

Higher Education

Facts

Georgia ranks 31st in terms of postsecondary participation¹, but has the eighth largest net full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment in the United States (excluding medical students)². In 2018, 52.6% of Georgia's young adults were enrolled in postsecondary education or had earned a degree, compared to 56.5% nationally.³

The average amount of annual in-state tuition and fees at Georgia's public four-year universities increased by 1.95% over the past five years. The national average during this time was 9.61%. Georgia's average amount of tuition and fees, \$8,719, also ranks below the national average at 38th.⁴

Net tuition revenue per FTE (tuition after scholarships and other grants) is \$4,716, which is 68% of the national average.⁵

		<u>Rank</u>
Average Annual In-State Tuition & Fees at Public Two-Year Institutions, 2019-20	\$4,042	32
Average Annual In-State Tuition & Fees at Public Four-Year Institutions, 2019-20	\$8,719	38
% Change in In-State Tuition & Fees at Public Four-Year Institutions, 2014-15 to 2019-20	1.95%	45
Higher Education Appropriations per FTE Student, 2019	\$8,979	13
State Grant Aid per Undergraduate Student, 2019-20	\$1,985	3
Total Educational Revenue Per FTE	\$13,692	30

Source: Trends in College Pricing 2019⁶

Table 1.1

College affordability remains a central challenge for higher education, and there has been a growing national push for college loan forgiveness and "free" college in recent years. Georgia has been a national leader in college tuition assistance ever since Gov. Zell Miller implemented the lottery-funded HOPE Program (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) in 1993 to provide merit-based college scholarships. Today, several financial aid programs are available to Georgia students:

The **HOPE Scholarship** is a merit-based award available to Georgia residents who have demonstrated academic achievement. A recipient must graduate from high school with a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) and maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible.

The **HOPE Grant** is available to Georgia residents who are pursuing a certificate or diploma. A recipient must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible.

The **Zell Miller Scholarship** is a merit-based award available to Georgia residents, similar to the HOPE Scholarship, but with more stringent academic requirements and a higher level of tuition assistance. A recipient must graduate from high school with a minimum 3.7 GPA combined with a minimum SAT score of 1,200 on the math and reading portions or a minimum composite ACT score of 26 in a single national test administration and maintain a minimum 3.3 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible.

¹ EdWeek.org, "Education Counts," <http://www.edcounts.org/createtable/viewtable.php?sortCol=1&sortAsc=0>

² State Profile: Georgia, 2019 State Higher Education Finance report, <https://shef.sheeo.org/state-profile/georgia/>

³ Education Week Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2018.

⁴ Trends in College Pricing 2019, College Board, <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing>

⁵ State Profile: Georgia, 2019 State Higher Education Finance report, <https://shef.sheeo.org/state-profile/georgia/>

⁶ Trends in College Pricing, College Board, <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing>

Eligible students are provided full-tuition assistance while pursuing an undergraduate degree to attend a Zell Miller Scholarship eligible college or university in Georgia.

The **Zell Miller Grant** is a merit-based program available to Georgia residents pursuing a certificate or diploma. A recipient must maintain a minimum 3.5 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible. Recipients are provided full-standard tuition assistance while enrolled at an eligible college or university in Georgia

Examples of HOPE's impact on tuition and fees:

At the University of Georgia, a student enrolled in 15 hours (per semester) for 2020-21 is assessed \$4,895 in tuition. Students eligible for HOPE receive \$3,840; Zell Miller Scholarship eligible students receive \$4,895. That leaves HOPE students with \$1,055 to pay out of pocket. (This does not include room, board, books/supplies, mandatory fees or other living expenses.)

At Chattahoochee Technical College, the per semester tuition and fees (15 hours) for 2020-21 is \$1,500. Students eligible for the HOPE Grant receive \$1,140 and Zell Miller Grant eligible students receive \$1,500. That leaves HOPE Grant students with \$360 out of pocket. (This does not include room, board, books/supplies, mandatory fees or other living expenses.)

High school students and eligible home study students can take advantage of college courses through the **Move On When Ready** dual enrollment program, which provides funds for tuition, mandatory fees and books up to a per-term maximum of 15 semester hours. Another option for high school students is one of Georgia's College and Career Academies, which are collaborative education and career-building partnerships between local school systems, technical colleges, and local businesses and industries. In the 2019-2020 academic year, there were 48 operating or proposed College and Career Academies in Georgia.

Students eligible for the HOPE or Zell Miller Grant are also eligible for the **HOPE Career Grant, formerly known as the Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant**. This grant pays for tuition, books and fees towards education for industries in which there are more jobs than workers to fill them and include the following areas of study: Commercial Truck Driving, Diesel Mechanic, Early Childhood Care/Education, Healthcare Technologies, Information Technology, Practical Nursing, Welding, and Industrial Maintenance.⁷

Low-income students at any higher education institution are eligible for a federal **Pell Grant**. The maximum annual amount of funding for FY 2020-21 was \$6,345, enough to cover the out-of-pocket tuition and fee expenses, for example, at UGA or Chattahoochee Tech.

Georgia's **REACH** program⁸ provides eligible low-income students in participating school districts with financial scholarships of up to \$10,000 to be used for "the educational costs at an in-state, HOPE-eligible public or private post-secondary institution."

Georgia higher education institutions also have their own need-based programs available, such as the **Tech Promise**⁹ program at Georgia Tech, which provides low-income, full-time resident students with funding to cover tuition, mandatory fees, an allowance for books, standard housing, personal expenses and a meal plan.

Georgia State University has gained national recognition for increasing graduation rates dramatically with a program of targeted grants and innovative use of data and technology. From 2014-2018, African-

⁷ <https://www.gafutures.org/hope-state-aid-programs/hope-zell-miller-grants/hope-career-grant/>

⁸ <https://www.gafutures.org/hope-state-aid-programs/scholarships-grants/reach-georgia/>

⁹ <https://finaid.gatech.edu/tech-promise>

American, Hispanic, first-generation and Pell-eligible students all graduated from Georgia State at or above the rates of the student body overall – making Georgia State the only national public university to attain this goal.

Over this same period, graduation rates for bachelor-degree seeking students improved 23%, including a 35% increase among Latino students and 29% among African Americans. Pell-eligible students comprise 58% of Georgia State University's overall undergraduate student population and graduated at a slightly higher rate than non-Pell students.¹⁰ This proves that students from all backgrounds can succeed if the right programs are in place.

All of these aid programs are available *before* students are forced to borrow money through student loans.

About the [Georgia Public Policy Foundation](#). Established in 1991, the Foundation is a trusted, independent resource for voters and elected officials. The Foundation provides actionable solutions to real-life problems by bringing people together. Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before the U.S. Congress or the Georgia Legislature.

© Georgia Public Policy Foundation (September 28, 2020).

¹⁰ 2018 Status Report, Georgia State University, Complete College Georgia, <https://success.gsu.edu/download/2018-status-report-georgia-state-university-complete-college-georgia/>