the Vermonters served. In addition, we also conducted a survey of nondegree grant recipients to collect information on the impact of this grant program on their employment, salary, ongoing college attendance, as well as other aspects of their life such as housing.



VSAC RESEARCH BRIEF | SUMMER 2023

The Vermont High School Class of 2022
Postsecondary Plans

Executive Summary

Every two years VSAC conducts a survey of all high school seniors. This research brief presents findings from the Vermont Class of 2022, the most recent Senior Survey, and compares these data to that from the Classes of 2012 and 2018. This allows comparison of aspiration data from a decade ago as well as a recent class prior to the pandemic.

The purpose of the study was to gather information about seniors' post-high school plans, to determine what proportion of the class planned to pursue further education or training in the fall of 2022 and to consider changes in aspiration over time. Based on our previous research, we examined students' postsecondary aspirations through the lens of two key demographic factors: students' gender and parent educational attainment.

These trend data demonstrate:

- a significant decline overall in students' intentions to pursue additional training or education after high school compared to prior years
- a widening of the gap in aspiration by both gender and parent education attainment since 2018
- a decline in the percentage of students reporting that their parents wished for them to continue their education. This decline differs significantly by gender and parent educational attainment and over time.

Analyses of the data for the Class of 2022 also show the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' perceptions on their learning, and—for at least some students—their postsecondary plans. Lastly, we present findings about students' postsecondary plans, both those who planned to continue their studies immediately after high school and those who planned to enter the workforce.

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Workforce Development Funding



Workforce
Development
Funding

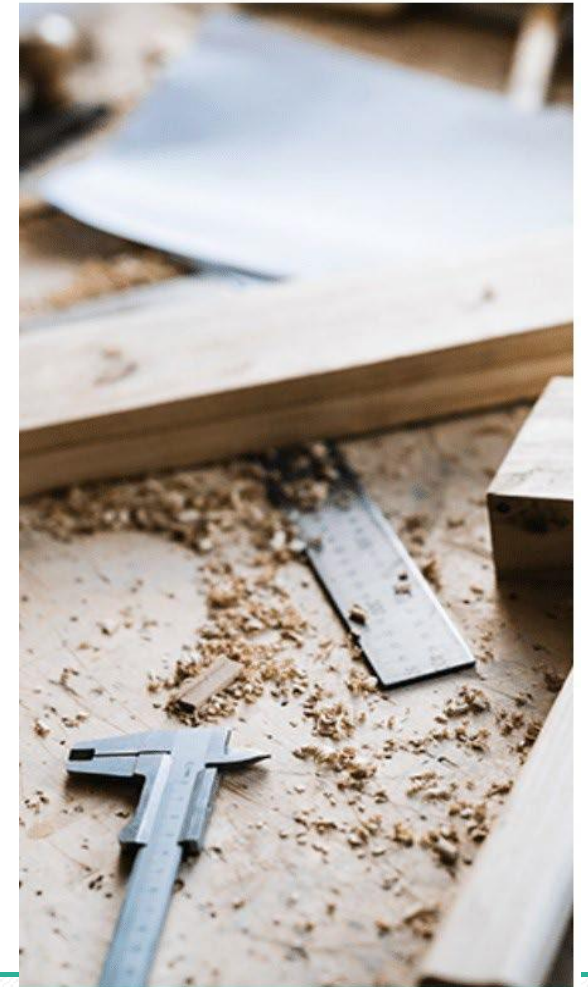
Paying for college or training in critical job fields

Vermont Grants

- 802 Opportunity
free tuition at CCV
- Advancement Grant
funding help for short-term training in a non-degree program

Interest-free Forgivable Loans

- Vermont Trades
- Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Program
- Vermont Nursing
- Vermont Nurse Faculty
- Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit
- Vermont Dentist
- Vermont Dental Hygienist
- Vermont Mental Health Professional
- Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner



Vermont Healthcare Workforce Incentive Loan Programs Administered by VSAC

Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive Program (\$3,050,000)

- Program has existed for over 20 years
- Expanded in Fall of 2020 & offered to students in the Spring semester of 2021
- Modified in Spring of 2021 & offered to students in the 21-22 School Year and the 22-23 School Year

Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan Incentive Program (\$500,000)

- Program was legislated in Spring of 22
- Original Funding Sources was ARPA funds
- DOH and VSAC launched this program for the 2023-2024 AY

Vermont Mental Health Professional Forgivable Loan Incentive Program (\$1,500,000)

- Program was legislated in Spring of 22
- Original Funding Sources was ARPA funds
- DOH and VSAC launched this program for the 2023-2024 AY

Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive Program (\$1,000,000)

- Program was legislated in Spring of 23
- Original Funding Sources was the General Fund
- DOH and VSAC launched this program for the spring '24 semester

Vermont Dental Hygienist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program (\$100,000)

- Program was legislated in Spring of 23
- Original Funding Sources was Global Commitment
- DOH and VSAC launched this program for the spring '24 semester

Vermont State Dentist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program (\$50,000)

- Program has existed for over 15 years
- Funding Source is Global Commitment
- DOH and VSAC partnership

Vermont Nursing Workforce Incentive Loan Program

- Nursing students receive full tuition at a VT Public Institution
- Nursing students receive up to UVM tuition at VT Private Institution or Out-of-State Institutions not to exceed actual tuition
- Agree to work in Vermont following licensure one year for each year of scholarship receipt
- Awards can be used at any accredited, federal Title IV funding eligible, Vermont or Out-of-State Institution which offer nursing degrees
- Awarded students sign a promissory note obligating them to work in Vermont in a nursing position following licensure or to repay the funds received

Eligible Students must:

- Complete FAFSA and State Grant application if appropriate
- Maintain good academic standing
- Can be residents and non-residents
- Attend an eligible nursing program at an in-state or out-of-state school

Priority:

- Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN's)
- Associate Degree in Nursing
- Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing
- Graduate Nursing Education

** Preference given to students attending Vermont institutions

Vermont Nursing Workforce Incentive Loan Program Outcomes to Date

Repayment

- 86% of recipients have traditionally met the work obligation

Usage

Fiscal Year	Number of Recipients
Spring 2021	66
FY '22	88
FY '23	151
FY '24 (to date)	259, unable to fund 67 applicants

VSAC FY24 Budget Summary – Core Budget

Act 78 section No.	Program	FY23 As Enacted (Act 185)	FY24 As Enacted (Act 78)	FY25 Request
B.605 & E.605	VSAC Grants (Full-Time, Part-Time, Advancement)	\$20,978,588 general fund base	\$25,378,588 general fund base (Full-Time, Part-Time, Advancement, Trades)	3.0% increase to general fund base (\$761,358)
B.605 & E.605(e)	Vermont Trades Scholarship Program – 2022 ACT 183, Sec.14	\$3 million one-time general funds (2022 ACT 183, Sec.14)	\$1 million (included in B.605 above)	Same as Act 78
B.605 & E.605(b)	Aspiration Program	\$300,000 one-time funds appropriated for FY23 (2021 Act 74, Sec G.300(b))	E.605(b) - \$300,000 carved out of VSAC's base in B.605	Same as Act 78
B.605.1 & E.605.1	Flexible Pathways Stipend Fund	\$82,450 Stipend (½ General Fund; ½ Education Fund)	Same	Same as Act 78
E.605(d)	VSAC – Seven Percent Administrative Fee Authority	New in FY24	Added – Sec. E.605(d)	Same

Other VSAC Administered Programs

Act 78 section No.	Program	FY23 As Enacted (Act 185)	FY24 As Enacted (Act 78)
B.301 & B.311	Vermont Nurse Forgivable Loan Incentive Program – 18 V.S.A. § 34	Unexpected funds from FY21, FY22 and FY23. Sec. C.107.2 of Act 185 of 2022 (FY23 Budget Bill) appropriated \$1.035 million. Also \$227,169 in Act 183 of 2022 (workforce bill). All one-time Global Commitment Funding through DOH.	\$3,050,000 Global Commitment base through DOH to VSAC (\$1,304,400 GF; \$1,695,600 Fed Funds)
B.301, B.311 & F.4	Vermont Dental Hygienist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program – 18 V.S.A. § 40	New in FY24	\$100,000 Global Commitment base through DOH to VSAC (\$43,480 GF; \$56,520 Fed funds)
B1101(a)(2)	Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program – Session law B.1101(a)(2)	New in FY24	\$2,500.000 one-time general fund
B.1101(d)(1) & F.3	Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable Loan Program – 18 V.S.A. § 39	New in FY24	\$1,000,000 – one-time General Fund to the Department of Health to be transferred as needed to VSAC
B.1101(c)(5)	UVM Office of Engagement, in consultation with VSAC, \$5K forgivable loans for recent college grads who live in VT for 2 years	\$3 million one-time general funds	\$1.5 million one-time general funds
B.215 & E.215	National Guard Tuition Benefit Program – 16 V.S.A. § 2857	\$1,319,834 – General Funds through Military	\$1,319,834 General Funds through Military

Note: These programs are funded through appropriations to other agencies/entities - VSAC administers them. VSAC itself is not seeking any changes to these appropriations.

Not in Act 78 - Programs VSAC Administers – Funds Appropriated in FY 23 That are Available in FY24

Act 78 section No.	Program	FY23 As Enacted (Act 185)	FY24 As Enacted (Act 78)
29c & 29d of Act 183 of 2022	Vermont Mental Health Professional Forgivable Loan Incentive Program – 18 V.S.A. § 38	\$1.5 million – one-time ARPA funds to DOH for VSAC shifted to "revenue loss" ARPA SFA by administration on 11/14/22 so ARPA restrictions lifted	On to ARPA funding restriction the program did not start in FY23. Administration shifted the \$1.5 million to "revenue loss" ARPA SFA so ARPA restrictions lifted. JFO confirmed these funds do not need to be reappropriated in the FY24 budget and are still available to VSAC .
28 & 29 of Act 183 of 2022	Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan Incentive Program – 18 V.S.A. § 36	\$500,000 – one-time ARPA funds	On to ARPA funding restriction the program did not start in FY23. Administration shifted the \$500,000 to "revenue loss" ARPA SFA so ARPA restrictions lifted. JFO confirmed these funds do not need to be reappropriated in the FY24 budget and are still available to VSAC . VSAC administers them. VSAC

Note: These programs are funded through appropriations to other agencies/entities itself is not seeking any changes to these appropriations.



Appendix A

VSAC Services

Sec. E.605 VERMONT STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

- (a) Of the appropriation in Sec. B.605 of this act, \$25,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) to be deposited into the Trust Fund established in 16 V.S.A. § 2845.
- (b) Of this appropriation, not more than \$300,000 may be used by VSAC for a student aspirational initiative to serve one or more high schools.
- (c) Of the appropriated amount remaining after accounting for subsections (a) and (b) of this section, not less than 93 percent of this appropriation shall be used for direct student aid.
- (d) Up to seven percent of the funds appropriated to VSAC in this act or otherwise currently or previously appropriated to VSAC or provided to VSAC by an agency or department of the State for the administration of a program or initiative may be used by VSAC for its costs of administration. VSAC may recoup its reasonable costs of collecting the forgivable loans in repayment. Funds shall not be used for indirect costs. To the extent these are federal funds, allocation for expenses associated with administering the funds shall be consistent with federal grant requirements.
- (e) \$1,000,000 of the General Fund appropriation in Sec. B.605 of this act shall be used to continue operating the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program in accordance with 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 14.

Report ID: VTPB-07_GOV REC
 Run Date: 01/21/2024
 Run Time: 05:00 PM

State of Vermont
FY2025 Governor's Recommended Budget: Detail Report

Organization: 1110012000 - Vermont Student Assistance Corporation

Budget Object Group: 3. GRANTS

Grants Rollup		FY2023 Actuals	FY2024 Original As Passed Budget	FY2024 Governor's BAA Recommended Budget	FY2025 Governor's Recommended Budget	Difference Between FY2025 Governor's Recommend and FY2024 As Passed	Percent Change FY2025 Governor's Recommend and FY2024 As Passed
Description	Code						
Other Grants	550500	20,978,588	25,378,588	25,378,588	26,139,946	761,358	3.0%
Total: Grants Rollup		20,978,588	25,378,588	25,378,588	26,139,946	761,358	3.0%
Total: 3. GRANTS		20,978,588	25,378,588	25,378,588	26,139,946	761,358	3.0%
Total Expenditures		20,978,588	25,378,588	25,378,588	26,139,946	761,358	3.0%

Fund Name	Fund Code	FY2023 Actuals	FY2024 Original As Passed Budget	FY2024 Governor's BAA Recommended Budget	FY2025 Governor's Recommended Budget	Difference Between FY2025 Governor's Recommend and FY2024 As Passed	Percent Change FY2025 Governor's Recommend and FY2024 As Passed
General Fund	10000	20,978,588	25,378,588	25,378,588	26,139,946	761,358	3.0%
Funds Total		20,978,588	25,378,588	25,378,588	26,139,946	761,358	3.0%

Position Count	
FTE Total	

Vermont Advancement Grant

Helping adults advance in Vermont's workforce

Vermonters used their Advancement Grant:

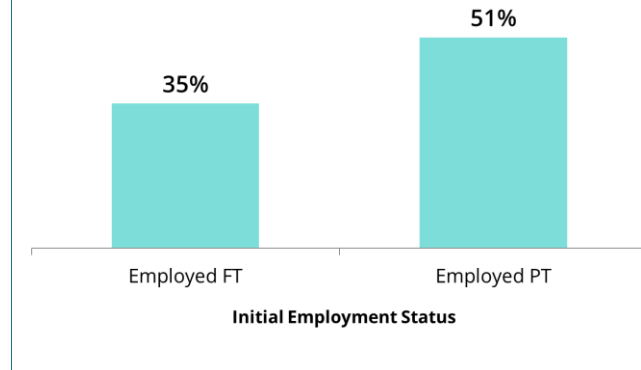
To enter the trades, such as:

- construction workers
- linemen
- cosmetologists
- culinary arts

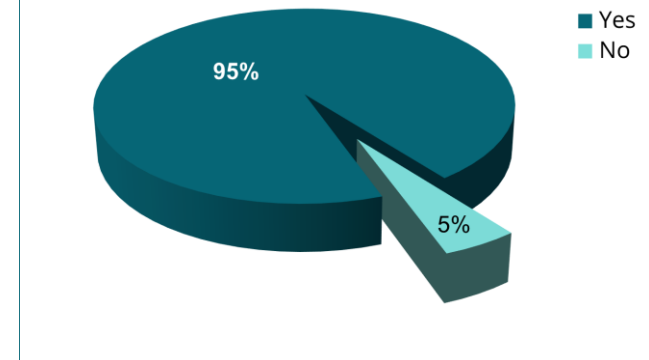
As well as:

- Earn CDL licenses
- Obtain certification as childcare providers
- Enter healthcare professions such as LNAs and dental assistants

Percentage who Reported Increased Earnings after Nondegree Course



Gained Skills that Could Help in Current or Future Job

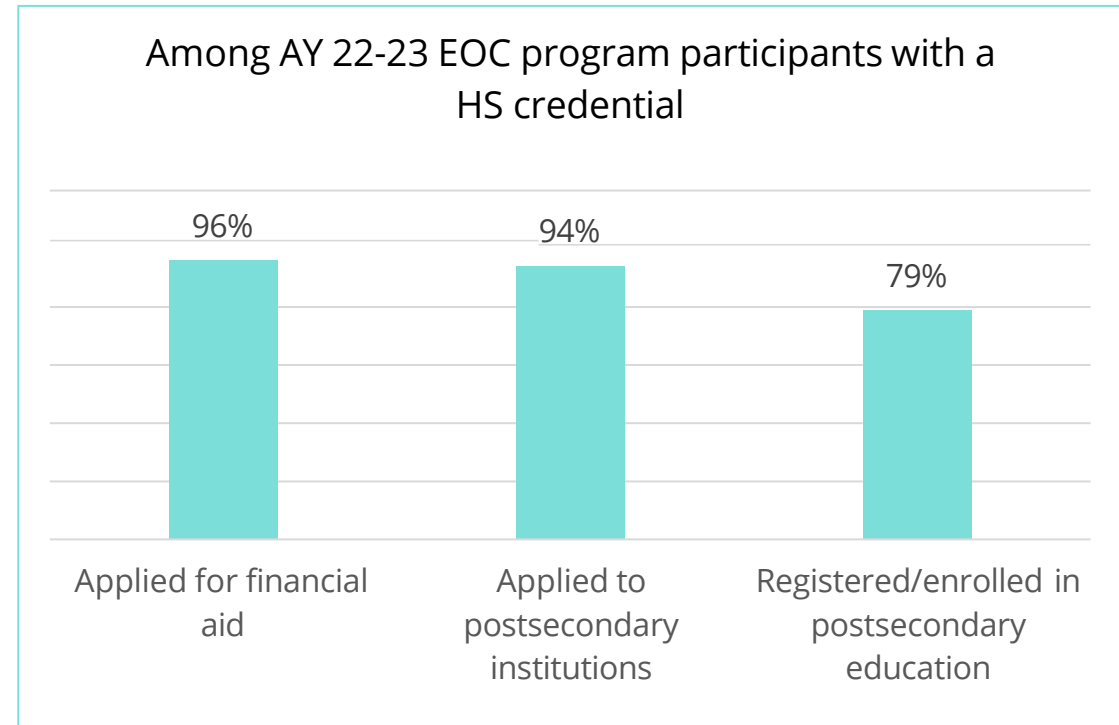


Opening doors for adult learners

Partially funded by a federal **Educational Opportunity Center (EOC)** grant, VSAC provided targeted information and counseling services to over 1,681 low-income and/or first-generation adult students in AY22-23.

EOC supports adult students to pursue BA, AA, and Credentials of their choice, including, e.g.:

- Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA)
- Medical Assistant, Interpreter, Billing & Coding
- Computer Coding, Software Development
- Weatherization
- Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL)
- Cosmetology licenses





Middle and high school students

- Two federal grants (**Talent Search and GEAR UP**) allow VSAC to provide targeted information and counseling services to low-income and first-generation students beginning as early as 7th grade.
- VSAC serves over 3,500 students at 83 middle and high schools across Vermont with the support of these competitive federal grants.



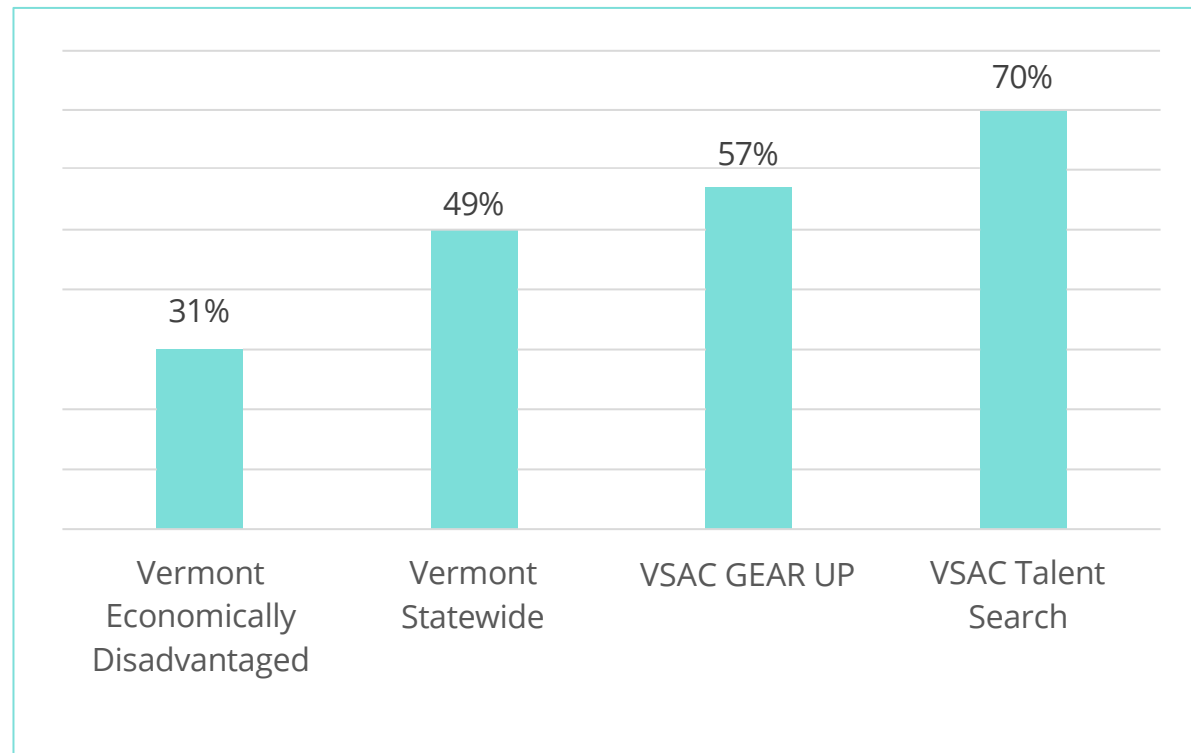
VSAC's student outreach:

Talent Search & GEAR UP

Serving (AY 21-22):

- 83 Vermont schools
- Over 3,500 middle school and high school students

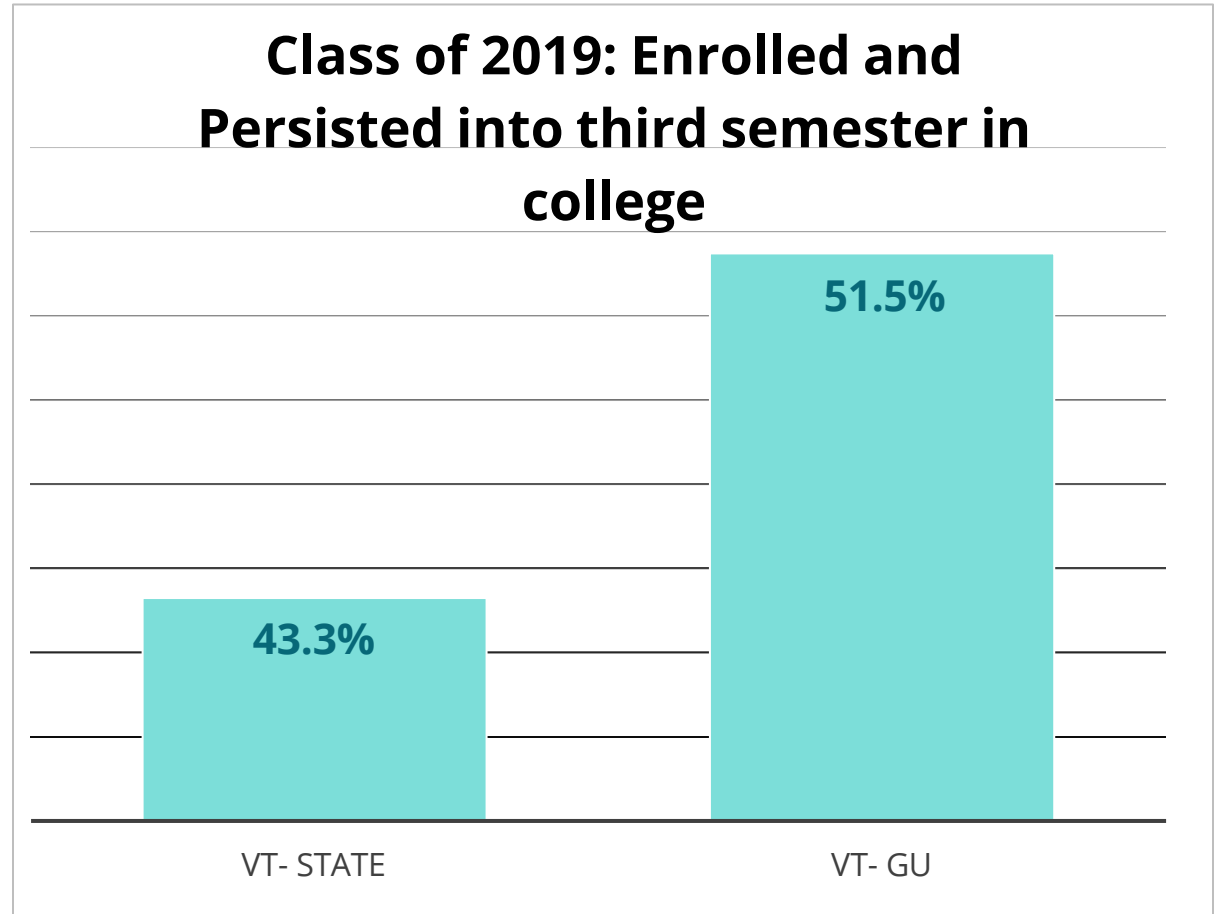
Postsecondary Enrollment Rates



VSAC's GUIDE Program

Giving Undergraduates Information and Direction in their Education (GUIDE) supports VSAC GEAR UP (GU) students into their 3rd semester in postsecondary.

Compared to VT students statewide, a higher percentage of GU graduates both enrolled and persisted into their second year of postsecondary education.

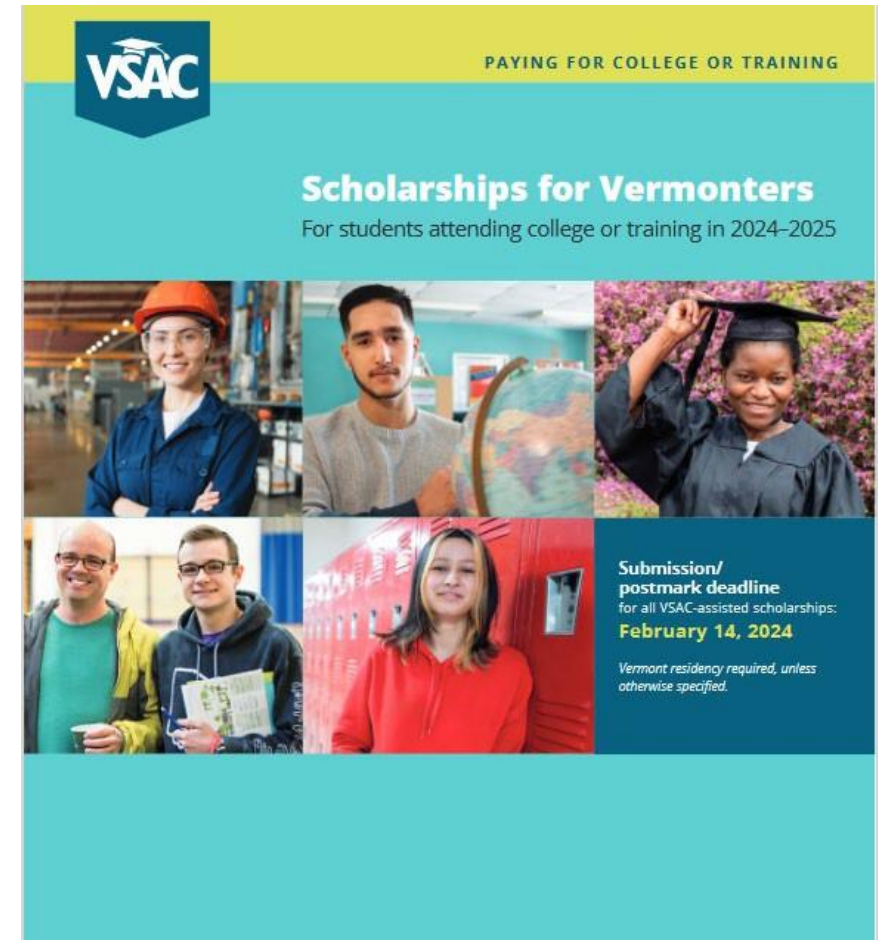


Scholarship Program

VSAC administers more than 150 scholarship programs that help Vermonters pay for school.

In FY23:

- 4,668 scholarship awards were awarded
- Worth more than \$10 million dollars



The image shows the cover of a VSAC booklet titled "Scholarships for Vermonters" for students attending college or training in 2024-2025. The cover features the VSAC logo and the tagline "PAYING FOR COLLEGE OR TRAINING". It includes a collage of photos: a woman in a blue work shirt and orange hard hat, a man in a grey sweater holding a globe, a woman in a black graduation cap and gown, two men in a hallway, and a woman in a red hoodie in front of red lockers. A dark blue box on the right contains the submission/postmark deadline: **February 14, 2024**, with a note that Vermont residency is required unless otherwise specified.

[Students can find college scholarship information through VSAC's scholarships booklet or online](#)



Legislative Guide 2024

STATEHOUSE RESOURCES

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Providing expert resources on higher education and workforce development to inform your policy work

The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) helps students and families find, plan, and pay for postsecondary education and job training, while fostering local, regional, and statewide partnerships to make education and training more affordable. We provide expert resources on higher education and workforce development, backed by research and analysis to inform your policy work.

Education is one of the most powerful and enduring tools for creating economic opportunity. Work by the McClure Foundation reveals that nearly every one of the high-wage, high-demand jobs in Vermont requires education or training beyond high school. VSAC remains committed to the idea that every Vermonter should have access to the education and training they need and that will best enable them to pursue their career and life goals—particularly those who believe that these doors are closed to them.

With our partners, VSAC advances programs and initiatives designed to create individual opportunity, strengthen workforce development, and foster economic growth. Tuition-free community college through *802Opportunity* creates exciting new options for students and their families. At the same time, VSAC's workforce grants and forgivable loan programs allow thousands of adults to take advantage of opportunities to learn new skills as they launch or reinvigorate careers in high-wage, high-demand jobs in the trades, nursing, mental health counseling, and teaching.

Because of your support, tens of thousands of Vermonters are achieving education, life, and career goals they thought were out of reach. Thank you again for your service to Vermont, and we look forward to working with you in the days and weeks ahead.

Scott Giles
VSAC President & CEO

Our vision is to create opportunities for all Vermont students, but particularly for those of any age who believe that the doors to higher education and training are closed to them.

VSAC research informs

VSAC's Research Department plays a critical role in identifying issues related to higher education and workforce development in Vermont. For 35 years, VSAC's research team has collected and analyzed data from state and national sources—including Vermont students—to provide Vermont policymakers with deeper insights into the complexities of the postsecondary experience. VSAC's reports help to facilitate informed decision-making around education policy and investment of the state's resources.

Education Fact Sheets by County are available at vsac.org/research.

VSAC opens doors

- With the support of three federal grants, VSAC Outreach staff counseled more than 5,380 modest-income and/or first-generation Vermont students of all ages working toward degree and non-degree education programs.
- 71% of Talent Search and 56% of GEAR UP participants who graduated from high school in 2022 continued their education in the fall.
- *802Opportunity* enrolled 2,600 Vermonters, from all 14 counties, at all 12 of Community College of Vermont's academic centers. With an average age of 30, 74% of students were first generation, and 17% were people of color or Hispanic.
- College & Career Pathways events at four locations statewide drew 1,243 students and parents, and another 413 students and families viewed these events online. Another 1,656 students attended VSAC-produced events focused on career and STEM exploration and student leadership development.
- 767 parents and students attended free *Paying for College* and *Financial Aid Forms* support events.
- VSAC's financial aid counselors talk to over 42,000 people every year, and the VSAC Resource Center assisted 180 students and families with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, Vermont State Grant applications, and post-high school planning.
- 588 Vermont education professionals received training from VSAC staff.

FY23 by the numbers

Federal and private loans \$464M serviced

VSAC serviced \$464 million in federal and private loans.

VSAC Student and Parent Loans \$38M administered

VSAC borrowers saved **\$146,000** in FY23 through rebates, and more than **\$183 million** since 1995.

VT529 Education Savings Plan \$595.2M value

The combined value of **28,315** VT529 education savings accounts as of 6/30/23 was \$595.2M. The amount used since 1999 for education expenses was **\$363.7M**.

Grants \$24.1M awarded

Vermont students of all ages received **11,513** need-based education grants.

802Opportunity 2,600 participants

2,600 Vermont students leveraged *802Opportunity* funding to attend CCV **tuition free** in 2022–23.

Scholarships \$10M awarded

Recipients of more than 150 public and private scholarships received **4,668 awards**.

Financial Aid 42,000 counseled

VSAC's financial aid counselors talked to more than 42,000 Vermonters and other borrowers.

Source: FY23 Annual Report