

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

WAYS TO APPLY

Regular Decision: the standard application process for most schools. This is a non-binding process and you may apply to as many schools as you wish. Applications are usually due around January 1st, decisions are released on pre-determined dates, (often in March) and you decide where you are attending by May 1st. Be sure to double check the deadline for each school to which you are applying.

Early Action: an early application process that allows you to apply to multiple schools. If you are admitted, you are not required to attend.

Early Action Single Choice: an early application process where you may only apply early to one school. If you are admitted, you are not required to attend.

Early Decision: a binding, early decision plan. You may only apply to one school ED, because if you are admitted, you must attend, regardless of other influencing factors.

Rolling Admission: an application process where you receive your admissions decisions based on when your application was submitted.

HOLISTIC REVIEW

Holistic Review: the name of the process selective colleges use to evaluate applications. This means a school will review all parts of your application together, no one part of the application is more important than another, and there are no “pre-screenings” or “cutoffs” for things like GPA or test scores.

TYPICAL APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Consortium Application: a system that allows you to submit your basic information once, then send it to multiple colleges and universities. The Common Application and Universal Application are the most popular examples.

Application Supplement: questions specific to each school tied to a consortium application. Many colleges require a school-specific supplement to the consortium application with multiple questions or essays specific to the institution.

Standardized Testing: ACT, SAT, AP/IB Testing, SAT Subject Tests, TOEFL.

High School Transcript: a record of your academic history in high school. Colleges will consider your grades, courses taken, and the overall rigor of your curriculum.

Extracurricular Activities: a list of everything you do outside the classroom, including your role and the total amount of time spent.

Letters of Recommendation: letters that describe your classroom presence and personality. Usually, two are required from academic teachers (ie. Math, Science, English, etc.)

Essays: your opportunity to share your personality. Be thoughtful about your topic choice (is this something you want the college to know about?) and always proofread!

Supplemental Materials: may include interviews, portfolios, and/or auditions.

FUNDING YOUR EDUCATION

Most selective schools are private, meaning they are supported by tuition; they can be more expensive, yet often offer more financial aid. Public colleges are meant to benefit their state, so they offer different tuition for in-state and out-of-state residents.

Schools that are ‘need-blind’ will not consider your ability to pay when making admissions decisions, while schools that are ‘need-aware’ or ‘need-sensitive’ will.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

Need-Based Financial Aid: awarded by taking into account your family’s need for financial support. In other words, your eligibility for aid is based on your family’s ability to pay.

Need Based Aid is awarded in a variety of forms, including:

Grants: awarded by the U.S. government or a college to be used towards your tuition and fees. Grants do not need to be repaid.

Loans: issued by the government, a private financial institution, or a college to be used towards your tuition and fees. Loans must be repaid; however, student loans have low interest rates and deferred payments that don’t begin until after graduation.

Work Study: a program run through the US Government in which students work in paid campus jobs and use their income to pay for a portion of their college expenses and/or tuition.

Merit-Based Financial Aid: a type of aid awarded to students for things like a high GPA, high test scores, athletic ability, leadership, research experience, or other accomplishments without taking into account your need for financial support.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

To apply for financial aid, colleges will request a variety of documents in order to understand your family’s unique financial circumstances. They will use these documents to determine your family’s Expected Family Contribution, or EFC, which is the amount your family can afford to pay towards your education. Your family’s EFC should be similar for every school.

Commonly requested forms include:

The FAFSA: the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, is an important part of any financial aid application. This is offered for free by the US Department of Education and can be filled out online at fafsa.ed.gov.

College Specific Forms or the CSS Profile: forms that are often available online and seek to provide colleges with a more rounded view of your family circumstances than can be obtained from the FAFSA alone. Each college will have different requirements, so be sure to check the policies at each of the schools to which you are applying.