



INSPIRED
PATHWAYS



Winter Newsletter

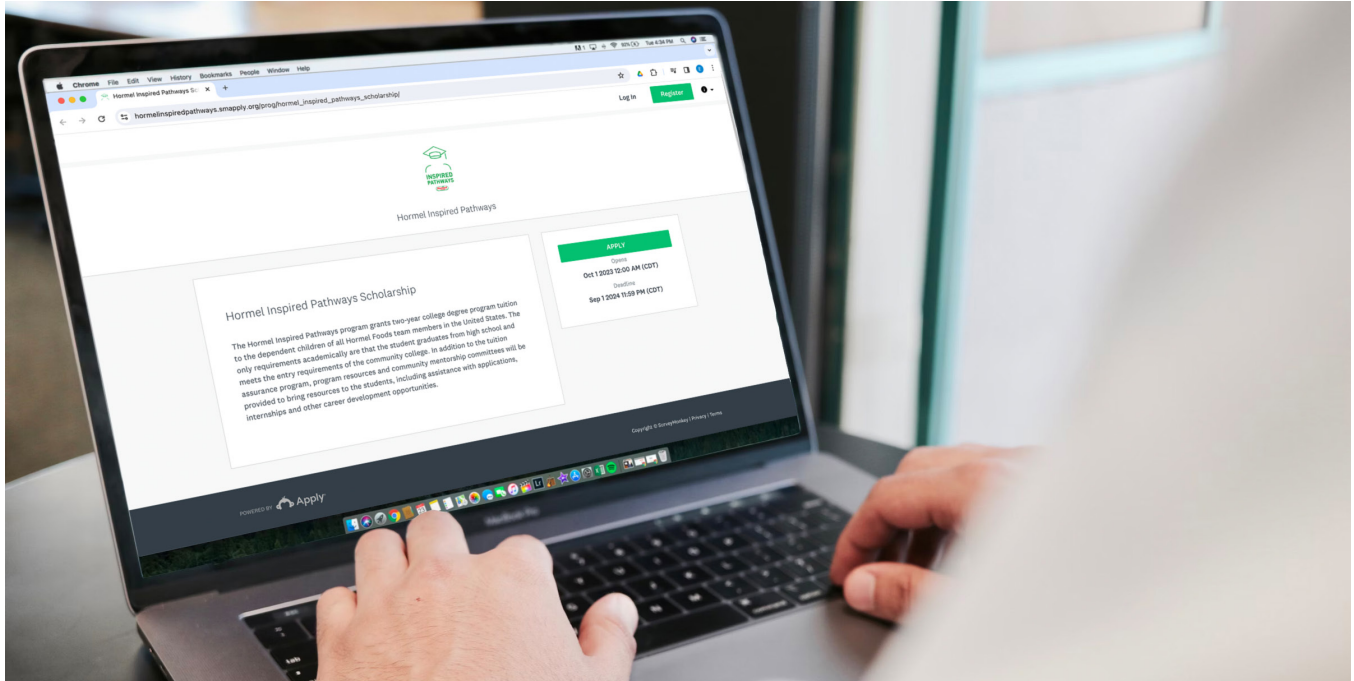
INSIDE / February 2024

- *Introducing the New Inspired Pathways Application Portal*
- *Why Isn't My FAFSA Working?*
- *Advice for Students Transferring to a Four-Year College*
- *Choosing the Right Career for You*
- *How an Inspired Pathways Student Is Engineering a Career for Herself*



Introducing Our New Admissions and Financial Aid Platform

Makes Applying Easier Than Ever



To better serve our Inspired Pathways students, we've introduced a new portal that will help streamline the application process. Our new portal comes with a host of benefits for students and their families navigating the Inspired Pathways program.

The main benefit of the new portal is a smoother, simplified application process. Students no longer have to use multiple platforms to complete their application — now, the initial application and subsequent document submissions are all housed in one easy-to-use, secure and accessible location.

After initial submission, students can track the status of their application and see what tasks they have remaining to complete the application. Plus, they will receive regular reminders about outstanding tasks.

Making changes and updates to your application is now easier than ever. Students no longer have to go through the Inspired Pathways team to make simple application updates like changing an address. Now, students can make updates themselves.

Students have an option to add a parent as a “collaborator” — allowing their parents to access the application and assist with document uploads if needed.

Existing scholarship recipients can use the portal to upload FAFSA and FERPA and other documents. Even though we have a new portal, please note that the scholarship and advising programs remain the same.

If you have questions about the new portal or how best to use it, feel free to reach out to a member of the Inspired Pathways team.

Choosing the Right Career for You

Successful career decisions are based on acquiring the right information, knowing enough about your skills, the task required by specific jobs, and how to acquire the skills you don't yet have to be successful in your goal job.

Career planning should never stop. As you progress through your career, it is important to continue to consider the Skill-Assessment steps below to decide whether you're on the right path.

A **Skill-Assessment** is the process of determining if your skills will allow you to gain and successfully perform the job you wish to have. There are three important steps to any successful skill assessment which are outlined below.

70%

of college graduates found college helpful while job hunting
Pew Research Center

Step 1: Self Assessment

Since there is no better source of information about you, the easiest method of increasing self-understanding is to review and analyze your past and present experiences with a career counselor. Increasing your knowledge of your skills, values and interests will help determine the type of work which fits you best. **Skills include a wide variety of personal attributes. Including:**

Talents/Strengths: These are skills that come naturally to you. These vary greatly from person to person. Maybe you're great at understanding how machines work, or helping through challenging times, understanding complex math problems. It is critical that this is the first assessment you make.

Specific knowledge/abilities acquired through training. These are the skills which you have developed by doing academic and hands-on work. One of the best ways to determine if a skill was developed by training is to consider the areas in which you used to struggle but now find easy. Then look at all the things you did to make that improvement. By doing this, you'll be able to not only figure out which skills you have, but how you can continue to improve them.

Step 2: Task Assessment

Too often students fall in love with the idea of a job, without realizing the daily tasks they'll be performing don't align with their skills — leaving them in a position in which they struggle or feel unchallenged. For this reason, the second step to take while determining your future career is identifying the specific tasks different jobs require.

To find these, simply start reviewing job postings. Each posting will list the role and responsibilities or "tasks" the person in that position is required to perform. By reviewing and taking notes on a large number of positions at different levels across a variety of industries, you'll develop a strong understanding of the jobs that fit both your talent and training-based skills. Just as important, you will discover the areas where you need to develop your skills further to get hired in the positions you really want to have.

Step 3: Skill Development

Having thoroughly assessed your skills and the tasks required for specific positions that you're interested in, you now need to assess the resources you have available to further develop current skills or acquire new ones. It is important to remember that skills can be developed both in and outside of the classroom, so always look for new and

unique opportunities. Often there are academic and career service advisors on college campuses who can help you with this. But in general, these are some of the best places to start:

Education. Your major is the obvious one, but there are many more learning opportunities available on a college campus including: work-study jobs and research opportunities, career-focused clubs and organizations, service programs, and academic minors.

Internships. Every single internship you have is valuable. Short, long, paid, unpaid, something you love or hate — internships will not only help you develop new skills but help you focus on what you really want to do. Additionally, they are one of the best additions to any resume whether you're planning to enter the workforce or apply to a four-year university.

Jobs. It may be tempting to stick with the same part-time job you've had since you were 16, but if you are no longer developing new skills and there aren't opportunities for advancement that you're interested in, it is not the best option in the long run. You would be much better suited trying a wide variety of jobs that help you develop the skills that you need, even if those jobs don't pay quite as well.

By strategically choosing classes, extra-curriculars and jobs that will help you develop the skills you now know you need from your assessments, you'll set yourself up for a future with a job that is satisfying both in the enjoyment of the day-to-day and the take-home pay.

To learn more or speak with an advisor about how to find opportunities local to you, please visit our website:
www.hormelinspiredpathways.com

Transferring from Community College to a four-year College or University

Whether you're just graduating from high school or looking to advance your career, there are many advantages to starting your higher education at a community college and transferring to a four-year school upon graduation.

Save Money

Starting at a community college is one of the best ways a student can mitigate the expense of a bachelor's degree. With the average cost of a four-year university surpassing \$35,000, this strategy can save you tens of thousands of dollars. This is especially true for Inspired Pathways students, who will be able to complete the first two years of their college journey absolutely free.

Find Your Passion

One of the most common concerns among students entering college is that they aren't absolutely certain about which degree to pursue. In fact, more than 80% of students end up changing their major at some point during their college career. By starting at a community college, you'll have the opportunity to try out a wide range of courses and programs without locking yourself into the major you listed on your application.

Get into a Better Four-year College

Another benefit of starting at a community college is the opportunity to improve your grades, which could even help you qualify for scholarships that would not have been an option if you had entered directly into a university. Especially if you are looking at prestigious schools, attending community college can give you a better chance of acceptance if you achieve good grades.

In addition, many colleges like to admit transfers instead of freshmen because they have proof that these students can be successful at the college level. Because of this, many colleges either design programs to help encourage community college transfers to attend or change their admissions criteria to make it easier to get in. Below are some examples of four-year-university initiatives intended to recruit community college graduates:

1. MnCAP

When you enroll in the Minnesota Cooperative Admissions Program, you will be guaranteed transfer admission to the University of Minnesota.

2. Ohio Guaranteed Transfer Pathways

These programs provide a direct path to degree completion for community college students who plan to transfer to an Ohio public university to complete their bachelor's degree.

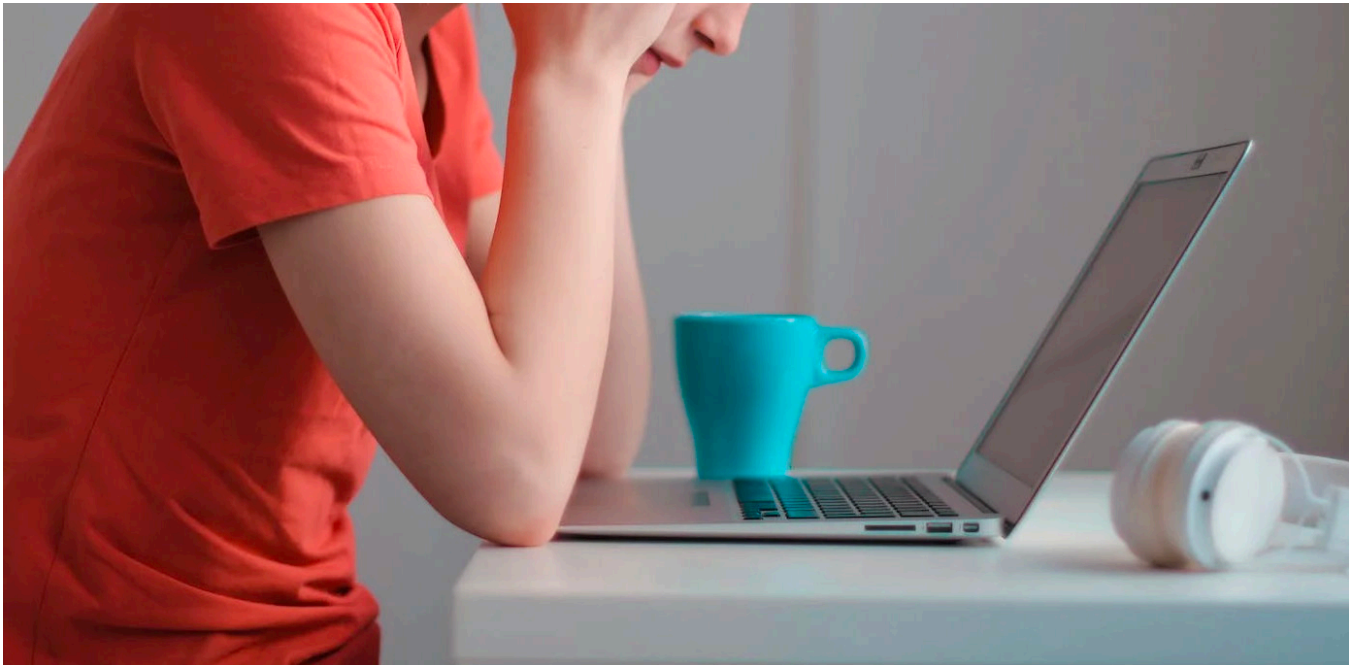
3. Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG)

This program guarantees admission to some of the most competitive colleges in the University of California system, which includes UCLA and UC Berkeley.



If you have any questions or want to learn more about guaranteed transfer programs in your state, visit the Inspired Pathways website and schedule an advisor meeting!

Why Isn't My FAFSA Working?



At the beginning of this year, the Department of Education did a complete overhaul of the FAFSA system. The goal was to create a streamlined version that would allow families to access Federal Financial Aid more easily. However, the launch has not gone smoothly and those trying to access the new system have faced a multitude of issues including:

Log-In issues

Both new and returning users are reporting difficulty logging in. Some have reported trying numerous times over the course of several weeks without ever being able to log into their account.

Incorrect Calculations

The streamlining of FAFSA made it easier for many families with more “typical” backgrounds to input their information. However, families with unique circumstances have found

it difficult to find where to enter the information that is relevant to them. When families are not able to put in all relevant information, they receive an incorrect award amount.

Delays

Even when families are able to login and submit information, there are delays at every step. Both the initial processing time and the time it takes to get the processed files to colleges have gone from a few days to several weeks.

These issues will likely continue to create challenges for the remainder of this year. **At Inspired Pathways, we've already begun working with colleges to create contingency plans. If you are experiencing FAFSA issues, reach out and we will help you navigate through them and avoid any delays to your college career.**

Engineering a Career

The Hormel Foods Inspired Pathways program helps an Illinois student avoid debt on her way to an engineering degree.

Written by: J.K. Rose



Rock Valley College campus | Photo courtesy of Rock Valley College

Matea Zec was a rising high school senior when she signed up for an online class offered by “Girls Who Code,” a nonprofit that teaches teenage girls basic coding skills in a bid to close the gender gap in computer science. According to the World Bank, women make up less than a third of the global workforce in science and engineering fields.

“The program was such a positive environment for me that I knew I wanted to get into tech,” the Rockford, Illinois, native says. During the free, two-week course, Matea built a website using HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and created a simple interactive game using JavaScript.

“Originally, I’d wanted to go into computer science because I know it’s a growing industry, especially with AI and things like that. But during the class, I realized that I really wanted to build something physical — and not just sit in front of a computer. I’d love to design airplanes or cars. There’s just something about seeing a product in front of me that’s very cool to me.”

Today Matea is a sophomore at Rock Valley College — a community college that’s a mere five minutes from her childhood home — where she’s

“It’s just perfect for me in every way.”

*HORMEL INSPIRED PATHWAYS RECIPIENT MATEA ZEC
ON THE INSPIRED PATHWAYS PROGRAM*

studying for an associate’s degree in engineering science. Next fall, she plans to transfer to Northern Illinois University to complete a BS in the same field.

College by the Numbers

Although Matea had initially planned to attend a four-year school for her entire college career, she ran the numbers and realized she'd accrue a debt of tens of thousands of dollars by the time she graduated, even with scholarships. Then her dad, who works as a quality control auditor at Rochelle Foods, told her about the Hormel Foods Inspired Pathways scholarships, which pay community college tuition for the children of company employees.

Now, instead of going into the red, Matea is actually growing her bank account. In addition to taking a full course load at Rock Valley, she works evenings in the food services department of the local hospital, planning healthy menus for patients. And to further economize, she lives at home for free.

The experience wasn't without hiccups, however. Rock Valley College mistakenly sent Matea a tuition bill and then placed a hold on her registration, which barred her from signing up for classes. Inspired Pathways Director Nate Lockett stepped in to sort out the problem with the registrar's office and get Matea into her preferred classes.

Matea's studies have ranged from calculus to chemistry to differential equations, but her favorite so far has been "Introduction to Engineering," which explores "different engineering disciplines, the role of the engineer in society, the engineering approach to problem solving and the engineering design process." In the lab portion of the class, students reverse-engineer products to puzzle out how they were designed.

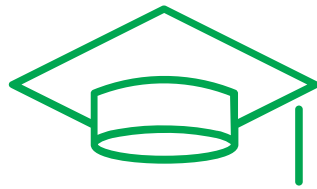
One advantage of studying at a community college, Matea says, is the diversity of the student body: Some of her classmates are seasoned engineers who are returning for a second degree or to update their skill sets. "Just hearing about their experience in the field is super awesome," she says.

Engineering salaries are pretty awesome too, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics: the median engineering salary is \$84,000 — almost double the annual wage for all other occupations.

Matea's dream job lies at the intersection of clean energy and cool design. "Honestly, if Tesla was to offer me a job, I would immediately take it," she says with a laugh. "But, you know, we'll see where things go."



Rock Valley College campus | Photo courtesy of Rock Valley College



**INSPIRED
PATHWAYS**



www.HormelInspiredPathways.com