ASPIRE

Career and College Planning Guide

Resource for Coordinators and Mentors

Created July 2024

ASPIRE

Contents

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ASPIRE Basics

ASPIRE Mission Statement

The ASPIRE program helps educate Oregon Student to become career and college ready. ASPIRE offers education, resources, and mentoring opportunities for all students. Student supports include one-on-one and group mentoring, activities or events that focus on career exploration career and college research, admissions applications, scholarships, and financial aid.

Roles and Responsibilities

ASPIRE Coordinators and Mentors are the heart and soul of the ASPIRE Program. Your drive and passion to help support students as they explore career and college pathways and plan for their future is key to their success.

ASPIRE Coordinators

ASPIRE Coordinators are provided clear roles and responsibilities when entering their Coordinator position:

- ASPIRE Coordinator Position Description (signed when Coordinator is new to ASPIRE – see ASPIRE Access Specialist for a copy if needed)
- Starting Point Coordinator Checklist

Resources to help you fulfill your roles and responsibilities:

- ASPIRE Program High School Toolbox
- ASPIRE Program Middle School Toolbox

ASPIRE Mentors

Each ASPIRE Site utilizes volunteer mentors differently. Here are a few examples of possible roles and responsibilities you may have as an ASPIRE Mentor serving middle school or high school sites:

- **Traditional Mentor:** Community adult volunteers who work with students 1-on-1 or in groups to help with career and college planning
  Staff Mentors: ASPIRE Site staff who assist and have ongoing communication with students about their future. These may include counselors, Career and College Readiness teachers (CCR or AVID Classes), coaches, support staff, etc.
- **Peer Mentors:** An ASPIRE high school junior or senior who has participated in ASPIRE. Peer mentors can be matched 1:1 or in groups for grades 6-12 on topics related to high school success, career and college exploration, or may participate in peer panels in classrooms or at events.
- **Episodic Mentors:** Community adult volunteers who occasionally assist with career and college readiness at your ASPIRE site but do not serve on a consistent basis. These mentors may provide educational career or college presentations, participate in industry/business/college panels, and more.
- **Project/Event Support/Administration Mentors:** Community adult volunteers who assist the ASPIRE Coordinator with projects which may include working through student lists for a particular purpose (example: meeting with senior students who have not

completed the FAFSA or ORSAA, Oregon Promise, OSAC Scholarship). These mentors may also be individuals who work on creating a welcoming ASPIRE Center environment (build displays, organize center resources, etc.) or specifically assist during events or CCR activities (college fairs, family engagement events, Senior Celebration/Decision Day, field trips, etc.)

- **Team Lead Mentor:** Experienced ASPIRE Coordinator that assists the ASPIRE coordinator in recruiting new mentors, matching mentors and students, coordination of mentor/student meetings, and providing resources and information to mentors. Team leads may also help ASPIRE coordinator with other administrative roles.

Student Safety

Background Check
Before meeting with students, community mentors are required to complete a background check form provided by the site coordinator. Coordinators should also ensure they comply with their school's volunteer procedures.

ASPIRE Mentor Student Safety Expectations
Each ASPIRE Site will have mentor expectations and guidelines to help keep students safe. ASPIRE asks that:
- Mentors and students should meet on-site, during operating hours, and in the presence of paid site staff, unless safety protocols are discussed and in place for other mentor and student connections (virtual meetings, off-site, etc.)
- Mentors may not transport students in personal vehicles.
- Mentors should avoid conflicts of interest. *Examples: Promoting personal, religious, or political beliefs, selling services or products to students, etc.*

Mandatory Reporting
All community mentors working with Oregon youth are considered mandatory reporters; cases of suspected child abuse and neglect must be reported. For additional information see the [Oregon Department of Human Services](#) website. To report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to authorities call the abuse hotline at 855-503-SAFE (7233).

Confidentiality
Confidentiality is the preservation of any privileged information concerning students that is disclosed in a professional working relationship. The volunteer ASPIRE mentor will keep the communication with his/her student confidential. All records dealing with specific students must be treated as confidential and be maintained according to site policy. ASPIRE mentors will not discuss students' confidential information with anyone other than the ASPIRE site coordinator.

Training Opportunities

New Coordinator Training
ASPIRE Access Specialists will meet with new coordinators to review responsibilities, resources, and discuss site goals. The ASPIRE Access Specialist is an ongoing trainer and coach available to help coordinators plan and develop ASPIRE Awareness and build strong College and Career Readiness cultures in their ASPIRE program. Each coordinator is encouraged to continue to grow and learn – participation in additional career and college

readiness trainings is highly encouraged.

Mentor Specific Trainings

- [ASPIRE Mentor Training Basics](#) (Required Training for Mentors)
- ASPIRE College and Career HS/MS CCR Events – Attend College/Career events/seminars at your ASPIRE Site when possible.
- Individual site training - When you first start as a mentor your ASPIRE site coordinator should provide an initial tour of your site and provide you with specific site procedures and career/college information.

ASPIRE Offers many Training Opportunities

These trainings are open to both coordinators and mentors.

- [ASPIRE Annual Fall Conference](#)
- [ASPIRE Connection Webinars](#)
- [OSAC/College and Career Readiness Partner Webinars](#)
- [ASPIRE/OSAC YouTube Videos](#)
- [Federal Student Aid Videos](#) – learn more about financial aid

Student Engagement

Getting to Know Students

Understanding Generation Z

It's important to consider generational differences when engaging with students. New Coordinators and mentors may find it helpful to review these short videos which introduces Generation Z:

- [Gen Z: The Newest Batch of Students](#)
- [Generation Z Unfiltered](#)

First Meeting with Student

For some, Middle School and High School students can be downright intimidating sometimes. Here are a few things that can help you as you begin working with students:

1. First – Introduce yourself – Share your high school experience and pathway to your career. Intersperse personal information (hobbies, favorite things, etc.) and why you are choosing to spend your time as an ASPIRE mentor.
2. Consider using the [ASPIRE Student Information Form](#). Be engaged, an active listener, and make sure you use follow-up questions if student's questions are short or unclear. "What do you mean by…Wow, that is something I don't know about – can you tell me more…etc.
3. Make it clear that you are there to support their goals – be clear that you are not there with an agenda, but that you want to support the post-secondary goals they have
4. "I don't know" is an absolutely fair answer – but then help the student figure out the answer. Work together to research using ASPIRE resources, online college/career information, etc. Gen Z Students often get paralyzed by fear when they don't know how

to do things, or they aren't sure they have the right answers. Model what it looks like to figure it out - ask questions if you need to (ASPIRE Coordinator, maybe you need to call a college admissions or financial aid office). Support them through the unknown until you have an outcome. Then celebrate.

5. Set Goals and clear expectations.

Helpful Resources to Guide Conversations with Students

As you build relationships with students, asking them open-ended questions and discussing plans for their future, sometimes it's nice to have a resource to use to guide conversations. Based on the student and their post-secondary plans you may opt to guide your conversations using the noted resources in this section. There is not a one-size-fits-all method to interact and guide conversations with students. Each mentor should talk with the ASPIRE Site Coordinator to see if there is a preferred guide for mentors to use at their site. Otherwise, mentors can choose what works best:

- **ASPIRE Student Tracker** – ASPIRE Coordinators can order free copies
  - MS Tracker (Printed or Fillable PDF)
  - HS Tracker (Printed or Fillable PDF)
    Typically trackers should be filed and used each time a coordinator/mentor works with a student to monitor progress, or allow any mentor to pick-up right where the last one left off.
- ASPIRE Calendar – Month by month conversation guide that also includes links/information/events that may be helpful to your conversations
- **ASPIRE Grade-level** Checklists for college bound students
- **ASPIRE Career/workforce Checklist**
- **Apprenticeship Checklist** found in dropdown "What can I do now to prepare?"
- **Opportunities College Planning Workbook** – See your ASPIRE Coordinator for this physical publication. There are activities and detailed grade-level checklists in the back of this workbook for college bound students. Coordinators can order this Opportunities publication free in English and Spanish.
- **ASPIRE Site Checklist/Guide** - Some ASPIRE site coordinators have a school specific checklists they like mentors to use when talking with students

Financial Aid Basics

Understanding Financial Aid Terms

Cost of Attendance (COA): The COA includes tuition, fees, and housing and food. It also has allowances for things like transportation, books, course materials, supplies, loan fees, and more. Schools may categorize these differently or refer to them as direct and indirect costs.
Student Aid Index (SAI): An index number used to determine your eligibility for federal student financial aid.
Direct costs: Tuition/fees and housing/food if living on campus. (Part of COA).
Indirect costs: Costs that are variable based on student's individual expenses. Typically, books/supplies, transportation, personal expenses, etc. (Part of COA).
Grants: Federal, state, and institutional grant aid is offered based on eligibility and need.

Scholarships: Gift aid offered by schools, local organizations, or state grant agencies (like OSAC), that you apply for and don't typically have to pay back. Can be based on need or merit.

Work-study: Money you can earn, typically at an hourly rate, that is funded by the government. It is not guaranteed. You must be awarded Federal Work-Study and find a qualifying work-study job that fits your schedule.

Federal Student Loans: Borrowed money that you pay back, usually with added interest. They usually have lower interest rates and more borrower protections than private student loans. There is no credit check, and a co-signer is not needed.

Subsidized: Student loans based on need - government pays interest while in college

Unsubsidized: Not need based, interest accrues immediately upon borrowing

PLUS Loans – Graduate students and parents of dependent undergraduate students - this loan is not need based, interest accrues immediately upon borrowing

Private Loans – Student loans from private lenders, typically not based on financial need. A student must apply and often have a co-signer to apply for this type of loan. Credit check is usually required, and interest may be fixed or variable. These loans typically have higher interest rates than federal loans.

Financial Aid Applications: FAFSA, ORSAA, CSS Profile

The FAFSA or ORSAA Financial Aid Applications are used to determine eligibility for financial aid opportunities including the Oregon Opportunity Grant, The Oregon Promise Grant, and many need-based OSAC Scholarships. The FAFSA is required for all federal financial aid opportunities including the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Direct Loans, and Federal Works-study. In addition, FAFSA and ORSAA applicants may be eligible. *To determine which financial aid application to submit,* complete the filter tool on our website

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
United States citizens and eligible noncitizens complete this application.

Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA)
Oregon residents who have undocumented status, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status, and/or Temporary Protected Status (TPS).
IMPORTANT: ORSAA students add ORSAAHelp@hecc.oregon.gov to your email contacts so that important messages do not go to your Spam/Junk folder.
For more information: ORSAA Tip Sheet is available English/Spanish

CSS Profile
The CSS Profile is an additional application required by 300+ colleges, universities, or scholarship organizations. The application is much more detailed than the FAFSA application but may provide a better overview of your family finances which can make a big difference when financial aid offices award.

Financial Aid Preparation and Process

The student financial aid process takes time and preparation is important. It is essential that you complete your Federal Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA) as soon after October 1st as possible (each year). Many financial aid awards are offered on a first come, first served basis.

Financial Aid Preparation

- Use the OSAC FAFSA/ORSAA Filter Tool to identify which financial aid application you will apply to.
- Create a professional email account that you will have access to after you leave high school, students should not use their school student email address for the FAFSA or ORSAA.
- Determine who will need to contribute information on the FAFSA or ORSAA Application- VIDEO
- Gather required documents and have them ready to complete the financial aid application.
- Students completing the FAFSA: Students and contributors (if required) should create an FSA ID prior to starting a FAFSA. You can learn more about creating an FSA ID in this video.
- Students completing the ORSAA: Students and contributors do not need to create an FSA ID
  - Students and contributors will need an email to sign the ORSAA Application.
  - DACA/Undocumented/TPS students will not need social security numbers however but will be required to provide income information for self and contributors (if required).
- Search and apply for scholarships –
  - Local Scholarships: Contact your ASPIRE/College and Career Coordinator
  - OSAC Scholarship Application
  - Oregon CIS
  - JLV Counseling
  - FastWeb
- Get a job – work and save money for college expenses.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions – your ASPIRE/college and career coordinator and HS counselor can help you with this process.

Financial Aid Process

- **Financial aid applications open December 1** – Submit as soon as possible after applications open.
  - List your top choice colleges on your application (up to 20 colleges), make sure to include at least one Oregon community college.
- Determine if your top choice colleges require the CSS Profile application. Note college deadlines for this application.
- Students completing the FAFSA Application: Review your FAFSA Submission Summary once your FAFSA has been processed.
- Students completing the ORSAA Application: When you finish your ORSAA application – Immediately save a PDF copy of your application. Any changes you need to make to your application will require you to re-enter all your information (it's easier if you have a printed a copy of your information).
  - If changes need to be made, both the student and parent will need to re-sign their application.
- Apply for the Oregon Promise Grant and other OSAC Grants
- Complete your OSAC Scholarship Application.
- Complete your admissions applications for schools you have listed on your financial aid

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application – official financial aid award offers are not sent until a student has applied and been accepted at a college/university.

- Regularly check your email/college financial aid portals for information related to your award – some may require additional documentation if you are chosen for [financial aid verification](#).
- [Compare your financial aid award offers](#). This Oregon Goes to College resource helps compare financial aid awards from colleges and determine the final out-of-pocket expenses for each school.
- Clarify any questions you have about your financial aid award with your college and make sure to let them know if there have been changes to your family's financial situation. Financial aid offices can adjust financial aid awards to more accurately reflect your current financial situation if it's different than when the taxes were filed.
- [Create a budget](#). Use Oregon Goes to College's resource and talk with your family, look at your financial aid award, and consider an appropriate budget for college.
- Once you have chosen the school you will attend you will need to notify the college of your plan to attend, place your deposit (if required) and complete your housing application if you plan to live on campus.
- Accept and/or decline aid – based on your determined budget and as you can identify your need.

Oregon Student Aid

The Office of Student Access and Completion ([OSAC](#)) awards grants and scholarships of more than $118 million to thousands of Oregon students. Prominent grant programs include:

- [Oregon Opportunity Grant](#)
- [Oregon Promise Grant](#)
- [Oregon Tribal Student Grant](#)
- [Chaffee Education and Training Grant (foster youth)](#)
- [Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance Grant](#)
- [Other](#)

Contact Information phone: (541) 687- 7400 and [email](#)

Understanding Student Loans

While not anybody's first choice, student loans can sometimes be necessary. Understanding student loans options is important.

Federal Student Loan Options
Subsidized Student Loans - Student loans are based on need and the government pays the interest on the loan while the student is in college.

Unsubsidized Student Loans - Student loans are not need based, and interest on the loan accrues immediately upon borrowing.

You can find out more about federal student loans by visiting the [Federal Student Aid Website](#)

Private Loans – Available through at local banks and credit unions – however we do not encourage the use of private loans. Higher interest rates and cosigners are typically required

Parent PLUS Loans – Federal loans that parents can apply for to cover education expenses not covered by other financial aid awards. For more information visit the Federal Student Aid Direct PLUS Loans for Parents webpage.

What are the Federal Student Aid Loan Limits?
Federal Student Loans have annual limits based on dependency status, academic year in school and whether you are a undergraduate or graduate student. The following chart shows annual and aggregate limits for subsidized and unsubsidized federal loans:

Year	Dependent Students (except students whose parents are unable to obtain PLUS Loans)	Independent Students (and dependent undergraduate students whose parents are unable to obtain PLUS Loans)
First-Year Undergraduate Annual Loan Limit	$5,500-No more than $3,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.	$9,500-No more than $3,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.
Second-Year Undergraduate Annual Loan Limit	$6,500-No more than $4,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.	$10,500-No more than $4,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.
Third Year and Beyond Undergraduate Annual Loan Limit	$7,500 per year-No more than $5,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.	$12,500-No more than $5,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.
Graduate or Professional Student Annual Loan Limit	Not Applicable (all graduate and professional degree students are considered independent).	$20,500 (unsubsidized only).
Subsidized and Unsubsidized Aggregate Loan Limit	$31,000-No more than $23,000 of this amount may be in subsidized loans.	$57,500 for undergraduates-No more than $23,000 of this amount may be in subsidized loans. $138,500 for graduate or professional students-No more than $65,500 of this amount may be in subsidized loans. The graduate aggregate limit includes all federal loans received for undergraduate study.

Frequently Asked Questions

When should I apply for Financial Aid?

It's important to apply as soon after the financial aid applications open on October 1st. Some aid is limited and distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.
The longer you wait the less aid may be available.

Do I have to use my parent's information on my FAFSA/ORSAA Application?

Your dependency status determines whose information you must report when you fill out the FAFSA/ORSAA. If you're a dependent student you will report your parents' information, if you are an independent you will report your own information. You can learn more about dependency status on the
Federal Student Aid website.

Which parent's information should I report on the FAFSA/ORSAA Application?

Determining which parent's information to report on the FAFSA/ORSAA can be a little tricky. The Federal Student Aid website provides information on which parent might be a contributor on the FAFSA.

What if my parents aren't going to help me pay for college and refuse to provide information when I fill out the FAFSA form?

If your parents refuse to provide information when you fill out the FAFSA form, please see the Federal Student Aid website for additional guidance and information.

What if my parents make too much money to receive aid?

It is important to complete financial aid application even if you believe your parents make "too much" money to get certain types of funding. WHY?

- Often colleges/universities have additional aid to offer. Even if students are not qualified for federal or state grants, they may be eligible for institutional grants.
- Many scholarships and grant applications require a financial aid application – even if the scholarship is not need based. Scholarship committees want to see you are looking for all funding options possible for your education.

What if I don't have contact with my parents?

If you have no contact with your parents, please see the Federal Student Aid website for additional guidance and information.

What happens if I get my financial aid award and there is a gap in my aid and cost of attendance?

Paying for post-secondary education can be challenging, especially when your financial aid offer is not enough here are some suggestions on how to close the financial aid gap:

Apply for local, regional, state, or national scholarships

- Connect with your ASPIRE/College and Career Coordinator at your school to find local scholarship opportunities.

- Institutional Scholarships - Look for additional scholarships at the college/university you are applying (other than the merit award you receive based on your GPA)
- Other scholarship sources:
  - OSAC Scholarship
  - Oregon Goes to College/Scholarships
  - BigFuture Scholarships/College Board
  - JLVCounseling/Scholarships

Consider attending community college to reduce the cost and utilize the Oregon Promise Grant if eligible

- Consider dual enrollment to reduce costs (cheaper community college courses)
- Did you know there are several community colleges in Oregon that provide on campus living?
  - Central Oregon Community College (Bend), Lane Community College (Eugene), Southwestern Oregon Community College (Coos Bay), Treasure Valley Community College (Ontario)

Work full-time in the summer and part-time during the school year and use earned wages to pay college expenses.

Financial Aid Resources and Scholarships

Federal Student Aid

The office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) provides approximately $114.1 billion in grant, work-study, and loan funds each year to help students and their families pay for college or career school. The Federal Student Aid YouTube Channel has short helpful videos about the financial aid process, application, and information.
Contact Information – phone: 1-800-433-3243, email and live chats

Search for Scholarships

A list of scholarship websites to get students started.

OSAC Scholarship Application – The OSAC Scholarship Application includes more than 600 scholarships. The application includes student contact and background questions, college plans, transcripts, activities chart, and personal statements.

Oregon Goes To College Scholarship List – Take a look at Oregon Goes To College webpage for a long list of scholarship opportunities – organized by date (you do not need an account to search).

College Board's BigFuture Scholarship Search Platform – BigFuture is a free online planning guide that helps all students take the right first step after high school. BigFuture connects/matches students to scholarships based on your background and interests.

JLV Counseling Scholarship Website – The JLV College Counseling scholarship website includes a list of thousands of scholarships (you do not need an account to search).

Fastweb Scholarship Search Platform – Fastweb is a national platform connects students to college and trade school scholarships and resources. Account required.

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Help Students Consider Postsecondary Options

Career exploration is the process of discovering what careers match a student's skills and interests to career opportunities and then determining the education or training needed to get there. There are many great resources to help students explore and assess career and educational pathways.

Career Exploration

Encourage students to begin by identifying possible career pathways helps determine a course of action to help them meet their goals. Below are a few helpful tools to help with career exploration:

Career Journeys – Oregon Education Department's career video series that allows students to hear the story of young adults in Oregon and the paths they took to begin their careers.

Career One Stop – U.S. Department of Labor provides a virtual career search platform that includes career profiles, information, videos, career projection and salary information.

Big Future – Explore Career Possibilities – Videos, tools, articles and career search that helps students find the right career fit.

My Next Move – U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration resource that allows students to search for careers by key words, by industry or by interests.

Apprenticeships.Gov - Search for apprenticeship information and jobs.

Career Journey Maps – C3 – Sometimes students might know a field they might want to consider, but don't fully know the opportunities within that career field. Career Journey maps give students an opportunity to consider possible jobs, classes, or skills available in 16 career clusters. Each journey map provides possible jobs, job descriptions, suggested education/development and links to additional resources.

School Career/College Readiness Platforms – Many schools have Career/College virtual platforms used in advisory/homeroom/career and college classes. Ask your ASPIRE coordinator if students at your site have access to Oregon CIS, Naviance, YouScience, or other school site CCR platforms

Student Assessment Resources
Career and student assessments ask questions about preferences and identified strengths to identify careers that might be a good fit. When students choose a career pathway that utilizes interests and skills they have, they are more likely to feel satisfaction in their career and educational pathway and achieve success.

Career OneStop
This platform offers three assessments:
- **Interest Assessment** – Students answer questions about what their preferences and

create a list of careers that fits interests.
- **Skills Matcher** – Rate current skill level in 40 areas, creating a list of strongest skills, then learn which careers match your skills.
- **Work Values Matcher** – Helps identify which qualities in a job/workplace are most important to you. Determining careers that align with values increases motivation and career satisfaction.
https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Assessments/self-assessments.aspx

Big Future Career Search
College Board has created a **Career Quiz** that matches students with careers based on their likes and dislikes. To take this interest survey students must create an account (if they have taken a PSAT or SAT test, they will already have an account created).

Career and College Readiness School-based Platforms
Career and College Readiness (CCR) Platforms are often used in schools to give students resources and access to CCR information. If your ASPIRE Site has a school-based CCR platform students may have access to student assessments within the school-based platform they use. Examples of school-based platforms: Oregon CIS, Naviance, You Science, etc. Ask ASPIRE Coordinator if these types of resources are available.

College Planning

Encourage Organization

Classes to Take to Prepare for College
Not taking the right classes in high school can limit a student's college options. It is important to encourage students to understand that admissions to college require taking certain classes, not just meeting state graduation requirements. Each college has unique admission eligibility requirements so it will be important to research. Oregon Goes to College has done a great job giving general guidelines to prepare. It is important for students to start early and work with their school counselor to make sure they are on track to meet college entrance requirements.

Suggested Organizational Resources for Students
- **Oregon Goes to College – Google Doc Worksheets –** These free Google Docs can be downloaded and used in the student's Google Drive to help with college planning and staying on track. In addition, these worksheets are great to use to provide college planning discussions/conversations with mentors and family as students look at their future plans.
  - Activities Chart
  - College Application Information
  - Compare Costs and Financial Aid
  - Create a Budget
  - Financial Aid Verification Tracker
  - It's A Plan: College Checklist
  - Make your College List
  - Make your Decision
  - Passwords and Log Ins

o   [Scholarship List](#)

- **Usernames/Passwords –** Student's may want to consider using a password app safe manager to secure usernames/passwords. Apps can be found on Android and Apple app stores.

- **Calendar(s) -** Encourage students to use a personal calendar to keep track of personal, school and extracurricular activities. Building good organizational habits early in high school will lead to seniors being able to manage important deadlines their senior year (college testing, application, and scholarship deadlines), in addition to readying them for career and college. Whatever organizational calendar method students choose is fine – as long as they are regularly checking their calendar.
  - o   Online Calendar (Example: Google Calendar) – Encourage students to set notifications/reminders to remind them of important deadlines.
  - o   Physical Calendar – it will be very important for students to regularly check and look ahead at entries. Consider encouraging students with physical calendars to set a reminder on their phones each day (or at least weekly) to thoroughly review their upcoming deadlines and add any new additions to their calendar.
  - o   Combined Calendar - Personal, school activities/assignments, and college/career planning
  - o   Separate Calendars – A student may choose to have multiple calendars that separates school activities/assignments from college/career planning and personal entries.

College Exploration and Narrowing College List

Suggested College Search Resources for Students
- **[ASPIRE Calendar](#) -** Use ASPIRE calendar to search Oregon Community Colleges and 4-Year public and private universities. Hyperlinks on pages 1-2. Note admissions application dates/deadlines, scholarship application dates, and look at college visit links to plan a visit to your top choice campuses.

- **[Big Future - College Search/Fit](#) –** Explore what you want and then find the colleges that meet your goals and interests.

- **[College Scorecard](#) –** Department of Education's online college search database intended to provide transparent information to students and families.

Students should go to Admissions Websites and Request Information
Most colleges admissions sites offer students the opportunity to show interest in their school by requesting to receive email/information. This is a student's first opportunity to introduce themselves to a school of interest. While its typically just basic information requested – encourage students to consider spelling/grammar when responding to school interest information.

Visit College/University and talk with Admissions Advisors
The best way for students to figure out if a college may be a good fit is to talk with university admissions representatives and/or visit a college in person/virtually.

- **College Fairs** - Attend local/regional college fairs to learn more.
- **Admissions Visits at your High School** – Students can meet college admissions recruiters when they visit school. Encourage them to ask questions about admissions, programs, and college life.
- **In person visit to campus/Campus Preview Days –** Students can independently identify top choice schools and visit campuses.
  - Campus Visit Tips
  - Get the Most Out of Your Campus Visit
- **Virtual Visits/Tours –** Options to visit or meet with college admissions/academic advisor are typically available on request and many institutions have virtual tours available on their websites.

Understanding the Admissions Application Process

When to Apply

Colleges/Universities have different application deadlines. It is extremely important for each student to research application deadlines for their desired top choice schools. Our recommendation is to apply for colleges in early fall. It is important to understand many institutions require that students complete admissions applications and receive their acceptance notifications before they can apply for the institution's scholarships (beyond the merit scholarships). Applying early minimizes any concerns of missing additional scholarship/financial aid deadlines.

Types of College Applications

While many colleges, universities, and trade schools still have their own **institutional admissions application**, many students find convenience in using the Common App.

Many college/university Admissions applications may have an **applications fee**, typically ranging between $35-$100. Many colleges accept fee waivers or deferments. Check with your college admissions counselor to determine if your fee can be waived or deferred.

Common App – This application offers one universal application and one common set of essays for its member colleges. This saves you time by not requiring you to fill out your personal contact information, educational history, etc. every time you apply to a new school. Click HERE to identify whether student's college of choice is uses the Common Application.

- **AXS Companion for Students and AXS Toolbox**
  - The AXS Companion is a free, open online resource for students that is to be used side-by-side with the Common App as they work through the application. Each section includes explanatory videos, helpful tips, a glossary of application terms, and links to resources mentioned in the videos. This resource gives students confidence as they work through the Common App independently.
  - The AXS Toolbox is a free, versatile resource designed to provide resources for counselors, teachers, and college and career educators, mentors assisting students through the Common App journey. The AXS Toolbox provides:
    - Customizable Lesson Plans
    - Engaging video tutorials
    - Interactive Student Worksheets

- And more

Other Types of College Applications

- **Coalition Application:** [The Coalition Application](#) is a platform where [150+ colleges and universities](#) express their commitment to provide lower-income, under-resourced and/or first-generation students support.
- **Common Black College Application:** [The Common Black College Application](#) is accepted by [60 historically Black colleges and universities](#) throughout the country.
- **Institution Specific Application:** Many colleges require specific college admissions applications from their institution. Applications will be found on the college/university admissions website.
- **Oregon Degree Partnership Admissions Program Applications:** These programs may also be called [Dual Enrollment or Co-Admission programs](#). Public universities in Oregon have partnerships with community colleges where students can choose to be enrolled in both colleges. Students are required to apply to both colleges and/or complete a separate application to be dual enrolled. Search "Dual Enrollment" on the website of the university/college you would like to attend for specifics about each school's process.

Admissions Terms to Know

- **Regular Decision:** Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.
- **Rolling Admission:** Institutions review applications as they are submitted and give admission decisions as they receive applications.
- **Early Action:** Students apply early (usually November) and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. This is non-binding.
- **Early Decision:** Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted they must enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early. This is binding. If accepted, the student must withdraw all other applications.
- **Open Admission:** Some colleges offer admission to all students who apply. Such colleges usually have extensive programs designed to provide remedial or developmental help to students who enroll with academic deficiencies.

Admissions Eligibility and Considerations

Colleges/universities have unique admissions eligibility/admissions considerations listed on their admissions websites and vary depending on the type of college and program students want to pursue.

Possible Admissions Eligibility/Considerations:
- Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Strength of HS Courses
- Admissions College SAT/ACT Test Scores
- Letter of Recommendation(s)
- Admissions Interview(s)
- Activity Resume
- Admissions Essay

NOTE: The earlier a student begins the college search process, the more flexibility they may have in meeting admissions eligibility/considerations at their top choice schools.

Tips: Writing Essays for College Applications and Scholarships

It is extremely important for students to take time writing their college/scholarship essays. This is the opportunity for students to give the admissions or scholarship reader a true understanding of their personality, strengths and goals.

Big Future's – Ultimate Guide to Writing Your College Essay is an amazing resource. This website gives helpful tips to write college essays, student and admissions counselor videos that discuss how to take your essay to the next level – providing an appropriate level of depth necessary to stand out.

College Essay Guy – Great videos that are easily to digest for students. Here is a great video to start with 7 GREAT College Essay Tips to Help you Stand Out

Career Planning

Resumes/Cover Letters/Interviews

Activity Chart If you are just starting a resume for the first time, you can use the Scholarship Activity Chart Mini-Lesson to help you brainstorm and organize things you might want to include on your resume, and begin noting employment, activities, volunteer work, awards, honors that you have received.

My Future website is a great resource for career planning. This site includes many helpful resources and information about building a resume, writing your first cover letter, and important ways to prepare for interviews. The site even provides a step-by-step resume breakdown and resume examples.

Get Schooled – website has great resources for resume and cover letter creation.

- Writing a Resume & Cover Letter
- Top Job Interview Questions to Ask a Potential Employer

Trades/Apprenticeships

Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) are often called "Earn & Learn" programs as they provide low or no-cost career training for people interested in high waged and high-demand jobs in many industries including manufacturing, health care, information technology, and construction. RAPs combine paid On-the-Job Training (OJT) with a program of instruction called Related Training (RT).

ASPIRE Apprenticeships page is a great place to start to learn more about the trades.

Other Recorded Trades/Apprenticeship Webinars:
- [Electrical Apprenticeship Program at NECA](#)
- [Carpenters Union Presentation – ASPIRE Connections Webinar](#)

3 Part Trades Step by Step Seminar
- [Part 1: Trades Step by Step: Overview of Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships](#)
- [Part 2: Trades Apprenticeship Resources & Understanding between Union and Non-Union Apprenticeships](#)
- [Part 3: Interviews for Apprenticeships, Ranking System and Preparation](#)

[**State of Oregon – Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI)**](#) – State of Oregon's apprenticeships resources and information.

Military

[**ASPIRE Military Career page**](#) is a great place to learn about all military related career pathway options. On this webpage you will be able to learn about different branches of the military, training/benefits the military provides, and education and enlistment options.

Military service includes a variety of career options in nearly every field and career cluster. Service members are assigned jobs based on their abilities, test scores and service needs. Many of the jobs available have civilian equivalents and offer training that translates to a future civilian career.

Financial Literacy/Budgeting Resources

Whether students further their education in college or trade school, join the workforce, or choose a military path, the financial choices they make now (or in the near future) will affect the rest of their lives. Enjoy the vetted list of financial literacy/wellness resources and please pass them along to counselors and teachers that support this important work!

[**Jump$tart Clearinghouse**](#) – An online financial literacy resource that houses the nation's premier searchable database of curated financial education resources from hundreds of reputable providers.

Singleton Foundation presents [MillionStories Media](#)

MillionStories Media is a free multi-playlist digital video series which encourages financial literacy and entrepreneurship education for Gen Z and Millennials. The platform uses short, creative videos to take the fear, boredom, and discomfort out of learning how to be financially competent and is great to use with students to inform and engage in career and college planning conversations.

- [Your World on Money](#) – Master money basics – from budgeting to investing, homeownership to retirement.
- [The Finance Couch](#) Easy to digest financial literacy concepts that look towards in the years after HS.
- [From](#)

[Venture Valley](#) - Free Video Game educational resource to teach financial entrepreneurial concepts. The website has amazing educator resources.