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# Indigenous College Planning Guidebook

EMPOWERING YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY  
TO HIGHER EDUCATION



Access

CollegeBoard







# Welcome

When I started my college planning journey many years ago, I had no idea what to expect or how to navigate the process. Neither of my parents have college degrees. They always told me that I'd go to college, just not how to get there.

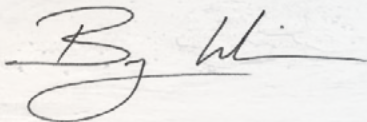
The journey to college can be daunting and overwhelming, especially for many Native students who, like me, are first-generation college students. Perhaps that's one of the many reasons that Native Americans have the lowest college degree completion rate than any other ethnicity. Only 14% of American Indians and Alaska Natives ages 25 and older have a college degree, which is less than half of other groups in the United States. You can change that percentage. You can go to college and you can earn a degree. You can make a difference in your own life and in the lives of other Native people. The *Indigenous College Planning Guidebook* can help you get there.

I'm excited to work for the College Board, a not-for-profit organization committed to expanding educational opportunities and promoting student success for all students, including Native students. This guidebook is a part of that commitment. It was created by separate cohorts of Native college students who were serving as summer interns at the College Board. They felt that it was important to share the knowledge that they acquired in their own college journeys with high school students just like you. They put the lessons they learned into this guide in hopes that their experiences can make your journey easier.

I wish that I would have had access to a guidebook such as this when I was navigating my own college application and admission journey. I know that it would have made my path to college much more manageable.

On behalf of the College Board, I want to encourage you to pursue opportunities in postsecondary education and challenge you to own your future.

Sincerely,



Bryan Whish (*Wichita and Affiliate Tribes of Oklahoma*)  
Director, State Partnerships  
Higher Education Services  
College Board

## CONTENTS

<b>Make the Most of Your Junior Year</b>	4
Get to Know Yourself	6
You're More Than Your Grades	7
Find a Mentor	8
Take Challenging Courses	9
Search for College Prep Programs	10
Take Your First SAT	12
Explore Your College Dreams	15
Go to a College Fair	16
Indigenous Serving Institutions	18
Search for Native Student Resources	21
<b>Own Your Senior Year</b>	22
Decide Where to Apply	24
Write Your Personal Statement	25
Apply for Financial Aid	26
Apply for Scholarships	28
Track Your College Applications	30
Choose Your College	31
<b>Parent/Guardian Checklist</b>	32
<b>Glossary</b>	34
<b>Resources</b>	Back

# Make the Most of Your Junior Year

College planning kicks into high gear when you're a junior. Here are some things you can do to stay on track.

## Fall

- ❑ **Create a free [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org) account:** This will help you manage everything from your college list to SAT® scores to scholarship searches on **BigFuture™**.
- ❑ **Practice for the SAT:** Link your College Board and Khan Academy® accounts. Use Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy to get ready. If you've taken the PSAT/NMSQT® or SAT already, you'll get a personalized SAT practice plan based on your results.
- ❑ **Explore AP:** Taking Advanced Placement® courses can help you earn college credit, saving you time and money. Register for the AP® Exams given in May. See page 9 to learn more.
- ❑ **Create your college list on BigFuture:** Ask friends, family members, teachers, and college students for input, and then make a list of at least six colleges. See page 15 for more information about exploring your college dreams.
- ❑ **Estimate your financial need:** Financial aid can help you pay for college. Use the Net Price Calculators for the colleges on your list to estimate how much you'll actually pay at each one.

## Winter

- ❑ **Sign up for College Board Opportunity Scholarships:** This scholarship program guides you through the college planning process.
- ❑ **Register to take the SAT in the spring:** Register online or through your school. Ask your counselor if you're eligible for an SAT fee waiver.
- ❑ **Start researching scholarships, grants, and other financial aid:** Use College Board Scholarship Search tool to find scholarships you may qualify for. Look into tribal, local, and state aid sources. Ask a counselor to guide you.
- ❑ **Stay involved with extracurricular activities:** Colleges look for consistency and leadership in your nonacademic activities.
- ❑ **Create a folder for college application materials:** Put forms or college information in a hard copy or a digital folder. If you're interested in drama, music, or art, start creating a portfolio.
- ❑ **Research college prep programs:** Based on what you're interested in studying or where in the country you'd like to go to college, begin researching summer programs to apply to.




### EARN A CHANCE AT \$40,000 FOR COLLEGE!

#### College Board Opportunity Scholarships

It doesn't require an essay or an application, and it doesn't have a minimum GPA or SAT score requirement. Instead, it rewards all students' efforts and actions on their way to college. Complete all six scholarship steps to be eligible for a \$40,000 scholarship. The more effort you put in and the more actions you complete, the more chances you'll have to earn a scholarship.

Visit [cb.org/opportunity](https://cb.org/opportunity) for more information.

Throughout the guidebook, you'll see a mountain icon  next to any action that's an important step in your college journey.

## Spring

- **Meet with your counselor about your college list:** Get input about your college choices, and ask about college visits.
- **Take the SAT and/or SAT Subject Tests™:** The SAT is offered in March, May, and June. You can test again in the fall of your senior year before applications are due.
- **Apply to a college prep program:** Applications generally open in the spring—get application deadlines from the programs. See page 10 for more information.
- **Create a challenging schedule for your senior year:** See page 9 for more information about challenging yourself academically in school.

## Summer

- **Take advantage of your summer break:** Consider summer courses for high school or college credit and college prep programs like College Horizons, or visit college campuses.
- **Research applications:** Check application deadlines and requirements for schools you're interested in applying to.
- **Continue the search for scholarships:** Search for additional scholarships on BigFuture, and complete the applications.
- **Create your résumé:** Begin compiling a record of your academic accomplishments, extracurricular activities, community services, and work experiences since starting high school. Ask your counselor or adviser for a template and for any additional help.
- **Start working on your personal statement:** The essay is an important part of your college application, so give yourself plenty of time to write, edit, and rewrite it. See page 25 for more tips.
- **Consider retaking SAT in Fall:** Review your SAT score report with your parent/guardian or mentor, and decide if you should retake the SAT in the fall of your senior year. Most students see an increase in their scores when they take the SAT a second time.

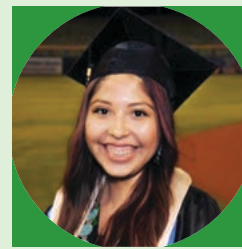


### Be sure to register early for the SAT.

Some testing locations have limited seating.

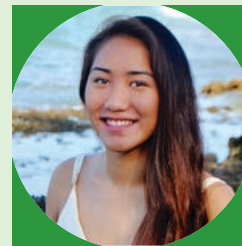


**Tip:** Your PSAT/NMSQT scores may qualify you for the National Merit® Scholarship Program, which could earn you money for college.



“During my junior year, I took classes at my local community college and was able to learn about subjects that I wouldn’t have been able to do at my school. When I entered college, I had the ability to skip my freshman year because of the credits I earned while in high school.”

— **Monica** (*Navajo and Hopi*),  
Columbia University (*Lenape & Wappinger Territory*)



“After attending Dartmouth’s Native Fly-In Program, I knew the college was the one for me. The Native students and faculty were so welcoming, and I liked that Dartmouth had spaces specifically for community members to come together to work and relax. **Visiting the school made the applications process much easier** because I got to talk to admissions officers about what they’re looking for in a prospective student.”

— **Kourtney** (*Native Hawaiian*),  
Dartmouth College (*Abenaki Territory*)

# Get to Know Yourself

Your future begins with you—it's a journey. Asking yourself questions can help you figure out who you are and where you want to go.

**What are some things you think you do well?**

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**What challenges you?**

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**What do you do for fun?**

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**Who do you look up to?**

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**What's something you've always wanted to try?**

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**What accomplishment are you proudest of?**

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**What's your favorite class?**

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**What do you read about in your free time?**

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**If you could do any job for a day, what would it be?**

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## What now?

Keep asking yourself questions like these, and you'll make important discoveries about who you are. Stay open to the places and interests they lead to.



**Tip:** If you have lots of interests but don't know if you can make any of them a career, explore majors and careers at [roadtripnation.com/edu/careerfinder](https://roadtripnation.com/edu/careerfinder).

# You're More Than Your Grades

A list of extracurricular activities is an important part of an effective application. These activities give people who don't know you a glimpse of your life outside the classroom. They also demonstrate your strengths, interests, and skills.

Examples of skills and attributes to include:

- **Leadership skills:** Serving in student government or as an officer for a school club.
- **Determination:** Being a member of a sports team.
- **Compassion:** Volunteering at hospitals, shelters, and community centers.
- **Commitment:** Participating in religious or cultural events regularly.
- **Time management skills:** Working at a part-time job while keeping up your grades.
- **Responsibility:** Helping with siblings or family chores.
- **Musical or creative skills:** Playing an instrument, dancing in a halau or a youth group, or singing in a choir.

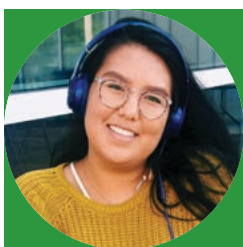
**Next:** Make a list of activities you participate in or groups you joined outside of school, with the dates you began, the number of hours a week you commit to each, and any leadership positions you hold in clubs or organizations. Also, write down the names of advisers, coaches, or supervisors who could give you a reference for your résumé or a letter of recommendation.

If you're interested in continuing your activities, search for colleges with similar student organizations or clubs you can join.



“I started getting involved my freshman year. I took part in student council, cross country, and the Boys & Girls Club. Extracurricular activities will help you build your leadership skills and refine college/scholarship applications. **I'd encourage you to get involved with something you're passionate about.**”

— Lane (Navajo), San Diego State University (Kumeyaay Territory)



“I was really active in school with sports and extracurriculars, which helped me make many connections leading to jobs and future recommendations. **I not only realized what my passions were—I also realized what didn't interest me as much.** While extracurriculars are important, don't overcommit while in school. Finding time to sleep, eat, and study should be prioritized too.”

— Holly (Navajo), Dartmouth (Abenaki Territory)



**Tip:** Thinking about college athletics? You can find the specifics at [ncaa.org/student-athletes/future](https://ncaa.org/student-athletes/future).



# Find a Mentor

A mentor is a trustworthy adult or older student, and a mentee is a student like you looking for insight. A mentor is available to answer your questions about college life and can also be a role model who will support you in reaching your full potential.

## Why seek out a mentor?

Mentors can give you perspectives on how to move forward in your college journey and navigate next steps. They can help you look forward to your life beyond college and open your professional network.

## How can I find a mentor?

You can find a mentor through your school, extracurricular activities, or community centers. If you're looking for someone in a specific career, start by talking to your school counselor.

## What can I talk to my mentor about?

You can share your career or college aspirations, academic challenges, and interests. Mentors share their experiences and insights to help you on your college journey. Remember that mentors offer advice, but they don't decide your path.

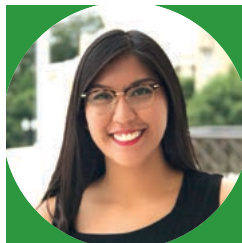


**Tip:** Once you find a mentor, set up monthly or biweekly check-ins to ensure you both have enough time to meet throughout the semester.



“I would argue that it’s essential for Native students who come from very rural communities to **get in touch with someone who understands where they come from** in an institution. This type of mentorship has afforded me the chance to be as open as I can, and to not be judged. I have also been fortunate to have mentors that care about my future and provide me with options to enhance my abilities and grow as a professional in education.”

— **Monty** (Navajo), University of Oklahoma (Wichita & Osage Territory)



“In high school, I had two mentors. One was my AP English teacher, and the second was one of my dormitory aids. I would visit with them to ask them questions about their journeys and to tell them what I was thinking in regard to college. **Each person provided insight into their college and career experiences, and they gave me overwhelming support in pursuing my college goals.**”

— **Megan** (Navajo), Arizona State University (Yavapai, Akimel O’odham & Hohokam Territory)



# Take Challenging Courses

One of the best ways to get ready for college is to take challenging courses like Advanced Placement. They'll help you build new skills, give you an idea of what college classes are like, and show admissions officers that you set high academic goals.

The College Board AP Program offers college-level classes—you can choose from 38—where students develop and apply skills like reading critically, solving problems analytically, and writing clearly. If you take an AP Exam at the end of the year and earn a high enough score, you can get credit, advanced placement, or both at most U.S. colleges and universities. Go to [exploreap.org/now](https://exploreap.org/now) to learn more.

Honors classes cover the same material as regular classes but in more detail or at a faster pace. You may also be able to take college courses while still in high school, either at your school or on a local college campus.

**Next:** If you think AP might be right for you, talk to your counselor or teachers about registering for classes. Talking with your family or friends about AP is a good way to get another perspective on the program. Learn more about the AP experience at [exploreap.org/experience](https://exploreap.org/experience).

If your school doesn't offer honors or AP-level classes, don't worry—admissions officers will take this into consideration when reviewing your application.



**“I remember being intimidated when I enrolled in my first AP class, but I am so thankful I did. This class not only prepared me for college coursework but also greatly improved my study skills, my time management, and how I think about the world! Taking challenging courses can be intimidating, but there are so many benefits beyond just college credit! They prepare you to think more critically about the world as well as developing hard skills that are extremely important as you progress in life.”**

— **Tamah** (*Meskwaki*),  
University of Oklahoma (*Wichita & Osage Territory*)



## **Create an academic plan for your high school years.**

Find out course requirements for potential colleges at [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org) or on the college's admissions website. Have your high school counselor help you map out courses for graduation from high school and for preparation for college.

# Search for College Prep Programs

College prep programs are a great way to learn about the college experience.

Many focus on admissions, increasing academic readiness, and even special interests (tribal sovereignty, medicine, etc.) while helping you get ready for college by being on campus or learning about the admissions process. Here are some programs specifically for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students.

## College and Career Access

**College Horizons** A five-day summer program for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian high school sophomores and juniors, with individualized programs to help students find their best fit college. [collegehorizons.publishpath.com](https://collegehorizons.publishpath.com)

**Native Pathways** American Indian College Fund's Native Pathways to College program supports a college-going culture among Native American and Alaska Native students through individualized college admissions coaching. [collegefund.org/student-resources/native-pathways-to-college](https://collegefund.org/student-resources/native-pathways-to-college)

**Kamehameha Scholars** This year-round program helps Native Hawaiian students earn a postsecondary degree and find a career. Students in grades 9–12 participate in workshops and activities, earning points that translate to dollars and lead to a merit scholarship to help pay for college. [apps.ksbe.edu/kscholars](https://apps.ksbe.edu/kscholars)

## College Specific

**Dartmouth Bound: Native American Community Program** The Dartmouth Indigenous Fly-In Program is open to rising Indigenous high school seniors who get an unedited view of life at Dartmouth from the perspective of Native students. [admissions.dartmouth.edu/visit/visit-programs/dartmouth-bound-native-american-community-program](https://admissions.dartmouth.edu/visit/visit-programs/dartmouth-bound-native-american-community-program)

**Colorado State University Native Education Forum** This forum is a six-day summer program for rising high school juniors and seniors who obtain university classroom experience, earn one academic credit, research issues critical to Native American/Indigenous communities, and receive college application assistance from professionals. Students discuss issues that affect Indigenous communities with university faculty, staff, and enrolled students. [admissions.colostate.edu/nef](https://admissions.colostate.edu/nef)



**Tip:** Start your own summer programs search with the keywords “summer college prep programs” or “summer enrichment programs.”



**Tip:** Ask your mentor if they were in any college prep programs and if they have any recommendations.

## Study Specific

**INSPIRE Pre-College Program** This is a three-week program at George Washington University for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian rising juniors and seniors. Students learn about the relationship between the federal and tribal governments. [inspire.naplp.gwu.edu](https://inspire.naplp.gwu.edu)

**Native Youth in Agriculture** This is a 10-day leadership summit on the impact of the food and agriculture policy on tribal communities. Speakers give presentations on topics such as the history of American Indian agriculture, business planning, ethnobotany and seed preservation, legal issues in Indian country, and the importance of traditional foods. [law.uark.edu/service-outreach/youth-summit.php](https://law.uark.edu/service-outreach/youth-summit.php)

## While in College

**LEDA Scholars** Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to identifying and supporting students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. [ledascholars.org](https://ledascholars.org)

**Nizhoni Academy** This is a six-week STEM-focused summer program for Native American first-year students and sophomores at Northern Arizona University. [nau.edu/nizhoni-academy/summer-academy](https://nau.edu/nizhoni-academy/summer-academy)



“In high school, I took part in College Horizons, a college admissions program for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. **It was an amazing experience and changed the way I think of Native American identity. It was so impactful and empowering, and it provided me with all of the information that I needed to apply to college.** When I attended College Horizons at NYU, I visited Columbia University nearby. I was instantly interested in the school. In the end, I chose Columbia University because of its outstanding chemistry department, diverse student body, and urban campus setting. It felt like the perfect match.”

— **Christian** (Navajo), Columbia University  
(Lenape & Wappinger Territory)



**Tip:** If you're questioning whether college is for you or what the different pathways to higher education look like, visit the BigFuture video gallery ([collegeboard.org/collegeprep](https://collegeboard.org/collegeprep)) to see how other Native students overcame obstacles and achieved their college dreams.



# Take Your First SAT

## Why should I take the SAT this spring?

The SAT is accepted by every college in the U.S. and is an important part of the college application process. **By testing in the spring of your junior year, you keep your options open for improving your score.** Most students who test more than once see their scores go up.

## How is the SAT organized?

The SAT has four tests, but the Essay is optional. The three tests everyone takes are (1) the Reading Test, (2) the Writing and Language Test, and (3) the Math Test. The timing and number of questions are:

Component	Time Allotted (Minutes)	Number of Questions/Tasks
Reading	65	52
Writing and Language	35	44
Math	80	58
SAT Essay (optional)	50	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b> (230 with Essay)	<b>154</b> (155 with Essay)

## Three Steps to Get Ready

The SAT makes it easy for you to show your best work. Use this checklist to stay organized as you prepare.

### 1. REGISTER

The registration deadlines are approximately one month before the test date. Check [sat.org/register](https://sat.org/register) for test dates and registration deadlines.

It's a good idea to have what you need—and to get comfy—before you start to register.

- Sign in to your free College Board account. Your parent or counselor can't register for you.
- Provide your full legal name and other identifying information. Make sure it's the exact name and information shown on your photo ID.
- Decide if you want to answer other questions about yourself. This takes time, but it's worth it if you want colleges and scholarship organizations to find you. Go to [studentsearch.collegeboard.org](https://studentsearch.collegeboard.org) to learn more about Student Search Service®.
- Decide whether to sign up for the SAT with Essay. Go to [collegeboard.org/satessay](https://collegeboard.org/satessay) to find out which colleges require or recommend it.
- Upload a photo that meets the College Board requirements.
- Check and print your admission ticket.



### Ask your counselor about SAT fee waivers.

Students who qualify can get an SAT fee waiver, which covers the full cost of the test, free, unlimited score reports to colleges, college application fee waivers, and more. For more information on SAT fee waivers, go to [collegeboard.org/satfw](https://collegeboard.org/satfw).

## 2. LINK

The College Board partnered with Khan Academy to give you free, personalized SAT study tools—you just have to link your Khan Academy account with your SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT™ 10, and PSAT™ 8/9 scores.

Here's how to get started:

- Log in to Khan Academy
  - ♦ Go to [sat.org/kappractice](https://sat.org/kappractice) and sign in to or create your Khan Academy account.
- Link your accounts
  - ♦ Agree to link your Khan Academy and College Board accounts.
- Send your scores
  - ♦ Log in using your College Board username and password, and hit **Send** to get personalized study questions.

## 3. PRACTICE

Just like playing a sport or an instrument, you have to practice if you want to do your best on the SAT. The more you practice, the more confident you'll feel on test day.

Here's how to make sure you get enough practice:

- **Make the most of your study time**

If you link your Khan Academy and College Board accounts, you can use Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy to focus on the areas you need to work on the most.
- **Set a goal**

You should aim to study for at least 12 hours before test day.

**My goal is to study for \_\_\_\_\_ hours before I take the SAT on \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **Choose a practice schedule**

Go to [sat.org/kappractice](https://sat.org/kappractice), and click **Choose Your Practice Schedule** to make a plan for achieving your goal.



### EARN A CHANCE AT \$2,000 FOR COLLEGE!

#### Practice for the SAT

Students who practice for six hours on Khan Academy—after their accounts have been linked—will earn a chance at a \$1,000 scholarship.

#### Improve Your Score

Students who practice for the SAT for 12 hours using Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy and improve their score by 100+ points—either from their PSAT/NMSQT to SAT or SAT to SAT—will earn a chance at a \$2,000 scholarship.

Be sure to check out [cb.org/opportunity](https://collegeboard.org/opportunity) for more information on how to join and deadlines.



**Tip:** Learn more about how to prepare for the SAT test day on [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org).





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CONQUEST HUGH THOMAS 972.02 Thomas

CORTES 970.015 Cortes Marks

JAMMOND INNES The Conquistadors 970.015



# Explore Your College Dreams

Native students take diverse paths to college, major, and career. It's important to acknowledge the benefits of attending college and to think about which subjects interest you.

To start your college list, consider what your priorities for college are. Keep these questions in mind when thinking about the colleges you want to apply to.

- **Kinds of colleges:** Do I want to go to a two-year or a four-year college? Am I limiting my choices by focusing on whether a college is public or private?
- **Location:** How close to home do I want to be? Do I want to stick to a setting I'm used to or should I try something new? Am I staying near home because I think it'll be less expensive? Do I want to be near Native communities?
- **Campus setting:** Do I see myself at a college with lots of students or in a smaller community? Do I want to be at a college where students stay on campus most of the time? Do I want to live in a dorm? Do I want to be at a college where sports are a big deal? Or one that's known for its activism or hardworking students?
- **Cost:** Do I have the facts about what college will cost? Will I qualify for financial aid? Am I eligible for scholarships?
- **Majors:** What are my favorite subjects? Do I want to take classes in many different subjects or focus mainly on one? Are there Indigenous studies majors or Native faculty members?
- **Learning environment:** Do I learn best when I'm academically comfortable or academically challenged? Do I prefer to be part of small-group discussions or to listen to lectures? How much interaction do I want with my professors? What balance am I looking for between studying and social life? Do I want to choose most of my classes myself, or do I prefer more structure?

**Next:** Share these lists with a counselor, teacher, mentor, parent, or peer for feedback and additional advice about applying to college. What are their recommendations?

## Create a College List

Next, dedicate some time to researching colleges that align with your interests. Go to [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search) to start your college search. Enter the answers to the questions above to find colleges that match what you're looking for, compare colleges, and save the colleges you're interested in to your list.



### EARN A CHANCE AT \$500 FOR COLLEGE!

#### Build Your College List

Students who build a college list with six or more colleges on our college planning site, BigFuture, can earn a chance at a \$500 scholarship.

Be sure to check out [cb.org/opportunity](https://cb.org/opportunity) for more information on how to join and deadlines.



**Tip:** Look up the application requirements for each college on your list and write them down for future reference. The requirements could include personal statements, test scores, interviews, and letters of recommendation.



**Tip:** Research services for Native students or ones that are specific to your major or your area of study at the colleges on your list. This will be important when you begin narrowing your options based on resources that colleges may or may not offer Native students.



**Tip:** Ask your school counselor if college visits are considered excused absences at your school.

## Go to a College Fair

A college fair is a gathering of college representatives looking for the right students for their institutions. They're there to spread the word about their colleges—and they want to talk to you.

College fairs may be held at your school, a conference center, or a local community center, and the colleges may be local or from around the country. The representatives usually sit at booths or tables and hand out brochures and cards. They can tell you about everything from academics to campus life at their college, and they can also answer more general questions about college. Ask your counselor or a teacher how to find college fairs in your area. If you can, go to more than one to get a good sampling of what's out there.

### Before You Go

- **Find out which colleges will be at the fair.** Make a list of 3–5 you want to learn more about.
- **Look at college websites,** and then write down any questions you still have about the colleges.
- **Bring a bag** to hold all the brochures, pens, and flyers you'll receive.
- **Be ready** to give your email address to representatives!



**“Don't let fear of rejection stop you from applying to your dream college.** Most colleges evaluate applications holistically; they look beyond GPAs and test scores to find unique, well-rounded individuals. If your application showcases those qualities, you have a chance.”

— **Ashley** (Cherokee), Harvard University (Massachusetts Territory)



## While You're There

- **Introduce yourself.** Smile. Extend your hand. Give a firm handshake, and tell the recruiter who you are.
- **Visit booths, and ask representatives questions about their college.** For example, you can ask: "What kind of students are you looking for?" or "What make the campus special?"
- **Take a minute to jot down any information** you think is important on your phone or a notepad.
- **Be sure to check out other booths** when you're done with the colleges on your list.
- **Ask about information sessions or recruitment programs** at each college.

## When You Get Home

- **Ask yourself** which colleges stood out and why.
- **Organize the materials** you collected, and review them for things you liked and want to learn more about.
- **Share pamphlets** from colleges you're not interested in with your younger siblings or community members.
- **Do more research** on the colleges you're thinking about. Explore their websites, contact admissions officers, and ask about campus visits.



### Waitlisted by a college?

If you intend to enroll if you're accepted, let the admissions director know. Ask how to strengthen your application, and consider writing an additional letter to the college about your intent. Check your position on the waitlist to help you make your final decisions on colleges.



# Indigenous Serving Institutions

If you're interested in attending an institution that's located near a reservation or controlled by a tribe, here's a list of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Most TCUs are located near Native communities, which allows them to offer degree programs within a Native learning environment full of culture and tradition.

## Tribal Colleges and Universities

Institution	Town	State
Ilisagvik College	Storrs	Alaska
Diné College	Tsaile	Arizona
Tohono O'odham Community College	Sells	Arizona
Haskell Indian Nations University	Lawrence	Kansas
Bay Mills Community College	Brimley	Michigan
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College	L'Anse	Michigan
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College	Mt Pleasant	Michigan
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Cloquet	Minnesota
Leech Lake Tribal College	Cass Lake	Minnesota
Red Lake Nation College	Red Lake	Minnesota
White Earth Tribal and Community College	Mahnomen	Minnesota
Aaniih Nakoda College (Ft. Belknap)	Harlem	Montana
Blackfeet Community College	Browning	Montana
Chief Dull Knife College	Lame Deer	Montana
Fort Peck Community College	Popular	Montana
Little Big Horn College	Crow Agency	Montana
Salish Kootenai College	Pablo	Montana
Stone Child College	Box Elder	Montana
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	Fort Totten	North Dakota
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (Fort Berthold)	New Town	North Dakota
Sitting Bull College	Fort Yates	North Dakota
Turtle Mountain Community College	Belcourt	North Dakota
United Tribes Technical College	Bismarck	North Dakota
Little Priest Tribal College	Winnebago	Nebraska
Nebraska Indian Community College	Macy	Nebraska
Institute of American Indian Arts	Santa Fe	New Mexico
Navajo Technical University	Crownpoint	New Mexico
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	Albuquerque	New Mexico
College of the Muscogee Nation	Okmulgee	Oklahoma
Sinte Gleska University	Mission	South Dakota
Sisseton Wahpeton College	Sisseton	South Dakota
Oglala Lakota College	Kyle	South Dakota
Northwest Indian College	Olympia	Washington
College of Menominee Nation	Green Bay	Wisconsin
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College	Hayward	Wisconsin

Colleges and Universities listed as of October 2018 by American Indian Higher Education Consortium



**Tip:** Some colleges and universities are commuter campuses, residential campuses, or a mix of the two. Make sure to look at each institution's housing options when considering adding them to your College List.

## Native American Serving Nontribal Institutions

There are some institutions that are designated as Native American Serving Nontribal Institutions. These institutions can be accurately described as:

- Having 10% or more Indigenous identifying student populations
- Being primarily two-year institutions, with many exceptions
- Being primarily public institutions, with few exceptions

Institution	Town	State
University of Alaska Anchorage-Kodiak College	Kodiak	Alaska
University of Alaska-Fairbanks	Fairbanks	Alaska
Northland Pioneer College	Holbrook	Arizona
Fort Lewis College	Durango	Colorado
University of Minnesota-Morris	Morris	Minnesota
Montana State University-Northern	Havre	Montana
New Mexico State University-Grants	Grants	New Mexico
San Juan College	Farmington	New Mexico
Robeson Community College	Lumberton	North Carolina
University of North Carolina at Pembroke	Pembroke	North Carolina
East Central University	Ada	Oklahoma
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma	Chickasaw	Oklahoma
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	Durant	Oklahoma
Redlands Community College	El Reno	Oklahoma
Northern Oklahoma College	Enid	Oklahoma
Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College	Miami	Oklahoma
Carl Albert State College	Poteau	Oklahoma
Seminole State College	Seminole	Oklahoma
Northeastern State University	Tahlequah	Oklahoma
Murray State College	Tishomingo	Oklahoma
Connors State College	Warner	Oklahoma
Eastern Oklahoma State College	Wilburton	Oklahoma
Utah State University-Eastern	Blanding	Utah
Heritage University	Toppenish	Washington

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Linking Policy and Practice Institutional Data Report 2019, July 2019

“Northeastern State University (NSU) had a lot of characteristics that interested me when I was deciding on which university to attend. It was located in Tahlequah, Okla., which is approximately 25 miles away from my parents’ home so I was able to still live at home and complete my degree without having to worry about paying for an apartment or rental property while paying for college. More importantly, NSU is rooted in Cherokee history and their Center for Tribal Studies does a lot for their Native students. They have multiple opportunities for Native American scholarships and linking students with possible employers in Native communities.”

—Makenley (Cherokee), Northeastern State University (Cherokee Territory)



# Search for Native Student Resources

You may need support as you transition from high school to college. Fortunately, many colleges have services and programs specifically for Native students.

Some examples include:

- **Centers for Native students:** Colleges like Northern Arizona University, Fort Lewis College, and Purdue University have centers that work to maintain a supportive network for Indigenous students. Some colleges, including Columbia University, Dartmouth College, and Stanford University, also host powwows for Native students and those who want to learn about Native American culture.
- **Native-centered housing:** There are residential programs that allow Native students to live together in a close-knit network that supports Native culture and history. Some colleges that offer this option: the University of California, Berkeley; Washington State University; and Colorado College.
- **Native fraternity or sorority:** There are Greek organizations focused on Native culture. Alpha Pi Omega Sorority is the oldest historically Native American sorority and has 20 chapters across the country. Phi Sigma Nu is a Native American fraternity that has 13 chapters, with almost 400 brothers representing more than 55 tribal nations.
- **Native majors or courses:** Some institutions offer coursework, minors, or majors focused on Native, Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, Native American, and Indigenous studies. Examples include American Indian studies at Arizona State University and American Indian Studies at University of North Carolina at Pembroke.
- **Native student organizations:** These organizations often provide student-led community support, advocacy, and cultural programming to campuses to promote Native heritage. Membership in all organizations and clubs is usually open to all interested students.
- **Recruitment programs:** Many institutions, including the University of Arizona and the University of Miami, offer programs such as Native SOAR and Upward Bound specifically to recruit Native students.



“I created my college list based on schools that had a chapter of the Alpha Pi Omega sorority, the first Native American sorority in the U.S. I realized that it was a group I really wanted to be a part of and that if that school had a chapter, then there were definitely strong leadership opportunities for Native students like me.”

— Rachel (*Haliwa-Saponi*), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and University of Miami (*Catawba & Seminole Territory*)



## Questions to ask colleges about Native-specific services:

- Can you connect me with Native students who can share their experiences?
- What programs are available to help Native students transition to campus life and thrive there?
- Are there housing options for Native students to live together?
- Are there any Indigenous studies classes I can take or Native studies majors I can pursue?



# Own Your Senior Year

Congratulations—you made it to your senior year! This will be a big year for you—Here’s a checklist to help you stay on top of your college applications.

## Fall

- Narrow your list of colleges** to your top six choices.
- Participate in college visit programs.** Many colleges host open houses and group tours. Some colleges have fly-in programs specifically for Native students. Make a list of what you like best about each college you visit so you can compare these documents when you get home.
- Request documents** from your tribe, including your Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) or Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB), letter of descent, or enrollment verification. You may need them for college and scholarship applications.
- Register for the AP Exams** given in May.
- Take the SAT one more time.** Many seniors retake the SAT in the fall—additional coursework and practice since your last test could boost your score. The SAT is offered in August, October, November, and December.
- Decide on early decision (ED)/early action (EA)/rolling admission applications.** Colleges may require test scores and applications November 1–15.
- Fill out college applications.** Breaking the work into chunks will make it easier. Complete at least one application by Thanksgiving break. See page 30 for a checklist to track your application process.
- Ask a counselor, teacher, or community member for recommendations,** if needed. Give them an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities, and give them at least one month to write your letter. Send thank-you notes to your recommendation writers.

- Complete your personal statement,** and ask for feedback from advisers, family members, and peers. If you’re applying for early decision, you should finish your final draft by mid-November.
- Ask counselors** to send your official high school transcripts to colleges. Give them the proper forms at least three weeks before the application deadlines.
- Gather documents for financial aid.** Ask your parents/guardians for a copy of their tax returns to complete the FAFSA®, which opens on October 1, and the CSS Profile™ (if needed).

## Winter

- Make and keep copies** of your applications and essays.
- Follow up with your counselor or teacher** to see if any colleges you’ve applied to require a second-semester transcript, and send it as soon as it’s available.
- Apply for scholarships.** Complete all required materials, and send the applications by the deadline.

## Spring

- **If you can, visit your final college options to help you make your decision.** You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. If you have questions about offers, talk to your counselor or call the college.
- **Review any financial aid awards,** and be sure to share the different aid packages with your family before deciding which college to attend.
- **Notify your counselor of your final choice,** and let every college that offered you admission know by May 1 if you will or won't be going there. Colleges can't require your deposit or commitment to attend before May 1. Talk to your counselor or adviser if you have questions.
- **Take any AP Exams** to show what you've learned in your AP courses. A successful score could even earn you college credit, advanced placement, or both. Send your official AP score report to your college by signing in to My AP ([myap.collegeboard.org](https://myap.collegeboard.org)) and designating your college before the June deadline.
- **Ask about first-year fellowship programs.** Once you're accepted, you should be able to search and apply to specific enrichment and readiness programs for additional support, mentorship, or scholarships beyond your first year.
- **Relax!** The college admissions process isn't easy. Congratulate yourself, and thank those who helped you throughout your journey.

## Summer

- **Start making lists of things you need when you go to college** such as clothes and dorm essentials.
- **Get experience, and earn some spending money** by finding a summer internship or job.
- **Stay up to date on events at your college/university** through their website or social media platforms.
- **Take summer enrichment courses or courses at local colleges.** Check that your college will accept the courses offered if you're seeking credit or placement into a specific course or track.
- **Read and respond promptly** to all the information and forms you receive from your college. You'll need to set up orientation activities, financial aid, housing, meal plans, and more, so be careful not to miss any deadlines.



**Tip:** Look for financial aid sources throughout your junior and senior years of high school. The summer before your senior year is a perfect time to find scholarships to apply for. Scan local newspapers to see which civic, cultural, and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating high school seniors.



**Tip:** Make sure to check out checklists to prepare for the first few weeks of college on the College Board Blog or Bigfuture.



“After being accepted to a handful of colleges, I made sure I was thinking more about which college would best support my identity and my background. I then began to look further into campus visits after narrowing down my top three choices. Stanford stood out the most in supporting first-generation, low-income students as well as having a strong Native community.”

— **Kenaba** (Navajo),  
Stanford University (Muwেকma Ohlone Territory)



“The summer before my freshman year I made sure to connect with someone at the university to be certain I was on top of all of my paperwork, meeting my deadlines, and involved in any campus activities to ensure that I would stay excited and ready for my first year of college.”

— **Tamah** (Meskwaki),  
University of Oklahoma (Wichita & Osage Territory)

# Decide Where to Apply

You've explored colleges, gone to a college fair, researched your options ... but how do you decide where to apply?

Here are some tips for how to decide where to apply:

1. Start with looking at how the colleges you're interested in fit you academically. Your final application list should include:
  - ♦ 3 "reach" colleges, where your SAT or ACT score is lower than the average score range of last year's freshman class
  - ♦ 2 "match" colleges, where your SAT or ACT score is solidly in the same score range as last year's freshman class
  - ♦ 1 "safety" college, where your SAT or ACT score is higher than the average score range of last year's freshman class

In addition to looking at your SAT or ACT scores compared to other students at the colleges, also look at how many students successfully complete degrees within six years at the colleges you're considering.

2. Next, consider how much the colleges might cost for you. You can get a personalized estimate of how much financial aid you might receive by using the colleges' Net Price Calculators. Every college has a link to their Net Price Calculator on their website. Set aside an hour to sit down with your parents/guardians to use the Net Price Calculators for your colleges. If you have questions about the financial aid options at colleges, you can always contact their financial aid office.
3. Finally, it's important you can see yourself thriving at the colleges where you plan to apply. You'll spend the next few years of your life wherever you decide to go. Can you imagine yourself at the college, living on or near campus, participating in events, and making friends? Are there clubs or organizations you would want to join? What support systems are on campus to help you transition from high school to college?

In summary, you'll want to apply to at least six colleges where you're confident you'll succeed academically, financially, and socially. Talk to your school counselor or mentor for help—these are big decisions, but you're not in this alone!



**Tip:** College application fee waivers and free score reports are available to students who use an SAT fee waiver. Speak to your school counselor to learn if you qualify.



**Tip:** Applying to reach colleges can help improve your chances for success after college. Remember, colleges consider much more than test scores!



**Tip:** You can find SAT and ACT score ranges, what percentage of students graduate on time, cost information, and more for more than 2,000 colleges at [bigfuture.org](http://bigfuture.org).



## EARN A CHANCE AT \$500 FOR COLLEGE!

### Strengthen Your College List

Students who update their college list on BigFuture to have a mix of safety, match, and reach schools will earn a chance at a \$500 scholarship.

Be sure to check out [cb.org/opportunity](http://cb.org/opportunity) for more information on how to apply and deadlines.



# Write Your Personal Statement

Your essay reveals an important part of you that your grades and test scores can't—your personality. It gives admissions officers a sense of who you are while showcasing your writing skills. The first suggestion from admissions officers for writing your essay is “**Be yourself.**” The second is “**Start early.**” Check out these other tips before you begin:

## Choose a Topic That Highlights You

- **Don't** focus on the great aspects of a college, the amount of dedication for specific fields of study, or the number of extracurricular activities you took part in during high school.
- **Do** share your personal story and thoughts. Take a creative approach, and highlight areas that aren't covered in other parts of the application.

## Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal

- **Don't** try to cover too many topics. This makes the essay sound like a résumé and doesn't provide any personal details about you.
- **Do** focus on one aspect of yourself so readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that readers should be able to follow your main idea from beginning to end.

## Show—Don't Tell

- **Don't** simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as, “I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests.”
- **Do** include specific details, examples, reasons, and thoughts to develop your ideas. Using the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Who did you talk to? What did you take away from the experience?

## Ask a Teacher or Parent to Proofread

- **Don't** turn your essay in without proofreading it, and don't rely on your computer's spellcheck to catch mistakes.
- **Do** ask a teacher or parent to proofread your essay, and ask them if the writing sounds like you. Reading your essay aloud also helps.



**“Most Native people are taught not to brag or be boastful. However, this is the time to do just that. Let the reader know ways that you have succeeded and what about you as a person has allowed you to succeed. Don't simply make claims about yourself without using supporting examples and stories.”**

— **Bryan** (*Wichita and Affiliate Tribes of Oklahoma*)  
Director, State Partnerships  
Higher Education Services  
College Board



**Tip:** Colleges are looking for students who will bring their viewpoint to classroom discussions and to the campus. Use your writing to describe what you'll contribute to the campus community. You might also consider how your Native identity informs your perspective and career path. Are you planning to help your community in any way through your studies? Write about it and why it's important to you.



**Tip:** Make an appointment with your mentor to ask if your personal statement sounds like you—if it doesn't communicate who you are, ask how you can enhance your goals or story.

# Apply for Financial Aid

For many students, college may seem too expensive. By investigating college costs and how to pay for them, you'll discover that higher education is within your reach.

## College Costs Vary

The biggest part of college costs is usually tuition, which is the price you pay for classes. Additionally, you'll probably have to pay fees to enroll in and attend a college. Other costs include room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. You should also think about the cost of going home for family and community gatherings if you attend college away from home. Just like tuition, these costs vary from college to college, but there are ways to save money on them.

## Financial Aid Reduces the Cost of College

Financial aid is money given or lent to you to help you pay for college. It may be awarded based on your financial need or based partly on factors such as academic or athletic ability. Most full-time college students receive some form of financial aid. The financial aid application process usually has its own forms, deadlines, and requirements. You don't have to be admitted to a college before you apply for financial aid.

[collegeboard.org/applyforinaid](https://collegeboard.org/applyforinaid)

## How to Apply for Financial Aid

- Submit the FAFSA:** Completing the FAFSA allows you to be considered for the greatest amount of financial aid from federal, state, and college sources—and it's free to fill out at [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov).
- Submit CSS Profile, if any of your colleges require it:** CSS Profile is used by colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their aid dollars. To get the most aid, you need to complete the CSS Profile before the priority deadlines. You'll need information similar to what you gathered for the FAFSA. Find out if the colleges you're applying to require it at [cssprofile.collegeboard.org](https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org).
- Search and apply for tribal scholarships:** Your tribe may award scholarships based on need or merit. You may have to submit a financial need analysis form or a copy of your financial aid package. Contact your tribal office or department for more information.

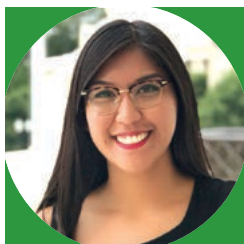
Remember, it's your responsibility to meet deadlines. You must submit your applications on time to qualify for financial aid. Financial aid resources are limited and, in many cases, are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.



**Tip:** Keep in mind that a college that charges a lot for tuition might offer you generous financial aid. It might even be more affordable than colleges that charge lower tuition. So, think about net price, not published price—and don't be afraid to apply to colleges you think you can't afford.

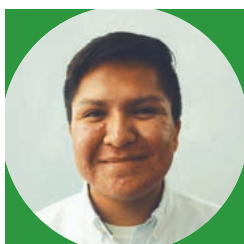
## Review Each Aid Offer Carefully

The college that offers the most aid may not have the best overall offer. Use the Compare Your Aid Awards tool at [bigfuture.org](https://bigfuture.org) to compare overall costs and the details of each college's offer, which may be mostly loan based for some colleges. Remember that the college with the best financial aid offer may not be the right one for you—you should choose a college that's a good fit based on your goals.



**“Before I started college, my mother and I made sure to talk to a financial aid officer to learn more about my financial aid package and what to do when money was tight. I learned about department scholarships, how to accept loans, and work-study. It was a two-hour visit but worth it!”**

— **Megan** (Navajo), Arizona State University (Yavapai, Akimel O’odham & Hohokam Territory)



**“I didn’t know how I was going to pay for college, but I knew I would figure it out. Through College Horizons, I learned about the QuestBridge National College Match. I applied to QuestBridge in my senior year; in December, I was matched to Columbia University with a full-ride scholarship. Now that I’m able to reflect on my own experience, QuestBridge taught me to embrace my story with its adversity and struggles, and to see that college is possible.”**

— **Kendall** (Navajo), Columbia University (Lenape & Wappinger Territory)



### EARN A CHANCE AT **\$1,000** FOR COLLEGE!

#### Complete the FAFSA

Students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will earn a chance at a \$1,000 scholarship.

Be sure to check out [cb.org/opportunity](https://cb.org/opportunity) for more information on how to join and deadlines.



#### Need financial aid?

Ask whether funds will be available if you're accepted. Also, it's important to know what's required to continue receiving financial aid from year to year and how your aid may change in future years. Work with a counselor to resolve any admission or financial aid problems.





**Tip:** Talk to your counselor about military academies or ROTC scholarships. Four-year ROTC scholarship applications open the summer before your senior year.

# Apply for Scholarships

Scholarship organizations and programs are working to provide more financial opportunities to support Indigenous students in higher education. Here are a few tips to guide you through the scholarship application process.

## Start Your Research Early

Researching scholarships, requesting information, and completing applications all take time. Go to [collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships](https://collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships) to get started. You can filter the search specifically for scholarships for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. You can also look for scholarships with eligibility requirements based on test scores, state residence, and first-generation and/or low-income status.

## Read Eligibility Requirements Carefully

If you have a question about whether you qualify for a certain scholarship, contact the scholarship sponsor. Native American-specific scholarships typically require documentation and proof of Native American descent, lineage, and/or enrollment. Read the eligibility requirements carefully.

## Get Organized

Mark all due dates on your calendar, and work your way backward to figure out how much time you have to get each piece of the application finished. Make a separate file for each scholarship, and sort the files by application deadlines. Be sure to gather all items you need to submit your application, including:

- High school transcript
- Standardized test score reports
- Student Aid Report, CSS Profile, and your parents' tax returns
- Personal statement and/or supplemental essays
- One or more letters of recommendation
- Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) and/or birth certificate



## Check Your Application

Before you send the application in:

- Contact scholarship offices if you have questions.
- If you can, fill out the application digitally.
- Confirm that you haven't used any incorrect names or references.
- Run spellcheck and grammar check on the application. Have someone you trust read your essays to catch mistakes and give you feedback.
- Remember to sign and date your application.
- Copy all materials.
- Track the package if you submit the application by mail.



**“There are approximately \$3 billion dollars in scholarships that go unclaimed every academic year. Which means it is possible to fund your education. My advice: research numerous sites, take notes of deadlines and requirements, make your responses strong, and repeat. Don’t count yourself out if you aren’t confident with your GPA. A lot of scholarship committees look at an applicant’s overall application.”**

— **James** (Cherokee), University of Oklahoma (Wichita & Osage Territory)

# Track Your College Application Process

You've taken a lot of the steps in this guide on your road to college. By your senior year, it's time to apply. Having a list of tasks to complete for each college application will make the process go smoothly and help you meet deadlines. You can make a copy of this page for each application.

College Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Application

- Create a digital or a hard copy folder for your application materials.
- Create a new application on the college's portal or website.
- Check for specific program requirements.
- If necessary, compile material for a portfolio (drama, music, art).
- Record regular/early decision/early action deadlines.
- See if you're eligible for an application fee waiver; if not, pay the fee.
- Sign the application, and send it.
- Receive a letter from the admissions office.
- Meet the deadline to accept admission and send the deposit.

## Testing

- Find out what tests are required by the colleges you're applying to (admission, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, etc.).
- Send all official test scores to the college.

## Interviews

- Schedule an official college or alumni interview (if you're interested or if it's required).
- Prepare two questions for the college interviewer, and practice by yourself and/or with a counselor/mentor.
- Arrive on time for the interview.
- Send a thank-you note/email to interviewer.

## Counselors/Mentors/Teachers

- Request to have high school transcripts sent to the institution.
- Meet with teachers/mentors to discuss plans, and request letters of recommendation (one month prior to due date).
- Share your résumé and/or writing samples with your recommendation writers.
- Send thank-you notes/emails to your recommendation writers.

## Personal Statement

- Draft an initial personal statement or supplemental essay.
- Have two people read your essay.
- Revise and proofread your essay.
- Upload essay to application.

## Financial Aid

- Gather tax documents.
- Write down financial aid deadlines.
- Complete and submit the FAFSA and CSS Profile (if needed) with your parent/guardian.
- Consider the expected family contribution (EFC).
- Write down tribal scholarship deadlines.
- Make copies of CIB/tribal enrollment card.
- Receive financial aid award letter.
- Submit state aid form (if needed).
- Accept financial aid offer, or submit a request to the institution for review.
- Plan for enrollment deposit fee.



### EARN A CHANCE AT \$1,000 FOR COLLEGE!

#### Apply to Colleges

Students who apply to two or more colleges will earn a chance at a \$1,000 scholarship.

Be sure to check out [cb.org/opportunity](https://www.collegeboard.org/opportunity) for more information on how to join and deadlines.



# Choose Your College

Congratulations—you've completed the admissions process and you're getting acceptance offers. Now it's time to decide where you want to go.

## Priorities

First, create a list of your priorities. They can be as personal or as academic as you need them to be.

### Academic

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### Financial

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### Community

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### Emotional

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### Future Opportunities

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## Balancing Support and Opportunity

Having the support you need to graduate is important, but so is knowing you'll learn as much as you want about your major or your future career.

Try to talk to people in fields that interest you about how and why they chose their colleges.



“I was scared to leave home and my community that I had grown up in, but I also recognized the importance of my educational journey and how that could benefit my community once I return. **College is a great time to take yourself out of your home context, see what problems face your community, and learn how you can help solve those problems with more training and experience.** Don't be afraid to take a step toward owning your future.”

— Evan (Cherokee), Dartmouth (Abenaki Territory)



**Tip:** Some colleges invite accepted students to visit to learn more about campus resources (example: the Dartmouth Acceptance Program). Once you're accepted, ask the college admissions office about a campus visit.



**You have time to make your decision.**

Many colleges don't expect your final decision until May 1.



**If you're having a hard time deciding, take time to chat with your mentor.**

Ask what they would do in your position but remember: They don't decide your college future—you do.

# Parent/Guardian Checklist



## College Board Opportunity Scholarships is a different kind of scholarship program

Students don't have to write an essay, fill out an application, or have a specific GPA or test score. The program rewards students for simply completing the actions they need to take to apply to college.

For more information, go to [collegeboard.org/findopportunity](https://collegeboard.org/findopportunity).



**Encourage your student to set goals for the school year.** Working toward specific goals helps them stay motivated and focused.

## Junior Year

Junior year marks a turning point when your student begins developing a college game plan.

### Fall

- Make sure your student meets with their school counselor.** If possible, sit in on this meeting to hear the counselor's perspective on the college application process.
- Help your student get ready for the PSAT/NMSQT in October.** This preliminary test helps students practice for the SAT, assesses their academic skills, and offers scholarship opportunities.

### Winter

- Review PSAT/NMSQT results together:** then have your student share their scores with Khan Academy to get their personalized SAT practice plan. Visit [satpractice.org](https://satpractice.org) to learn more.
- Discuss taking honors or Advanced Placement courses next year** to prepare your student for college work and create a strong academic record.
- Join the College Board Opportunity Scholarships:** Have your student sign up for the chance to earn this scholarship opportunity.

### Spring

- Search together for colleges that meet your student's needs** to help create their college list.
- Help your student make summer plans,** including searching for scholarships, attending college prep programs and fairs, visiting colleges, or finding summer jobs.
- Encourage your student to take their first SAT before the summer.** The SAT is offered in March, May, and June.

### Summer

- Encourage your student to get started on applications** by filling in as much required information on them as possible.
- Gather financial documents,** including your most recent tax returns, to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on October 1.
- Find a college's actual cost.** Once your student has a list of potential colleges, use the College Board Net Price Calculator to find out the potential for financial aid and the true out-of-pocket cost—or net price—of each college.

# Senior Year

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Senior year is a whirlwind of activities, from schoolwork and extracurricular activities to the college application process. Use these suggestions to help your student successfully navigate this important time.

## Fall

- Encourage your student to meet with their school counselor** to complete and submit college applications.
- Encourage your student to take the SAT one more time.** Many seniors retake the SAT in the fall—additional coursework and practice since their last test could boost their score. The SAT is offered in August, October, November, and December.
- Help your student find and apply for scholarships.** Information about scholarship opportunities is available from their school counselor.
- Fill out the FAFSA and CSS Profile** to apply for financial aid beginning October 1.
- Encourage your student to take SAT Subject Tests and AP Exams** to showcase their interests and achievements. Qualifying AP Exam scores can get your student valuable credit or placement in college.

## Winter

- Help your student track their FAFSA and CSS Profile status.** Have your student contact the financial aid offices at the colleges on their list to ensure their financial aid applications were received and to provide any additional documentation the colleges may require.
- Work together to apply for scholarships.** Visit [collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships](https://collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships) with your student to search for additional scholarships they may want to pursue. Help your student complete all required materials, and send the applications by the deadline.
- Learn about college loan options together.** Borrowing money for college can be a smart choice—especially if your student gets a low-interest federal loan.

## Spring

- Help your student compare college responses and financial aid offers,** and offer support as they make their final decision.
- Help your student complete the paperwork** to accept a college's admission offer.

## Summer

- Have your student read and respond promptly to all the information and forms they receive from their college.** They'll need to set up orientation activities, financial aid, housing, meal plans and more, so be careful not to miss any deadlines.
- Help your student gather any medical documentation they may need to enroll.** Most incoming college students have to submit the results of a recent physical exam and their vaccination history before they can register for classes.
- Review your student's first tuition bill with them.** If you have questions about the bill, reach out to the college's bursar's office. Together with your student plan on how to pay for the remaining balance by the due date. Most students pay their tuition bill through a combination of scholarships, savings, and loans.



### Help your student stay organized with a calendar.

Work with them to make weekly or monthly to-do lists of tasks required to be ready to apply to colleges.

# Glossary

## College Application Resources

**Admissions tests:** Tests designed to measure students' skills and help colleges evaluate how ready students are for college-level work. The ACT and the SAT are two standardized admission tests used in the United States.

**BigFuture:** College Board online tool that gives students free, comprehensive college planning resources.

**Common Application:** Standard application form accepted by all members of the Common Application association. You can fill out this application once and submit it to one—or to several—of the nearly 700 colleges that accept it.

**Coalition application:** Standard application form accepted by members of the Coalition for College. You can use it to apply to any of the more than 130 Coalition member colleges and universities.

**Deferred admission:** When there isn't enough room for an admitted student in the class year they applied for, a college can defer the student's admission to the next year's class.

**Early action (EA):** Option some colleges offer with an October or November deadline and decisions released by mid-December. Unlike early decision, early action isn't binding, so students can apply to other colleges and compare financial aid packages. Note: Some colleges use restrictive early action, which means that although they're not binding, you can't apply early action to other colleges.

**Early decision (ED):** Option some colleges offer with an October or November deadline and decisions released by mid-December. Early decisions are binding, which means students must commit to attending if accepted.

**Fly-in programs:** More than 65 colleges offer free summer and fall visits for underrepresented and diverse students. If you're unsure if a college offers a fly-in program, contact them.

**Need-blind admission:** Policy of making admissions decisions without considering the financial circumstances of applicants. Colleges that use this policy may not offer enough financial aid to meet a student's full need.

**Personal statement:** Essay a college requires students to write and submit as part of their application. Some colleges give applicants specific questions to answer, while others simply ask applicants to write about themselves.

**Priority date or deadline:** Date your application—whether it's for college admission, student housing, or financial aid—must be received by to be given the strongest consideration.

**Regular admission/decision:** Traditional college application option. These deadlines vary, but most regular admission applications are due by early to mid-January. The sooner applications are filled out, the better.

**Rolling admission:** A system where colleges assess applications as they receive them. Candidates are often notified of the college's decision within a few weeks of submission.

**Universal application:** Standard application form accepted by all Universal College Application members. Once you fill it out, you can submit it to as many of the more than 3,044 colleges that accept it as you want to.

**Waitlist:** List of applicants who may be admitted to the college if space becomes available. When admission offers are declined, a college can fill the new spots with waitlisted students. A student will usually hear if they're accepted from the waitlist by summer.

## Financial Aid

**Award letters:** Documents that state the college's financial aid offer. The information includes the types and amounts of financial aid, what's required of students to maintain the award, and a deadline for accepting the award.

**CSS Profile:** Financial aid application offered by the College Board and used by more than 300 colleges, universities, and private scholarship programs to award financial aid.

**Demonstrated need:** Difference between your expected family contribution (EFC) and the total cost of attending a college.

**Expected family contribution (EFC):** A measure of your family's financial strength. States and colleges use this number to help determine your financial aid award. The EFC is calculated using information you supply about your family's financial circumstances.

**Financial aid:** Money given or loaned to you to help pay for college. Financial aid can come from federal and state governments, colleges, and private organizations.

**Federal Pell Grants:** A federal grant for undergraduate students with financial need. Unlike loans, they don't have to be repaid.

**Financial need analysis (FNA):** A form filled out by the college or university's financial aid office that includes exact amounts for tuition, room/board, university fees, and books. This document must be signed by the financial aid officer and returned by a specific date so a student can be considered for a scholarship or award.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The free application you submit to apply for federal financial aid. It's required for all students seeking federal student grants, work-study programs, and loans. Most colleges require it as well. The FAFSA may also qualify you for state-sponsored financial aid.

**Grants:** A type of "gift aid"—financial aid that doesn't have to be paid back. Grants are usually awarded based on need.

**Loan:** Money you borrow from the government, a bank, or another source. Loans need to be paid back, usually over an agreed period of time. You'll most likely also have to pay interest (a fee for borrowing the money) on a loan.

**Merit aid:** Financial aid given to students based on their personal achievements. Most scholarships are considered merit aid because they're generally awarded for success in school, the arts, athletics, or another area.

**Need-based aid:** Financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study opportunities) given to students when their families can't pay the full cost of college. This is the most common type of financial aid.

**Net price:** The true amount a student will pay for a college.

**Scholarships:** Funds to help pay for college that are awarded for academic or other achievement.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** Report sent to your family after you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It reports your expected family contribution (EFC).

**Tribal scholarships:** Scholarships and financial assistance provided by a tribal education office to support eligible tribal members pursuing a postsecondary degree. Please ask your tribal office for more information.



**Tuition:** Amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition doesn't include the cost of books, fees, or room and board.

**Work-study:** A program that allows students to use a part-time campus job as part of their financial aid package. To qualify for the government-funded Federal Work-Study Program, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Some colleges have their own work-study programs.

## Tests and Academic Programs

**ACT:** A standardized college admissions test. It features four main sections: English, math, reading, science, and an optional essay section.

**AP:** The College Board Advanced Placement Program, which offers college-level courses and exams to high school students. Colleges and universities may give advanced placement, credit, or both to students who receive high scores on the exams.

**Khan Academy:** An online instruction program that offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard to empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside of the classroom.

**PSAT/NMSQT:** An assessment that includes a Math Test, Writing and Language Test, and Reading Test, but no essay. It's also the official route of entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program. The PSAT-related tests include the PSAT 8/9, the PSAT 10, and the PSAT/NMSQT.

**Placement tests:** Tests that measure the academic skills needed for college-level work. They cover reading, writing, math, and other subjects. Placement test results determine which courses you're prepared for or if remedial classes would be beneficial.

**SAT:** The College Board standardized college admission test. The SAT has two sections: 1) Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and 2) Math. The SAT comprises four tests: Reading, Writing and Language, Math, and the optional SAT Essay.

## Types of Higher Education Institutions

**College:** An institution of higher education that grants degrees and certificates. The term also names the colleges within a university, such as the College of Education or the College of Engineering.

**Community college:** Two-year college offering associate degree programs that prepare you to transfer to a four-year college or for a certain career.

**Four-year college:** College offering degree programs that lead to a bachelor's degree.

**Graduate:** A student who has earned a bachelor's degree and is pursuing additional education in a specific field.

**Liberal arts college:** College offering a broad base of courses in the liberal arts, including literature, history, languages, mathematics, and life sciences.

**Online/distance learning:** Online programs that let you earn an associate or a bachelor's degree—or just enjoy a course.

**Private university:** An institution that relies mainly on tuition, fees, and private sources of funding. Private donations can sometimes mean generous financial aid packages for students.

**Public university:** An institution funded by local and state governments, usually with lower tuition costs than private colleges.

**Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs):** Institutions that foster Native American culture, languages, and traditions. They serve a variety of people, from young adults to senior citizens, both Native and non-Native.

**Two-year college:** College offering programs that last up to two years and lead to a certificate or an associate degree.

**Undergraduate:** A college student working toward an associate degree or a bachelor's degree.

**University:** A postsecondary institution composed of undergraduate, graduate, and professional colleges, all offering degrees.

## Miscellaneous

**Audit:** An arrangement that lets you attend the class as a "visitor" with the instructor's approval. You're enrolled in the course, but you won't receive credit.

**Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB)/Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) :** An official U.S. government document that certifies an individual has a specific degree of Native American blood of a federally recognized Indian tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community. They're issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

**College credit:** Credit granted after passing a college-level course. You need a certain number of credits to graduate with a degree.

**Concentration:** A specific area of emphasis within your chosen major. Like minors, colleges don't usually require you to declare a concentration; instead, they're used as an optional tool to help you customize your college experience.

**Full-time status:** Applies to a student enrolled in a full-load class schedule.

**Gap year:** A yearlong break between high school and college or between college years. This time can be used for traveling, clarifying goals beyond college, building a résumé, volunteering, participating in an internship, getting a head start on academics, serving the community, or developing areas of interest.

**Half-time status:** Applies to a student taking fewer classes than a full-time student.

**Major:** Area of study a student focuses on during the last two years of studying for their degree.

**Minor:** Area of study that typically supplements a major.

**Networking:** Exchanging information or services with individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically, building productive relationships for employment or business.

**Pass/fail courses:** Courses not graded with letter grades or grade points, only "pass" or "fail." Pass/fail course evaluations don't count toward the student's GPA.

**Quarter system:** Divides the academic year into three quarters: fall, winter, and spring. The fourth quarter, the summer session, gives students the chance to take more classes and possibly graduate early. A typical quarter lasts 10 weeks, and students usually take 3 classes per quarter.

**Resident adviser/assistant (RA):** An upperclassman or graduate student who lives in the dorm with younger students to provide support and advice.

**Retention rate:** Percentage of a college's full-time, first-year students who continue to matriculate the following year.

**Semester system:** Divides the academic year into two 15-week sessions: the fall and spring semesters, with a winter break in between. About 90% of colleges in the United States run on the semester system—it's the most common academic schedule.

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# Resources

Go to [bigfuture.org](https://bigfuture.org) and the sites below for resources to help you prepare for, find, apply to, enroll in, and pay for the right college for you.

#### Advanced Placement Program

[exploreap.org/now](https://exploreap.org/now)

#### American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC)

[aigcs.org](https://aigcs.org)

#### Cobell Scholarship

[cobellscholar.org](https://cobellscholar.org)

#### College Board Opportunity Scholarships

[cb.org/opportunity](https://cb.org/opportunity)

#### College Search

[bigfuture.org/college-search](https://bigfuture.org/college-search)

#### Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

[fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov)

#### Majors and Career Search

[collegeboard.org/major-careers](https://collegeboard.org/major-careers)

#### Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy

[satpractice.org](https://satpractice.org)

#### Scholarship Search

[collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships](https://collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships)



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