

Colorado to Offer Scholarships and Success Coaching to Help Graduating High School Seniors Chart College and Career Pathways

InsideTrack to provide free education and career coaching to reduce “summer melt” and help recent high school graduates chart pathways to careers in fast-growing industries as part of Opportunity Next

DENVER (May 8, 2024) -- Recent high school graduates across the Centennial State will be eligible to receive education and career coaching this month thanks to [Opportunity Next Colorado](#), a new \$25 million statewide scholarship and advising program administered by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). Through a new collaboration with coaching nonprofit [InsideTrack](#), participating learners across the state will receive coaching and advising support to help them navigate the complex, often daunting process of planning for a career and life after high school.

“At a time when the vast majority of new jobs created in our state require some kind of postsecondary education or training, removing barriers to education and career opportunity is an economic and growth imperative for the state of Colorado,” said Eve Lieberman, executive director of OEDIT. “This is about unlocking career opportunities for young Coloradans by ensuring they have the tools, financial resources, and college and career planning support needed to achieve their educational and career aspirations and prepare for the world of work.”

Colorado continues to post record job growth, with the [tightest labor market on record](#) and 2.7 jobs for every unemployed person. At the same time, recent years have seen a [decline](#) in the number of high school graduates continuing with college or career or technical education beyond high school—even though [90% of jobs in Colorado](#) that pay a living wage require postsecondary education or training. The number of students who have applied for federal student aid has recently declined by [about 30% nationally and 27% in Colorado due](#) to ongoing technical challenges with the federal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) website.

To help expand access to education and training after high school and close the state’s shortage of skilled labor, Opportunity Next Colorado is designed to remove financial and other barriers to enrolling in Colorado-based postsecondary education and training programs. The program offers students in Colorado’s Class of 2024 a one-time scholarship of up to \$1,500 to cover tuition, fees, books, and equipment for use in the 2024-2025 academic year.

The scholarships are directly administered by colleges, community colleges, registered apprenticeship programs, and eligible training providers, which award funding to students pursuing careers in the roles and industries experiencing the greatest demand across the state, including: advanced manufacturing, computer and information sciences, construction, education, engineering and technology, family and social sciences, health professions and transportation.

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In addition to financial aid assistance to reduce college costs, eligible students can also now access education and career coaching from InsideTrack, which has provided success coaching and support to more than 3.2 million learners nationally over the last two decades.

Coaches will work with students one-on-one and in groups to help them set goals, build skills to balance work, personal, financial and school commitments; and develop individual plans to achieve the goal of completing a degree, certificate, registered apprenticeship program or another credential of value. To help address the variety of challenges beyond the classroom students face, coaches will work with students to identify and connect to a variety of school-based and community resources ranging from financial aid to health and wellness and academic support services.

“As the parent of a current college student and a college-bound senior, I know firsthand the challenges facing students and families across the country and our state as they navigate the complexity of planning for life after high school and beginning to explore the world of work,” said Steve Ast, senior vice president, partner success at [InsideTrack](#) and an Evergreen, Colo. resident. “We’re grateful for Governor Polis’ leadership on these issues and are humbled by the opportunity to support these efforts to bring educational and workforce opportunities within reach for thousands of learners who represent the future of Colorado’s workforce.”

Opportunity Next brings together a broad coalition of state partner agencies to close talent gaps and help learners achieve success after high school. The program’s core partners include the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), and the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment (CDLE).

All Colorado class of 2024 learners are eligible to apply. Visit [OpportunityNext.org](#) to explore top Colorado career pathways and access to free 1:1 student coaching, family group coaching, and financial aid sessions.

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About InsideTrack: InsideTrack is a mission-driven nonprofit that fuels positive change by empowering and advancing all learners to achieve their educational and career goals through the transformative power of coaching. We help people get the education they need to enhance well-being, create opportunity and secure meaningful employment — ultimately facilitating economic and social mobility. Since 2001, we have served over 3.2 million learners, partnering with more than 350 institutions and organizations to directly improve enrollment, retention, completion, and career advancement — tailoring our coaching outcomes to fit the needs of our partners and the learners they support. Our coaching methodology is evidence-based and research-confirmed, supporting all types of learners at every stage of their journey — especially those who face systemic barriers to postsecondary success. We are a catalyst for transformational impact, ultimately empowering learners and the organizations who serve them.

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