



Funding Your Education Wisely

Trusted Advice for Smarter Choices

WE'RE HERE to **HELP!**



For over 35 years INvestEd's goal has been to provide Hoosier students and families with solutions to put higher education within reach.

We want to help you fund your education wisely while meeting your educational goals.

Whether it's:

- A live event in your community
- Meeting with you one-on-one
- Over the phone
- Online at investedindiana.org



FREE Help!

INvestEd promotes educated decision making for higher education choices to students, families and counselors!

Strong choices before college are the best way to:

- Increase the likelihood of graduating on time
- Reduce the total cost of college
- Minimize potential student loan debt

Connect with the College Planning Team:

Email: outreach@investedindiana.org

Phone: 317.715.9007



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pinterest.com/investedindiana



youtube.com/investedindiana



Check out our event calendar...we'll be at a location near you!

investedindiana.org/event-calendar

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FREE help throughout the college planning process

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Making Wise Choices

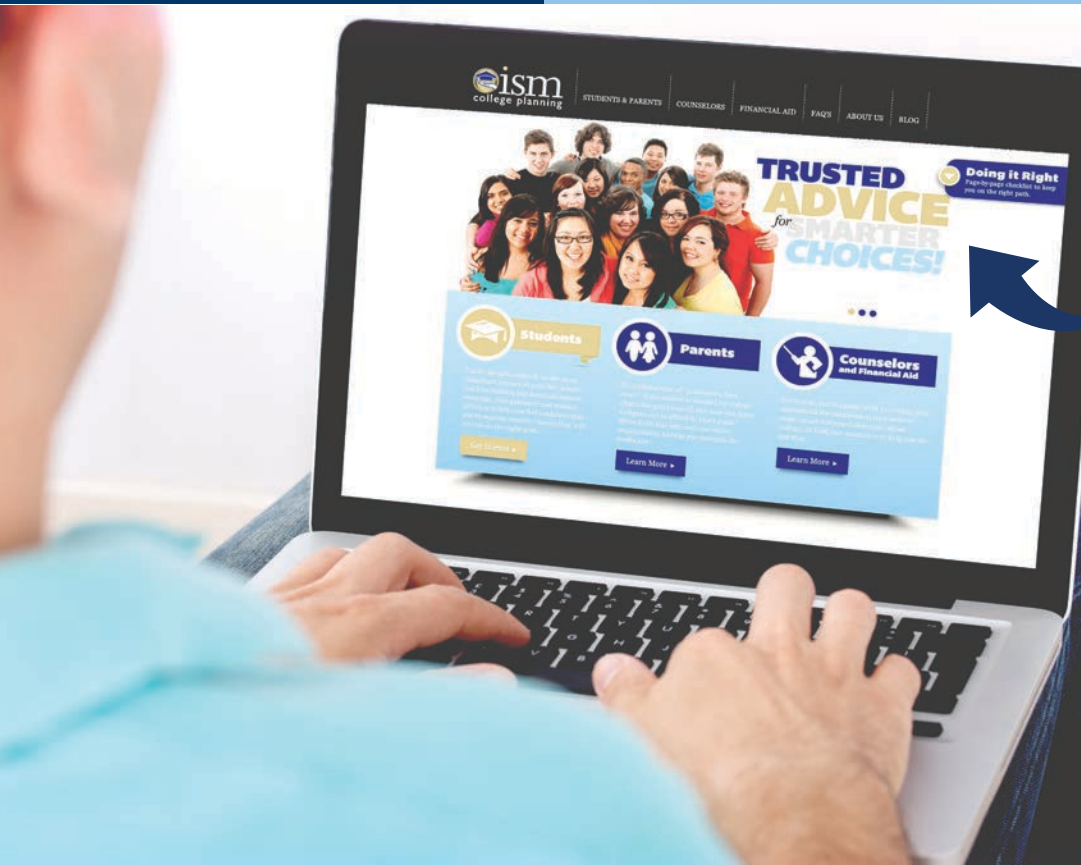
JUNIOR & SENIOR CHECKLIST **10-11**

Stay on track

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Check out all our FREE tools and resources at:
investedindiana.org



Doing it Right

Page-by-page checklist to keep you on the right path.

Need Help Getting Started?

Visit investedindiana.org and follow the “**Doing it Right**” checklist on the upper right corner of the home page. As you go through the list, make sure to contact us with any questions.

317.715.9007

outreach@investedindiana.org

Let's Get Started!

INvestEd will help you:

- Investigate the right career path
- Choose the right school for you
- Maximize FREE money like scholarships & grants
- Meet financial aid deadlines
- Understand options to fill any funding gap

We'll provide you and your family with **FREE** resources and tips to help you make a plan for college and graduate with as little debt as possible.

Ask questions at any time by emailing us at outreach@investedindiana.org

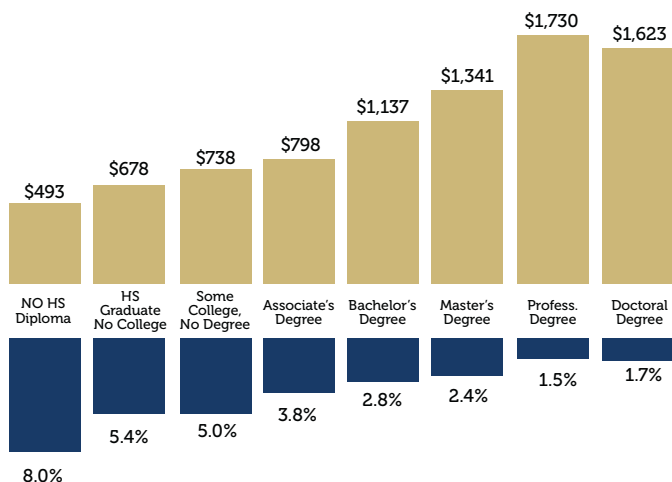


Sign up for our e-newsletter for updates on key college planning topics and check points to keep you on track. investedindiana.org/ mailing-list



Why College?

- **More Job Opportunities** – 65% of jobs will require education beyond high school by 2020. *(source: Recovery 2020 - Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020; Georgetown University)*
- **Higher Lifetime Earnings** – Over the course of a working lifetime a person with a 4-year degree will earn almost \$1 million more than someone with just a high school diploma. *(See Chart Below)*
- **Lower Unemployment Rate** – In addition to earning more money over your lifetime, you are also less likely to be unemployed. *(See Chart Below)*
- **Personal & Social Development** – People with a college degree often make healthier lifestyle choices and give back to their community.
- **Better Benefits** – Jobs for college graduates often offer better benefits like health insurance coverage and generous retirement plan options.
- **Your Family's Future** – If you attend college, your children and even grandchildren are more likely to attend college as well.



Median Weekly Earnings in 2015

Unemployment Rate in 2015

(Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)



Follow us on Pinterest for more informative charts, infographics and photos from our events!
pinterest.com/investedindiana

Choosing Your Career & Major

One of the easiest ways to run up student debt is to spend extra years in college. Researching and planning before college can lead to the selection of a career and major better suited for you, while increasing your chance of graduating on time.

Use online tools to:

- Take a personality test to help you discover your interests and strengths.
- Research what careers match your personality traits, skills and interests.
- Understand the potential salary in a chosen career field.

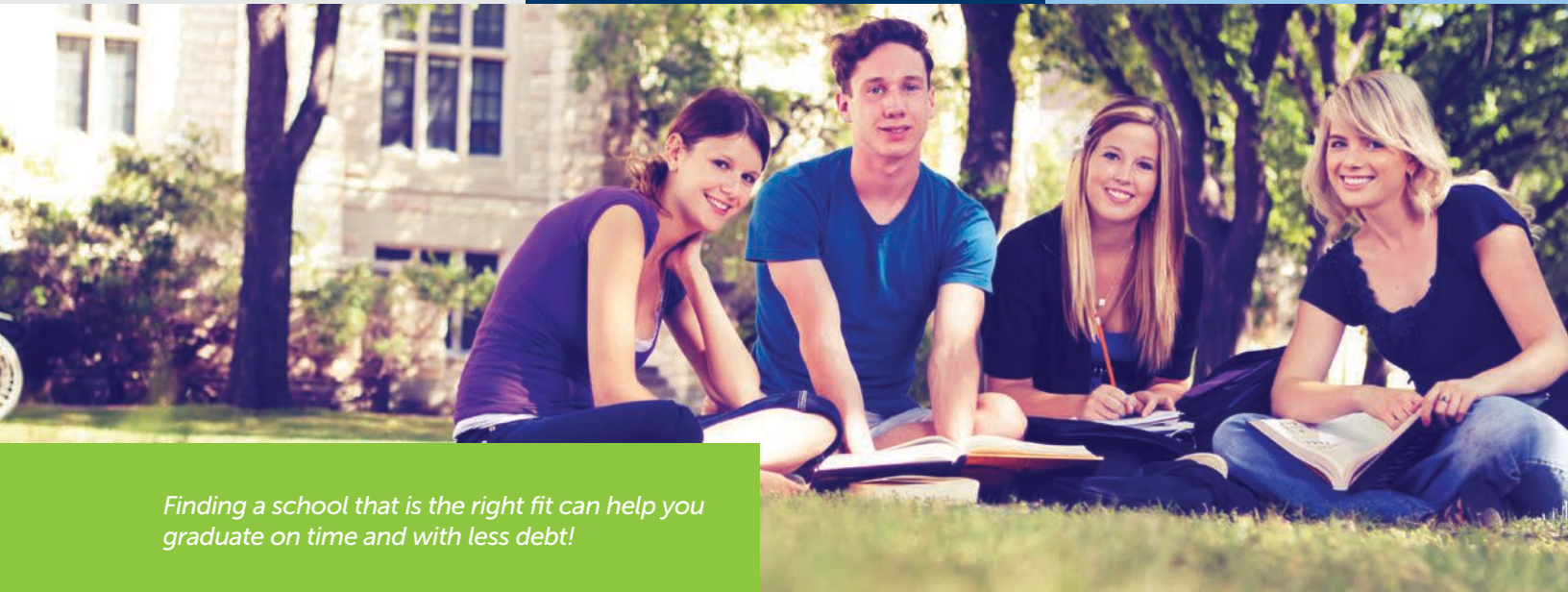
Gain experience by:

- Job shadowing someone in different career fields of interest to see if a job is really what you think it is.
- Talking to your school counselors and teachers about possible internship opportunities.
- Volunteering in your community. Serving others could lead into a specific career field and looks great on college and scholarship applications.

Spending a little time doing some online research and gaining experience can help you start the process of choosing your major and future career!

➤ **Get started at:** investedindiana.org





Finding a school that is the right fit can help you graduate on time and with less debt!

Choosing Your School

There are many great ways to continue your education. Knowing your options is critical to making a choice that fits you academically, financially and personally.

College means different things to different people. Choosing the right program and institution that fits your skills and interests can save you time and money in the long run. Here are some of the different avenues to consider when continuing your education:

- 2 year colleges or universities
- 4 year colleges or universities
- Vocational or Technical Schools
- Apprenticeships

Research Your Options:

There are many great schools to choose from, including right here in Indiana! Finding the right school for you takes time and effort. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

- Use online tools like College Navigator
- Attend College & Career Fairs
- Talk with your school counselor & teachers
- Go on campus visits



Check out investedindiana.org/choosingcollege for more information and to see a list of questions to ask during your college search!

Funding Your Education

So you've figured out what career you want to pursue and which schools offer programs in that field...



Now it's time to work through how to fund your education wisely. Planning ahead can relieve the financial stress of going to college. The next sections of this guide will walk you through your funding options.

- Applying for financial aid
- Maximizing FREE money
- Taking advantage of student employment opportunities
- Minimizing Debt
- Comparing Costs

We are happy to help!

Email: outreach@investedindiana.org
Phone: 317-715-9007

Visit investedindiana.org for great resources to help you fund your education wisely!



INvestEd travels across the state to help families all year round! See when we'll be at a location near you at investedindiana.org/event-calendar

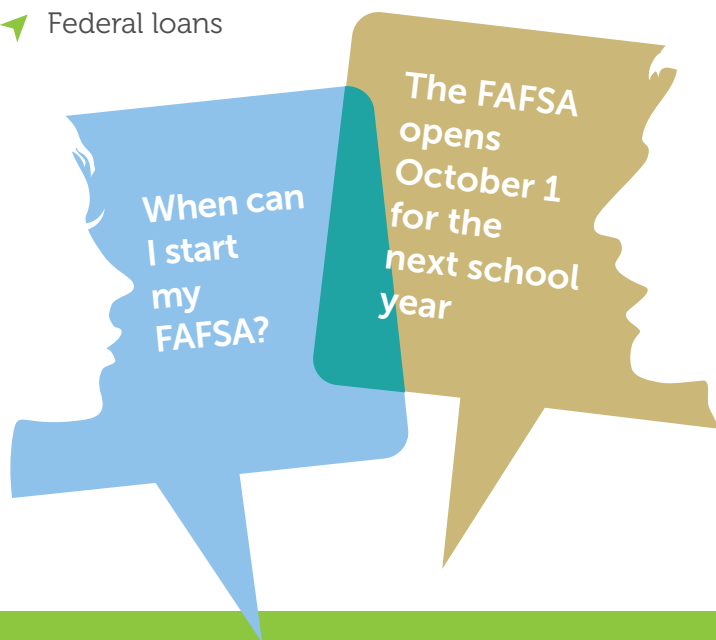
The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most important form in the financial aid process, and your friends at INvestEd are here to help!

The FAFSA

Applying for Financial Aid

Determines eligibility for most sources of financial assistance:

- Federal, state and some institutional grants
- Scholarships
- Work Study
- Federal loans



INvestEd is here to help you with all your FAFSA filing questions!

Connect with us at outreach@investedindiana.org or 317.715.9007 for help!

To be eligible for state of Indiana aid you must complete the FAFSA by March 10.

Please note that some colleges may have an earlier deadline to be eligible for their aid. Make sure you know the deadlines and submit the FAFSA on time!



Never pay to file the FAFSA. It's free and easy to complete online at the official website: fafsa.gov

For more information on the FAFSA, including:

- FAFSA Checklist
- Setting up your FSA ID
- IRS Data Retrieval Tool
- After the FAFSA Checklist

Visit INvestEd online: investedindiana.org/fafsa



Free Money!

Scholarships & Grants

The best way to pay for college is to find money that does not have to be paid back! Free money in the form of scholarships and grants is a key component of paying for college wisely.

The earlier you start searching for scholarships and grants, the more time you have to build your scholarship resume and become a better applicant. Here are some steps to get you started:

- **Plan.** Getting started is the hard part. Set aside time weekly for online searches and working on essays.
- **Ask around.** Check with your school counselor, local community foundation, places of employment, and college websites.
- **Look ahead.** Review possible scholarships for eligibility criteria and deadlines. Looking at these requirements early will give you time to become the best applicant.
- **Repeat.** Searching for scholarships requires continual effort, even throughout college.

Sources of Free Money:

- Federal & state government
- Colleges & universities
- Private businesses
- Community foundations & civic organizations



Top FREE Search Sites:

fastweb.com
scholarships.com
chegg.com/scholarships
unigo.com/scholarships
cappex.com/scholarships

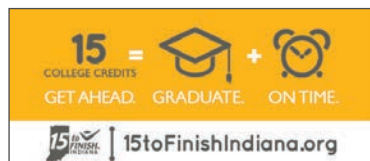


Having trouble getting started on scholarships?

Check out investedindiana.org/Scholarships for great tips to keep you on track and organized.

State of Indiana Grants

- **Must file your FAFSA by March 10!**
- Register for eStudent after filing your FAFSA to monitor your state grant eligibility
- For more information on state of Indiana grants, visit investedindiana.org/grants



Did you know that completing at least 15 credit hours per semester helps you maximize your FREE money, and you are more likely to graduate on time?

Student Employment

Don't overlook the benefits of student employment. It can be a great way to help pay for college, gain practical work experience and even help you get a job after graduation!

Student Employment Options:

- **Working Part-Time** – earning money to cover college expenses, networking and on the job experience are just some of the benefits.
- **Federal Work Study** – in addition to the benefits above, the income you earn through this program does not count against you when you file the FAFSA.
- **Internships** – although they can be paid or unpaid, studies show that over 80% of employers look for internship experience in their future employees.



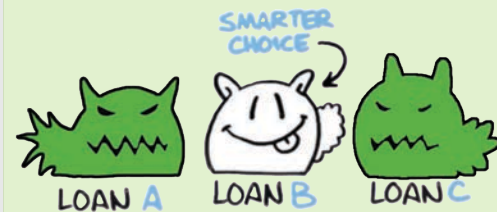
➤ Check out investedindiana.org/studentemployment for more information on student employment options!

Education Loans

As part of your plan to pay for college, education loans may be an option, but only after you have exhausted all FREE money avenues. Understanding the different types of loans and repayment options can help you to borrow wisely.

Key elements when evaluating loan options:

- **Know who the borrower is for each type of loan.**
Is it the student, the parent, or is a cosigner involved?
- **Know the costs.**
Do the loans have fees and are the interest rates variable or fixed?
- **Know when interest begins to accrue.**
Does the loan debt begin to grow immediately?
- **Know when repayment begins.**
Is there a grace period or does repayment start once the loan is disbursed?
- **Who is the lender?**
Are the loans from the government, a bank or a not-for-profit organization?



Types of Education Loans:

- Federal Direct Student Loan
 - Subsidized
 - Unsubsidized
- Federal Perkins Loan
- Federal Direct Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)
- Private/Alternative Loan

Not all loans are the same, but ALL loans must be repaid!

For more information on loan options, check out:

investedindiana.org/studentloans



Saving for School

Saving for college includes setting aside money and finding ways to reduce your costs. Perhaps it's taking dual credit courses, commuting from home, or even online versus classroom courses.

A common saving for college option is a 529 Direct Savings Plan. Here are some of the benefits:

- ✔ Indiana's plan provides a 20% state tax credit up to \$1,000 on annual contributions
- ✔ Account owner can be just about anyone
- ✔ Account owner retains control of the money and names the beneficiary
- ✔ Plans have low fees, low contribution requirements and various investment options

Check out more information on saving for college at investedindiana.org/saving

Comparing College Costs

Whether you are just starting your search for schools or reviewing your financial aid award letters, comparing the costs and aid options at each school is a critical step of the process. The better understanding you have of your true costs, the better decision you can make on where to attend.

To compare costs at each school side by side check out our College Cost Comparison worksheet at investedindiana.org/NPC.

Net price calculators provide estimates as you review your college options

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Cost of College} \\ - \text{Free Money} \\ \hline = \text{Net Price*} \end{array}$$

*What you have to pay through loans, employment or savings

Junior Year Checklist

Fall:

- Talk with your school counselor to find out if you are on track for college. Take challenging coursework, the PSAT and opportunities to earn college credit with advance placement (AP) and dual credit courses.
- Check out investedindiana.org/choosingcollege for resources as you investigate different schools.
- Find opportunities to volunteer in your community. Volunteering looks great on admission and scholarship applications.
- Begin setting aside money for college and, if possible, work with a trusted adult regarding a 529 Direct Savings Plan.

Spring:

- Begin searching for scholarships by:**
 - Talking to your school counselor about scholarship options.
 - Reviewing community foundation scholarships so you can begin to make yourself a better applicant your senior year.
 - Registering on national search sites. Top sites available at investedindiana.org/scholarships
- Register for the SAT, ACT or both. Remember that achieving a good score on these tests may reward you with more opportunities for grants and scholarships.
- Continue researching schools and begin narrowing your list to 5 or 6. Investigate the costs and possible aid at these schools using their net price calculator. INvestEd provides links and tools to help at investedindiana.org/NPC
- Visit college campuses. Make appointments with both the Admissions and Financial Aid Offices, attend some classes and spend the night if you can.
- Create a resume and apply for summer jobs. Find a job in an area related to your career interest if possible.

Summer:

- Save as much money as possible from your summer job and put it in a college fund. Money saved now means borrowing less for college later.
- Begin discussions with a trusted adult regarding options available to you for covering the cost of college.
- Write sample essays in preparation for admission and scholarship applications. Tell your story in 300 words or less.

Senior Year Checklist

Fall:

- Narrow your list of college options to 3-4. File your admission applications and make note of important deadlines. Schedule initial or return visits with faculty, admissions and financial aid.
- Gather recommendations for admission and scholarship applications, as well as fine tuning your personal essays.
- If you are looking to improve your scores or take the test for the first time, register and prepare for the fall SAT or ACT. Better scores may lead to better financial aid offers.
- Continue discussions with a trusted adult about the financial options available to cover college costs, as well as continuing scholarship searches. investedindiana.org/scholarships
- After October 1, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), available at fafsa.gov. To be eligible for state of Indiana aid, the form is due at the federal processor by March 10.
Note: Some colleges may have an earlier deadline.

Winter:

- Continue searching for and applying for scholarships. In fact, keep looking for scholarships until you have graduated college. This is free money that doesn't have to be paid back, which means less you have to borrow.
- Follow up with the colleges you are applying to and confirm that they have received your Admissions and Financial Aid applications. Ask about any additional financial aid forms that may be required.
- Confirm your federal, state and institutional eligibility for scholarships and grants. Use the *After the FAFSA Checklist* at investedindiana.org for guidance.

Spring:

- Review your financial aid offers and compare costs using INvestEd's College Cost Comparison worksheet available at investedindiana.org/NPC.
- Check deadlines for sending in your required deposit, housing application, or any other forms requested by the school and remember to let the other schools know that you won't be attending.
- Finalize your paying for college plan with the financial aid office and complete all paperwork prior to orientation.



Have questions as you finalize your financial aid and make your decision on where to go to school? INvestEd is just an email or phone call away!

Connect with us at **317.715.9007** or outreach@investedindiana.org

College Planning Notes:

There are lots of ways to connect with us!

 fb.com/INvestEdIndiana

 twitter.com/INvestEdIndiana

 instagram.com/INvestEdIndiana

 pinterest.com/INvestEdIndiana

 youtube.com/INvestEdIndiana

Email: outreach@investedindiana.org

Phone: 317.715.9007



**A FREE Resource
for all Hoosiers!**



RESPONSIBLE OPTIONS for
LITERACY & LENDING in EDUCATION

Ph: 317.715.9007
outreach@investedindiana.org

INvestEd Indiana
11595 N. Meridian St. • Suite 200
Carmel, IN 46032