

College Admissions

mefa[®]

About MEFA

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





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

College Application Manager

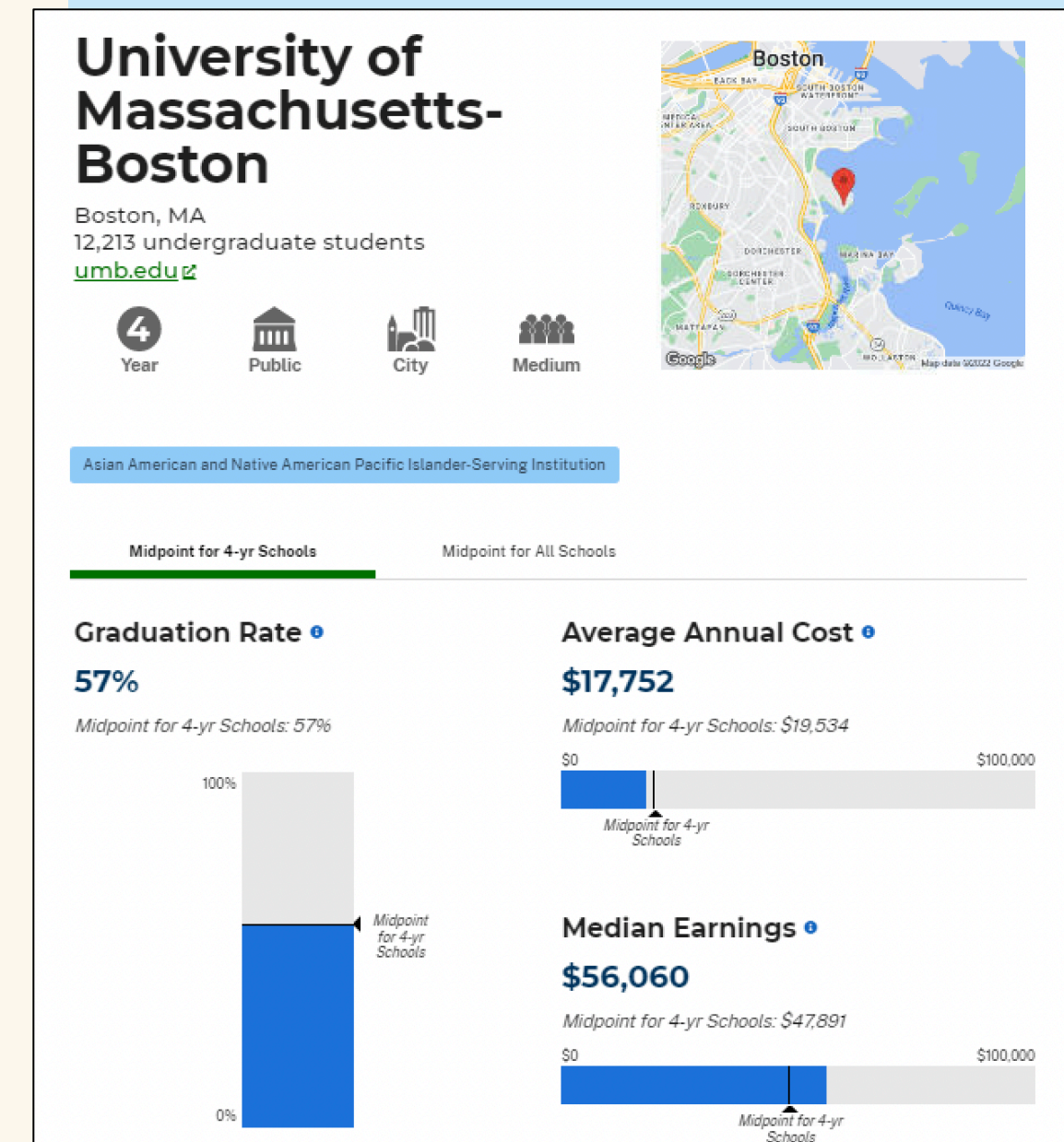
As you explore schools and build your college list, keep track of your details here. Remember that deadlines are critical when applying to college and requesting financial aid, so set yourself reminders to ensure you submit all applications on time. If you’re applying to more than ten schools, make a 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">High school visit: Oct 1stStrong nursing program4-hour drive away
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](https://collegenavigator.gov)**
 - College search with admissions, academic, & cost info
- **College Scorecard: [CollegeScorecard.ed.gov](https://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

- **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 & neacac.org for upcoming events**



Assess Prospects for Admission

- **Develop a final list with colleges of each type:**
 - **Likely**
 - **Possible**
 - **Reach**

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

- **Personal essay**
- **Interview**
- **Audition**
- **Portfolio**



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

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 act.org

AP Exam

- Shows subject knowledge
- Register at 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**



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 2024 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 1st) to secure
your spot at a
school

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

- **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®):

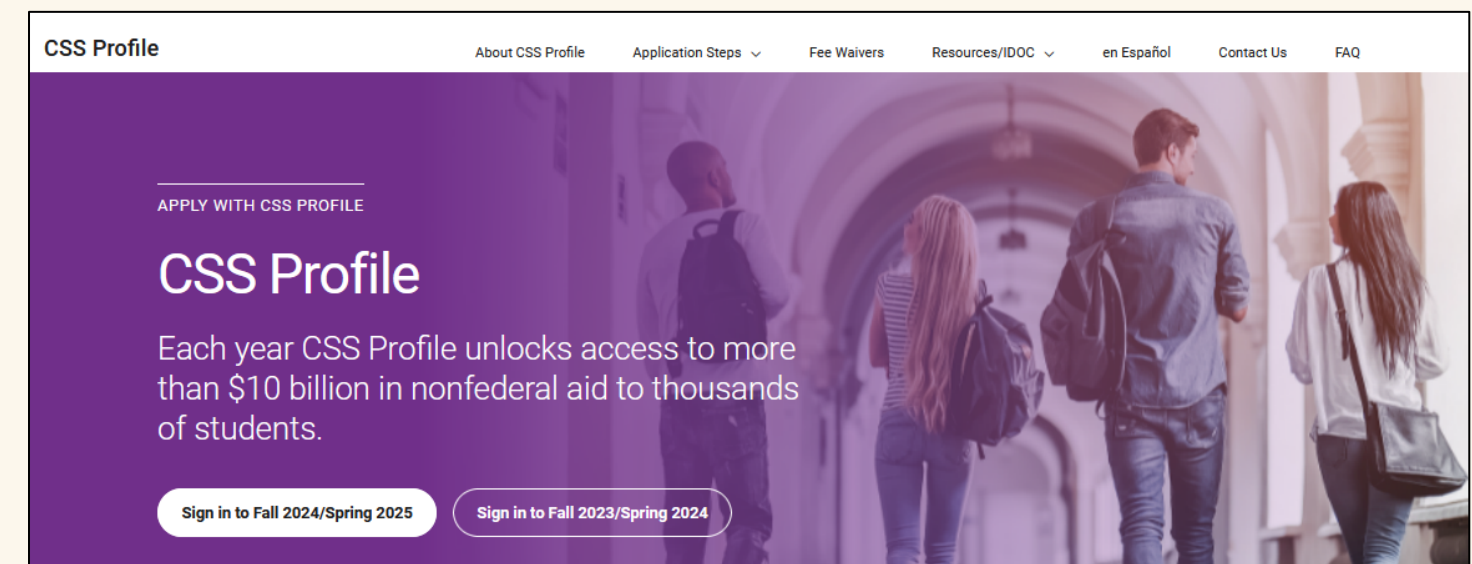
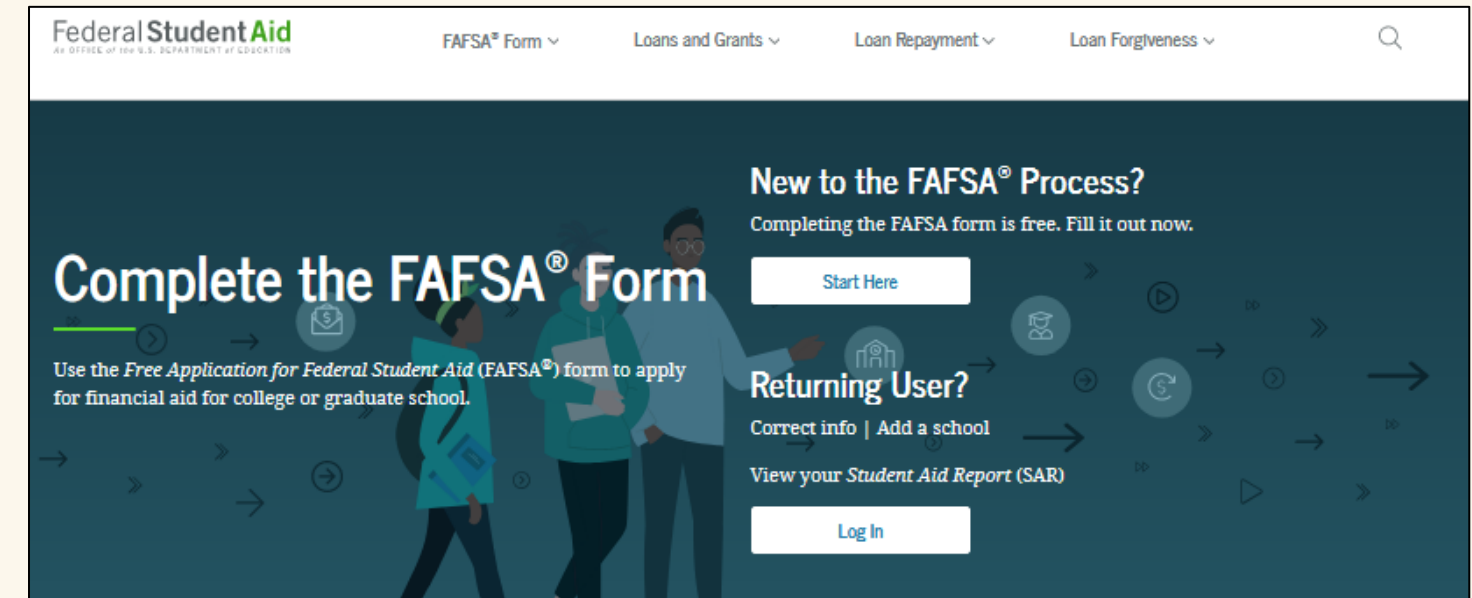
- Required by every college and university
- 2025-26 FAFSA will be available Oct 1, 2024
- Will ask about 2023 income

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



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

Tuition Break

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



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

Winter Senior Year

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

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

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 1st

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

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

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pathway YOUR PLAN
FOR THE FUTURE®





What You Can Do Now

- **Sign up for MEFA webinars at mefa.org/events**
- **Research colleges**
- **Start creating your college list**

Connect with MEFA on Social Media



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Thank You

QUESTIONS?

Call (800) 449-MEFA (6332)
or email collegeplanning@mefa.org

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