

## Key Message Points & FAQs

### Overview

- The State of North Carolina continues to create innovative ways to make it easier for students to go to college, including a new simplified application program, NC College Connect.
- NC College Connect is a program created with the goal of increasing access to higher education by simplifying the application process for qualifying North Carolina students to participating UNC System universities and their local North Carolina community college.
- North Carolina public high school students with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above are matched to the colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect pilot program, bypassing the traditional application process – including essays.
- Participating institutions include:
  - Elizabeth City State University
  - Fayetteville State University
  - University of North Carolina Asheville
  - University of North Carolina at Greensboro
  - University of North Carolina at Pembroke
  - Winston-Salem State University
  - North Carolina Community College System (all 58 colleges)\*
    - *\*Students will be offered a simplified application process to their local community college.*
- The pilot program removes the burden of a traditional college application process and admissions essay and creates a simplified way for qualifying North Carolina students to apply to college.

## The Process

- Qualifying students for the NC College Connect pilot program will receive an official letter to participate in the program by mail for the 2025-2026 academic year in October 2024, which will include a QR code to guide them to more information on [NCCollegeConnect.org](https://NCCollegeConnect.org).
- Next, students will:
  - Scan the QR code on their letter and visit [NCCollegeConnect.org](https://NCCollegeConnect.org) to learn more about the program.
  - Log into the NC College Connect portal using their existing CFNC.org login credentials or create a new CFNC account.
  - See a complete list of colleges and universities where they can complete the simplified application as part of NC College Connect.
  - Complete an easy, simplified application to indicate their interest in admission to the NC College Connect colleges and universities of their choice.
- A student's qualification for NC College Connect is determined based on their weighted GPA at the close of their junior year. Qualifying students must maintain a weighted GPA of 2.8 or above throughout their senior year, in addition to meeting the state's basic [graduation requirements](#) as set by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and [UNC System minimum requirements](#).
- Students are welcome to apply to other colleges and universities via CFNC.org, including other UNC System institutions and private colleges and universities throughout the state. The state offers a [need-based scholarship](#) for those planning to attend a private college.
- For each application submitted through the NC College Connect portal, students will be required to pay an application fee, ranging from \$30 to \$75. Applications to North Carolina community colleges are free, and all participating institutions will accept approved fee waivers (such as the College Board or ACT fee waiver).
- Students are encouraged to submit applications during College Application Week, October 21-27, 2024, to avoid application fees of participating colleges. Of note, University of North Carolina at Greensboro will not waive application fees as a part of College Application Week.
- High school counselors are helpful resources for students to learn about additional ways their application fees could be covered.

## Additional Messages

- Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke are participating NC College Connect institutions and part of the NC Promise Tuition Plan.
- In addition to receiving the opportunity for a simplified application process through NC College Connect, qualifying students attending NC Promise universities will only pay \$500 in tuition each semester.
- While students may qualify for a simplified application process for the colleges and universities that are a part of NC College Connect, students are encouraged to apply to any other North Carolina college or university they would like via CFNC.org, including other UNC System universities and North Carolina private colleges and universities based on their priorities and interests.
- There's no need to submit standard applications for participating NC College Connect colleges and universities in addition to those submitted through the NC College Connect portal.
- Federal and state financial aid, including [the Next NC Scholarship](#), is available to students for participating colleges and universities through the completion of the FAFSA.
  - [The Next NC Scholarship](#) helps most North Carolinians from households making \$80,000 or less pursue higher education by fully covering tuition and fees at any community college or more than half, if not all, of tuition and fees to attend any public university in the state. Students can complete the FAFSA to apply.
- Students are encouraged to visit CFNC.org to explore additional steps they can take to understand the financial support that may be available to them to help pay for college. Students are encouraged to complete their [residency determination](#) and FAFSA to understand what financial aid they may be eligible for. Colleges and universities use information from the FAFSA to determine if a student qualifies for federal, state, and college-based scholarships or grants.
- CFNC provides additional support for North Carolina students in [planning](#), [applying](#), and [paying](#) for college.

## FAQs

### What is NC College Connect?

- NC College Connect is a pilot program that aims to increase access to higher education by offering the opportunity for a simplified application process at participating UNC System universities and a student's local North Carolina community college.
- North Carolina public high school students with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above are matched to the colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect pilot program, bypassing the traditional application process.

### Which colleges and universities are included in NC College Connect?

- Participating colleges and universities include:
  - Elizabeth City State University
  - Fayetteville State University
  - University of North Carolina Asheville
  - University of North Carolina at Greensboro
  - University of North Carolina at Pembroke
  - Winston-Salem State University
  - North Carolina Community College System (all 58 colleges)\*
    - *\*Students will be offered a simplified application process to their local community college.*

### How were the NC College Connect colleges and universities determined?

- Colleges and universities participating in NC College Connect program voluntarily agreed to be a part of the pilot program based on their existing admissions criteria. Moving forward, additional colleges and universities may be included in the NC College Connect program.

### Will the cohort of students include every public high school senior in North Carolina with a weighted GPA of 2.8 or above?

- Yes. A student's qualification for NC College Connect is determined based on their weighted GPA at the close of their junior year. Qualifying students must maintain a weighted GPA of 2.8 or above throughout their senior year, in addition to completing the State's [graduation requirements](#), and [UNC System minimum requirements](#). This program cohort includes all students graduating from a public high school, which includes charter school students.

### Will students who do not meet the weighted 2.8 GPA threshold their junior year, but do meet it their senior year, be considered for the program?

- No. A student's qualification for NC College Connect is determined based on their weighted GPA at the close of their junior year.
- Students who are not eligible for the NC College Connect program should visit [CFNC.org](https://www.cfnc.org) to learn more about higher education options available and for additional support in planning, applying, and paying for college.

### **How were these qualifying students determined?**

- The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) collected transcripts of public high school juniors with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above in June 2024, after the 2023-2024 academic year. These students qualify for the NC College Connect pilot program.

### **Do students that are a part of the NC College Connect Program have to pay application fees for their selected colleges or universities?**

- For each simplified NC Connect College application, students will pay an application fee on the CFNC portal, ranging from \$30 to \$75.
- Applications to North Carolina community colleges are free, and all participating institutions will accept approved fee waivers (such as the [College Board](#) or [ACT](#) fee waiver).
- Students are encouraged to submit applications during College Application Week, October 21-27, 2024, to avoid application fees of participating colleges. Of note, University of North Carolina at Greensboro will not waive application fees as a part of College Application Week.

### **What if students are interested in colleges or universities that are not part of the program?**

- While students may qualify for a simplified application process for the colleges and universities that are a part of NC College Connect, students are encouraged to apply to any other college or university they would like to attend via [CFNC.org](https://www.cfnc.org), including other UNC System universities and North Carolina private colleges and universities based on their priorities and interests.

### **How is a student's community college match determined? What if a student wants to attend a different community college?**

- A student's matched NC community college is determined by the district or local education agency (LEA) where they attend. For school districts bordering two community colleges, students will be matched to the community college that enrolls over 60% of that county's population.
- The application portal will not have the capability to match a student to more than one NC community college, even though all NC community colleges are participating.

- Students are encouraged to apply to as many NC community colleges in the state that interest them. NC community college applications are always free, and students are automatically admitted through the traditional application process.

### **How do students make an account to claim their spot?**

- After eligible students receive their letter, they should scan the QR code provided and visit [NCCollegeConnect.org](https://nccollegeconnect.org) to learn more about the program.
- They should then log into the NC College Connect portal using an existing or new CFNC.org account.
- After logging in, students will see a list of colleges and universities where they can complete a simplified application for each college. Students can complete as many simplified applications as they'd like.

### **Do students have to claim their spot at just one institution, or can they accept multiple spots before committing to attend one institution?**

- Students can complete an easy, simplified application on the NC College Connect portal for each participating college or university where they are interested in.
- Students can complete as many simplified applications as they'd like. This step does not guarantee enrollment – students are simply completing the first step of the process and informing the colleges and universities that they're interested in attending. The benefit of claiming their spot through NC College Connect is a much shorter application process.

### **Are the official enrollment deadlines the same for each college or university? Do the enrollment deadlines for NC College Connect align with the regular enrollment dates for each college or university?**

- Colleges and universities often have different enrollment deadlines. The deadlines for NC College Connect applications are no different than the traditional deadlines for each college or university. Students who apply via the NC College Connect program will need to confirm the enrollment dates of their college or university of choice and enroll by that date.

### **What is the deadline to submit the simplified application?**

- Each college or university within the NC College Connect program will have its own application deadline, ranging from February 1 to June 30, 2025, and many community colleges have flexible or rolling application deadlines. Students applying to college via the NC Collect Connect program should confirm the application deadlines for the colleges they are interested in.

### **What about qualifying students who are concerned about the cost of attending college?**

- Students are encouraged to visit [CFNC.org](https://www.cfnc.org) to explore additional avenues to pay for college, including completing the FAFSA to determine what federal, state and college-based financial aid they qualify for.
- Some students may be eligible for [The Next NC Scholarship](#), a program that helps most North Carolinians from households making \$80,000 or less pursue higher education by fully covering tuition and fees at any community college or more than half, if not all, of tuition and fees to attend any public university in the state. Students can complete the FAFSA to apply.
- Students should also discuss their options with the financial aid office at the college or university of their choice to inform their college decisions.

### **Do qualifying students get a simplified application to some of the participating colleges and universities and not others?**

- No. Within NC College Connect, qualified students will be offered a simplified application to **all** colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect program, including their local community college.

### **When is this program being implemented?**

- Students qualified for the NC College Connect pilot program will receive an official letter in the mail for the 2025-2026 academic year in October 2024.

### **If a student did not qualify but is still interested in applying to college, what is the best way to guide them?**

- There are multiple opportunities for students to pursue higher education even if they do not qualify for a simplified application through NC College Connect.
- Students who are not eligible for the NC College Connect program should visit [CFNC.org](https://www.cfnc.org) to learn more about higher education options available and for additional support in planning, applying, and paying for college.

### **What information will students need handy to complete the simplified applications?**

- Students will be required to share basic information such as their NC Student Number, personal email address, intended major, and intended start term (fall 2025 or spring 2026).

### **Will counselors be notified of which high school seniors at their high school will be receiving a letter?**

- Yes. High schools will be given a list of eligible students that counselors can reference to support students whose offer letters may have been lost in the mail or misplaced.

### **Why should students consider NC College Connect instead of the traditional college application process?**

- Students eligible for the NC College Connect program are matched to the colleges and universities participating in the program and offered a simplified application, bypassing the traditional application process.

### **Does this program eliminate students from scholarship opportunities?**

- No. Qualifying for the NC College Connect program does not impact any financial aid opportunities.

### **Where do I go to ask questions about the program?**

- Education partners across the state are aware of the program details and are here to support you as you help students navigate their journey to college. Reach out to your local CFNC Outreach Coordinator, your district PIO(s) or the following email addresses:
  - For High School-related Questions: [NCCollegeConnect@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:NCCollegeConnect@dpi.nc.gov)
  - For UNC System Questions: [nccollegeconnect@northcarolina.edu](mailto:nccollegeconnect@northcarolina.edu)
  - For NCCCS Questions: [nccollegeconnect@nccommunitycolleges.edu](mailto:nccollegeconnect@nccommunitycolleges.edu)