

POST-SECONDARY PLANNING GUIDE

Earl L. Vandermeulen High School

A Recognized School of Excellence-US News & Newsweek



Guidance Department

350 Old Post Road, Port Jefferson, New York 11777

Phone: (631)791-4457

Fax: (631)476-2373

CEEB Code: 334585

(v.2/2025)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

District Information	p. 1
High School Contact Information	p. 2
Introduction	p. 3
Naviance Student	p. 4
Who Am I? Self-Assessment	p. 5-6
Career Research	p. 7
What are the Options?	p. 8
• <i>Post-Graduate Year/Gap Year</i>	<i>p. 9</i>
• <i>Employment/Apprenticeship-Job Search/Interview Skills</i>	<i>p. 10-14</i>
• <i>Technical School/Vocational School</i>	<i>p. 15</i>
• <i>Armed Forces/Military Academy</i>	<i>p. 16-17</i>
• <i>Volunteer/Service</i>	<i>p. 18</i>
• <i>Higher Education</i>	<i>p. 19</i>
The College Experience	p. 20
• <i>Starting Your Search</i>	<i>p. 21</i>
• <i>Types of Degrees</i>	<i>p. 22</i>
• <i>Types of Schools</i>	<i>p. 23</i>
• <i>College Entrance Tests</i>	<i>p. 24</i>
• <i>Test Taking Strategies</i>	<i>p. 25</i>
• <i>What Colleges Consider</i>	<i>p. 26-28</i>
• <i>What You Should Consider</i>	<i>p. 29-30</i>
• <i>Researching Schools/Naviance/Campus Visits</i>	<i>p. 31-34</i>
The Admissions Process	p. 35
• <i>Types of Applications</i>	<i>p. 35-36</i>
• <i>Types of Admission Programs</i>	<i>p. 36-37</i>
• <i>Components of a College Application</i>	<i>p. 38-39</i>
• <i>Writing Your College Essay</i>	<i>p. 40-41</i>
• <i>Creating a Portfolio</i>	<i>p. 42</i>
• <i>College Athletes/NCAA</i>	<i>p. 43-46</i>
• <i>Get Organized and Apply</i>	<i>p. 47-48</i>
• <i>Student Rights and Responsibilities</i>	<i>p. 49</i>

Planning Timeline

p. 50

- *Freshman Year* p. 50
- *Sophomore Year* p. 50
- *Junior Year* p. 51
- *Senior Year* p. 52-53

Financing Your Education

p. 54

- *Cost of College* p. 55
- *Financial Aid* p. 56
- *FAFSA* p. 56
- *FAFSA Simplification Overview* p. 57-58
- *Creating an Account* p. 59
- *Starting Your FAFSA Form* p. 60-61
- *Signing & Submitting your FAFSA* p. 62
- *CSS Profile* p. 62
- *Forms of Financial Aid* p. 63
- *Other Sources of Money* p. 64
- *Financial Aid Websites* p. 65
- *Paying for Your Education* p. 66-68

Making a Decision

p. 69-70

Glossary

p. 71-72

PORT JEFFERSON UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Port Jefferson, New York

www.portjeffschools.org

Board of Education

Ellen Boehm, President
Tracy Zamek, Vice President
Randi DeWitt
Traci Donnelly
Shannon Handley
David Keegan
Michael Weaver

Jessica Schmettan
Superintendent of Schools

Sean Leister
Deputy Superintendent

Robert Neidig, Ed. D
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

EARL L. VANDERMEULEN HIGH SCHOOL

350 Old Post Road
Port Jefferson, New York 11777
631-791-4400

John Ruggero, Principal
Kim Braha, Assistant Principal

School Counseling Office

Kathi Galvin

High School Counselor

kgalvin@portjeffschools.org

(631) 791-4457

Jennifer Poma

High School Counselor

jpoma@portjeffschools.org

(631) 791-4457

Deborah Abbatiello

Guidance Secretary

dabbatie@portjeffschools.org

(631) 791-4458

Rose Darling

Guidance Secretary

rdarling@portjeffschools.org

(631) 791-4457

Earl L. Vandermeulen
School Counseling Department

Dear Students & Parents/Guardians,

We are pleased to provide you with our Post-Secondary Planning Guide as you begin your exciting journey towards graduation from Earl L. Vandermeulen High School and preparation for beyond. This guide integrates information from many sources and has been written with your possible future goals in mind, including college, military, and career options. It is designed to provide you with the most accurate and up to date information available. This guide will be an important tool throughout your future exploration and decision making process.

One of the most significant parts of planning your future is meeting regularly with your School Counselor. Your Counselor will be your greatest resource and can provide you with a wealth of information and ideas in thinking about what is in store for you after Port Jefferson. We also encourage you to take full advantage of our college and career research tool *NAVIANCE Student*. Additionally, the School Counseling Office hosts fall and spring college fairs as well as individual visits by admissions representatives from various colleges and universities throughout the school year.

Although the future planning process may seem overwhelming at times, it is an inspiring time full of adventure and possibilities. There are many challenges students and families may face along the way, so it is important to stay organized, communicate regularly, and not be afraid to ask questions. Port Jefferson has a unique and supportive network of counselors and staff who are ready to assist you in this process. We look forward to working with you and helping you create your future!

Sincerely,

Kathi Galvin

Jennifer Poma

High School Counselors

NAVIANCE Student

NAVIANCE Student is a web-based program that supports students with research on college, careers, scholarships, and enrichment programs. NAVIANCE is also a venue for students to organize their information, develop a resume, and engage in self-exploration activities. Within the college application process, NAVIANCE Student becomes a portal through which counselors can send student transcripts and teacher letters of recommendation to colleges electronically.

Each student at Earl L. Vandermeulen High School has an individual account with NAVIANCE Student. The high school counseling office provides you with your access code so that you may establish your own account with your unique username and password.

Throughout this guide, and throughout your high school years, you will revisit the NAVIANCE Family Connection website many times. It will be useful to you on many levels as you reflect on yourself, explore your interests, research your options, and participate in the process of creating your future.

The screenshot shows the NAVIANCE Student website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the NAVIANCE logo on the left and menu items: Home, Self-Discovery, Careers, Colleges, Planner, and About me. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are icons for a heart, a mail envelope, a person, and a globe, along with the text 'EN' and a 'Log Out' button.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Earl's Future Planning:** This section features a large graphic with the text 'Plan Your Future' and a sub-headline 'Quickly access your path highlights, favorite careers, information from your school, and more from this page.' To the right of the graphic is a button labeled 'College Bachelor's Degree' and an 'Edit Path' link.
- Welcome to Naviance:** This section contains a welcome message: 'Welcome Students and Parents to the Earl L. Vandermeulen Naviance Website!' followed by a paragraph explaining the tool's purpose: 'We are pleased to offer you this innovative and exciting tool to help you with your career and college planning. This new database will be a powerful tool to aid you as you navigate through the college process. With Naviance, you will be able to search for colleges that match your interests, identify those schools to which you are applying, keep track of important deadlines and much more.' Below this text is a link for 'Additional information from Your School'.
- Tasks from My School:** This section states: 'Relax, you have no overdue or upcoming to-dos and tasks. However, you can get ahead by going to My Planner to see what's next or create a goal or to-do.' A 'Go to My Planner' link is provided at the bottom right.
- College Path Highlights:** This section is currently empty.
- Search for a College:** This section includes a search bar with the placeholder text 'Enter name' and a 'Search' button.
- What's New:** This section displays the message: 'Nothing new to review this visit. Check back later.'

WHO AM I? A Self-Assessment

In order for you to begin planning and researching for your future career, you will need to identify some things about “you.” Specifically, it is important to explore your interests, aptitudes, temperament, and your values. There are several resources to help guide you through this exploration process.

NAVIANCE Student

Within NAVIANCE Student, students can utilize the *About Me* tab to begin their guided self-exploration. You may complete the **Strengths Explorer**, which will help uncover your talents and reveal your potential strengths. By completing this 78 question assessment, you will begin a wonderful journey of discovery, and you'll have the tools you need to make the most of your talents. From there, you can begin the **Career Interest Profiler**, a tool that can help you discover the types of work activities and careers that match your interests. The interest profiler has 180 questions about work activities that people do at their jobs. The combined information about your strengths and interests is a perfect starting point for researching and exploring possible career goals, which in turn can help you identify the type of education and training appropriate for those career goals. NAVIANCE Student will even show you which colleges offer programs to help you achieve your career goals.

SELF REFLECTION

Students may also utilize the following questionnaire to begin thinking about their interests, aptitudes, temperament, and values. The questions below will help you reflect on yourself, and guide you in thinking about your personal qualities and how they affect your career choices.

INTERESTS are fairly easy to assess; you know what you enjoy

1. What do you like to do in your free time?
2. What might your hobbies be?
3. What are your favorite school subjects?
4. What kinds of books do you like to read and why?
5. Do you have a part time job or participate in some sort of community activity?

APTITUDES refer to typical abilities you have

1. Are you mechanically inclined?
2. Are you good in math?
3. Are you able to look at a diagram or a blueprint and visualize an object?
4. Do you express yourself well? Converse easily with others? Speak well in front of a group?
5. Do you have a special talent in art, music or another area?
6. What are your strongest abilities?

TEMPERMENT is a particular response in a given situation or situations

1. How do you interact with others?
2. How much patience do you have?
3. Are you friendly?
4. How do you respond under pressure?
5. Do you get upset when criticized or lectured?

VALUES as they relate to work, are feelings that are important and worthwhile to you

1. Do you have a desire to be creative?
2. Must you make a lot of money?
3. Do you want to help others?
4. Do you resent being supervised?
5. How important is freedom or independence?



CAREER RESEARCH

There are a variety of resources, where student and families can access information about various career fields, including type and level of training/education required to be successful.

NAVIANCE Student

Within NAVIANCE Student, students can utilize the *Careers* tab to explore various specific careers and broad career fields or *clusters*. Career clusters are a way of grouping careers with common features and skills. Careers grouped into the same cluster typically require similar education and training. Exploring clusters can be a useful way to find a good career match, especially if you have general areas of interest but are not sure what specific careers match those interests. Career clusters can also help you better understand how your coursework in school can prepare you for certain types of careers. NAVIANCE Student allows you to save your preferred careers so that you can continue to add/delete options while you further your research on the required level of training or education necessary. NAVIANCE Student also links careers to college majors, and even to specific colleges that you may wish to consider.

Occupational Outlook Handbook

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) is a tool for students created by the United States Bureau of Labor. It is a comprehensive guide to possible careers as well as hundreds of occupations. You can browse resources, average pay, growth rate as well as multiple other characteristics for occupations listed. Access the OOH online at: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm>.

Department of Labor

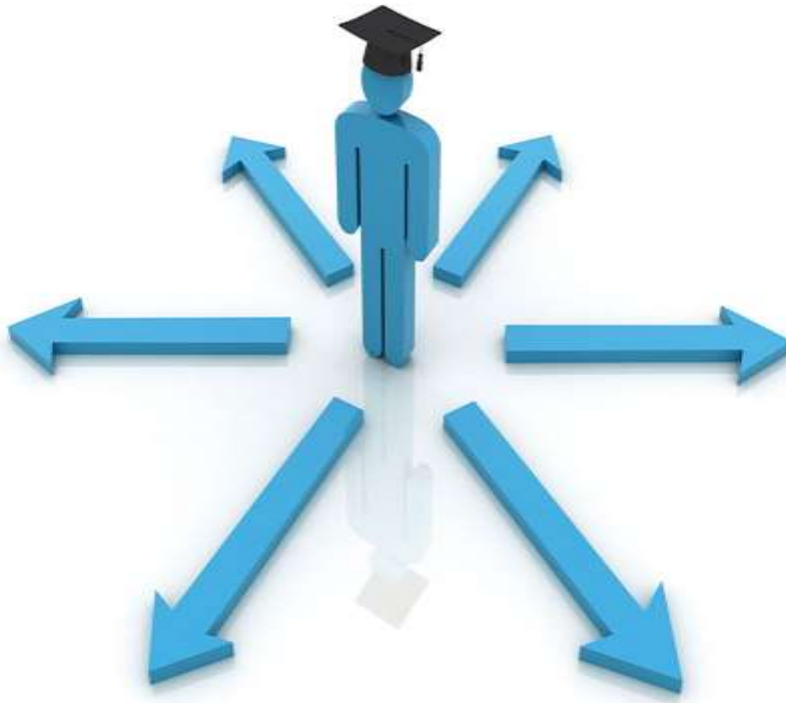
You may also want to explore your options by visiting either the national or local Department of Labor websites. You can visit the U.S. Department of Labor at: <http://www.dol.gov>. You can also access your local New York Department of Labor at <http://labor.ny.gov/>.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

There are many options available to a student as an Earl L. Vandermeulen graduate, it is important to choose the path that is the best fit. Many students go on to colleges or universities in pursuit of undergraduate degrees, but there are other options out there. Some of these alternative paths include pursuing a trade, entering the military, traveling or studying abroad, AmeriCorps etc. Regardless of whether you choose college or a different path, School Counselors can offer resources for every student.

Options for the Post-Secondary Graduate

- Post-Graduate Year (A repeat of Senior Year at a private school/or/Gap Year)
- Employment/Apprenticeship
- Technical School/Vocational School
- Armed Forces/Military Academy
- Volunteer Service
- Two-Year/Community College
- Four-Year College



Post Graduate Year

A repeat year is taken by a student who wishes to focus on their academic, extra-curricular, and/or athletic achievements at a private or “prep” school. In some instances, this year may serve to highlight the special talents of the student, which may in turn develop a more robust college application.

A Gap Year is taken by a student who wants to grow and explore more before entering college. It is encouraged that students still apply to college during their Senior Year and once accepted, defer admission for a year (please see the section detailing the college admissions process.). This allows the student to not have to worry about the admission and decision process during their Gap Year experience.

- *Gap Year Related Resources:*
- **An interesting article detailing the Gap Year further:**
- <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/what-a-gap-year-is-and-how-it-prepares-students-for-college>
- **Gap Year Fairs**
<http://www.usagapyearfairs.org/>
- **Global Citizen Year**
<http://www.globalcitizen.org/>
- **AmeriCorps – City Year**
<https://www.cityyear.org/experience/what-to-expect/ameri-corps-member-gap-year-information/>
- **Global Vision International**
<http://www.gviusa.com/>



Employment/Apprenticeship

Employment Opportunities

Local businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and regional career fairs can offer students the opportunity to seek employment. Job Corps is a resource for a free education and training program that helps young people learn job skills and secure a job: <http://www.jobcorps.gov/>. NAVIANCE Student *About Me* section provides a template for students to develop a resume, which can be utilized in the employment application and interview process.

Apprenticeship Training Programs

These programs tend to be run by trade unions or private companies/industries. On-the-job training is combined with instruction in order to give a student the qualifications and experience to pursue a specific career. You can apply through the New York State Department of Labor (<https://dol.ny.gov/apprenticeship/overview>), there are over a hundred recognized apprenticeship trades including Machinist, Carpenter, Electrician, etc.

Internships

Students looking for further experience and the development of their career skills may consider seeking internships. Internships are a good option for the student who is not yet fully qualified, but looking to build their experience and resume. Although some internships may offer pay, most internships are not paid experiences, but can still be of great value in exploring a career field or landing a future job. Contact local businesses and/or civic organizations to seek out prospective options for internship opportunities. Getting an internship is often similar to getting a new job, requiring an application and interview. Please read below for more information on completing an application and preparing for an interview.

The Job Search Process

Job Applications

Why do employers use job applications? Many employers use applications as a way of standardizing the information they obtain from all job-seekers, including some things that you would not normally put on your resume. Your goal is to complete the application as completely and honestly as you can -- all the time remembering that the application is a key marketing tool for you in the job-hunting process. Remember that some employers will use your application as a basis for deciding whether to call you for an interview. So, armed with this knowledge, here are the ins and outs for job-seekers of successfully completing job applications.

1. Arrive prepared with the information you need. Be sure to bring your resume, social security card, driver's license, etc. You probably will also need addresses and phone numbers of previous employers, as well as starting and ending salaries for each previous job. It's always better to have too much information than not enough.

2. Read and follow instructions carefully. Always take a few minutes to review the entire application. Some applications ask for information differently -- and all have specific spaces in which you are expected to answer questions. Think of the application as your first test in following instructions.

3. Complete the application as neatly as possible. Remember how important handwriting was in school? Neatness and legibility count; the application is a reflection of you. Consider typing it if you have access to a typewriter. If completing it by hand, be sure to use only a blue or black pen -- and consider using an erasable pen or taking some "white-out" to fix minor mistakes. Don't fold, bend, or otherwise mar the application.

4. Tailor your answers to the job you are seeking. Just as with your resume and cover letter, you want to focus your education and experience to the job at hand. Give details of skills and accomplishments, and avoid framing your experiences in terms of mere duties and responsibilities. Show why you are more qualified than other applicants for the position. Include experience from all sources, including previous jobs, school, clubs and organizations, and volunteer work.

5. Don't leave any blanks. One of the reasons employers have you complete an application is because they want the same information from all job applicants. However, if there are questions that do not apply to you, simply respond with "not applicable," or "n/a." Do not write "see resume" when completing the application (but you can certainly attach your resume to the application).

6. Don't provide any negative information. As with any job search correspondence, never offer negative information. Your goal with the application is to get an interview. Providing negative information (such as being fired from a job) just gives the employer a reason not to interview you. If asked about a specific circumstance, be truthful.

7. Always answer questions truthfully. The fastest way for an application to hit the trash can is to have a lie on it, but that doesn't mean you need to give complete answers either. For example, many applications ask your reason for leaving your last job. If you were fired or downsized, you should try to be as positive as possible and leave longer explanations for the interview; some experts recommend writing "job ended" as the reason you left your last job.

8. Do not put specific salary requirements. It is way too early in the job-seeking process to allow yourself to be identified by a specific salary request. You don't want to give employers too much information too soon. In addition, employers often use this question as a screening device -- and you don't want to be eliminated from consideration based on your answer. It's best to say "open" or "negotiable."

9. Provide references. Employers want to see that there are people who will provide objective information about you to them. Pick your references carefully -- and make sure you ask if they are willing to be a reference for you before you list them. Where do you get references? Consider past employers, teachers, family and/or friends. Most young job-seekers have a mix of professional and character references, while more experienced job-seekers focus on professional references who can speak of your skills and accomplishments.

10. Proofread your application before submitting it. Once you've completed the application, sit back and take a moment to thoroughly proofread the document, checking for all errors -- especially typos and misspellings.

One final word. Be prepared for all kinds of job applications, from simple one-page applications to multi-page applications; and some will be clean and crisp copies while others will appear to be photocopied a few too many times. Regardless, take your time and do the best you can, always keeping in the back of your mind the goal of the application -- getting you an interview. If you have not heard from the employer within a week of submitting your application, you should follow-up with the employer. There's truth to the "squeaky wheel" cliché. Ask for an interview -- and ask to have your application kept on file.

Interviewing Skills

Spending days, weeks, or possibly months of looking for the right job has finally paid off and you've been asked to come in for an interview. Then comes the biggest question of all, now what? You will only have 15 to 20 minutes to sell your experiences, attitude, and skills to the employer - most likely without knowing what the employer wants to hear from you. There are articles upon articles of advice on interviewing, from how to answer certain questions to how to dress - right down to the color of your socks! It can seem overwhelming, but remembering a few key points can help make your interview successful.

1. Research

Find out a little bit about the company you want to work for. Visit the location in person if it is a store or building open to the general public. Visit the company's website and talk to anyone you might know who works there. What kinds of products or services does the company make or sell? What types of people work there? What are the typical hours this position requires? What are some of the day-to-day tasks that the job involves?

Make notes of things you want more information about and ask the employer about them at the end of your interview (it's always a good idea to have a few questions to ask the employer, anyway). Researching a company and the position make you stand out in an interview. It shows that you are really interested in working there.

2. Practice

It sounds funny -- and it looks even funnier -- but practicing out loud for your interview will help you sound more polished and concise and less nervous in the actual interview. List a few key things you want the employer to know about you, and review common interview questions. Formulate answers to those questions and answer them out loud while looking at yourself in the mirror. This exercise prevents you from rambling in the interview and sounding unpolished and unsure. It also helps you discover what really does make you the best candidate for the job.

3. Dress to Make a Good First Impression

In an interview, first impressions do matter. The best way to ensure a good first impression is to dress smart. If you are interviewing for a job in an office, it is usually best to wear a dark-colored,

conservative suit (for both men and women). If you are interviewing for a job where the dress code is more casual (at a factory or a construction site, for example), nice slacks and a collared button-down shirt with a tie for men and a nice dress or blouse and slacks or skirt for women are usually appropriate. You should avoid wearing excessive jewelry, perfume, and flamboyant clothes. Good personal hygiene is also important.

If you are unsure what to wear, you should always go with the most conservative, professional option. Most experts agree it is better to be overdressed rather than dressed too casually. What you are wearing tells employers a lot about how serious you are about getting the job.

4. Be Conscious of Good Interview Etiquette

This list could go on forever – there is literally an endless array of “dos” and “don’ts” for an interview – and not everyone agrees on every aspect of that list. There are, however, some basic “interview etiquette” tips that are important to remember.

Be on time for your interview. This is, perhaps, the most important. Employers expect employees to arrive on time to work. They may see a person who is late to an interview, when he or she is supposed to be showing his or her best side, as someone who will have difficulty arriving on time to work or meeting deadlines if hired.

Be aware of your body language. When shaking hands, make sure your grip is firm and confident. Have good posture, but avoid appearing like you’re as stiff as a cardboard cutout. Even the most experienced professionals get nervous in an interview – it’s normal. However, if you appear too nervous, the interviewer might draw the wrong conclusions about your ability to do the job – especially if it involves interacting with people. Conversely, make sure you don’t slouch – this could give the impression that you are lazy or uninterested in the position. Maintain eye contact with your interviewer to convey confidence. When speaking, be polite and professional and avoid using slang and profanities. The more confident and polished you appear the more likely you are to leave the interviewer with a positive impression of you.

Keep the interview positive. Avoid making negative remarks about any previous jobs or employers. Also, refrain from complaining about any job-related tasks or responsibilities you were given in a previous position. Employers want to hire someone who is positive, enthusiastic, and able to meet and deal with challenges.

5. Be Prepared to Ask the Interviewer Questions

This is where your research comes in. Employers want to know if you’re truly interested in the position. They also want to know that you have all the information you need to make a decision, if offered the job. It isn’t a good idea to turn the tables and “interview” the interviewer, but it is a good idea to go into the interview with a few questions in mind. This is your chance to ask additional questions about the business, the position, the requirements, and the expectations of the person who will fill the position. Remember to ask questions that are relevant to the company and position for which you are interviewing.

6. Follow up with a Thank-You Note

Make sure you let the interviewer know how pleased you were to have the chance to interview with him or her. Immediately after the interview, send the interviewer a thank-you note, thanking him or her for taking time to interview you. This is not only proper etiquette and a common display of appreciation, but it also allows you to reaffirm one or two key points of the interview. It also lets the interviewer know how interested you are in working for the company. Being polite and professional always makes a good impression.

All of this advice comes down to three important things to remember when you're interviewing: being prepared, professional, and polite is the best way to make the right impression.

Source: <https://blog.employmentguide.com/category/career-advice>



Technical/Vocational Education

These schools offer programs for specific certificates or trades/vocations. A Vocational/Technical school may offer programs such as Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts, HVAC or Electrical, Cosmetology, etc. There are even programs to prepare a student to enter the medical field as a technician for radiology or sonography, for example. These programs would prepare a student to enter into a specific trade, specific job, or earn a license through an apprenticeship program. There may be options to earn a certificate in one or two years.

Below is a listing of possible Technical/Vocational Education programs located here on Long Island that may help you begin your search. This is only a partial list. There are other options/programs available. Please speak with your school counselor to discuss your specific interests and goals.

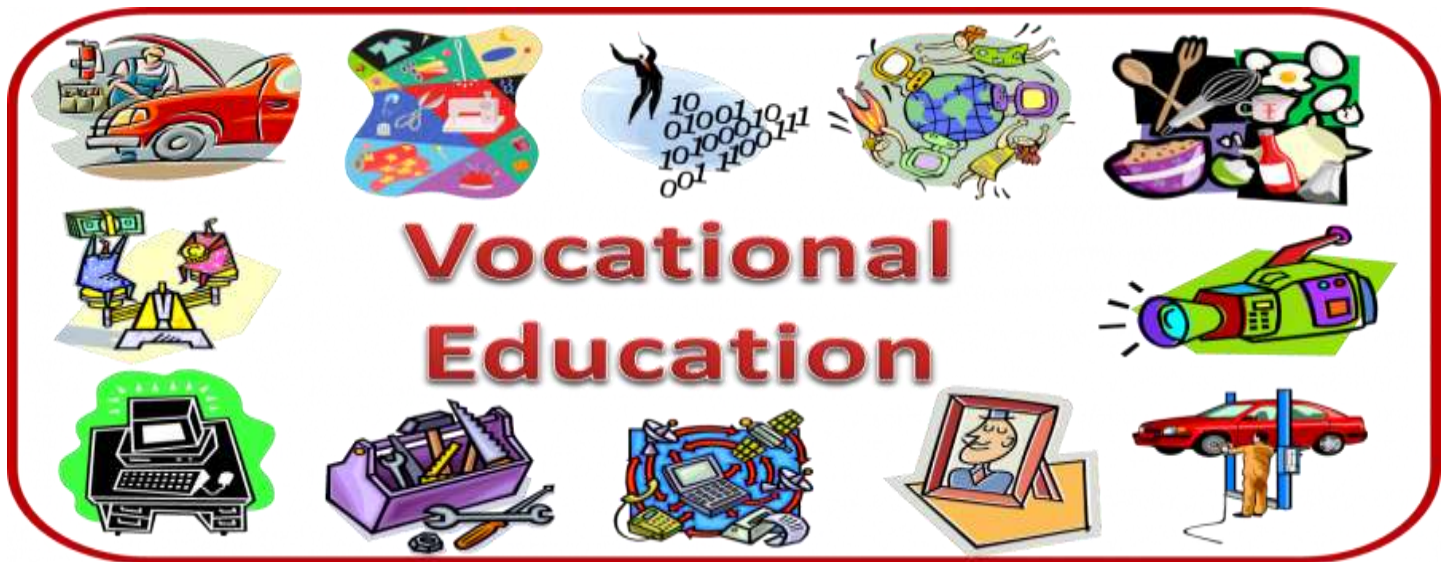
Island Drafting & Technical Institute: www.idti.edu

Eastern Suffolk BOCES: <https://adulthoodeducation.esboces.org/programs-services>

Hunter Business School: <https://hunterbusinessschool.edu/>

Lincoln Technical Institute: www.lincolntech-usa.com

Wilson Tech: www.wilsontech.org



Armed Forces/Military Academy

Students in grades 10-12 may consider taking the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Taking the exam does NOT require the student to commit to the military. This test will help identify a student's possible abilities and skills and can be used to identify your specific opportunities in the military. Taking this test can also provide valuable feedback on a student's strength, aptitude and interests that may relate to careers outside the military as well. It is important to note that all branches of the military offer educational assistance programs, for students who wish to become involved in military life but still complete higher education. The following link is a wonderful resource to learn more about all of the opportunities the military has to offer: <http://todaysmilitary.com/training>.

Enlisting

The military can offer many options to interested students including job and future career training as well as educational options. Recruiters typically visit Earl L. Vandermeulen High School, and can often be contacted via the semi-annual college fair. If you are interested don't be afraid to reach out to local recruiters of the different military branches for additional information. Resources for contacting the various military units are also available in the guidance office. Below are listed the local recruiter contact numbers:

Army	888-550-2769
Navy	631-451-6750
Air Force	631-475-0259
Marines	631-665-0260
Coast Guard	718-422-1490
NY Army National Guard	516-419-2906
NY Air National Guard	518-786-4326

ROTC

Founded in 1916, ROTC stands for Reserve Officer Training Corps. It's a college program offered at more than 1,000 colleges and universities across the United States that prepares young adults to become officers in the U.S. Military. In exchange for a paid college education and a guaranteed post-college career, cadets commit to serve in the military after graduation. Each service branch has its own take on ROTC. Please refer to this link for more details on each of the branches and their offerings: <http://todaysmilitary.com/training/rotc>

Military Academy

Pursuing an education at one of the four United States military academies can be very challenging and requires several important steps. In order to qualify as an applicant to a military academy, a student must seek congressional nomination as step one. Once a student secures a nomination from a congressperson, the application process closely follows the college application process. These academies offer a high level of education as well as specialized training to enter the military as an officer upon graduation. Many of the academies host summer programs that offer high school students opportunities to experience academy life.

United States Naval Academy: <https://www.usna.edu/homepage.php>

United States Military Academy: <http://www.usma.edu/admissions/SitePages/Home.aspx>

United States Coast Guard Academy: <https://uscga.edu/>

United States Merchant Marine Academy: <http://www.usmma.edu/admissions>



Volunteer/Service

Programs such as Peace Corps and AmeriCorps offer the opportunity to engage in meaningful, structured volunteer service across the globe. AmeriCorps engages more than 75,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps>.

The Peace Corps offers a unique experience to make a difference around the world and bring the benefits of that experience back home. The personal and professional rewards of Peace Corps service last a lifetime. Deciding to apply to the Peace Corps takes research and deliberation. <https://www.peacecorps.gov/>

**THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOURSELF
IS TO LOSE YOURSELF
IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.
GANDHI**

QUOTESEVERLASTING.COM

Higher Education

There are many options for colleges and universities that offer two- and four-year degrees in a variety of majors. Students who wish to pursue higher education should begin planning with their high school academic program, selecting rigorous college preparatory courses and excelling to achieve at their best. There are a myriad of criteria a college admissions office considers when accepting an applicant. In the next section, the college experience and the research and application process are discussed in greater detail.



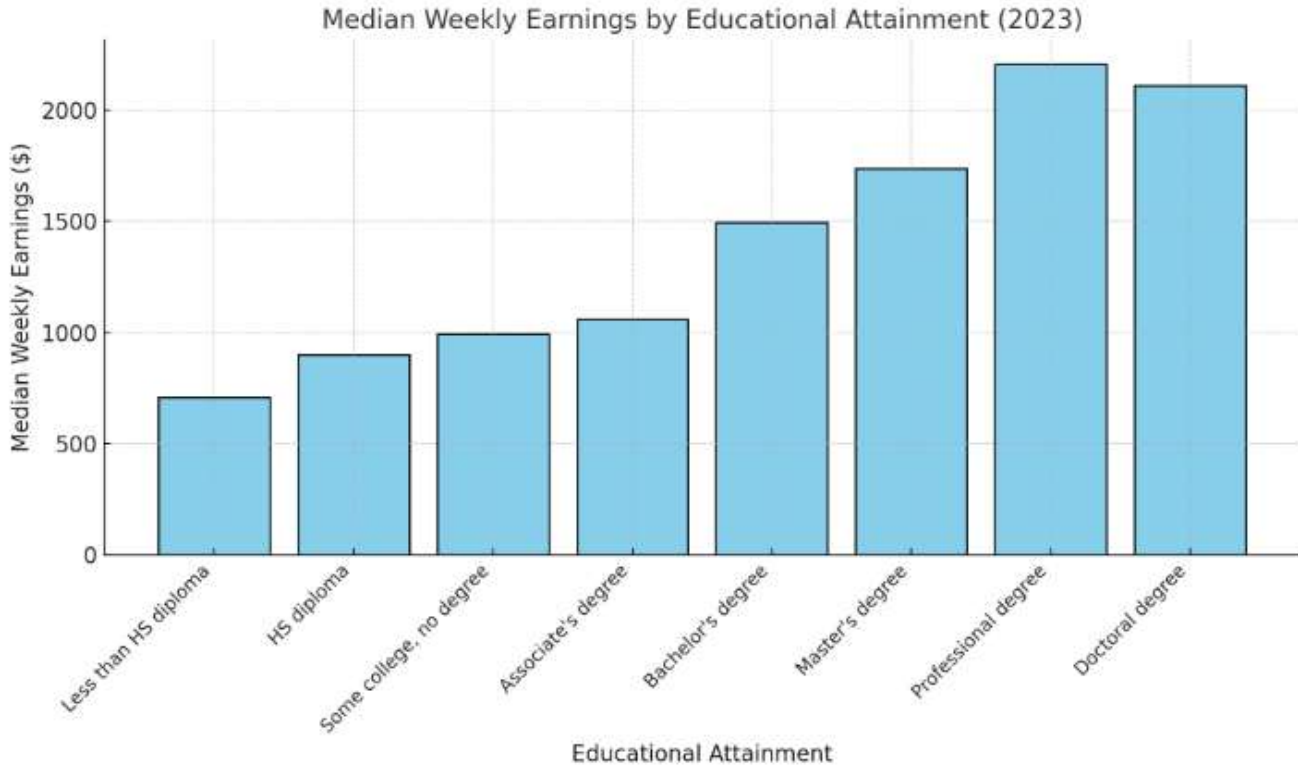
THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE



There are many important steps in the College Search and Application Process. It is important to use your self-assessment to better understand your strengths and weaknesses. Communication and discussion with your family is of utmost importance, as the ultimate choice of where you will attend college is typically a family decision. Your school counselor is a valuable resource as you progress through high school and begin planning your future. You will need to evaluate the factors that colleges consider when accepting applicants and how these compare with the factors you should consider when choosing a college. Once you have reviewed, evaluated and narrowed your list of schools it will be time to begin the Application Process.

STARTING YOUR SEARCH

Benefits of Earning a Degree



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and Department of Education.

TYPES OF DEGREES

There are a variety of degrees and certificates available to you in your post-high school career. Some of these include:

Certificates

Certificates are similar to technical programs in that they are geared towards a student interested in a shorter program compared to the typical 4-year higher education, and who are interested in being prepared for a specific kind of work force or specialty training. Students can earn certificates in a variety of disciplines including Veterinary Technician, Web Design, or Paralegal. Certificates can often be earned by attending a two year college or a Technical School.

Associate Degree

An Associate degree is an Undergraduate degree that is typically a 2-year academic program, compared to the 4-year Bachelor program. A student who earns an Associate degree often moves on to complete a Bachelor's, or will enter the work force in their discipline.

Bachelor's Degree (B.A. or B.S.)

The Bachelor's degree is the most common academic path thought of when discussing college. Typically completed in four full-time years, the Bachelor's Degree is the highest degree of an Undergraduate education. Students pursuing a Bachelor's in any area of study will often find themselves choosing between public or private colleges or universities.

Master's Degree

A Master's degree is awarded for the next level of study after a Bachelor's, with a greater concentration in an area of study. A student with a Master's degree will have a higher understanding and greater mastery of their area of study. Master's programs can take one to six years of study, as they are earned independently as well as on your way through a Doctorate program.

Doctorate Degree

A Doctorate degree is the highest degree earned and depending on your discipline, can give you the ability to teach at higher level institutions. The capabilities that come with earning a Doctorate vary by profession.

TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Community Colleges & Junior Colleges

These schools provide the option to earn credits toward an Associate's degree, certificate, and training in technical and/or vocational fields. It may also be a good starting point for a student who wishes to eventually transfer to a 4-year college. A student who is unsure and interested in exploring multiple degree options, or planning on improving academic performance before entering a College or University could benefit from starting at a Community College both academically and financially.

Business Schools

These schools offer training in skills and career specific to the office environment. Certificates are often earned after 9 to 12 months of training.

Nursing Schools

These schools are often affiliated with a college or university and allow students to operate in conjunction with hospitals to earn two-year (A.S.) or four-year (B.S.N.) nursing degrees.

Fine Arts Colleges & Conservatories

Portfolios and or auditions are often required during the admission process to these schools. They offer specific degrees in everything from music, to theater, art, and dance.

Colleges and Universities

These schools will offer Bachelor's degrees as well as the opportunity to prepare for higher degrees such as a Master's or Doctorate degree.

Public vs. Private

Public schools are funded predominately by their local state education system. This generally means lower cost to in-state students. Public schools often tend to be much larger than private schools and offer a wider variety of areas of study. This also means class sizes tend to be much larger at the big public universities. Private schools can come with a hefty price tag, but often offer a more personalized experience for students. Because private schools rely heavily on endowments and private funds, they tend to offer a greater amount of financial aid to their smaller student bodies than the typical public school aid package does.

**COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS
STANDARDIZED TESTING
PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) &
SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)**

- The SAT is composed of two sections: (1) the Reading and Writing section, and (2) the Math section. You have 64 minutes to complete the Reading and Writing section and 70 minutes to complete the Math section for a total of 2 hours and 14 minutes.
- Each section is divided into 2 equal length modules, and there is a 10-minute break between the Reading and Writing section and the Math section. The first module of each section contains a broad mix of easy, medium, and hard questions. Based on how you perform on the first module, the second module of questions will either be more difficult or less difficult.
- The following table shows how much time you get for each section and the number of questions for each section:

Component	Time Allotted (minutes)	Number of Questions/Tasks
Reading and Writing	64 (two 32-minute modules)	54
Math	70 (two 35-minute modules)	44
Total	134	98

- Most of the questions are multiple choice, though some of the math questions ask you to enter the answer rather than select it.
- The PSAT is approximately 2 hours and 14 minutes and consists of 2 sections. It is administered every October at ELVHS.
- The SAT is given seven times per year.
- For additional information, please visit the College Board website at www.collegeboard.com

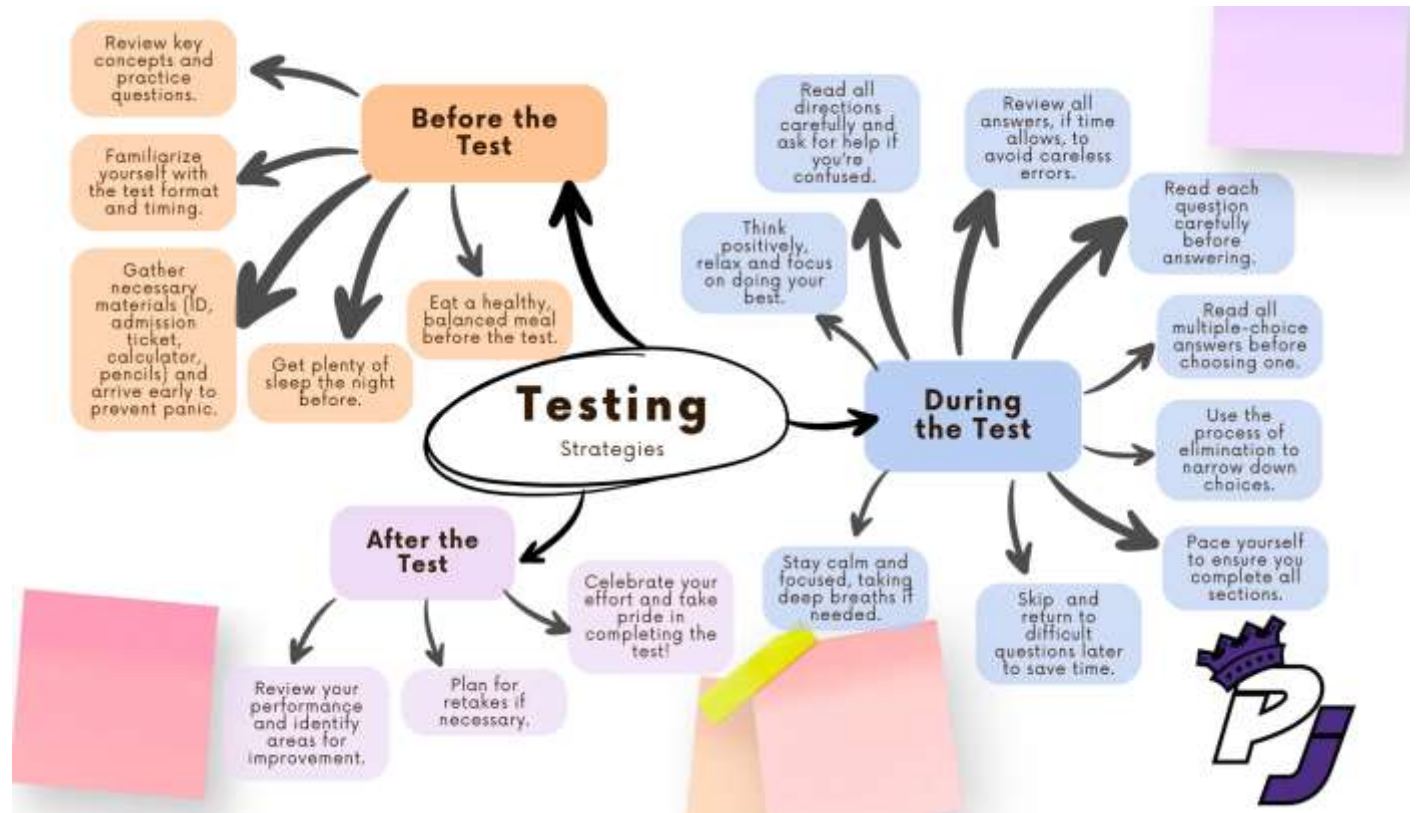
ACT (AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING)

- The ACT is a three hour, multiple choice achievement test that measures your abilities in the following areas: English, math, reading and natural science reasoning.
- The ACT can be used in place of the SAT at most colleges. Most colleges do not favor one exam over the other.
- There is an optional writing section which is designed to measure your writing skills. There is a prompt with a complex issue and three perspectives.
- The ACT is given six times each year.
- For additional information, please visit the ACT website at www.actstudent.org

TOEFL (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

- TOEFL exams are available to students whose native language is not English. For students whose SAT or ACT score may be negatively impacted because English is not their first language, colleges allow students to also submit a TOEFL so that this additional information may be utilized in the application process. For additional information, please visit the TOEFL website at www.ets.org/toefl

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES



Before the Test

- Review key concepts and practice questions.
- Familiarize yourself with the test format and timing.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before.
- Eat a healthy, balanced meal before the test.
- Gather necessary materials (ID, admission ticket, calculator, pencils) and arrive early to prevent panic.

During the Test

- Think positively, relax and focus on doing your best.
- Read all directions carefully and ask for help if you're confused.
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Read all multiple-choice answers before choosing one.
- Use the process of elimination to narrow down choices.
- Skip and return to difficult questions later to save time.
- Pace yourself to ensure you complete all sections.
- Stay calm and focused, taking deep breaths if needed.
- Review all answers, if time allows, to avoid careless errors.

After the Test

- Review your performance and identify areas for improvement.
- Plan for retakes if necessary.
- Celebrate your effort and take pride in completing the test!

WHAT COLLEGES CONSIDER

There is no one formula that colleges use to admit students. Although grades and test scores are important, it's a combination of these factors that colleges consider to get the best picture of who a student is and how he or she will fit in at their institution.

Rigorous Curriculum including, at minimum:

- Four years of English
- Four years of Mathematics
- Three or more years of Lab Science
- Three or more years of Social Sciences/History
- Three or more years of the same World Language

Course Selection:

- Be mindful of what kinds of courses are required for graduation and to get in to the college of your choice. If you need help, don't be afraid to ask, speak up.
- Take a balanced course load. Although you should challenge yourself, you don't want to take on more than you can handle and risk not doing well in those courses. At the same time, you should not take all easy classes just to increase your GPA.

Grades:

- Work hard, prioritize your time, and do well throughout high school. Improvement of grades and progression of courses throughout high school builds a strong transcript.
- Good grades may enable you to qualify for certain scholarships.
- Trends: Colleges consider grade trend. Upward trends can help a lot, but downward trends can raise questions. If a student is experiencing an overall downward trend, often a counselor recommendation or special letter can address these issues if there are circumstances about which the college should know.

SAT Reasoning Test, ACT, TOEFL, AP Scores

- As of 2025, nearly 80% of U.S. colleges and universities have adopted test-optional or test-free policies, allowing students to decide whether to submit SAT or ACT scores. This shift, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, aims to reduce barriers and emphasize a holistic admissions process, focusing on GPA, extra-curriculars, essays, and recommendations. Some institutions, like the University of California system, have gone test-blind, meaning they do not consider test scores at all. Students should research individual schools to determine if submitting scores could enhance their application. www.fairtest.org is a website that lists those colleges willing to accept an alternate to the SAT or ACT tests.
- Most colleges that require test scores will accept from either the SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT (American College Testing). One exam is not preferred over the other. Most students take the SAT Reasoning Test and/or the ACT during the spring of their junior year and fall of senior year. At least half of all students may take the SAT or ACT twice, after continued preparation, with the goal of better scores. It is not recommended that any student repeat these tests more than three times.
- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is available to students whose first language is not English. It is often taken in addition to the SAT Reasoning Test, and the scores are used in conjunction by college admissions.
- AP test scores may be reported to colleges by directly contacting the AP Program at (888) CALL4AP. Although most schools do NOT require AP scores for admissions consideration, a

student's overall application may be enhanced by reporting these scores, given the student earned very strong scores. Students can self-report AP scores directly on most applications for admissions decisions. Many colleges offer course credit or advancement based on AP Test Scores. Official AP Score reports will be required by colleges for credit consideration.

- SCORE CHOICE was designed for students to give more flexibility and control over scores.
 1. It is important that you check with the colleges to which you are applying, because colleges set their own policies regarding how they wish scores to be reported.
 2. Students will be able to select which SAT scores they send to colleges by test date for the SAT Reasoning Test.
 3. The new score-reporting feature will be optional – if students do not use it, all scores from all test dates will be sent automatically. Detailed information is available at www.collegeboard.com/scorechoice.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Recommendations:

- Be sure to read applications thoroughly to understand their criteria; some want at least one recommendation, rarely do they want more than two from academic teachers from two different subjects.
- Confidentiality Statement: By waiving your right to view the recommendation, colleges perceive the teacher's letter as more credible and candid.

Personal Statement/Essay:

- Essays are both a measure of writing ability and a window into each student's background and future goals.
- Many applications have short answer questions in addition to the essay. Use these questions to give additional information about yourself beyond the facts.

Demonstrated Interest:

- Colleges like to know that you really want to go to their school. Make every effort to show your interest and enthusiasm.
 - *Consider Early Action/Restrictive Early Action/Early Decision options. Visit the campus and attend the tour and/or information sessions. Participate in an optional interview when available.

Extracurricular Activities:

- You don't need to do a little bit of everything. Instead, try to focus on a few of your serious interests or passions, and then get more deeply involved in those.
- Don't be afraid to look outside of school for opportunities. Ask your family and friends about ways to volunteer, intern, and/or work in the areas in which you are interested.
- Colleges want to see long-term involvement in activities that are related to a future goal. Activities that demonstrate leadership skills and ability are also a plus!

Interview/Portfolio/Audition:

- Colleges may have special deadlines and requirements for scheduling interviews, submitting portfolios, or arranging an audition.
- Be sure to read each college's specific requirements carefully.

Evidence of Special Skills, Talent, Leadership:

- In some cases, colleges are seeking students who play a particular instrument or sport, possess a special talent, or have demonstrated significant leadership qualities. Letting a college know these details about you may be an asset in the admissions process.

Importance of Factors in College Admission Decisions (Fall 2023)

Factor	Considerable (%)	Moderate (%)	Limited (%)	No Importance (%)
High school grades (college prep)	76.8	15.1	4.9	3.2
Total high school grades (all courses)	74.1	18.9	5.4	1.6
Strength of high school curriculum	63.8	22.7	10.3	3.2
Positive character attributes	28.3	37.5	18.5	15.8
Essay or writing sample	18.9	37.3	26.5	17.3
Student's interest in attending	15.7	27.6	25.4	31.4
Counselor recommendation	11.9	40.0	27.6	20.5
Teacher recommendation	10.8	40.5	28.1	20.5
Extracurricular activities	6.5	44.3	30.8	18.4
High school class rank	5.5	22.4	43.2	29.0
Admission test scores (ACT, SAT)	4.9	25.4	38.9	30.8
Portfolio	4.9	10.8	24.3	60.0
Interview	4.3	8.6	32.4	54.6
Work	2.2	30.8	40.0	27.0
State graduation exam scores	1.6	6.5	18.4	73.5
Subject test scores (AP, IB)	1.1	22.2	25.9	50.8

Source: NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling)

WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER

Size and Diversity of the Student Body

Size will affect many of your opportunities and experiences, including:

- Range of academic majors offered
- Extracurricular possibilities
- Amount of personal attention
- Number of books and resources available in the library
- Internship opportunities
- Career services

When considering the student body, be sure to think about factors such as the geographic, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of the student body. Explore what kind of student organizations, or other groups with ethnic or religious foundations, are active and visible on campus.

Location/Distance

Do you want to visit home frequently, or do you see this as a time to experience a new part of the country? Perhaps you like an urban environment with access to museums, ethnic food or well-known sports teams. Or maybe you want easy access to the outdoors or the community feel of a small town.

Academic Programs

If you know what you want to study, research the reputations of academic departments by talking to people in the fields that interest you. If you're undecided, relax and pick an academically balanced institution that offers a range of majors and programs.

Campus Life

Consider what your college life will be like beyond the classroom. Aim for a balance between academics, activities and social life. Before choosing a college, learn the answers to these questions:

- What extracurricular activities, athletics and special interest groups are available?
- Does the community around the college offer interesting outlets for students?
- How do fraternities and sororities influence campus life?
- Is housing guaranteed?
- How are dorms assigned?

Retention and Graduation Rates

One of the best ways to measure a school's quality and the satisfaction of its students is to find out what percentage of students return after their first year and the percentage of students who actually graduate. A college with good retention (percentage of students that come back for a second year) and graduation rates often indicates that responsible academic, social and financial support systems exist for most students.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Today's college price tag makes cost an important consideration for most students. However, virtually all colleges work to ensure that academically qualified students from every economic circumstance can find financial aid.

Sports or Special Programs

Students who wish to participate in athletics, study abroad programs, internships, job placement programs, etc., may want to inquire about those options at each college.

Early Decision/Early Action

Early Decision means you have decided that this is your first choice school. You can only apply to **ONE** school Early Decision. If accepted, you are bound by contract to enroll in that school and withdraw all other applications. Early Action means you apply early and get an admission response early, but you are not bound by contract. You can still wait to hear from all of your schools before making a final enrollment choice.



RESEARCH SCHOOLS

With over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States alone, researching them can seem daunting. Where do you begin? First, prioritize the criteria that is most important to you and rank order criteria that may help guide your search. Utilize NAVIANCE Student to perform college searches, research and compare schools, and organize lists. Attend college fairs and speak to individual admissions representatives.

When researching particular schools:

- Identify academic programs that interest you, and read the course requirements to complete that major. Different colleges may offer the same major, but have very different courses to be taken within that program.
- Review each college's admission requirements & application deadlines
 - Freshman profile: College's report of average admitted students' GPA and SAT/ACT scores (if required)
 - Review courses required in high school for admission consideration
 - Take note of testing requirements: SAT or ACT
 - Research requirements for special programs, some have early deadlines
- Review application deadlines
 - Early Action: non-binding early application, early admission response
 - Early Decision: binding early application contract, early admission decision, required enrollment
 - Regular Decision: deadlines vary, admissions notification typically by March
 - Rolling Admissions: Colleges begin accepting applicants as applications are received, earlier the better
- Review application materials/type of application
 - Common Application: web-based application accepted at many colleges
 - SUNY Application: State University of New York application
 - CUNY Application: City University of New York application
 - Coalition Application: web-based application accepted by approximately 170 colleges
 - Individual College Application
- Visit schools, record impressions and unique features (more on Visiting Colleges in the next section)

NAVIANCE Student

Your personal NAVIANCE Student account will provide you an excellent resource for organizing and conducting college research. Directly from NAVIANCE Student, you are able to search for colleges, learn information about individual colleges, link directly to college websites, communicate with admissions offices, and view the deadlines and application types, among other things. There are a multitude of functions NAVIANCE Student offers to help you with this process. Here are a few:

From the *Home Page* go to the *Colleges* Tab.

- *Colleges* Tab – provides a comprehensive platform for students to research colleges, compare their academic profile against past applicants from our school, and create and save a list of potential colleges.

- *Researching Colleges*
 - *Colleges I'm Thinking About*: you can add schools directly to this list and arrange schools by your preference. This screen indicates application type, application deadlines, admissions contacts, and college website links.
 - *Colleges I'm Applying To*: when you have decided to apply to a specific school, you must add it to Colleges I'm Applying To.
 - *College Compare*: you can set two schools side by side to see how they compare on different elements.
 - *College Maps*: where exactly is this school? Maps allows you to see the location of each college in relation to what is around it.
 - *Enrichment Programs*: allows you to search for extracurricular or summer programs that may interest you. You can enter any subject and view a plethora of activities available to you.
- *Find Your Fit*
 - *SuperMatch College Search*: this feature allows you to set particular criteria (i.e. location, major) and will create a list of colleges that fit your specifications. It's easy to then click on a school and add it to *College's I'm Thinking About* if you wish to do further research.
 - *Scattergrams*: allows you to visually see a graph of the GPAs and SAT scores of students from Earl L. Vandermeulen high school who applied to a particular school, along with their admissions decision. Your personal information is also plotted on the graph so you can see where you might stand in the admissions process.
- *Scholarships & Money*: There are several features in this section which offer you the opportunity to research specific scholarships or to peruse the list in search of a scholarship that seems appealing. You can also enter information about yourself and your background to match you up with possible scholarship opportunities. The *Home Page* (on the right hand side) also offers a periodic Scholarship Newsletter posting for you to review any scholarships of which the high school guidance office has become aware.

NAVIANCE Student is a vast resource with many applicable features to the college research and application process. Above is a brief listing of those features that are good starting points for your research. You are encouraged to log onto the NAVIANCE Student program as early as 9th grade to begin using all the valuable features available to you.

College Fairs/Admissions Representatives

Every fall and spring a variety of schools attend the Earl L. Vandermeulen College fair and talk about their programs. These representatives offer insight to what each school has to offer, even if it is not one of your top schools, or even schools you don't know much about, students are encouraged to attend these presentations to broaden their options. In addition, there are various regional college fairs that offer information in a similar format, but with a larger scope of schools.

Throughout the fall and spring, we also host individual college admissions representatives who offer small group presentations to interested students. The schedule of visiting schools is always posted in the guidance office and on NAVIANCE Student.

Campus Visits

All colleges offer the experience of coming to campus and attending an informational session and campus tour. Some host seasonal Open House events as well. These are valuable experiences which may help you better understand if this college is a good fit for you. You can contact the Admissions Office directly by phone or by visiting their website to schedule a session.

There are many benefits to visiting a college campus. It provides you with the opportunity to get to know a college from the inside:

- Take a campus tour/attend an information session
- Speak with an admissions counselor
- Ask about financial aid opportunities
- Sit in on a class of interest
- Read the student newspaper
- Talk to students and faculty

Some things to do when you visit a campus:

- Get business cards and names of people you meet for future contacts
- Pick up financial aid forms/scholarship applications
- Spend the night in a dorm through an “overnight program” run through the admissions office
- Try to find student publications—department newsletters, campus newspapers, etc.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like
- Eat in the cafeteria
- Wander around the campus by yourself
- Read for a little while in the library and see what it is like
- Browse in the college bookstore
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus
- Listen to the college’s radio station
- Imagine yourself attending this college for four years

Whether you visit in person, speak to an admissions representative at a fair, or make direct contact with the admissions office, it is always best to have in mind what kind of information you are seeking. Here are some tips for “questions to ask”:

- What are the strongest departments at the college?
- What are the class sizes generally?
- How accessible are the professors?
- What memorable campus events take place during the year?
- How many students stay on campus on weekends?
- What kinds of housing options are there? How are the dorms set up?
- How good is the food? What are the meal plan options?
- What is the security situation?
- What are some of the special facilities or resources?

- What types of services are there? Tutoring? Post-graduation/employment planning?
- Can students have cars? Bikes?
- What are the study abroad or co-op opportunities?

Virtual Tours


You can also visit and explore a school through a virtual tour. This is becoming an increasingly popular option for students, especially when considering a school that is a distance away. Many schools will offer virtual tours directly on their own websites. Other websites which offer virtual tours include: www.campustours.com and www.thecollege tour.com

[ASK 25]

25 QUESTIONS TO ASK A COLLEGE ADMISSION REPRESENTATIVE

When visiting with a college representative, ask plenty of questions to ensure you choose the college that best matches your needs.

<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Academics</div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What majors or programs do you offer? 2. What is the average length of your programs? 3. What percent of your students graduate? 4. Do you have internship programs? 5. Will I have an advisor to help me with scheduling and program-related questions? 6. How difficult is it to get the class schedule I need? 7. Do you offer tutoring services if I need them? <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Admissions</div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. When is your enrollment deadline? 9. What standards do you use for acceptance? 10. When may I tour your campus? <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Career Services</div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. What type of career placement assistance do you offer? 12. Will you help me find a part-time job while I attend school? 13. What is your placement rate? 	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Financial Aid</div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. What type of financial aid is available to me? 15. Do you have a financial aid application deadline? 16. Are there scholarships available through the college? 17. What is the total cost of my program including books, fees, and tuition? <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Student Life</div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. What type of housing is available for students? 19. How many students are enrolled at your college? 20. What is the average class size? 21. Do you have student organizations and activities? <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Technology</div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. What equipment and software do you currently use? 23. Does each student have access to a computer during class time? 24. Does your college have a student Intranet? 25. Will I have an email account and access to the Internet?
---	---



UNIVERSITY OF MARY

America's Leadership University

The Admissions Process

Applying to college involves several important steps. First and foremost, you must know which application you are going to use (each college has different options) and it is imperative that you always review the application instructions to ensure you complete all requirements. You must also know which type of admissions program you are applying for because the deadlines and requirements are specific to each type. Each component of the application is important, so we will review each element in more detail in the following section.

Types of Applications

Common Application: www.commonapp.org

Common Application is a web based college application that was developed to encompass the information most colleges wish to receive. This application includes “common” information that can be sent to multiple colleges. Therefore, many colleges accept Common Application. You can establish a Common Application account to view the application itself and to see which colleges accept this form. You can also review the main essay prompts if you’re looking to get started on writing. Each college has its own application fee and some colleges ask for additional information to supplement the common information. This application is very representative of what most college admissions applications look like, so it is helpful to peruse the site.

SUNY Application: www.suny.edu

State University of New York provides its own application that can be used at virtually all of the SUNY schools. There is a main application component that does not include an essay, however, many individual SUNY schools require additional information that will ask you for an essay. There is a fee for each campus to which you apply. It is important to note that some SUNY schools also accept the Common Application, so you can use whichever you prefer. The colleges have no preference.

CUNY Application: www.cuny.edu

City University of New York has created its own application system that serves all of the colleges within the CUNY system. On one application, you can apply to up to six colleges in rank order for one fee. Some individual colleges will then ask you for further information, including the possibility of an essay. The CUNY Honors program is also accessible through this same application process.

Coalition for College Application:
www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org

The Coalition is a web based platform for college applications to approximately 170 American higher education institutions. These colleges and universities share a commitment to providing students with the best possible college experience, beginning with the college application process. Coalition schools offer an affordable education, promising low-cost, in state tuition for residents of their state or meeting the full, demonstrated need of admitted domestic students.

Individual College Application

Some public colleges are a part of their state system (for example, University of California system: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu>, or United Kingdom/British schools: www.ucas.com). These systems allow you to apply to multiple campuses within the same system by utilizing the main application portal. Other colleges and universities simply have their own application, which requires you to log onto their individual application portal (most often found on the Admissions page of their website). Each college's application requirements differ, so it is important to review all application directions.

Application Fee Waivers

Students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch through the federal National School Lunch Program or who otherwise receive public assistance may be eligible for college application fee waivers and/or SAT/ACT fee waivers. Please speak with your school counselor if you feel you may qualify.

Types of Admission

Regular Admissions

The application deadlines for Regular Admissions typically range from January 1st to April 1st. However, we recommend that students strive to complete their applications by Thanksgiving or early December at the latest, ensuring that all materials are received by the college well in advance of the deadline. Applicants are typically notified of the admissions decision by April 15th, and you may be accepted, denied, or wait listed. You are required to reply to your chosen college with an enrollment deposit by May 1st, this is referred to as the "Universal Enrollment Deadline." Some colleges may require an earlier response.

Rolling Admissions

For Rolling Admissions, applications are reviewed continuously and decisions are typically given within a short period of time once all required materials are submitted. Getting an application in early typically means there will be less competition during the evaluation, so even though it is rolling, you should still work to apply early.

Early Action

Early Action is similar to Early Decision in that the application deadlines are earlier in the fall (October 15- December 1 typically). Applying Early Action does not require the student to commit to attending the school. You will typically hear an admissions decision in late December or early January. You may be accepted, denied, or deferred. Deferral means you will be reconsidered as part of the Regular Decision pool.

Some schools offer *Restricted Early Action (REA)* or *Early Action Single Choice* options. This means that the school will offer you the opportunity to apply early and receive an early admissions decision without commitment, however, they also impose limitations on whether or not you can apply to other schools under either Early Action or Early Decision programs. Please read each college's specifications.

Early Decision

Early Decision is for the student who plans to commit to attending one particular college upon acceptance. Students considering this option should be well aware that this is a binding decision. You can only apply to one school Early Decision and if you are accepted, you are committed to attend. The application requires agreement by signature of student, parent, and guidance counselor. Application deadlines range from October 15 – December 1, although some may be later. Decisions for this type of admission are typically given in late December or early January. You may be accepted, denied, or deferred. Deferral means you will be reconsidered as part of the Regular Decision pool and your application decision is no longer binding. Many Early Decision applications require parent financial information at an earlier deadline as well, so the college can provide a financial aid package with the admissions decision.

Priority

Applying Priority means you submit your application by the deadline to be evaluated with the rest of the school's prospective applicants. After the deadline, any other applications are considered on a case by case basis. We recommend that students applying for priority deadlines still strive to complete the application process in November.

Components of a College Application

Admissions Application

The application itself will ask you for information about who you are, where you live, family information, testing scores, your current courses, and in which activities you've participated. It is important to note that all activities are important to list: work, volunteer, clubs, sports, organizations, etc. They should be listed in rank order, with the most significant to you at the top. Many applications also require an essay and possibly additional short answer questions. The importance of the essay cannot be overstated, as it is your "voice" in the application process. A section below is devoted to developing a great essay.

Official SAT and/or ACT scores or alternative (for Test Optional schools) & TOEFL scores

Colleges require that you submit official SAT or ACT scores and TOEFL, if applicable, directly from the testing agency. This means you will have to contact www.collegeboard.org, www.actstudent.org, www.ets.org/toefl directly and request scores be sent to each college (for a small fee). This request should be placed as early as possible (after your last test date) in order to ensure the college receives the scores in a timely manner. When registering for an SAT or ACT, you have the opportunity to list up to four colleges to receive your scores free of charge. At the time when those scores are available to you, they are also automatically sent to those colleges.

Most colleges and universities prefer that you send ALL scores so that they can give you the benefit of your best scores. Often, colleges will "superscore," meaning they will take the highest component from various test dates to calculate your highest combined score for admissions purposes.

Test Optional schools offer alternatives to submitting test scores. Typically it can involve sending a copy of a graded paper or a research paper. For students who do not feel the SAT or ACT scores are indicative of their ability, test optional provides them an opportunity to present alternative information. Many test optional schools can be found with these two resources, <https://blog.prepscholar.com/test-optional-colleges-list> or <https://fairtest.org/test-optional-list/>.

Official High School Transcript

Colleges require that you submit your official high school transcript. This means you will have to complete a "*College Transcript Processing Form*" and submit it to the Guidance Office well in advance of your deadline, typically at least two weeks ahead. If you have attended school in another country, colleges often require that you also send your transcript from that institution directly as well so they can consider the information as part of your application process.

Teacher Letters of Recommendation

Teacher letters of recommendation are an important part of the application process for many colleges and universities. Most colleges prefer for you to ask two teachers from different core academic subjects, generally from 10, 11, or 12th grades. Many students begin thinking about who they may ask in spring of junior year. It is required that you complete the FERPA waiver, indicating whether or not you waive your right to review the letters. Colleges and universities prefer that you waive your right to see the letter, as they would like the teacher recommendation to be a private and direct communication. When you complete your “*College Transcript Processing Form*” you will be able to also indicate which teacher letters you wish to be sent to colleges and the Guidance Office will send those letters along with your official transcript.

Some students wish to send additional letters of recommendation from outside writers (for example a college professor, research supervisor, internship supervisor, etc.). If the college permits this, you may ask that individual to write on your behalf and send their letter directly to each campus admissions office. It is appropriate to provide a postage-paid envelope addressed to each college to your writer in advance. Common Application has a feature that some colleges activate which allows outside writers to submit letters electronically through their application portal. Please see Common Application or refer to the individual college admissions office to determine the best method of delivery.

Portfolio/Audition

Particular college majors may require that you perform and audition (Music, Theatre, Dance, etc.) or submit a portfolio (Art, Design, Architecture, Writing, etc.). It is important to review the specific requirements of each portfolio or audition to ensure you are prepared and complete the process in a timely fashion.

NCAA

The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies whether prospective college athletes are eligible to play sports at NCAA Division I or II institutions. It does this by reviewing the student-athlete's academic record, SAT or ACT scores, and amateur status to ensure conformity with NCAA rules. All Division I and Division II athletes must meet NCAA eligibility requirements to participate in college. If you are pursuing collegiate athletics, or are being recruited by a college coach, please visit www.eligibilitycenter.org for more information.

Writing Your College Essay

(From the *Professors Guide LLC: 2010*)

1. Be concise. Even though the Common Application main essay has only a suggested minimum of 250 words, and no upper limit, every admissions officer has a big stack to read every day; he or she expects to spend only a couple of minutes on the essay. If you go over 700 words, you are straining their patience, which no one should want to do.

2. Be honest. Don't embellish your achievements, titles, and offices. It's just fine to be the copy editor of the newspaper or the treasurer of the Green Club, instead of the president. Not everyone has to be the star at everything. You will feel better if you don't strain to inflate yourself.

3. Be an individual. In writing the essay, ask yourself, "How can I distinguish myself from those thousands of others applying to College X whom I don't know—and even the ones I do know?" It's not in your activities or interests. If you're going straight from high school to college, you're just a teenager, doing teenage things. It is your mind and how it works that are distinctive. How do you think? Sure, that's hard to explain, but that's the key to the whole exercise.

4. Be coherent. Obviously, you don't want to babble, but I mean write about just one subject at a time. Don't try to cover everything in an essay. Doing so can make you sound busy, but at the same time, scattered and superficial. The whole application is a series of snapshots of what you do. It is inevitably incomplete. The colleges expect this. Go along with them.

5. Be accurate. I don't mean just use spell check (that goes without saying). Attend to the other mechanics of good writing, including conventional punctuation in the use of commas, semi-colons, etc. If you are writing about Dickens, don't say he wrote *Wuthering Heights*. If you write about Nietzsche, spell his name right.

6. Be vivid. A good essay is often compared to a story: In many cases it's an anecdote of an important moment. Provide some details to help the reader see the setting. Use the names (or invent them) for the other people in the story, including your brother, teacher, or coach. This makes it all more human and humane. It also shows the reader that you are thinking about his or her appreciation of your writing, which is something you'll surely want to do.

7. Be likable. Colleges see themselves as communities, where people have to get along with others, in dorms, classes, etc. Are you someone they would like to have dinner with, hang out with, have in a discussion session? Think, "How can I communicate this without just standing up and saying it, which is corny." Subtlety is good.

8. Be cautious in your use of humor. You never know how someone you don't know is going to respond to you, especially if you offer something humorous. Humor is always in the eye of the beholder. Be funny only if you think you have to. Then think again.

9. Be controversial (if you can). So many kids write bland essays that don't take a stand on anything. It is fine to write about politics, religion, something serious, as long as you are balanced and thoughtful. Don't pretend you have the final truth. And don't just get up on your soapbox and spout off on a sensitive subject; instead, give reasons and arguments for your view and consider other perspectives (if appropriate). Colleges are places for the discussion of ideas, and admissions officers look for diversity of mind.

10. Be smart. Colleges are intellectual places, a fact they almost always keep a secret when they talk about their dorms, climbing walls, and how many sports you can play. It is helpful to show your intellectual vitality. What turns your mind on? This is not the same thing as declaring an intended major; what matters is why that subject interests you.

Examples:

Refer to the following websites for examples of what makes an essay “work” for an application:

<https://summer.harvard.edu/blog/12-strategies-to-writing-the-perfect-college-essay/>

<https://www.stjohns.edu/news-media/johnnies-blog/personal-essay-tips-for-college-admissions#:~:text=Don't%20Just%20Pick%20a,narrative%20that%20truly%20defines%20you.>

<https://www.nacacfairs.org/learn/apply/EssayTips/>

Creating a Portfolio

Academic: *Depending on your school or program, it might be required that you submit a portfolio of your work including graded assignments. Below are a few tips:*

- Save your best assignments that are graded by your teachers. Schools use the teacher's comments to gauge the level of work expected in your coursework.
- Do not worry about a few corrections on things such as spelling from a teacher on your assignment, these corrections are understood to be normal by colleges.
- Sometimes the work that best displays your abilities or talent doesn't necessarily have the highest grade, the grade alone will not be the school's only concern in evaluation.

Artistic: *If you are applying to an art school, certain artistic programs, or even some architecture programs, you will usually be asked to submit a portfolio of your work in the medium you are pursuing, below are a few tips to consider:*

- Save all your work.
- Be mindful of building your portfolio throughout your high school career including theater, art, music, dance, etc.
- Consult your art teacher(s) on whether or not to send pieces, it is only worth sending slides/photos of pieces of your highest quality.
- Look closely at schools' specific guidelines in regards to whether or not they want a recommendation from your art teacher or if the deadline for your portfolio is earlier/different from your application deadline.
- There are annual Portfolio Days at various art schools and local venues. Portfolio Days are typically an opportunity to have a professional admissions representative from highly selective art schools review your current portfolio and make recommendations/suggestions for improvement. This experience can give you the feedback you need to ensure your portfolio is at its best when actually being reviewed for admission.
- Most art schools utilize an online portal for the submission of your portfolio. See each schools admission criteria for portfolio submission.

Audition:

- When you are performing sight-read music, take time to look over the piece and make sure you understand the key and time signatures before proceeding.
- Select your audition time and date early.
- Try to acquire audition information ahead of time. Ask for help from teachers as you prepare for your college audition.
- If you haven't already, get involved in high school performances.

College Athletes

The NCAA Requirements

(Taken from CollegeBoard.com)



What is the NCAA Eligibility Center?

The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies whether prospective college athletes are eligible to play sports at NCAA Division I or II institutions. It does this by reviewing the student-athlete's academic record, SAT or ACT scores, and amateur status to ensure conformity with NCAA rules.

What are NCAA Divisions I, II, and III?

The NCAA is the governing body of many intercollegiate sports. Each college regulated by the NCAA has established rules on eligibility, recruiting and financial aid and falls into one of the three membership divisions (Divisions I, II and III). Divisions are based on college size and the scope of their athletic programs and scholarships.

When should students register?

The NCAA recommends that student-athletes register at the end of their junior year in high school. There is no registration deadline, but students must be cleared by the Eligibility Center before they receive athletic scholarships or compete at a Division I or II institution.

How do students register?

Students must register online at the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). They will have to enter personal information, answer questions about their course work and sports participation outside of high school and pay a registration fee.

Can students have the registration fee waived?

Students who have received a waiver for the SAT or ACT are eligible for a waiver of the registration fee. The student's counselor must submit confirmation of the student's test fee waiver. Go to the [NCAA Eligibility Center High School Portal](#) for more information.

What records does the Eligibility Center require?

Students should arrange to have you send their high school transcript as soon as they have completed at least six semesters of high school. The transcript must be mailed directly from their high school. They must also arrange to have their SAT or ACT test scores reported directly by the testing company to the Eligibility Center. Students can arrange this when they register for the tests. **The Counseling office is responsible for sending in students' final transcripts and proof of graduation** at the end of their senior year.

How often can students update their athletics participation information?

Students can update the information on the athletics participation section online as often as they want (and should update it regularly), up until the time when they request a final certification of their status. At that point — usually three to four months before enrolling in college — students must finalize their information.

What are the NCAA academic eligibility requirements?

To play sports at an NCAA Division I or II institution, the student must:

- Complete a certain number of high school core courses (defined below).
- Earn a certain minimum grade point average in these core courses.
- Earn a certain minimum score on the SAT or ACT.
- Graduate from high school.

For more information, see the NCAA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*, in the [Publications section of the NCAA website](#).

What are core courses?

This is the name that the NCAA gives to high school courses that meet certain academic criteria specified by the association. Students must complete a certain number of core courses for NCAA Division I and II eligibility.

How are high school courses classified as core courses?

All participating high schools submit lists of the courses that they offer that meet NCAA core-course criteria. If approved, the courses are added to a database that the NCAA Eligibility Center maintains. You can check this database or view a list of approved core courses on the [NCAA Eligibility Center High School Portal](#) to see whether your student-athletes are enrolled in courses that will count toward NCAA eligibility.

It is often the counselor who provides the NCAA with the list of your school's core courses and updates it annually. The NCAA may ask for more information before approving a core course.

What are the NCAA amateurism eligibility requirements?

To play sports at an NCAA Division I or II institution, the student athlete must follow NCAA amateurism rules about receiving a salary or prize money for athletic participation, playing with a professional team and other areas. For more information, see the *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*.

Five Things to Know About Recruiting

(From NCSA Athletic Recruiting)



When does the recruiting process start?

1. The athletic recruiting process started yesterday. You don't have to look far on the Internet to find lists of college sports prospects that are still in junior high. Ideally, you should begin thinking about athletic recruiting in the seventh or eighth grade, and by the beginning of freshman year you should have a good understanding of the NCAA rules and core course requirements. The recruiting process is complicated and time consuming, and waiting until the last minute is never a good idea if you're looking for an athletic scholarship.

How do I get discovered?

2. College coaches find athletic recruits based on third-party evaluations from trusted resources. You're an outstanding middle blocker. You run through linebackers like they're butter. You can routinely bury open three-pointers. Having the skill on the court or field doesn't necessarily mean you'll be spotted by college programs. College coaches work with experienced talent evaluators and rely on online resources to identify and discover top athletic prospects.

How do coaches evaluate prospects?

3. Make sure coaches see your highlight video and use the Internet as your most powerful recruiting tool. Highlight videos help college coaches determine talent. But coaches don't have the time to look at every video they receive, and they certainly can't spend hours scouring YouTube for clips. When a highlight video comes from a trusted recruiting expert at NCSA, that video doesn't get lost in the shuffle. Easy access to video highlights and statistics lets coaches find players that fit their system. Showcasing your skills on the Internet makes the athletic recruiting process easier for both you and the coaches you want to impress.

Where am I qualified to play?

4. Less than 1% of college athletes earn a Division I full ride. More than 1,800 colleges have athletic programs and 94% of them are outside of Division I. The majority of college athletes don't compete in Division I, so set your expectations accordingly. Most college athletes are at the Division II, Division III, NAIA or junior college level. An experienced talent evaluator can tell you exactly which level you should shoot for and where you're likely to find the most success.

What is my coach's role?

5. Your coach can take care of your development on the field or on the court, but getting an athletic scholarship is your responsibility. Ultimately, your athletic ability is what earns you a scholarship, but the recruiting process requires a lot of work off of the playing field. Your high school or club coach probably can't dedicate the time that the athletic recruiting process requires.

Tips for the Recruitment Process

If you anticipate being recruited, consider the following tips during your recruitment:

- Ask your coach(es) for an honest assessment of your ability, what level they think you can perform at
- Determine what you want; would you be happy being on the bench or second team for a strong team? Or would you rather see more playing time in a not as strong program?
- Ask for a recommendation from your coach, either in writing or by phone
- Consider making a video (if relevant to your sport)
- Consider attending a summer camp or tournament where college representative look for prospective players
- Email prospective coaches at schools in the spring of your Junior year including:
 - Formal letter of interest and request for more information
 - Transcript and Test Scores
 - Athletic resume
 - Current coach's contact information
 - Where you will be playing over the summer where the coach can see your abilities
- Potential Division I and II athletes register with NCAA Clearinghouse by the end of Junior year
- Keep a record of any correspondence/phone calls/emails from coaches
- Don't be afraid to ask where you rank among the rest of the recruits and what spots need to be filled in regards to graduating seniors currently on the team, what are your chances?
- If a coach is serious about you, ask them if they have shown your transcript to admission and deemed you "admissible"

Get Organized and Apply to College

Narrow your choices

Once you are certain that you are applying to a specific college, be sure to add it to Naviance section “Colleges I’m Applying To.”

Be sure to complete the FERPA waiver on Common App and link your Common App with your Naviance Account. (In September of Senior year, the counselors will go into the seniors classes to help them complete this task.)

Your college list should include approximately five to eight colleges, but there isn’t one magic number. Applying to too many colleges (over ten, generally) is expensive and unnecessary. Your list should break down as follows:

- One or two colleges where you feel you will most likely get in. These are usually called “safeties” or “backups”.
- Two to four colleges that are overall good matches. Your academic scores fall within the average range of those typically accepted.
- One or two “reach” colleges. These are the colleges that you may be very excited about, however, the average scores of those typically accepted are above your own.

Complete the “Senior Questionnaire” and “Parent Brag Sheet”

- Return these forms to your counselor early in your senior year. Both forms are valuable tools to ensure your counselor letter includes pertinent information.

Review each application’s individual requirements

- Be sure to note specific deadlines and required documents (transcript, teacher recommendations, senior mid-year grades, first quarter grades, SAT/ACT scores, application supplements, etc.).
- Determine your choice of application: Common Application, SUNY Application, CUNY Application, Coalition Application, individual college application, paper application vs. electronic application.
- Some applications require a “Part 2” or “Supplemental Application.”

Review the personal essay

- **Remember, this is your essay.** Although it is okay to get a second opinion, having someone else or AI heavily edit or write your essay is not allowed.
- **Refocus.** Does your main idea come across clearly? Do you prove your points with specific details? Read it aloud to make sure everything sounds right.
- **Get feedback.** Have someone you like and trust (someone likely to tell you the truth) read your essay. Ask them to tell you what they think you are trying to convey. Did they get it right?
- **Edit down.** Your language should be simple, direct and clear. Make every word count.
- **Proofread two more times.** Careless spelling or grammatical errors, awkward language or fuzzy logic will detract from your essay.

Teacher Recommendations

You should have at least one academic recommendation. Many colleges require two.

- Personally ask a teacher for a recommendation and provide the Earl L. Vandermeulen **Teacher Recommendation Request Form** to him/her. Be sure to ask an academic teacher from the past few years, someone with whom you have a good relationship and who knows something about you and the way you think.
- Teachers are usually happy to help you, as long as you respect their time constraints. Teachers spend a significant amount of time writing on your behalf, so be mindful to ask them well in advance so they are not rushed, **at least FOUR WEEKS ahead of your first deadline**.
- Once teachers have agreed to write, be sure to invite in NAVIANCE each teacher writing on your behalf so that your letter can be submitted electronically.
- Follow up with your recommendation writers a few weeks prior to your first application deadline to ensure the recommendations have been submitted, or to see if additional information is required.
- Once you have decided which college to attend, write thank you notes to everyone who provided a recommendation and tell them where you have decided to go to college. Be sure to do this before you leave high school.

Request Official Transcript

Be sure to list in the NAVIANCE section “Colleges I’m Applying To” each college to which you are applying. Submit one “College Transcript Processing Form” (*Pink Sheet*) to the guidance office for each college to which you are applying. The *pink sheet* is your way of requesting your school credentials be sent to the admissions offices (transcript, letters of recommendation, school reports). *Pink sheets* should be submitted to the guidance office **no later than TWO WEEKS prior** to the actual application deadline.

Request official scores

In order for the colleges to receive your OFFICIAL SCORES from SAT, ACT, or TOEFL, you must specifically request score reports from the respective testing program. A small fee per report is customary. When you register to take these exams, you may take advantage of sending free reports by indicating those colleges *at the time of registration only*. You should arrange to send your scores to each college to which you are applying. If you are a prospective Division I or II collegiate athlete, you also need to provide the NCAA with your official score report. The NCAA institution code for requesting scores is 9999.

Portfolio/Audition/NCAA

- Be clear about specific portfolio or audition guidelines and deadlines.
- <http://www.slideroom.com/> is a widely used portfolio application site.
- Prospective Division I or Division II athletes must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse (www.eligibilitycenter.org). Also let your counselor know your hope to participate in athletics in college to ensure that all NCAA requirements are being met while still in high school.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

National Association for College Admission Counseling

Your Rights when Applying

Before You Apply

- You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from schools about their admission, cost, financial aid, practices, policies and housing.

When You Are Offered Admission

- You have the right to wait to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid until May 1st
- Schools that request commitments to admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1st must clearly offer you the opportunity to request, in writing, an extension until May 1st. They must grant you this extension and your request cannot jeopardize your status, this does NOT apply to Early Decision applicants.

If You Are Placed on a Wait List

- The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the waitlist, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing
- Colleges may require neither a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition of remaining on the Wait List
- Colleges are expected to notify you of the resolution of your Wait List status by August 1st at the latest

Your Responsibilities when Applying

Before You Apply

- You have a responsibility to do your research and understand the policies/procedures of each school regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships and housing. You should also be sure you understand the policies of each school regarding deposits that might be required before you enroll.

As You Apply

- You must complete all materials required and submit it before or on the deadline. You should be the only author of your applications.
- You should seek the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application process.
- It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at schools of your choice.

After You Receive a Decision

- You must notify each school which accepts you whether or not you are accepting or rejecting their offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you know but no later than May 1st.
- You may confirm your intention to enroll and submit a deposit, if required, to only one school. The only exception is if you are placed on a Wait List and are later admitted. If this happens you must immediately notify the school to which you previously indicated your intention to enroll.
- If you are accepted Early Decision, you must promptly withdraw all other applications.

TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE PROCESS

FRESHMAN YEAR

1. Focus on class work and achieve the best grades possible in your courses.
2. Join interesting clubs, sports, and activities.
3. Participate in community service opportunities. Minimum 32 hours of community service are required for high school graduation.
4. Meet with your counselor to review midyear progress, and to plan for sophomore year course load.
5. Establish your Naviance Family Connection account if you have not already done so. Counselors will help students establish an account and provide a classroom presentation on the many features of the program.
6. Plan for meaningful summer work, volunteer experience, and leadership opportunities.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. Focus on class work and achieve the best grades possible in your courses.
2. Join interesting clubs, sports, and activities.
3. Participate in community service opportunities.
4. Consider taking PSAT in October for SAT practice/preparation. Use PSAT results as learning tool for improvement on future SAT (taken in spring of junior year).
5. Discuss ideas about careers and colleges with family and friends. Contemplate career interests and academic strengths; consider future career goals and possible college majors.
6. Talk to your counselor about potential opportunities at Eastern Long Island Academy of Applied Technology (BOCES).
7. Communicate ideas/concerns/questions to your counselor.
8. Continue to use Naviance Family Connection. Counselors will work with students in the classroom using the program.
9. Meet with your counselor to review academic progress and to plan for junior year course load.
10. Plan for meaningful summer work, volunteer experience, and leadership opportunities.

JUNIOR YEAR

1. Focus on class work and achieve the best grades possible in your courses.
2. Pursue clubs, sports, and activities that hone and refine special talents and interests, particularly those that demonstrate leadership qualities.
3. Participate in community service opportunities.
4. Visit college fairs, talk to friends and alumni, and utilize various college search resources to investigate colleges. Think about the type of college (size, location, etc.) that suits you and the major/career fields that interest you.
5. **OCTOBER:** Take the PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). Use PSAT results as learning tool for improvement on SAT Reasoning Test.
6. **JANUARY/FEBRUARY:** Meet with your counselor to review midyear academic progress and to plan for senior year course load.
7. **FEBRUARY:** Attend College Information Night with your parent/guardian. Use Naviance Family Connection to explore the many college research features of the site. Add schools to the “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list
8. **MARCH/APRIL:** Attend your individual Junior College Planning Conference with your parent/guardian and guidance counselor to discuss interests, develop a list of colleges, and more clearly define your specific college plan. Utilize Naviance to organize and research colleges you are thinking about.
9. Attend open houses, information sessions and tour colleges that interest you.
10. Research colleges’ admission requirements: GPA, SAT/ACT Test requirements, and application deadlines. Utilize Naviance “scattergrams” feature to compare your scores with other applicants.
11. **MARCH, MAY, JUNE:** Register for and take the SAT and/or ACT.
12. **MAY:** Take appropriate AP Exams.
13. Request letters of recommendation from two teachers for college applications.
14. Plan for meaningful summer work, volunteer experience, and leadership opportunities.

SENIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER

1. Focus on your classes and achieve the best grades possible in your senior program.
2. Participate in community service opportunities (32 hours required for graduation).
3. Attend in person and virtual college visits at the high school (appointments can be made on Naviance), and utilize college search websites.
4. Research colleges' admission requirements, SAT/ACT testing requirements, and application deadlines. Utilize Naviance to organize and research colleges.
5. Arrange campus visits, interviews, and open houses (schools may offer both in person and virtual options).
6. Register for SAT Reasoning Test/ACT exams/retakes (if required).
7. Complete Senior Questionnaire and Parent Brag Sheet and submit to the Guidance Office.
8. Follow up with the teachers with whom you have requested a letter of recommendation and provide them with your earliest deadline.
9. If you have not done so already, establish a Common Application account (commonapp.org). Utilize Common Application if available for your colleges.
10. If you have not done so already, complete the FERPA waiver in Common App and link it with your Naviance account. (Students will do this in class with the Counselors).
11. Indicate in Naviance: 1) colleges to which you are applying and 2) Teachers who will be writing your letters of recommendation.
12. File NCAA Clearinghouse form if you hope to play Division I or Division II sports in college.
13. Applicants for Performing Arts or Fine Arts must research specific details about audition and portfolio requirements through each individual college.
14. Pursue clubs, sports, and activities, when available, that hone and refine special talents and interests, particularly those that demonstrate leadership qualities.
15. Attend the Financial Aid Night at the high school. Updates for the FAFSA will be discussed.

OCTOBER

1. Start completing your applications, especially if you are applying Early Action or Early Decision. Draft essays for applications and have them proofread.
2. If you have not done so already, indicate in Naviance: 1) colleges to which you are applying and 2) Teachers who have agreed to write your letter of recommendation.
3. Utilize the *HS Transcript Request Form* (pink sheet) to request your transcript and letters of recommendation be sent to colleges. Submit *HS Transcript Request Form* to the guidance office at least **TWO WEEKS** prior to the college's application deadline. It is the student's responsibility to know each college's deadline.
4. Due to changes in FAFSA, the exact release date is not yet confirmed. Check regularly to see if FAFSA has become available. Some schools are requiring the CSS profile form or submission of tax returns for early admissions. Please check with each school for specific financial aid requirements.
5. Re-take the SAT/ACT exam if you choose.

6. If you plan to send your testing scores, request official SAT/ACT scores be sent from the testing organization directly (collegeboard.org or actstudent.org). If applying Early Action or Early Decision, make sure you are aware of the deadline for sending test scores.
7. Research scholarships for which you may be eligible by reading the Guidance Scholarship Newsletter on Naviance and using internet search engines.

NOVEMBER

1. Early Decision/Early Action deadlines are often November 1 or November 15. Regular Decision deadlines fall between October 1 and February 1, but it is best to apply early. Have all *HS Transcript Request Forms* (pink sheets) submitted to Guidance by either Thanksgiving or December holiday vacation. NOTE: for all January 1 application deadlines, the *HS Transcript Request Form* must be submitted to Guidance by December 2.
2. Finalize applications and essays. Proofread everything TWICE!
3. Re-take the SAT/ACT if necessary.
4. If you have not done so already and are planning to send your scores, request official SAT/ACT scores from the testing organization directly.
5. If you would like first quarter grades sent to any school, please submit the *First Quarter Grade Request Form* (blue sheet) found in the Guidance Office.

DECEMBER – MAY

1. Follow-up on any missing details. Check-in with your counselor.
2. Often times, colleges will solely communicate via email or through their school portal. You should check both regularly.
3. Continue to focus on maintaining solid senior grades. Colleges receive midyear and final transcripts with your grades.
4. Complete the FAFSA (once available) and any additional financial aid forms required by each individual school, i.e. CSS Profile.
5. Colleges traditionally notify of acceptance during the month of March. There is a universal deposit deadline of May 1 to secure your place at the school you choose.
6. Communicate to your counselor all college acceptances and scholarship awards.
7. Complete application for local scholarship selection.
8. Complete your Senior Survey and request your banner!
9. Thank your teachers who supported you with letters of recommendation and let them know your chosen college!

Financing Your Education

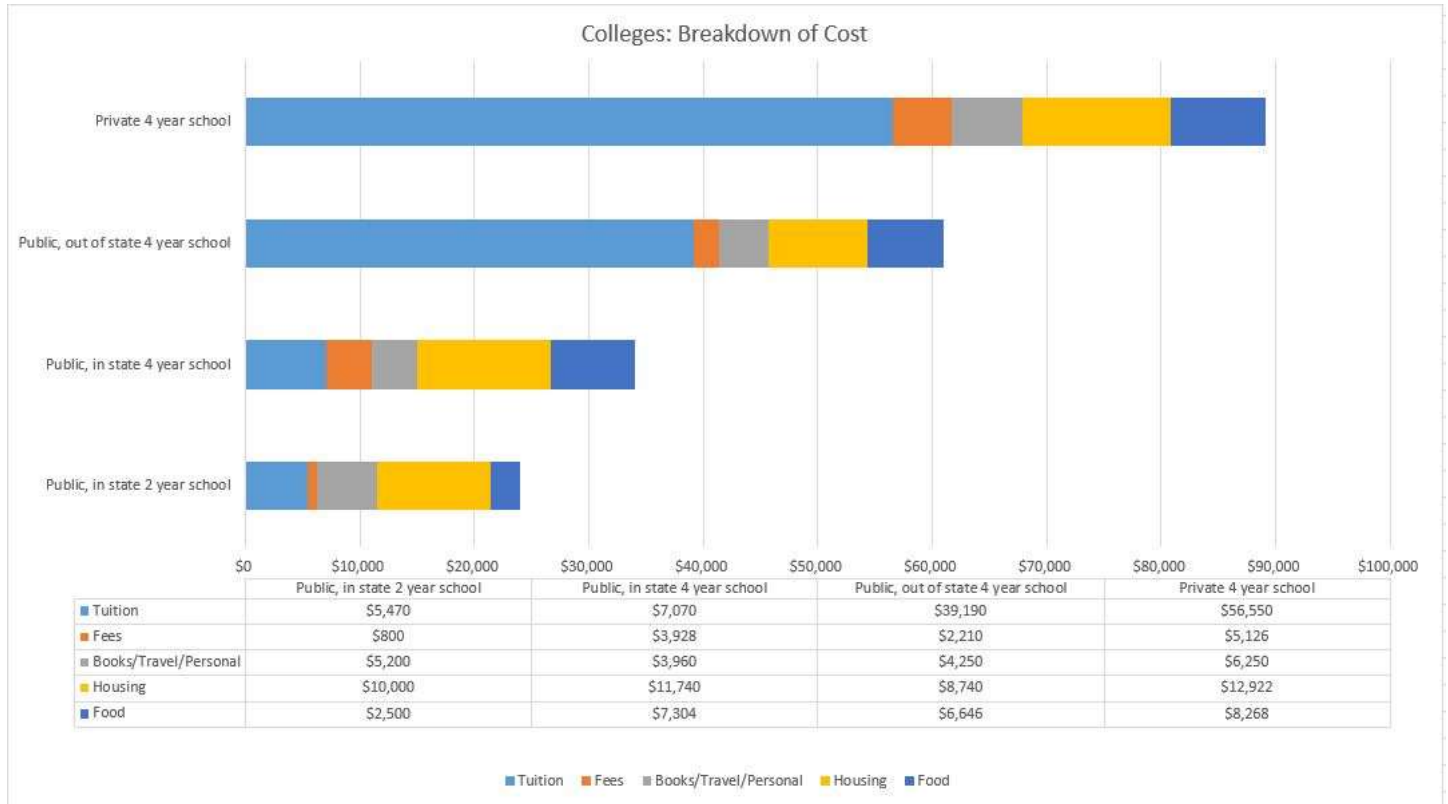
The Cost of College and Financial Aid



The Cost of College

The cost of a school does not end at the price tag on tuition, room and board. A college student will also be paying for books, supplies, personal expenses, and if they are living off campus there will also be transportation, housing, and living expenses.

Average Estimated Full-Time Undergraduate Budgets (based off of data from SCCC, Stony Brook University, University of Delaware and Harvard)



- **Tuition and fees:** These are the costs of your education. They may vary based on your academic program and number of credit hours.
- **Room and board:** Many colleges require that incoming students live on campus and choose a meal plan. The charges will vary depending on the room and the meal plan you choose. If you plan to live off campus, you will need to make your own estimate of these expenses.
- **Books and supplies:** This expense covers your course materials.
- **Personal expenses:** The cost for things like travel, laundry and telephone fall under personal expenses.

College Cost Estimator/Net Price Calculator: Located on the Financial Aid page of many colleges' websites, you can input specific family income information to determine estimated financial aid for which you may be eligible. These are estimated figures only. Once you have applied for admission, you must still apply for Financial Aid in order to receive a formal financial aid award package.

FAFSA4caster: This tool can be found at www.fafsa.ed.gov. By providing some basic family financial information, you can "forecast" an estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid. This site will also help you understand your options for paying for college.

FINANCIAL AID

Overview of FAFSA & CSS PROFILE

- The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (or FAFSA)** is the financial aid application form you will need to apply for federal and state student grants, work-study and loans.
- You can complete, submit and track your application using FAFSA on the Web at www.fafsa.ed.gov. This is the easiest way to apply for federal aid. The FAFSA can be submitted starting October 1 of the student's senior year.
- The **CSS Profile** is a separate financial aid form required by certain schools in addition to the FAFSA. Sometimes Early Decision and Early Action applicants are asked to complete this form prior to submitting the FAFSA. After applying for admission, it is advisable to contact the financial aid office at each school to inquire about any additional forms required for scholarship or financial aid consideration.

FAFSA

The FAFSA, (Free Application for Federal Student Aid,) is vital in the Financial Aid process for colleges. The FAFSA process involves completing the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" form online, where students provide details about their financial situation to determine their eligibility for federal financial aid like grants, loans, and work-study programs, which is then used by colleges to create personalized aid packages based on their cost of attendance and the student's calculated need; essentially, it's a standardized application that helps students access federal financial aid for college tuition and fees. You are eligible to file your FAFSA as soon as October 1st of your Senior year.

(Need help? Call FAFSA Support at 1-800-433-3243)

Types of Federal Student Aid

- GRANTS**
Gift aid that doesn't have to be repaid.
- FEDERAL WORK-STUDY**
Money that is earned and doesn't have to be repaid.
- LOANS**
Borrowed money that must be repaid.

Note: The amounts listed are for one academic year of school. Talk to your school about how your aid will be disbursed.

Federal Student Aid
AN OFFICE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Program Name	Maximum Scheduled Award Amounts <small>(subject to change)</small>
Federal Pell Grant (2024-25)	up to \$7,395
Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	up to \$4,000
Teacher Educational Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant	up to \$3,772
Federal Work-Study	varies by SCHOOL
Direct Subsidized Loans	up to \$5,500 <small>Depending on grade level and dependency status</small>
Direct Unsubsidized Loans	up to \$20,500
Direct PLUS Loans	varies by STUDENT <small>Based on cost of attendance minus other financial aid received</small>

Different types of student aid have their own eligibility requirements and maximum award amounts.

FAFSA® Simplification Fact Sheet

Overview

FAFSA® Simplification Act

On Dec. 27, 2020, Congress passed the *Consolidated Appropriations Act*. The law includes provisions that amend the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by *Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act* and includes the *FAFSA Simplification Act*—a sweeping redesign of the processes and systems used to award federal student aid. Specifically, the law makes it easier for students and families to complete and submit the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)* form and expands access to federal student aid.

Benefits to Students, Families, and Borrowers

Expanding access to federal aid

The Student Aid Index (SAI) will replace the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) on the FAFSA form. Students and families will see a different measure of their ability to pay for college and experience a change in the methodology used to determine aid. In addition to the SAI, the *FAFSA Simplification Act* will expand the Federal Pell Grant to more students and link eligibility to family size and the federal poverty level. New eligibility formulas and funding are estimated to increase Pell Grant recipients by nearly 15%. Incarcerated students will regain the ability to receive a Pell Grant, and Pell Grant lifetime eligibility will be restored to students whose school closed while they were enrolled, or where subject to a false certification, identity theft, or a borrower defense loan discharge.

The law also repeals the lifetime limit on the period for which a borrower can receive subsidized loans of up to 150% of program length (often referred to as Subsidized Usage Limit Applies).

Streamlining the FAFSA® form

Where possible, the *FAFSA Simplification Act* mandates that the U.S. Department of Education office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) use federal tax information (FTI) received directly from the IRS to calculate Pell Grant eligibility and SAI. This data exchange was made possible by the *FUTURE Act*, which FSA will implement alongside FAFSA simplification. The law also removes questions about Selective Service registration and drug convictions and adds questions about applicants' sex and race/ethnicity. Additionally, students who are homeless, orphans, former foster youth, or who have other unusual circumstances that prevent them from providing parental information on their FAFSA form, will benefit from simplified questions and processes that more efficiently determine their independent status.

By the 2024–25 award year, resources for completing the FAFSA form will be expanded to the 11 most common languages spoken in the United States. Additional language specific support will be available from the Federal Student Aid Information Center.

NEW Requirements for Higher Education Institutions

New definitions of cost of attendance (COA)

The *FAFSA Simplification Act* makes COA the starting point for calculating the Student Aid Index (SAI). The formula is: $COA - SAI = \text{financial need}$. Schools will need to make more information about COA publicly available to students and their families, including loan fees and other costs that students may directly or indirectly pay to complete their program of study.

Professional judgment: Expanded rules for financial aid professionals

Financial aid professionals at institutions will have additional flexibility in adjusting a student's eligibility for federal student aid—known as professional judgment—due to special or unusual circumstances. This expansion will help certain students that have unique family situations, such as a loss of income or a change in housing status. The law also provides additional flexibility for financial aid professionals to assist students who cannot provide parental information on their FAFSA form (e.g., homeless youth, orphans, foster youth).

Schools will have the ability to address a student's special or unusual circumstances by adjusting their COA, the student's dependency status on their FAFSA form, the components that determine Pell Grants, or all the above. As is the case with COA, schools will need to make their policies and procedures for reviewing professional judgments publicly available.



Additional Resources:



1. **FSA Partner Emails** - Subscribe to receive ongoing email updates from Federal Student Aid: outreach.fsapartners.ed.gov



2. **Financial Aid Toolkit** - Find outreach tools to help guide others through the FAFSA simplification changes: financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/bfbf



3. **FSA Training Center** - Gain access to on-demand training courses, tools, and videos for financial aid professionals: fsatraining.ed.gov



4. **Knowledge Center** - Obtain official policy guidance and access to other FSA administrative websites for financial aid professionals: fsapartners.ed.gov/-center



5. **Customer Service Center** - Connect with FSA service centers to assist students, parents, and borrowers: fsapartners.ed.gov/help-center/fsa-customer-service-center

Creating a StudentAid.gov Account

Every contributor—anyone (you, your spouse, a biological or adoptive parent, or your parent's spouse) who's required to provide information on the FAFSA form—needs a StudentAid.gov account before accessing and completing their section of the online form. We strongly recommend you and your contributor(s) [create StudentAid.gov accounts](#) before starting your FAFSA form. When you create your account, be careful to enter your name and Social Security number (SSN) exactly as they appear on your Social Security card. You and your contributors can access the StudentAid.gov account by using an FSA ID (account username and password).

Note: Contributors without an SSN can create a StudentAid.gov account too to fill out their portion of your FAFSA form online.

To start the online FAFSA form, select “Log In To Start.” You’ll be taken to the “Log In” page to enter your account username and password. After logging in, you’ll be given the option to select your applicable role to fill out the FAFSA form: “Student” or “Parent.” You (the student) should select “Student.” If a parent wants to start their dependent child’s FAFSA form, they should select the “Parent” option.

Gathering Needed Documents

You might need the following information or documents as you fill out the FAFSA form:

- Your parents’ SSNs if they have SSNs and you're a [dependent student](#)
- Tax returns
- Records of child support received
- Current balances of cash, savings, and checking accounts
- Net worth of investments, businesses, and farms

Keep these records! You may need them again.

One thing you don’t need in order to fill out the FAFSA? Money! Remember, the FAFSA is FREE when you use the official .gov site: www.fafsa.gov.

Getting Help

If you need help filling out the [FAFSA form](#), use these free tools:

- In the online FAFSA form, select the question mark icon next to a FAFSA question to view a “tool tip” that provides information about how to answer that question.
- Visit the [“FAFSA® Help”](#) to find answers to common questions.
- In the online form, chat with Aidan®, our virtual assistant.
- Chat with, email, or find a phone number for the [Federal Student Aid Information Center](#).
- Contact the financial aid office at the college or career/trade school you plan to attend.

Starting Your FAFSA® Form

The 2025–26 FAFSA form is available now for the award year that runs from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. We encourage you to fill out the form as soon as possible on or after the applicable FAFSA launches to meet [FAFSA federal, state, and school deadlines](#)

If you are starting the FAFSA form for the first time on fafsa.gov, select “Log In To Start” and enter your account username and password to access the FAFSA form.

If you are applying for a summer session, contact the financial aid office at your college or career/trade school to find out which school year you should select when you complete your FAFSA form.

Listing Colleges and/or Career Schools

While completing the FAFSA form, you must list at least one school to receive your information. The schools you list will use your FAFSA information to determine the types and amounts of student aid you may receive. Use the [School Search](#) to find the colleges or career/trade schools you’re interested in including on your FAFSA form.

For federal student aid purposes, the order of schools for your college list does not matter. However, to be considered for state aid, some states require you to list schools in a particular order (for instance, you might need to list a state school first). Find out whether your state has a [requirement for the order in which you list schools](#) on your FAFSA form.

You can list up to 20 schools online or up to 10 schools on a FAFSA PDF. (You can [add or delete schools on your FAFSA form](#) later.) Schools you list on the application will automatically receive your FAFSA results electronically.

Note: Schools will not be able to see which other schools you listed on your FAFSA form.

Determining Your Dependency Status

The FAFSA form asks a series of questions that determine whether you are a dependent or [independent student](#) for purposes of applying for federal student aid. If you are a [dependent student](#), you must report parent information, as well as your own information, on your application. If you’re curious, you can [find out now whether you’re a dependent student](#).

Reporting Parents’ Information

If you’re a dependent student, you’ll need to report parent information on your FAFSA form. Visit our page on [reporting parent information](#) to find out who counts as your parent, what to do if you don’t live with your parents, and what to do if you don’t have access to your parents’ financial information.

Providing Financial Information

The FAFSA form asks for financial information, including information from tax forms and balances of savings and checking accounts.

- The 2025–26 FAFSA form asks for [2023 tax information](#).

- The 2024–25 FAFSA form asks for [2022 tax information](#).

Note: If your or your family’s financial situation has changed significantly from what is reflected on your federal income tax return (for example, if you’ve lost a job or otherwise experienced a drop in income), you may be eligible to have your financial aid adjusted. Complete the FAFSA questions as instructed on the application, submit your FAFSA form, then contact the school you plan to attend to discuss how your current financial situation has changed. Note that the school’s decision is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education.

What to Do If Your Parents’ (or Your) Marital Status Has Changed Since Taxes Were Filed

Here are some tips for this type of situation using the example of the 2025–26 FAFSA form:

- The FAFSA form asks for marital status “as of today” (the day it’s filled out). So, if the student or parent is married now but wasn’t in 2023 (and therefore didn’t file taxes as married), the spouse’s 2023 income will need to be added to the FAFSA form.
- Similarly, if the student or parent filed 2023 taxes as married but is no longer married when filling out the FAFSA form, the spouse’s income will need to be subtracted.
- And if the student or parent was married when filing 2023 taxes, then got divorced and is now married to someone else, the current spouse will need to report their own income as a contributor.

The FAFSA help text covers all these situations in more detail as you’re filling out the application.

Automatically Transferring Your Tax Information

Your contributor’s federal tax information will be transferred from the IRS into your FAFSA form.

All contributors must provide consent and approval for the U.S. Department of Education to

- disclose their personally identifiable information provided on the FAFSA form to the IRS to match their information with their tax information;
- obtain their federal tax information from the IRS and include with the FAFSA form;
- use their federal tax information to determine your [Student Aid Index](#) and Federal Pell Grant eligibility;
- share their federal tax information with colleges, career/trade schools, and state higher education agencies for use in awarding and administering financial aid; and
- reuse their federal tax information on another FAFSA applicant’s form (e.g., if a parent has multiple dependent students or for a parent’s own FAFSA form as an aid applicant).

NOTE: Even if contributors don’t have an SSN, didn’t file taxes, or filed taxes outside of the U.S., they will still need to provide consent and approval.

IMPORTANT: If a required contributor doesn’t provide consent and approval to have their federal tax information transferred into the FAFSA form, you (the student) will not be eligible for federal student aid—even if the contributor manually enters tax information into the FAFSA form.

To ensure the information is secure, the federal tax information won’t display on the FAFSA site or the [FAFSA Submission Summary](#).

Signing and Submitting the FAFSA® Form

After you complete your required section of the FAFSA form online, you'll acknowledge the terms and conditions of the form and electronically sign your section. You can then submit your section of the FAFSA form. However, your FAFSA form won't be considered complete until all required contributors provide their information on the FAFSA form, give their consent and approval to transfer federal tax information into the form, and provide their signatures.

After you and your parent (and/or any other required contributor) sign and submit the FAFSA form, the form will be considered complete and will be submitted for processing.

If you submit the FAFSA form, you'll see a confirmation page that displays your completion date, data release number, and next steps. You'll also see your estimated Student Aid Index, estimated Federal Pell Grant eligibility, and information about other federal student aid for which you may be eligible. This confirmation page is emailed automatically to you for your records.

Note: The Student Aid Index on the confirmation page is only an estimate. The official Student Aid Index will appear on the FAFSA Submission Summary.

Taking the Next Steps

Once you've completed your FAFSA form, there are more steps you have to take before you receive financial aid. Use the link to make sure you know [what happens after you submit your FAFSA form](#).

CSS Profile

Your CSS Profile, also called your Financial Profile, stands for College Scholarship Service Profile and is often required by private schools in addition to the FAFSA. It is important to review each college's financial aid requirements to verify whether or not this form is required and to identify the deadline for filing. College Board supplies the application for students for a small fee, and in turn, schools and scholarship organizations use the information reported to determine the type and amount of financial aid given out. This form is typically utilized by schools who offer Early Decision option, and is often due around the same timeline as the application for admission so if the student is accepted under the Early Decision program, the college can provide a financial aid award shortly thereafter. You can access the CSS Profile at: <http://css.collegeboard.org/>

Forms of Financial Aid

Grants – Also called gift aid. Grants do not have to be repaid and you do not need to work to earn them. Grant aid comes from federal and state governments and individual colleges.

Loans – Most financial aid comes in the form of loans, i.e., aid that must be repaid. Most loans that are awarded based on financial need are low-interest loans sponsored by the federal government. Types of loans include:

Unsubsidized

An unsubsidized loan means you pay all the interest on the loan yourself. Students usually have this loan deferred until after graduation and the interest just gets added to the overall balance.

Subsidized

A subsidized loan is different from unsubsidized in that the government pays the interest while you are in school.

Parent Plus Loan

The Parent PLUS Loan is a federal loan that provides affordable financing to parents and guardians to cover educational expenses including tuition, housing, supplies, etc.

Work Study – Student employment and work-study aid helps students pay for education costs such as books, supplies and personal expenses. Work-study is a federal program that provides students with part-time employment to help meet their financial needs and gives them work experience while serving their campuses and surrounding communities. These jobs are typically part time and range in anything from working the reception desk in the athletic center, to answering phones in Student Service, and even serving as a Student Ambassador. While the income from these positions may be listed as part of your financial aid package, you will not receive this money up front. You will still need to pay this as part of your student account, and have the opportunity to earn this money back during the semester. Income earned through work study is exempt from the following year's federal calculation for Expected Family Contribution.

Scholarships

Below are several sources where information about scholarships can be found. Be sure to thoroughly investigate all options.

Free Scholarship Search Service

NAVIANCE Student provides access to a national scholarship search and also provides scholarship information listed in our monthly Scholarship Newsletter. Students can access scholarship applications and organize/manage their scholarship list.

Scholarship Search Engines collect information on hundreds of awards and compares your student characteristics with scholarship restrictions. Based on your answers to a questionnaire, you will receive a list of possible scholarships. Suggested scholarship search engines are indicated below.

Important: Watch out for scams that charge students for information that is available for free. You should never have to pay for scholarship information or applications.

Other Sources of Money

Local Scholarships

Seniors are encouraged to complete a Local Scholarship Application in spring of senior year. By applying, students are eligible for various scholarship awards donated by local organizations and businesses. All students are encouraged to apply. Awards are presented at Senior Awards Night.

Membership Organizations and Employers

- Explore categories you might not have considered, such as religious community service, fraternal, military, union and professional.
- Don't forget your parents. Many large companies offer scholarships or tuition programs for children of employees.
- Don't overlook student jobs. Employers such as fast food chains, department stores and supermarkets often give scholarships.

Institutional Scholarships

- Research what kinds of scholarships are available at the schools that interest you.
- Check out colleges' financial aid website pages for scholarship information or contact the Financial Aid offices directly for this information.
- Eligibility for scholarships can be based on merit, financial need, intended major, ethnicity or a variety of other factors.

Don't Miss Out

- Attend Earl L. Vandermeulen's Financial Aid Night in the fall of senior year. A review of the FAFSA and all forms of Financial Aid is provided, and questions answered.
- Peruse the Guidance Department's Scholarship Newsletter, which is published monthly and posted on the Guidance page of the District Website under Document Manager. This information is also available through NAVIANCE Student on the right hand side of the home page.
- In March of senior year, complete an application for Local Scholarships. By completing this one application, you will be eligible for a variety of scholarships donated by local business and organizations. These awards are given at the Senior Awards Ceremony in early June.

Financial Aid Websites

FastWEB (Online Scholarship Search):

<http://www.fastweb.com> ... a highly popular, customized financial aid search.

Scholarships.com (Online Scholarship Search):

<https://www.scholarships.com/>... a place where you can search for nationwide scholarships

Financial Aid Information Page:

www.FinAid.org ... click on Scholarships to access a selection of scholarship search databases including the College Board's Fund Finder, an incredible resource with numerous links.

Student Guide (U. S. Department of Education):

<http://studentaid.ed.gov> ... The Department's Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs are the largest source of student aid in America.

Higher Education Services Corp:

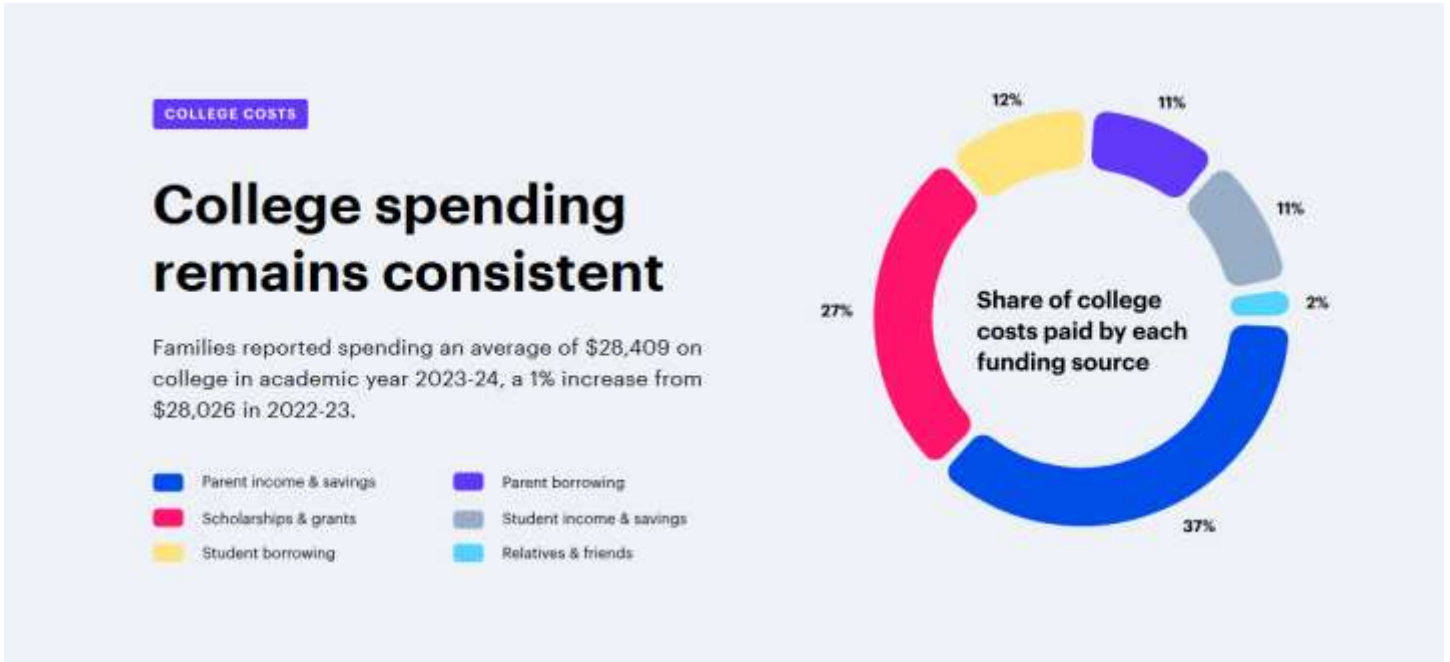
www.hesc.ny.gov New York State's Higher Education Student Financial Aid Agency.

Naviance :

<https://connection.naviance.com/family-connection/auth/login/?hsid=vandermeulen> National scholarship search engine posted in searchable list format—login to account (login info available at PJHS Guidance Department).



Paying for Your Education



Sallie Mae; How America Pays for College. 2024

Financial Aid Packages/Award Letters

Once you have been accepted to a school and you have submitted your FAFSA (and CSS Profile, if required), you will receive a Financial Aid Package, or Award Letter. This will include all the aid the school is offering a student from Federal Loans, Scholarships, Academic or Athletic Awards, Merit-Based awards and even Work Study Placement.

How does financial aid work?

If you need help paying for school, your first step is to look into [financial aid](#). To get financial aid for school, filling out the [FAFSA®](#) (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is a must-do. The FAFSA® is used by colleges to determine how much financial aid they can offer you for one school year. Financial aid offers include [grants](#), [scholarships](#), [work-study](#), [federal student loans](#), and school and state aid to help families from various income levels cover college costs.

When will I receive a financial aid offer letter?

Financial aid offer letters get sent out after you're accepted into your school(s). When you receive these offers depends on when you applied to school. Many schools send financial aid information out around the time they send admission letters. However, submitting your [FAFSA®](#) or college applications late, the amount of FAFSA® forms schools receive, being [waitlisted](#), and more could lead to your financial aid offer letters coming later than expected. For more information on when you'll receive your financial aid offer letters, contact your school's financial aid office.

Decoding your financial aid offer

Got all your financial aid offers? All financial aid offers look different, and you may have some questions about all the different [grants](#), [scholarships](#), [work-study](#), and [federal loans](#) you've been offered. Here's the rundown of what all the information in your financial aid offer means.

What information is listed in a financial aid offer?

Cost of Attendance (COA)

One of the most important figures you'll spot first in your financial aid offer is the cost of attendance (COA). Each school breaks the cost down per academic year. The COA is your estimated cost to go to that school. It includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, loan fees (if applicable), meal plans, and more. Remember, this number is just an estimate. Take the time to consider the true amount you'll spend. Are you commuting a long distance? Would you be willing to buy used textbooks instead of new? There are lots of factors that could bring your personal cost of school up or down.

Student Aid Index (SAI)

The Student Aid Index (SAI) is the revamped Expected Family Contribution (EFC). It's an index number [calculated by the FAFSA®](#) that lets your school know how much and what types of financial aid you need. The numbers range from -1500 to 999999. A negative SAI means you have high financial need, while a positive SAI means your financial need is lower.¹

Grants

Grants are free money you don't have to pay back, and they tend to be need-based. You can get them from federal and state governments, schools, or private institutions. Common grants that may be in your financial aid offer are the Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FESOG), Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants, and Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grants.² Grants aren't always offered every year, so make sure you stay eligible for them.

Scholarships

Scholarships are another form of free money to help students pay for school, and they can be offered based on merit, financial need, talent, community service, academics, or more. Like grants, not all scholarships are renewable each year, so make sure you maintain eligibility just in case. Some scholarships are school-specific and you've earned them for meeting that particular school's criteria. Other scholarships you may see in your financial aid offers can be based on:

Merit

Financial need

Community service

Academics

State of residence

Information from the SallieMae website

MAKING A DECISION

How to choose between several acceptances:

- Do some soul-searching to figure out which of your colleges would provide the best fit for you. Consider and prioritize location, size, mix of students, academics, extracurricular activities and facilities.
- Although this decision is ultimately a personal one, it never hurts to ask for advice from people who know you well and care about your future, like your parents, counselors, friends or relatives.
- Get first-hand knowledge about what it is really like to attend a particular college from current students. Don't be afraid to ask frank questions—your future college will be your home, school and work for the next four years.
- Visiting a college's campus can help break a deadlock if you can't decide between two or more colleges. At this point, a campus visit is less about facts and figures than intuition and whether or not you click with a school.
- If you receive offers of financial aid from more than one college, use the College Board's **Compare Your Aid Awards** tool to compare:
 - Total amount of aid awarded
 - Family share of costs
 - Percentage of gift aid (grants and scholarships) versus self-help aid (work-study loans) for up to four schools, side by side.



Calculate your net price for each school to see which aid offer is better for you.

- Colleges expect your final decision by **May 1** (Universal Enrollment Deadline), so you have about one month to make up your mind. Try to keep your options open in case circumstances change (e.g., you decide to change your intended major).
- Once you have made a decision, send in your acceptance letter. Don't forget to let all of the schools that offered you admission your final choice. A simple letter thanking them for their consideration, but declining their offer will do.
- Remember to send a brief note thanking those teachers who supported your application by writing a letter of recommendation and let them know where you've decided to attend.
- **Congratulations, you have made it to the end of the process!** Remember to keep up with all of the paperwork your college sends you over the summer and, if you have questions, call us or the admissions office at your new college.

Glossary

Accelerated Program - A college program of study that is completed in less time. This is often done by taking courses through the summer, or having a larger than normal course load during the normal school year.

Accreditation - Recognition by an accrediting organization/agency that a school meets standards regarding its facilities, services, and educational programs. Regional Accreditation refers to the college as a whole whereas Specialized Accreditation refers to specific types of schools or programs.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams - AP Exams are taken in May and are offered to students enrolled in AP courses. High scores on these tests can often transfer to college credit for most schools.

ACT (American College Testing) - Multiple choice achievement test that measures abilities in the following areas: English, Math, Reading and Natural science reasoning. Can be used in place of the SAT at most colleges.

Associate Degree - A degree program completed in at least two but less than four years.

Bachelor's Degree - A degree program completed with undergraduate programs, typically completed in four years.

College Scholarship Services (CSS) - A service from College Board that assists post-secondary schools, the government, and scholarship associations in the equal distribution of student financial aid funds. This is done by measuring a family's financial strength and analyzing the ability to contribute to the cost of college.

Common Application - An undergraduate college admission application that applicants may use to apply to any of 517 member colleges and universities in 47 states and the District of Columbia, as well as in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.

Consortium - Two or more colleges provide joint services and academic programs to students enrolled in member institutions. These are typically neighboring colleges, students at one campus are allowed to attend courses on the other.

Cooperative Education - A program where students alternate between periods of full-time course loads and full-time employment in a related field. Students are paid for their work, typically five years are required to complete a bachelor's degree under a cooperative plan.

CSS Profile - A form filed through the College Scholarship Service for students seeking any type of campus-based aid at private institutions. Examples of this aid include grants, work study, scholarships etc.

Deferred Admission - Permits the students to postpone enrollment for one year after acceptance to college.

Double Major - Any program of study where the student completes the course work for two majors concurrently.

Early Action - Similar to Early Decision, but it is not binding. If you have been accepted you can commit immediately or wait until spring.

Early Decision - Early Decision plans **are** binding. You agree to attend if the college accepts you and offers an adequate financial aid package. If you are accepted to this school, you must withdraw your application from all other schools.

FAFSA - A form completed by parents and dependent students to provide information on assets, income, expenses, and liabilities. Schools use this to estimate the family's contribution as well as federal institution in their decision to offer a Pell Grant or Stafford Loan, etc.

Independent Study - Allows students to complete some of their college program by studying independently as opposed to scheduled classes and courses.

Internship - Short-term supervised work experiences usually related to a student's major or field, where academic credit is earned for the experience

Merit-Based Aid - The general term for grants, scholarships and discounts that a college awards to an admitted student without regard to financial need. Merit aid may be based on academic or athletic achievements, special talents such as music, where the student lives, or other demographic characteristics.

Need-Based Aid - Financial aid is awarded on the basis of the financial need of the student. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid application (FAFSA) is generally used for determining federal, state, and institutional need-based aid eligibility.

Parent Brag Sheet - Document that Senior Parents provide to Guidance Counselors. The information provided on the brag sheet helps Counselors craft college letters of recommendation.

PSAT/NMSQT - This test serves as a practice for the full SAT as well as being used for awards such as the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, offered once per year in October.

ROTC - Programs conducted by certain colleges in cooperation with the United States Air Force, Army and Navy, often combining scholarship opportunity with commitment to the military.

Rolling Admission - An admissions process in which the college considers each application as soon as all materials are received.

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) - Tests students' aptitude for subjects that are necessary for college success in the areas of: reading, writing, and mathematics.

Senior Questionnaire - Document that students provide to Counselors detailing their extra-curricular activities, community service, work experience, and honors and awards received. This information is used to write the students letter of recommendation for college.

Student-Designed Major - A program in which the student is able to build a major field of study not typically offered by the college.

Study Abroad - An arrangement where a student completes part of their course work while studying in another country. These colleges either have a campus abroad, or they have a "sister" school with whom they have a cooperative agreement.

TOEFL - A test that helps foreign students demonstrate their English proficiency at the level required by colleges.

Transfer Program - A program provide by two-year colleges that is offered to students who intend to continue on to four-year colleges and undergraduate degrees.

Universal Enrollment Deadline - May 1st is the date in which colleges expect students to reply back to them with their final decision on whether or not they will be attending.

Upper-Division College - Colleges that offer undergraduate degrees that begin in the junior year, after the student has completed freshman and sophomore coursework elsewhere.

Wait List - A college or university has not formally accepted a particular student for admission, but at the same time may offer admission in the next few months if spaces become available