**Key Message Points & FAQs**

**Overview**

* The State of North Carolina continues to create innovative pathways to make it easier for students to go to college, including the state’s direct admissions program, NC College Connect.
* NC College Connect is a program created with the goal of increasing access to higher education by providing direct admission for qualifying public North Carolina students to select colleges and universities in the state.
* North Carolina public high school students with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above who meet NC College Connect requirements are offered direct admission to select colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect program.
  + Meeting NC College Connect requirements means meeting course requirements and any additional criteria required by individual institutions, as well as responding to safety questions to show a student meets the institutions’ safety requirements.
* Students are provided direct admission to participating institutions based on their GPA and meeting NC College Connect requirements. There is no need to submit a traditional application – just the NC College Connect form – to accept their admission.
  + There is no need for a student to submit a traditional application through Common App, CFNC.org, or the institution website for the institutions where they have accepted admission through the NC College Connect portal.
  + Qualifying students must maintain their admitted GPA through senior year and maintain NC College Connect course requirements.
  + Participating institutions reserve the right to rescind a student’s admission or request additional information, such as test scores, if a student no longer meets NC College Connect requirements.
  + This program allows students to bypass the traditional application process – including essays, test scores, and recommendation letters.

**Participating UNC System institutions include:**

* Appalachian State University
* East Carolina University
* Elizabeth City State University
* Fayetteville State University
* North Carolina Central University
* University of North Carolina Asheville
* University of North Carolina at Charlotte
* University of North Carolina at Greensboro
* University of North Carolina at Pembroke
* Western Carolina University
* Winston-Salem State University

**Participating North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities include:**

* Barton College
* Belmont Abbey College\*
* Bennett College\*
* Brevard College
* Campbell University
* Catawba College
* Chowan University
* Gardner-Webb University\*
* Greensboro College
* Guilford College\*
* Johnson C. Smith University\*
* Lees-McRae College
* Lenoir-Rhyne University\*
* Livingstone College
* Louisburg College
* Mars Hill University\*
* Meredith College\*
* Methodist University
* Mid-Atlantic Christian University
* Montreat College
* North Carolina Wesleyan University
* Pfeiffer University
* Saint Augustine’s University
* Salem College\*
* Shaw University
* University of Mount Olive
* Warren Wilson College
* William Peace University
* Wingate University\*

\**These colleges and universities have additional requirements for a student to qualify for direct admission. These requirements will be noted in each institution’s NC College Connect form.*

**North Carolina Community College System (all 58 colleges)\***

* *\*Students will be automatically directed to the traditional application process for their local community college, where they have received direct admission.*

**The Process**

* Qualifying students for the NC College Connect program will receive an official letter to participate in the program by mail by the start of their senior year, which will include a QR code to guide them to more information on [NCCollegeConnect.org](http://NCCollegeConnect.org).
* Next, students will:
  + Scan the QR code on their letter and visit [NCCollegeConnect.org](http://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 have received admission.
  + Complete an NC College Connect form, which includes contact and demographic information, to accept admission at the NC College Connect colleges and universities of their choice.
    - Students will have to submit an NC College Connect form for **each** institution where they would like to claim their spot.
    - Completing an NC College Connect form will **not** enroll a student; it instead indicates to an institution that a student is interested in accepting their offer of admission from that institution. For each institution where a student completes an NC College Connect form, students will receive direct communications about next steps, such as enrollment and financial aid opportunities.

**Costs**

* Most NC College Connect forms submitted through the NC College Connect portal will be free. For some institutions, students will be required to pay an application fee ranging from $20 to $75 alongside the forms.
* Applying to any North Carolina community college is always free and application fees to North Carolina independent colleges and universities submitted through the NC College Connect portal are waived.
* Most participating institutions will accept approved fee waivers (such as the [College Board](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/apply-to-college/college-application-fee-waiver-faq) or [ACT](https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/fees/fee-waivers.html) fee waiver).
* Students are encouraged to submit their NC College Connect forms during College Application Week, October 20-26, 2025, to avoid application fees for most participating colleges. Students are encouraged to confirm the final list of College Application Week institutions on CFNC.org, [here](https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/nc-countdown-to-college/).
* High school counselors are helpful resources for students to learn about additional ways their application fees could be covered.

**Deadlines**

* Each college or university within the NC College Connect program will have its own deadline for applications, ranging from January 15 to July 15, 2026, and many community colleges and institutions have flexible or rolling application deadlines.
* Students who have been admitted to an institution via the NC Collect Connect program should confirm the application deadlines for the institutions they are interested in and accept their admission before that deadline.
* If a student has received admission to their dream school, they are encouraged to complete the form to accept their admission as soon as possible – don't wait until the institution deadline!

**Additional Messages**

* While students may qualify for direct admission at 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 via CFNC.org, based on their priorities and interests.
* 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](https://www.ncresidency.org/) and [FAFSA](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa) to understand what financial aid they may be eligible for. Colleges and universities use information from the [FAFSA](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/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](https://www.cfnc.org/plan-your-future/), [applying](https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/), and [paying](https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/) for college.

**NC Promise**

* Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Western Carolina University, and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke are participating in NC College Connect institutions and part of [NC Promise](https://www.northcarolina.edu/impact/affordability-efficiency/nc-promise/).
* In addition to receiving direct admission through NC College Connect, qualifying students attending NC Promise universities will only pay $500 in tuition each semester.

**Financial Aid**

* Federal and state financial aid is available for students who are planning to attend all NC College Connect participating colleges and universities through the completion of the FAFSA. This includes the [Next NC Scholarship](https://nextncscholarship.org/) for UNC System and NC Community College System institutions, and the [NC Need-Based Scholarship](https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nc-need-based-scholarship-for-private-college-students/) for private colleges and universities.
* [The Next NC Scholarship](https://nextncscholarship.org/) 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](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa) to apply.
* [The NC Need-Based Scholarship](https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nc-need-based-scholarship-for-private-college-students/) is a state financial aid program for North Carolina residents attending the state’s independent, nonprofit colleges and universities. Students will be considered automatically for this scholarship upon completion of the [FAFSA](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa).

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is NC College Connect?**

* NC College Connect is a program that aims to increase access to higher education by offering the opportunity for direct admission at participating UNC System universities, North Carolina independent colleges and 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 who meet NC College Connect requirements are offered direct admission to select colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect program. Note, eligible students will see a tailored list of colleges and universities in their portal, reflecting their GPA.
* This program allows students to bypass the traditional application process – including essays, test scores, and recommendation letters.

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

* Accepting admission through the NC College Connect program is designed to be simpler and faster than the traditional college application process.
* Students eligible for the NC College Connect program are directly admitted to select colleges and universities participating in the program based on their weighted GPA and meeting NC College Connect requirements, bypassing the traditional application process.
* There is no need for a student to submit a traditional application through Common App, CFNC.org, or the institution website for the institutions where they have accepted admission through the NC College Connect portal.
* For example, once a student submits their NC College Connect form to accept their admission at Appalachian State University, the student does not need to apply through the Common App or other application process.

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

* Participating UNC System institutions include:
  + Appalachian State University
  + East Carolina University
  + Elizabeth City State University
  + Fayetteville State University
  + North Carolina Central University
  + University of North Carolina Asheville
  + University of North Carolina at Charlotte
  + University of North Carolina at Greensboro
  + University of North Carolina at Pembroke
  + Western Carolina University
  + Winston-Salem State University
* Participating North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities include:
  + Barton College
  + Belmont Abbey College\*
  + Bennett College\*
  + Brevard College
  + Campbell University
  + Catawba College
  + Chowan University
  + Gardner-Webb University\*
  + Greensboro College
  + Guilford College\*
  + Johnson C. Smith University\*
  + Lees-McRae College
  + Lenoir-Rhyne University\*
  + Livingstone College
  + Louisburg College
  + Mars Hill University\*
  + Meredith College\*
  + Methodist University
  + Mid-Atlantic Christian University
  + Montreat College
  + North Carolina Wesleyan University
  + Pfeiffer University
  + Saint Augustine’s University
  + Salem College\*
  + Shaw University
  + University of Mount Olive
  + Warren Wilson College
  + William Peace University
  + Wingate University\*

\**These colleges and universities have additional requirements for a student to qualify for direct admission. These requirements will be noted in each institution’s NC College Connect form.*

* North Carolina Community College System (all 58 colleges)
* Students will be automatically directed to the traditional application process for their local community college, where they have received direct admission.

**Who is eligible for NC College Connect?**

* North Carolina public high school students with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above who meet NC College Connect requirements are offered direct admission to select colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect program.
  + Meeting NC College Connect requirements means meeting course requirements and any additional criteria required by individual institutions, as well as responding to safety questions to show a student meets the institutions’ safety requirements.

**Are charter schools included?**

* Yes. Charter schools are public schools, so charter school students are eligible for NC College Connect.

**What are the NC College Connect requirements?**

* In addition to a weighted GPA of 2.8 or above, students must also meet NC College Connect requirements. This includes meeting necessary NC College Connect course requirements and answering safety questions.
  + Some independent colleges and universities also have additional requirements, such as foreign language courses, for a student to qualify for direct admission. This will be noted in each institution’s NC College Connect form.

**What are the NC College Connect course requirements?**

*If a student meets the state graduation requirements, including a fourth-level mathematics course, the course requirements below are met.*

* **Language**
  + Four course units in language, including: four units in English, emphasizing grammar, composition, and literature
* **Mathematics**
  + Four course units of mathematics, in any of the following combinations:
  + algebra I and II, geometry, and one unit beyond algebra II
  + algebra I and II, and two units beyond algebra II, or
  + Integrated math I, II, and III, and one unit beyond integrated math III.
  + *The UNC System strongly encourages future students to take at least one mathematics course unit in the 12th grade.*
* **Sciences**
  + Three course units in science, including:
  + at least one unit in a life or biological science (for example, biology),
  + at least one unit in physical sciences (for example, physical science, chemistry, physics), and
  + at least one laboratory course.
* **Social Studies**
  + Two course units in social studies, including one unit in U.S. history. Students who do not have the unit in U.S. history may be admitted on the condition that that they pass at least three semester hours in that subject by the end of the sophomore year.
* **Additional Requirements**
  + Two additional academic courses from English, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, or computer science. (Note: these courses should be selected in alignment with a student’s academic and career objectives.)
  + Some independent colleges and universities have additional requirements for a student to qualify for direct admission. This will be noted in each institution’s NC College Connect form.

**What are safety questions?**

* In efforts to maintain a safe learning community, North Carolina colleges and universities ask safety questions as a part of their application processes. These questions ask about any behavioral misconduct during high school and criminal activity.
* Answering “yes” to the safety questions may not necessarily preclude a student from being admitted. However, failing to answer these questions or failing to respond completely, accurately, and truthfully, may be grounds to deny or withdraw a student’s admission or to dismiss a student after enrollment.

**Will students be admitted to all the institutions participating in NC College Connect?**

* No. Students will be matched to a select list of participating NC College Connect colleges and universities based on their weighted GPA and meeting NC College Connect requirements.
* While some students may be eligible for direct admission for all institutions, others will not.

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

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

**Where do students go to claim their spot?**

* Students will:
  + Scan the QR code on their letter and visit [NCCollegeConnect.org](http://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 have received admission.
  + Complete an NC College Connect form, which includes contact and demographic information, to accept admission at the NC College Connect colleges and universities of their choice.
  + For their local community college, the program will redirect the student to that institution’s traditional application – but a student already meets application requirements and are already admitted! The application is quick and easy.
* Students will have to submit an NC College Connect form for **each** institution where they would like to claim their spot.
* Completing an NC College Connect form will **not** enroll a student; it instead indicates to an institution that a student is interested in accepting their offer of admission from that institution. For each institution where a student completes an NC College Connect form, students will receive direct communications about next steps, such as enrollment and financial aid opportunities.

**Will students who do not meet the weighted 2.8 GPA requirement at the close of their junior year, but 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 and enrollment in a fourth level math course by the start of their senior year.
  + Students who are not eligible for the NC College Connect program should visit [CFNC.org](http://www.cfnc.org/) to learn more about higher education options available and for additional support in planning, applying, and paying for college.

**How and when will students find out if they’re eligible for this program?**

* North Carolina public high school students with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above, who meet the NC College Connect requirements, will receive an official letter to participate in the program by mail by the start of their senior year, which will include a QR code to guide them to more information on [NCCollegeConnect.org](http://nccollegeconnect.org/).

**How are qualifying students determined?**

* At the end of the 2024-25 school year, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) reviewed transcripts of public high school juniors with a weighted GPA of 2.8 and above, who meet the NC College Connect requirements.
  + Meeting NC College Connect requirements means meeting course requirements and any additional criteria required by individual institutions, as well as responding to safety questions to show a student meets the institutions’ safety requirements.
* In September 2025, DPI reviewed transcripts for any additional eligible students who may have made course changes, qualifying them for direct admission.
  + Some independent colleges and universities have additional requirements for a student to qualify for direct admission. This will be noted in each institution’s NC College Connect form.

**Do students need to maintain their weighted GPA of 2.8 or above throughout their senior year?**

* Yes. Students are offered direct admission to select colleges and universities participating in the NC College Connect program based on their GPA at the close of their junior year. Students must maintain this admitted GPA throughout their senior year.
* Should a student no longer meet the NC College Connect requirements or their admitted GPA drop below what it was at the close of their junior year, an institution can rescind their admission or require more information, like test scores.

**Where can a student find their admitted GPA?**

* Students can find their admitted GPA on Infinite Campus, in their NC-SIS portal or on their transcript, typically wherever their grades are posted. Students can also confirm their admitted GPA with their counselor.

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

* Most NC College Connect forms submitted through the NC College Connect portal will be free. For some institutions, students will be required to pay an application fee ranging from $20 to $75 alongside the forms.
  + Applying to any North Carolina community college is always free, and application fees to North Carolina independent colleges and universities submitted through the NC College Connect portal are waived.
  + Most participating institutions will accept approved fee waivers (such as the [College Board](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/apply-to-college/college-application-fee-waiver-faq) or [ACT](https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/fees/fee-waivers.html) fee waiver).
  + Students are encouraged to submit their NC College Connect forms during College Application Week, October 20-26, 2025, to avoid application fees for most participating colleges. Students are encouraged to confirm the final list of College Application Week institutions on CFNC.org, [here](https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/nc-countdown-to-college/).

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

* While students may qualify for direct admission 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, including other UNC System universities, North Carolina community colleges, and North Carolina independent colleges and universities based on their priorities and interests.

**How is a student’s community college direct admission determined? What if a student wants to attend a different community college?**

* A student’s offered direct admission to 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 directly admitted to the community college that enrolls over 60% of that county’s population.
* The application portal will not have the capability to admit 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 accept their admission?**

* Qualifying students for the NC College Connect program will receive an official letter to participate in the program by mail at the start of their senior year, which will include a QR code to guide them to more information on [NCCollegeConnect.org](http://NCCollegeConnect.org).
* Next, students will:
  + Scan the QR code on their letter and visit [NCCollegeConnect.org](http://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 have received admission, including a set of tailored admission letters.
  + Complete an NC College Connect form, which includes contact and demographic information, to accept admission at the NC College Connect colleges and universities of their choice.
    - Students will have to submit an NC College Connect form for **each** institution where they would like to claim their spot.
    - Completing an NC College Connect form will **not** enroll a student; it instead indicates to an institution that a student is interested in accepting their offer of admission from that institution. For each institution where a student completes an NC College Connect form, students will receive direct communications about next steps, such as enrollment and financial aid opportunities.

**What information will students need handy to accept their admission?**

* Students will be required to share basic information such as their name, date of birth, personal email address, intended major, intended start term (fall 2026 or spring 2027) as well as answer some basic questions around campus safety and military affiliation.

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

* Students can accept admission on the NC College Connect portal for each participating college or university they are interested in.
* Students can accept admission at as many institutions as they’d like, just as any other student might apply the traditional way and be accepted to multiple institutions.
  + This step does not guarantee enrollment – students are 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 process and avoiding the wait associated with applying and then waiting to be admitted.

**What is the deadline for students to accept their admission at the institution(s) of their choosing?**

* Each college or university within the NC College Connect program will have its own deadline for applications, ranging from January 15 to July 15, 2026, and many community colleges and institutions have flexible or rolling application deadlines.
* Students who have been admitted to an institution via the NC Collect Connect program should confirm the application deadlines for the institutions they are interested in and accept their admission before that deadline.
* If a student has received admission to their dream school, they are encouraged to complete the form to accept their admission as soon as possible – don't wait until the institution deadline!

**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 students to enroll at the NC College Connect institution of their choice are no different than the traditional deadlines for each college or university.
  + Students who are admitted 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 last date students can access NC College Connect?**

* Students should consider the application deadlines for each participating college or university and the respective programs they are interested in and accept their admission before that date.

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

* Students are encouraged to visit CFNC.org to explore additional avenues to pay for college, including completing the [FAFSA](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa) to determine what federal, state and college-based financial aid they qualify for.
* Some students may be eligible for [The Next NC Scholarship,](https://nextncscholarship.org/) 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](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa) to apply.
* Some students may be eligible for The [NC Need-Based Scholarship,](https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nc-need-based-scholarship-for-private-college-students/) a state financial aid program for North Carolina residents attending the state’s independent, nonprofit colleges and universities. Students will be considered automatically for this scholarship upon completion of the [FAFSA](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa).
  + Students should also discuss their options with the financial aid office at the college or university of their choice to inform their college decisions.

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

* No. Qualifying for the NC College Connect program does not impact any financial aid opportunities or eligibility for merit-based scholarships.
* As long as students select for their transcript to be sent to the colleges and universities of their choosing, they will be considered for scholarship opportunities. Students are still encourages to complete the FAFSA to understand their financial aid opportunities.
  + Students are encouraged to explore merit-based scholarship deadlines for each campus, as well as other North Carolina financial aid opportunities, [collected on CFNC.org here](https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/).

**Will students have to complete their Residency Determination (RDS) when they accept their admission?**

* No. A student will not have to indicate or complete Residency Determination (RDS) when they submit their short NC College Connect forms. However, establishing in-state residency is an important step in the college-going process to help students save money on college expenses and should be completed at a later date.

**If a student did not qualify but is still interested in applying to college, what steps should they take?**

* There are multiple opportunities for students to pursue higher education even if they do not qualify for direct admission through NC College Connect.
  + Students who are not eligible for the NC College Connect program should visit CFNC.org to learn more about higher education options available and for additional support in planning, applying, and paying for college.

**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. The list will be sent through the secure shell with Accountability and Testing. Counselors can also contact their district PIOs for more information on the program and who is eligible.

**Where can educators go to ask questions about the program?**

* Reach out to your local CFNC Outreach Coordinator, your Director of Student Services 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)
  + For North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities Questions: [nccollegeconnect@ncicu.org](mailto:nccollegeconnect@ncicu.org)