



**CLASS OF  
2025**

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Dear Class of 2025 and Parents/Guardians,

We would like to officially welcome you to the college research and application process! This guide is intended to provide a broad overview of the different components of applying to college. We hope you will use it as a tool to gain knowledge that will make this process easier to navigate.

Applying to college can be an exciting time, but it does require time and research. We hope that you will utilize the resources provided here as a first step in finding the best-fit schools for you. We believe that anyone who wants to go to college can go, and we are here to support you throughout your journey.

Each piece of the application process is discussed in detail throughout this guide. We encourage you to review the guide prior to beginning this process, and refer back to it as you progress. The College Office is available to assist you at any time, and we look forward to working with you in your one-on-one junior meeting, your senior family meeting and at all the events and workshops in between.

We would also like to thank the Beacon Parent Teacher Association, whose funding supports our initiatives.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Deborah Heller, Valerie Flores, Dara Kornblatt, and Lindsay Peyton

## Advice From Beacon Graduates



*Each year, graduating seniors are asked what advice they would give students who are starting the college process. In their words...*

- Do not stress too much. You WILL get into college. I did, and I did not think I would. Get to know your counselor.
- Get started early – the process takes longer than you think.
- Do not miss deadlines (this does not just mean for applications, but also financial aid and scholarships).
- Time management is essential. Make a spreadsheet with all your deadlines.
- Memorize your social security number.
- Do not get fixated on one school, leave your options open.
- Be sure you know WHY you are applying to the colleges that you are applying to.
- When visiting schools, get your questions answered.
- When you fill out applications for schools or register for tests, print your name exactly the same way on everything; if you hyphenate, always hyphenate; if you use a middle initial, always use a middle initial.
- Prioritization and organization are two necessary life skills.
- Actually study for the SAT or ACT.
- If you do not get into your first-choice school, you will still be happy.
- You are not done with college stuff when you submit your applications. Don't forget about financial aid.
- Don't stop doing work senior year – colleges notice.
- FAFSA is not the only way to pay for college. There are outside scholarships too.
- Auditions for college (theater) are hard, waiting stinks, but getting accepted feels good!
- Make your own decisions.
- Proofread your essay.
- Apply for scholarships.
- Visit as many schools as you can and follow up any interviews with a thank you email.
- Do not wait to write your essay – your teachers will not let you turn in other work late just because you have a college essay to write.
- Give your teachers plenty of notice when asking for recommendations.
- Do not be late with ANYTHING. I did not get housing because I missed a deadline by a day.
- Keep ALL options open. You never know how you'll feel at the end of the year.
- Work hard – it pays off.
- It seems like the process will never end. It does. You will survive.

## College Application Process Timeline

<b>JUNIOR YEAR</b>			
<p><b>January/February</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on ending the first semester and starting the second semester strong!</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Read Weekly College Office Bulletins</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to participate in activities and clubs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Build relationships with your teachers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue doing community service if possible</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start researching colleges</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete Junior Questionnaire on Maia Learning to set up an individual appointment with the College Office</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Decide SAT or ACT and begin prep</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Maia Learning training (check email for details)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin virtual/in person college info sessions and tours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start applying for summer programs and internships</li> </ul>	<p><b>March/April</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review the Beacon College Planning Guide</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take free in-school SAT</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Register for future SAT/ACT exams</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep grades up and build relationships with your teachers/advisor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend the essay workshop offered by the College Office in your advisory</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> March – attend Junior College Night</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start adding your contact info to mailing lists of schools that you are interested in</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend open houses and college fairs online</li> </ul>	<p><b>May/June</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue with college visits and research</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Beacon’s College Admissions Panel</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask 1 or 2 teachers for letters of recommendation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize summer plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for a Common App account</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorm topics for and work on a draft of your college essay</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a list of extracurricular activities, honors, awards, special talents</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start thinking about the list of colleges you you want to apply to</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set up summer campus visits and tours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents attend Parent Panel</li> </ul>	<p><b>July/August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a relaxing and productive summer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visit college campuses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finish your Common App essay</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin to finalize your college list and gather application materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 8/1 – Individual college supplements come out on Common App!</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete as many supplements as you can before returning to school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start using net price calculators and the Federal Student Aid Estimator</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check Maia Learning for Beacon rep visits in the fall</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check to see if your colleges offer interviews</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gear up for a great senior year</li> </ul>

<b>SENIOR YEAR</b>			
<b>September/October</b>	<b>November/December</b>	<b>January/February</b>	<b>March/April/May</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If not complete, finish Common App essay</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work on supplements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finish SAT/ACT testing and send scores if applicable</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Senior College Week events</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Financial Aid Night</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fill out your senior questionnaire on Maia Learning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set up your senior college meeting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for an FSA ID before starting FAFSA</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 10/1 – FAFSA and CSS Profile open</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Add teacher recommenders to Maia Learning (not advisor)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Watch Common App/CUNY tutorial videos and read FAQs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ED/EA deadlines generally start on 11/1</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> First quarter grades go to ED/EA schools</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete SAT/ACT testing and confirm scores and financial aid forms were sent</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apply to rolling schools ASAP</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check application portals to make sure application is complete</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check CSS Profile schools for IDOC requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you have applied to likely schools</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure CUNY application has been submitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> End first semester strong – all colleges receive your mid-year grades</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regular decision deadlines usually 1st week in Jan.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check application portals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Research and apply to scholarships</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start making summer plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Update Maia Learning with any admissions decisions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Thank your recommenders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure all applications are submitted</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Submit required EOP/HEOP documents (if applicable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend accepted student events</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compare financial aid packages</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> May 1<sup>st</sup>: College Decision Day! Make deposit and submit required forms</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Colleges will receive updated transcripts in June.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue applying for scholarships</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Let your recommenders know where you are going to college</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy the last few months of high school!</li> </ul>

<p><b>Ongoing throughout senior year:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make schoolwork a priority</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend rep visits and/or campus tours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schedule interviews (if applicable)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Maia Learning is up-to-date</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Express interest in your colleges</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor admissions and financial aid deadlines</li> </ul>
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## Overview of the Application Process

- 1) Figure out what factors will influence your college choice.
  - Your specific needs
  - Geographic location
  - Size
  - Cost
  - Curriculum
  - Resources
  - Environment
  - Diversity
  - Standardized testing requirements
- 2) Research colleges that have your preferred characteristics using various resources.
  - College counseling office
  - Maia Learning
  - Individual college websites
  - Campus visits
  - Rep visits at Beacon (in the fall)
  - College fairs
  - Conversations with current students and/or alumni
  - Fiske Guide
  - College Board 'Big Future' website
  - Niche.com
- 3) Make a list of schools that interest you.
  - Your list should include:
    - 2 *likely* schools – your high school record exceeds admission requirements, and approximate acceptance rate of 65% or higher.
    - 2-4 *target* schools – admissions requirements are similar to your high school record, and approximate acceptance rate of between 40% and 60%.
    - 2 *reach* schools – admissions requirements may be higher than your high school record and/or school accepts less than 40% of applicants.
  - Scattergrams on Maia Learning are helpful visual representations of R-T-L.
- 4) Standardized testing
  - Most, but not all schools have moved to testing-optional policies and do not require test scores. You can review the list at [fairtest.org](http://fairtest.org).
  - Take a practice SAT and a practice ACT to help you decide which test is a better fit.
  - If you have an IEP or a 504 that grants you extended time on testing, make sure that you've contacted Naisha Baidy-Crews to request extended time on standardized tests as well.
  - Register for ACT or SAT test dates at the appropriate website ([actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org) or [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org)).



- 5) Set up accounts for and fill out your applications.
  - Create a Common Application account ([commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org)) junior year.
  - Some colleges may use their own or alternate application methods. Examples include, the Common Black College Application, University of California Application, and the City University of New York Application.
  - Be aware of your deadlines. Sometimes colleges' honors programs or scholarship opportunities may have priority deadlines that are earlier.
  - Ask a friend or family member to proofread your application for errors.
- 6) Write your Common Application personal statement and any supplements.
  - The Common Application typically has seven prompts to choose from, one of which is to submit an essay on a topic of your choice. You should aim to have a solid draft of this essay by the end of the summer before senior year. This 650-word essay should focus on YOU.
  - Some schools also require one or more supplemental or short-answer essays. These prompts will be released when the Common Application site goes live on August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 7) Request recommendations from two teachers and your advisor.
  - Recommenders should be from sophomore, junior or senior year, preferably not in the same subject area. Try to get one from the intended area of future study.
  - Recommenders must have at least four weeks notice, the more the better.
  - Add your recommenders to Maia Learning as soon as they have agreed to write your recommendation. Do NOT add your advisor to Maia Learning.
  - Do not forget to thank your recommenders for spending time on your behalf.
- 8) Keep Maia Learning up-to-date.
  - Maia Learning is the way in which you communicate to your counselor the schools to which you are applying. Your counselor cannot send your school-based materials (i.e. transcript, recommendations, etc.) unless a school has been added to your list of colleges.
    - Colleges should be added to Maia Learning at least two weeks before a deadline to ensure all materials are transmitted in time.
  - Update your decisions as you receive them.
- 9) Fill out financial aid applications and research scholarships.
  - Research your individual schools to determine whether you qualify for merit scholarships and if so, how to be considered.
  - All schools require the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to be considered for need-based aid.
  - Some colleges also require the CSS Profile.
  - To determine whether you may be eligible for need-based aid, you can use the Federal Student Aid Estimator or an EFC Calculator.
  - All students are encouraged to take advantage of our vast public in-state offering to maximize affordability (SUNY, CUNY).
  - Outside scholarship information can be found at [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com), [scholly.com](http://scholly.com), and in Weekly College Office Bulletins, among other resources (see scholarship section).
- 10) Choose where to attend college (!) and submit any tuition and housing deposits by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Overview of Standardized Testing

### TESTING-OPTIONAL SCHOOLS

- Most, but not all schools do not require test scores. You can review the list at [fairtest.org](http://fairtest.org). In these cases, it is to your advantage to only share your scores if it is in or above the mean range for accepted students.
- Some schools may require a graded paper along with your transcript. Save your work.

### PSAT

- Review results from 10<sup>th</sup> grade by logging into your College Board account (contact the College Board if you are unsure of your log-in details).

### SAT

- Students may choose to take the SAT in March, May, June or August of Junior year, or October or November of senior year. Register on [Collegeboard.org](http://Collegeboard.org) at least six weeks in advance.
- Schools differ in how they will accept your score reports. Some schools require official score reports directly from the testing agency. There is a fee and it can take several weeks to process. Some schools will accept self-reported scores, allowing you to include your scores in your application without sending official reports. Research your schools' policies on this practice.
- Use prep courses and/or study guides to develop confidence and familiarity with the test.
- When you register, you have the option of sending your scores to four schools for free.
- Almost every school in the country Superscores the SAT – send all your scores, only your highest section scores will be considered.
- If you believe you qualify for a fee waiver and do not see a fee waiver applied to your account, please see your counselor.

### ACT

- In terms of requirements, this exam is interchangeable with the SAT. Any college that requires standardized testing will accept results from either exam.
- To register, visit [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org). You may choose to take the ACT in April, June or July of Junior year and/or September or October of senior year.
- If you qualify for fee waivers, please see your counselor.

## What Factors are Considered in College Admission?

**Strength of your Transcript** is almost always the most important factor. In other words, what courses did you take at Beacon and how well did you perform in them? Your grades are important; however, colleges are specifically looking for the level of challenge in your course selections. This includes sticking with your core academic courses through ALL of senior year. Beacon students also have the opportunity to challenge themselves further through College Now offerings. Please note that your transcript does not indicate a GPA, as Beacon does not provide GPA or rank to colleges.

**Activities and Awards** – Colleges look at the depth of your involvement, not the quantity of activities you are involved in. Leadership positions and commitment over time are highly regarded factors.

**Letters of Recommendation** – Typically, you will need two teachers' and your advisor's recommendation. You should ask teachers for recommendations by the end of junior year, or at least four weeks in advance of your earliest deadline if you wait until senior year. Ask a teacher with whom you have a good in-class relationship.

**Personal Essays** – The essay is your opportunity to show more about yourself to an admissions officer. How do you spend your free time? What are your passions? Who or what has influenced you? What do you value? What obstacles have you overcome? Most of your application consists of statistical and biographical data. The essay is where you can demonstrate your particular strengths, interests, or abilities in your own unique voice. Generally, the maximum is 650 words.

**Standardized Test Scores** – While many schools have updated their policies to eliminate or de-emphasize the importance of standardized test scores, if you choose to submit your scores, they will be considered as one piece of your application.

**Interviews** – Colleges that either require or recommend an interview will likely weigh it more heavily in their decision-making process. Like the essay, the interview is your way of showing who you are beyond your grades and test scores. It's also a great place to ask questions and learn more about the school. You can usually register for an interview on the colleges' websites. Send a thank you letter or email to each interviewer.

**Demonstrated Interest** – Colleges want to know that you are interested in them as much as they are interested in you. Show your interest by reading their emails, spending time on their website, attending their rep visit at Beacon, speaking to them at a college fair, making scheduled visits, attending classes on campus, emailing professors in your intended major, and calling or emailing the admissions officer responsible for reading your application. Contact should be initiated by the student rather than the parent.

## Responsibilities in the Search and Selection Process

Student Responsibilities	Parent Responsibilities	College Office Responsibilities
Be honest and think carefully about your goals, dreams, strengths and weaknesses.	Respect and listen to your student and his/her/their thoughts.	Lead a junior one-on-one meeting to introduce students to the college process.
Take time to assess who you are and what you like and do not like.	Be honest and provide your student with realistic information about finances available for college.	Lead a senior family meeting to ensure that students and their families are on the same page and make suggestions as needed.
Strive to do your best academic work.	Encourage your student to explore a variety of options.	Provide essay workshops.
Own the process and take the time necessary to research college options.	Allow your student to own the college process; know when to “step back.”	Conduct Maia Learning training for juniors.
Attend local college fairs and receptions to gather more information.	Do not underestimate your student’s potential and do not raise your level of expectations beyond your student’s capabilities.	Provide college and financial aid information sessions and events.
Be your own advocate, call or email colleges for information.	Allow your student to assert his/her identity.	Support students in their understanding of reach, target and likely schools.
Apply only to colleges that you like and could see yourself attending	Remember that educational needs should guide college choice.	Send all school documents, including letters of recommendation and transcript via Maia Learning.
Use your own voice in your college essays or personal statements.	Remember that there is more than one right college for every student.	Keep track of letters of recommendation.
Take care in completing applications and be aware of all deadlines.	Be available for advice when needed, be a great encourager and avoid being a discourager.	Help students understand financial aid and the impact of college debt.
Know that there is more than one “right” college and take time to determine the best fit for you.	Share in decision-making with your student.	Provide information on programs related to students’ special interests.
Keep the College Office informed of your priorities, considerations and final decisions.	Contact the College Office with any concerns or questions you might have.	Keep families apprised of summer, internship, and scholarship opportunities.

# Researching Colleges

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## Available Resources



*There is a wealth of information available to teach you about the unique aspects of each college or university. As you spend time reading and researching, you will begin to narrow your list of colleges to which you will apply.*

**College Guides** – These large volumes contain brief descriptions of a variety of colleges, often grouped by special interest (some examples might include the Fiske Guide, Best Value Colleges, K&W Guide to College for Students with Learning Disabilities). They include information on college location, number of undergraduates, programs offered, SAT/ACT ranges, admission requirements, application deadlines, etc. Some guides organize listings by major, by state or by region of the country.

**Virtual Tours** – Many colleges provide virtual tours online that showcase their institution, students, faculty and staff in order to give you a feel for their college communities.

**Maia Learning** – This is a helpful tool to access data about previous Beacon applicants to a particular college. You can also perform an advanced search with criteria you set to find schools that match your preferences. In addition to performing the required college-related tasks, Maia also offers a number of interest inventories and career search tools to help you gain a more holistic understanding of possible paths after high school.

**College Websites** – You will find everything from athletics to scholarships to majors and course descriptions, etc. School's individual websites are also the best and most reliable resource for requirements and deadlines.

**College Representatives Visiting Beacon** – Each Fall, over 200 colleges send representatives to Beacon so that students can meet with them in small groups to learn about the different offerings and requirements at each college. Dates and times are published in the Weekly Bulletin and will be available on Maia Learning. Students are strongly encouraged to attend these brief but informative meetings. They also provide a great opportunity to make a connection with someone at a college that may interest you. Make sure to sign up at least three days in advance on Maia Learning, and get teacher permission to attend. Teacher permission slips are available in the College Office, must be signed by the teacher prior to the visit, and then brought to the visit itself.

**College Open Houses** – Many colleges host open houses on their campuses. During these events, you and your family may meet with different college representatives, take a tour of the campus, talk with students and professors, as well as attend information sessions.

**College Fairs** – Several college fairs are held in New York City each year. Hundreds of colleges send representatives who will answer questions, put you on their mailing list and provide viewbooks, catalogs, and other free information.

## Visiting Campuses



*Visiting campuses in person is a great opportunity to learn more about a school. Many colleges offer various options for virtual visits as well. We recommend seeing different kinds of schools (liberal arts college, research institution, etc.) to understand things that you like or don't like. It is helpful to visit reach, target, and likely schools.*

### Planning Your Visit

- **Plan to visit as many colleges as you can on the weekends or during school vacations.** Missing too many classes could have a negative impact on your grades. Do not wait until the spring of your senior year to start visiting the colleges you've been accepted to.
- **Arrange to visit specific departments of interest to you, or sit in on a class if possible.**
- **Allow enough time to get a real feel for the campus.** Take part in an official campus tour and information session.
- **Don't schedule more than two campus visits in a day.**
- **If visiting a college is not within your means, the school may be able to help make special arrangements** (e.g., bus trip from the city, fly-in programs, etc.). Even if you're not able to visit schools you're applying to, you should still plan on visiting local campuses to start to get an idea of your preferences.

### When on Campus

- **Get a general impression:** Are there students around? If not, why? If it's the summer, or during a break, there will naturally be less happening on campus. What is the atmosphere like?
- **Do not let a bad tour guide or dreary weather impact your view of the school.**
- **Take a closer look:** What kind of security is evident? Do you feel comfortable and safe walking around?
- **Go to places where students congregate:** the student union, the bookstore, the main cafeteria, a dorm. Ask them what they like and do not like about the school.
- **Get a copy of the school newspaper:** What are the top stories? What kinds of activities are listed: movies, bands, theater, sports, etc.
- **Take notes:** Things that you like, things that you do not like. You may want to reflect on these when writing colleges' supplemental essays.
- **Keep your appointment,** and if you cannot make it for some reason, be sure to call ahead of time to cancel or reschedule.

## Admissions Interviews



*Many colleges offer interviews to prospective students. Some interviews may take place with an admissions officer and others may be conducted with an alumnus. Don't forget to send a quick note of thanks after your interview.*

**Research.** The more you know ahead of time, the more in-depth your conversation can be. Look at the list of courses for the programs in which you are interested. Prepare a list of questions not easily answered by a brochure or website. Find out if you will be interviewed by an admissions officer or an alumni.

**Think about how you might answer questions that come up.** Remember, you will not be graded on your responses; you do not need to have a full presentation prepared. It is better to be prepared generally so that you do not panic when the interview begins.

**Optional:** Bring along a copy of your most recent high school transcript or prepare a high school résumé. Include a list of your extracurricular activities, community service and jobs as well as a list of your special skills and accomplishments. This will go into your file in the admissions office.

**Keep in mind that the interview is not a test and there are no trick questions.** The purpose of the interview is to give the admissions officer a chance to better understand things about you that are not reflected in your application. So try to relax and be yourself.

### Topics and questions the interviewer may bring up:

- Give me a brief autobiography of yourself.
- Tell me about your high school.
- What kind of relationship do you have with your teachers?
- Tell me about your transition to high school.
- What are your favorite subjects? What's the toughest for you?
- What is your favorite book and why?
- What do you like about this school? What majors interest you?
- If I asked your family or friends, how would they describe you?
- What are you most looking forward to about college?
- What are your concerns about attending college?
- Share an example of an obstacle you've had to overcome.
- What kind of roommate would you be?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten?

**Examples of questions you may want to ask** (Remember, you don't want to ask questions that are easily answered by reviewing the literature or visiting the website):

- What are the most important campus issues to students at this school?
- What is the most popular department or major here? The most popular course?
- What is the average class size?
- If you are applying for a specific program (art, music, drama, pre-med, business, etc.), will you be considered for general admission if you are not accepted into that specific program?
- What are the dormitory arrangements: Are they co-ed, will you have a roommate, are

- there cooking facilities, is there a meal plan, etc.?
- How has this college changed in the last five years?

### **Tips for the Interview**

- **Try to arrive a bit early whether in person or online to compose yourself.**
- **Listen to the question, then answer.** Don't get ahead of yourself and start planning your answer before you've heard the whole question. By taking time to listen, you will also give yourself a few extra seconds to form your response.
- **If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.**
- **If necessary, ask for a moment:** "Do you mind if I take a minute to think about that . . ." or "Let me think about that for a minute. . ."
- **Bring along your list of questions.** It's fine to refer to it; it will show the interviewer that you have come prepared.
- **Make eye contact.**
- **Be yourself.**
- **Try not to give one-word answers.** If you are asked a "yes" or "no" question, follow up your "yes" or "no" with an explanation.
- **Don't mumble.** Enunciate your words. Speak with your head up. If you have a soft voice, make an effort to speak up. **Practice.** Take a cue from the interviewer. If he or she is leaning forward and seems to be straining to understand you, **speak up.**
- **Be sure to get contact information from the interviewer.**
- **Write a thank you card or e-mail to your interviewer.** Use that as an opportunity to ask any additional questions.



## Standardized Testing

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### SAT / ACT Comparison

	Digital SAT	ACT
<b>Total time</b>	Two hours 14 minutes	Two hours 55 min
<b>Number of sections</b>	Two, broken up into two modules each	Four, plus optional essay
<b>Section Details</b>	Reading and Writing: 64 mins (two 32-min modules) Math: 70 mins (two 35-min modules)	English: 45 min Math: 60 min Reading: 35 min Science: 35 min
<b>Number of Questions</b>	Reading and Writing: 54 questions Math: 44 questions	English: 75 Math: 60 Reading: 40 Science: 40
<b>Scoring</b>	Two section scores on a 200-800 scale, combined for a total score from 400-1600.	Four section scores scaled from 1-36, averaged for a composite from 1-36.
<b>Wrong answer penalty?</b>	No	No
<b>Need more info?</b>	<b>The College Board</b> <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a>	<b>ACT, Inc.</b> <a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a>

### SAT / ACT Score Concordance

<b>ACT Score</b>	<b>SAT Score Range</b>	<b>ACT Score</b>	<b>SAT Score Range</b>
36	1570-1600	22	1100-1120
35	1530-1560	21	1060-1090
34	1490-1520	20	1030-1050
33	1450-1480	19	990-1020
32	1420-1440	18	960-980
31	1390-1410	17	920-950
30	1360-1380	16	880-910
29	1330-1350	15	830-870
28	1300-1320	14	780-820
27	1260-1290	13	730-770
26	1230-1250	12	690-720
25	1200-1220	11	650-680
24	1160-1190	10	620-640
23	1130-1150	9	590-610

## Standardized Test Prep Providers

<b>Goddard Riverside Community Center*</b> Manhattan 212 873 6600	718 882 4000
<b>The Door*</b> Manhattan 212 941 9090	<b>Kingsbridge Heights Community Center*</b> Bronx 718 884 0700
<b>Boys and Girls Harbor*</b> Manhattan 212 427 2244	<b>Cypress Hills/College Steps*</b> Brooklyn 718 647 2800
<b>Apex for Youth*</b> Manhattan 212 385 3574	<b>Revolution Prep*</b> Online 877 738 7737
<b>Harlem Center for Education*</b> Manhattan 212 348 9200	<b>Atlas Prep*</b> Various locations and online 716 299 TEST
<b>Applerouth*</b> Manhattan and online 212 731 4676	<b>NY Public Library*</b> Various locations 917 ASK NYPL
<b>Let's Get Ready*</b> Manhattan, Queens, Bronx 646 808 2760	<b>Huntington Learning Center</b> 800 CAN LEARN
<b>South Asian Youth Action (SAYA)*</b> Queens 718 651 3484	<b>Next Level Learning</b> 212 957 9100
<b>Khan Academy*</b> khanacademy.org	<b>Kaplan Test Prep</b> Various locations and online 800 KAP TEST
<b>Sunnyside Community Services*</b> Queens 718 784 6173	<b>Ivy Tutors</b> 212 519 1981
<b>Bronx House*</b> Bronx 718 792 1800	<b>Princeton Review</b> 888 580 8378
<b>Mosholu Montefiore Community Center*</b> Bronx	<b>Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center*</b> Bronx 267 719 3269
	<b>New Settlement College Access Center*</b> Bronx 718 294 3870

\* Programs may provide free or low-cost test prep and supplemental college advisement.

**Additional information and individual tutors recommended by Beacon families can be found on the Beacon College Office website.**

## Standardized Test Dates and Fees

### SAT Test Dates

#### Junior Year

March (national, registration required)

March/April (in-school, free, no registration required)

May

June

August

#### Senior Year

October \*

November

December

\* October is typically the last test date for scores to be accepted under Early Action or Early Decision application strategies.

**Fees include \$60.00 to register, \$14.00 per score report recipient.**

College Board fee waivers will cover the costs of up to two exam registrations and unlimited score sending. If you believe you qualify for a fee waiver and do not see one in your account, please see your counselor.

### ACT Test Dates

#### Junior Year

February

April

June

July \*\*

#### Senior Year

September

October \*

December

\* October is typically the last test date for scores to be accepted under Early Action or Early Decision application strategies.

\*\* July ACT is not offered in New York State.

**Fees include \$68.00 to register, \$18.50 per score report recipient.**

A fee waiver is available for students who qualify, but registration must be submitted by the regular (not late) deadline. Students who are eligible may receive up to two ACT fee waivers, which can be obtained from the College Office.

# Applying to Colleges

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## The Applications



Once you have narrowed your list down to a manageable number, it's time to apply. There are several different kinds of applications you may be required to submit. Please check your schools' requirements to determine how to apply. If a school accepts more than one type of application, they do not have a preference as to which application you use.

**Common Application** – [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org)

**CUNY Application** – [cuny.com/apply](http://cuny.com/apply)

**Common Black College Application** – [commonblackcollegeapp.com](http://commonblackcollegeapp.com)

**SUNY Application** – [suny.edu](http://suny.edu)

**UCAS Application** – [ucas.com/apply](http://ucas.com/apply)

**University of California Application** – [apply.universityofcalifornia.edu](http://apply.universityofcalifornia.edu)

**COMMON APPLICATION.** The Common Application is used by over 1,000 colleges and universities, and many colleges use ONLY the Common Application.

- You can register for an account and start filling out demographic information junior year.
- Most schools require a 650-word maximum personal statement.
- Many schools also require supplemental essays that will become available on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Topics and length vary.
- The Common App will not be accessible in July, as they prepare to roll over for the new admissions cycle on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Your personal information will be saved.
- For fee waiver information, please see your counselor.
- In order for your counselor to send supporting materials to schools on your behalf, you will have to “match” your Common Application account to your Maia Learning account after August 1<sup>st</sup>. Instructions will be provided senior year.
- Beacon’s school code (333438) needs to be entered correctly in the “Education” section.
- **Beacon does not calculate rank or GPA.** You should leave these sections blank.
- There is an optional section in which you can report your standardized testing scores. You should not fill this out if you are applying to any testing-optional schools and do not intend to share your scores. Many colleges will accept scores reported on your Common Application in place of score reports sent through the College Board or ACT’s websites (this can save you \$12 or \$13 per school).
- **Do not add your teacher or advisor recommenders** to the Common Application. Beacon uses Maia Learning for this purpose.
- Proofread your application. This is how colleges are getting to know you, put your best foot forward. Check grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and include answers to “optional” questions.
- Some colleges require students to self-report all grades from 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade courses. If this is required by a school you are applying to, you must complete it.
- You can submit individual applications as soon as you complete them. They do not all need to be submitted simultaneously.

**CUNY APPLICATION.** The City University of New York comprises eighteen colleges and universities that, for New York City residents, cost a fraction of the price of many private colleges. In many cases, it may even be free to earn a degree through CUNY.

- The CUNY application allows you to apply to up to six schools for one \$65 fee.
- You will need your social security number (if you have one) and OSIS number to apply.
- Some CUNY schools do not require your Common Application essay, however we recommend submitting it regardless.
- CUNY schools have rolling deadlines. We recommend that you apply by December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Some CUNY's have an honors program called Macaulay. Macaulay requires their own application with an earlier deadline and separate essays. When you apply to Macaulay, you will still be considered for regular CUNY admission at the schools you have selected. For this reason, please do not submit both CUNY and Macaulay applications.
- If you qualify for fee waivers, please see the College Office.

**COMMON BLACK COLLEGE APPLICATION (CBCA).** The CBCA is used by over 67 of the 107 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the U.S.

- The CBCA allows you to apply to as many of the member institutions as you want for a fee of \$20. There are no fee waivers for this application.
- Students have the option of uploading test scores in the Student Dashboard. Please check with your individual schools to confirm whether they will accept those self-reported scores as official.
- Please add your counselor to your Dashboard in order for them to upload your supporting materials (letters of recommendation, etc.).
- When you've completed your application, you will be asked to indicate your top-four member colleges. If you would like your application to be considered by any additional member colleges, you need to contact those schools directly.

**SUNY APPLICATION.** The State University of New York System is comprised of 64 member institutions, including two and four-year colleges and technical schools. New York City residents are eligible for in-state tuition rates.

- All SUNYs accept the Common Application, except for Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) and community colleges. The College Office recommends students apply to any other SUNY schools via the Common App.
- Each SUNY school has its own application fee of \$50. If you qualify for fee waivers, you can apply to up to seven SUNY schools at no cost.
- Some SUNY schools have rolling deadlines, while others have specific stated deadlines. If you are applying to a SUNY school with a rolling deadline, we recommend submitting your application no later than December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ADMISSIONS SERVICE (UCAS) APPLICATION.** The UCAS Application is a centralized application for multiple colleges in the UK.

- Students apply to a specific degree program at a university, rather than applying to a general university.
- You can choose a maximum of five courses on your UCAS application, which means you can apply for five courses at only one university or college, or a different course at five different universities.
- Students are admitted via an application process that reviews students' readiness for

their chosen major.

- If a school accepts the UCAS application AND the Common Application, the College Office recommends completing the UCAS application for priority consideration.

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (UC) APPLICATION.** The UC Application is the only way to apply to schools under the University of California umbrella.

- The deadline is November 30<sup>th</sup>.
- The UC application requires students to self-report all grades from 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade courses. Colleges will not receive ANY materials from the College Office, including letters of recommendation.
- Students will be required to list household income on their application. This number will determine fee waiver eligibility. If you are eligible, the waiver will be applied automatically to your application.
- The UC application requires answers to four out of eight short essay prompts.

However you apply to a college, it is your responsibility to submit your application in advance of the school's deadline, and to check the completion status of your application in your admissions portal. Note that this may include self-reporting your grades to some colleges.

## Types of Admissions Options



*In addition to the standard Regular Decision admissions option, it is important to be aware of a few application alternatives that may be available at various schools.*

**Early Decision (ED):** ED is a **BINDING** agreement between the student and the college. You, your family, and your counselor will be required to sign a contract. If the college makes an offer of admission through ED, you pay a deposit within a short period of time and sign an agreement to withdraw your applications to other schools. The ED admission deadlines and requirements are different at each campus, so be sure to check with the school well in advance of submitting an application to be sure you understand their criteria. Some colleges now offer a second opportunity to commit to their school through **ED II**. You are not able to apply ED II if you have an outstanding ED agreement to another school. ED II deadlines are generally the same as Regular Decision deadlines.

Benefits:

- Applying ED shows a college that it is your top choice and you are committed to attending if accepted. Colleges often take that into consideration when making admission decisions.
- At some schools, ED may increase your odds of acceptance. Colleges have recently been admitting larger percentages of students during ED. However, most colleges and universities do not recommend applying early to increase your chances of acceptance.
- If you are accepted, you will know in December of your senior year and you can relax – the college process is complete.

Drawbacks:

- **Since you are committing to one school**, you *cannot* compare financial aid packages from several institutions. Schools will try to meet a student's financial need during the early round, but financial aid officers may be less likely to provide a compelling aid package for an early decision candidate since the college knows they are not competing for you against other colleges.
- ED can be a more competitive pool of applicants.

**Early Action (EA):** Unlike ED, students may apply EA to more than one school, and an offer of admission does not mean they are committed to attend that particular school. Students accepted through EA do not have to commit to a school until May 1st of senior year. In general, you may apply to as many EA schools as you want.

- **Restrictive Early Action (REA)** – You are committing to applying to only one school Early Action (exceptions may include public universities, so please check individual schools' policies).

**Rolling Admissions:** These programs admit students on a rolling or continuous basis until spaces in the class fill up. This doesn't mean that you can delay applying until the last minute, because with fewer spaces remaining, admissions become more competitive the longer you wait. The earlier you apply the more likely you are to be accepted.



## Recommendations

*There are two types of recommendations that are requested by colleges and universities: Teacher Recommendations and Counselor Recommendations.*

**Teacher Recommendations:** Most colleges require at least one – if not two – formal recommendations from teachers. The best time to ask your teachers is at the end of junior year. You may ask a teacher senior year, but you must do so at least four weeks before your earliest application deadline. Since you will want to have the best possible recommendations sent to each college, we suggest that you consider the following in choosing teachers who will write on your behalf:

- How well does the teacher know you? Will they write well on your behalf?
- Has the teacher sponsored an extracurricular activity in which you made a contribution?
- Do you get along with the teacher?
- Does the college or university specify that a recommendation must be from a particular subject instructor (e.g., a science teacher, an English teacher, etc.)?

**Also...**

- If you declare an intended major, try to choose a teacher in that particular field.
- If possible, choose your junior and senior year teachers. They are best able to address your ability to do college level work.
- Try to choose teachers from academic subject areas.
- If you have a strong commitment and/or leadership role in an activity, community service activity, job, etc., you may want to add a recommendation from the supervisor/moderator in charge.

**Counselor Recommendations:** This will be written by your advisor. *You must ask your advisor to write this letter for you.* If for any reason that doesn't work for you, you should consider whether another faculty member may know you personally (this could include a coach, your college or guidance counselor, the supervisor of a club, or an arts teacher). This recommendation is a more personal overview of your high school experience, including:

- Your involvement in the school community;
- Your progress as a student, especially specific information about obstacles you have overcome and an explanation about a rough patch you may have gone through personally or academically; and
- Any other information about your life as a Beacon School student. *If you have a specific issue you would like discussed, be sure to bring this to your advisor's attention.*



**IMPORTANT:**

**Do NOT add any Beacon staff members to the Common Application.**

**Please add only your teacher as recommenders to Maia Learning after they have agreed to write your recommendation. You should NOT add your advisor. After your teachers and advisor have written recommendations for you, be sure to thank them.**

## Writing Your Common Application Personal Statement



***It's all about you.** The college application provides an overview of who you are as a student: the classes you took, the grades you earned, the activities you participated in. Then there are test scores and teacher recommendations to help round out the picture. **The college essay is your opportunity to get personal** – to put your academic story into context.*

**What should I talk about?** This is an opportunity to examine your accomplishments, your struggles, your adventures, your successes, and your failures. Think about what you want a college admissions officer to know about you that isn't evident from the rest of your application.

### **Brainstorm. Think or write a few sentences about:**

- Important events in your life;
- Important people in your life, both from your childhood and right now;
- Adventures you have had;
- Challenges and obstacles you have faced or overcome;
- Accomplishments;
- Influences in your life: people you've known, books you've read, movies you've seen;
- Your favorite qualities about yourself;
- Things that have affected change in yourself over time;
- **How do you think other people would describe you?**
  - Ask your friends, parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, etc. to describe you.
  - Ask your family to remember their favorite stories about you.
- **Think about where you live.**
  - If you've lived in the same neighborhood or building for a long time, you will have friends and neighbors who have watched you grow up . . . Talk to them.
  - What are your favorite places in the neighborhood and what memories do they evoke?
  - Think about the things you see everyday and how they impact your perspective.
- **Write a résumé.**

### **Getting started.**

- **Write about something important to you.** Your friends or your parents might not choose the same essay topic, but **this is your story**.
- **Think of your essay as a tool for self-discovery:** who you are, what you've done, where you are going.
- **Tell a story.**
  - Whether you begin at a high point of the action or start at the very beginning, "action" is the key word.
  - Your essay should be about concrete events in your life rather than abstract ideas.
  - Use imagery and clear, vivid prose.
  - Your story should have a point.
  - **Use your own unique voice.** Write your essay as if you were telling a story to a friend.
- **Keep it focused and organized. Make sure to proofread.**
  - Start with your main point or argument and follow it through to the conclusion;
  - Be clear, coherent and concise;
- **Try to grab the reader's attention in your introduction.** Admissions officers take

about 1-2 minutes to read your essay, so you need to grab their attention and keep it from the first sentence.

- **Your essay should demonstrate:**

- Writing ability;
- Reasoning ability;
- Creativity.

- **Your first attempt is not your final draft.**

- Start early; write a first draft your junior year. This can take time.
- After completing your essay, give it a rest for a few days.
- Read it aloud. This is a great way to catch awkward-sounding language or confusing structure.
- Have someone else read it. Find out if you've succeeded in making your point. If you need to explain something in order for your reader to understand, then you have not done your job.
- Finish a draft of your essay before August 1<sup>st</sup> of your senior year.

## **2023-24 Common Application Prompts**

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

***650-word maximum***

## **Resources:**

- Talk to past students about their experiences writing their college essay.
- The College Office will be conducting essay workshops in junior advisories throughout the spring semester to get you started.
- There are numerous books and publications available about writing strong college essays. You can also research “college essays that worked” online.

## How To Build A High School Résumé

Your resume should fit on **one page**.

Your résumé should be a basic profile of who you are based on your interests, activities and accomplishments since starting high school.

The only information you must include is your name, address, email address and phone number. You also want to include the name of your high school. If you transferred from another high school to Beacon, you should include that information *after* listing Beacon.

On a résumé, all information in each category is listed with the most recent items first. Entries should be chronological. The headings on your résumé will differ depending on your activities, interests, accomplishments and jobs.

**Put categories first that most reflect your interests and accomplishments.** For example, if you are an avid student of history, and you received an award for a history paper or project, you would include that toward the beginning of your résumé.

You can take liberties with layout, design and typeface on the résumé. Remember, however, that first and foremost, **you want to keep your résumé simple and easy to read**, so avoid illegible typefaces.

Your résumé should NOT just be a duplicate of the information provided in your application, but should rather serve as a supplement when you have additional information beyond what is included in the application. When an item in the application asks for “Extracurricular Activities,” “Employment,” “Awards,” etc., write in as much as you can fit in the space in the application. You can then include your résumé that incorporates this information PLUS additional information.

On the next page is a sample of what your high school résumé might look like. Depending on your interests and involvement, your résumé will be different. Don’t think that you need to have all these categories. The sample résumé is simply an example to show you the types of things you might include.

## Your Name

Street address  
City, ST, zip code

Phone number  
Email address

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### Education

Beacon High School  
New York, NY

Grad year

*List any college courses you've taken or transfer high schools here.*

### Extracurricular Activities

Role, Activity 1

Date range

- Include any sports, clubs, or activities, and highlight leadership roles.
- Describe your experience in several bullet points.

Role, Activity 2

Date range

- Description of Activity 2, etc.
- Description of Activity 2, etc.

Role, Activity 3

Date range

Description of Activity 3, etc.

Description of Activity 3, etc.

### Internships and/or employment

Position, Employer 1

Date range

City, ST

- If you had or currently have a job or internship, list those here.
- You may also choose to include the location of your employer.
- Describe each in bullet points, focusing on your contributions.

Position, Employer 2

Date range

City, ST

- List ALL your experiences reverse chronologically (most recent first).
- If a position lasted for less than a year, include the month range instead.
- Be as consistent as possible.

### Community Service

Volunteer, Organization

Date range

City, ST

- List any volunteer or unpaid experiences here.
- Your descriptions can focus on your role, or your contribution in terms of hours spent.

### Honors/Awards (OPTIONAL)

Award 1

Date range

- Think about any academic or non-academic achievements or awards.

Award 2

Date range

- You may choose to describe it in a bullet point below the title line.

### Skills (OPTIONAL)

Languages spoken, or specific skills you have that may not fall into any of the other categories listed. Only include this section if you have specific

# Paying for College

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## Applying for Need-Based Aid



*Help paying for college is available in the form of financial aid and scholarships. The total cost of college to you and your family may not be as high as it seems at first glance. You must be diligent in researching your potential colleges' offerings. While all colleges offer financial aid packages based on need, some colleges and organizations offer money based on academic performance or merit. **Financial aid is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, so it's best to apply as early as possible.***

Most colleges provide financial aid packages that are a combination of **Grants or Scholarships** (money that does not need to be paid back), **Loans** (usually paid back after graduation) and **Work-Study** (which requires the student to earn money by working on campus). You have to work in order to earn the work-study money, meaning it will not automatically be placed in your student account at the beginning of the semester.

Every spring and fall, Beacon hosts two different financial aid workshops for parents/guardians. The spring workshop is intended to provide an overview of the financial aid application process and suggestions for preparing in advance of applying. The fall workshop is intended to provide a detailed line-by-line review of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and CSS Profile by a certified financial planner.

**FAFSA. In order to be eligible for need-based financial aid, you will be required to complete FAFSA (fafsa.ed.gov).** This application becomes available on October 1st. FAFSA will calculate your Student Aid Index (SAI) which will be used by colleges to determine your eligibility for federal aid.

Anyone (you, a biological or adoptive parent, or your parent's spouse) who's required to provide information on the FAFSA form needs a StudentAid.gov account before accessing and completing their section of the online form. Contributors can access their StudentAid.gov account by first creating (and then using) their FSA ID (account username and password).

You can submit FAFSA to up to twenty schools at a time. If you are applying to more than twenty schools, once you receive a notification that FAFSA has been processed, you can simply remove your first ten schools and replace them with any additions.

- **Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).** If you include a school in the state of New York on FAFSA and indicate residence in New York State, you will automatically be prompted to apply for the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), which, if awarded, **can be used at any college or university in the state (up to \$5,665).**
- **Pell.** The Federal Pell Grant Program provides **need-based grants up to \$6,895.** Grant amounts are dependent on family income, your EFC, the cost of attendance (as determined by the institution) and full/part-time student status. **You will be automatically considered for this by completing FAFSA.**
- **Excelsior.** The Excelsior Scholarship, in combination with other student financial aid programs, allows students to attend a SUNY or CUNY college tuition-free. **If your**

**combined federal adjusted gross income is \$125,000 or less, you may qualify.** This application becomes available in spring of your senior year.

- Please refer to the HESC website ([hesc.ny.gov](http://hesc.ny.gov)) for additional state-based grants and scholarships.

**CSS PROFILE.** In order to be eligible for need-based financial aid at some colleges, the CSS Profile (available through the College Board) may be required by certain colleges, and becomes available on October 1st.

The CSS Profile is more comprehensive and asks more detailed questions about your family's financial profile than FAFSA. Each college that requires the CSS determines their own questions. Unlike FAFSA, there is a fee to register and additional fees to submit the CSS Profile to each school. Fee waivers are automatically applied if the information you include in the Profile indicates that you qualify.

Some colleges require additional information beyond FAFSA and the CSS Profile. You may find additional required forms in your application/financial aid status portal, or you may receive them via email. You may also be prompted to upload certain documentation (W2, 1040) via the **Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC)**. Your financial aid application will be incomplete until you submit all required materials.

**Check your colleges for their individual financial aid deadlines.** Early Decision applicants may have to submit materials prior to their deadline.

*A sample package might look like this:*

Cost of Attendance	\$31,500
Expected Family Contribution	<u>- 11,000</u>
Financial Need	<b>\$20,500</b>
Grant from college	1,500
Federal Pell Grant	1,000
TAP (NY only)	2,000
Work Study	1,500
Federal Stafford Student Loan (unsubsidized)	2,625
Federal Perkins Loan (subsidized)	<u>1,075</u>
	<b>\$10,500</b>

**In this example, the student is receiving \$10,500 in scholarships and loans. Their demonstrated need is \$20,500. The gap between their need and their aid package is \$10,000.**

**In this example, the student is receiving \$10,500 in scholarships and loans. Their demonstrated need is \$20,500. The gap between their need and their aid package is \$10,000.**

- Evaluate all award letters carefully before making a final decision. Compare your aid packages and don't be afraid to call colleges and negotiate for a better package or ask them to match an offer from a competing school.

- When researching colleges, it is helpful to have an idea of your EFC. Check out the Federal Student Aid Estimator <https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/> for an estimate.
- Net Price Calculators provide preliminary estimates of federal, state and institutional aid eligibility. They are intended to help families gauge what aid the student may be awarded and to make arrangements to cover the cost of attendance, and are available on all colleges' websites.



### **Thinking About In-State Public Schools and College Debt**

It is helpful to keep in mind that if you choose a public college in New York, you will be eligible for in-state tuition as well as state-funded scholarships and grants. Public universities collect funds from federal and state governments, which allows them to make tuition much more affordable than private universities. Just because a public school is cheaper, doesn't mean you're receiving a lesser education. Public schools often offer a greater number of majors and extracurricular opportunities, larger athletic programs, a greater degree of diversity on campus, and a large alumni network.

Considering Americans' \$1.5 trillion in student debt, it makes sense to strongly consider in-state public universities. While each student and case is different, lower tuition costs generally mean less student debt upon graduation.

The choice you make now about college debt may have an impact on your future. Studies show that students who can't repay their educational loans within ten years end up having to delay life events like home buying and saving for retirement.

The following is a breakdown of average costs per semester at a selection of different types of colleges. Although these figures do not include the cost of books, transportation and personal expenses, colleges do consider these "extras" when determining how much financial aid to give a student.

	<b><u>Tuition Only</u></b>	<b><u>Room and Board</u></b> (no boarding)
CUNY 2-year colleges	\$4,800	(no boarding)
CUNY 4-year colleges	\$6,930	\$11,800
SUNY 2-year colleges	\$5,130	\$14,930
SUNY 4-year colleges	\$7,070	\$15,000
Out-of-state public colleges	\$35,000	\$16,000
Private colleges	\$55,000	

\* approximate costs based on averages plus fees.



## Applying for Merit-Based Aid and Scholarships



Scholarships, in some form or fashion, are what can make a higher-cost college ultimately affordable. The largest providers of scholarships are colleges themselves through merit-based aid. Students who are in the top percentage of a particular college's applicant pool are often awarded large sums of gifted aid to entice them to attend. Some colleges publish details about the percentage of applicants who are awarded this kind of aid, and their requirements.

Often, colleges require students to apply by an earlier deadline, or submit separate applications to be considered. In the same way that you research colleges and their academic offerings and admissions requirements, it is important to be aware of their financial aid offerings and requirements as well.

The financial resources of each school may vary, so don't prematurely discount a school based solely on their sticker price. See what you can get from scholarships and financial aid before you decide whether or not you can afford it. Don't forget that in-state public schools are great options that start at lower cost.

Students can also seek funding from outside sources through scholarship applications. These applications vary greatly in terms of qualifications (grades, talents, background/ethnicity, leadership, prospective major, etc.) and amount. These scholarships may carry certain obligations (GPA), and may or may not be renewable over the course of your education. While you can apply for scholarships at any time, we recommend that you first concentrate on your college applications. Scholarship applications can be time-consuming and require multiple essays.

Helpful places to start may be through parent employers (unions and large companies may offer scholarships to the children of members or employees) or the College Office Weekly Bulletin, where we'll inform you of specific opportunities we become aware of each week.

Many scholarship opportunities may seem legitimate at first glance, but are actually marketing tools. A good rule of thumb is to not apply for scholarships that require you to pay a fee to be considered.

We've compiled the following list of more reputable resources to help you in your search:

**Fast Web**

**Unigo**

**myscholly**

**College GreenLight**

**College Board Big Future**

**Scholarship Monkey**

## Special Considerations

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### Opportunity Programs (HEOP, EOP, SEEK)

Opportunity Programs in the state of New York support students who show promise for mastering college-level work, but who may otherwise not be admitted because their academic record does not reflect their full potential. You must qualify both academically *and* financially and enroll in a full-time program. Even if you meet eligibility requirements, you are not guaranteed admission because spaces and services are limited. Since requirements vary from campus to campus, please check with specific schools' Admissions Offices to confirm their specific criteria.

Although these programs are essentially the same on different campuses, they have different names and eligibility criteria depending on the type of campus:

- **EOP:** Educational Opportunity Program, offered at SUNY schools
- **HEOP:** Higher Educational Opportunity Program, offered at private schools in New York
- **SEEK:** Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge, offered at CUNY four-year schools
- **CD:** College Discovery, offered at two-year CUNY schools.
- **ASAP:** Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, offered at two-year CUNY schools.

**The general guidelines for program eligibility** require that you are:

- A permanent resident or citizen of the U.S.,
- A New York resident for 12 months prior to enrollment (CUNY and SUNY only),
- Able to demonstrate potential for successfully completing a college degree,
- In need of financial assistance within legislated income guidelines. In selecting students for the program, priority is given to applicants from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In general, these programs offer special tutoring, and academic, career, and personal counseling, as well as financial aid to help with the cost of tuition, room, board, books, and personal expenses. They often require summer programs before freshman year. **In many cases, there are additional required materials, financial aid applications, and even interviews required, so be sure to complete all necessary components of program applications.**

## Student Athletes

If you are a college-bound athlete who wants to play intercollegiate sports, it is important to learn all you can about the rules governing academic eligibility. Depending on which level of competition you are considering, your relationship with a college recruiter must abide by the rules established by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), or the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). Violating any of the rules might result in your loss of eligibility to compete.

All potential Division I or Division II athletes must be certified by the NCAA Initial Eligibility Center. They will determine your eligibility by looking at the following factors:

- Will you graduate from high school?
- Your high school grade point average.
- The courses you took in high school.

Plan to start the certification process in the spring of eleventh grade. The eligibility forms must be obtained online at **[www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)**.

### Key Questions to Ask College Coaches

- What division is the college/university in (I, II, IA, III, etc.)?
- Are there any division changes anticipated in the next four years?
- What conference is the college/university in and what were the final standings last season?
- How many team members will return next year?
- What are the long-range goals of the athletic program?
- What is the graduation rate of players?
- How often are practices scheduled?
- What are the living accommodations?
- How many classes may be missed due to team travel? Can they be made up?
- Does the school provide study support for athletes?
- What financial aid is available and what are the rules for maintaining this aid?
- How many players are you recruiting for my position?

## NCAA Fact Sheet

### Points to Remember:

- The requirements for eligibility to participate at Division I differ from those required at Division II.
- Students normally should register after completion of their junior year in high school and only after an informed judgment has been made as to the prospect's potential at the Division I or II level.
- NCAA academic committees are vested with the authority to grant waivers of the initial-eligibility requirements based on objective evidence that demonstrates circumstances in which a student's overall academic record warrants the waiver of the normal application of the legislation.
- Initial eligibility waivers must be filed by an NCAA institution on behalf of the student (*students with approved diagnosed disabilities may file a waiver on their own behalf*).
- Correspondence or independent study classes may not be used to meet the core-course requirements.
- Courses taken in the eighth grade may not be used to satisfy the core curriculum requirements, regardless of the course content or level.
- Students enrolling in a Division I institution may not use courses taken after high school graduation to meet core-curriculum requirements. (Note: students with approved diagnosed disabilities may use courses taken after graduation but prior to full-time college enrollment.)
- Students with disabilities may receive additional information regarding accommodations by checking Part III on the student release form or by calling the NCAA (913-339-1906).

### To be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center, you must:

**Graduate from high school.** You should apply for certification after your Junior year in high school if you are sure you wish to participate in intercollegiate athletics as a freshman at a Division I or II institution. The Eligibility Center will issue a preliminary certification report after you have submitted all your materials (official six-semester transcript, ACT or SAT scores, student release form and fee). After you graduate, If your eligibility status is requested by a member institution, the Eligibility Center will review your final transcript and proof of graduation to make a final certification decision according to NCAA schools.

**Earn a grade-point average of at least 2.3 (Division I)** in a core curriculum of at least 16 **approved** core academic courses which were successfully completed between grades 9 and 12. Only courses listed as approved on your high school's "List of NCAA Approved Core Courses" can be used to calculate your NCAA GPA. No special values are allowed for "+" or "-" grades.

**Earn a grade-point average of at least 2.2 (Division II)** in a core curriculum of at least 16 **approved** academic courses which were successfully completed during grades 9 through 12. Only courses listed as approved on your high school's "List of NCAA Approved Core Courses" can be used to calculate your NCAA GPA. No special values are allowed for "+" or "-" grades.

\* Eligibility requirements may vary due to COVID.

## Information for Students with Learning Differences

For students and families of students with learning differences, the most commonly asked question in the college research process tends to be “what schools have the best resources?” The reality is that the majority of colleges in the U.S. offer a great deal of support, though the types and levels of accommodations vary and may come at an additional cost on top of tuition. In most circumstances, it makes sense for students with learning differences to determine their general college preferences (i.e. geographic location, school size, availability of majors, etc.) to establish a list of schools that may be a good fit, and then research the available supports at those schools. The *K&W Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities* is a helpful resource with information about the specific supports available at many colleges. Beyond that, campus visits are a great way of gauging whether schools’ services meet your needs, and should include an evaluation of the available supports and a meeting with the head of those services, if possible.

When you visit colleges, think about asking the following questions relating to **learning differences**:

- Is there a specific learning center for students with learning disabilities? What services does this center offer?
- Is there a general academic support center? Who staffs it?
- Is there a fee associated with any of the supports or services available?
- How big is the office of disability services?
- What kind of advisers are available if help is needed?
- Are tutors peers or specialists?
- At what point is documentation of a student’s learning disability needed? In what form? How recent do the results need to be?
- What does one need to do to get extended time on tests and exams?
- Does the school have a foreign language requirement? Are waivers granted? How?
- What kind of information should be on your application regarding a learning disability?

If you receive accommodations on in-school testing based on an IEP or a 504 plan, and need to request accommodations on the SAT/ACT, you should contact Ms. Baidy-Crews, Assistant Principal, as soon as possible.

Think about asking the following questions relating to **physical disabilities**:

- Is the entire campus wheelchair accessible? Find out how this might impact your ability to move around campus and attend the classes of your choice or to live in a dorm.
- Be clear in advance what your specific needs are and discuss them with admissions offices at the schools to which you are applying. Consider your comfort level – will you need to ask for help when you need it or is the school proactive about anticipating your needs?
- Does the school provide readers, signers, note-takers and other kinds of aids for visually, hearing, or motor-impaired students?

## Conservatories and BFA Programs

Students who wish to study visual or performing arts have some unique challenges and options during their college search.

### **A Difference of Degree**

Prospective arts majors have two degree options: a bachelor of arts (BA) degree with a major in the arts and a bachelor of fine arts (BFA) for artists/performers, or bachelor of music (BM) for musicians. The BA degree is the typical liberal arts degree – students who major in English, history, and other humanities majors also earn BA degrees. The BFA or BM degree is more focused on the arts.

A BA in music will be similar to any other BA degree – a number of credits outside of your major with approximately 40-50 credits in your major. A BM would consist of the majority of your 120 credits in music. The remainder would be music or degree-related courses: private lessons, conducting classes, music history, music theory, etc.

Which degree you choose depends on your college and career goals. If you have a high degree of commitment to your art and would prefer to focus exclusively on it in college, a BFA or BM might be right for you. If you would rather study a variety of subjects along with your arts major, a BA may be the way to go.

### **Types of Colleges**

Visual and performing arts students have several types of colleges to consider. Conservatories and stand-alone arts schools offer an immersion-type experience for students earning BM or BFA degrees. Some universities offer BFA/BM degrees as well as BA degrees in the arts.

### **The Application Process**

In addition to completing a typical college application, students in the visual or performing arts should prepare a portfolio or audition. Each arts program has different requirements, so you should contact the schools as early as possible to obtain their portfolio or audition requirements.

Although your portfolio or audition is an important part of the application, arts programs may consider your academic record and test scores. Some colleges place greater value on academics, while others lean more toward the student's portfolio or audition.

Students who register for Art Honors in their senior year will develop their portfolio in class.

### **Assessing Your Abilities**

If you're interested in pursuing an arts major and career, now is the time to seek objective opinions of your abilities in the field. Speak to your Beacon or outside mentors for advice and guidance.

Visual arts students can receive portfolio evaluations and college information at one of the National Portfolio Days sponsored by an association of arts schools and art departments at universities. For more information, ask Ms. Malloy, or visit [nationalportfolioday.org](http://nationalportfolioday.org).

## **Other Considerations**

All students benefit from visiting the colleges that interest them and asking questions about academics, student life, and other facets of college life. As an arts student, you may have different or additional things to consider.

**Location.** The location of your chosen college may be more important to arts students than to students in other majors. For art students, factors to consider involve access to professional venues such as museums, galleries, theaters, and concerts. Also, do these venues attract regional, national, or international talent to inspire and educate the students? Additionally, the opportunity to perform, exhibit, and have active internships is vital to a young artist's education.

**Facilities.** In addition to checking out dorm rooms, classrooms, and athletic facilities, art students should look at a college's studio space or practice rooms, performance or exhibit venues on campus, darkroom facilities, computer resources, and any other resources specific to your field of study. And ask questions about how accessible these resources are to students – attractive studios are of no help if there aren't enough to go around.

**Educational philosophy.** Also, ask each college about its philosophy. Different fine arts or music programs can have very different emphases. For example, one music program may emphasize classical music, while another specializes in more modern forms, like jazz. Similarly, the intensity of competitiveness, workload, and pressure can vary from school to school. During your visits and talks with students and faculty, try to get an impression of the daily pressures of being a student in that particular program.

**A good fit.** Finally, as for any student, visual and performing arts students need to find a college that fits their personality, interests and goals. It can be helpful to speak with current students or alumni for a broader insight.

## Taking A Gap Year



### Why take time off?

There are many reasons for taking time off before attending college. You may want more time to find yourself outside of academics. A change of environment can give students added focus and enthusiasm when they return to school. Time off can cultivate maturity and self-discipline, and allow students to work and save money.

### What to do

Even if you intend to take a gap year, the College Office recommends applying to college during your senior year while you have in-school resources and support. Most colleges will usually grant a one or two-semester leave of absence or deferral after you've been admitted. It's a good time to research gap year options after you've completed your college applications; these applications are typically due later than college applications, but may be just as time-consuming. Once you have a better picture of your college acceptances and how you intend to spend your gap year, start inquiring with your colleges about the deferral process. This should be a phone call to admissions offices.

### Popular options

Colleges and employers generally prefer that you spend your gap year as productively as possible by engaging in a structured activity. There are many things you can do during your time away from school.

- **Volunteer:** Use this as an opportunity to give back locally or abroad.
- **Professional experience:** Working is a great opportunity to gain practical skills while saving money. This may help inform your decision on what to study in college.
- **Take courses:** Some students opt to take non-traditional courses, either abroad or closer to home to gain credits towards an eventual degree.
- **Gain perspective and maturity:** Sometimes a change of scenery can be beneficial. Travel, experiences like Outward Bound, or language-immersion programs provide unique opportunities to learn outside the classroom.

### Considerations

The cost; some gap year programs are expensive.

The timing; this may set your graduation timeline back.

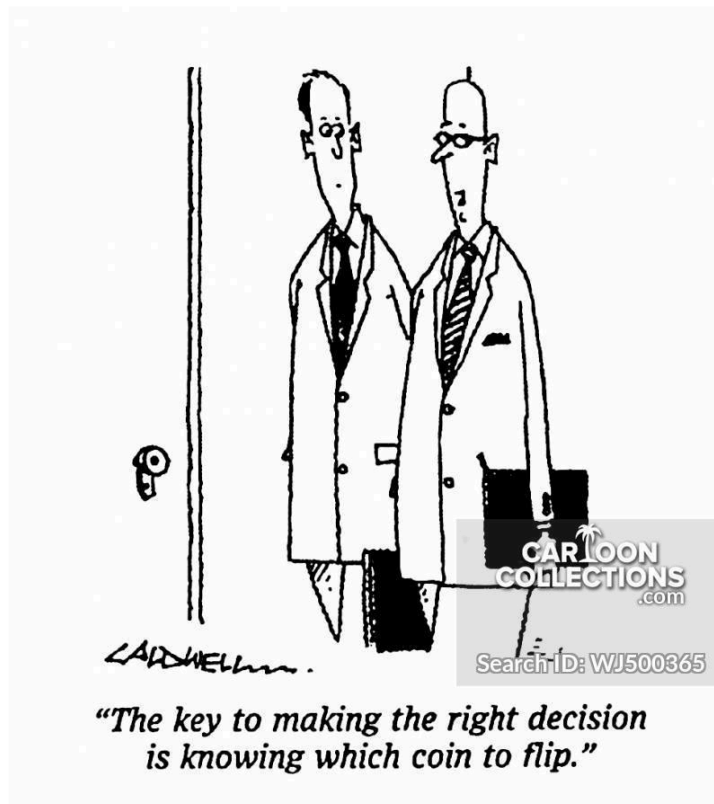
The disruption to academic momentum; you may feel like once you leave school, it might be hard to return. Studies actually show that this is not the case for the majority of people.





## Factors to Consider When Making Your Final Decision

- There are always several colleges that would be right for you.
- You should be in the driver's seat, so listen to others' opinions, but the choice is up to you in the end.
- Students need to know parents'/guardians' parameters around an acceptable selection.
- College finances are an important discussion to have as a family. Compare aid packages and discuss relative value. If you're considering loans, discuss how much debt would be a reasonable amount to take on.
- Look beyond the name recognition of a college.
- Consider the distance from home, what feels most comfortable, and how you will get back and forth.
- Visit when possible: taste the food, talk to students, attend classes, explore the campus and surrounding area, read the campus newspaper, meet with admissions staff, and stay overnight if possible.
- Consider the surroundings that are essential to your happiness.
- Consider the diversity on campus.
- Look at the depth and breadth of courses offered in your area of interest.
- Consider the degree of academic challenge that is best for you.
- Explore the balance of study, activities, and social life that fits your needs.
- Explore the intellectual life on campus: what are students on campus reading? What are students talking about? How does the campus environment feel to you?
- Consider your family's thoughts and opinions and how they will impact your decisions.
- Take a look at campus communities, clubs, and abroad programs.



## Glossary Of Terms

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*The following terms are commonly used by secondary school counselors and admissions personnel.*

**ACCELERATED STUDY** - A college program of study completed in less time than is usually required, most often by attending classes in the summer and/or by taking extra courses during the regular academic terms. Completion of a bachelor's degree program in three years is an example of accelerated study.

**ACCREDITATION** - Recognition by an organization or agency that a college meets certain acceptable standards in its educational programs, services and facilities. Regional accreditation applies to a college as a whole and not to any particular programs or courses of study at the college. Specialized accreditation of specific types of schools may also be determined by a national organization.

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) PROGRAM** - A service of the College Board that provides high schools with course descriptions in college subjects and Advanced Placement Examinations in these subjects. High schools implement the course and administer the examinations to interested students who are then eligible for advanced placement, college credit, or both, on the basis of earning satisfactory scores.

**ASSOCIATE DEGREE** - A degree granted by a college or university after the satisfactory completion of a two-year full-time program of study or its part-time equivalent. In general, the Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree is granted after students complete a program of study similar to the first two years of a four-year college curriculum. The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) is awarded by many colleges upon completion of technological or vocational programs of study.

**BACHELOR'S OR BACCALAUREATE DEGREE** - A degree received after the satisfactory completion of a four- or five-year, full-time program of study (or its part-time equivalent) at a college or university. The Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS) are the most common baccalaureates.

**BRANCH CAMPUS** - A small campus connected to, or part of, a large institution. Generally, students spend the first two (2) years at a branch campus and then transfer to the main campus to complete a baccalaureate degree. A branch campus provides students with a smaller and more personal environment which can help the student mature personally and academically before moving to a larger setting.

**COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP SERVICE (CSS)** - A service of the College Board that assists postsecondary institutions, state scholarship programs and other organizations in the equitable distribution of student financial aid funds by measuring a family's financial strength and analyzing its ability to contribute to college costs. CSS provides the Profile Form with which students may apply for institutional aid at some private colleges.

**COMBINED BACHELOR'S/GRADUATE DEGREE** - A program to which students are accepted for study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The programs usually can be completed in less time than two individual programs. (Such degrees are also called dual programs.)

**COOPERATIVE (“CO-OP”) EDUCATION** - A program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government.

**CREDIT HOURS** - The number of hours per week that courses meet are counted as equivalent credits for financial aid and to determine a student’s status as full-time or part-time. Upon successful completion of a course, credit hours are applied to graduation requirements.

**CROSS-REGISTRATION** - The practice, through agreements between colleges, of permitting students enrolled at one college or university to enroll in courses at another institution without formally applying for admission to the second institution.

**DEFERRAL** - The practice of placing an Early Admission applicant into the Regular pool.

**DISCOVERY/SEEK** - These programs are available for students who qualify for comprehensive academic and financial support at New York City 4-year and 2-year schools. The program is designed to encourage students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds an opportunity to succeed on a more level playing field. These programs provide counseling, tutorial services and a financial aid stipend for educational expenses.

**DOUBLE MAJOR** - Any program of study in which a student completes the requirements of two majors concurrently.

**EARLY ACTION** - A student applies to an institution early in the Senior year and receives an early notification of his/her admission to the institution. If the student is accepted, he/she is NOT obligated to attend that institution.

**EARLY DECISION PLAN** - A student applies to an institution early in the Senior year and receives an early notification of his/her admission status. It is a contract between the student and the institution. If the student is accepted, he/she is obligated to attend that institution.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS** - Limited English Proficient students who speak English as a second language and who wish to take college-level courses need to demonstrate proficiency in English. The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam is a commonly used test to determine the level of English language proficiency.

**EOP/HEOP** - The (Higher) Educational Opportunity Program is for students who qualify for comprehensive academic and financial support at New York public and private 4-year schools. These programs provide counseling, tutorial services, and a financial aid stipend for educational expenses.

**ESL** - An English as a Second Language program offers a variety of courses and schedules to meet the needs of a diverse population with limited English proficiency.

**FEE WAIVER** – Documentation which is used by colleges or testing services in lieu of fee payment. Students receiving free or reduced lunch qualify for fee waivers.

**GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)** - A system used by many schools for evaluating the overall scholastic performance of students. It is found by first determining the number of grade points a student has earned in each course completed and then dividing the sum of all grade points by the number of hours of course work carried. It is calculated by multiplying the number of hours given for a course by the student’s grade in the course. The most common system of numerical values for grades is A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and E or F=0.

**GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIPS** - General terms that describe the outright gift of a sum of money to a student.

**HONORS PROGRAM** - Any special program for exceptional students that offers the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these characteristics.

**INTERNSHIPS** - Short-term, supervised work experiences, usually related to a student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full or part-time, on or off campus, paid or unpaid. Student teaching and apprenticeships are examples of internships.

**MATRICULATION** - A point in college admissions when a student is formally admitted into a curriculum, under standard college procedures. A student must be matriculated in order to apply for financial aid and/or try out for intercollegiate athletic programs.

**NON-MATRICULATED** - A student has either not been formally admitted into a curriculum or has been academically dismissed. This classification excludes a student from financial aid and /or intercollegiate athletics.

**OPEN ADMISSIONS** - The college admissions policy of admitting high school graduates and other adults generally without regard to conventional academic qualifications, such as high school grades and admission test scores.

**RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS (ROTC)** - Programs conducted by certain colleges in cooperation with the United States Air Force, Army and Navy. Local recruiting offices can supply detailed information about these programs, as can participating colleges.

**RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS** - Most colleges and universities require that a student spend a minimum number of terms taking courses on campus (as opposed to independent study or transfer credits from other colleges) to be eligible for graduation. Also, residency requirements can refer to the minimum amount of time a student is required to have lived in a state in order to be eligible for in-state tuition at a public (state-controlled) college or university.

**RETENTION RATE** - The number and percentage of returning students at a given college.

**ROLLING ADMISSIONS** - An admissions procedure by which the college considers each student's application as soon as all required credentials, such as school records and test scores, have been received. The college usually notifies applicants of its decision within 4-12 weeks.

**STUDENT DESIGNED MAJOR** - An academic program that allows a student to construct a major field of study not formally offered by the college. Often non-traditional and interdisciplinary in nature, the major is developed by the student with the approval of a designated college officer or committee.

**TAP** - Tuition Assistance Program of NY State is a financial aid program based on an established formula. Money awarded can only be used at a New York State college or university.

**WAIT LIST** - A student is not offered admission, but is placed on a waiting list should an opening occur. After a certain time, if an opening is not available, the student receives a rejection notice.

**WORK STUDY** - An arrangement by which a student combines employment and college study. The employment may be an integral part of the academic program (as in cooperative education and internships) or simply a means of paying for college (as in Federal Work-Study Program).

**YIELD** - The percentage of accepted students who will actually matriculate at an institution.