



# Guide to Higher Education

## This quick guide addresses these guiding questions:

1. What education and training is required for my career goal?
2. How do I choose the right major or program?
3. What options do I consider when choosing a school?
4. How will I pay for my education and training beyond high school?
5. Where can I get more information to help me along the way?

## 1. What education and training is required for my career goal?

Most people are aware that if you want to be a doctor, you'll have to go to college. But what kind of education and training do you need to become a video game designer, marketing analyst, or a computer support specialist? Will you need a one-year certificate, two-year associate degree, four-year bachelor's degree, or a professional degree?

Once you know the requirements for your future career, you can research and choose which level of education best matches your career goal and personal situation. Generally, educational programs beyond high school are organized in the following ways:

- Non-Credit Programs are workshops, seminars, or courses that improve skills for professional development, but do not offer credit toward an academic degree.
- Certificates are documents granted by career centers and colleges after completion of study for specific occupations. Certificates usually require a full-time, six-month to one-year program of required courses or their part-time equivalent. Some certificates can be counted toward a higher degree, but this is not always the case.
- Associate Degrees are granted by colleges after students satisfactorily complete two-year, full-time programs of required college-level courses or their part-time equivalent.
- Bachelor's Degrees are granted by universities or colleges after students have satisfactorily completed four-year, full-time programs of required courses or their part-time equivalent.
- Advanced Degrees – Master's, doctorate, or professional degrees (such as law or medicine) – are earned after Bachelor's degrees, taking at least an additional two years for full-time students to complete.

## 2. How do I choose the right major or program?

Choosing a major within a program is the first step toward initiating your career. The major should really connect back to the industry in which you want to get a job. Be mindful that not every major is created equally – there are jobs that require a license or certificate and may include more courses or

an additional degree (e.g., psychologist, teacher and accountant). A major is a specific area of study that involves a series of courses related to that field. By concentrating on one area, you are able to gain specialized knowledge and skills required for related occupations.

Why does your major matter? Watch the video “Success in the New Economy” to get an overview on why education and training decisions are important to your future: <http://vimeo.com/67277269>.



### 3. What options do I consider when choosing a school?

In general, you can divide educational and training institutions beyond high school into three categories:

- Less-than-2-year institution offers programs less than 2 years, and includes occupational and vocational schools. In Ohio, the Ohio Technical Centers provide labor market-driven post-secondary workforce education and training in 91 career-technical districts throughout the state.
- 2-year institution offers at least a 2-year program of college-level studies that either leads to an associate degree or coursework that can be credited toward a baccalaureate degree.
- 4-year institution offers at least a 4-year program of college-level studies leading principally toward a baccalaureate degree. A "university" is a 4-year institution which typically comprises one or more graduate professional schools.

Two-year colleges are most often chosen when an associate degree is the minimum educational requirement for an occupation, when you want a nearby location, or when you want a lower cost of education. Four-year institutions are often chosen for their academic specializations, higher degree levels and prestige associated with them.

You can also choose between public or private institutions.

- In Ohio, the state university system supports 14 public universities (and 24 regional branch campuses), 23 community colleges, and over 120 adult workforce education and training centers statewide.
- The Ohio Board of Regents has also authorized 111 not-for-profit colleges and universities, and 31 for-profit colleges and universities.

### 4. How will I pay for my education and training beyond high school?

You can find a variety of ways to finance the cost of your education. In addition to any support from family or earning money with a part-time or full-time job, you can explore:

- Financial aid through grants and student loans
- Scholarships, assistantships and fellowships
- Tuition waivers or discounts from individual schools
- Benefits for veterans and their children
- Employer aid (tuition payment or reimbursement)

Resources are available to help you find ways to fund your education. You can learn about available funds such as Federal Pell Grants, Federal Stafford Loans, Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Work Study, and PLUS Loans. The following links provide a good starting point for obtaining this information:



- “Federal Financial Aid,” *OhioHigherEd*, Ohio Board of Regents, <https://www.ohiohighered.org/students/pay-for-college/federal-financial-aid>
- *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)*, U.S. Department of Education, <https://fafsa.ed.gov>
- <https://www.studentaid.ed.gov/resources>
- “Prepare for College,” *FederalStudentAid*, U.S. Department of Education, <https://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college>
- U.S. Armed Forces Benefits, Federal Tuition Assistance Program, and other education benefits such as college credit for military experience, ROTC stipends, and Financial Aid for Veterans, <https://www.ohiohighered.org/veterans/financial-aid>

## 5. Where can I get more information?

- *College Navigator*, Institute of Education Sciences/National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>
- “Glossary,” U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/>
- National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov>
- *OhioHigherEd* (University System of Ohio), Ohio Board of Regents, <http://www.ohiohighered.org/>
- *Popular College Majors*, Peterson’s, <http://www.petersons.com/college-search/popular-college-majors.aspx>
- “Prepare for College,” *OhioHigherEd* (University System of Ohio), Ohio Board of Regents, [www.ohiohighered.org/students/prepare-for-college](http://www.ohiohighered.org/students/prepare-for-college)
- “Types of Schools,” *FederalStudentAid*, U.S. Department of Education, <https://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools/types>
- “Success in the New Economy”, <http://vimeo.com/67277269>

## A Checklist for Making Decisions about Higher Education



### What kind of education or training do I need for my career goal?

- I talked to school counselors and people working in the careers that interest me to learn more about their work and education requirements.
- I used *OhioMeansJobs K-12* to research occupations.
- I completed career exploration activities such as job shadows, internships and interviewing people in my community to learn more and meet people in my career of interest.

### What kind of educational program offers what I need for my career goal?

- I used *OhioMeansJobs K-12* to learn about programs of study that relate to my career interests.
- I researched schools I'm interested that have the program of study I need to reach my goal.
- I understand the differences between certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate or professional degree programs.
- I understand the differences between public, private, 2-year, 4-year, community, technical, trade, and online college options.
- I attended a college fair or informational event and visited a campus and talked with advisors to learn more about program offerings.
- I considered my own preferences for factors such as cost, small college or large university, live at home or live on-campus, nearby or distant location from home, limited or extensive social and extracurricular activities.

### What am I doing to prepare myself for education beyond high school?

- I developed good work and study habits.
- I update my course planner each semester to make sure I am on track for graduation and my career goal and not missing any credits.
- I have taken challenging courses that will prepare me for my next steps beyond high school.
- I maintained a strong grade point average (GPA).
- I keep a current record of my awards, honors, summer workshops, enrichment programs, work experiences and volunteer and extracurricular activities in my *OhioMeansJobs K-12* résumé.
- I used the *Online Assessment and Training Center on OhioMeansJobs K-12* to prepare for tests such as ACT, PSAT and ASVAB.
- I completed and submitted all required applications, forms and documents by the appropriate deadline (e.g., school, job, military and financial aid).

**What kind of financial aid is available for my education or training after high school?**

- I researched college costs and estimated how much money I will need.
- I created a savings plan with multiple options for reaching my goal.
- I contacted admissions and financial aid offices of the schools I am considering to find out what aid is available.
- I researched information about available scholarships, educational loans and grants.
- I used the *Search for Scholarships* tool on OhioMeansJobs K-12 to find possible awards.
- I applied for financial aid and completed the FAFSA.
- I explored alternative ways to pay for my education and training (internships, apprenticeship, work-study, co-op opportunities, attend school part-time, etc.)



**Enter your total number of checked items and then check your progress with the scores below:**

**(0 – 5)** You have a good start. You can make better informed decisions by completing more of the activities listed above

**(6 – 11)** You've taken some good steps. Completing more activities will offer you more options in the future.

**(12 – 17)** You're doing great. You have experiences that help you make good decisions about furthering your education.

**(18 – 23)** You're on target. Keep up the good work until you reach your goal.