It’s Never Too Late To Go (Back) to College

Journey to College
Going to college is more important than ever before. The skills learned through higher education can lead to promotions, higher paying jobs and more opportunities. See what furthering your education can do for you.

Where will going (back) to college lead you?
The COVID-19 pandemic has many working Americans considering going back to school. According to Strada Education Network, 42 percent of adult learners say that the economic effects of the pandemic has made them more likely to enroll in an education program.

If you’re worried that you’ve been out of school too long to succeed, don’t be. The experience you gained while working will serve you well in college. Bud D., a secondary education major at Mineral Area College, went back to college to earn his teaching degree after he retired from the Army. “The military taught me how to focus and motivate myself to achieve my goals. I wish I’d known how much I would be learning about me the first time I went to college, before I went into the service. Now, college is a lot different than the first time I went many years ago.”

Did you know? College graduates with a bachelor’s degree earn $1 million more, on average, than those without a degree. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics

Benefits of higher education

A college degree or certificate can mean more career opportunities and a higher salary. College graduates, on average, earned $33,000 more per year than high school grads in 2018, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment rate (%)</th>
<th>Median usual weekly earnings ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's degree</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 3.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financing your future

Federal grants
The Federal Pell Grant does not need to be repaid. The actual amount you receive depends on factors like financial need and cost of attendance. There are other federal grants that give money to individuals who go into certain career paths or that have a certain income range. Filing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the first step to apply for these grants.

Federal loans
The FAFSA also gives you access to federal loans, both subsidized (the interest is paid while you’re in school), and unsubsidized (the interest accrues while you are in school.) Federal loans must be repaid. Neither subsidized nor unsubsidized loans require a credit check like private loans do. Both have fixed interest rates that are usually lower than private loan rates.

State, Regional or Local
There are many options for financial aid in Missouri, too. The first step to receive these is also to file a FAFSA. It provides your school with your financial information so they can determine if you’re eligible for grants and need-based scholarships.

After receiving your federal and state aid, there are also private grants and scholarships you can apply for. Scholarships can be based on location, school, academic program or even age and parental status. Search online for scholarship opportunities – sites include studentloanhero.com, studentdebtrelief.us, scholarships.com and collegescholarships.org

Academic Programs
The Missouri Economic Research and Information Center looked at growth, wages and projected job availability for future occupations. Those jobs were linked to academic programs like these:

- Agriculture
- Biotechnology
- Business Administration
- Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science
- Computer & Information Science
- Construction Trades
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Engineering
- Finance/ Financial Management
- Health Professions
- Hospitality Admin./Management
- Math
- Mechanics/ Repair Technology
- Precision Production
- Social Work

For full list of approved programs at eligible institutions visit: MOFastTrack.com

Helping Missouri adults pay for school
Fast Track’s goal is to increase access to college for adults. By providing grants, Fast Track will increase the number of people qualified for high-demand jobs in Missouri. It provides financial aid to cover actual tuition and fees so adults can reach their goals.

Who is eligible?
- Adults age 25 or older, OR adults who have not been in an educational program for two or more years.
- Adults with a bachelor’s degree.

Who should apply?
- Someone underemployed or laid-off.
- Adults with some college but no degree.
- Adults with an associate degree.
- Someone who needs another credential to move up to a better job.

Other funding
Fast Track is a last-dollar grant applied after other federal aid, including Pell Grants and Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act funds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: MOFastTrack.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: MOFastTrack.com

Student Stories

Marcia F.
St. Louis Community College
Major: Early Childhood Education

“Forward is forward. No matter how fast or slow you go, you’re still moving forward. The classrooms have every age group you can think of. It took me almost 6 years to obtain this degree, but I took my time and earned straight A’s, each semester.”

Geri V.
Missouri Western State University
Major: Population Health Management

“JUST DO IT! There are so many tough decisions to make in life and with a degree, the options are endless. I believe that non-traditional students sometimes take the fact that we have been out of school so long and forget what fun learning actually is.”

Jay K.
Southeast Missouri State University
Major: General Studies, Criminal Justice and Sociology

“I lacked about 45 credit hours...which seemed like a million, but I’m proud to say that after 2.5 years of night classes, day classes, and online classes, I was able to graduate.”
The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development administers a variety of federal and state grant, scholarship, and financial literacy programs. For more information about student financial assistance, contact the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development at 800-473-6757 or 573-751-3940. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development has no control over, or responsibility for, material on other websites provided in this document. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development does not verify the information on linked sites and does not endorse these sites or their sources. Links are provided as a convenience only to Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development customers. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development makes every effort to provide program accessibility to all citizens without regard to disability. If you require this publication in an alternate form, contact the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development at 800-473-6757 or 573-751-3940. Hearing/Speech impaired citizens may call 800-735-2966. Content accurate at time of printing, October 2020. For the latest information, visit dhewd.mo.gov or studentaid.gov.

© 2020 Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development