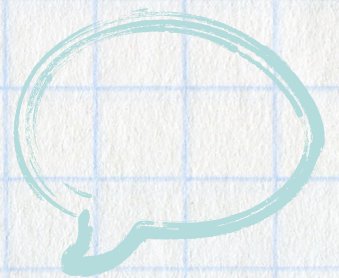


BRING THEIR VISION TO LIFE



*A parent's guide to helping the
Class of 2027 design their future.*





Welcome to your child's vision board journey!

Senior year is a time of big dreams, big questions and important decisions. Your child's vision board workbook is a space to sketch out their future, explore what excites them and start building a plan that's uniquely theirs.

This workbook is yours: a guide to help you support them along the way. Think of it as a place to picture possibilities, map next steps and bring your child's vision to life.



Your encouragement and support can help them feel confident as they discover what belongs on their vision board. You don't need to have all the answers. What you can do is ask questions, stay curious alongside them and help keep things organized as you navigate it all together.

Use this workbook throughout senior year to help your child build the future that's right for them — one conversation and one step at a time.

Throughout these pages, you'll find:

- A look at education and training options (and how to pay for them!)
 - Conversation starters to jump-start exploration, decision-making and taking the next step together
 - Checklists and planning tools to help your family stay on track
- 



HELP THEM PICTURE WHAT'S POSSIBLE



Explore the paths
that can bring your
child's vision to life.



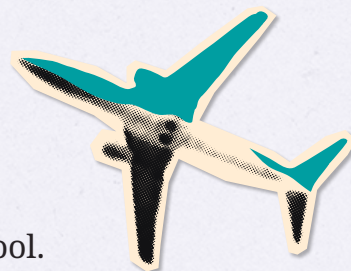
HELP THEIR VISION TAKE SHAPE

Their future. Your support.

Your child's first step is **imagining the future they want to create** and exploring different paths that can get them there. While it's tempting to want to help by pointing them toward the "right" answer, you play an important role by helping them stay open to possibilities.

Ways to Encourage Exploration

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Attend college fairs, campus visits, career events or apprenticeship information sessions together.
- Keep an open mind about different paths after high school.
- Help them notice their strengths, interests and what energizes them.
- Remind your child that changing direction is a normal part of designing their future.



Start the Conversation

- When you imagine your future, where can you picture yourself working?
- Do you see yourself in an office, on a job site or somewhere else?



EXPLORE CAREERS TOGETHER

Michigan Career Pathfinder is a free tool that lets your family map out real career paths and build a custom career road map by exploring fields of study, education requirements, salaries and more — all in one place. You can even save your child's favorites to compare side by side to help them find the right path.

Where to Start

Pathfinder lets you begin wherever makes sense for your child. Sit down together to pick a starting point:

- A school they're curious about
- A career that's caught their interest
- A subject they enjoy
- A place they could see themselves living



Scan to get started!

Go to pathfinder.mitalent.org

**Scan to see the
state's top careers!**

Go to pathfinder.mitalent.org/top50careers



*Curious what's
in demand across
Michigan?*

Start the Conversation

What careers made you think, "I could see myself doing that"?

PIN THEIR PATH

Is community college or a four-year university a better fit for your child?

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

4-YEAR UNIVERSITY

<i>Great for:</i>	Flexibility, affordability, starting strong in a career, preparing for a four-year college	A traditional college experience, careers requiring a bachelor's degree (or higher)
<i>They'll earn:</i>	An associate degree or skills certificate	A bachelor's degree
<i>The vibe:</i>	Smaller classes, lower (or free!) tuition, flexible schedules, transfer opportunities, commuting to campus	Campus life, specialized majors, higher tuition costs
<i>Can lead to:</i>	Beginning a career in as little as two years, or transferring to a university	Careers that require advanced education, such as teaching or engineering

As a family, consider talking through:

- Do they thrive with more structure or more independence?
- Does your child's dream career require an associate degree, bachelor's degree or skills certificate?
- What can your family realistically afford and what financial aid might help close the gap?
- What sources do you have available to help fund your child's future?

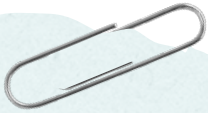
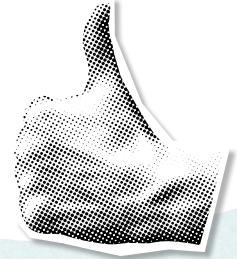


Scan to search for colleges!

Go to collegescorecard.ed.gov

Turn to page 15 to learn how your child could go to community college **TUITION-FREE!**

Is hands-on training the right fit for your child?



CAREER TRAINING

APPRENTICESHIP

<i>Great for:</i>	Getting on the fast track to a high-paying career	Earning a paycheck while they learn
<i>They'll earn:</i>	An industry-recognized certificate from a career training program or trade school	A respected credential or certification in their field
<i>The vibe:</i>	Skills-focused programs, often a few months to two years	Paid on-the-job training with some classroom instruction
<i>Can lead to:</i>	A high-demand career in fields like healthcare, IT and skilled trades	Building a career from day one in an in-demand industry, including construction, manufacturing and healthcare

Why Career Training and Apprenticeships Deserve a Closer Look

For many students, hands-on learning is the right fit, offering a clear path to in-demand, often high-paying careers. Some use these pathways as a foundation for additional education. Others build lifelong careers from the start. What matters most is choosing the option that matches your child's goals, interests and strengths.



THE BIG PICTURE

Use this page to see which pathways align with what matters most to your family.

<i>Paths</i>	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY	CAREER TRAINING	APPRENTICESHIP
Typical Length	1-2 years	4+ years	A few months-2 years	Varies by program
Credential Earned	Associate degree /certificate	Bachelor's Degree	Certificate/ Industry Credential	Industry Credential /Journeyworker Status
Learning Style	Classroom & hands-on learning	Classroom-focused with some hands-on learning	Hands-on, skills-focused	Learn by doing
Real-World Experience	Sometimes available	Sometimes available	Often included	Built into the program
Earn While You Learn	Sometimes	Rarely	Sometimes	Yes
Best for Students Who ...	Want flexibility, a lower-cost start or the opportunity to transfer to a four-year university	Want a traditional college experience or a career requiring a bachelor's degree	Want to develop career-specific skills quickly	Want paid training

Flip to page 15
and 16 to learn
more about FREE
MONEY for college
or career training!

Questions to Discuss as a Family

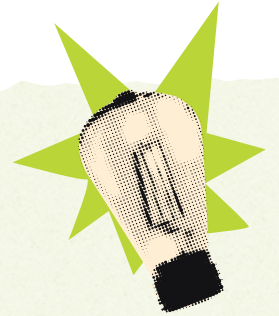
- What's most important — cost, starting a career as soon as possible, hands-on experience, campus life?
- Do you want to stay close to home, or are you open to moving further away?
- What questions do you still have about each path?
- How would each path fit into our family's budget?
- If cost weren't a factor, what path would you want to pursue?



FIND THEIR FIT

Choosing what comes next doesn't happen in one conversation. It's a process of exploring options, asking questions and finding a path that feels right for your child.

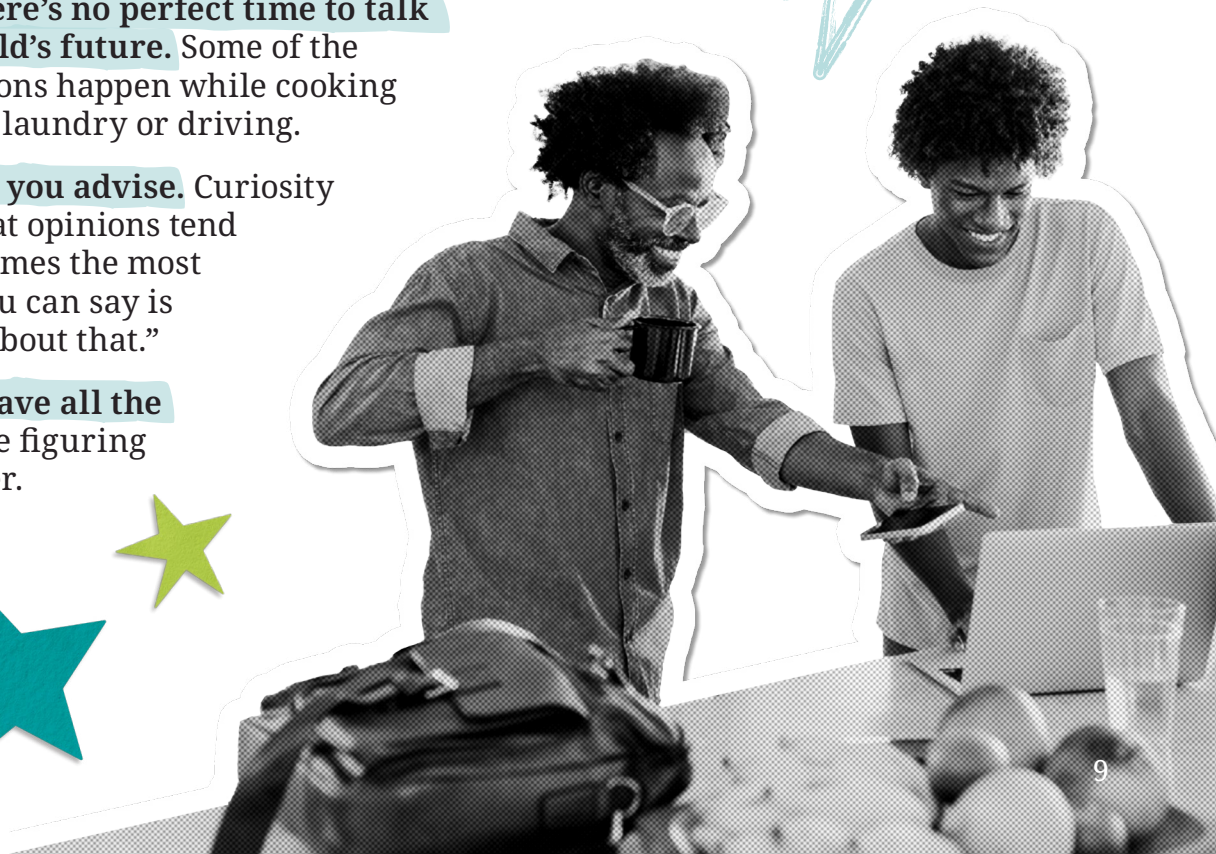
Talk It Over Together



- How does your child learn best?
- What type of environment will help them thrive?
- Where do your priorities match? Where might you see things differently?
- What will your family need to make your child's chosen path possible?
- What information would help your family feel ready for the next step?
- How can you balance what your child wants with what feels realistic?

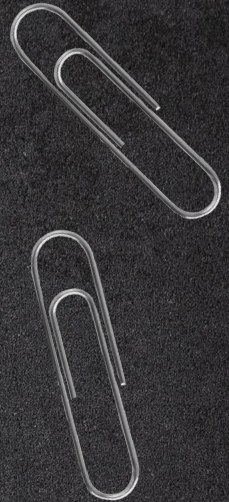
Tips for the Conversation

- **Remember, there's no perfect time to talk about your child's future.** Some of the best conversations happen while cooking dinner, folding laundry or driving.
- **Ask more than you advise.** Curiosity opens doors that opinions tend to close. Sometimes the most useful thing you can say is "tell me more about that."
- **It's OK not to have all the answers.** You're figuring this out together.



BRING THEIR VISION TO LIFE

Help make a plan
that fits your
child's future.



Senior Year

CHECKLIST

September

- ☐ Help your child narrow down their options (college, trade school, apprenticeship).
- ☐ Encourage them to start applications.
- ☐ Research deadlines together and talk through personal essay topics.
- ☐ Remind them to create their MiSSG Student Portal account (flip to page 21 to learn more!).
- ☐ Explore dual enrollment or college credit opportunities for spring semester if available.

October

- ☐ It's College Applications Month! Check in on progress and help request applications from top schools if needed.
- ☐ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) together as soon as it opens.
- ☐ Help your student start applying for additional scholarships (local, state and national).
- ☐ Encourage your senior to ask for letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches or mentors.
- ☐ Help schedule SAT, ACT or placement tests if needed.

November

- ☐ Help your child apply for apprenticeships, internships or career training programs with early openings.
- ☐ Work with your child to create a basic resume highlighting academics, extracurriculars and work experience.

December

- ☐ Make sure all college and program applications due before January are submitted.
- ☐ Continue applying for scholarships (many have winter/spring deadlines).
- ☐ Research housing options (on campus, off campus or alternatives).

January

- ☐ Confirm the FAFSA was processed and help fix any errors.
- ☐ Submit any remaining program or college applications with spring deadlines.

February

- ☐ Keep the scholarship applications going. Aim for at least one a month.
- ☐ Look for workshops on budgeting, financial aid or independent living you can attend together.

March

- ☐ Keep an eye out for acceptance letters and financial aid offers.
- ☐ Compare award letters from schools/programs.
- ☐ Visit or revisit top-choice schools/programs.

April

- ☐ Help finalize postgraduation plans.
- ☐ Submit housing deposits and intent-to-enroll forms if attending college.

May

- ☐ Confirm enrollment by National Decision Day (May 1).
- ☐ Help register for summer transition programs or orientation sessions.
- ☐ Make sure final transcript requests are submitted to your child's chosen school.
- ☐ Register for placement testing if required.

June & July

- ☐ Celebrate graduation!
- ☐ Attend college orientation and finalize class schedules together.
- ☐ Buy necessary supplies or tools for college or career training.
- ☐ Complete any required health forms, vaccinations or background checks.
- ☐ Start teaching basic adulting skills: budgeting, meal prep, laundry.
- ☐ Take a moment to celebrate how far they've come.

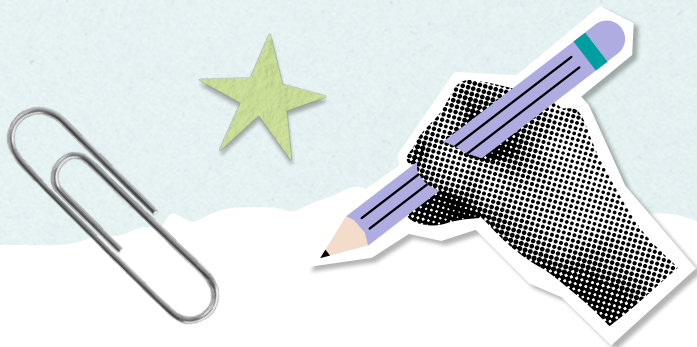


Come back to this!

TOP PICK TRACKER

Keep track of every school, program or path your student is considering
— all in one spot, so you can compare and discuss as a family.

SCHOOL/ PROGRAM	PATHWAY TYPE	ESTIMATED COST	FINANCIAL AID	VISITED?	APPLIED?	DEADLINE	NOTES
Sample School	Four-Year University	\$12,000 / year	FAFSA, Michigan Achievement Scholarship	☒	☒	01/01/27	I really liked their XYZ program.
				☐	☐		
				☐	☐		
				☐	☐		
				☐	☐		
				☐	☐		
				☐	☐		
				☐	☐		



Start the Conversation

Which application feels like
the right one to tackle first?

What's one step you can take
this week toward submitting
the application?

PICTURE THEIR FUTURE THERE

Plan a campus visit together.

Photos and websites can only tell you so much. School visits — in person or virtual — can help you see if a program really fits the picture your child is building.



Questions to Ask

- What activities and services are available to help students transition during their first year?
- What programs or training opportunities are available?
- Are lectures taught by professors or teacher assistants?
- How easy is it to switch majors?
- What careers do graduates pursue most?
- What makes this program unique?
- What is the cost of attending this school?
- What types of grants and scholarships are offered through the school?

Start the Conversation

After the visit, take a few minutes to check in while the experience is still fresh:

- Could you picture yourself there?
- What stood out the most? What surprised you?
- What questions or concerns do you still have?

Green Flags

- Students seem welcoming and engaged.
- Staff answer questions clearly.
- Support services are easy to access.
- Career preparation is built into the experience.





FUND THEIR FUTURE

Unlock money that
helps bring your
vision to life.



THEIR VISION WITHIN REACH

Free Money for College or Career Training

Take on tuition with MI Student Aid programs (no matter your child's GPA!)

Big dreams deserve the money to make them happen. Whether your child is headed to community college, university, a career training program or another path (or they're still figuring it out), Michigan offers financial aid programs that can help make their next step more affordable.



- **Community College Guarantee** — Picture TUITION-FREE community college!
- **The Michigan Achievement Scholarship** — Bring your child's college plans to life with up to \$27,500 at a public or private university.
- **The Michigan Achievement Skills Scholarship** — Get a head start with up to \$2,000 for career training.
- **Tuition Incentive Program (TIP)** — If your child has received Medicaid, they could get even more to cover an associate degree, skills certificate or bachelor's degree.



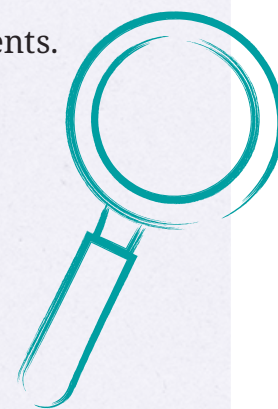
SCHOLARSHIPS

Find Scholarships That Fit Their Future

There are more scholarships out there than you might think — including those from colleges, employers, local groups and more. And they aren't just for straight-A students or star athletes. By helping your child search regularly, stay organized and apply often, you can boost their chances of getting money they won't have to pay back.

Scholarship Search Tips

- **Start early.** Don't wait until spring. New scholarships open throughout senior year.
- **Search often.** Spend a little time every month looking for new opportunities together.
- **Apply for more than one.** Every application increases the chances of getting free money for college or career training.
- **Stay organized.** Keep track of deadlines, essays and application requirements.
- **Don't skip the smaller scholarships.** Every award adds up.
- **Read the details.** Double-check eligibility requirements before applying.
- **Watch out for scams.** Legitimate scholarships don't charge application fees or promise guaranteed money.



Michigan Scholarship Search Tool

Not sure where to begin?

The Michigan Scholarship Search Tool helps you and your child discover scholarships that match your goals and interests.



Scan to start searching!

Go to michigan.gov/mistudentaid/students-families/mi-scholarship-search



WHAT'S POSSIBLE WITH THE FAFSA

Filling out the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is your child's first step to qualifying for grants, scholarships, loans and more!

FAFSA Myths Busted

Myth #1: Only students with good grades get financial aid.

Fact: The FAFSA isn't only for top GPAs. Most of the funding it unlocks doesn't depend on academic achievements.

Myth #2: It's just for loans.

Fact: The FAFSA is the only way to access certain grants and scholarships (like the Michigan Achievement Scholarship) — money that doesn't have to be repaid.

Myth #3: My family makes too much to qualify for any money.

Fact: Your child might be eligible for more than you expect. The FAFSA is the key to unlocking scholarships that aren't as income-based as you might think.

Myth #4: It's too hard to do and takes forever to fill out.

Fact: Completing the FAFSA takes most families just 30 minutes or less and the form is only 36 questions!



3 Steps to Completing the FAFSA:

- Gather Social Security numbers, income and tax info (like bank account balances and tax returns) for you and your child.
- Create StudentAid.gov accounts for student and parents.
- Fill out the FAFSA together at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov).



Scan to get started!

Go to [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov)



Scan to hear Jabez's
FAFSA success story!

FAFSA FAQs ANSWERED

Every family's situation is different. Even if your circumstances feel complicated, you can still complete the FAFSA and ask for help along the way.

Who actually needs to complete the form?

PARENT(S) MARITAL STATUS	WHOSE INFORMATION TO INCLUDE ON THE FAFSA
Married to each other	Both parents
Not married but live together	Both parents
Not married and don't live together (never married, divorced, remarried)	The parent who provided the most financial support in the past year (or the one with the higher income if financial support is equal)

What if ...

We don't file taxes?

You can still complete the FAFSA. You'll indicate that you aren't required to file and may be asked for other documentation.

We aren't U.S. citizens.

A parent's citizenship status does not determine whether a student is eligible for federal student aid. Parents without a Social Security number can still create a StudentAid.gov account and complete their portion of the FAFSA.

Our finances changed after we filed taxes.

Submit the FAFSA, then contact your student's financial aid office to discuss your circumstances.

Need More Help?

Don't let uncertainty keep your family from completing the FAFSA. Scan for more resources!

Go to studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out/help



FAFSA CHECKLIST

Gather This Info Before You Begin



Required Student & Parent/Contributor Information

Additional contributors may include the student's adoptive parents, stepparents or spouse.

☐ <u>StudentAid.gov</u> accounts and passwords	Create <u>StudentAid.gov</u> accounts (both student and parent)
☐ Email addresses	Student: Parent: Additional Contributor:
☐ Social Security numbers	Personal records or call the Social Security Administration at 800-772-1213
☐ Dates of birth	Student: Parent: Additional Contributor:
☐ Checking and savings account balances	Student: \$ Parent: \$ Additional Contributor: \$
☐ 2025 federal income tax forms and W-2s* <i>*You may need 2025 federal income tax forms and W-2s if you changed your marital status since you filed your 2024 taxes or have unique tax circumstances.</i>	Personal records or visit irs.gov/transcript
☐ Investments <i>Excluding home and retirement (e.g., stocks, bonds, mutual funds, 529 plans, rental properties)</i>	Student: \$ Parent: \$ Additional Contributor: \$
☐ Current net worth of businesses and farms* <i>*Do not include a family business with 100 or fewer full-time employees, farms where the family resides or a commercial fishing business and related expenses.</i>	\$ or contact your accountant
☐ Child support received from the last complete calendar year	\$ or contact MiChildSupport at 877-543-2660 or micase.state.mi.us
☐ Alien Registration Number/USCIS Number of eligible noncitizens* <i>*Student only</i>	Contact U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at uscis.gov .

HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN

Your child's next chapter
starts with the steps you
take together today.



FINANCIAL AID AT A GLANCE

All their financial aid info in one place.

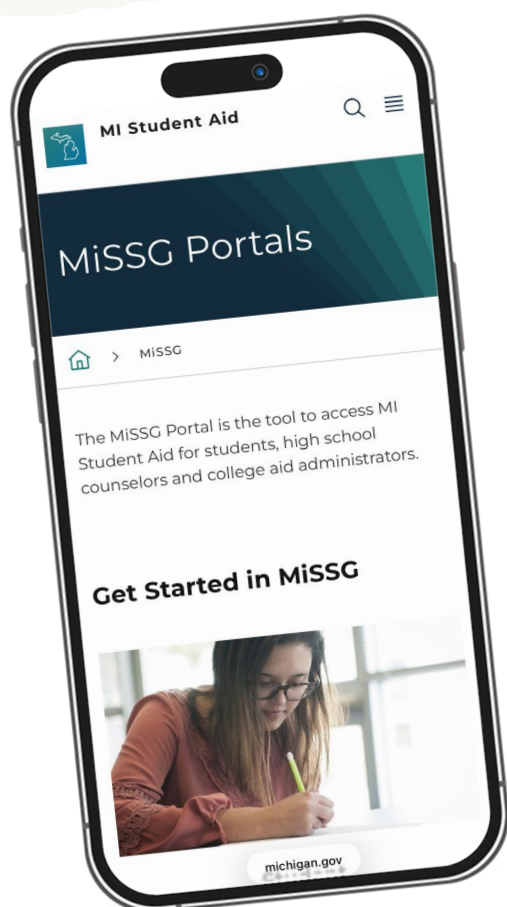
Once your child has completed the FAFSA, their MiSSG account helps them stay in the know and moving toward their goals.

It's a free tool that helps them:

- See what state financial aid they qualify for
- Apply for scholarships and grants
- Track next steps



It takes only a few minutes to get started!



Scan to help your child create their account!

Go to michigan.gov/mistudentaid/misgg

GRADUATION CHECKLIST

Your child's vision is getting closer every day. Help them check these to-dos off the list to stay on track, finish senior year strong and prepare for what's ahead.

Graduation Essentials

- ☐ Pick up cap and gown.
- ☐ Confirm graduation date, time and location.
- ☐ Get tickets (if needed).
- ☐ Attend rehearsal.
- ☐ Take care of any outstanding school fees.
- ☐ Return any school items (books, devices, uniforms).

Their Next Chapter

Financial Aid

- ☐ Complete the FAFSA, if not done yet.
- ☐ Check FAFSA status and submit verification.
- ☐ Review and accept financial aid offers together.
- ☐ Apply for scholarships. (Applying for the Michigan Achievement Scholarship is as simple as submitting the FAFSA!)

School / Training

- ☐ Send the final transcript.
- ☐ Confirm enrollment.
- ☐ Pay housing deposit (if needed).
- ☐ Register for orientation and classes.

Life Prep

- ☐ Plan housing (on or off campus).
- ☐ Start the summer job search.
- ☐ Update resume.
- ☐ Open a bank account.
- ☐ Create a simple budget for student life.





Keep Supporting Their Vision.

Whether your child's path leads to college, career training, an apprenticeship or somewhere entirely their own, they're on the way to creating a life that matches who THEY are. **Your support and encouragement have helped shape not only their plans but their confidence to pursue them.**

Thank you for helping your child dream bigger, plan boldly and make moves toward realizing their vision!



*MI Student Aid is here for you
as you continue cheering them on.*

Scan for more planning tools and resources. Go to [MI.gov/MISStudentAid](https://mi.gov/MISStudentAid)



Individuals with disabilities may contact the MiLEAP ADA Coordinator to request an alternative format to these materials. Please visit www.Michigan.gov/ADA for a list of state ADA Coordinators.

