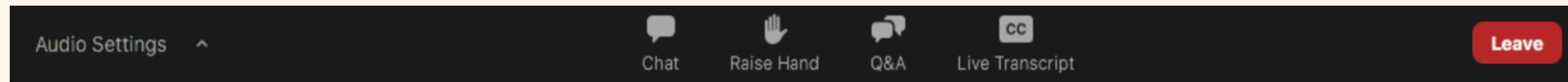


# College Admissions & MEFA Pathway

*mefa*<sup>®</sup>

# How to Participate



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## About MEFA

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

## MEFA Pathway

FREE college and career planning tool

Resources include:

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

Visit [mefapathway.org](https://mefapathway.org) to get started

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**pathway** YOUR PLAN  
FOR THE FUTURE®





## Webinar Topics

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

# Trends in College Admissions

- Students applying to a greater number of schools
- Demonstrated interest a factor
- Social media
- Cost a bigger factor
- More ways to interact with colleges virtually
- More test-optional schools
- More applications at test-optional schools, resulting in more selectivity
- Longer waitlists

## Stay Organized!

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

[mefa.org/college-application-manager](https://mefa.org/college-application-manager)

## 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	Financial Aid Deadline*	Notes
1. Example University	November 1st	SAT	FAFSA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSS Profile <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	February 1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High school visit: Oct 1st</li><li>• Strong nursing program</li><li>• 4-hour drive away</li></ul>
2.			FAFSA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSS Profile <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
3.			FAFSA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSS Profile <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
4.			FAFSA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSS Profile <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>		

# 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

### SEARCH FOR COLLEGES

**Location:**  
**Where do you want to be?**  
Considering attending college somewhere entirely new to you? Or do you like being a short car or bus ride from home? Explore options and think about how location will impact your college experience.

Select the regions where you'd like to attend college: (Select as many as you wish)

Midwest Northeast  
West Southwest Southeast  
Midwest Northeast Southwest West

### My College List

Your college list represents schools that you have found to be a match for you based on your interests and career goals. From here you can add more colleges using the College Search tool. And you can keep track of your favorites by adding them to your Digital Portfolio.

You have **14** Colleges on your list [ADD MORE COLLEGES](#)

College Name	City	State	Added By	Remove	Add to Favorites
Bridgewater State University	Bridgewater	MA	Student	x	♥
University of Vermont	Burlington	VT	Student	x	♥
Curry College	Milton	MA	Student	x	♥
Brandeis University	Waltham	MA	Student	x	♥
Wentworth Institute of Technology	Boston	MA	Student	x	♥
Northeastern University	Boston	MA	Student	x	♥
Florida Gulf Coast University	Fort Myers	FL	Student	x	♥
Framingham State University	Framingham	MA	Student	x	♥
Central Washington University	Ellensburg	WA	Student	x	♥
Bay Path University	Longmeadow	MA	Student	x	♥
Lasell College	Newton	MA	Student	x	♥
Hampshire College	Amherst	MA	Student	x	♥
University of Massachusetts Lowell	Lowell	MA	Student	x	♥
Fitchburg State University	Fitchburg	MA	Student	x	♥

Show: 15 30 50



## College Factors to Consider

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



## Informal & Formal Campus Visits

### Informal Visits

- Size
- Setting
- Culture

### Formal Visits

- Academics
- Activities
- Housing
- Food
- Q&A



## 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](http://nacacfairs.org) & [neacac.org](http://neacac.org) for upcoming events

# Assess Prospects for Admission

Develop a final list with colleges of each type:

- Likely
- Possible
- Reach

Use MEFA Pathway's College Compare feature to view up to 5 colleges for a side-by-side comparison.

My Preferences		University of Massachusetts Lowell	Wentworth Institute of Technology	Florida Gulf Coast University	Central Washington University	Framingham State University
▼ Key Factors						
Type of School		Public	Private	Public	Public	Public
Setting	Small Town	Urban	Urban	Suburban	Small Town	Suburban
Size	7 - 14k students	13266	4324	13717	10982	4478
Location	No Preference	Lowell, MA	Boston, MA	Fort Myers, FL	Ellensburg, WA	Framingham, MA
Admission Difficulty	Moderately difficult	Moderately difficult	Moderately difficult	Moderately difficult	Moderately difficult	Moderately difficult
▼ Undergraduate Info						
Total Undergraduates	7 - 14k students	13266	4324	13717	10982	4478
Male/Female Ratio		62%/38%	80%/20%	45%/55%	49%/51%	37%/63%
Student/Faculty Ratio		17:1	15:1	22:1	20:1	15:1
▼ Financial Info						
In-state Tuition & Fees		\$14307	\$33724	\$0	\$8688	\$9340
Out-of-state Tuition & Fees		\$30875	\$33724	\$0	\$21501	\$15420
Annual Estimated Total Cost		\$42948	\$47254	\$0	\$31676	\$26664
Estimated Total Cost		\$171792	\$189016	\$0	\$126704	\$106656
▼ Academic Info						
Overall Acceptance Rate		57%	67%		81%	71%
GPA	3.0-3.5	3.54000	3.10000	3.63000	3.14000	3.08000
▼ Test Scores						
SAT CR		573	528	535	490	491
SAT WR		551	510	525	476	481
SAT Math		600	578	535	495	493
ACT		26	26	24	21	21

## College Application Types

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

## College Application Forms

- Common App: [CommonApp.org](https://CommonApp.org)
- Universal College App: [UniversalCollegeApp.com](https://UniversalCollegeApp.com)
- Coalition App: [CoalitionForCollegeAccess.org](https://CoalitionForCollegeAccess.org)
- College website application
- Paper application

## 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

A young man with short, wavy brown hair is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a white t-shirt with red sleeves and has a grey backpack strap over his right shoulder. He is standing in a brightly lit school hallway with other students blurred in the background. The overall atmosphere is positive and energetic.

## 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



## Standardized Tests

### PSAT

- Offers practice and assessment
- Register at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org)

### SAT

- Measures college readiness
- Offers free test prep online
- Register at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org)

### ACT

- Measures college readiness
- Offers free test prep online
- Register at [act.org](https://act.org)

### AP Exam

- Shows subject knowledge
- Register at [apstudents.collegeboard.org](https://apstudents.collegeboard.org)

Fairtest.org provides a list of over 2,000 test-optional schools

## Activity List & Resume

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

Use MEFA Pathway's *My Resume* tool to create a resume whenever you need one

PERSONAL INFO ACTIVITIES HONORS & AWARDS SKILLS & STRENGTHS EMPLOYMENT

ACTIVITIES CONTINUE

What's Next? Now that you have added some Activities, you can continue on to the Honors & Awards section.

ADD NEW

Sports

**Swimming & Diving**

Position Held:

Grades Involved: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Involved during: School Year & Summer

Plan to continue at college: Yes

Description:

REMOVE EDIT

Arts/Music

Ba

Pos

**Jennifer Bento-Pinyoun**  
51 Manning Rd  
Chelmsford, MA, 01824

---

**OBJECTIVE**  
To obtain a position that will enable me to use my strong organizational skills and ability to work well with people.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**Tree Department**  
Churchill's Garden Center - Chelmsford MA 01824  
Customer service, grounds maintenance

**Cashier/Bag**  
Market Basket - Chelmsford MA 01824  
Customer service

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HONORS & AWARDS	ACTIVITIES
<b>Honor Roll</b> Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	<b>Swimming &amp; Diving</b> Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	<b>Band - Concert</b> Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	<b>Special Olympics</b>

## 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

## Common App Essay Prompts for Fall 2025 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.

## 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!

## 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

# The Admissions Decision

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

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

Admitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student is accepted</li><li>• Student may also be accepted to begin at a later semester</li></ul>
Deferred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student is not accepted Early Action/Decision but will be considered in the regular applicant pool</li></ul>
Denied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student is not accepted</li></ul>
Waitlisted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student is not yet accepted and may not get accepted off the waitlist</li></ul>

## Understanding College Affordability

- 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

- 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

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

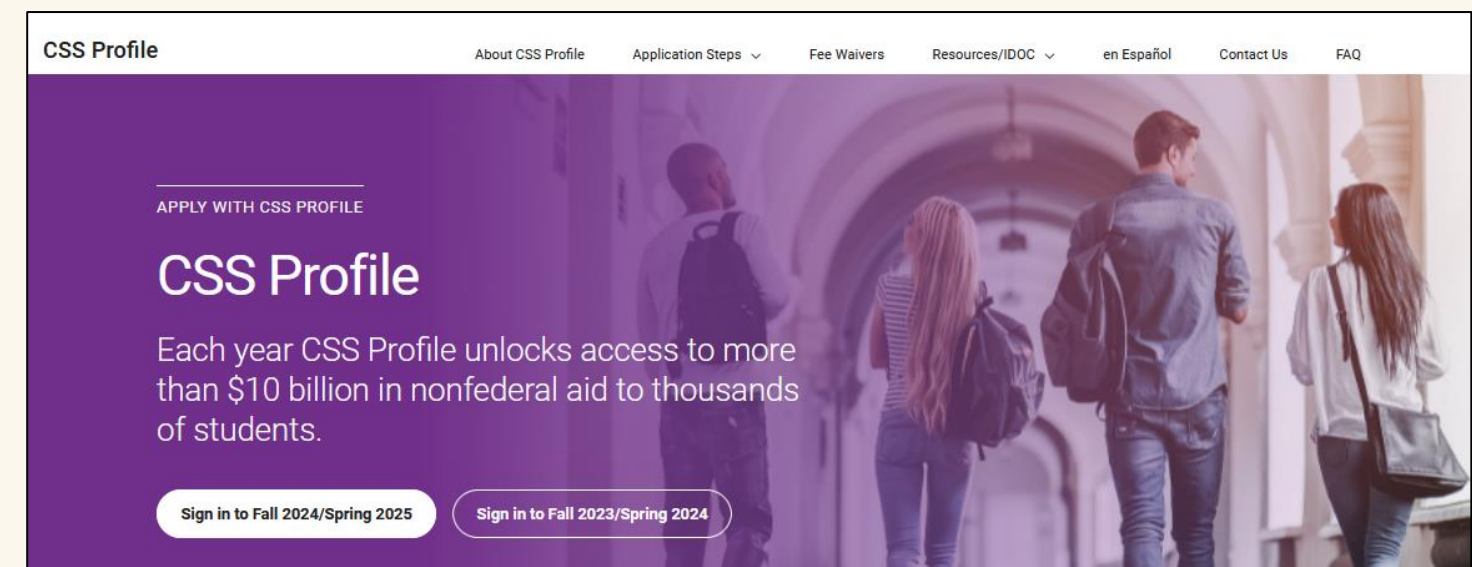
- Required by every college and university
- 2025-26 FAFSA will be available Oct 1, 2024
- Will ask about 2023 income

### CSS Profile™:

- Required by ~200 colleges and scholarship agencies
- 2025-26 Profile will be available Oct 1, 2024
- Will ask about 2023 income

### College-specific financial aid applications

- Posted on each college's financial aid website



## Paying for College in MA: You Have Options

### MassTransfer

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

### Tuition Break

- Reduction on out-of-state tuition costs at New England schools for certain programs  
[nebhe.org/tuitionbreak](https://nebhe.org/tuitionbreak)



## Search for Scholarships with MEFA Pathway

- **Search for scholarships based on specific criteria**
  - Type of award
  - Area of study
  - State of residence
  - State where studying
  - Ethnicity
  - Type of school
  - Religion
- **Build a scholarship list in MEFA Pathway to keep track of each scholarship's status, award amount, and deadline**

14 scholarships found SAVE SEARCH

Scholarship X Current Deadline - Yes X Nursing X Four-year College X Current HS Student X Full-time X Clear all X

Show: 15 30 50

[Back to School Nursing Scholarship Program](#) SAVE

AMOUNT	AVAILABLE	RENEWABLE	DEADLINE
\$2,500	1	No	Continuous

[Canadian Nurses Foundation Scholarships](#) SAVE

AMOUNT	AVAILABLE	RENEWABLE	DEADLINE
\$1,500	50	No	February 22

[Cynthia E. Morgan Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc.](#) SAVE

AMOUNT	AVAILABLE	RENEWABLE	DEADLINE
\$1,000	1	No	February 25

You have 9 Scholarships on your list ADD MORE SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship	Deadline	Status	Award	Remove
\$1,000 Creative Video Challenge College Scholarship	2019-03-31	Interested	1000	x
AvaCare Medical Scholarship	2019-12-15	Interested	1000	x
\$2,000 No Essay Scholarship	2019-12-31	None	2000	x
\$3,000 USA University Student Scholarship	Continuous	None	3000	x
\$500 Because College is Expensive Scholarship	Continuous	None	500	x

# 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 CSS Profile if required

## Winter Senior Year

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

## Spring Senior Year

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

View an extended timeline at: [mefa.org/college-admissions-and-financial-aid-timeline](https://mefa.org/college-admissions-and-financial-aid-timeline)



## What You Can Do Now

- Sign up for MEFA webinars at [mefa.org/events](https://mefa.org/events)
- Research colleges
- Start creating your college list

Connect with MEFA on  
Social Media



[facebook.com/mefaMA](https://facebook.com/mefaMA)



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



[linkedin.com/company/mefa](https://linkedin.com/company/mefa)



[youtube.com/MEFAcounselor](https://youtube.com/MEFAcounselor)



[mefa.org/mefa-podcast](https://mefa.org/mefa-podcast)

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Thank You

**QUESTIONS?**

Call (800) 449-MEFA (6332)  
or email [collegeplanning@mefa.org](mailto:collegeplanning@mefa.org)

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