College Affordability in Tennessee

NCAN’s research documents the prevalence of “unaffordability” at public two-year and four-year institutions for students from low- and moderate-income families. The following charts demonstrate the affordability landscape of postsecondary education. When net price and emergency expenses are not covered by subsidized loans and student earnings from part-time employment, NCAN defines the remaining deficit as an “affordability gap.” In instances where the sum of loans and wages equals or surpasses the sum of net price and emergency costs, we refer to the surplus as “an affordability margin.”

---

### Percent of Affordable Institutions (2021-2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TENNESSEE</th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-Year Institutions</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year Institutions</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Average Affordability Gaps & Margins (2021-2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TENNESSEE</th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-Year Institutions</td>
<td>-$1,023</td>
<td>-$5,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year Institutions</td>
<td>$1,022</td>
<td>-$2,256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

The **Pell Grant** is a federal need-based aid award that helps millions of students annually.

State grant programs are crucial for college access and success, and can be based on financial need, merit, or a variety of factors.

---

There are **116,054** Pell Grant recipients in Tennessee.

Tennessee receives **$505,646,840** in Pell Grant funding each year.

---


**Source:** Federal Student Aid Pell Grant 2021-2022 End of Year Report.

**Source:** SHEEO, 2022. “State Higher Education Finance (SHEF) Report.”
In the 2023-2024 FAFSA cycle, Tennessee ranks 2nd in FAFSA Completion.

67% of high school seniors in Tennessee completed a FAFSA for the 2023-2024 cycle (as of 7/1/2023).

The TENNESSEE Class of 2023 left $48 million in Pell Grants unclaimed, by not completing a FAFSA.

The chart to the right reflects degree attainment (including an associate’s degree or higher,) for adults ages 25 and older.

Source: NCAN, Pell Dollars Left on the Table Report.