



Every Child. One Community. Cradle to Career.

COLLEGE AND CAREER SENIOR TOOLKIT

For Students, Parents and Guardians



Class of 2021

INSIDE

- Welcome 2
- College and Career Guidance Team List..... 2
- High School and Beyond Plan Checklist..... 3
- Know Your Options..... 4
- Financing Your Future 6
- College and Career Action Steps 8



You'll see QR codes throughout the Toolkit. Take out your phone camera, hover over the code, and link to helpful websites with the most updated information.



GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN



WELCOME TO YOUR SENIOR YEAR!

Graduating high school is such an important milestone. This year may look a little different, but you are not alone and the Graduate Tacoma Community is here to help. Now is the time for you to finalize plans and meet deadlines for the transition to college, technical school, apprenticeship, military, or career.

Use this toolkit and the College and Career Guidance Team listed below to get started. Go to GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN to connect to more resources, links, and events to support you and your future plans.

College and Career Guidance Specialists	
 <p>FOSS, OAKLAND, WILLIE STEWART ACADEMY Juanita Cantrell-Jeffreys 253.571.7358 • jjeffre@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>	 <p>SAMI Liz Minks, Co-Director 253.571.2300 • lminks@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>
 <p>IDEA Kainoa Higgins, Co-Director 253.571.5600 • khiggin@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>	 <p>STADIUM Brandi Junderson 253.571.3153 • bjunder@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>
 <p>LINCOLN Jamila Jones 253.571.6659 • jjones5@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>	 <p>SOTA Bliss King, Co-Director 253.571.7900 • bking2@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>
 <p>MOUNT TAHOMA Glen Burden 253.571.3823 • gburden@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>	 <p>WILSON Nancy Sprick 253.571.6148 • nsprick@tacoma.k12.wa.us</p>

HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND PLAN

All seniors are required to complete this plan as part of the high school graduation requirements. These are the main steps to take, but your high school's plan may look a little different so check out your school website as well. Get started now and reach out to your school's counseling and college and career staff for help.

STEP 1: Check your transcript

- Make sure you have all 24 credits needed to graduate. Ask your counselor if you have any questions.

STEP 2: Complete the FAFSA or WASFA

- See "Financing Your Future" on page 6-7 of the toolkit to get started. Print the form, fill in the appropriate information, and include it in your plan with all of the necessary signatures.

STEP 3: Complete the VANI form (Verification of Acceptance to Next Institution)

- Apply to at least one best-fit college, print the form, fill in the appropriate information with verification of acceptance, and include it in your plan with all of the necessary signatures.

STEP 4: Choose your best-fit post-high school plan

Complete your school's required document for your post-high school plan, print the document, and include it in your High School and Beyond Plan. Use this toolkit to help you plan the best fit for your future.

- Four-Year College/University
- Community/Technical College
- Vocational/Trade School
- Workforce
- Apprenticeship
- Military

STEP 5: Prepare a resume or activity log

- Complete your Resume or Activity log, print it, and include it in your plan.

Deadline and questions

Check with your school for specific deadlines and requirements. Ask your counselor or career specialist if you need help. Upon completion of the required items, submit your High School and Beyond Plan prior to graduation.

Tip! Find more information about careers and the steps to get there. Visit: CollegeBoard.org and CareerBridge.wa.gov and create a profile to start. More career exploration pages at: GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

High school graduates have many options after high school: two-year or four-year colleges, technical schools, apprenticeships, and more! Consider a range of pathways and options to fit your needs.

Regardless of where you go:

- Fill out the FAFSA or WASFA in the month of October (you can always make corrections)—remember, it's first come, first serve, so save your spot!
- If you're a College Bound Scholar, make sure your scholarship is confirmed.
- Attend information sessions—go in with prepared questions.
- Make sure that whatever path you pick, it's the right fit for you.
- Go to: GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN for resources to support your college search journey.

Four-Year College or University

- Know yourself first—pick out 3-5 things that are important to you and look for schools that have those things. This is called “the right fit.”

Consider:

- majors and programs offered
 - size
 - distance from home
 - how selective it is (can I get in?)
 - financial aid options
 - cost (don't let this scare you off until you explore financial aid options)
- Apply early and keep track of deadlines—it's important!
 - Use CollegeBoard.org to learn more about schools. You can also go to a college's web page and talk to a trusted advisor about your options.

Vocational/Trade Schools

- Career specific programs with certification options.
- Some vocational schools are for-profit, so check the job placement rates.
- If you plan to attend a vocational or trade school and then transfer, talk to the school you plan to transfer into to ensure your credits are valid.
- RWM.org lists schools that offer Associate's Degree programs in Washington and nationwide.



Build an application list of about 4-6 schools, including three types of schools:

- 1) **“Reach”**—You really want to go, but it could be challenging getting in.
- 2) **“Solid”**—Your grades and test scores match what the school says they're looking for.
- 3) **“Safety”**—You will definitely get accepted; helps you stay on track with your goals.

DIPLOMA



Community and Technical Colleges

- Affordable and close to home, these colleges can set you on a degree path or help with career training.
- Students who earn an Associates Degree can transfer to a four-year university as a junior and finish a bachelor's degree in two years – a great way to cut costs.
- Learn more about the variety of programs offered at Tacoma Community College, Pierce College, Bates Technical College, Clover Park Technical College and Washington's other 30 community and technical colleges at: [CheckOutACollege.com](https://www.checkoutacollege.com).
- Go to the “Two-Year and Technical College Application Checklist” at [GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN](https://graduatetacoma.org/TCSN) to take next steps.

Workforce

- Identify your goal for entering the workforce directly after high school.
- Do you want to save for college?
- Do you want to begin working towards a high paying trade such as electrical or plumbing?
- Do you want to work for personal independence?
- Learn more about workforce steps and get support at [NextMoveTacoma.org](https://www.nextmoveTacoma.org) and [Worforce-Central.org/job-seekers/young-adults/](https://www.worforce-central.org/job-seekers/young-adults/).

Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships are a mix of technical education and on-the-job training. Offered in multiple sectors such as trades, technology, and engineering, they allow students to earn a wage while learning the skills and knowledge needed for the job.
- Employers (such as Boeing), trade unions (such as electricians and roofers), and independent programs offer apprenticeships. These two- to four-year programs provide the pathway to family-wage jobs. Apprenticeship programs offer certifications, licenses, and/or college degrees.
- Apprenticeships are competitive and require solid math skills.
- Learn more at [LNI.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship](https://lmi.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship).

Military

- Military experience teaches life skills and often provides technical education.
- Military service can also provide scholarships and help pay for future college education.
- Learn more at [TodaysMilitary.com](https://www.todaysmilitary.com).

Tip! Start early, even if you're not sure what you want to do after high school. Plan for a few options. Ask for help when you need it.

FINANCING YOUR FUTURE

Opens

OCTOBER

1

For the most financial aid possible, you must submit the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or **WASFA** (Washington Application for State Financial Aid) starting **October 1**.

REMEMBER: You can always submit your FAFSA/WASFA to save your spot on the priority list and make corrections later, including adding additional colleges to your list. Every college's priority date is different, so check deadlines to submit your documents. You'll need to submit a new FAFSA/WASFA every year.

Submitting the FAFSA/WASFA

1 Gather your documents

- Your Social Security number (or Alien Registration or Permanent Resident Card)
- Your Driver License number or state ID
- Last year's family income tax returns
- Untaxed income records
- Current bank statements for you and your family
- Business and investment records for you and your family

2 Be prepared

- Attend a workshop to learn how to prepare for the process. See your school's website or GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN for dates.
- For the FAFSA—Both you and a parent need to apply for a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) at FSAid.ed.gov.
- List all the colleges you're considering regardless if you've applied.

3 Apply online

- FAFSA: FAFSA.ed.gov
WASFA: ReadySetGrad.wa.gov/WASFA
- Download the free FAFSA mobile App at myStudentAid to begin filing the FAFSA.
- Save your work if you get stuck—help is available!

How do I know if I should apply for the FAFSA or the WASFA?

You only fill out one or the other—NOT BOTH. If the student is a US citizen or eligible non-citizen, the FAFSA is the form you fill out. Visit StudentAid.gov/Understand-Aid/Eligibility/Requirements for information on eligible non-citizens.

If the student circumstance doesn't fall under the eligible non-citizen, then students can fill out the WASFA. In order to qualify you must:

- Have graduated from a Washington high school or obtained a GED (or will do so before beginning college).
- Have lived in Washington for three years prior to, and continuously since, earning the high school diploma or equivalent.
- Sign an affidavit (written promise) to file an application to become a permanent resident of the United States when eligible to apply.

Complete the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) at ReadySetGrad.wa.gov/WASFA, available beginning **October 1**.

FAFSA:



WASFA:



Financial Aid Award Letters

After filling out the FAFSA/WASFA, you'll receive a financial aid award letter through a college portal, email, or snail mail from every school granting admissions. Letters may include **grants, scholarships, work study, and/or loans**. Go to GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN to learn how to read your award letters and compare costs per school.

College Costs

There is a different cost for in-state residents vs. out of state if you're attending a public school. Consider this when selecting your school. Some private schools require a second financial aid application called the **CSS profile** available at CSSprofile.CollegeBoard.org. The cost of attendance at private colleges is much higher, but those institutions are often able to offer more financial aid, meaning the cost you actually pay may be less. Talk with a college access support staff member at your school for support with understanding your financial aid package.

College Bound Scholarship

Many families were eligible to sign up for the College Bound Scholarship (CBS) in seventh or eighth grade. Check with your counselor to see if you are a College Bound Scholar. To receive the CBS award, students must complete the FAFSA or WASFA, be admitted to a college in WA state, maintain income eligibility, and a minimum 2.0 GPA. CBS is combined with the Washington College Grant to cover tuition at public rates and a small book allowance. CBS will not be part of your financial aid award if all your need is met by other financial aid. You can learn more about the College Bound Scholarship at ReadySetGrad.wa.gov/college/college-bound-scholarship-program



Scholarships

Tacoma has some excellent scholarships for TPS students. Check out scholarships at GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN, making note of their application due dates. Your high school has its own scholarship page as well, so see your school website or career center for more information.



Text Otter!

Sign up for Otterbot, a free texting service designed to help Washington students navigate financial aid for college and career education. Students can access Otterbot via text message 24 hours a day, seven days a week by texting **"Hi Otter"** to 360-928-7281.

COLLEGE AND CAREER ACTION STEPS

September:

- Select 4-6 colleges you will apply to (make sure at least one is in-state).
- Complete student and parent FSA ID; FAFSA/WASFA opens October 1.
- Draft your resume and application essays—have people edit them.
- Create a profile and search and apply for scholarships at theWashBoard.org.
- Set up a professional email for school communication—check it every other day.

October:

- Complete FAFSA or WASFA. Opens October 1.
- Continue your scholarship search. Check your high school website for local scholarships.
- Take the free SAT provided by the school district.
- Attend a college fair. See GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN for a calendar of events.

November:

- Request official transcripts for college applications from Parchment.com.
- Ensure FAFSA/WASFA has been received by your selected schools.
- If applying to UW Seattle or any schools “early action” apply by November 15. Check schools for deadlines.

December:

- Complete and submit college applications. Ask your counselor for fee waivers if needed.
- Create a calendar of deadlines through summer.

January - March:

- Complete any remaining college applications/scholarships.
- Double-check with colleges to make sure all information has been received.
- Complete Financial Aid Verification if necessary.
- Visit schools of interest/attend university preview days.

April:

- Review your financial award letter(s).

May:

- Confirm college choice by May 1 and notify colleges you are not attending.
- Find out when housing deposit payments are due and submit.
- Complete High School and Beyond Plan.

June:

- Notify your high school which college you’ve selected and scholarships you’ve received.
- Request official transcript from Parchment.com.

July - August:

- Set up and/or update school portal account.
- Sign up for orientation.
- Keep up with checking emails/tracking deadlines.
- Register for classes.
- Contact your professors and introduce yourself.
- Contact financial aid office and make sure there are no holds on the account (late July).

Tip! Go to GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN for updated information, resources, and events.

