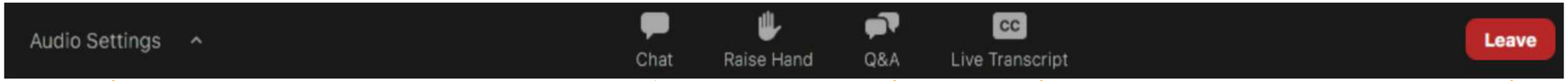
College Admissions

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

How to Participate



The *Audio Settings* allow you to control the volume levels

The *Chat* feature is disabled. To communicate with the host, please use the *Q&A* section

Have a question during the webinar? Type it in the *Q&A* section

Use the *Live Transcript* feature if you want to see closed captions

Click *Leave* to exit the webinar

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

About MEFA

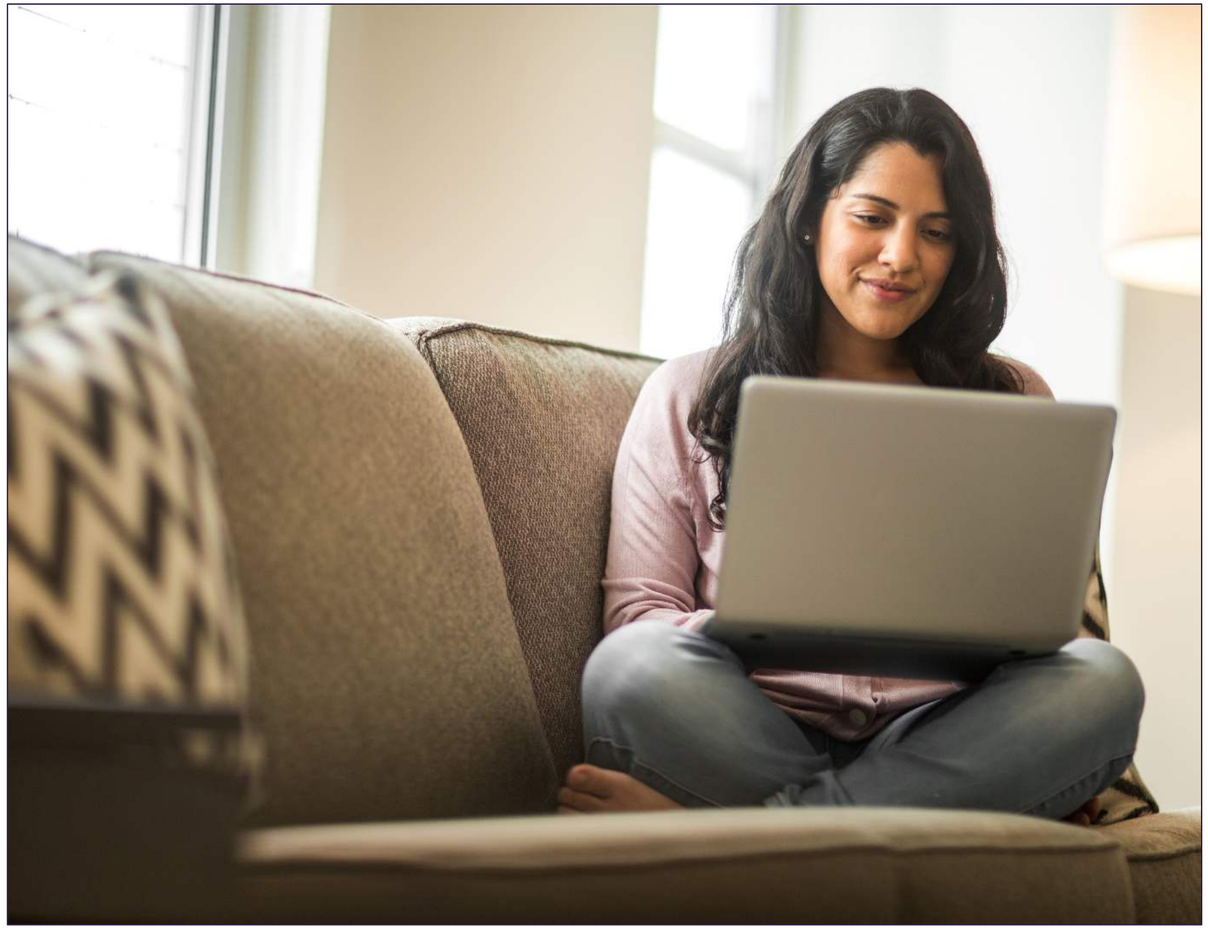
State authority created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1982, helping families plan, save, and pay for college.



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Webinar Topics

- Current Trends
- Your College List
- Campus Visits
- The Application Process
- Financial Aid
- Free Resources



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Trends in College Admissions

- Students applying to a greater number of schools
- Demonstrated interest a factor
- Social media
  - *A 2023 Kaplan study* found that 67% of admissions officers "believe that checking out applicants' social media posts to learn more about them is "fair game" to help them make decisions about who gets in."*
- Cost a bigger factor
- More ways to interact with colleges virtually
- More test-optional schools & more applicants at those schools
- Longer waitlists
- Direct admissions

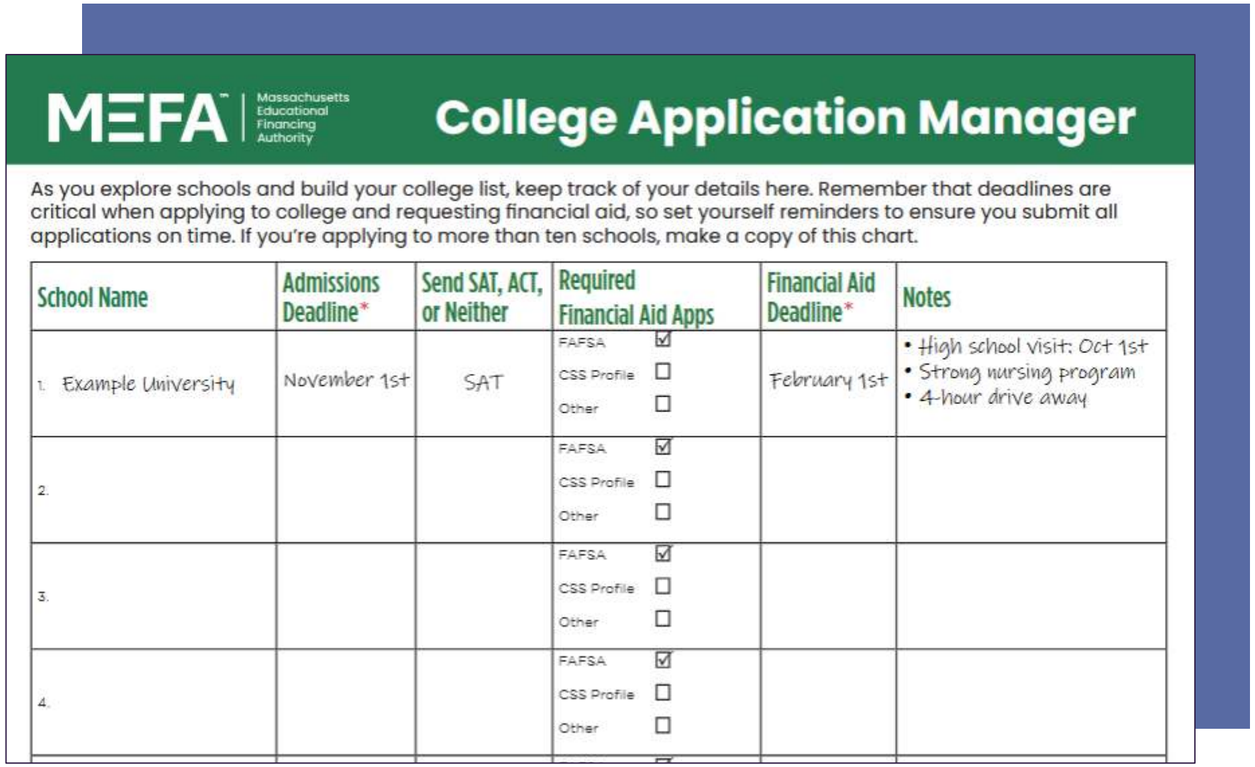
*https://kaplan.com/about/press-media/kaplan-survey-college-admissions-officers-applicant-social-media

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Stay Organized!

Use a system to keep track of applications and deadlines, such as MEFA's College Application Manager:

mefa.org/college-application-manager



MEFA™ Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority

College Application Manager

As you explore schools and build your college list, keep track of your details here. Remember that deadlines are critical when applying to college and requesting financial aid, so set yourself reminders to ensure you submit all applications on time. If you're applying to more than ten schools, make a copy of this chart.

School Name	Admissions Deadline*	Send SAT, ACT, or Neither	Required Financial Aid Apps	Financial Aid Deadline*	Notes
1. Example University	November 1st	SAT	FAFSA ☑ CSS Profile ☐ Other ☐	February 1st	• High school visit: Oct 1st • Strong nursing program • 4-hour drive away
2.			FAFSA ☑ CSS Profile ☐ Other ☐		
3.			FAFSA ☑ CSS Profile ☐ Other ☐		
4.			FAFSA ☑ CSS Profile ☐ Other ☐		

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Researching Colleges

Research Thoroughly

College Navigator: CollegeNavigator.gov

College search with admissions, academic, & cost info

College Scorecard: CollegeScorecard.ed.gov

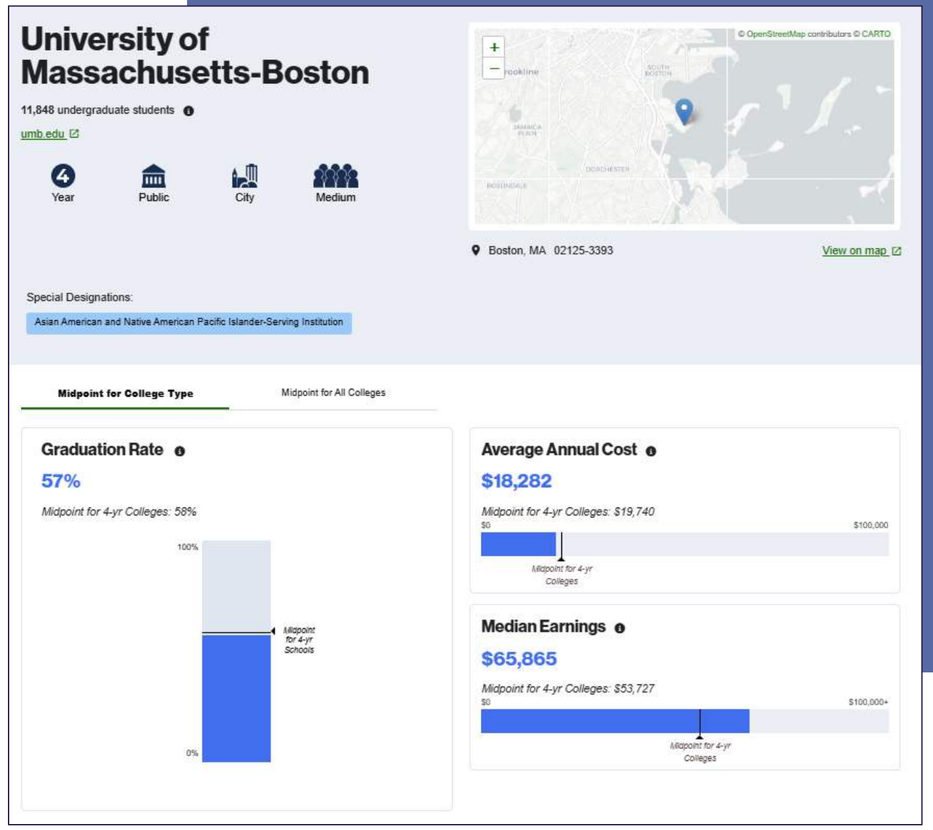
College info including average net price, student debt, grad rate, & alumni salary

Big Future: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search

College search with info on academics, applying, & paying

MEFA Pathway: mefapathway.org

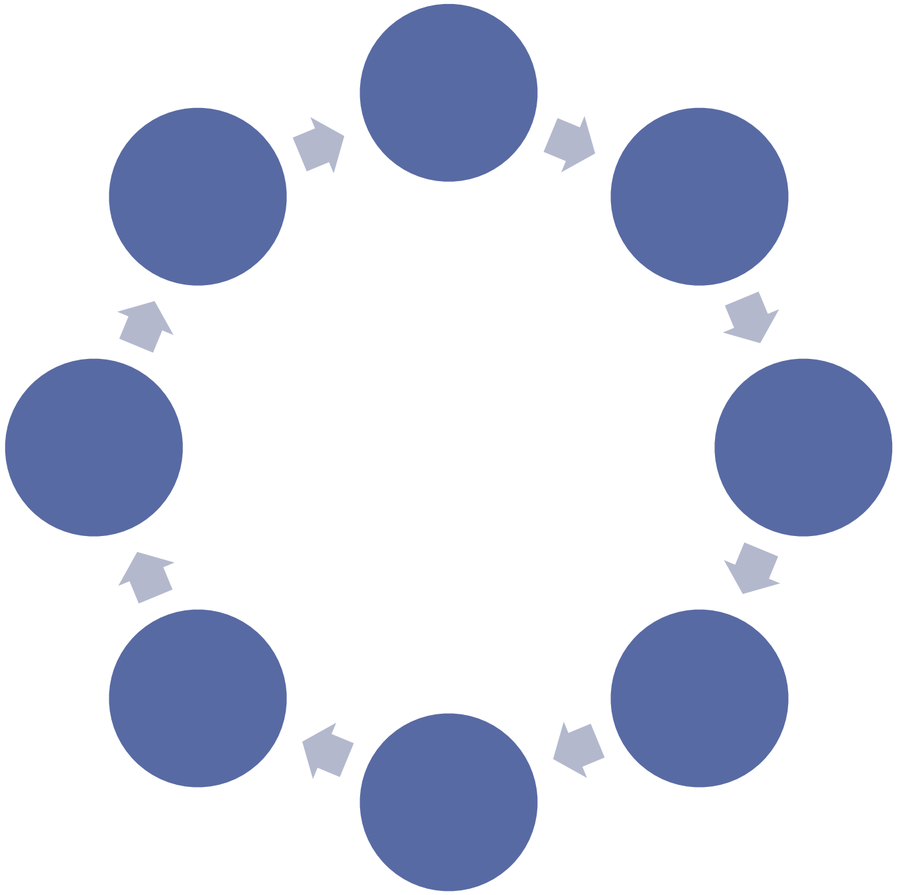
College search and matching tool based on preferences



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

College Factors to Consider

- Institution size & location
- Academic fit
- Intended major
- Learning style
- Campus culture
- Activities
- Study abroad programs
- Career & internship services
- Affordability



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

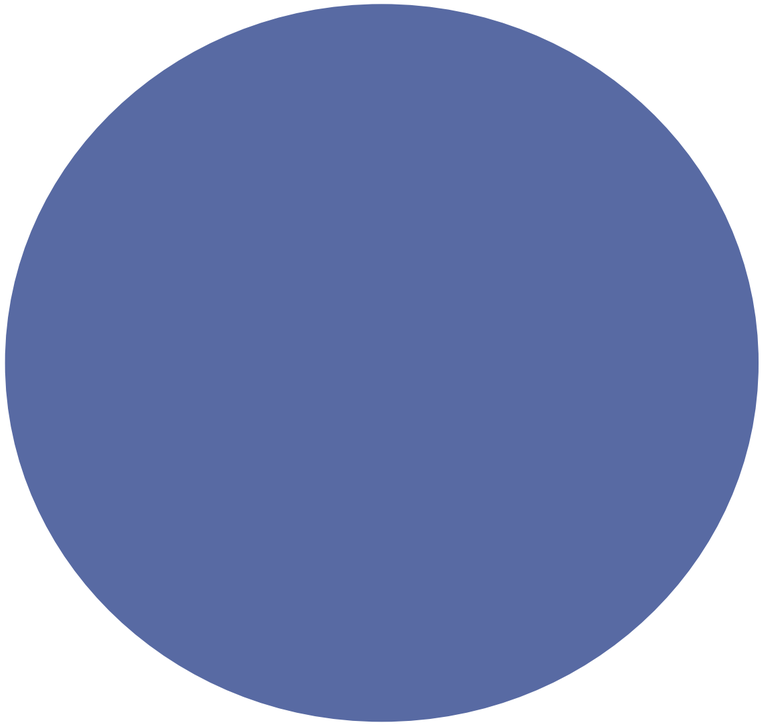
Informal & Formal Campus Visits

Informal Visits	Formal Visits
• Size • Setting • Culture	• Academics • Activities • Housing • Food • Q&A

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

College Fair Tips

- Sign up
- Check out the college list beforehand
- Have a plan of attack before you start
- Take advantage of information sessions
- Schedule 1-on-1 meetings with colleges if available
- Check nacacfairs.org & neacac.org for upcoming events



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Assess Prospects for Admission

Develop a final list with colleges of each type:

- Likely
- Possible
- Reach



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

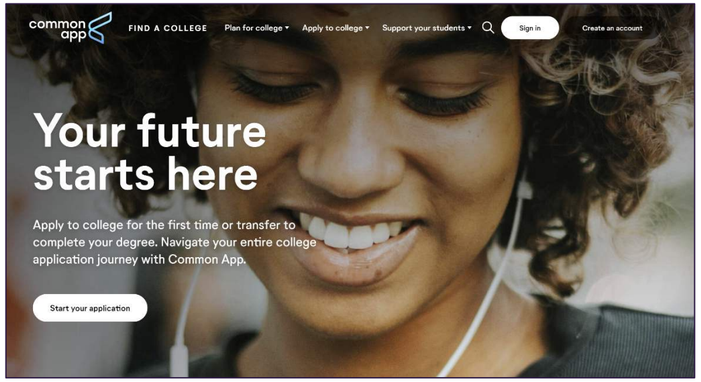
College Application Types

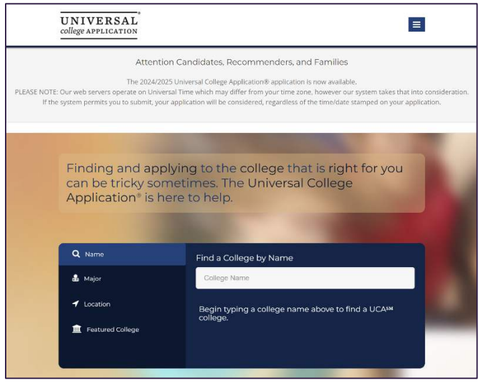
- Regular Decision: Usually an early Jan deadline
- Early Action: Deadlines in Nov & Dec, non-binding agreement
- Early Decision: Deadlines in Nov & Dec, binding agreement
- Rolling Admission: Decisions on a rolling basis, Nov-May
- Open Admission: Admits most students for most programs anytime

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

College Application Forms

- Common App: CommonApp.org
- Universal College App: UniversalCollegeApp.com
- Coalition App: CoalitionForCollegeAccess.org
- College website application
- Paper application



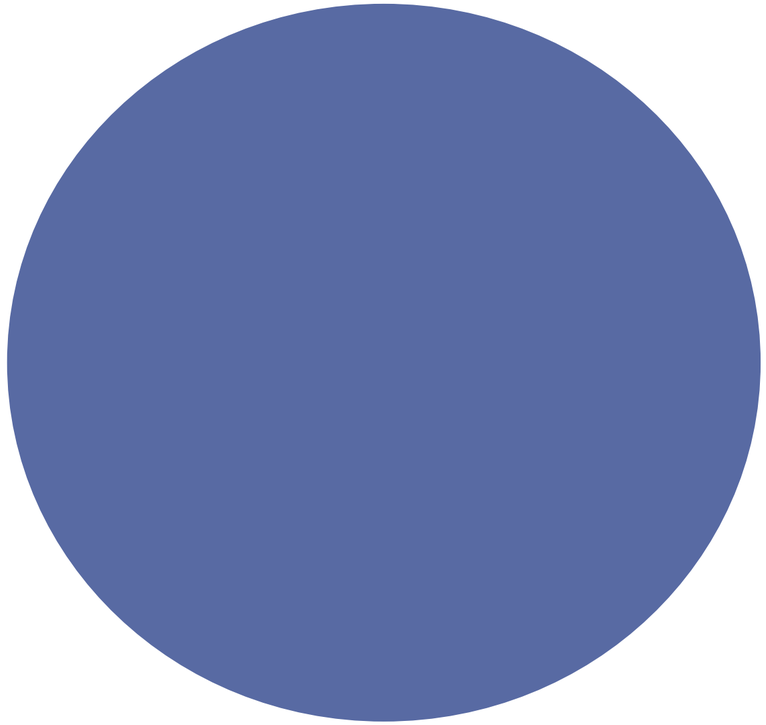




MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

College Application Components

- Application requirements may vary at each college.
- Your application may include:
  - Application form
  - High school transcript
  - Standardized test scores
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Activity list or resume
  - Personal essay
  - Interview
  - Audition
  - Portfolio



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Academic Readiness

- Rigor
- Good grades vs. challenging classes
- Improvement over time
- Exceeding minimum requirements
- Relevance to college plans
- Sliding scale for MA public colleges & universities



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Standardized Tests

PSAT

- Offers practice and assessment
- Register at collegereadiness.collegeboard.org

SAT

- Measures college readiness
- Offers free test prep online
- Register at collegereadiness.collegeboard.org

ACT

- Measures college readiness
- Offers free test prep online
- Register at

AP Exam

- Shows subject knowledge
- Register at apstudents.collegeboard.org

Fairtest.org provides a list of nearly 2,100 test-optional schools

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Activity List & Resume



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Essays

- Your application essay says a lot about you
- Share something meaningful and personal
- Start writing early
- Try different topics and approaches
- Plagiarism is taken very seriously
- Leave time for careful proof-reading



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Common App Essay Prompts for Fall 2027 Admission

- 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.
- 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?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- 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?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- 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?
- 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.

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Letters of Recommendation

- Adults who know you well can offer a helpful perspective on your strengths
  - What are your high school guidelines?
  - Whom to ask?
  - When to ask?
  - Say thank you!



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Interviews

- A face-to-face conversation lets colleges see the person behind the numbers
- Only offered at a small number of schools
- Two types: Informational and Evaluative
- Be prepared to answer open-ended questions
- Know your reasons for applying to the college
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Cover the basics
- Relax and be yourself



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The Admissions Decision

Most colleges send decisions over email or post to their online portal

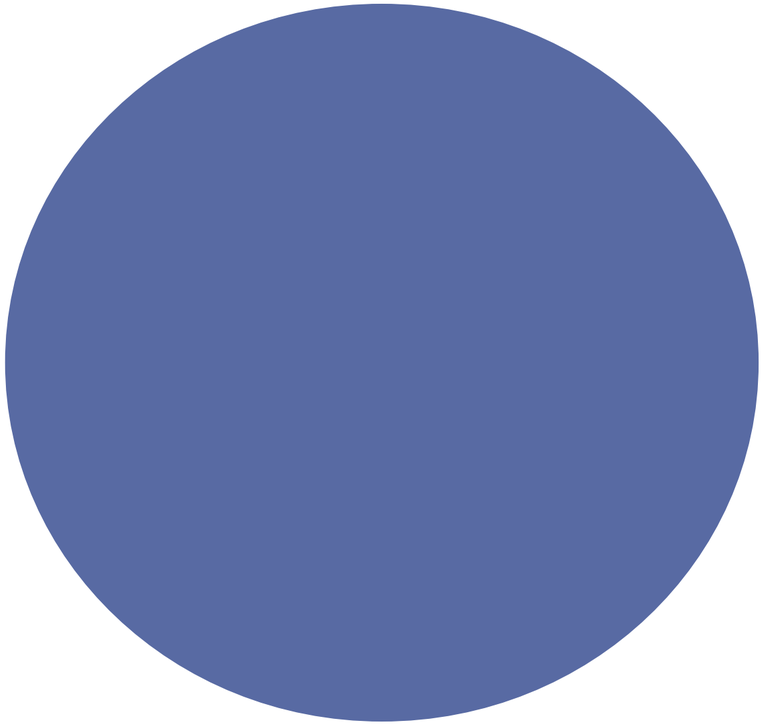
Deposit by deadline (usually May 1st) to secure your spot at a school

Admitted	• **Student is accepted** • **Student may also be accepted to begin at a later semester**
Deferred	• **Student is not accepted Early Action/Decision but will be considered in the regular applicant pool**
Denied	• **Student is not accepted**
Waitlisted	• **Student is not yet accepted and may not get accepted off the waitlist**

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Understanding College Affordability

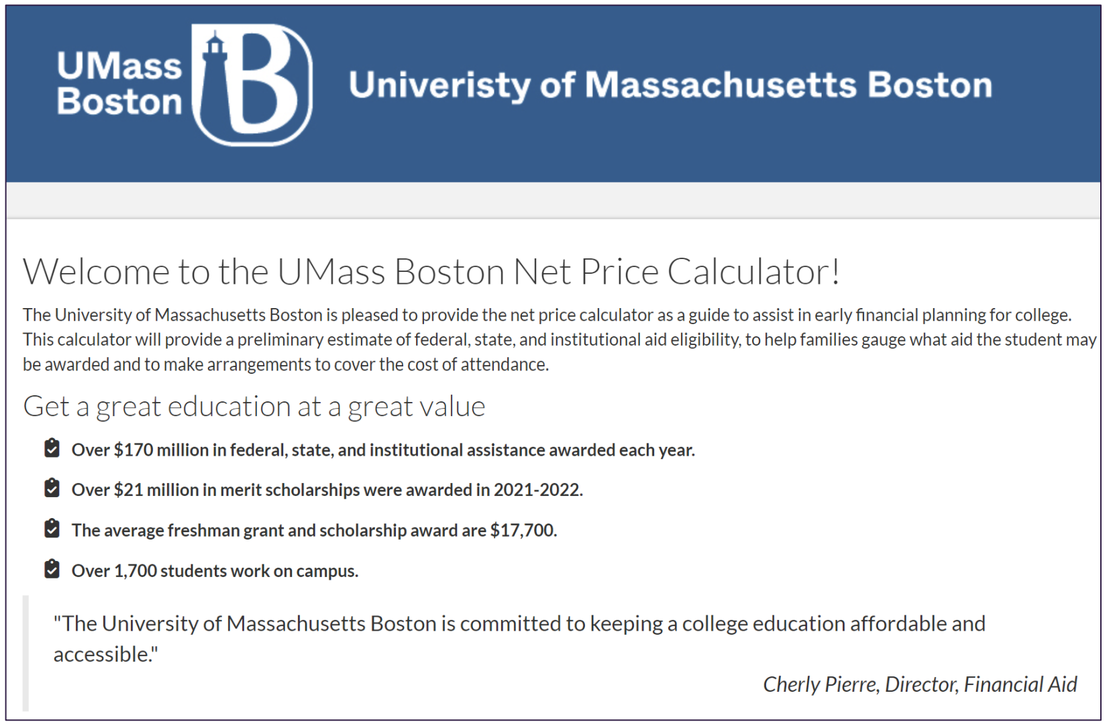
- What is the Cost of Attendance?
- What financial aid applications are required and when?
- Need-based aid vs. merit-based aid: potentially different deadlines
- Start looking for private scholarships now



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Net Price Calculators

- Online tool found on each college's website
- Asks questions about family finances & student academics
- Provides personal, estimated net college price
- Displays federal & institutional financial aid
- Merit-based aid may also be calculated



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Applying for Financial Aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®):

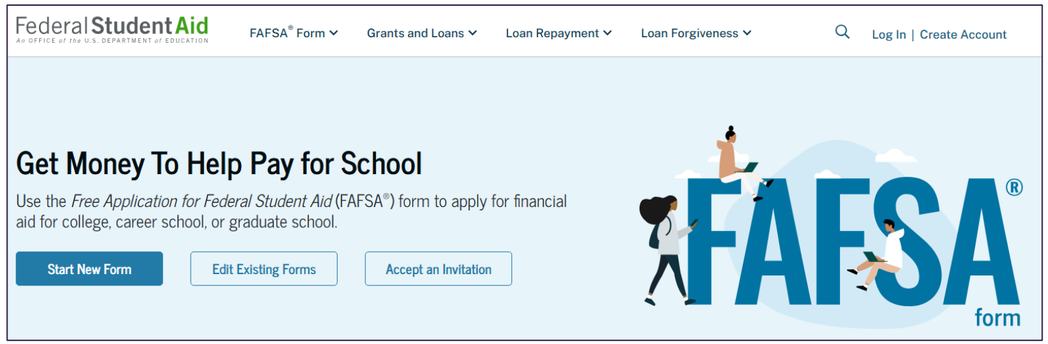
- Required by every college and university
- 2027-28 FAFSA will be available on Oct 1, 2026
- Will ask about 2025 income

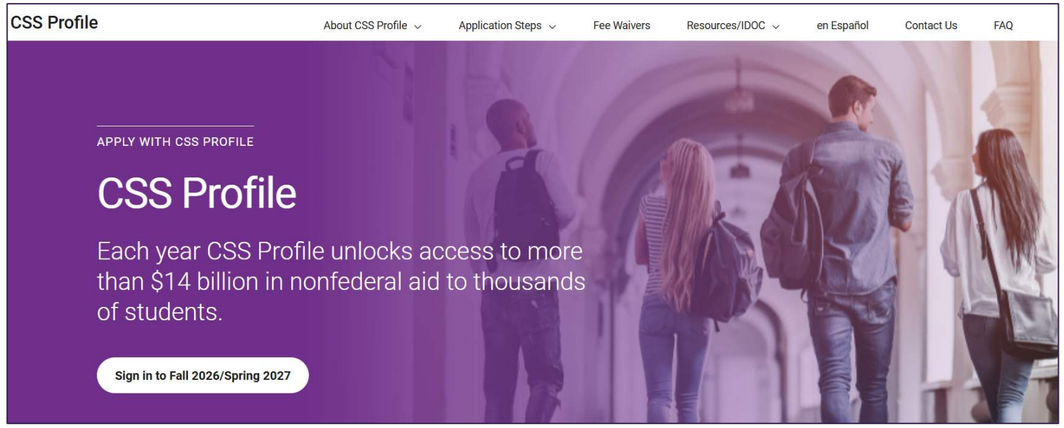
CSS Profile™:

- Required by ~200 colleges and scholarship agencies
- 2027-28 Profile will be available Oct 1, 2026
- Will ask about 2025 income

College-specific financial aid applications

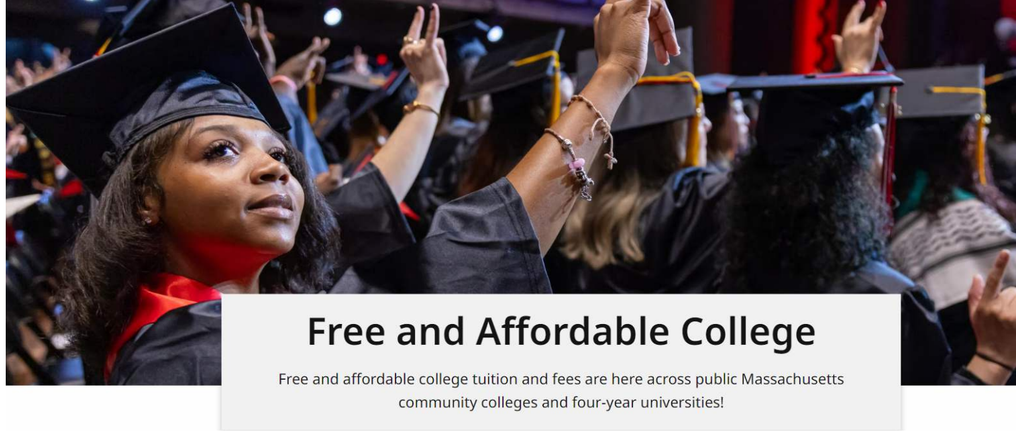
- Posted on each college's financial aid website





MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Paying for College in MA



To apply for MA state financial aid, complete the FAFSA by May 1st

mass.gov/go-higher

- **MassEducate:** Free community college (tuition & fees and potential book allowance) for all students
- **Mass Reconnect**: Free community college for adults over 25 years of age
- **MASSGrant Plus Expansion:** Free or reduced tuition & fees for low & middle-income students and potential book allowance
- **Tuition Equity Law:** Some undocumented students can receive MA state aid and in-state tuition rates (mass.edu/tuitionequity/home.asp)
- **MassTransfer:** Makes transferring from a MA community college to a 4-year MA public college more affordable
- **Tuition Break:** Reduction on out-of-state tuition costs at New England colleges for certain programs (nebhe.org/)

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

mefa.org/article/paying-college-massachusetts

Staying on Track Through Senior Year

Spring/Summer Junior Year

- Research Colleges
- Visit campuses and college fairs
- Ask teachers for letters of recommendation
- Take the SAT/ACT
- Start writing the college essay

Fall Senior Year

- Retake the SAT/ACT
- Secure letters of recommendation
- Finalize the college essay(s)
- Attend MEFA's *Financial Aid 101* webinar
- Complete all admissions applications
- Submit the FAFSA
- Submit the CSS Profile if required

Winter Senior Year

- Submit admissions applications
- Apply for private scholarships
- Send in mid-year grade reports

Spring Senior Year

- Receive admissions and financial aid offers
- Attend MEFA's *Financial Aid Offers & the College Bill* webinar
- Attend college open house programs
- Choose your college by May 1st

View an extended timeline at: mefa.org/college-admissions-and-financial-aid-timeline

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

MEFA Pathway

FREE college and career planning tool open to all

Resources include:

- Skills and interests assessments
- Career exploration
- College search
- Financial aid and scholarship information
- Personalized digital portfolio

Visit mefapathway.org to get started



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Upcoming MEFA Webinars

- Financial Aid 101
- Understanding the FAFSA
- What to Know About the CSS Profile
- Ask an Expert All Your CSS Profile Questions
- Financial Aid Offers & the College Bill
- And many more!

Register at mefa.org/webinars

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Connect with MEFA on Social Media

facebook.com/mefaMA

linkedin.com/company/mefa

@mefa_ma

youtube.com/MEFAcounselor

@MEFAtweets

mefa.org/mefa-podcast

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Thank You!

Questions?



(800) 449-MEFA (6332)



collegeplanning@mefa.org

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.