



State Financial Aid Manual

Introduction

2025-2026

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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding up to \$207 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending accredited institutions in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state grant and scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 Institution Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

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Introduction

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) is a cabinet-level state agency that connects students and families with financial aid programs, information, and resources to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency collaborates with public, private, and tribal colleges and universities to enhance the distribution and effectiveness of need-based aid and competitive grant programs and provides the public with access to cutting-edge agency research products to support innovation and success.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding more than \$210 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and an early college awareness program and initiatives for youth.

Inter-agency work with the Minnesota Department of Education helps E-12 students successfully transition to postsecondary education. Collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Department of Labor and Industry supports state businesses and industry by aligning efforts to build and retain a well-trained and educated workforce and create opportunities for job seekers.

Agency Mission and Vision

Mission: To support the pursuit and completion of a higher education credential by every Minnesotan, regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status, in order to enhance our democracy, the State's economic vitality, and individual quality of life.

Vision: Minnesota is the best state in the country for children to grow up in – those of all races, ethnicities, religions, economic statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, and zip codes.

The Four A's that Guide Our Work

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is dedicated toward helping every Minnesotan who seeks a postsecondary education meet their goal through a variety of tools, services, and initiatives centered around four broad themes:

Affordability

Robust state financial aid programs that support Minnesotans with the most financial need. Students can graduate without student loan debt levels that limit their financial futures.

- Need-Based Financial Aid

- Helps lower- and middle-income students and families pay for educational expenses at eligible Minnesota colleges or universities
 - Minnesota State Grant
 - Postsecondary Child Care Grant
 - Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program
 - Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant
 - Minnesota Work Study
 - Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students
- SELF Loan Program
 - Long-term, low-interest student loans to help families cover the cost of college
- Minnesota College Savings Plan - MN Saves
 - Helps families save for college through a 529 plan that offers tax-saving benefits

Attainment

Students are given the supports and services they need to finish what they start.

- Minnesota's Attainment Goal: Increase the percentage of Minnesotans ages 25 to 44 who have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree to 70% by 2025
- Minnesota's FAFSA Goal: Increase FAFSA filing by 5 percentage points every year for 5 years, with a focus on closing gaps in FAFSA filing for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color. Therefore, for the class of 2022, our state's goal is to see FAFSA filing increase to 53%, while closing gaps in FAFSA filing by race/ethnicity.

Accessibility

A diverse array of higher education and postsecondary training programs exist so that all Minnesotans have choices for their future. Minnesotans have the information they need to understand the value of higher education and how to find the right option for themselves and their families.

- Student and Parent Outreach
 - Minnesota Goes to College
 - FAFSA Completion Initiatives
 - Direct Admissions
 - Other early college awareness programs and initiatives
- Postsecondary Participation Programs
 - Targeted programs that help students prepare for college and transition successfully into higher education
 - Get Ready —a federal Gear Up grant

- Intervention for College Attendance Grant Program
- Summer Academic Enrichment Program
- Adult and Worker Engagement
 - Programs targeted at removing barriers and facilitating entry into and completion of postsecondary education in specifically targeted industries
 - Dual Training Grant/PIPELINE Program
 - Minnesota Next Generation Certified Nursing Assistant Initiative
 - Minnesota Student Teacher Grants
 - Student Loan Repayment Programs for specific occupations critical for the state's economy
 - Programs to support incarcerated individuals
 - Parenting Student Support Programs
- Research
 - Produces information and analysis on Minnesota postsecondary education, student success, and effectiveness of state- and federally-funded programs
 - Bridges existing cross-agency data to gauge the effectiveness of current programs and design targeted improvement strategies to help students through Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLS)

Accountability

Students are given the supports and services they need to finish what they start. Higher education institutions provide high-quality options and are committed to student success. Data is collected and transparently shared to ensure that all higher education stakeholders are clear on the successes and challenges of higher education in Minnesota.

- Licensing and Registration
 - Currently developing a quality credentials framework, in partnership with OHE Research, for identifying Minnesota credentials, programs, and providers that offer evidence of value to individuals and support smart investments by the state
 - Provides consumer protections for students and families
 - Registers degree-granting private institutions
 - Licenses occupational programs
 - Helps resolve student complaints
- Research related to student safety, including annual Sexual Assault Data and Study Abroad Health and Safety report

Commissioner and Senior Leadership Team

Dennis Olson Jr. was reappointed to a second term as Commissioner of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) by Governor Tim Walz in November of 2022. Prior to this executive cabinet appointment, he served as the Executive Director of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, working closely with tribal elected leaders, the state legislature, state agencies, and the governor to highlight and address issues important to all Tribal Nations and American Indian communities in Minnesota.

Dennis also served as the Director of the Office of Indian Education for the Minnesota Department of Education, working closely with Tribal Nations, urban American Indian communities, and multiple partner agencies to address issues impacting Indian Education in Minnesota. Before joining state government, Dennis served as Commissioner of Education for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and worked nearly 10 years in various capacities for the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration, coordinating federally funded grant programs focusing on postsecondary transition for American Indian high school students, students with disabilities, and at-risk youth.

Dennis, an enrolled citizen of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in American Indian Studies, Sociology, and Communications. He also holds Masters degrees in Liberal Studies (MLS) and Education (M.Ed.) from the University of Minnesota Duluth, both with a focus on Federal Indian policy and American Indian education.

Email: dennis.olson@state.mn.us

Executive Assistant: Chris Hendrickson, (651) 259-3901, chris.hendrickson@state.mn.us

To invite the commissioner, or another member of the OHE Senior Leadership Team, to your event, program or meeting, [please use the Appearance Request Form](#).

Senior Leadership Team

Name and Position	Phone	Email Address
Winnie Sullivan , Deputy Commissioner	(651) 259-3922	winnie.sullivan@state.mn.us
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Keith Hovis , Director of Communications	(651) 259-3902	keith.hovis@state.mn.us

OHE Strategic Plan and Affirmative Action Plan

The work of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education is driven by two plans:

- OHE Strategic Plan 2023-2027
- OHE Affirmative Action Plan

You can also read the Enterprise-wide [One Minnesota Plan: Agency Strategic Plans 2023-2027](#), which summarizes the mission and focus of all State of Minnesota agencies.

Statewide Attainment Goals

The work at OHE is centered around advancing two statewide goals:

1. Educational Attainment Goal 2025: In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature passed statute 135A.012 Higher Education Goal, which enacted a goal that 70% of Minnesota adults (ages 25-44) will have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2025. In recognition of existing gaps in attainment, the law also sets 30% and 50% educational attainment benchmarks for all races and ethnicities as interim goals.
2. Statewide FAFSA Filing Goal: Completing a FAFSA is a primary indicator that a person will enroll in and attend a postsecondary program. In 2020, the Minnesota Legislature directed OHE to set an annual goal for FAFSA filing among high school seniors. As a result of that directive, OHE has set a goal of increasing FAFSA filing by 5 percentage points every year for 5 years, with a focus on closing gaps in FAFSA filing for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color.

Contact Us

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education office is open to the public. If you need assistance, you have the option to continue receiving support via phone or email, in addition to visiting the agency. Our agency staff will continue to operate in a hybrid working environment, so if you are looking to meet with a particular staff member, please connect with them ahead of time before coming in person. You can find the contact information for Agency in our [Staff Directory](#).

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1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350
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Phone Contact Information:

651.642.0567 or 800.657.3866

Press 1 for SELF Loans

Press 2 for State Grant, Tuition Reciprocity, Dream Act, Indian Scholarship, Student Teacher Grants, Work Study, Fostering Independence Grants, North Star Promise Scholarship and other student financial aid programs.

Other Contact Information

Transcripts:

If you are looking for a transcript or education verification for a private college or training program that operated in Minnesota and is now closed, [please fill out this request form.](#)

Website Accessibility:

If you need specific documents in accessible format, please submit your request to accessibility.ohe@state.mn.us

SELF Loans: selfloan.ohe@state.mn.us

All other departments: info.ohe@state.mn.us