



**FY  
25**

# **Testimony before House Education Committee Regarding H.717**

**January 26, 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.







# 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.

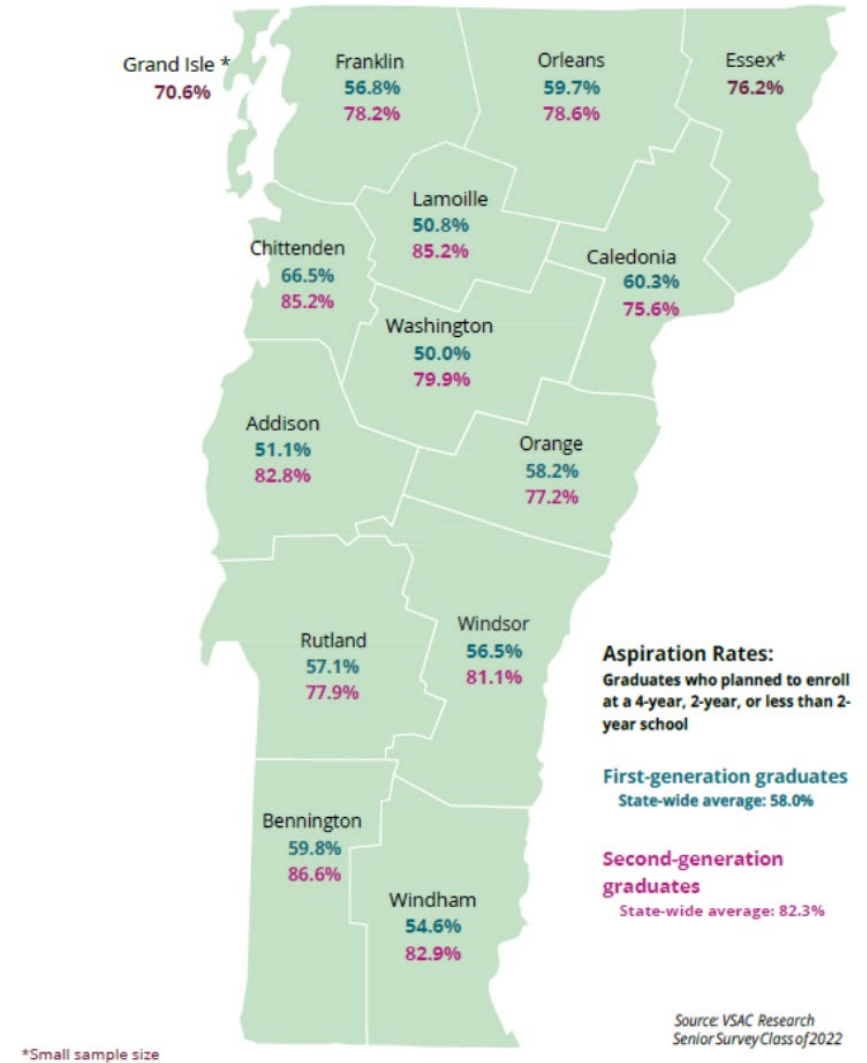


# Aspirations Partnerships

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 delivered by Aspirations School Specialists.
- Graduate credit through 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 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."*

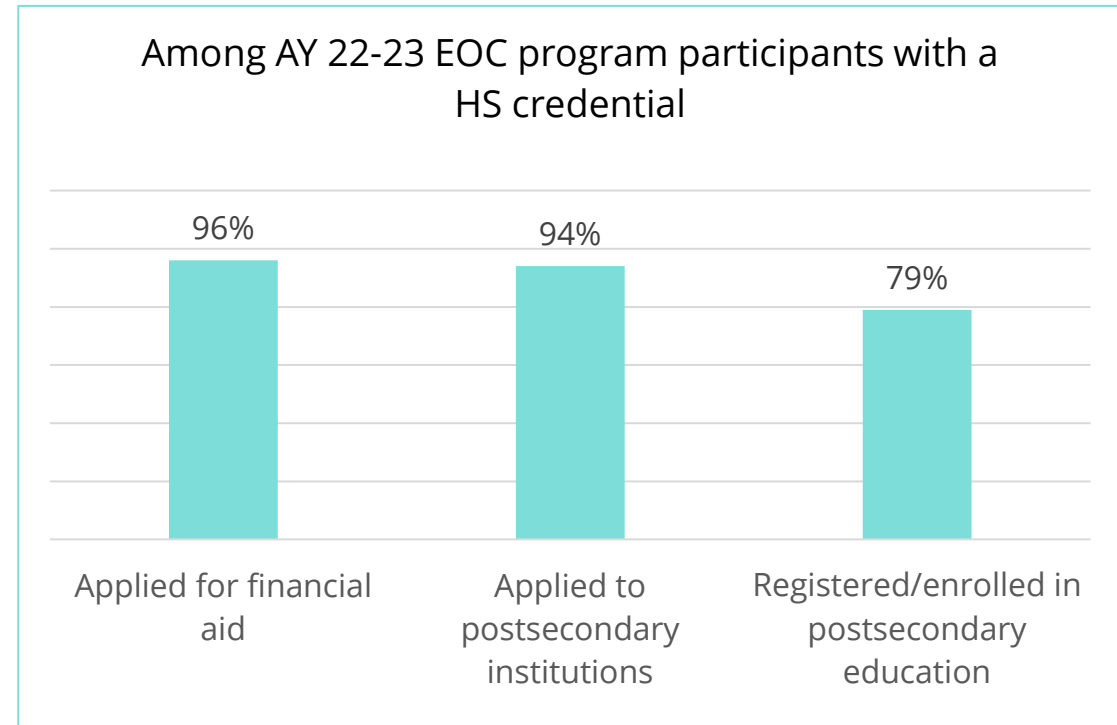
*"This was time very well spent and that's partly b/c of the info but largely because of the thoughtful facilitation and protocols."*

# Educational Opportunity Center – 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 first-generation adult students in AY22-23.

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

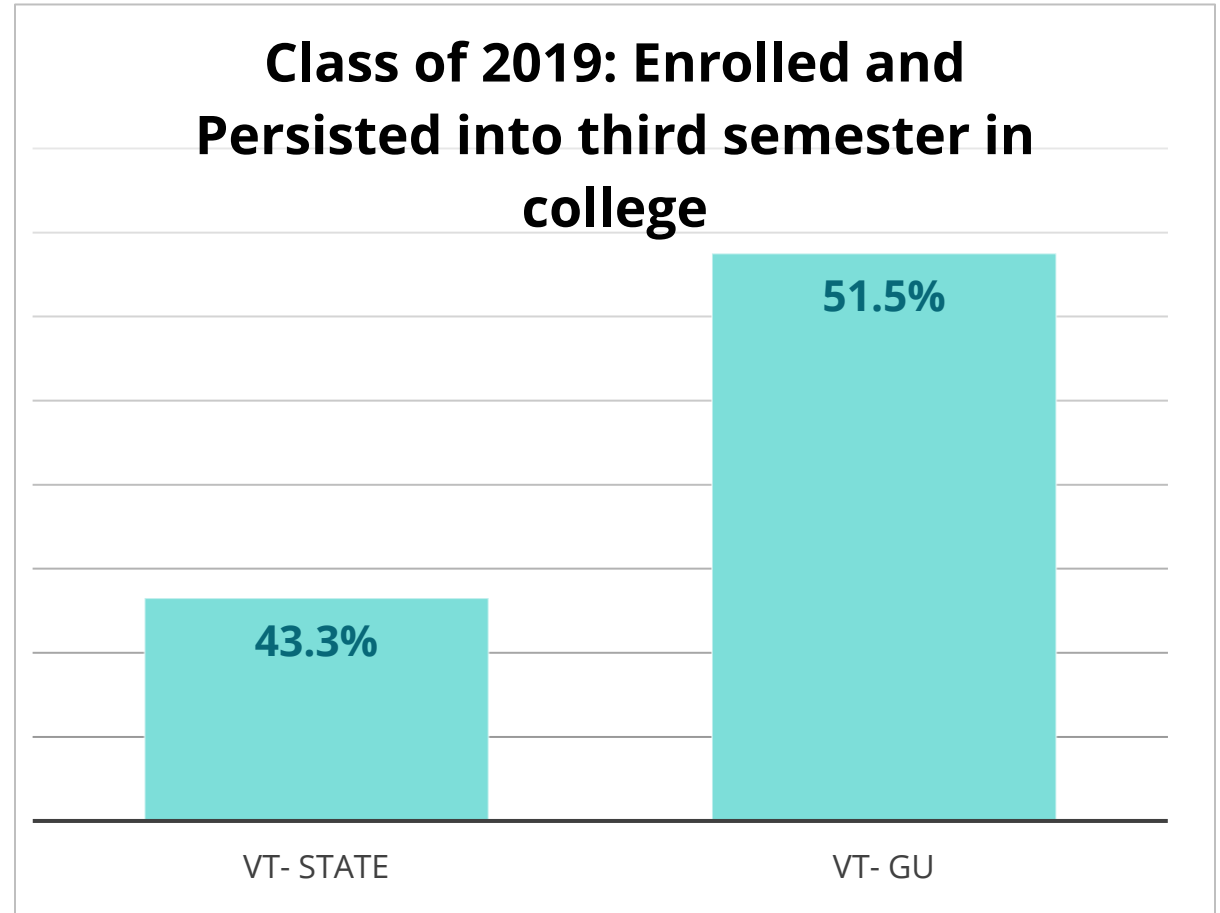
- LNA
- Medical Assistant, Interpreter, Billing & Coding
- Computer Coding, Software Development
- Weatherization
- CDL
- Cosmetology licenses



# VSAC's GUIDE Program

**Giving Undergraduates Information and Direction in their Education (GUIDE)** supports VSAC GEAR UP (GU) students into their 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.



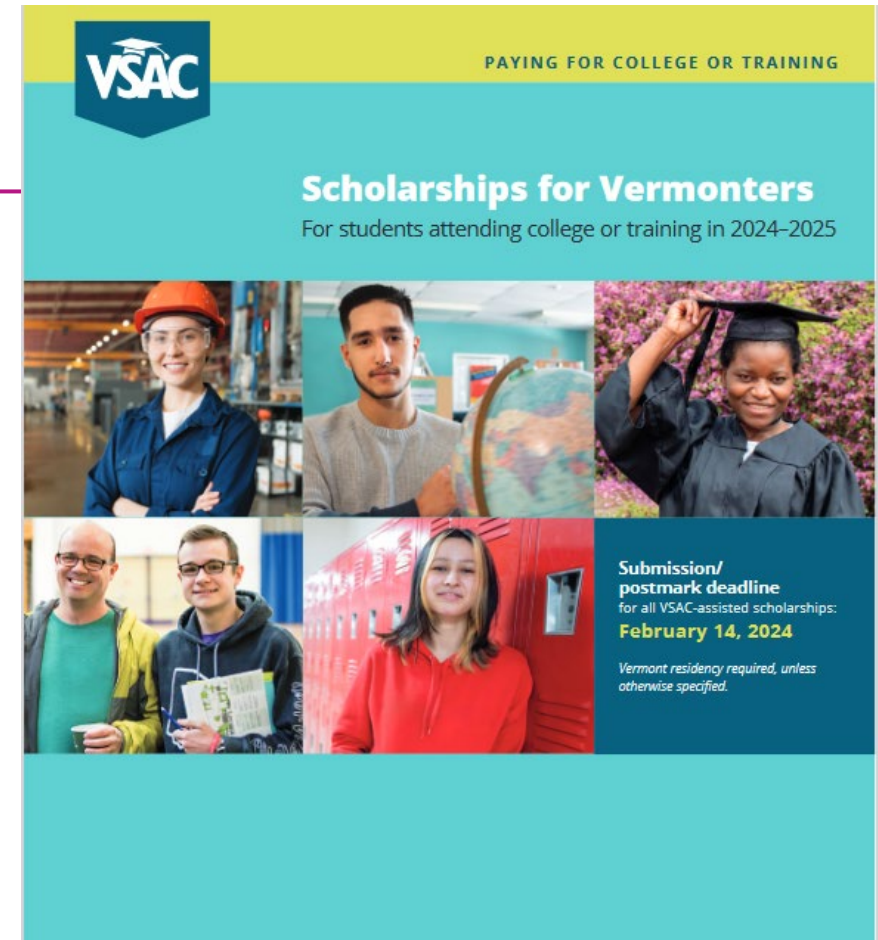


# Scholarship Program

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 four 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, and a woman in a red hoodie standing in front of red lockers. A dark blue box on the right side of the cover contains the text: "Submission/postmark deadline for all VSAC-assisted scholarships: February 14, 2024" and "Vermont residency required, unless otherwise specified."

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



# Vermont State Grant programs

In the 2022-2023 academic year (FY 2023), VSAC awarded 11,677 need-based education grants to students attending school full- or part-time or enrolled in nondegree courses of study.

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.

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	1,170

# 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





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

### 802Opportunity Scholars come from every county



Distribution of 802Op scholars by county (%)



# Vermont Advancement Grant

The average Advancement Grant recipient is:

**34**  
**YEARS OLD**



  
**HOUSEHOLD**  
**OF TWO**

—————  
**\$24,104**  
AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME  
—————



# Scholarships Supporting Foster Youth

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- Vermont John H. Chaffee
  - The scholarship was established for youth with experience in foster care.
  - Under the age of 26
  - Attending an accredited school
  - Cannot exceed \$5000/student
  - Conditional upon annual federal approval
  - Appropriation for FY23 \$212,695
  - Appropriation for FY24 \$257,233
- Emily Lester Vermont Opportunity Scholarship
  - Currently under custody of DCF or between ages 18-24 that has been under custody of DCF
  - Seeking an undergraduate degree at an accredited school in Vermont
  - Cannot exceed \$3000/student
  - Conditional upon annual VT legislative approval
  - Annual appropriation is \$25,000

# 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.

