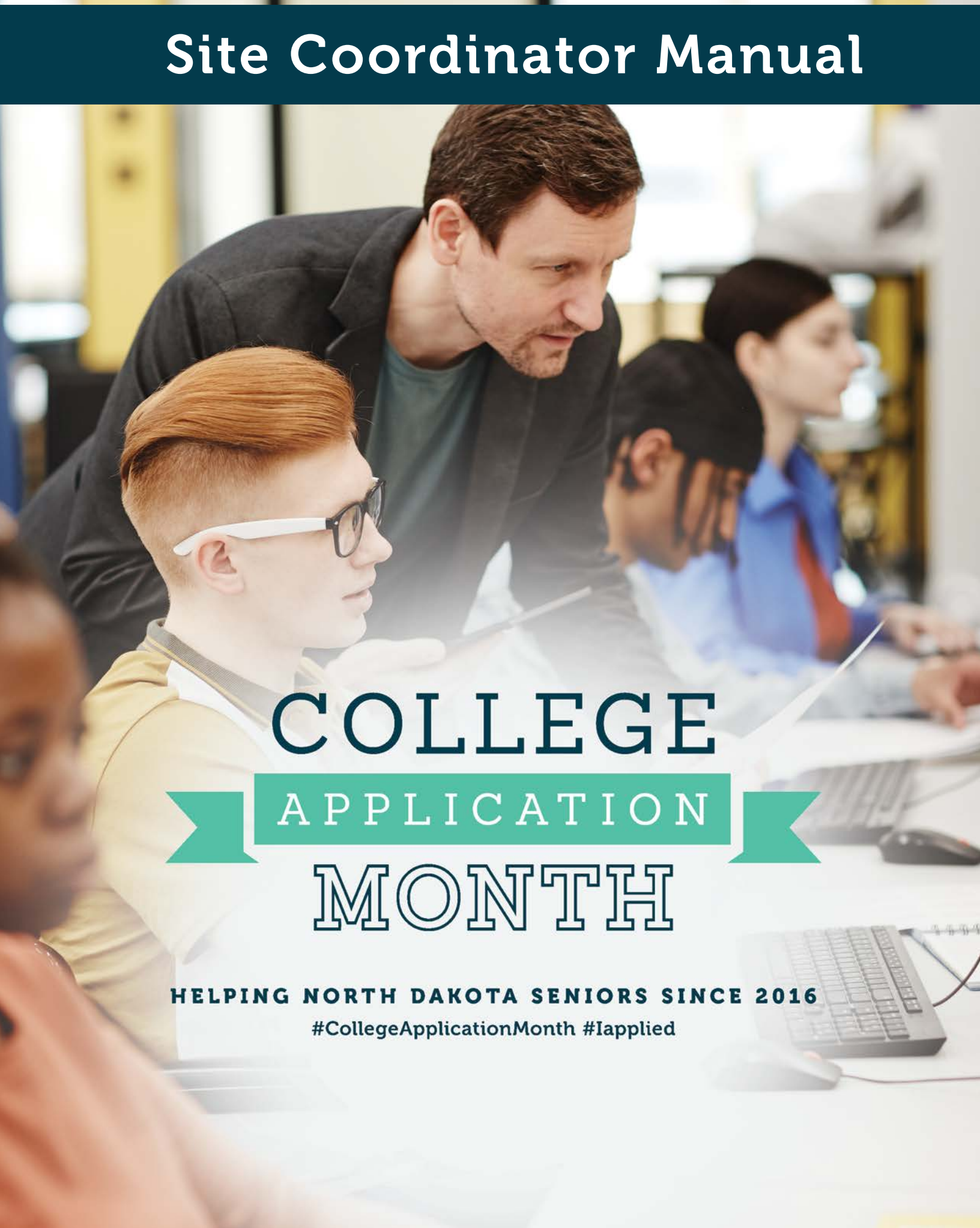
Site Coordinator Manual



WHAT IS COLLEGE APPLICATION MONTH?

College Application Month is part of a national initiative known as the American College Application Campaign. The American Council on Education started this initiative in 2005 with a single high school in North Carolina. Today, 5.17 million students have been served in all 50 states. North Dakota was the final state to join the initiative in 2014.

The goal of College Application Month is to increase the number of first-generation students and students from low-income families pursuing a college degree or other higher education credential. In addition to applying for college, College Application Month also helps students and their parents learn about the FAFSA.

Dear North Dakota College Application Month Site Coordinators:

On behalf of Bank of North Dakota (BND), thank you for hosting a College Application Month event at your schools. We are SO excited that you are providing your students the opportunity to step toward their future plans.

College Application Month is the perfect time for them to apply to the schools they're interested in, start considering the costs, create an FSA ID and strategize with their parents on how they'll pay for education beyond high school.

To help them make decisions that they can be confident in, such as their student loan and career planning decisions, BND offers a variety of tools and information. Students and parents can access these resources at bnd.nd.gov/confident and bnd.nd.gov/education-funding. Our Regional College Cost Sheet could be a great resource for them during College Application Month. They can access it electronically on our website or you can request printed copies as well.

This handbook will guide you through planning and implementing your school's College Application Month event. It contains resources and ideas that will help you plan an event that allows all of your seniors to participate no matter where they are planning to go to college next fall.

We greatly appreciate the effort and time you commit to your students and to making this event a success. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about North Dakota's College Application Month.

Sincerely,

Amanda Woidyla
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History of American College Application Campaign

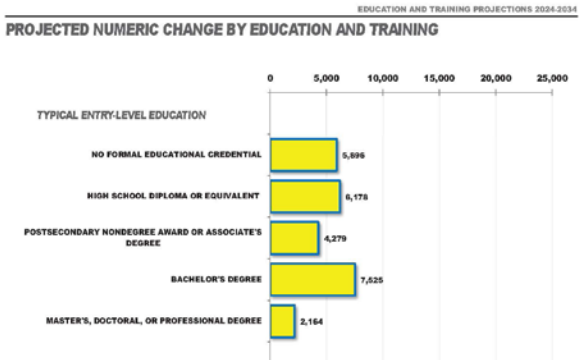
The American College Application Campaign (ACAC) began in 2005 with a single North Carolina high school. Its success spurred other schools to participate. Since 2008, the numbers participating in a College Application program has grown to more than 4,000 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

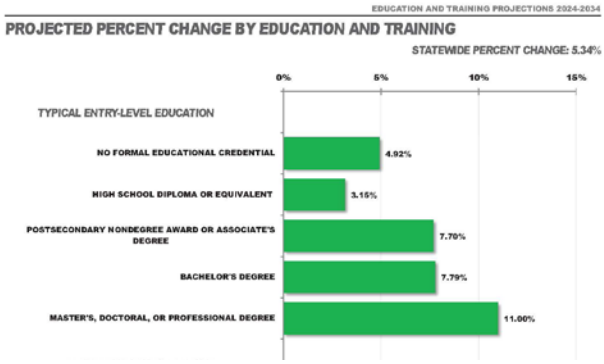
North Dakota was the final state to join the ACAC initiative. In 2014, North Dakota University System piloted the program at Magic City Campus in Minot. The following year, three more schools joined the effort: Carrington High School, Central Valley High School in Buxton and Watford City High School.

In 2016, North Dakota University System asked Bank of North Dakota (BND) to partner with them and lead the effort to expand the initiative statewide. The goal is to increase the number of North Dakota students applying to North Dakota colleges, with an emphasis on first-generation students and students from low-income families. Over the past 10 years, over 26,000 students have taken advantage of the $35 application fee that BND pays when a student attends a College Application Month event and applied to a North Dakota college or university!

Benefits of College Application Month

In North Dakota, Job Service's Labor Market Information projects that entry level jobs in North Dakota across all education paths will increase through 2034, including those that require on the job training.





We believe this initiative will benefit students by helping them navigate the complex admissions and financial aid process early in the year and benefit the state by developing an educated workforce that is needed for our ever-changing economy.

Implementing a College Application Month event

Each high school will identify a site coordinator, typically a guidance or career counselor or assistant principal, who will be responsible for implementing the program at your site. ACAC and BND has provided resources that can be customized to fit your school's event and the needs of your students.

College Application Month doesn't happen in a vacuum. Most schools are already implementing career exploration and college planning activities throughout the school year and we want this event to complement your efforts. Application events prove to be most successful when students are adaquately prepared to submit their college applications.

Every school's event will look different depending on the size of your senior class and how involved you want to get. Some schools plan events that take one day, some plan activities over an entire week or even incorporate college and career planning activities throughout an entire month. You may decide to incorporate elements of college planning in class lessons, have a door decorating contest, or have a college t-shirt day. The options are endless!

As with any event, success is often determined in the planning stages. In addition to the College Application Month activities, site coordinators will also want to consider what students will need to do to be ready to submit their college applications and how you want other teachers and school staff to be involved. If you want to include additional activities for students who's plans don't involve college, BND has some great ideas for you.

Implementing a College Application Month event at your school only has three hard and fast rules:

1. Schedule a time during the regular school day that adheres with guidelines at your school for students to complete their applications.

2. Give all seniors the opportunity to participate.

3. Collect data as requested by the state coordinator.

Some common questions from schools have been:

1. **Do I need to host the event during the school day?**

   Yes. It is the best way to reach all seniors and to have maximum participation, especially with the demographic we are trying to reach: first-generation students and students from low-income families who may not have the knowledge about applying to college or the resources to do so at home.

2. **What if my students aren't ready to apply, already applied, or aren't going to college?**

   No matter a student's plans, they can dedicate time during this event to their future. That could mean working on a resume or completing a job application, researching apprenticeship or job training opportunities, or even begin to learn about money topics they will need to know as independent adults.

3. **Do I need volunteers?**

   It depends! Small schools or schools that have participated for many years may be able to host an event with just the counselor or a small school team to assist students during the application days.

   For schools that would like volunteers, BND is happy to recruit college admissions reps, Dollars for Scholars volunteers or even reps from your local bank or credit union to assist your students. Due to the high demand of volunteers on some days, we also may ask you to reach out to your contacts if our volunteer groups are unable to attend your event.

Bank of North Dakota will provide:

- Every high school will receive a code to share with their students to pay for one $35 application fee to any North Dakota college or university during the month of October.
- Digital volunteer resources that each school can use to create custom volunteer packets.
- Statewide media efforts, a press release and an article template which can be customized for your local area.
- Resources to plan your event and get students ready to complete their applications.

Site Coordinator Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide as you implement a College Application Month event. It includes suggested activities, but can be customized to fit your specific event.

Pre-event preparation

- ❒ Review the North Dakota College Application Month Site Coordinator Handbook
- ❒ Identify a school team to build support and assist with tasks; host meeting
- ❒ Identify date(s) and reserve space for the College Application Month event
- ❒ Ensure that students have access to a device (laptop/tablet) and internet
- ❒ Add College Application Month event to school calendar
- ❒ Get common email domains whitelisted with your district, so that students will be able to verify their non-school email as part of the application process

Communicate College Application Month event to students and families

- ❒ Post information on school website, school newsletter and school marquee
- ❒ Pre-event press release

Prepare students for the event

- ❒ Post on virtual classroom
- ❒ Bring your students to one of the college fairs hosted by DACAC-ND in September
- ❒ Encourage students to research and identify schools they may be interested in
- ❒ Implement college and career exploration and preparation activities and/or collaborate with teachers for college and career related assignments in classrooms
- ❒ Enlist student groups to help build excitement and support for the event
- ❒ Encourage students to visit colleges in-person or virtually during ND Teachers Convention (October 22 and 23, 2026)

Implement schoolwide activities to build awareness and enthusiasm

- ❒ College t-shirt/sweatshirt-themed dress up days
- ❒ College wall bulletin boards
- ❒ "I Graduated!" signs on office, classroom doors and video chat backgrounds
- ❒ Door decorating or video chat background contests
- ❒ Morning announcements
- ❒ Engage underclassmen to help support the event
- ❒ Ask your local Dollars for Scholars chapter to volunteer, speak about scholarships or even fundraise as part of your event

College Application Month event

- ❒ Ensure that students:
    - ❒ Have a step-by-step tutorial to help them complete their applications if needed. As the site coordinator, you will be emailed the tutorial.
    - ❒ Have the ONE-TIME code to cover the application fee for ONE North Dakota school. BND will provide this to you in an email, and you can provide it to your students.
    - ❒ Apply to at least one college and complete next steps in the admissions process.
    - ❒ Update or create their North Dakota Dollars for Scholars scholarship profile at https://northdakota.dollarsforscholars.org.
    - ❒ Create an FSA ID at https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id so that they're ready to complete the FAFSA when it opens.
    - ❒ Complete an alternative future-focused activity.
    - ❒ Visit SmartWithMyMoney.nd.gov to start learning about financial topics they will need to know about once they leave high school like building credit, responsible borrowing and more.
- ❒ Collect data as requested by the state coordinator.

After the event

- ❒ Host post-event debrief with school team.
- ❒ Submit data as requested to state coordinator.
- ❒ Follow up with students to send transcripts.
- ❒ Host a financial aid night, share FAFSA videos or other FAFSA resources.
- ❒ Encourage students to submit scholarship applications.
- ❒ Celebrate your seniors commitments to college, military or workforce. This can be done by hosting a "Decision or Signing Day" event, displaying college pennants, military or workforce logos for your seniors or celebrate in another way.

Site Coordinator Timeline

Prior to school year

- ❒ Pick a date and register your school to participate.
- ❒ Establish a school team to assist with implementation; host a meeting.
- ❒ Add the College Application Month event to your school's master calendar.

Beginning of the school year

- ❒ Meet with your school team to get acquainted with the event and begin planning.
- ❒ Ensure students' technology needs are adequate; computer labs, laptops and internet connection.
- ❒ Promote College Application Month to seniors and parents during any beginning of the school year activities or communications.
- ❒ Communicate to seniors and parents during any beginning of the school about all of the fall college and career planning events.
- ❒ Bring your students to one of the college fairs hosted by DACAC-ND in September.
- ❒ Place the event on the school's web page and social media sites such as Facebook.
- ❒ Watch for emails with the Site Coordinator Handbook and volunteer resources from the state coordinator.
- ❒ Encourage teachers to implement college preparedness activities in their classes.
- ❒ Confirm space and computers are reserved for the event and your school's technology coordinator is ready to tackle any technology issues that may arise.
- ❒ Get common email domains whitelisted with your district, so that students will be able to verify their non-school email as part of the application process.

2 Weeks prior to your event

- ❒ Remind teachers, counselors and administrators of the event schedule and ensure all seniors will have the opportunity to participate.
- ❒ Remind parents about the event and supply them with a list of items their child will need to complete a college application.
- ❒ Hang, email or share posters provided by BND in your school and in the community.
- ❒ Communicate with your volunteers to verify date, time and other instructions, such as parking.

1 Week before the event

- ❒ Remind students the event is next week and supply them with a list of items they will need to complete a college application.
- ❒ Encourage staff and underclassmen to show their support for seniors participating.
- ❒ Use the provided press release to alert local media about the event.
- ❒ Place a reminder on your school's web page and social media sites (i.e., Facebook).

Week of the event

- ❒ Make sure that handouts and other documents needed are printed or easily available virtually.
- ❒ Prepare any documents needed for your students: transcripts, transcript request forms, application code information and student instructions.

Day of the College Application Month event

- ❒ Ensure students apply to at least one college or participate in alternative activities if they are being held.
- ❒ Contact the state coordinator directly if there is a large-scale issue.
- ❒ If students have extra time, encourage them to update or create their North Dakota Dollars for Scholars scholarship profile. Scholarships open in January!
- ❒ Create an FSA ID at https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id so that they're ready to complete the FAFSA when it opens.
- ❒ Post on social media about your event.
- ❒ Have the state coordinator's contact information on hand if you need assistance.

Week after the event

- ❒ Submit any requested data to your state coordinator.
- ❒ Use the press release template to submit an article to the local newspaper to celebrate your success.
- ❒ Follow up with your school team to share your success.
- ❒ Commit to host next year!

College Application Month resources for your school

bnd.nd.gov/cam

For questions about College Application Month, contact:

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COLLEGE
APPLICATION
MONTH

HELPING NORTH DAKOTA SENIORS SINCE 2016
#CollegeApplicationMonth #Iapplied