



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IRVING MEDICAL CENTER

FINANCIAL AID HANDBOOK

2026-27 OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM



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FINANCIAL AID HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

PROGRAMS IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

THE OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID & PLANNING administers financial aid for the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Dental Medicine, the Institute of Human Nutrition, and the Programs in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Genetic Counseling. We serve as a resource and as a link to your funding sources. Keep in mind that financial aid programs are subject to change due to legislative and regulatory changes.

Each class is assigned to one of our Financial Aid Officers who will determine need, award financial aid and work closely with you throughout your time in the program.

Check our [website](#) periodically for up-to-date information and helpful links.

WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID? Financial aid is any grant, scholarship, loan, or work-study offered to help you meet educationally related expenses. Such aid is provided by or through the school, federal and state agencies, foundations or corporations, etc.

Grants/Scholarships need not be repaid.

Loans are borrowed money, offered at various interest rates, which are repaid over a term after you graduate or leave the institution.

Federal Work Study is also available to MS students if you wish to cover some of your expenses through part-time earnings.

MS IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

WHAT KIND OF FINANCIAL AID IS AVAILABLE?

Students in the MS Occupational Therapy program are eligible for external loans (Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan, Federal Graduate PLUS for continuing students, private alternative loans) and Federal Work Study. Scholarships may be awarded by the Occupational Therapy Admissions

Committee. Information about applying for such scholarships will be provide upon admission to the program.

HOW DO I APPLY? New students must submit the **Aid Type Request Form**

U.S. citizens and permanent residents should **complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** to establish eligibility for Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan, Federal Graduate PLUS and Federal Work Study. No parental information is required. If you are **married**, your spouse's financial information is also required. .

International students do not need to complete a FAFSA. **International students** in the United States with an F1 or F2 student visa, with a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or with a G-series or H-series visa **are not eligible for need based student aid from federal or state sources**. If you acquire permanent resident status prior to graduation, you may become eligible for state and federal assistance. Please note that a "Notice of Approval to Apply for Permanent Residence" (I-171 or I-464) does not make you eligible for federal student aid.

International students are eligible to apply for private alternative loans if they have a credit worthy cosigner, who is a US Citizen or Permanent Resident. **You must also submit the Aid Type Request Form.**

INTERNATIONAL AND DACA STUDENTS WHO DO NOT HOLD A PERMANENT RESIDENT VISA CANNOT RECEIVE FINANCIAL AID FROM FEDERAL, STATE OR NEED BASED SCHOOL SOURCES. An **international student** in the United States with an F1 or F2 student visa, with a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or with a G-series or H-series visa **is not eligible for need based student aid from federal or state sources**: you may qualify for "alternative loans" from outside sources and grants from funds which are not federally or state-sponsored. If you acquire permanent resident status prior to graduation, you will become eligible for "external" state and federal assistance. Please note that a "Notice of Approval to Apply for Permanent Residence" (I-171 or I-464) does not make you eligible for federal student aid.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY? **New Students** should submit the FAFSA within two weeks of their acceptance. **Returning students** should submit the FAFSA by April 15th.

APPPLICATION MATERIALS - Please keep copies of completed materials:

1. **New students** must complete the [Aid Type Request Form on Net Partner](#). This form asks you to indicate the type of financial aid for which you would like to be considered. The type of financial aid you indicate on this form will determine which documents you need to complete for the financial aid application process. Once you receive your CU ID, you will be able to log into [Net Partner](#) to check the status of your application materials and also see if any additional documents have been requested.
2. The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is required for U.S. citizens and permanent

residents applying for federal, state, or institutional aid. The FAFSA is free and completed at StudentAid.gov. An FSA ID is required to sign the application and access federal aid records. Applicants will use 2024 tax year information, and consent to retrieve IRS tax data is mandatory for federal aid eligibility.

An **FSA ID** is a username and password you need to log in and sign the FAFSA online. If you do not already have a FSA ID, you can [create an FSA ID](#) online. This is your electronic signature for FAFSA and Renewal FAFSA on the Web. It can also be used to access your Title IV federal student aid history [online](#) (select "Manage Loans").

At this same website, you can complete a **Renewal FAFSA** if you applied for federal student aid last year. Be sure to keep copy of your application before you submit it.

Read the instructions carefully when you complete your FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA. Most mistakes are made because students fail to follow instructions.

You will be using 2024 tax year information. Your (and your spouse's) consent and approval is needed to retrieve and disclose federal tax information (FTI). With your consent and approval, FAFSA can obtain tax return information automatically from the IRS which will help you complete the form. **If you do not provide consent and approval, you will not be eligible for federal student aid, including Federal Direct Loans and Federal Work Study. You must provide consent and approval even if you did not file a U.S. federal tax return or any tax return at all.**

If you have already sent in your FAFSA, and **Columbia University Title IV Code 002707**, was not one of the schools you originally listed, go [online](#) and add us.

Note: *There may be private companies who charge to help you complete this form. **There is no charge for filing a FAFSA**, so be sure to go to the correct [website](#).*

3. **Permanent Resident Card** - If you are selected for Federal Verification and do not hold US citizenship but have been accorded "permanent resident" status, you must submit a copy of both sides of your Permanent Resident Card (I-151, I-551, or I-551C) to our office. If you have an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94 or I-94A), you may be eligible for federal loans. Please check with us. If you have a Notice of Approval to Apply for Permanent Residence (I-171 or I-464), you are not eligible for federal student aid.
4. If you are interested in **Federal Work-Study**, you should contact our office for further information.
5. **Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan and Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loans** - – Congress passed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) in July 2025, which introduced several changes to federal student loans beginning July 1, 2026. These changes do not affect student borrowing for the current academic year (2025–2026). Students who have already borrowed federal loans for their current academic program may be considered a "continuing borrower" and therefore grandfathered in if enrolled in the same academic program through June 30, 2026. The information below is intended to help you understand how these changes may apply to you.

New students for the 2026-27 academic year who are US Citizens or Permanent Residents will have access only to the Direct Unsubsidized loan and will not be eligible to borrow under the Direct GradPLUS Loan program.

Currently enrolled students who have borrowed under the Federal Direct Loan

Program **before July 1, 2026** may continue to be eligible to access both Direct Unsubsidized and GradPLUS loans under the expiring limits for the remaining time needed to complete their current OT degree. This is calculated by the minimum length of your program, less the amount of time you have completed, whichever is sooner.

All new students should complete a separate **Master Promissory Note (MPN)** for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan. Please note that **Entrance Counseling** is required and can be completed at StudentAid.gov along with the MPN. Entrance Counseling is done once. If you are a continuing student who borrowed from these programs in the previous academic year, you will not have to complete another MPN or redo the Entrance Counseling.

Please note that there is no place on the MPN to request loan amounts:

a) Your Financial Aid Offer Letter will include the maximum amount you are eligible to borrow from the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan.

After you review your Financial Aid Offer Letter, complete the [Financial Aid Acceptance Form](#) within two weeks after receipt of the letter. Should you wish to borrow an amount that is different from what you are eligible for, you must indicate your requested loan amounts on the **Financial Aid Acceptance Form**. You can work with your Financial Aid Officer to make the necessary adjustments if you need help determining the proper amounts, including private loan amounts.

b) **We cannot originate either Direct Unsubsidized Loans or GradPLUS Loans until you have accepted them on the Financial Aid Acceptance Form.** You have the right to cancel these loan amounts or to subsequently change them. However, please be advised that changes may cause a delay with disbursement.

6. **Private Loans – Given the limits on federal and school based financial aid, students may need to access loans from private lenders to meet their Cost of Attendance budgets.** Please review the Student Financial Services [website](#) for important information and application steps for these loans.

7. Students with dependents should complete the [Budget Adjustment & Loan Change Request Form](#) and the [Expected Year Income Form](#) and contact their financial aid officer to discuss any budgeting considerations.

8. **Verification Worksheet** - To confirm the accuracy of data reported by financial aid applicants and their families, the federal government has a regulatory process called **Verification**. Verification applies to applicants for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan, Grad PLUS Loan and Federal Work-Study programs.

If you are selected for Verification, our office will contact you with the appropriate Verification Worksheet. It must be returned to our office no later than **three weeks** from the date you are notified that you must complete the form (see below for late penalties). The completed Worksheet plus all required documentation must be reviewed by your Financial Aid Officer before Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Grad PLUS Loans and Federal Work-Study can be awarded.

Please note also that if you or your spouse receives untaxed benefits, the Verification process requires documentation from the appropriate agency.

If you submit subsequent applications for additional federally regulated aid after you have filled out a Verification Worksheet, federal regulations require that you "update" your household size, and number of household members in a postsecondary school.

Important Note on Penalties: If the required information has not been submitted by the stated deadline then:

- Our office will consider your application for federal aid **withdrawn**. You may reactivate it by supplying the information.
- Our office will then certify Federal Direct Unsubsidized and Grad Plus Loans.
- In any case you miss the deadline and your financial aid is delayed because of this, you will be responsible for all late charges assessed on your school account.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE FINANCIAL NEED?

Financial “need” is defined as the difference between anticipated expenses and financial resources which include any scholarships, grants or loans awarded to you by sources outside of our office.

DETERMINATION OF ACADEMIC YEAR EXPENSES

Student budgets are divided into three areas: **Tuition and Fees** (charges paid directly to the university), **Educational Expenses** (books & supplies and other costs not charged by the university), and **Living Expenses** (food, housing and personal expenses). The budgets are used to calculate eligibility for all types of financial aid. You can see the full **Cost of Attendance** budget [here](#).

Adjustments to student budgets may be made for special circumstances, including the following items, where applicable:

- ✓ If you **opt in** to the Medical Insurance Plan your budget will be increased for the premium and your financial aid package will be adjusted accordingly.
- ✓ Student Health Service and/or Medical Insurance for students with dependents.
- ✓ Medical/dental care expenses in excess of the benefits provided by the CUIMC Student Health Service Program or non-elective dental costs that exceed \$200 per year will be considered, if documentation is provided.
- ✓ Students with dependents should complete the [Budget Adjustment & Loan Change Request Form](#) and [Expected Year Income Form](#) and contact their financial aid officer to discuss any budgeting concerns.
- ✓ International Student Fee - \$175 assessed each semester by the International Students & Scholars Office-CUIMC.

- ✓ Rents that exceed our average budgets may be approved for extra borrowing **BUT** only to a maximum of **\$1,675 a month**. The “[Budget Adjustment & Loan Change Request Form](#)” **and a copy of your lease** will be required before any adjustment to your budget is made. Check with your Financial Aid Officer before committing to additional housing expenses that you cannot cover with personal funds.
- ✓ Monthly subway/bus if living outside of Washington Heights.

Please contact your financial aid officer if you have another special circumstance that you would like considered for a budget adjustment.

PLEASE NOTE!

Other expenses will be considered if they are necessary and related to attendance in the Physical Therapy program, **BUT**, you should not incur expenses that exceed the standard budget unless: a) you can cover them with assistance from family or friends, or b) if you will need financial aid to cover them, you have **first** cleared the expenditure(s) with your Financial Aid Officer. Be prepared with itemized documentation of any additional charges. If you do not get Columbia owned housing, we may be able to approve higher rent, **BUT** only to a predetermined maximum. Potentially refundable deposits cannot be covered.

In most cases, you will have to pay for additional expenses by accessing higher cost alternative loans, so it is to your advantage to “**think frugally**”.

THE FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE AND AWARDING POLICIES - Once your demonstrated financial need is determined, a Financial Aid Officer will construct a package of funds you can use to supplement the “expected family contribution” in order to pay for school. The relative amount of each component of the package is determined by the availability of funds and eligibility guidelines within each program.

To meet demonstrated need, a financial aid package is developed using institutional, federal, and private loans and scholarships, prioritized in the following order:

1. OT Scholarship, if awarded to you by the Admissions Committee of the Occupational Therapy Program
2. Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan
3. Supplemental Loan Sources (Grad PLUS if eligible or private/alternative loans)
4. Federal College Work-Study (optional)

LOANS - Student loans are the primary form of financial aid available to finance an occupational therapy education. Although some students will also be eligible for limited school grants the majority of students needing assistance will use student loans to pay for most of the cost of attendance. **It is very important for you to become the best informed consumer possible about the available loan programs and seriously consider the implications of assuming student loan debt.** If you are concerned about the amount of student loans you will have to take, you can seek additional counseling from our staff.

For more information about loan programs, visit our [website](#).

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

OT DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIPS – Scholarships may be awarded by the OT Admissions Committee. Students will be notified of their eligibility by the OT Admissions Committee at the time of their acceptance.

INTRASCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS - A number of scholarships are awarded directly by the University Provost's Office and are available only to students who meet specific criteria. **If you meet any of the following criteria, please write to our office explaining how you qualify, no later than June 1, 2026.**

Ellis	Graduate students who are residents of Vermont or who have graduated from an accredited Vermont college or university.
Nichoplas	Students from any area of the University who have attended college or university in Greece. Available to graduate or undergraduate students for a maximum of two years.
Poder	Candidates must speak Estonian.
Upton	Children of employees of the Houghton Mifflin Company, Lexington, Massachusetts.

EXTERNAL SCHOLARSHIPS – In addition to federal and institutional aid, there are many external scholarships available to qualified candidates. Additional resources can be found at <http://www.finaid.org> and at [Foundation Grants to Individuals by Candid](#) . Please note that Foundation Grants to Individuals by Candid charges approximately \$20 for 1 month access. It is not a scholarship search engine, but a publication from the Foundation Center, New York Public Library.

We expect that **all** eligible students will apply for grants that are administered by their states of legal residence. You should investigate the availability of scholarship programs in your home state.

REDUCTION OF LOANS BY EXTERNAL SCHOLARSHIPS - If you receive externally-awarded scholarships or loans, you **must** notify your Financial Aid Officer. You will be granted a dollar for dollar substitution of the financial aid in the standard package in an amount equal to the "external" award in the following order: the GradPLUS will be reduced first; the Unsubsidized Federal Direct Loan will be reduced next. Alternative loans with higher interest rates than federal loans will be reduced first.

SERVICE SCHOLARSHIPS – The [New York City Board Of Education](#) provides scholarships for both first and second year students. This service scholarship pays for one year of tuition in exchange for two years of service after graduation as an Occupational Therapist in a public school at the regular salary. These service scholarships are renewable for the second year of study contingent upon funding. Further information may be obtained by calling the Board of Education at (718) 935-2449, or in writing:

NYC Department of Education
Scholarship Incentives and Speech Programs 65
Court Street, Room 508
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Attention: OT Scholarship Program

FEDERAL WORK-STUDY PROGRAM (FWS) – This program provides an opportunity for students who are US citizens or Permanent Residents who are enrolled at least half time to earn money to cover a part their educational expenses. Funds provided to the University by the Federal Government subsidize a portion of the wages paid to the students.

Students interested in FWS opportunities should complete the FAFSA form and check with us regarding eligibility.

DOCTOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

WHAT KIND OF FINANCIAL AID IS AVAILABLE?

Columbia has two programs for students interested in the Doctor of Occupational Therapy. The Master of Science/Doctor of Occupational Therapy program, also called the Accelerated Program, and the Online Doctor of Occupational Therapy program, also called the Part-Time Program.

Students must be enrolled at least half-time to be eligible for the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan. Students enrolled on a less than half-time basis may be eligible for private alternative loans.

There are no scholarships available directly from our office for either program.

Students in the Part-Time OTD Program should complete the [Aid Type Request Form on Net Partner](#) if you have never applied for aid with us as an OTD candidate before. This form asks you to indicate the type of financial aid for which you would like to be considered. The type of financial aid you indicate on this form will determine which documents you need to complete for the financial aid application process.

You should also complete the [Planned Enrollment Form](#), which will ask you to project the number of credits you expect to enroll for each term.

Please review the information on page 3 this Handbook on completing the FAFSA for applying for federal loans, and the follow up activities for activating the loans. Please also review the information on pages 7-8 regarding the determination of academic year expenses.

RULES FOR REFUND AND RETURN OF FINANCIAL AID FUNDS

REFUND POLICY - If you withdraw, take a leave of absence, leave the University without formal notification, or if you are requested to leave, you may be eligible for a refund of all or a portion of your tuition, fees, and dorm charges based on the earlier of the date of formal withdrawal or the documented date of last attendance. The [tuition adjustment schedule](#) is published on the University Registrar's website. All students are charged a withdrawal fee of \$75.

Withdrawal is defined as dropping the entire academic program in a given term, not a portion of the program. The Director of the Programs in Occupational Therapy determines the formal withdrawal or date of last attendance to be one of the following:

- The date the student began the school's withdrawal process or officially notified the institution of intent to withdraw.
- The date of last documented academic activity.
- The midpoint of the semester for those students who do not formally withdraw.

The Director of the Programs in Occupational Therapy determines the formal start and end date for a **leave of absence**. If you are approved for a leave of absence you will be subject to the *Refund and Return of Aid Calculations* listed below.

RETURN OF FINANCIAL AID FUNDS - If you have received financial aid, the Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning must recalculate eligibility for financial aid, and determine if any financial aid funds must be returned or cancelled.

You will be able to view the revised amounts based on the new period of attendance on NetPartner and must attend an exit interview with the Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning if you have taken any educational loans while you were enrolled. We must process all changes to Title IV, and Columbia-administered funds, and determine if a return of financial aid funds is due, within 30 days from the date the school has determined you withdrew.

Title IV Funds Calculation - Students who received Title IV aid are subject to a recalculation of their eligibility according to the federal "Return of Title IV Funds" formula.

- Title IV funds are the federal financial aid programs authorized under the Higher Education Act of 1965 (as amended) and include the following programs: Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and Federal Direct Graduate PLUS loans.
- Allowable charges include tuition and all "billable" fees (excluding the withdrawal fee) paid directly to Registration & Student Financial Services, as well as rent paid for Columbia owned housing.
- The percentage of Title IV aid returned is determined by dividing the number of days of attendance in a semester by the total number of days in that semester. Scheduled breaks of five (5) consecutive days or more are excluded.

- The federal formula is applicable up to the 60% point of the semester. After the 60% point, the student is eligible for 100% of Title IV aid disbursed or scheduled to be disbursed for that semester.
- Students will be requested to approve any post withdrawal disbursements after the Return of Title IV Funds Calculation is completed. The Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning will contact the student one time via email. If there is no response within 14 days a late disbursement of funds will not be authorized.

School Funds and Private Loans Calculation - Eligibility for school funds (grants/scholarships and school loans) and private loan funds will be prorated based on actual costs incurred for the enrolled period.

Columbia University's Responsibility

- Perform Return of Title IV Funds calculation. Funds will be returned in the following order:
 - Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan
 - Federal Direct Graduate PLUS
 - School Aid
- State aid funds will be returned according to state guidelines.
- External scholarships will be returned according to external granting institution guidelines.
- Private Loans

Student's Responsibility

- Repay loans according to the terms of the loan program(s).
- Repay any grant funds required by the calculation.
- Repay any funds released to the student because of a credit balance that now have to be returned by the school as part of the Return of Title IV aid formula.
- You must notify our office in writing if you wish to have more loan money returned to the lender than is prescribed by the formula.
- Complete required on-line loan Exit Counseling.

POLICY ON FRAUD AND ABUSE IN FINANCIAL AID - The Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning for the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Dental Medicine, the Institute of Human Nutrition, and the Programs in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Genetic Counseling is responsible for overseeing the disbursement of educational funds provided by a number of state and federal programs as well as loans and scholarships from Columbia University. These total over \$97 million dollars during the 2025-26 academic year.

This stewardship includes validating submitted information, awarding aid, monitoring students' and their families' changing financial circumstances, and dealing effectively and fairly with instances of suspected fraud and abuse.

Information submitted by students and families must be accurate. Changes in personal and family financial circumstances which may change a student's eligibility must be reported, documented, and financial aid packages reexamined, to give the student all potential benefits and to fairly distribute funds.

Discrepancies in reported information and IRS 1040 forms or other income and asset verification materials must be clarified. The Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning must, under the law, award funds only to students who prove their eligibility.

We may declare students ineligible for financial aid if there are significant unexplained

discrepancies, if students' applications are delayed beyond the filing deadlines published in the Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning Handbook, or if there is intentional misrepresentation on the part of the student and his or her family.

Acts of fraud and abuse will result in loss of financial aid eligibility, and may result in termination of matriculation and/or referral to the responsible agency of the federal or state governments for investigation and potential prosecution.

The information in this HANDBOOK is compiled to help students understand the financial aid process at Columbia University's Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, College of Dental Medicine, Institute of Human Nutrition, and the Programs in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Genetic Counseling. It is as accurate and complete as we can make it at the time of printing. We cannot be responsible for subsequent changes to information or programs over which our office has no control, or for inadvertent omission, misinformation, or typographical errors.

The Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning is located in 154 Haven Avenue, Suite 405.

We are open from 9 am to 5 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Wednesdays we are open from 12pm to 5pm.



VAGELOS COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS

Office of Student Financial Aid & Planning
Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons
College of Dental Medicine
154 Haven Avenue
Suite 405
New York, NY 10032
(212) 305-4100
ps.columbia.edu/financialaid