



APPLY YOURSELF FLORIDA

2020 Student Guide

ACAC
American College Application Campaign

FLORIDA
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

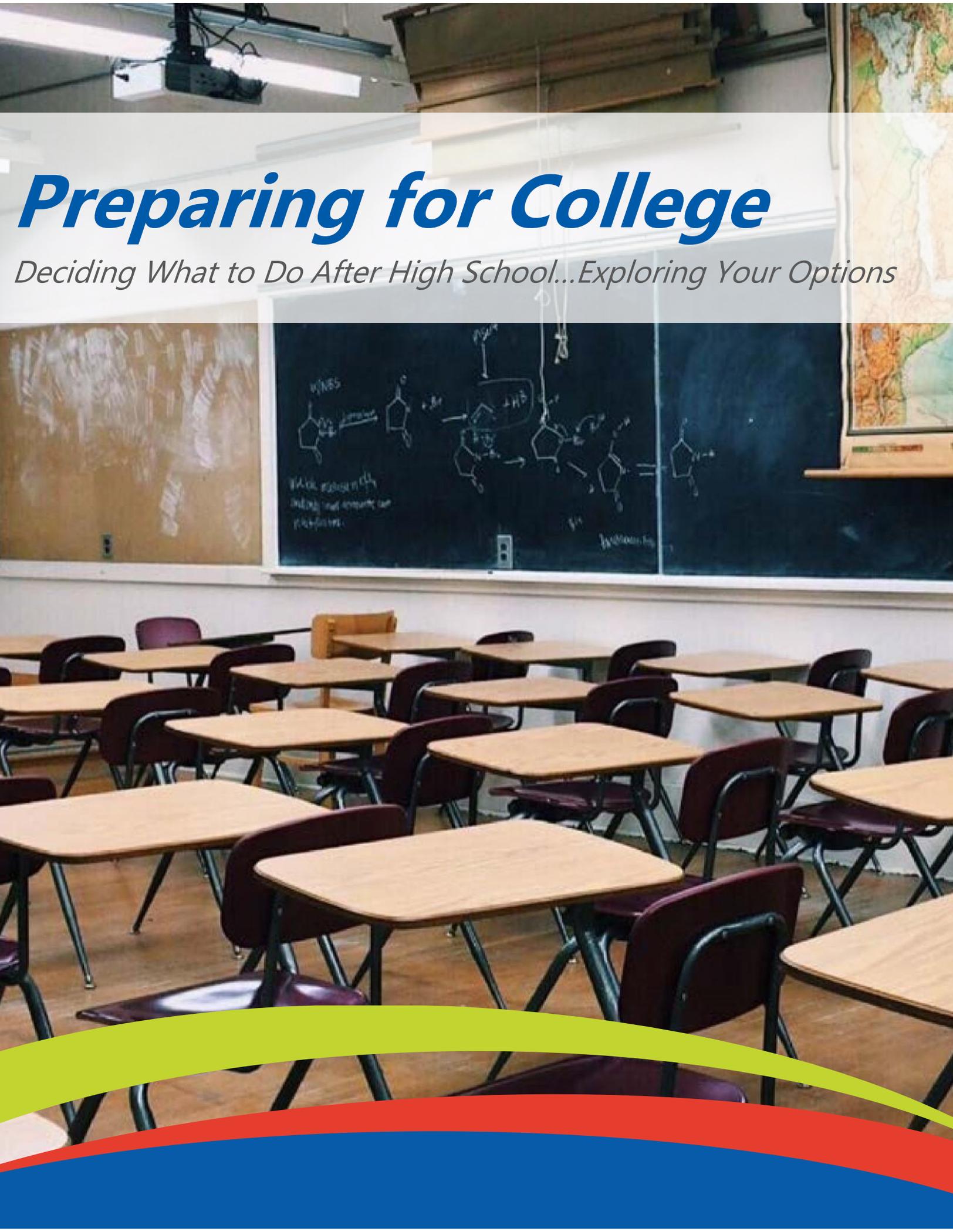
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You're starting an exciting new journey!

Soon, you'll be graduating high school and moving on to the next stage of your life.

If you plan to continue your education, the first step of this journey is applying to college. This guide will help you choose colleges that are right for you, take steps to apply to college, and identify the next steps after you've applied.

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Preparing for College

Deciding What to Do After High School...Exploring Your Options

Choose Your Path!

There are three main paths you can take after high school, depending on your future goals—education, service, or work.

EDUCATION

Career and technical education (CTE) programs help you learn skills to prepare for a specific career, such as paramedic, aircraft mechanics, digital design, veterinary assisting, culinary arts, etc. Local state colleges or technical colleges offer certificates for these types of jobs.

You can earn a **2-year associate's degree**, which can help build a body of knowledge that can prepare you for a career or further education. Associate's degrees in areas like healthcare or information technology/computer science can prepare you for work in specific fields.

In Florida, many **state colleges have formal 2+2 agreements** with local universities. These relationships give you the option to complete the first two years of your bachelor's degree at a state college and the second two years at a university. This can help families save money on a four-year degree.

You can complete a **4-year bachelor's degree** to prepare for work in fields like business, education, or engineering. You can also continue on to **graduate school** for careers in medicine, law or other fields. As part of earning a bachelor's degree, you will build a broader body of knowledge that can offer more flexibility to change careers over time.

SERVICE

Some students enlist in the **military**, where you can receive on-going training in specific jobs that can translate to civilian work. You will also have the option to return to school later using GI Bill benefits.

You may choose to do a **service program** that allows you to explore your interests. Organizations like AmeriCorps allow you to earn money for college through service. AmeriCorps members participate in service programs such as disaster cleanup, home building, and others.

WORK

After high school, you have the option to start **working**. To increase your earning potential, consider exploring **apprenticeship programs**, which provide on-the-job training and education while earning a wage. You can also look into free training opportunities online or through a local library.

College Exploration Resources

Use the following free resources to do more research and figure out what you might want to do after high school (and how you can pay for it!).

FloridaShines

<https://www.floridashines.org/>

FloridaShines offers information to explore Florida colleges and universities.

GetSchooled

<https://getschooled.com>

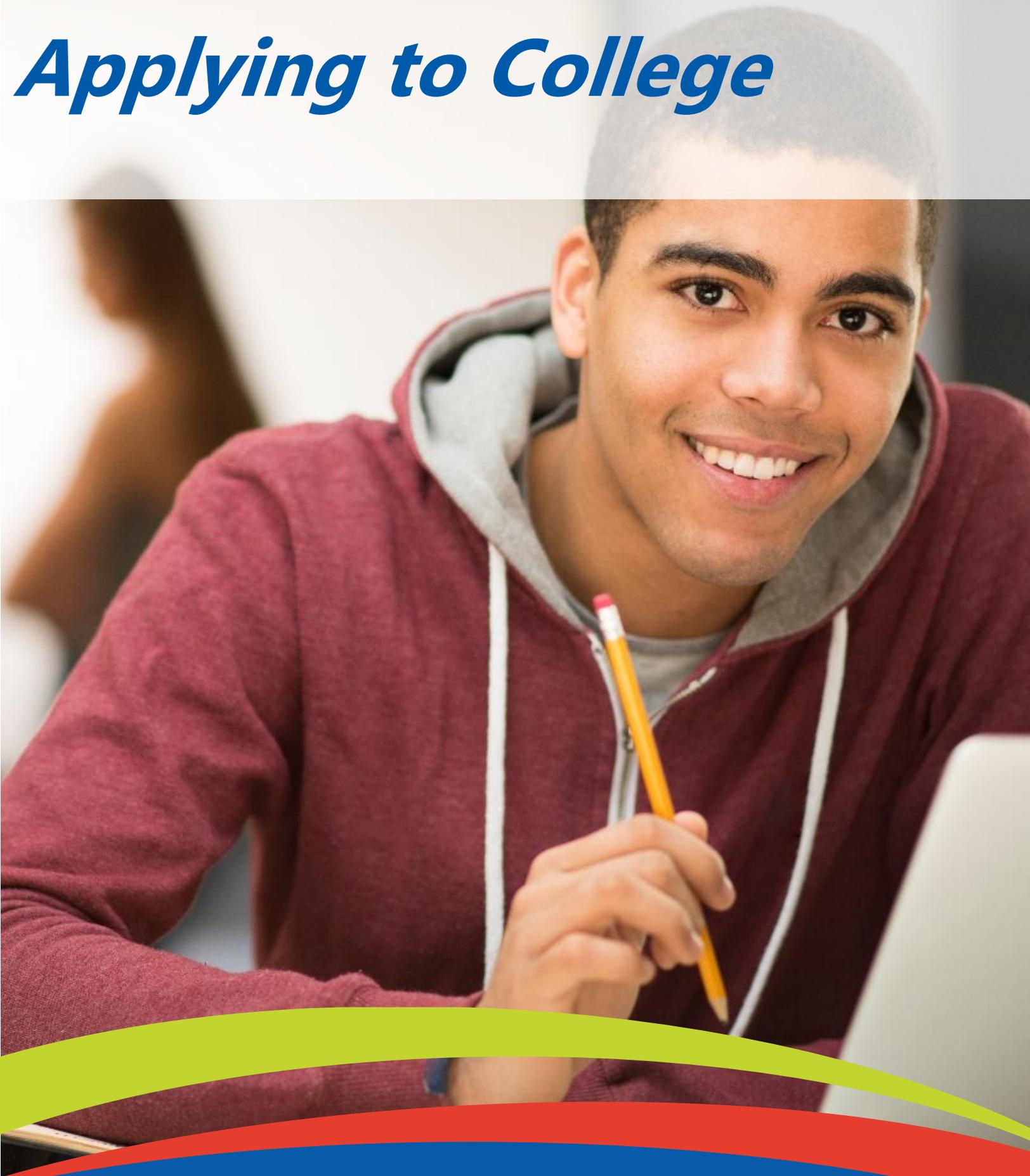
GetSchooled offers a wide variety of test prep, financial aid, and college application resources.

myOptions

<https://myoptions.org/>

myOptions offers college and career planning tools and advice, as well as quizzes that can help you identify the best fit and match college options for you. Your answers to the quizzes will inform the customized list of colleges for you to consider based on your academic profile.

Applying to College



Finding the Right Fit

When considering colleges, it is important to research your options. This will help you choose a school with features that fit your needs, interests, and talents.

Consider these factors when comparing schools:

Size

Colleges range in size. Some might be the size of your high school, while others are the size of a small town!

At a small school, you will likely take classes with 30 or fewer students. Classes at a big school could have as many as 500 students. Many classes at larger colleges are also taught by graduate students.

Big schools often have more services, programs, and activities available. By contrast, small schools may offer more specialized programs and personalized attention.

Location

Do you want to save money by living at home? Do you want to go home on weekends? Or do you want to be as far away as possible?

Do you want to go to school in an urban area (city/town) where you can use public transit? Or would you prefer a more quiet, rural setting?

These are all questions to consider when thinking about a school's location.

Culture

Big schools often offer opportunities for joining fraternities or sororities. These schools also may have nationally-recognized sports teams and a culture of school pride.

A smaller school, however, may have a more supportive environment. You can check the school's list of student clubs and organizations to find your niche.

Programs

Large schools usually offer a wide variety of academic programs. This offers you flexibility if you're not yet sure what you want to study, or if you want to change your major.

If you're interested in something specific, a small school might offer more specialized programs. You also may have the opportunity to work closely with faculty earlier in your education.

The Perfect Match

What kinds of schools should I apply to?

Based on your academic record, you should apply to at least **one safety school**, **one reach school**, and **two match schools**. See [page 11](#) to learn how to use fee waivers to cover the cost of your application.

Safety Schools

Schools you are **confident** you will be accepted to

Safety schools may include schools with higher acceptance rates, schools with less selective admissions requirements, or schools where your academic record is stronger than the average admitted student.

Keep in mind: Florida state colleges are “open admission,” meaning that they accept **all** students who apply.

Match Schools

Schools you will **likely** be accepted to

Match schools should be more selective than the safety schools you apply to. At a Match school, your academic record should be similar to that of the average admitted student’s record.

Reach Schools

Schools you **could** be accepted to

Reach schools are institutions that tend to have lower acceptance rates than other schools. At these schools, your academic record may be on the lower end compared to the average admitted student.

What is my academic record?

There are several factors that impact your academic record, including your average high school **grade point average** (GPA), the **rigor** of the classes you’ve taken (Honors, AP, IB, dual enrollment, etc.), and your **standardized test scores** (ACT, SAT, etc.).

Application Checklist

Make sure you are meeting all of the requirements in applying to college:

- ✓ Decide on at least four schools you want to apply to: 2 match schools, 1 safety school, and 1 reach school (see [page 11](#) to learn how to use fee waivers to cover the cost of college applications).
- ✓ Make a note of all application deadlines, including priority scholarship deadlines.
- ✓ Send requests for your high school transcripts, midterm grade report, and standardized test scores (ACT/SAT/PERT) to be sent to each school. Talk to your school counselor for help.
- ✓ Request recommendation letters from teachers or counselors.
- ✓ Write your personal essay and have someone proofread it.
- ✓ Submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- ✓ Fill out the online college application.
- ✓ Print out the confirmation page or take a picture of it.
- ✓ Pay the application fee or send the fee waiver.
Remember that your application is **not** considered complete until your application fee is paid or your fee waiver is received.
- ✓ If you do not hear from the college in 2-3 weeks, contact the admissions office to ensure your materials were received.

Application Worksheet

There is a lot of information you will need to complete your college application.

To make sure you have everything you need for applying, use the [Application Worksheet](#) in the back of this guide.

You may need help from your school counselor or parents to answer all the questions on this sheet.

Letters of Recommendation

A good letter of recommendation can help highlight strengths that are not reflected on the rest of your application. To get a good letter, follow these tips:

- ❖ Request letters of recommendation from teachers or counselors you have a good relationship with.
- ❖ Request the letter at the [beginning](#) of the school year to give your recommender plenty of time to write it.
- ❖ Write thank-you notes for each recommender!

Writing the Essay

Essays are your opportunity to share the story your GPA and extracurricular activities don't tell. Admissions officers want to get to know you as a person, so make sure to let your personality shine!

Tip	Don'ts	Do's
Research essay requirements	Do not wait until the last minute to find out if you need to write an essay.	Check early to see what each college on your shortlist requires. Take note of essay topics, word limits, and formatting requirements.
Choose a topic that will highlight your strengths	Do not focus on the great aspects of the college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor, or the number of extracurricular activities you have done.	Share your personal story and thoughts. Tell a specific story that highlights your best qualities.
Keep your focus narrow and personal	Do not try to cover too many topics. This will make the essay sound like a laundry list that does not provide any details about you.	Focus on one aspect of yourself so the readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that readers must be able to understand your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Ask a parent or teacher to read just your introduction and tell you what they think your essay is about.
Show, don't tell	Do not state something about yourself rather than sharing a story. For example, saying, "I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests," instead of describing a story that shows this to be true.	Include specific details, examples, stories, and reasons to develop your ideas. For the example to the left, describe a situation when various types of people surrounded you instead. What did you do? What did you take away from the experience?
Use your own voice	Do not rely on phrases or ideas that people have used many times before. These could include statements like, "There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people."	Write about an experience that you had and how it made you take action or how it changed your thinking.
Proofread	Do not turn your essay in without proofreading it or relying only on your computer's spell check to catch mistakes.	Ask a teacher or parent to proofread your essay to catch mistakes. You should also ask the person who proofreads your essay if the writing sounds like you.

Remember to bring your essay with you to your school's Apply Yourself Florida College Application Campaign event! You can bring it on a USB drive, or email the essay to yourself.

Application Fee Waivers

Most colleges have an application fee of \$30-\$50. If you qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, you may be eligible for an application fee waiver to complete your college application. If you are not sure whether you qualify, speak with your school counselor.

ACT College Application Fee Waivers

Eligibility: Students who used a fee waiver to take the ACT exam.

Access: School counselors should print the necessary number of fee waivers and sign off on student eligibility. Students must also sign the form.

[Download the fee waiver here](#)

SAT College Application Fee Waivers

Eligibility: Students who used a fee waiver to take the SAT exam or SAT subject test.

Access: Students can access the fee waivers directly through their online College Board Account. Students may use up to four fee waivers. Counselor approval is not required. [Find more information here](#)

National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) College Application Fee Waivers

Eligibility: Students are eligible for up to four fee waivers if they meet at least one of these criteria:

- The student used a fee waiver to take the SAT or ACT
- The student is enrolled in a free or reduced-price lunch program
- The student is enrolled in a program for low-income students (TRIO, Upward Bound)
- The student's family qualifies for public assistance
- The student is a ward of the state
- Other special circumstances outlined by the school counselor

Access: School counselors must print the form and sign off on student eligibility. [Download the form here](#)

COVID-19 Update!

"Due to the COVID-19 disruption, students or counselors can submit the waivers directly to the institution if obtaining both signatures is a hardship. Simply note that obtaining the second signature constitutes a hardship, and send the form directly to the admission office."

NACAC, 2020

Don't Forget!

- ❖ The school will NOT consider your application complete until they receive your fee waiver.
- ❖ If you are not using a fee waiver, you will need a credit card to pay the application fee, or can send a payment with cashier's check or money order.

Fee Waivers by School

School Name	Waivers Accepted	How to Use the Waiver
Florida Atlantic University (FAU)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Students should submit the application without payment, then submit their fee waiver with their FAU "Z" number included (from the application) either by email to admissions@fau.edu , or fax to 561-297-2758.
Florida A&M University (FAMU)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Apply online using the application for FL Fee Waiver applicants. Attach the fee waiver prior to submission.
Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Complete online application and answer question about application fee waivers. If you indicate that you qualify for a fee waiver, send the application fee waiver form to Undergraduate Admissions by email to undergrad@fgcu.edu , or mail to: Florida Gulf Coast University Office of Undergraduate Admissions 10501 FGCU Blvd. S. Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565
Florida International University (FIU)	ACT, SAT	Upon reaching payment page, select "pay by check" option. Upload your waiver to your student portal on MyFIU or send it directly to your admissions counselor (check FIU's website).
Florida Polytechnic University	ACT, SAT	On the payment page, select the "pay by fee" waiver option. Submit the ACT or SAT fee waiver to admissions@floridapoly.edu .
Florida State University (FSU)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Submit part 1 of application. In part 2 of application, upload a copy of your signed fee waiver. The waiver may also be faxed to 850-644-0197, emailed to admissions@fsu.edu , or mailed to: FSU Admissions PO Box 3062400 Tallahassee, FL 32306
New College of Florida	No application fee	---

Fee Waivers by School (Cont.)

School Name	Waivers Accepted	How to Use the Waiver
University of Florida (UF)	ACT, SAT	On the payment screen, select the "mail payment" option. Mail the fee waiver to the address on the application screen.
University of Central Florida (UCF)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Submit application without payment. Submit a written request and fee waiver via email to myapplicationdocs@ucf.edu , or mail to: Office of Undergraduate Admissions P.O. Box 16011 Orlando, FL 32816-0111 Please include your name and date of birth with any email requests. If a Social Security Number (SSN) appears on the waiver request, please black out all but the last four digits for security purposes. If using the Common App, submit the fee waiver through the Common App website.
University of North Florida (UNF)	ACT, SAT	Submit your application without payment. The waiver can be faxed to 904-620-2414, emailed to admissions@unf.edu , or mailed to: 1 UNF Drive Jacksonville, FL 32224.
University of South Florida (USF)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Submit application without payment. Mail fee waiver to address listed on application screen, email to admissions@usf.edu , or fax to 813-974-9689.
University of West Florida (UWF)	ACT, SAT, NACAC	Select mail in payment option. Then send waivers to UWF via email, or regular mail, or drop it off in person. Email: admissions@uwf.edu Mail to: UWF Undergraduate Admissions 11000 University Pkwy. Bldg. 18 Pensacola, FL 32514

Application Deadlines

School Name	General Deadline	Priority Deadline
Florida Atlantic University (FAU)	April 15; rolling admission basis	February 15 (priority admission deadline) May 1 (early admission deadline)
Florida A&M University (FAMU)	May 1	October 15 (university scholarship program consideration)
Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU)	March 1	November 1
Florida International University (FIU)	April 1	December 1 (merit scholarship deadline)
Florida Polytechnic University	April 1; rolling admission basis	November 1
Florida State University (FSU)	March 1; rolling admission basis	November 1
New College of Florida	July 1	November 1 (early decision deadline) March 1 (priority admissions consideration)
University of Florida (UF)	March 1	November 1
University of Central Florida (UCF)	May 1	---
University of North Florida (UNF)	July 1; rolling admission basis	---
University of South Florida (USF)	March 1; rolling admission basis	November 1 (priority admission consideration) January 1 (priority financial aid deadline) January 15 (scholarship consideration deadline)
University of West Florida	July 1; rolling admission basis	December 1 (priority admission/scholarship deadline) December 15 (priority financial aid deadline)

You've Applied! Next Steps

Applying to college is an important step in continuing your education, but it is not the last step! Here is what you will need to do next:

Finalize your application

- Make sure your application fee has been paid
- Make sure your transcripts have been sent

Apply for financial aid

- Create your FSA ID, the username and password that you will need to log into the Federal Student Aid website and to sign the FAFSA form. Remember your password!
 - You and your parent will each need to create your own FSA ID.
 - Go to fsaid.ed.gov to get started.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
 - The FAFSA opens on October 1. Submit your application as early as possible.
 - Some aid is on a first-come, first-served basis. The earlier you complete the FAFSA, the more likely you are to receive some forms of financial aid.
 - Go to studentaid.ed.gov to get started.
- Complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA).
 - The FFAA opens October 1.
 - It is necessary to complete this application to receive state-funded grants and scholarships, including Bright Futures.
 - Complete the FFAA at www.floridastudentfinancialaids.org/ua/sawstua_uaform.asp.
- Apply for grants and scholarships, which do not need to be paid back.
 - Florida offers both need- and merit-based scholarships, including Bright Futures, First Generation Matching Grant, and Florida Student Assistance Grant.
 - Some of these scholarships require that you complete the FFAA.
 - Research local scholarships through your local education foundation, community foundation, or by speaking with your school counselor.

Get ready to go!

- Accept an admission offer by May 1.
- Attend new student orientation.
- Sign up for housing and a meal plan (if you plan to live on campus).
- Submit your housing deposit by the deadline (check your college's website for more information).
- Get necessary supplies, like books, dorm room essentials, etc.
- Register for classes if you did not already do so at student orientation.
- Have a great first semester!

Paying for College

How do I Pay for College?



What Will College Cost? It Depends!

Where You Go

- **Private schools** tend to cost more than **state schools**
- **State universities** tend to cost more than **state colleges**
- If you qualify as a **Florida resident for tuition purposes**, you will be eligible to pay a lower in-state tuition rate at Florida schools

What You Get

- Many schools offer generous **school-based aid and scholarships** based on need and merit
- Be sure to check schools' **priority admission/scholarship deadlines** so you can be considered for the most aid possible

Consider all the costs

- Yearly tuition/cost per credit hour
- Books, supplies, and other fees
- Housing, internet, meals, and transportation
- Summer courses (keep in mind that Florida state universities require students to complete 9 credit hours of summer courses)

Florida's 2+2 Program

All Florida state colleges are open admission, meaning they guarantee admission to almost all students.

Students who complete an associate's degree at a state college are guaranteed acceptance to a state university to complete their bachelor's degree.

In other words, you can start the first two years of your bachelor's degree at a state college, and then complete the second two years at a state university. This could help you save money!

Where will the money come from?

Options for Funding

- Grants and scholarships - these do not need to be repaid (federal, state, college-based and private sources like education foundations)
- Savings – which can include savings from the student and/or parent, and gifts from extended family members (e.g. grandparents, aunts and uncles)
- Federal and state loans (must be repaid when you graduate)
- Work – which can include a student's part-time job, participating in a federal work study program, working over the summer and breaks, and a parent's work earnings

Complete the FAFSA!

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the best way to qualify for state, federal, and college-based grants and loans.
- You can file your FAFSA as early as October 1 by going to studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa

Qualifying for In-State Tuition

If you are applying to a Florida school and qualify as a **Florida resident for tuition purposes**, you will be eligible for lower in-state tuition rates. Here is what you need to know about qualifying as a Florida resident and residency requirements:

Who is a “Florida Resident for Tuition Purposes”?

- If your parent has lived in Florida for at least 12 consecutive months, then you are likely a Florida resident for tuition purposes.
- To claim residency, you must complete a residency form or affidavit. Admissions staff will review this form and related documentation to determine your eligibility for in-state tuition.

Who is the “claimant,” or the person claiming residency?

- If you are a dependent, your parent is the claimant.
- Most recent high school graduates are dependents, but there are some exceptions.

If you think you might be an independent, speak with your school counselor for help.

What documents can verify Florida residency?

- A copy of a Florida driver’s license or Florida state identification card
- Voter’s registration
- Florida vehicle registration

Speak with the school’s admissions office for guidance regarding other acceptable documents.

Special residency cases

- Members of the armed services stationed in Florida, as well as their spouses and dependent children, may qualify as residents for tuition purposes.
- For a full list of students in special circumstances who may qualify as Florida residents for tuition purposes, please see the [Florida Department of Education’s web page](#).

Resources for Undocumented Students

Students who are not citizens or whose parents are not citizens may be eligible for lower in-state tuition rates instead of the more expensive non-resident tuition rates.

To qualify for in-state tuition:

- ❖ You must have attended high school in Florida for 3 consecutive years immediately prior to high school graduation.
- ❖ You must apply to a Florida college or university within 24 months (2 years) of high school graduation.
- ❖ You must submit an official Florida transcript to verify attendance and graduation.

After you have applied and are admitted to a school, you will need to submit an HB 851 Out-of-State Fee Waiver (ask an admissions officer where you can access this form).

DACA students can use their workforce authorization number in place of a social security number to complete the FAFSA. They are not eligible for federal aid but will receive a Student Aid Report that demonstrates financial need and can be used to apply for college-based and other scholarships.

Resources for Foster Care Youth

If you have been in foster care any time after age 13, there are resources and financial aid available to help you go to college, including vocational training, and 2- and 4-year options for most Florida schools.

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) hosts a Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS) program that provides a \$1,256 stipend for living expenses to students attending a Florida Bright Futures-eligible institution, including vocational training. You are eligible for this program until your 23rd birthday.

Many colleges and universities provide campus coaches for on-campus support for current and former foster youth. You can find lists of foster care student advisors below:

- State University Foster Care Liaisons & Coaches:
<https://www.positivepathwaysflorida.org/university-campus-liasons>
- State College Liaisons & Coaches:
<https://www.positivepathwaysflorida.org/collegebased-liasons>
- Campus-based Programs focused on students from foster care:
<https://www.positivepathwaysflorida.org/campus>

In some cases, you may also qualify for waived tuition and fees, which is available to you until you reach 28 years of age. Check with your institution on what financial resources are available to you as a foster youth.

Applying for Financial Aid

4 out of 5 Florida college students (83%) use financial aid to pay for college.

To qualify for financial aid, you must apply. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most important step to take to access most forms of financial aid. All federal financial aid, some state aid and most aid offered by colleges require you to complete and submit the FAFSA. If you do not have a Social Security number or have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status, you should complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA). Complete the FAFSA and FFAA as close to October 1st as possible because some financial aid dollars are limited and are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Types of Aid

Very few students get all of their financial aid for college from one source. When you are searching for financial aid, consider a wide variety of options and apply to as many programs as possible.

- **Grants:** Grants do not have to be repaid if you successfully complete the courses in which you were enrolled. Most grants come from the federal and state governments. The Pell grant is the largest federal grant program and is designed to help students from low-income households attend college. Over 50% of Florida college students come from low-income households and qualify for the Pell grant.
- **Scholarships:** Scholarships do not have to be repaid if you successfully complete your coursework. They are awarded for a variety of criteria: good grades, cultural or religious background, sports and special talents. Most scholarships come from organizations and colleges.
- **Work-study:** Work-study helps you to earn money to pay for your education by working a part-time job offered through the college.
- **Loans:** Loans for students have lower interest rates than most other types of loans. Unlike grants or scholarships, loans must be repaid with interest when you finish college, even if you do not graduate. Student loans are offered through banks, colleges, and other institutions.

You can complete, submit, and track your FAFSA application at studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa. However, if you do not have access to the internet, you can request a paper copy by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID (433-3243). There is also an online chat function to answer any questions that students or parents might have.

You should complete the FAFSA every year that you attend college.

It opens on October 1 every year.

What Do You Need to Complete the FAFSA?

- ❖ Student and parent(s)' driver's license number(s)
- ❖ Student and parent(s)' social security number(s)
- ❖ (Alien registration number if you are not a U.S. citizen)
- ❖ Parent(s)' date(s) of birth
- ❖ Parent(s)' Federal Income Tax Return from 2 years ago (if filed)
- ❖ Student's Federal Income Tax Return from 2 years ago (if filed)
- ❖ Parent/student income information (if tax return was not filed)
- ❖ Your current bank statements
- ❖ Student & parent FSA ID (username & password). If you have lost your information, visit fsaid.ed.gov

Your Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID)

Creating an FSA ID is the first step to completing your FAFSA. Your FSA ID serves as your legal signature when completing the FAFSA. Create an FSA ID using your own personal information and for your own use.

To create your FSA ID, go to fsaid.ed.gov. This information should be kept confidential and stored in a safe place; you will need this every year when you file your FAFSA.

FSA ID Reference Sheet: fsaid.ed.gov

Username: _____

Password: _____

Email address: _____

Cellphone number: _____

Answers to challenge questions:

Answer #1: _____

Answer #2: _____

Answer #3: _____

Answer #4: _____

FAFSA Save Key: _____

For your records only—keep in a safe place!

I've Submitted the FAFSA. Now What?

Once you submit your FAFSA, you will receive a confirmation email. It will list the school(s) you've requested your FAFSA be sent to for financial aid and the aid you are likely to qualify for. It also lists what happens next in the FAFSA process:

- In 3-5 business days, you will receive an email notifying you that your FAFSA was processed.
- Your FAFSA information will be made available to your school(s), and they will use it to determine the aid you may be eligible to receive.
- Your school(s) will contact you if they need more information or when they are ready to discuss your financial aid award.

Student Aid Report (SAR)

When your FAFSA has been processed, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). **This is a summary of all the information you submitted on the FAFSA.** Check it for any mistakes, especially if you entered incorrect information or estimated your tax information. One of the most common mistakes students make is to enter their name or social security number wrong. Verify you've entered your legal name as it appears on your social security card. Your SAR will include estimated Pell grant eligibility and your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). You can access your SAR at studentaid.ed.gov using your FSA ID.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

Your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is part of your SAR. **The EFC is the estimated amount your family is expected to contribute toward your college education based on the information submitted in your FAFSA.** It is also used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid. Variables that determine your EFC include income and net worth for you and your parents, family size, age of older parent, state and federal taxes, and number of family members attending college.

Verification

Schools may require you to verify the information submitted on your FAFSA. This is called verification. If this happens, the school will tell you what information they need and what you need to do. This process must be completed before financial aid can be awarded.

Financial Need

Each college or university that you list on your FAFSA and that accepts you will determine your financial need based on **the cost of attendance (COA) at that school minus your EFC.** While cost of attendance varies by school, your EFC will remain the same in a given year (unless an unusual family situation arises) regardless of which college or university you attend. The COA will include tuition, fees, books, housing and meals. The amount of aid you receive cannot exceed the total cost of attendance.

Award Letter

Once you've been accepted to a college or university, you'll get an award letter from the school's financial aid office outlining the federal, state, and college-based aid being offered to you. If you've applied to more than one school, compare your award letters from each school. This financial aid award package is designed to cover your financial need by closing the gap between the cost of attendance and your EFC. Your financial aid award package may include grants, scholarships and loans you are eligible for.

To accept the financial aid award offered, follow all instructions provided by the school. This might involve entering aid amounts you intend to accept in an online form, or signing and returning a paper award letter by a specified deadline—usually May 1. Talk to the financial aid office at the college or university if an unusual circumstance delays your response.

Changes in Financial Circumstances

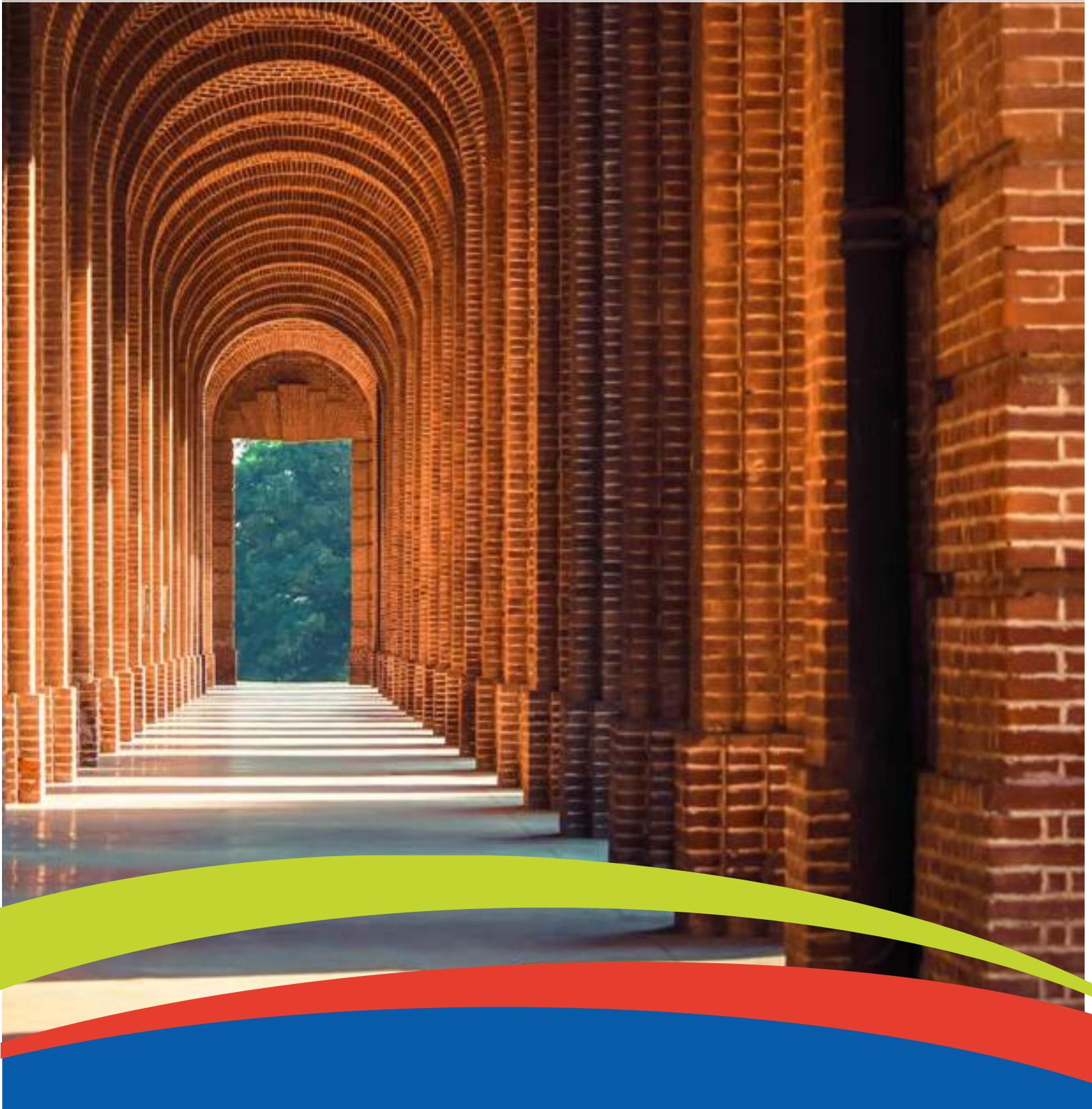
If you or your family's financial situation has changed recently, contact the financial aid office at the college or university as soon as possible to discuss your options. Each school has its own method for documenting new financial situations and reassessing a student's financial need.

Swift Student

[SwiftStudent](#) is a new, free digital tool for requesting changes to college financial aid award packages. This tool carefully walks users through the process to appeal the financial aid they were initially offered, focusing on numerous special circumstances that may justify a student requesting an adjustment to their financial aid, such as recent job loss of a parent, a medical crisis, loss of childcare or housing, etc. It also produces 14 customized templates for specific types of appeals. SwiftStudent is free to use, available to all current and prospective college students receiving federal student aid, and does not share or sell personal data.

[Explore how you can use SwiftStudent to prepare any financial aid appeals.](#)

Going to College



Summer Transition Checklist

Have you completed your FAFSA?

- Completing the FAFSA is the first step to getting financial aid. Some aid is on a first-come, first-served basis. The earlier you complete the FAFSA, the more likely you are to receive some forms of financial aid. Complete the FAFSA at www.studentaid.ed.gov!

Have you completed any additional financial aid forms required?

- Your college may ask you for income verification; promptly provide the information, or you may be denied financial aid.

Have you been notified of your college awarding you financial aid?

- Most colleges have a “net price” calculator on their website, which shares the total estimated cost of going to school there, including tuition, fees, books, meals and housing. Consider how much aid you are being offered from the college and the total cost to attend school there. Do you or your family have enough savings to cover the difference? If not, how will you cover the difference?

Have you logged in to your college’s web portal?

- Every school has a student portal where you will log into your student account. Check it often as most schools send information about deadlines through this system.

Have you completed any required placement test?

- If you will be pursuing an Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), or Associate of Professional Studies (APS) degree from a state college, you must schedule and take a placement test. You can either call the testing center or schedule your appointment online. Check with your institution to determine any costs for placement tests and how they are being administered.

Have you confirmed your enrollment?

- You must confirm that you will be attending the school of your choice and pay a deposit by the school’s deadline. Depending on your school, it can cost anywhere from \$0 to \$1,000! Check with your institution to determine the enrollment deposit fee and the deadline.

Have you submitted all housing forms and deposits (if you are going to live on campus)?

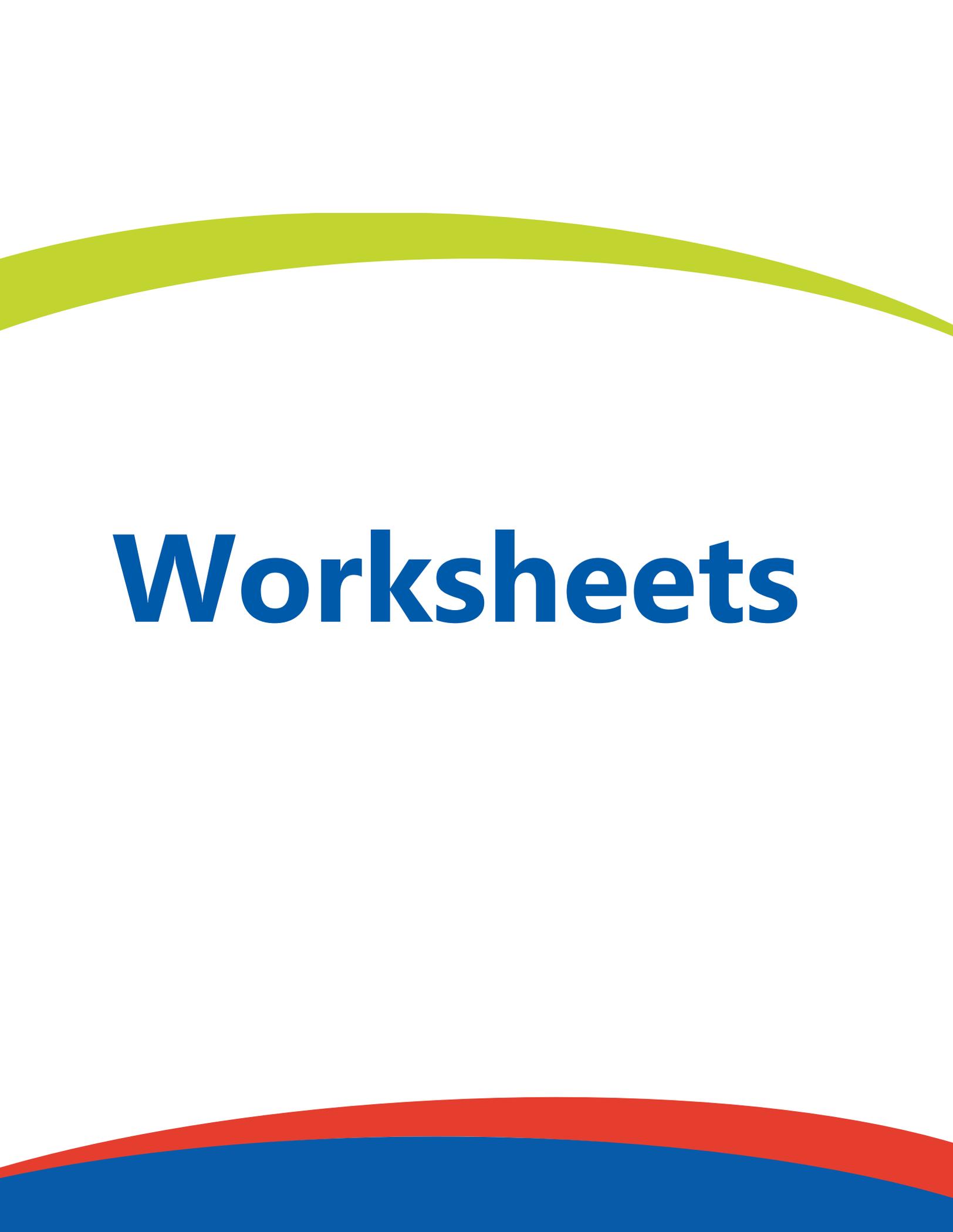
- Housing fills up fast, so you don’t want to delay. Usually, you are required to pay the enrollment deposit before you are allowed to submit your housing application. Housing deposits are required to secure your spot. It is the student’s responsibility to check their student account to determine any outstanding balances, and check your school’s housing website for payment deadlines.

- Have you registered for or attended new student orientation and registered for classes?**
 - All schools have a required Freshman Orientation that you must attend before you will be allowed to register for classes. This can be another cost; check with your institution to determine any costs to attend new student orientation.
 - Often, at new student orientation you will register for your classes. Check with your college about the process. Many schools will have you meet with an academic advisor who guides you through the registration process the first time and helps you understand the courses required for your major.

- Have you signed up for a meal plan?**
 - Many students find it helpful to sign up for a meal plan for at least their first year, especially if they are living on campus. That way, they don't need to worry about making meals.

- Have you checked your school's move-in checklist for supplies you'll need to live on campus?**
 - Most colleges and many stores can provide you with checklists of the items students most commonly bring to help their dorm room feel more like home. Check your school's housing website to know what things are allowed while living on-campus.

- Have you made a plan for transportation?**
 - Make a plan for getting to campus the first time to move in. Find out what local transportation options are available on campus and in the area. Make a plan for getting home and back on breaks.
 - Check if your school allows freshmen to bring their own car. If so and you choose to do so, buy a parking permit.



Worksheets

What's My Ideal College?

Directions	Scoring
Rate schools based on how well they fit your criteria. Total the scores. (Place a ★ next to the criteria most important to you.)	4 – 5: Perfect fit. 2 – 3: Kind of meets my criteria. 0 – 1: Doesn't fit.

SCHOOL 1: SCHOOL 2: SCHOOL 3:

	★			
I want a school that is located:				
a. Close to home				
b. As far away as possible				
c. Somewhere in between				
I prefer a campus size that is:				
a. Small (under 5,000)				
b. Medium (5,000 – 15,000)				
c. Large (15,000+)				
I want the school to be in the:				
a. City				
b. Suburbs				
c. Country				
I want to be able to live:				
a. On campus, in a dorm or apartment				
b. Off campus, in an apartment or house				
c. At home				
I would prefer a college that is:				
a. Private (not a public or state school)				
b. Single-sex				
c. Religiously affiliated				
d. Known for serving ethnic or racial minorities				
e. None of these are important to me				
I want to complete my degree in:				
a. 2 years or less (apprenticeship, CTE, associate's degree)				
b. 4 years (bachelor's degree)				
I want to participate in the following activities:				
a. Sports (intramural, Division I, Division II, Division III)				
b. Student government				
c. Community service				
d. Greek life (fraternities and sororities)				
e. Other clubs and activities				
I want to use the following student services:				
a. Tutoring/academic support				
b. Counseling and health services				
c. Study abroad				
d. Disability access				
e. Other:				
Total				

College Visit Profile

	SCHOOL 1		SCHOOL 2		SCHOOL 3	
School name						
School website						
School type (technical college, 2-year, 4-year, etc.; public, private)						
School setting (city, suburb, country)						
Student body size						
Location (in-state, out-of-state)						
Distance from home						
Degree types offered (e.g. AA, AS, BA, BS)						
Majors I'm interested in	1. 2. 3.		1. 2. 3.		1. 2. 3.	
Admissions contact	Name: Phone: Email:		Name: Phone: Email:		Name: Phone: Email:	
Admissions requirements	ACT/SAT: GPA:		ACT/SAT: GPA:		ACT/SAT: GPA:	
On-campus housing	Available	Not available	Available	Not available	Available	Not available
Deposit amount						
Deposit due date						
Estimated Cost of Attendance						
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	School code: Deadline:		School code: Deadline:		School code: Deadline:	
Available financial aid (grants, work-study, loans)						
Available scholarships	Name: Deadline:		Name: Deadline:		Name: Deadline:	
	Name: Deadline:		Name: Deadline:		Name: Deadline:	
	Name: Deadline:		Name: Deadline:		Name: Deadline:	

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS						
	Available	Not available	Available	Not available	Available	Not available
Career Center
Computer labs
Free tutoring
Math center
On-campus health center
Summer orientation
Writing center
Other:
Other:

My Top 4 Colleges

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ESSAY OR PERSONAL STATEMENT REQUIRED? <i>TOPIC/REQUIREMENTS</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			
RECOMMENDATIONS REQUIRED? <i>HOW MANY?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO _____			
SAT/ACT REQUIRED?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
APPLICATION COST <i>PAYMENT DEADLINE</i>	\$ _____ _____	\$ _____ _____	\$ _____ _____	\$ _____ _____
APPLICATION FEE WAIVER ACCEPTED? <i>WHICH ONES?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO _____			
APPLICATION DEADLINE	_____	_____	_____	_____
DEADLINE FOR SCHOLARSHIPS/ FINANCIAL AID	_____	_____	_____	_____
ACCEPTANCE OF ADMISSION DEADLINE	_____	_____	_____	_____

College Application Worksheet

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Legal Name: _____

Any Other Names Used: (for transcripts, etc.): _____

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Are you a US citizen? YES NO

If you are not a citizen, do you hold a Visa? Are you applying for a Visa? What kind? _____

If you are a permanent resident, what is your alien registration number? _____

***If you are a permanent resident, you will need to send a photocopy of your alien registration card with your application.*

Gender: M F Race/Ethnicity: _____

Are you currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces? YES NO Have you ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces? YES NO

Are you a spouse or child of a person currently serving, or who has served, in the U.S. Armed Forces? YES NO

APPLICATION INFORMATION

When do you plan to start (fall, spring, summer)? _____

Planned Major: _____

HIGH SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School: _____

City & State: _____ School phone number: _____

Expected Graduation Date: _____

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

ACT Date(s) Taken: _____ Scores: _____

SAT Date(s) Taken: _____ Scores: _____

SAT Subject tests: Subject: _____ Date(s) Taken: _____ Scores: _____

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Are you currently or have you ever been charged with or subject to disciplinary action for scholastic or any other type of misconduct at any educational institution? YES NO

Have you ever been charged with a violation of the law, misdemeanor and/or felony (even if adjudication was withheld) which resulted in, or, if still pending, could result in, probation, community service, restitution, a jail sentence or the revocation or suspension of your driver’s license (you are not required to include traffic violations which only resulted in a fine)? YES NO

If your answer to either of the above questions is yes, you must submit a full statement of relevant facts on a separate sheet, and may be required to supply the institution with copies of all official documents explaining the final disposition of the proceedings. Failure to answer the questions can delay an admissions decision.

If your records have been expunged pursuant to applicable law, you are not required to answer yes to these questions. If you are unsure whether to answer yes to either question, it is strongly suggested that you answer yes and fully disclose all incidents. By doing so, you can avoid any risk of disciplinary action or revocation of an offer of admission.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Have you participated in any programs or activities to help you prepare for higher education (University Outreach, Talent Search, Upward Bound, Junior Achievement, 4-H, etc.)? List all programs that apply:

Extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.): List each organization, position, description of the activity, and hours per week of involvement:

Awards and recognition: List each award/recognition, a description of the honor and the work you did to earn it, the level (e.g. first place), and the number of years you earned the distinction:

Community service: List the organization(s), type of work, your role, and hours per week of involvement:

Employment: List the job, your title, description, hours per week, and dates of employment:

Talents: List other talents you have that were not recognized above (e.g. art, music, computer coding):

CURRENT & EXPECTED COURSEWORK

Courses you are currently enrolled in (FALL): _____

Courses you expect to complete before entering college (SPRING/SUMMER): _____

FAMILY INFORMATION

Parent/Legal Guardian 1

Name (First and Last): _____

Relationship: _____ Highest Level of Education Completed: _____

Mailing Address (if different from yours): _____

Parent/Legal Guardian 2

Name (First and Last): _____

Relationship: _____ Highest Level of Education Completed: _____

Mailing Address (if different from yours): _____

Are you living in a single-parent household? YES NO

How many people, including yourself, live in your household? (Include siblings attending college): _____

Please indicate your family's gross income for the most recent tax year, including both taxed and untaxed income. _____

Do you have family obligations that keep you from participating in extracurricular activities? Please describe. _____

BRAG SHEET

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Extracurricular Activities (clubs, sports, etc.):

Activity	School Years	# of hours per week	Description
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		

Awards & Honors:

Name of Award	School Years	Organization & Responsibilities
	_9 _10 _11 _12	
	_9 _10 _11 _12	
	_9 _10 _11 _12	
	_9 _10 _11 _12	

Leadership Positions:

Position	School Years	Organization/Activity & Responsibilities
	_9 _10 _11 _12	
	_9 _10 _11 _12	
	_9 _10 _11 _12	
	_9 _10 _11 _12	

Community Service:

Activity	School Years	# of hours per week	# of weeks per year
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		

Work Experience:

Position, Place of Employment	School Years	# of hours per week	Responsibilities
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		
	_9 _10 _11 _12		

Hobbies and Interests:

Other:

Writing Your Personal Statement

Writing the Essay

Step 1: Review the list of questions below and come up with a few answers. This will help you come up with topics to write about.

HOME AND FAMILY

- Have you ever lived outside the United States/in another country?
- Are you the first person in your family to go to college?
- Does your family speak any language(s) other than English?
- Do you live in a non-traditional family?
- Do your parents have unusual jobs?
- Did you move a lot growing up?
- Do you live in a town with a unique setting?
- Do you look up to anyone in your family?
- Has your family faced any hardships?

EDUCATION

- Have you won any awards and/or recognitions?
- Have you worked on a special class project?
- Do you have a favorite class that relates to your intended college major?
- Have you had any hard classes that you were determined to do well in?
- Do you have someone at school you look up to?
- Has your school gone through any hard times lately?
- Are you part of a special college-going or gifted program?

ACTIVITIES

- Do you play a sport?
- Are you part of a school organization?
- Are you a leader of a team or club?
- Were you an underdog?
- Do you perform community service outside of school?
- Have you made any contributions to your community?

HOBBIES

- Do you play an instrument?
- Do you do anything creative?
- Do you have a favorite book?
- Do you have a role model?
- Do you have a favorite quote?

EVERYTHING ELSE – UNIQUENESS!

- Do you have anything about you that makes you stand out?
- Have you ever been outside the United States?

Step 2: Write down a paragraph about yourself as it relates to your answers from Step 1. It doesn't have to be perfect; it's just an exercise to help you get started.

Step 3: Search essay prompts for the college(s) you will apply to. Jot down the answers below.

Name of college/university: _____

Prompt/topic: _____

Word/page count: _____

Any additional instructions: _____

Name of college/university: _____

Prompt/topic: _____

Word/page count: _____

Any additional instructions: _____

Name of college/university: _____

Prompt/topic: _____

Word/page count: _____

Any additional instructions: _____

Name of college/university: _____

Prompt/topic: _____

Word/page count: _____

Any additional instructions: _____

Name of college/university: _____

Prompt/topic: _____

Word/page count: _____

Any additional instructions: _____

Step 4: Refer back to your answers from Step 1 to see which ones best fit the essay prompt(s) of your chosen college(s). Start outlining what you will discuss in each paragraph of your essay:

Paragraph 1: _____

Paragraph 2: _____

Paragraph 3: _____

Paragraph 4: _____

Paragraph 5: _____

Step 5: Begin the first draft of your essay.

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