

# UT PROMISE

## MENTOR HANDBOOK



**Dear UT Promise Mentor,**

Congratulations on making one of the best decisions of your life. Your investment of time and expertise will have a tremendous impact on the life of a University of Tennessee student.


I talk often about making this the greatest decade in UT history. In order to do this, we must continually seek ways to honor our land-grant mission by making our universities accessible to all who wish to achieve their dream of earning a college degree. We don't want to measure ourselves by who we exclude; we want to measure ourselves by who we include.

One key component to fostering an environment of inclusivity is the UT Promise undergraduate scholarship program, which guarantees free tuition and mandatory fees for students whose family household income is under \$60,000. By offering this scholarship, we are ensuring more students have the chance to access higher education and receive a college credential.

UT Promise welcomed its first class of students in fall 2020, and your fingerprints will be all over the future success of these students. You are a key component of this program and a critical support system for our students. We couldn't do it without you.

**This handbook has been thoughtfully developed to help guide you through your mentoring relationship. The keys to mentoring are really quite simple – be proactive, be present and act as a resource for students who need help while they are on our campuses. And be assured that we will walk alongside you as you journey together with your assigned UT Promise students.**

Thank you, in advance, for helping our students achieve their dream of a college degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Boyd".

Randy Boyd, President  
University of Tennessee

Welcome .....	2
UT Promise Information .....	4
Mentorship .....	6
Mentor Platform .....	7
Mentor Responsibilities .....	8
Mentor/Mentee Communication .....	10
Tips and Tricks .....	11
Maintaining Eligibility .....	12
Community Service .....	14
Filing the FAFSA Annually .....	17
Completing Financial Aid Verification .....	18
Tips for College Success .....	19
UT Promise Policies .....	21
UT Promise FAQs .....	25
Mentor FAQs .....	27
Mentor Checklist .....	28

# UT PROMISE INFORMATION

UT Promise is an undergraduate scholarship program guaranteeing free tuition and mandatory fees for qualifying Tennessee residents attending UT's campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis.

Launched in Fall 2020, this innovative scholarship will cover a student's last-dollar amount of tuition and mandatory fees after other financial aid is applied (such as Pell grants, HOPE Scholarship or other institutional scholarships) to students who qualify for HOPE and whose family household income is under \$60,000 a year.

UT Promise is a student-success scholarship program. Each participating semester students are required to complete eight community service hours and work with a volunteer mentor to ensure a successful experience.

Our volunteer mentors, you, are the heart of the UT Promise Program. You will serve as the conduit between the program and the students. You will support them as they face the challenges that postsecondary education often brings. You are not expected to be an expert, but your investment in the students will show them that someone cares about them and believes in their ability to succeed.

This handbook serves as a guide to both you and the students as they complete their scholarship requirements and provides information on your role as the mentor. Please remember that situations will arise that are not covered in this handbook. In those times, please engage the UT Promise team.

Family household income is defined as “the accurate, verifiable total combined amount of parent and student adjusted gross income and untaxed income of less than \$60,000, AND a total maximum asset amount of less than \$75,000, as defined on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

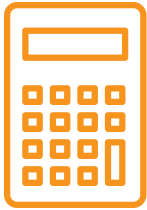
## CONTACT US

If you need any assistance or guidance with your UT Promise mentorship, please feel free to contact the UT Promise Team, at [utpromise@tennessee.edu](mailto:utpromise@tennessee.edu).

## PARTNERSHIPS

tnAchieves is a nonprofit partnering organization to both the TN Promise and UT Promise. tnAchieves works directly with high school students as they complete the scholarship requirements prior to enrollment at UT, including attending mandatory meetings, completing the FAFSA, working with a mentor and submitting community service hours.





### What does last-dollar mean? What will UT Promise cover?

Last-dollar programs consider any additional public funding or grants that the student is eligible for, like a federal Pell Grant. The amount of last-dollar funding that will cover the tuition and mandatory fees will vary from student to student as it will depend on other public funding for which the student is eligible.

UT Promise covers the last-dollar amount of tuition and mandatory fees. UT Promise does not pay for books or other post-secondary expenses, including, but not limited to, program of study fees (course fees/differential fees), late registration fees, housing fees, meal plan fees, etc.

**Below is an example of how UT Promise will cover the last-dollar amount for three different students. These examples are based on an average of UT's campuses' tuition costs, but do not reflect actual costs:**

	STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3
TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$11,000
PROGRAM OF STUDY	\$600	\$0	\$0
HOPE	-\$4,000	-\$4,000	-\$4,000
PELL GRANT	-\$7,395	-\$5,000	-\$3,000
INSTITUTIONAL SCHOLARSHIP	\$0	-\$1,500	-\$2,000
TOTAL COST AFTER FINANCIAL AID	\$705	\$1,000	\$2,000
UT PROMISE	\$705	\$1,000	-\$2,000
<b>STUDENT PAYS*</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

\*Students will still be responsible for covering any costs beyond tuition and mandatory fees such as book expenses and room/board.

# MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a process in which an experienced individual helps another person develop their goals and skills through on-going, supportive one-on-one conversations and learning exercises. Being a mentor allows faculty/staff, alumni and friends of the University to give back in a very meaningful way. Our mission is to connect students with a mentor who will support them in their post-secondary journey by helping them navigate the college environment and preparing them for their transition from college to a rewarding career. This mentoring program's purpose is to provide students with support in the form of one-on-one guidance, advice and insight from a mentor who may share similar experiences.

## ROLE OF THE MENTOR

Provide insight and guidance for the mentee based on personal experience in navigating the college environment and career and academic pursuits. Students should be receptive to guidance and support, and mentors should be invested in their students' success.

## ROLE OF THE MENTEE

Receive guidance and advice from a mentor in navigating the college environment, connecting to campus resources, developing career goals and transitioning into the workforce.

### **A mentor is a(n)...**

Resource  
Encourager  
Supporter

### **A mentor is NOT a(n)...**

Academic Advisor  
Counselor  
Tutor

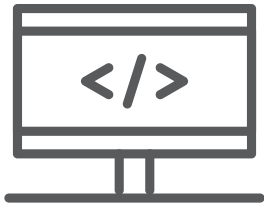
### **The student is...**

Willing to engage and ask questions  
Responsive to the mentor  
Thankful and kind

### **The student is NOT...**

Disengaged  
Unresponsive  
Unkind

As a mentor, you are not expected to know all of the answers. You are a resource and support system and should refer mentees to the appropriate offices/services on campus when needed.



# MENTOR PLATFORM

You will be assigned a mentee who meets all the UT Promise eligibility requirements and is currently receiving the UT Promise scholarship. While you are welcome to meet with this student in person if available, the majority of your mentoring will take place through our UT Promise Mentor Platform. If you do meet in person, make sure to meet in a public place!

## HOW TO CREATE A PROFILE

After you receive an email with a sign-up link from UT Promise (utpromise@tennessee.edu), you will visit the UT Promise Mentor Platform and create your account. You will be prompted to activate your account – faculty and staff should click UT NetID Login and use Single-Sign On, while alumni and friends of UT should click email. Then, complete the registration questions and profile information. We will use this information to match you with your students. Upon future visits to the site, click the Sign In button to login and begin mentoring!

## MATCHING

The UT Promise Mentor Platform will use an algorithm to match students and mentors based on preferences, such as hobbies and passions, collegiate activities, social identities, and industries. Mentors cannot request students to mentor. You will be notified via email in early fall of the students with whom you are matched. Please reach out to your students as soon as possible to formally initiate the relationship.

## NAVIGATING THE UT PROMISE MENTOR PLATFORM


The UT Promise Mentor Platform is used to match you with a UT Promise student and will allow you to email your student to coordinate meetings. You will be able to communicate with your student on or outside of the platform and are encouraged to use tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to facilitate mentor meetings each semester.

### Platform Website **mentor.tennessee.edu**

Please do NOT try to sign up or create a profile until you receive an email from UT Promise asking you to do so. You will get an email with a link to sign up on the platform. If you create a profile before then, it cannot be approved.


# MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES


**UT Promise scholarship recipients will be required to meet with their mentors at least three times a semester.** We recommend meeting in September, October and November in the fall and February, March and April in the spring. Students do not have to complete mentoring requirements for summer enrollment.


<p><b>IMPORTANT</b></p> 	<p>It is the <b>MENTOR'S responsibility to report the completion of mentor meetings</b> each semester. To report that you met with your students, visit <a href="https://tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring">tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring</a>.</p> <p>Fall goals <b>MUST be completed by December 1</b> and spring goals <b>MUST be completed by July 1</b>.</p>
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The UT Promise Mentor Platform and other tools make it easy to communicate with your students, schedule meetings and meet via video chat in the platform! UT Promise will provide guided Pathways with conversation topics, discussion questions and resources all within the platform. All you have to do is follow along with your assigned Pathway and check off the meeting goals in your inbox as they are completed!

**UT Promise will provide a mentor toolkit that has conversation topics and discussion questions to guide meetings with your mentee. For each month, we recommend that mentors do the following:**


- 

**1** Set up a time to meet with your student.
- 

**2** Review the discussion guides and resources in the toolkit.
- 

**3** Video chat or meet with your student in person.
- 

**4** Report that you met with your mentee by completing the short survey on the website: [tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring](https://tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring).

<p><b>IMPORTANT</b></p> 	<p>Even if you meet with your mentee in person, you will still be asked to report that you completed a meeting online at <a href="https://tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring">tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring</a>. Failure to report these meetings could result in the loss of your student's scholarship, so please be diligent about confirming the status of your student.</p>
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**In addition to completing the three mandatory meetings each semester with their mentor...**



**Mentors should also connect with their student when:**

- A UT Promise deadline is approaching.
- They have resources or opportunities that would assist the student.
- They know the student had a completed a test, interview, or something they were nervous or excited about.
- They wish to check in with the student to build a more meaningful relationship.

**Students should also connect with their mentor when:**

- They have a question.
- The mentor asks a question of them via email or text message.
- The student is excited/nervous/worried about a college experience.
- The student accomplishes a goal and wishes to share with their mentor!

Mentors and students can also create their own goals to complete together or individually. Remember, **completing goals does not take the place of your required UT Promise goals**. The only goal that counts toward maintaining the UT Promise scholarship are the three mandatory meetings each semester.

**MENTOR EXPECTATIONS**



- Provide meaningful, supportive interactions and assist students in setting goals
- Be available to your student
- Help students find ways to be motivated
- Provide personal and professional enrichment opportunities for students
- Reach out to mentee during encouraged check-points
- Update UT Promise if there are any problems or concerns



# MENTOR/MENTEE COMMUNICATION

Before you meet with your student, you will communicate through email via the UT Promise Mentor Platform to introduce yourself and set-up a time to meet (either virtually or in person). **Please be responsive to these emails.** Below is an example of how you can reach out to your students and what the response might look like.

## MENTOR TIP

It is important that mentors do not make any assumptions about UT Promise scholarship recipients. While UT Promise students may fall into a similar income bracket, this does not imply anything about their family history/background, racial demographics, life experiences, academic preparedness, college expectations and/or first-generation status.

**All students should feel like they matter and belong.** Making assumptions about their identities and experiences might isolate or marginalize them. Rather than assume what their experience is like, we encourage you to listen to the information they share and ask follow-up questions using the information they provide.



## Example of an Email to Your Student

Hi Jackson,

My name is Thomas, and I am your UT Promise mentor. Congratulations on being a UT Promise scholarship recipient! I am excited to connect with you and to walk with you throughout your collegiate journey.

In order for you to maintain your scholarship, we will need to meet at least three times a semester, but I am happy to connect more often if you need my support or assistance. Let's go ahead and schedule our first meeting for the semester. You can email me here with your availability or look at my calendar to find a time that works for both of us.

Looking forward to getting to know you! In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions or need any support.

Sincerely,  
Thomas

## Example of an Email Reply from Your Student

Hi Thomas,


Thanks for contacting me. I am excited to meet you as well! No one in my family has been to college, so I am kind of nervous about the experience. I am thankful you have chosen to support me throughout this journey.

Does next Tuesday at 3pm work for us to have our first meeting via Zoom?

I will see you soon!  
Jackson

Please note that the UT Promise Mentor Platform's administrators will have access to all communication sent between mentor and mentees.

**IMPORTANT**



Remember, text messages and emails **do not count** toward the 3 mandatory meetings per semester; rather, these communications should be a supplement to the mentoring meetings!

If a student or mentor ever encounters anything that gives them pause, they should reach out to UT Promise administrators at [utpromise@tennessee.edu](mailto:utpromise@tennessee.edu) so the appropriate measures can be taken. In addition, if immediate action is needed, a student or mentor can report abuse and block their connection through the UT Promise platform by going to the message thread, clicking "Manage Conversation," and then click "Block User/Report Abuse."

After you make initial contact, it will be important to keep your student engaged. In addition to your monthly meeting, send weekly emails or texts following up on any clues the students' have given you about their successes, challenges, and concerns.

The UT Promise Mentor Platform is a safe place to communicate with your student that protects your privacy. Emails sent through the platform will go directly to the recipients' email platform's inbox without ever sharing your personal email information.\* However, if you feel comfortable, we do encourage you to share phone numbers and email addresses as students may be more responsive to text. This also allows for you to quickly check-in and encourage the student in a more informal way. You and your students should discuss expectations for communication at your first meeting.



# TIPS AND TRICKS

## CONNECT WITH YOUR STUDENT

### **Share your own life experiences**

- You may be matched with students with similar identities, so we encourage you to be open about your own life experiences when appropriate in order to make the student feel like they are not alone.

### **Find common interests**

- Ask questions to determine what you have in common (like basketball, geography, music, a favorite TV show, etc.) and then enjoy sharing your passion for it with each other.
- Show interest in the student's personal life and well-being to foster deeper discussions.
- Make note of items the student mentions in your meeting and follow up on them with a text or bring them up the next time you meet.

## COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

### **Ask open-ended questions**

- Open questions encourage the student to continually talk without asking for specific information: What courses have been your favorites? What made them interesting? What have you enjoyed about community service? How do you plan to get involved?

### **Practice active listening and demonstrate empathy**

- Focus on the student, ask clarifying questions and validate the student's communication. Show attentiveness and communicate care and concern through your nonverbal and verbal cues.

### **Don't be afraid of silence**

- Allow the student time to think about the questions you are asking and reflect on their own experiences.

## SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

### **Establish communication guidelines**

- Consider appropriate means and times for communicating. Is email, call or text better? Can your student reach out after 10 p.m.? Set mutually beneficial guidelines early on.

### **Discuss the expectations for mentor/mentee meetings**

- Do you have a preference on how often you meet or how you meet (in-person, video chat or phone call)? Who will be responsible for reaching out to set up meetings? Discuss and decide these things together.\*

### **Respect each other**

- Discuss attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate respect, such as showing up on time for meetings or not going beyond the allotted meeting time. You might encourage each other to always respond to email or texts, even with a simple thank you, so you know the communication was received and so you both stay engaged.

Remember, the UT Promise Mentor Platform is a great place to email and video chat, and even if you meet in person, you will still need to check off your goals in the platform.



# STUDENT GUIDELINES

## MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

Once you begin college, you still have to meet requirements to maintain your UT Promise eligibility! See the list below for a few to keep in mind:



### Complete and Submit 8 Hours of Community Service Before Each Deadline

Eight community service hours must be submitted by the established deadline prior to each semester. Community service hours do not roll over from the previous semester.



### Complete Mentoring Requirements Before Each Deadline

Three meetings with your mentor must be completed by the established deadline prior to each semester. Mandatory meeting requirements do not roll over from the previous semester.



### File the FAFSA by the Established Deadline Each Year

Submit your FAFSA at [studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa) by the established deadline. The FAFSA opens Oct. 1 every year. If selected for financial aid verification, you must complete verification by your UT campus' priority date each year.



### Enroll as a Full-Time Student Each Semester

You must maintain enrollment in at least 12 credit hours each semester. You must also maintain continuous enrollment. Remember, in order to maintain full-time enrollment, you must attend and participate in all courses. Failure to attend class could result in the loss of your UT Promise eligibility.



### Maintain the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship

You must maintain the minimum GPA requirement and make satisfactory academic progress to keep the HOPE scholarship. If you lose HOPE, you will also lose UT Promise. You can regain the HOPE scholarship once. Visit the TN HOPE website for more information on HOPE requirements.



### Continue to Check Your University Email

You will receive regular email communications from UT Promise, so be sure to check your email often.

This section consists of student requirements/guidelines and are included for your reference. Additional mentor tips are provided throughout.

## REMEMBER

You are **NOT** expected to be an expert or have all the answers!

UT Promise will guide you through every step. In addition to providing topics to discuss during your mentor/mentee meetings, we will also send you emails reminding you to touch base with your students and to let you know of upcoming deadlines.

**UT Promise is always an email away if you need any support or guidance.**

All you need to do is be present and stay connected to your student!



# MENTOR TIPS

College can be a challenging time as students face many pressures. Below are some of the more common challenges your students may be facing and how to help them:



## TIME MANAGEMENT

In high school, students' day-to-day schedules are determined by others. As college students, they are able to determine a schedule of their own. Being able to plan each day and schedule time for studying and social activities is critical to having a successful college experience.

Encourage students to use a planner. Learning how to manage time for school and social life is a necessary tool that will be useful through graduation and beyond.



## STRESS

Not only is college more academically challenging, but there is also stress that comes from learning how to navigate new life experiences.

Consider encouraging students to intentionally relieve stress through activities like exercising or listening to music, and share how you manage stress in your life.



## FINANCES

Many students in college have the opportunity to manage their own money for the first time. A lack of financial planning can result in challenges for students. Advise students to make a budget to keep track of their expenses and savings.

Direct them to college counselors that may be able to offer financial advice or even financial planning courses.



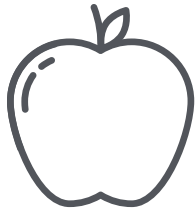
## RESOURCES

Often, students are unaware of the many resources that are available to them on campus. Encourage students to take advantage of resources such as tutoring centers, counseling services and advising offices.

Let them know seeking help is a wise step that will help them succeed.

**A full list of UT Promise policies and requirements are listed on page 22.**

If you have questions about maintaining your eligibility, contact your campus Financial Aid Office or email [utpromise@tennessee.edu](mailto:utpromise@tennessee.edu).



# COMMUNITY SERVICE

## IMPORTANT



**Eight hours of community service** MUST be completed and submitted by the established deadline prior to each semester!

## WHY?

Community service is a way to give back to your community, to become involved and to foster a mindset of bettering our communities! It is also a great way to meet new people and learn about your community.

## WHAT?

**Community service is time contributed to a nonprofit or public service organization.**

The community should be benefiting from the work you do! Make sure you are not being paid and you are being supervised by someone who is not a family member. Students can volunteer with more than one organization to meet their eight-hour requirement. Travel time to and from destinations does not count as service. Make sure your service aligns with your UT campus service guidelines.

### YES! THAT COUNTS!

- Volunteering at an animal shelter
- Tutoring at a school or community center
- Participating in an environmental cleanup day
- Volunteering on a service-oriented trip
- Volunteering for race registration
- Serving meals at a homeless shelter
- Doing laundry for nursing home residents
- Helping setup and take down an event

### NO! THAT DOES NOT COUNT!

- Job shadowing\*
- Tutoring your friend or grade school neighbor
- Picking up trash on a hike
- Volunteering for academic credit
- Paying to run in a race
- Raising money for the homeless shelter
- Donating blood\*
- Attending a philanthropy event

\*Please note that job shadowing and donating blood were acceptable forms of community service for high school seniors completing service for UT Promise through tnAchieves; however, they will not count as acceptable forms of community service hours for UT Promise once enrolled at UT.

## HOW?

### 1. Find an organization!

Looking for places to volunteer? Contact your appropriate campus office, local United Way or ask your mentor! Already have a place in mind? You are welcome to complete your hours anywhere that meets the requirements. You do not have to complete service in the city your campus is located in; you can serve in other cities, states or countries!

### 2. Complete at least eight hours!

Don't forget: Every service hour completed will be reviewed and verified by your UT campus service tracking administrators. Before you leave your service site, ask your supervisor for their name, email address and phone number so they can confirm you were there if needed.

### 3. Submit your form!

Visit your campus service tracking site and complete the service submission form entirely. You can find instructions and links to your campus service tracking site at [utpromise.tennessee.edu](http://utpromise.tennessee.edu).

#### LIST OF CAMPUS SERVICE TRACKING SITES

UTK: [leadserve.utk.edu/serveutk](http://leadserve.utk.edu/serveutk)

UTC: [utc.givepulse.com](http://utc.givepulse.com)

UTM: [my UTM Portal](#)

UTHSC: [uthsc.edu/track-your-hours](http://uthsc.edu/track-your-hours)

#### HAVING PROBLEMS SUBMITTING THE FORM?

Contact your campus service tracking site administrators.

Visit [utpromise.tennessee.edu](http://utpromise.tennessee.edu) for contact information and instructions on tracking service at your campus.



#### MENTOR TIP

Many students wait until the week before community service hours are due to complete and submit their service hours. This can cause undue stress for our students, community partners/service organizations and service verifiers. In addition, students may find that it is difficult to find service opportunities at this time as community partners' service time slots are filled and needs are met through other students serving. Throughout each semester, check in with your students to ensure they understand the deadlines and are making progress toward submission.

If your students have questions about where to find service, have them reach out to the appropriate office at their campus. Feel free to offer your own suggestions for organizations that students may visit to complete their hours!

**WHEN?**

- Community service hours **must be submitted each semester** and additional hours over the required eight hours **cannot be carried over** to the next semester. Hours must be completed and submitted within the time frame given above.
- Completing your community service before the deadline but failing to submit to your UT service tracking site before the deadline will result in the **loss of your UT Promise eligibility**. Even one minute after the deadline will result in the loss of your UT Promise eligibility.
- Make sure **YOU submit your community service hours by the deadline**. Do not rely on the organization or another person to complete this important step for you.

Semester	Timeframe for Completion	Submission Deadline
Fall 2023	July 2, 2023 - December 1, 2023	December 1, 2023 by 11:59 PM
Spring 2024	December 2, 2023 - July 1, 2024	July 1, 2024 by 11:59 PM
Fall 2024	July 2, 2023 - December 1, 2023	December 1, 2024 by 11:59 PM
Spring 2025	December 2, 2023 - July 1, 2024	July 1, 2025 by 11:59 PM
Fall 2025	July 2, 2023 - December 1, 2023	December 1, 2025 by 11:59 PM
Spring 2026	December 2, 2023 - July 1, 2024	July 1, 2026 by 11:59 PM
Fall 2026	July 2, 2023 - December 1, 2023	December 1, 2026 by 11:59 PM
Spring 2027	December 2, 2023 - July 1, 2024	July 1, 2027 by 11:59 PM
Fall 2027	July 2, 2023 - December 1, 2023	December 1, 2027 by 11:59 PM



# FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

## IMPORTANT



**If you lose your FSA ID and password** or have trouble accessing your FAFSA, contact the FAFSA helpline at 1-800-4FEDAID (1-800-433-3243).

**If you need to make edits to your FAFSA**, please work with your UT campus' Financial Aid Office.

## FILING FAFSA ANNUALLY

**Once you begin college, you still have to meet requirements to maintain your UT Promise eligibility! See the list below for a few to keep in mind:**

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) serves as the application for federal Pell Grant; Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS), also known as the HOPE scholarship; and Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSAA). In addition to this step being a UT Promise requirement, filing the FAFSA by the Feb. 1 established deadline increases the probability that eligible students will receive more aid.

1. The FAFSA opens annually on Oct. 1. On or after this day, visit [studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa). This is the official FAFSA website. **DO NOT complete the application at www.fafsa.com or any other website that asks you for a fee. FAFSA filing is free.**
2. **DO NOT submit the FAFSA prior to Oct. 1** of each year, or you will complete the wrong academic year's FAFSA. If you file the wrong year's FAFSA and do not file the correct academic year FAFSA by February 1 of each year, you will no longer be eligible for UT Promise.
3. **Please make sure to select the UT campus you plan to attend as your first-choice school!** If you change your mind, you must log back into your FAFSA and change it so the correct campus can retrieve your information. You must also change your institution on the TSAC Portal.
4. You will use the previous year's tax information on your FAFSA. For example, when filing the 2021-2022 FAFSA, you would use the 2019 tax return. If you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) have filed and completed your taxes for the previous year, you can select **I have filed my taxes** and answer the financial questions based on the previous year's taxes. If you or your parent(s)/guardian(s) have not completed the previous year's taxes at the time of FAFSA completion, you must select **I will file my taxes**, file the FAFSA based on estimations and later update your FAFSA with the filed tax information.
5. Even if you are 18 years old, you will need your parent(s)/guardian(s)' information to complete the FAFSA unless you are married, have children who receive more than half of their support from you, were in foster care, are a ward of the court, are emancipated from your parents, are homeless, and/or have parents who are deceased. If you report one or more of these situations as true, you may be required to provide court documentation.
6. If you feel lost, click inside the answer box for any question. Information will appear indicating where to find the appropriate answer or a tip on how to continue.
7. At the end, you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) will sign your FAFSA electronically using the FSA IDs you created. You can create your FSA ID the same day you file. Make sure you click **Submit to successfully file your FAFSA**. If you click save, your FAFSA will **not be submitted**. You will receive a confirmation email after successfully submitting your FAFSA – **keep it for your records!**

# COMPLETE FINANCIAL AID VERIFICATION



## **MENTOR TIP**

Many of our students are selected for the financial aid verification process each year. Notifications are placed on students' college accounts. After the file the FAFSA each year, encourage your students to check their college accounts regularly and to check in with their institution's financial aid office.

The UT campus the student is attending will be able to address student questions as they navigate the verification process. Do not worry about having to know the answers to your students' questions; just remind them to check their financial aid status and complete all financial aid steps.

This is often a challenging time for students and their families. Your role is to continue to encourage the student to stay on course and submit all required documents each year. The earlier students submit all required documentation, the easier and quicker the college will be able to process their award.

## **What is verification?**

Verification is a process initiated by the Department of Education at the time you submit the FAFSA. Students selected for verification are required to submit certain documents to the college's financial aid office to verify the information provided on the FAFSA. Not all students are selected for verification, but if you are selected, no federal or state financial aid awards, as well as UT Promise, can be posted to your account until your financial aid file is verified.

## **What is the deadline to remain UT Promise eligible?**

UT Promise strongly encourages you to submit all requested documents by July 1 to avoid problems. The longer you wait to submit documentation, the longer it will take for your file to be completed. This means you may be required to pay to keep your classes or could be dropped from your classes for non-payment!

## **How do I know if I have been selected?**

You will be notified by your UT Financial Aid Office if you have been selected for verification, so be sure to check your college account! Your college account may show alerts when you first log in. In order to be notified if you have been selected for verification, the college must have your application and FAFSA on file. Click the links in the alerts to determine what information is being requested. You can also check the financial aid section of your college account for details. If you have trouble accessing your college account, contact your campus's Financial Aid Office directly. Many colleges begin posting verification requirements to student accounts in April or earlier. If you are selected for verification, make sure you begin working with the financial aid office as soon as possible. It is important to make sure your college campus is listed as the first-choice school on your FAFSA and your TSAC Student Portal shows the correct institution.

## **What do I do if I am selected for verification?**

If you are selected for verification, contact your campus's financial aid office. Sometimes linking your FAFSA back to the IRS website will be sufficient. Other times, you will need to collect copies of the documents requested by the financial aid office (e.g., parent and/or student W-2, IRS tax return transcripts, etc.). Once all paperwork is submitted, the financial aid office will make corrections and process your financial aid. Remember, it can take up to four weeks for the financial aid office to process this paperwork, and processing documents may trigger the need for other documents to be submitted, so begin addressing this immediately. All requested documentation should be submitted to the financial aid office by July 1 to ensure your file is reviewed and awards are posted to your account prior to the beginning of the term. Simply turning in documents does not mean you have completed verification. The review process at the college is considered part of verification.

# TIPS FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS

## GO TO CLASS



- Attendance is important! Every day that you are absent from class, you miss out on information that may not be in your books but could be on your test.
- Asking questions during class is tough, but it ensures you receive correct answers. Other students in your class most likely have the same questions – you are just the brave one willing to ask! Once you start asking questions, it will become easier.
- If a class has a review session before a test, attend it. It can only strengthen your knowledge of the subject.
- Be active in class. Taking notes, asking questions and listening makes it more likely you will perform favorably in the class and will get the attention of your professor!

## ORGANIZE & PRIORITIZE



- College can be overwhelming (especially as a full-time student) and finding a healthy balance is key to your success.
- Use your syllabus! It will help set your expectations for your classes. It informs you of important dates, materials you will need and how you will be graded. If you do not know how to read it, ask your professor!
- Get organized. Use a planner, make to-do lists and sync your school email and calendar to your phone. Decide what works best for you; there is no wrong way to get organized.
- Manage your time before, between and after classes to study or work on assignments with the resources available on campus.

## PLAN FOR ADDITIONAL COSTS



- Some classes have additional fees that you will be responsible for along with your books and school supplies. It is important to find a way to cover these additional costs, as well as your housing and meal plans (e.g., part-time job, work-study on campus, plan of action with family), before classes begin.
- Make a budget so you know what you can spend on food, activities and gas.
- Planning ahead will help you cover your costs with as little stress as possible. This allows more time for you to focus on your classes, activities on campus and to stay on track in order to graduate on time!



### ASK FOR HELP

- Professors/instructors hold office hours and usually have time before and after class. Get to know them during these times. They will help you if you find yourself struggling during the semester.
- UT's campuses have multiple resources (e.g., math labs, writing centers, tutors, student success centers, advisors and counselors) that are all FREE. Take advantage of them!
- Fellow students are encountering the same challenges and can relate to you. Surround yourself with students you work well with and hold one another accountable.
- Remember to connect with your UT Promise mentor. They want to be a resource for you, and if they cannot answer your question, they can direct you to someone who can!
- If you meet the qualifications, additional resources and support may be available to you through your campus' student disability services office.
- Update UT Promise if there are any problems or concerns.



### BE ENGAGED

- Get involved. Campus involvement is an important part of the college experience. There are hundreds of clubs and organizations to join and campus events you can choose to attend. From sporting events, cultural attractions, community service and volunteer opportunities, comedians, concerts, speakers and art exhibits, there is something for everyone.
- Explore. Discover your passions and academic interests and get experience in your field. Meet with an academic advisor, participate in research, talk to a student success coach, or visit your career center to help you determine your strengths and reach your goals.
- Find community. Get to know the people in your residence hall and in your classes or join a club to feel connected. Step out of your comfort zone to learn about others who are different than you. Plugging in will connect you to others and help you find your place at UT.

Take advantage of the opportunities and support systems on campus to help you navigate the college experience and move towards graduation. By following these tips, you are making an investment in your own success!



# UT PROMISE POLICIES

**UT Promise only funds last-dollar tuition and mandatory fees.** It does not pay for room and board, books or other post-secondary expenses (e.g., application fee, program and class specific fees). Federal and state grants/scholarships, tuition discounts and waivers, and institutional scholarships will be applied to tuition and fees first; UT Promise will then cover any remaining cost. Additional aid, such as endowed scholarships, private funding and departmental scholarships, can be used in addition to UT Promise to cover other post-secondary expenses. UT Promise only covers fees required of all students, as well as any applicable online course fees.

**To be eligible for UT Promise, the student MUST be a TN resident eligible for in-state tuition, receive the HOPE scholarship and have a family household income under \$60,000 per year and assets under \$75,000 per year.**

## STUDENTS MUST:

### **1. Begin at an eligible post-secondary institution within 16 months of high school graduation.**

- a. A student may begin at their post-secondary institution prior to the fall term directly following high school graduation; however, the student will be responsible for incurred tuition and fees until fall, as UT Promise will not cover costs before the initial fall term.
- b. A student may be granted a medical or personal leave of absence from timely enrollment in the initial semester, full-time attendance or continuous enrollment at an eligible post-secondary institution as long as all other acceptable eligibility criteria are met. A student must request a HOPE leave of absence through their campus Financial Aid office and have it approved.

### **2. Maintain full-time status each semester.**

- a. If the student falls below full-time, they will no longer be eligible.
  - i. If a student is in their last semester of classes and needs less hours to graduate than the full-time status requirement, he or she will only be required to take the remaining number of hours for degree completion.
- b. Co-ops, internships and other educational advancement programs (e.g., Disney College Program) will not count against a student's full-time requirement. Determining if the program will affect the student's full-time enrollment requirement is up to the discretion of the student's campus Financial Aid Office.
 

Please check with your Financial Aid Office before making decisions on semester long programs.
- c. If a student drops below full-time status, UT Promise will follow the institutional refund policy. Dropping classes could result in loss of your UT Promise scholarship.
- d. Failure to attend class could result in loss of eligibility.

**3. Attend a UT institution for continuous semesters in fall and spring.**

- a. A student cannot leave UT for a period of time (excluding summer) and remain eligible. If a student is not continuously enrolled at a UT campus, they will lose their UT Promise scholarship.
- b. If a student withdraws from all classes or stops attending during the semester, they will no longer be eligible.

**4. Maintain the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship. For all eligibility and termination requirements for HOPE, please visit [tn.gov/collegepays](http://tn.gov/collegepays).**

- a. Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress.
- b. Students must earn the minimum GPA to maintain HOPE.
- c. If a student ceases to be academically eligible for the HOPE Scholarship, the student may regain the award one-time only. The award may be re-established once the student meets any of the above criteria and maintains continuous enrollment and satisfactory academic progress at an eligible postsecondary institution without the HOPE Scholarship. The student will still be required to complete community service for every semester in which they will be receiving UT Promise funds.
  - i. If a student determines they are re-eligible for HOPE after the community service deadline has passed for the upcoming semester, the student will still be required to complete 8 hours of community service during the next semester to make up for the service they did not complete previously. They will also be responsible for completing service hours for the next semester to maintain eligibility.

Example: If a student becomes re-eligible for HOPE after the fall semester, they would have missed the community service deadline to be eligible for the spring. Thus, in the spring, they will have to complete 8 hours of service for the spring semester and an additional 8 hours of service for the upcoming fall semester.

- d. Tennessee HOPE-Nontraditional: If a student ceases to be academically eligible for the HOPE Scholarship, the student may regain the award one-time only. The award may be re-established once the student meets any of the above criteria and maintains continuous enrollment and satisfactory academic progress at an eligible postsecondary institution without the HOPE Scholarship. The student will still be required to complete community service for every semester in which he/she will be receiving UT Promise funds.
  - i. The Tennessee HOPE- Nontraditional scholarship has different qualifiers than the traditional HOPE scholarship. Please visit [tn.gov/collegepays/money-for-college/tn-education-lottery-programs/tennessee-hope-scholarship---nontraditional.html](http://tn.gov/collegepays/money-for-college/tn-education-lottery-programs/tennessee-hope-scholarship---nontraditional.html) for eligibility requirements.
  - ii. Students receiving the Tennessee HOPE-Nontraditional scholarship must achieve 2.75 GPA after 12 attempted hours to be eligible for HOPE and, thus, UT Promise.

**5. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the established deadline each year throughout his/her post-secondary experience.**

- a. Failure to complete the FAFSA by the established deadline will result in permanent loss of the UT Promise scholarship.

**6. A student’s family household income must be under \$60,000/year and assets under \$75,000 a year upon initial receipt of UT Promise to remain eligible for UT Promise.**

- a. Family household income is defined as “the accurate, verifiable total combined amount of parent and student adjusted gross income and untaxed income of less than \$50,000, AND a total maximum asset amount of less than \$75,000, as defined on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).”
- b. If the student is receiving the TN HOPE-Nontraditional scholarship, the student and spouse’s adjusted gross income must be equal to or less than \$36,000, but the total family household income as defined above must still be under \$50,000.
- c. Students who received the UT Promise scholarship but now have an increase in family household income that exceeds \$50,000 are still eligible for the UT Promise scholarship until the household income reaches \$60,000. At this point, the student will become ineligible for UT Promise. The student can become re-eligible if their family household income falls below \$60,000 again.
- d. If you have a change of income, please contact your Financial Aid Office.

**7. Submit all financial aid verification documents by July 1 each year, if selected.**

- a. UT Promise encourages students to submit all documents by July 1 to ensure the campuses have adequate time to process.
  - i. A student may be required to pay tuition and mandatory fees out of pocket if their financial aid file is not processed and verified by the beginning of classes.
- b. Student must select the eligible institution they plan to attend as their first choice on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as well as direct their TSAC Student Portal to the eligible institution.
- c. It is the student’s responsibility to confirm with the post-secondary institution that their admissions and financial aid files are verified, processed and ready for award.

**8. Complete and submit at least eight hours of community service prior to the start of each semester by the established deadline through your campus service tracking site. Community service must be completed under the supervision of an established organization (e.g., nonprofit, public service organization) and must align with your UT campus’s service definition.**

- a. Students must submit all information regarding community service by the established deadline through their UT campus’s service tracking site. Failure to comply by the established dates will result in permanent loss of eligibility.
- b. Community service hours do not roll over each semester.

**9. Submit all financial aid verification documents by July 1 each year, if selected.**

- a. Students must complete all mentoring requirements by the established deadline. Failure to comply by the established dates will result in permanent loss of eligibility.
- b. Students must complete all mentoring requirements each semester (fall/spring). Mentoring requirements do not roll over each semester. Students do not have to complete mentoring requirements for summer.

**OTHER COMPONENTS:**

1. Only UT's Financial Aid offices and UT Promise scholarship administrators may determine a student's UT Promise eligibility.
  - a. Mentors are an extension of UT Promise but are not UT Promise administrators.
  - b. UT Promise mentors are volunteers and may lack adequate time to answer all questions; therefore, it is the student's responsibility to confirm eligibility with UT Promise administrators.
2. UT Promise scholarship funds can be applied to fully distance education programs (also known as online programs).
3. UT Promise scholarship funds can be applied to UT faculty-led study abroad courses. UT Promise will only cover tuition and mandatory fees.
4. A student cannot be mentored by a family member.
5. Mentors cannot choose students to mentor.
  - a. UT Promise will use a mentoring platform and matching algorithm to match students and mentors.
6. UT Promise follows the admissions requirements of the post-secondary institution.
  - a. UT Promise will fund learning support classes at UT if the student fails to meet the ACT requirements for college-level coursework.
7. Incorrect student information does not preclude a student from ineligibility.

Should a student fail to adhere to any/all policies, UT Promise invokes the right to remove a student's eligibility.

UT Promise values honesty and integrity. A student who submits misinformation will immediately lose UT Promise eligibility. Be respectful in all correspondence and communication, including social media.

Policies may be subject to change without notice. It is a student's responsibility to refer to the policies as posted at [utpromise.tennessee.edu](http://utpromise.tennessee.edu) for updates and changes to the UT Promise policies.





# UT PROMISE FAQS

## What is UT Promise?

UT Promise is a last-dollar, undergraduate scholarship that will guarantee free tuition and mandatory fees to qualifying Tennessee residents enrolling at UT campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Pulaski, Martin and Memphis.

## Who is eligible?

Students who are TN residents and eligible for in-state tuition, who have a family household income under \$60,000 and assets under \$75,000, who qualify for the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship, and who gain admittance to a University of Tennessee campus are eligible.

## How many semesters can a student receive UT Promise?

If a student continues to meet all requirements, UT Promise funding is available for as long as a student is receiving the HOPE scholarship. UT Promise will only provide scholarship funds when a student is receiving HOPE scholarship funds. Visit <https://www.tn.gov/collegepays/> for more information on termination criteria.

## Are GED recipients eligible for UT Promise?

Students who complete a GED or HiSET diploma (and have met all other UT Promise eligibility requirements) must enroll full-time in an eligible post-secondary program within 16 months after they receive their diploma to be eligible for HOPE, and thus, UT Promise.

What if a student graduates early from high school?

Students graduating early from high school can still receive UT Promise as long as they enroll in an eligible post-secondary program within 16 months of high school graduation. Students graduating in the fall term should still follow the high school senior application process, including applying for the TN Promise.

## Do non-U.S. citizens qualify for UT Promise?

To be eligible, students must be able to complete the FAFSA, qualify for in-state tuition and possess a valid Social Security number. A student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for which the student's U.S. citizenship or eligible non-citizenship status has been confirmed by the federal government. Note: This option is only available for:

1. U.S. Citizens,
2. U.S. permanent residents (with an I-151, I-551, or I-551C permanent resident card); or,
3. Individuals who have an Arrival/Departure Record (I-94) showing one of the following designations: Refugee, Asylum Granted, Cuban-Haitian Entrant (Status Pending), Conditional Entrant (Valid only if issued before April 1, 1980), Victims of Human Trafficking (T-2, T-3, or T-4 visa), or Parolee (who meets certain conditions).

## What does UT Promise cover?

UT Promise is a last-dollar scholarship that funds tuition and mandatory fees at UT campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Pulaski, Martin and Memphis. These funds cannot be used for books, cost of attendance fees or fees associated with a specific program or class.

**Does UT Promise cover remedial education?**

Yes. UT Promise will cover remedial courses if a student should need to take them.

**Will a student receive a check for the scholarship?**

Students never directly receive funding from UT Promise.

**How long after high school graduation will students remain eligible for UT Promise?**

To remain eligible for UT Promise, students must enroll in a postsecondary institution within 16 months of high school graduation.

**What happens if a student misses a UT Promise deadline**

Failure to meet any UT Promise deadline will result in a student being permanently ineligible for UT Promise.

**Can a student take a semester off?**

Medical or personal appeals will be considered in the following situations: illness of the student, illness or death of an immediate family member, extreme financial hardship of the student or student's immediate family, fulfillment of a religious commitment expected of members of that faith, fulfillment of required military service, or other extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control where attendance by the student creates a substantial hardship. In order to request a leave of absence after initial enrollment, a student must request a leave of absence through their campus financial aid office.

**If students and their families have not filed taxes by Feb. 1, can they still file the FAFSA before the UT Promise deadline?**

Students will report income information from the previous tax year. For example, when filing the 2021-2022 FAFSA, you would use the 2019 tax return. Reference pages 8-10 of this handbook for additional information.

**THIS MARKS THE END OF THE STUDENT-ORIENTED SECTION OF THE MENTOR HANDBOOK**



# MENTOR FAQS

## **How will I know which students I will be working with this year?**

You will be paired with your students through the UT Promise Mentor Platform. You will access the platform before the students to create a profile. Once the students have been added to the platform, the system will match you with your students. You will receive an email notifying you of the students with whom you've been matched.

## **When should I contact my students?**

You will be required to meet with your students at least three times a semester, but we ask that you contact your students at least every two weeks. Feel free to contact your students more often! The more you reach out, the stronger the connection.

## **How many students will I mentor?**

Mentors will be paired with two to five students, depending on how many students they indicated on their application and how many students are recipients of UT Promise.

## **Am I allowed to give a student a ride?**

UT Promise discourages mentors from transporting students to and from locations.

## **What if I do not hear from my students after I contact them?**

Students will be required to meet with their mentor to maintain their scholarship. Students may prefer to communicate via text message to set up your scheduled meetings. If you have not tried sending them a text message, do so! If this does not work, please let UT Promise know and we will attempt to help facilitate a conversation.

## **Does a student lose their scholarship if they do not participate in mentoring?**

Yes. Participation in the mentoring program is a mandatory requirement to maintain UT Promise. Students will be required to meet with their mentor three times a semester to maintain their eligibility. They will not be required to do beyond the required check points; however, we do encourage you to contact your students more than the required communication to build a strong, supportive relationship.

## **What if the parents of my students are not engaged in the college experience?**

Many of our students are the first in their families to attend college and sometimes parents are not aware of the steps and experiences involved when attending a postsecondary institution. This is the reason the students need you! You serve as an individual who can walk with students through this important process.

## **As a faculty or staff member volunteering to mentor, must I still report to Title IX?**

Yes, faculty and staff are still mandatory reporters while serving in this volunteer role.

## **Who do I contact if I do not know an answer to a question?**

You can contact UT Promise staff at [utpromise@tennessee.edu](mailto:utpromise@tennessee.edu). We are always available to you!



# MENTOR CHECKLIST

COMPLETE MENTOR TRAINING	<input type="checkbox"/>
RECEIVE MENTOR PLATFORM REGISTRATION EMAIL FROM UT PROMISE	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMPLETE PROFILE ON UT PROMISE MENTOR PLATFORM	<input type="checkbox"/>
RECEIVE MENTOR/STUDENT MATCH EMAIL	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONNECT WITH STUDENT AND SCHEDULE FIRST MEETING	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEET WITH STUDENT IN SEPTEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEET WITH STUDENT IN OCTOBER	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEET WITH STUDENT IN NOVEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>
ENSURE ALL FALL MENTOR MEETINGS HAVE BEEN REPORTED	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEET WITH STUDENT IN FEBRUARY	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEET WITH STUDENT IN MARCH	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEET WITH STUDENT IN APRIL	<input type="checkbox"/>
ENSURE ALL SPRING MENTOR MEETINGS HAVE BEEN REPORTED	<input type="checkbox"/>



# UT PROMISE



**UT** THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
SYSTEM

**TN Achieves**  
Changing Lives, Transforming Communities