



**NORTH DAKOTA
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

ACCESS. INNOVATION. EXCELLENCE.



DESIGN

YOUR FUTURE

COLLEGE & CAREER PREPARATION GUIDE

PARTNERS IN YOUR EDUCATION

NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

NORTH DAKOTA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

BANK OF NORTH DAKOTA COLLEGE PLANNING CENTER

Explore Your Career Options

What do you want to be? What kind of education will that require?

You may choose a job that is in demand in North Dakota, such as a computer systems analyst, science teacher, heating and air conditioning mechanic, chef or registered nurse. Or how about a job that is action-packed, such as a fire fighter, police officer or oil field worker? What about being a doctor, stock broker or power plant operator?

Start your exploration process now. Go online to explore careers, and talk to people who have jobs that interest you. To find out more about careers in your favorite subject area, go to RUReady.ND.gov or Insights.ND.gov.

These sites describe thousands of jobs available in the U.S. and shows how the skills you learn in the classroom apply in the real world. It's easy to use and readily available to all middle and high school students in North Dakota. Ask your school guidance counselor for information on how to access this program.

By exploring and planning ahead, you'll know more about your career options.

Is a High School Diploma Enough?

With a high school diploma or less, your job options and future earnings potential will be limited. In fact, some jobs that once called for a high school diploma now require more education.

For example, many service and repair technicians now receive training beyond high school. The need for skilled workers, such as registered nurses and electricians, continues to increase in North Dakota and throughout the U.S. Plus, there is a growing need for people who have four-year degrees, such as scientists and engineers, and graduate and professional degrees, such as school administrators and pharmacists.

Whatever career you choose, planning now will increase your options later.

North Dakota Jobs By Education - As many as 30,000 jobs available

Degree Level	Number of Postings	Median Salary
High school or vocational training	13,943	\$31,541.00
Associate's degree	5,004	\$46,711.00
Bachelor's degree	12,398	\$61,217.00
Master's degree	2,923	\$72,851.00
Doctoral degree	1,142	\$78,692.00

Steps in the Right Direction



High School Diploma

- Farmer or rancher
- Office clerk
- Bookkeeping clerk
- Sales representative
- Child care worker
- Service unit operator
- Carpenter apprentice
- Electrician apprentice

Certificate Program or 2-Year Degree

- Heavy or tractor-trailer truck driver
- Nursing assistant
- Licensed practical or licensed vocational nurse
- Welder
- Registered nurse
- Computer user support specialist
- Dental hygienist
- Preschool teacher

4-Year Degree

- General or operations manager
- Elementary teacher
- Accountant or auditor
- Secondary teacher
- Industrial engineer
- Petroleum engineer
- Financial manager
- Market research analyst

Graduate Degree

- Physical therapist
- Nurse practitioner
- School counselor
- Minister
- School administrator
- Healthcare social worker
- Speech-language pathologist
- Occupational therapist

Professional Degree

- Lawyer
- Pharmacist
- Family or general practitioner
- Surgeon
- Dentist
- Optometrist
- Veterinarian

Learning must be a top priority if you plan to go to college. Friends, activities, part-time jobs – they’re all part of growing up, but never lose sight of your academic goals. Here are a few tips to help you stay focused.

Set Goals

Think about your future and map out a plan. Use available resources to explore your strengths and interests and match them to career possibilities.

Manage Your Time Well

Begin with a weekly planner. Outline your activities and decide which are priorities. Break large assignments into smaller tasks and do a little at a time.

Develop Good Learning Skills

Good work habits result in good learning skills. Think about the study methods you’ve used to get good grades in the past; and apply them to other subjects.

Maintain a Positive Attitude

Believe in yourself. Be positive about your talents, stay focused on your goals.

Challenge Yourself

Take the more challenging high school courses. They will help you prepare for college.

Accept Responsibility

It’s your responsibility to make the most of your education, so take charge. Ask questions, explore different perspectives and challenge yourself to do your best in everything you do. By doing so, you’ll make life a lot more fun.

Choosing the Right College for You

The North Dakota University System includes two types of academic institutions – two-year colleges and four-year universities. While each campus is unique in size and the types of programs it offers, the bullet points below describe North Dakota’s public colleges and universities in very general terms.

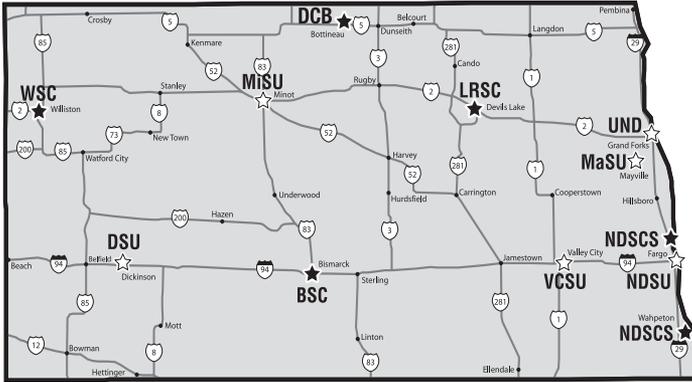
Two-Year Colleges

- Offer career and technical programs that prepare students for specific careers. A student who completes one of these programs receives a certificate, an associate in applied science (AAS) degree or associate in arts (AA) degree, which enables the student to directly enter the workforce in his or her particular field of study. Some programs take less than two years to complete.
- Allow students to earn an AA degree or associate in science (AS) degrees. Expanded offerings such as a Bachelor of Applied Science is also being offered as a step between AA/AS and traditional bachelor degrees. For some, these degrees meet their educational goals, while others transfer to four-year universities.
- Have open-enrollment policies; they accept all high school graduates.

Four-Year Universities

- Require all students to take a wide variety of courses.
- Offer a broad range of programs and degrees, including four-year or bachelor’s degrees. Some also offer graduate degrees, such as master’s degrees and doctorates.
- Offer a limited number of career and technical education programs.
- Require students to meet minimum admission requirements, including taking “core” high school courses and meeting the minimum requirements for ACT score and GPA.





Key:

= Two-Year Colleges

- Bismarck State College (BSC)
- Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB)
- Lake Region State College (LRSC)
- North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS)
- Williston State College (WSC)

= Four-Year Universities

- Dickinson State University (DSU)
- Mayville State University (MaSU)
- Minot State University (MiSU)
- North Dakota State University (NDSU)
- University of North Dakota (UND)
- Valley City State University (VCSU)

The NDUS Wants You

Soon you'll need to start thinking about college. We believe there's a college or university here that's just right for you.

Maybe you'll prefer a small campus where you can get to know most of the students and professors, or perhaps you'll enjoy the excitement of seeing many new faces. From two-year colleges to doctoral-degree universities, one of the 11 state public colleges and universities can be your stepping stone to a bright future.

To learn more about these institutions, go to Insights.ND.gov.

Meeting Expectations

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provides you and your family a valuable tool for determining if you've learned what is expected of an eighth-grade student in North Dakota in reading, mathematics and science.

The North Dakota State Assessment will show your achievement toward meeting statewide standards. During eighth grade, you'll take the State Assessment, an exam designed to identify your strengths and needs in reading, mathematics and science. You and your family will receive a personalized report showing your knowledge of these subjects, which will help you track your performance against state standards and inform you of your progression toward college or career readiness.

For more information and a list of these standards, visit the DPI website at www.nd.gov/dpi.

What Every Eighth-Grade Student Needs to Know About ACT

Have you ever heard of the ACT assessment? The ACT is one of two tools used throughout the nation to determine if students have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college. The other is the SAT.

Work with your school counselor to see if a college or university you plan to attend requires the ACT. If you are uncertain, it is highly recommended that you take the ACT as the scores may be used for college admission, admission into select programs of study, placement into college courses, and most importantly - for many scholarships!

ACT also offers ACT Aspire or periodic assessments of your accumulated learning that can additionally be used for placement into entry level college courses. ACT Aspire can provide teachers, students, and family members with insight to help students achieve their educational goals. Check with your school counselor to see if your school participates in the ACT Aspire program. Other similar assessment resources may be available through your school.

Earn a \$6,000 College Scholarship

The North Dakota Academic Scholarship, the N.D. Career and Technical Education Scholarship, and the N.D. Scholarship are aimed at N.D. high school graduates.

These programs reward students who meet specific coursework, grade-point-average and test score requirements. If you qualify, you may be eligible for up to \$6,000 for undergraduate study at eligible institutions of higher education within N.D.

Your high school counselor can work with you to make sure you're taking the right steps to qualify for one of these scholarships. For more information, contact NDUS at 701.328.2906, or call the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction at 701.328.2244.

Other scholarship and grant programs are also in place to help with you with college financing, and can be found at the NDUS.edu.

Plan and Pay for College with Bank of North Dakota

Bank of North Dakota (BND) is here to help you achieve your career goals after high school. When it comes to planning, visit CareerCompass.ND.gov. There you can register for and watch Career Discovery sessions and access BND's variety of resources. These include financial education material, College Application Month information, The College Handbook, checklists and BND's video library.

To help you pay for college, BND offers a series of videos on completing the FAFSA and administers ND Dollars for Scholars, a statewide scholarship program, and College SAVE, the state's 529 plan which helps residents save for college. BND's student loan program offers low interest rates to state residents and can fill the gap when federal student loans, grants, scholarships and savings don't cover college expenses. Information can be found at BND.ND.gov/studentloans. Follow BND on Facebook and Instagram.

Make Plans to Graduate from High School

Do you know what courses you will need to take to graduate from high school? North Dakota high school students need a minimum of 22 credits to graduate.

This includes specific requirements in several subject areas. To learn more about these requirements, talk to your school counselor, principal, or check your school handbook. By beginning with the end in mind, you will get off to a good start in ninth grade.

Also, see your counselor to find out which courses your school offers. Some electives, such as visual/performing arts, career and technical education, and foreign languages, may influence your choice of careers.

Taking a wide variety of high school courses will help you prepare for college and the future. By exploring many subject areas, you may find the career that best suits your interests and talents. Subject areas and sample courses are listed below.

<p>English (4 credits)</p> <p>English 1, 2, 3 and 4 Composition Literature Speech Drama Debate Mass media Journalism</p>	<p>Mathematics (3 credits)</p> <p>Applied math Algebra 1 and 2 Geometry Trigonometry Calculus Statistics Integrated Math AP Comp. Science Advanced JAVA</p>	<p>Lab Science (3 credits)</p> <p>Physical science Biology Chemistry Physics Anatomy and physiology Ecology Geology Biochemistry</p>	<p>Social Studies (3 credits)</p> <p>Geography U.S. history World history American government Psychology Sociology Economics Problems of democracy</p>
(3 credits)			
<p>Foreign Languages and/or Native American Studies</p> <p>French German Spanish Latin Chinese Greek Native languages Sign Language</p>	<p>Visual and Performing Arts</p> <p>Art Band Chorus Dance</p>	<p>Career and Technical Education</p> <p>Trade, industrial, technical and health careers Family/consumer science Info. technology Tech and engineering education Business/ office tech Marketing education Ag education</p>	<p>College Credit</p> <p>You can earn college credits while you're in high school. Many schools offer dual-credit courses (high school and college credit), and some offer advanced placement (AP) courses.</p>
<p>Physical Education and/or Health (1 credit)</p>	<p>Other Electives (5 credits)</p>		

Do You Want to Get on Track for a Four-Year College Degree?

Do you plan to attend a four-year university? If so, we hope you choose one of the following six public universities in the North Dakota University System:

- Dickinson State University
- Mayville State University
- Minot State University
- North Dakota State University
- University of North Dakota
- Valley City State University

You'll need to take the following 13 core high school courses before you can attend one of North Dakota's public four-year universities:

- English: Four courses
- Mathematics: Three courses (Algebra 1 and above)
- Laboratory science: Three courses (including at least two in biology, chemistry, physics or physical science)
- Social studies: Three courses (not including consumer education, cooperative marketing, orientation to social science and marriage/family)

Students seeking admission to NDSU or UND must complete a total of 14 core course requirements. The additional one unit of coursework can be selected from the categories listed above or world language.

If you plan to attend a four-year university, the NDUS recommends that you take a mathematics course each year of high school, including advanced algebra.

Additional courses may be required before you can be admitted to some college programs. Your school counselor can tell you more about specific requirements for the programs that interest you.

If you don't take the courses required to attend a four-year university, you may attend a two-year college. After successfully completing 24 college credits, you may be eligible to transfer to a four-year university.

Those seeking admission to an NDUS university must also meet minimum grade-point-average and ACT score requirements. NDUS universities are broken into three categories, each with its own minimum standards. The minimum standards for admission are as follows:

- 4-Year Comprehensive Universities (DSU, MaSU, VCSU) – GPA: 2.0, ACT: 18
- 4-Year Master's Granting University (MiSU) – GPA: 2.75, ACT: 21
- 4-Year Research Universities (NDSU, UND) – GPA: 2.75, ACT: 22

By taking a variety of courses, you'll be better prepared for life – no matter what job or career you choose. For instance:

English teaches you how to be a good communicator by using your best reading, writing and speaking skills.

Mathematics helps you develop problem-solving and logical thinking skills.

Laboratory science teaches you how to observe and analyze.

Social studies gives you the knowledge and skills to be an informed citizen.

Foreign languages help you learn about other countries and cultures.

Art helps develop individual talents and an appreciation for all types of art in the world around you.

Career and technical programs give you an opportunity to apply what you learn to the real world.

Get Started!

Now is the best time to begin planning for high school and college. Use this chart to get started. Pencil in the high school courses you plan to take and the year you plan to take them. Check with your school counselor to see which courses your high school offers.

My High School Plan of Study

	9th	10th	11th	12th
English/language arts (4 credits)				
Mathematics (3 credits required, 4 recommended)				
Laboratory science (3 credits required, 4 recommended)				
Social studies (3 credits)				
Physical education and/or health (1 credit)				
Electives (3 credits)				
- Career and technical education				
- Foreign languages and/or Native American studies				
- Visual and/or performing arts				
Other electives (5 credits)				
TOTAL				

Attend a North Dakota College or University

The NDUS wants you to know about all the choices available to you at the state's 11 public colleges and universities. That's why we provide you and your family more information about the university system when you are a high school sophomore.

But you don't have to wait to start planning for college. Just go to Insights.ND.gov or RUPrepare.ND.gov, where you will find options to help you determine which of our campuses is the best match for your academic goals, your athletic and extracurricular interests, and your preference for campus size.

We hope you'll choose to attend a North Dakota college or university.





Think You'll Need Help in College? Just Ask!

Students who receive special support services in elementary and high school can continue to receive assistance in college.

If you need these services now, there's no reason to worry about how you would get through college without them. But there is one catch – in college, you will have to speak up and ask for assistance. Teachers and counselors won't know about your needs unless you tell them.

Support services that may be available to you in college include:

- Tutoring
- Note-taking
- Adaptive aids
- Counseling
- Assistance with English language skills

A Parent's Guide to Paying for College:

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions



When Should I Start Saving for My Child’s College Education?

Ideally, you should have begun saving when your child was born, but it’s never too late to start! It’s tough to keep up with the cost of college, but, as a parent, you may want to provide as much as you can for your child’s college education. No matter how close your child is to graduating from high school, financial planning will help you set spending priorities and develop savings and investment plans.

Any amount of money saved today will help. It is a common mistake to think that saving will prevent a student from qualifying for financial aid. It’s true that a financial aid needs assessment considers savings and assets; however, it also takes into consideration the age of the parents and their need to save for retirement. Remember that any savings may help reduce the need for borrowing money, a situation that usually requires years of repayment.

How Much Do I Need to Save if My Child Will Graduate in 2026?

The cost of higher education can vary widely depending upon the type of college, the program of study and the region of the country where the college is located. Total cost of education usually takes into consideration tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation and personal expenses. The following chart shows you the approximate average cost of attending an in-state college or university in 2026-27. This is based on a North Dakota resident living on-campus with a 5 percent annual rate of inflation:

Estimated Cost of Attending College in 2026-27*

	Private	Two-Year Public Colleges	Four-Year Public Universities
One Year of College	\$40,144	\$20,582	\$26,541
Four Years of College	\$173,026	– NA –	\$114,397

* For a complete listing of college costs, contact the college or university of your choice for the actual cost of attendance.

What Savings Options Are Available?

Savings and investment options to consider include:

- **College SAVE** – North Dakota’s college savings plan, administered by Bank of North Dakota, helps families invest for future college expenses. The BND Match can be utilized by four out of five N.D. families, adding an extra \$300 to college savings to those who qualify. You can deduct up to \$5,000 (up to \$10,000 for a married couple) of your College SAVE contributions from your N.D. state taxable income, and your earnings grow tax free. A College SAVE account may be used at any qualified school providing postsecondary education in the country.
- **Certificates of Deposits** – CDs are issued by insured financial institutions that pay fixed rates of interest for specific time periods. These are considered safe investments.
- **Series EE Savings Bonds** – Issued by the U.S. government, income from Series EE Savings Bonds bought after 1989 may be tax exempt if used to pay for college tuition and fees. For more information, consult your tax advisor or visit the U.S. Department of Treasury’s website at [savingsbonds.gov/indiv/planning/plan_education.htm](https://www.savingsbonds.gov/indiv/planning/plan_education.htm).
- **Regular Savings Accounts** – Monthly contributions to these accounts are one of the most fundamental methods for building financial reserves.
- **Education IRAs and Mutual Funds** – These investments should be discussed with an investment broker.

What Other Types of Financial Aid Are Available For Higher Education?

- **Scholarships** – These funds are awarded to students for academic performance, skills, achievement, need or other qualifications. Scholarships generally do not need to be repaid. Also, beware of scholarship scams. It does not cost anything to apply for a scholarship. N.D. offers various scholarships to N.D. residents. You can find more information on state scholarships at [NDUS.edu](https://www.ndus.edu).
- **Grants** – Federal Pell Grants and Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (SEOG) are available through the U.S. Department of Education. North Dakota provides a State Student Incentive Grant Program (SSIG), which offers need-based grants to N.D. college students. Visit [ndus.edu](https://www.ndus.edu) to learn more about this program. Grants do not need to be repaid.
- **Work-Study Programs** – The federal College Work-Study Program administered by each college enables students to work on or off-campus while enrolled in college.
- **Student Loans** – Many students need to take out loans to help pay for college. It is recommended that you compare interest rates, fees and repayment terms of all options before choosing a student loan. The most important thing to understand is that loans need to be paid back, with interest. Federal and private student loans are available to students who attend eligible institutions if students or their families cannot pay for college. Each type of loan has different qualifications.

When Do I Start the Process of Determining if My Child Qualifies for Gift Aid and/or Student Loans?

Financial aid funds can be limited, so it's important to get a head start! The first step is to apply for admission to the college or university of your choice. Then complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at fafsa.gov as soon as possible after Oct. 1 of the year financial aid is needed.

If your child plans to attend college in the fall of 2027, you need to begin this process soon after Oct. 1, 2026. To learn more about the FAFSA process, visit bnd.nd.gov.

For an early estimate of eligibility for federal student aid, complete the FAFSA4caster at fafsa4caster.ed.gov at any time. During your child's senior year, transition from FAFSA4caster to the online FAFSA is easy.

Much of the information entered in FAFSA4caster will carry over to your online FAFSA application. Visit collegehandbook.bnd.nd.gov for videos that will assist you in completing the FAFSA.

The College Handbook, written by Bank of North Dakota, is a trusted local resource for North Dakotans to answer questions about college and career planning. You may also follow Bank of North Dakota on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to receive college updates at your fingertips.

Did You Know?

Most financial aid programs are administered through a college's financial aid office, which also may administer additional campus-specific programs. For more information, contact the financial aid office at the college or university your child plans to attend.



For More Information

For more information about any of the topics included in this publication, contact one of the following agencies:

Department of Career and Technical Education

State Capitol, Floor 15
600 E Boulevard Ave Dept 270
Bismarck, ND 58505-0610
701.328.3180
www.nd.gov/cte/

Department of Public Instruction

State Capitol, Floor 11
600 E Boulevard Ave Dept 201
Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
701.328.2260
www.nd.gov/dpi

North Dakota University System

State Capitol, Floor 10
600 E Boulevard Ave Dept 215
Bismarck, ND 58505-0230
701.328.2960
Insights.ND.gov/College

For more information about College SAVE, planning for college - including student financial aid, and student loans, contact:

Bank of North Dakota Education Market

1200 Memorial Hwy
Bismarck, ND 58506-5509
800.554.2717 or bnd.nd.gov

For more information about any of the 11 campuses that make up the North Dakota University System, contact the college or university at:

Bismarck State College

Bismarck, ND 58506
701.224.5429
800.445.5073
www.bismarckstate.edu

Mayville State University

Mayville, ND 58257
701.788.4842
800.437.4104 ext. 34842
www.mayvillestate.edu

University of North Dakota

Grand Forks, ND 58202
701.777.3000
800.CALL UND (225.5863)
www.und.edu

Dakota College at Bottineau

Bottineau, ND 58318-1198
701.228.5488
800.542.6866
www.dakotacollege.edu

Minot State University

Minot, ND 58707
701.858.3350
800.777.0750
www.minotstateu.edu

Valley City State University

Valley City, ND 58072
701.845.7101
800.532.8641 ext. 7101
www.vcsu.edu

Dickinson State University

Dickinson, ND 58601
701.483.2175
800.279.4295
www.dickinsonstate.edu

North Dakota State College of Science

Wahpeton, ND 58076
701.671.2521
800.342.4325
www.ndscs.edu

Williston State College

Williston, ND 58802
701.774.4200
888.863.9455 ext. 4220
www.willistonstate.edu

Lake Region State College

Devils Lake, ND 58301
701.662.1514
800.443.1313
www.lrsc.edu

North Dakota State University

Fargo, ND 58108-6050
701.231.8643
800.488.6378
www.ndsu.edu

The programs and services of the Department of Career and Technical Education, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, the North Dakota University System and the College Planning Center at Bank of North Dakota are available without discrimination on the basis of age, race, creed, color, sex, marital status or national origin. Anyone who needs alternative accommodations because of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) qualifying conditions may contact these agencies, which will make any reasonable arrangements in response to requests.