



2023 Colorado Free Application Days Communications Toolkit



A message from Dr. Angie Paccione:

On behalf of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, thank you for participating in Colorado Free Application Days, an initiative to waive application fees for all Colorado residents from Oct. 17-19, 2023.

We want to inspire more Coloradans to continue their education and erase equity gaps within our higher education system. To get there, we must increase the number of high school seniors who enroll in a postsecondary program. And we're making progress. Thanks to your hard work our schools received 63,976 applications during Colorado Free Application Days in 2022. That represents thousands of young people who have chosen to study in our state and make a difference in our communities.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts to make this happen. By rallying around our young people, we send a powerful message that we see their potential and believe in their success.

Enclosed you will find a communications toolkit stocked with a sample press release, talking points, FAQ copy and social media ideas. We'll also share graphics that you may modify for your communications and outreach. Please reach out to us if you require additional resources.

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Onwards and upwards!

Dr. Angie Paccione,

Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

In this toolkit:

- Logistics and Timeline
- Sample Press Release
- Talking Points
- Web Copy/Newsletter Blurb
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Social Media Promotion
 - Sample Posts
 - Additional Content Ideas

2023-2024 Logistics and Timeline

Deadline	Campus Admissions	K12 and Campus Communications	CDHE
Thursday, Sept. 14	Deadline to submit institution's fee waiver directions to Carl Einhaus .		
Friday, Sept. 15			CDHE will post fee waiver information on this webpage and in my Colorado Journey
Monday, Sept. 18	Statewide Media Campaign: Governor Jared Polis announces Colorado Free Application Days		
Monday, Sept. 18		Statewide Media Campaign: Use the sample news release below to conduct media outreach.	
Sept. 18 through mid-Oct.			PSAs air on English and Spanish language television
Sept. 18 through October 19		Use social media sample posts (below) to promote the event.	CDHE communications will amplify social media promotions.
Tuesday, Oct. 17- Thursday, Oct. 19			Gov. Polis and Executive Director Dr. Angie Paccione promote days on TV news.
Tuesday, Oct. 17-19	Implement your fee waiver solution for Oct. 17-19	Promote Colorado Free Application Days	Amplify on social media
Friday, Oct. 27			CDHE sends application data collection webform to admissions directors.
Friday, Nov. 17	Report data on applications submitted through CDHE webform.		
Early December			CDHE issues press release on Colorado Free App Days results



Sample Press Release

Colorado higher education institutions to waive application fees from Oct. 17-19

The sixth annual Colorado Free Application Day campaign returns as a three day-long event and encourages Colorado residents to continue their education beyond high school

CITY/TOWN, CO—To inspire more Coloradans to continue their education, all 32 public colleges and universities in Colorado and several private institutions will allow students to apply for free from Oct. 17-19 as part of [Colorado Free Application Days](#).

Colorado Free Application Days caps off Colorado Applies Month, a statewide campaign that encourages high school juniors and seniors to explore, chart and execute a post-high school path. Once students select a goal—such as applying to an apprenticeship program—they are connected to resources and tools that will help them achieve major goals and action steps along the way. Admissions application information for each institution is available on the campaign website at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays> and fees will be waived for applications submitted from Oct. 17-19 only.

The statewide push is designed to increase Colorado's college-going and FAFSA and CASFA completion rates. The campaign strategically aims to support low-income and first-generation students, while keeping Colorado students in state. According to 2021 numbers from CDHE's [Pathways to Prosperity Report](#), 49.9% of high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education the fall after graduation (a slight decrease from 2020) - race and ethnicity enrollment gaps persist.

"Our workforce demands that Coloradans are equipped with a postsecondary education and Colorado Free Application Days brings us one step closer to achieving that," said Gov. Jared Polis. "As we look ahead, our economy depends on a workforce that has the skills to fill the most in-demand jobs and careers of tomorrow."

By waiving application fees—a common barrier to higher education—Colorado Free Application Days aims to improve access to further education and training, which is becoming increasingly critical in the state's rapidly-changing economy. The [2022 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report](#) identified that 91.4% of Colorado's Tier 1 top jobs and 70.4% of Tier 2 top jobs require a credential beyond high school. However, only 61% of Coloradans 25- 64 years old hold a postsecondary credential, indicating a supply-and-demand gap for some occupations.

In response to these workforce demands, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education set a strategic goal to increase the number of Coloradans benefiting from valuable career skills, obtained while in high school or via postsecondary education, that—at a minimum—enable additional lifetime earnings greater than the cost of attendance, in its statewide plan for higher education, [Building Skills for an Evolving Economy](#). Increasing postsecondary enrollment and reducing equity gaps—the racial disparities in educational attainment—are priority strategies to improve access and reduce costs for Coloradans.

###



Talking Points

- All 32 public colleges and universities in Colorado and several private institutions will waive application fees as part of the sixth annual Colorado Free Application Days from Oct. 17-19, 2023.
- The fee waivers will be valid for applications submitted on Oct. 17-19 only. Students who want to take advantage of the fee waiver should be ready to submit a complete, high-quality application by October 19 to ensure they have the best chance for admission.
- Information for each institution's application process is available at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>.
- National studies show that more than half of high-achieving students from low-income families end up at a college beneath their academic level, a phenomenon called undermatching. Troublingly, those who are undermatched are less likely to graduate on time and are more likely to stop out of their program. By waiving admissions application fees—a common barrier to higher education—we hope more Colorado students can find an education path that harnesses their talents and interests and graduate with a credential in hand.
- To help prepare applications, the Colorado Department of Higher Education has resources that walk students through the key steps in identifying education and training programs, preparing applications, and submitting them successfully.
- Colorado Free Application Days aims to support students of low-income backgrounds and first-generation students in their postsecondary journey. There are also options for students experiencing financial hardship to apply for free year-round.
- By keeping Colorado students in the state, our workforce and economy will strengthen and provide more career opportunities to students of color and individuals experiencing hardship.

Web Copy/Newsletter Blurb

To encourage Colorado high school seniors to continue their education, we are waving application fees during Colorado Free Application Days from Oct. 17-19.

Here's how it works. [EMBED INSTITUTION-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS].

The fee waivers are valid for applications submitted on Oct. 17-19 only. To take advantage of this opportunity, make sure you are ready to **submit a complete, high-quality application** before Oct. 19.



If you have any questions, please reach out to **[EMBED INSTITUTION-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS]**. We can't wait to see you on campus!

Frequently Asked Questions

When is Colorado Free Application Days?

Colorado Free Application Days take place **from Oct. 17-19 only**. All public and some private institutions will waive application fees on those days.

How does it work?

You must submit a completed admissions application from **Oct. 17-19, 2023**. Any admissions applications that have been started but not submitted may not be granted a waiver.

Each institution will have a unique process to waive the admissions application submission fee. Visit [the Colorado Free Application Days webpage](#) to find specific information by institution.

To take advantage of Colorado Free Application Days, it's best to have all admissions application materials prepared, double-checked, and reviewed **before** Oct. 19. That way, you can submit high-quality, complete applications, and improve your chances of getting accepted.

Who should I contact if I have questions or technical difficulties?

If you encounter any technical problems when submitting your admissions application, please contact the Admissions Office of your school of choice. Their contact information will be listed on their website, which you can find on our [Colorado Free Application Days webpage](#).

Why should I apply between Oct. 17-19?

Colorado's changing economy demands more education and training. Studies show that nearly three in four jobs in Colorado require a certificate or degree. To set yourself up for success, it's important to reach higher and find a path that suits your unique talents and interests.

Higher education is not just good for our state—it's good for you, too! Graduates of higher education programs are more likely to be employed, earn more money over their lifetime and lead healthier lives.

What academic term should I apply for?

If you are applying to one of Colorado's community colleges and technical schools, you are welcome to apply for Spring or Fall 2024. If you're applying to a four-year college or university, you should apply for Fall 2024.

I'm a transfer student. Can I apply and receive the fee waiver?

Yes! Colorado Free Application Days are open to all Colorado residents.

What if I'm not ready to submit my application by Oct. 19?

To take advantage of Colorado Free Application Days, it's best to have all admissions application



materials prepared, double-checked, and reviewed **before** Oct. 19. For the third year in a row, you have even more time, as we've extended Colorado Free Application from one day to three. That way, you can submit high-quality, complete admissions applications, and improve your chances of being accepted.

If you do not feel prepared to apply from Oct. 17-19, that's okay! You should wait until you have complete, high-quality admissions applications ready to submit. If you have trouble paying the admissions application fee, call or email the Admissions Office of your institution of choice; most institutions will waive admissions application fees in cases of financial hardship.

What if I apply prior to Oct. 17-19?

The waiver is valid for admissions applications submitted **between Oct. 17-19 only**. Any admissions applications submitted **before** Colorado Free Application Days **will not** be granted an automatic admissions application waiver.

If you want to apply before Colorado Free Application Days and have trouble paying the admissions application fee, call or email the Admissions Office of your institution of choice. Most institutions will waive admissions application fees in cases of financial hardship.

What if I miss the Oct. 17-19 window deadline?

The waiver is valid for admissions applications submitted from Oct. 17-19 only. Any admissions applications submitted **after** Oct. 19 **will not** be granted an automatic application waiver.

If you missed Colorado Free Application Days and have trouble paying the application fee, call or email the Admissions Office of your institution of choice. Most institutions will waive admissions application fees in cases of financial hardship.

How do I get my application ready?

The steps you need to take depend on for which program you intend to apply.

- If you are a high school graduate, you will likely be admitted to community colleges and technical schools automatically.
- If you have your sights set on a four-year college or university, you will likely need to submit additional materials and information, including your optional SAT or ACT scores, a personal essay and letters of recommendation. To learn more about the application process, check out the [College Admissions Tool](#).



Social Media Promotion

Signature Hashtag: #FreeAppDayCO, #FreeAppDaysCO

Complementary Hashtags: #CORises, #WhyApply, #IApplied #edcolo

CDHE Handles:

Twitter: [@CoHigherEd](https://twitter.com/CoHigherEd)

Instagram: [@cohighered](https://www.instagram.com/cohighered)

Facebook: [@cohighered](https://www.facebook.com/cohighered)

Sample Social Media Posts

You may link to your institution webpage(s) or the Colorado Free Application Days webpage (<https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>)

- To encourage more Colorado high school juniors and seniors to continue their education, we are waving application fees from Oct. 17-19 for #FreeAppDaysCO. We're excited to be part of this statewide initiative! Learn more: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- Despite being one of the most educated states in the country, Colorado sent less than 50% of high school graduates to a college or university last year. That's why we're encouraging students to apply for free from Oct. 17-19 for #FreeAppDaysCO. Learn more: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- All public Colorado colleges and universities are waiving application fees from Oct. 17-19—including us! That means you can apply for FREE on #FreeAppDaysCO. Click here to learn how. <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- Need another excuse to apply to [INSTITUTION NAME]? You can apply for FREE from Oct. 17-19 as part of #FreeAppDaysCO. Here's how: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- Planning to apply to [INSTITUTION NAME] on #FreeAppDaysCO? Make sure your applications are in tip top shape BEFORE Oct. 19 so you have the best chance of getting in. Learn more: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- #FreeAppDaysCO is just a week away! Review our resources to make sure your application materials are complete, checked and ready to go: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- #FreeAppDaysCO is tomorrow! Remember, you must submit your application between Oct. 17-19 to have your application fees waived. Learn more: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>
- Colorado Free Application Days aims to support students of low-income backgrounds and first-generation students in their postsecondary journey. There are also options for students



experiencing financial hardship to apply for free year-round. Learn more here:

<https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>

- By keeping Colorado students in state, our workforce and economy will strengthen and provide more career opportunities to students of color and individuals experiencing hardship due to the pandemic. Learn more at: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cofreeappdays>

Additional Content Ideas

- **Video Testimonials:** Have students explain why they chose your institution. Ask them about the one piece of advice they would give younger students about the application process. Send these to CDHE (CDHE@dhe.state.co.us).
- **Campus Tours:** Use Facebook Live to host a virtual campus tour leading up to Colorado Free Application Days.
- **Program Highlights:** Showcase unique, innovative, and fun degree programs that pique the interest of prospective students.
- **Campus Life Spotlights:** Ask student organization representatives to talk about clubs, sports, internships, and other extracurricular opportunities available at your institutions.
- **Giveaways:** Raffle t-shirts and SWAG to students who tag you on Colorado Free Application Days.
- **Engage Alumni Organizations:** Ask alumni groups to promote Colorado Free Application Days through their networks and post photos from their time as a student.