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College Admissions

(Webinar slides are available for printing on the sidebar of mefa.org/events)

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About MEFA

Not-for-profit state authority created in 1982 helping families plan, save, and pay for college

Keeping you on track with FREE college planning:

- Visit mefa.org: Information, tools, & resources
- Call us: (800) 449-MEFA (6332) with any questions
- Email us: collegeplanning@mefa.org
- Follow us: Facebook, Twitter, & LinkedIn
- Get our emails: Sign up on mefa.org
- Attend a seminar: Details at mefa.org/events
- Attend a webinar: Register at mefa.org/events



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Seminar Topics

- Current trends
- Your college list
- Campus visits
- The application process
- Financial aid
- Free resources



Trends in College Admissions

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- Earlier Process
- Students applying to a greater number of schools
- Demonstrated interest a factor
- Has become more a parent-driven process (though students should be driving!)
- Rise of social media
- Cost has become a bigger factor



Stay Organized!

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

School Name	Admissions Deadline*	Send SAT, ACT or Neither	Required Financial Aid	Financial Aid Deadline*	Notes
Example University	November 1st	SAT	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> CO-terms <input type="checkbox"/> None	February 1st	• High school visit Oct 1st • Offered working program • A four-year degree
1.			<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> CO-terms <input type="checkbox"/> None		
2.			<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> CO-terms <input type="checkbox"/> None		
3.			<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> CO-terms <input type="checkbox"/> None		
4.			<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> CO-terms <input type="checkbox"/> None		
5.			<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> CO-terms <input type="checkbox"/> None		

mefa.org/college-application-manager

Researching Colleges

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Research thoroughly

College Navigator: CollegeNavigator.gov

College search with admissions, academic, & cost info

College Scorecard: CollegeScorecard.ed.gov

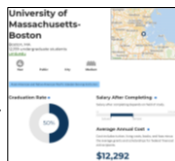
College info including average net price, student debt, grad rate, & alumni salary

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



College Factors to Consider

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

Informal & Formal Campus Visits

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*While most campuses have suspended on-campus tours, take advantage of virtual tours, and plan to visit campus in person at a later date

Informal visits

- Size
- Setting
- Culture



Formal visits

- Academics
- Activities
- Housing
- Q&A



College Fair Tips

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- Check out the college list beforehand
- Have a plan of attack before you arrive
- Head to the info booth first
- Take advantage of information sessions
- Check NACACnet.org and NEACAC.org for fairs

Assess Prospects for Admission

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Develop a final list with colleges of each type:

Probable

Your chances for admission are strong (Make sure at least one is affordable)

Target

Your chances for admission are 50/50

Reach

Your chances for admission are less than 50%

College Application Timeline

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- **Regular Decision:** Usually an early winter deadline
- **Early Action:** Earlier deadlines, non-binding agreement
- **Early Decision:** Earlier deadlines, binding agreement
- **Rolling Admission:** Decisions shared on a rolling basis
- **Open Admission:** Admits most students for most programs

College Application Types & Components

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Application requirements may vary at each college

College Application Types:

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

Your application may include:

- Application form
- High school transcript
- Standardized test scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Activity list or resume
- Personal essay
- Interview
- Audition
- Portfolio

Academic Readiness

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

Standardized Tests

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PSAT	Offers practice and assessment
SAT	Measures college readiness Offers free test prep online
ACT	Measures college readiness Offers free test prep online
SAT Subject Test	Shows subject knowledge
AP Exam	Shows subject knowledge

Register at: • act.org (for the ACT)
 • collegereadiness.collegeboard.org (for the PSAT & SAT)
 • apstudents.collegeboard.org (for AP exams)
[Fairtest.org](https://fairtest.org) provides a list of over 1,000 test-optional schools

Activity List & Resume

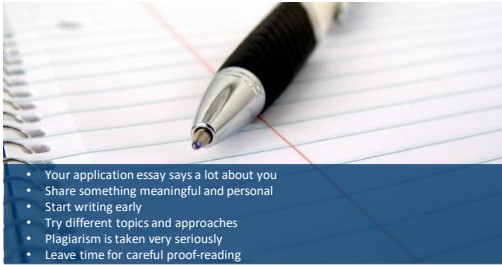
15

- Extracurricular activities
- Showcase what you do and the depth of the activity
- Include family responsibilities and employment
- Highlight the impact on your community



Essays

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- 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

2020-21 Common Application Essay Prompts

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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. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
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.

Letters of Recommendation

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- 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!

Interviews

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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



The Admissions Decision

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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

- Most colleges send decisions over email or post to their online portal
- Deposit by May 1st to secure your spot at a school

Understanding College Affordability

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

Net Price Calculators

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- 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



Applying for Financial Aid

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Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®):

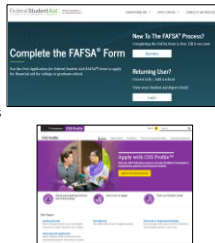
- Required by every college and university
- 2021-22 FAFSA will be available Oct 1, 2020
- Will ask about 2019 income

CSS Profile™:

- Required by 250+ colleges and scholarship agencies
- 2021-22 Profile will be available Oct 1, 2020
- Will ask about 2019 income

College-specific financial aid applications

- Posted on each college's financial aid website



Paying for College in MA: You Have Options

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MassTransfer

- Makes transfer from community college to a 4-year public MA college more affordable
- Benefits include guaranteed credit transfer, tuition credit, & freeze on tuition
- mass.edu/masstransfer



Tuition Break

- Reduction on out-of-state tuition costs at New England schools for certain programs
- Nebhe.org/programs-overview/rsp-tuitionbreak/overview



Staying on Track Through Senior Year

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Spring/Summer Junior Year

- Research colleges
- Visit campuses & 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 *College Financing* seminar
- Complete all admissions applications
- Submit financial aid applications

Winter Senior Year

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

Spring Senior Year

- Receive admissions and financial aid offers
- Attend MEFA's *After the College Acceptance* seminar
- 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 Pathway *Your Plan for the Future*

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FREE college and career planning tool

Resources include:

- Skills and interests assessments
- Career exploration
- College search
- Financial aid and scholarship information
- Personalized digital portfolio
- Visit mefapathway.org to get started



What You Can Do Now

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- Sign up for MEFA emails →
- Research colleges
- Start creating your college list



Connect with MEFA on Social Media

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facebook.com/mefaMA



[@MEFAtweets](https://twitter.com/MEFAtweets)



linkedin.com/company/mefa



youtube.com/MEFAcounselor

Thank You

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Questions?

(800) 449-MEFA (6332)

collegeplanning@mefa.org

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