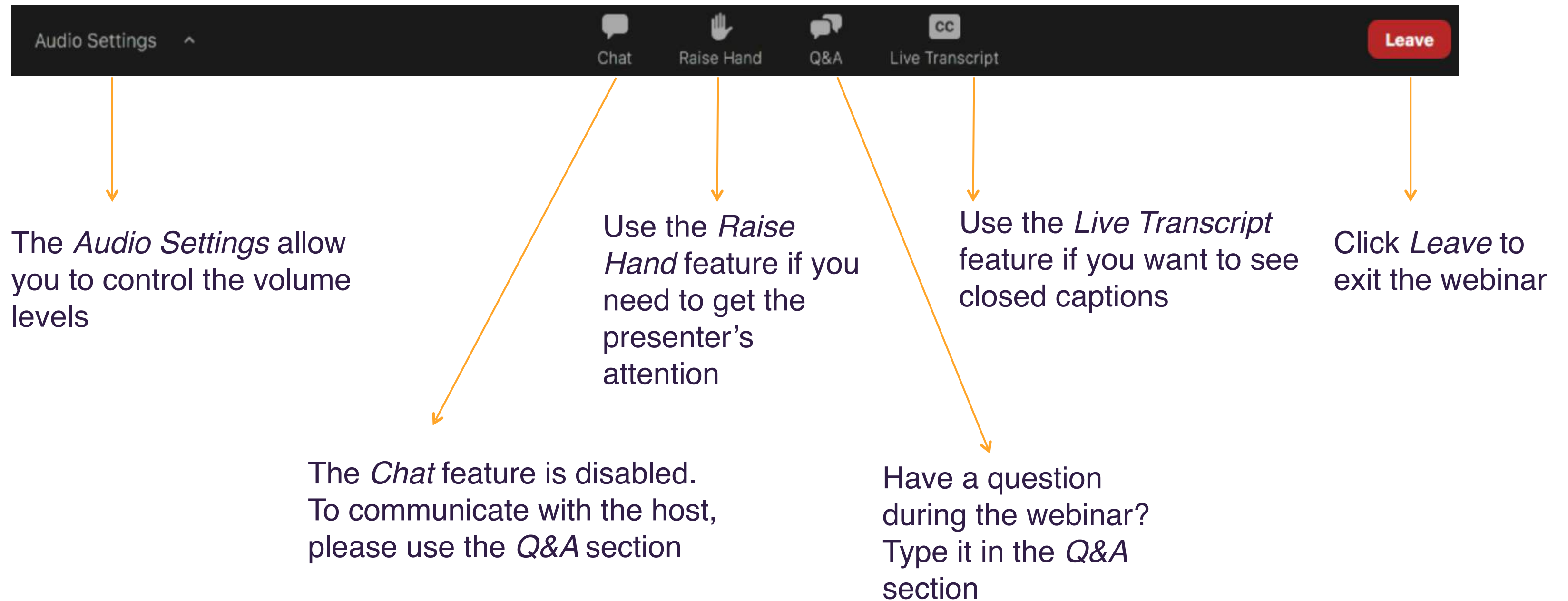


College Admissions & MEFA Pathway



How to Participate



About MEFA

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



About 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 to get started

MEFA | pathway™



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
 - *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 applications at test-optional schools, resulting in more selectivity
- Longer waitlists

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

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	• High school visit: Oct 1st • Strong nursing program • 4-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

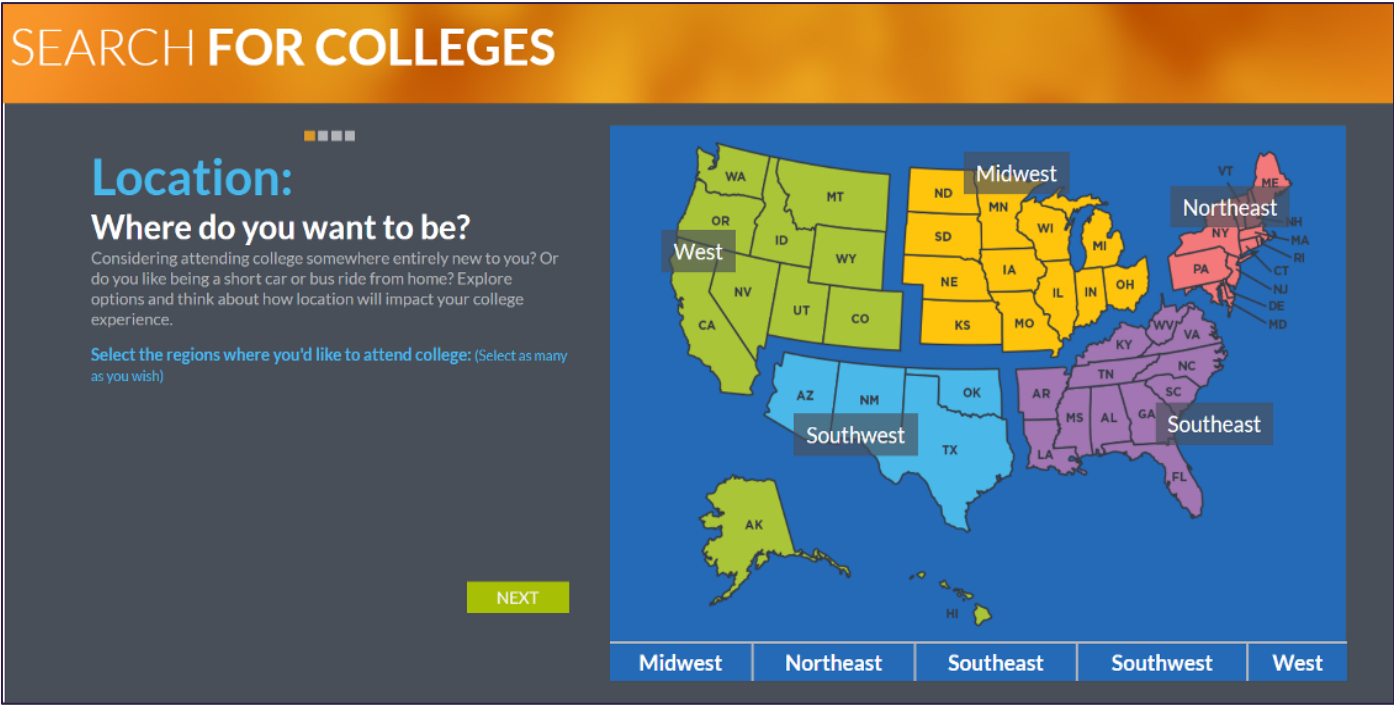
Research Thoroughly

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



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.

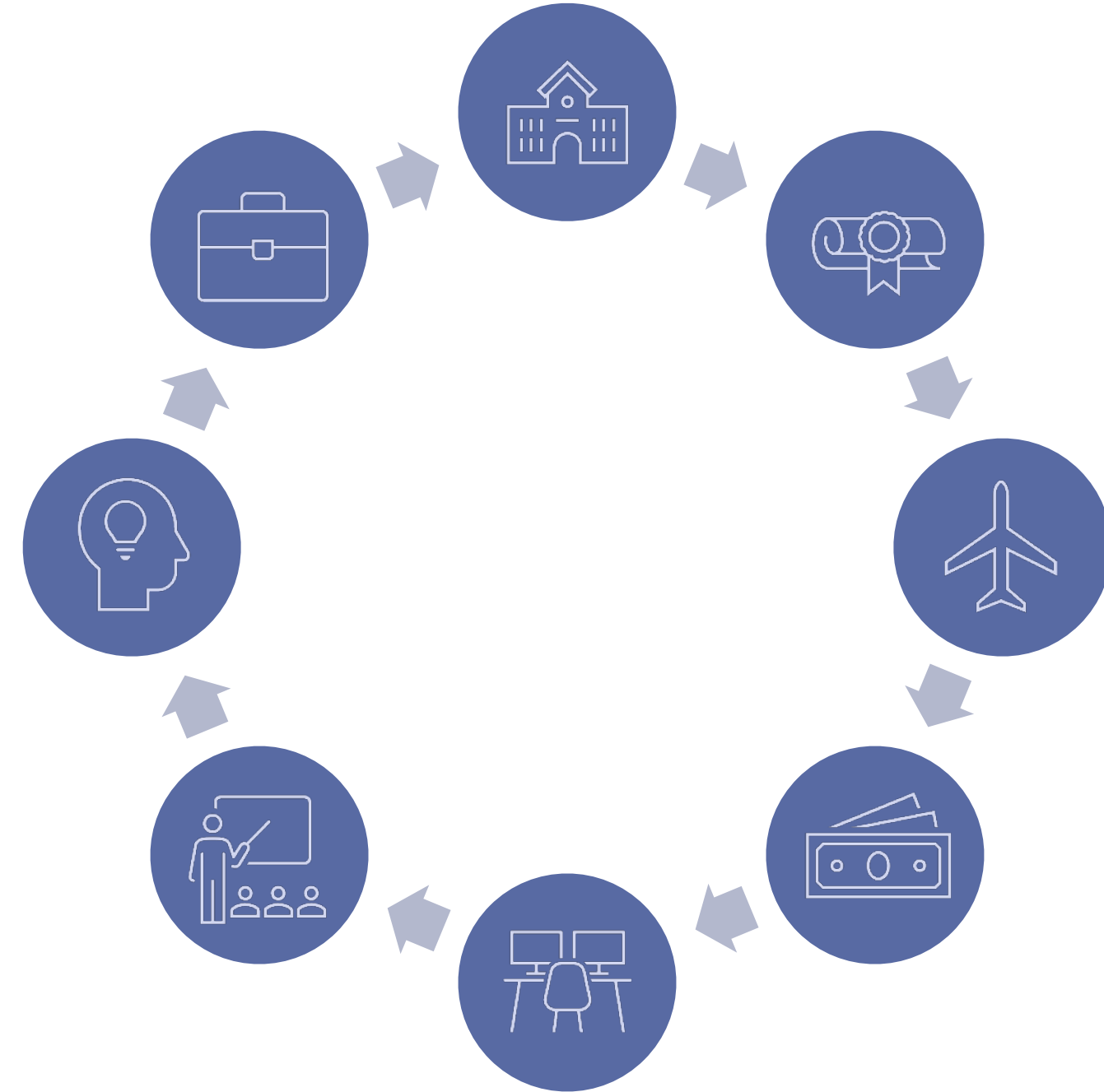
You have **14** Colleges on your list [ADD MORE COLLEGES](#)

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	♥

◀ 1 ▶ 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

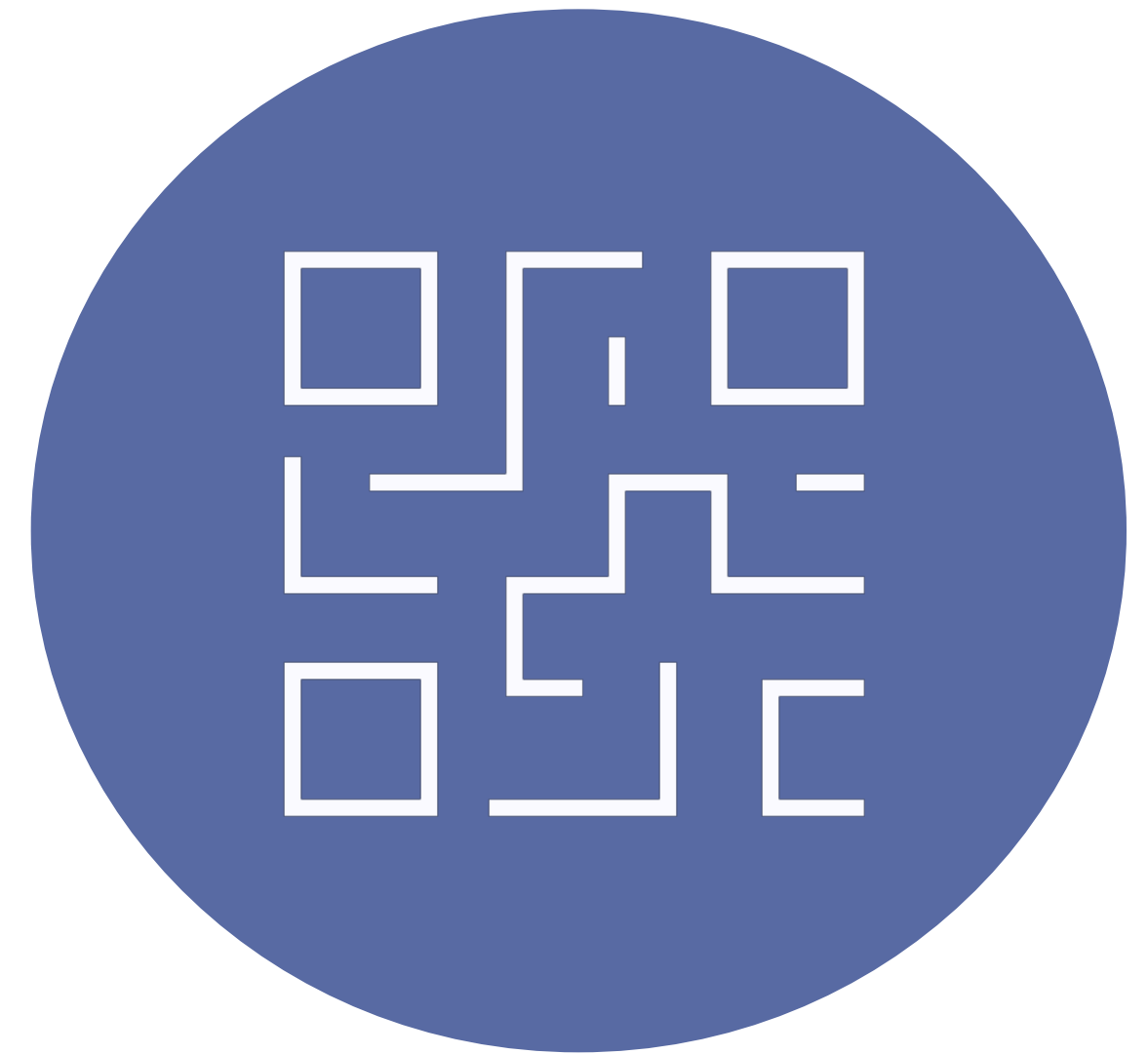
- Size
- Setting
- Culture

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 & neacac.org for upcoming events



Assess Prospects for Admission

Develop a final list with colleges of each type:

- Likely
- Possible
- Reach

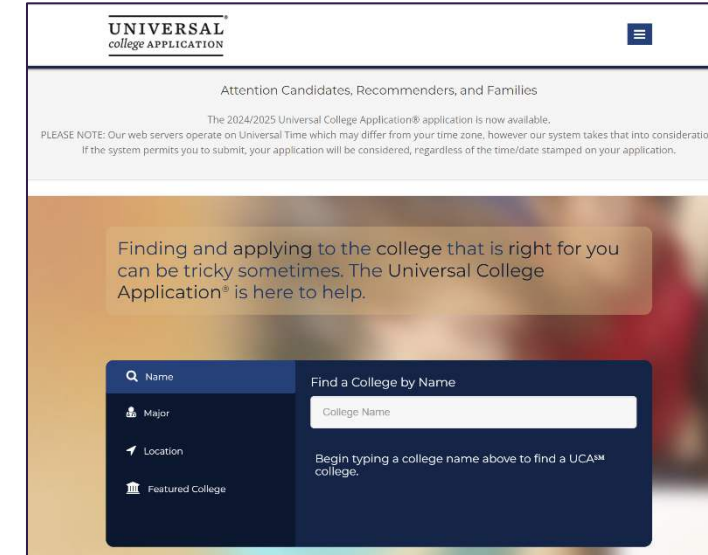
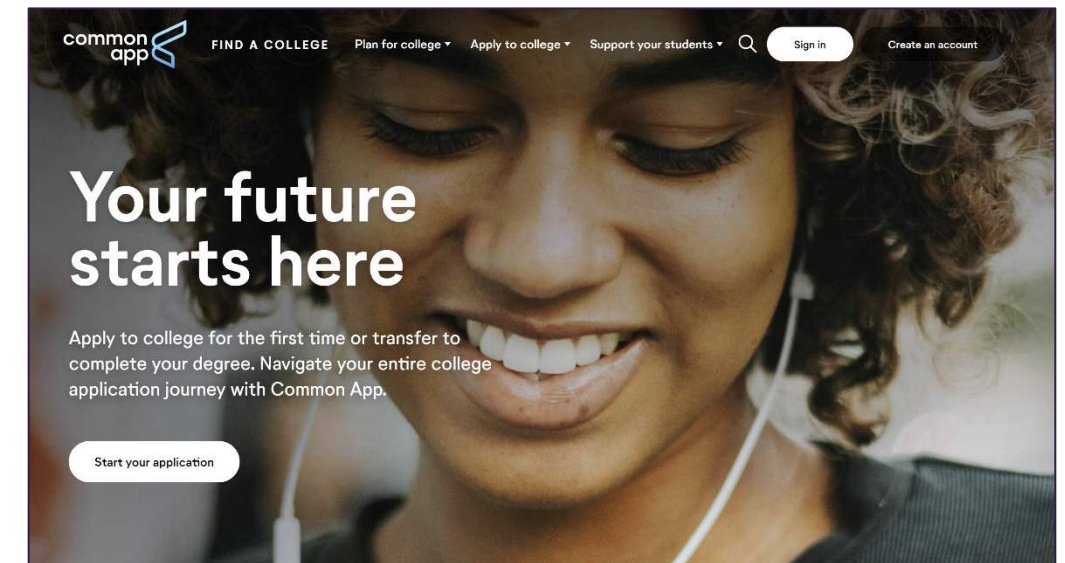


College Application Types

- 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

College Application Forms

- Common App: CommonApp.org
- Universal College App: UniversalCollegeApp.com
- Coalition App: 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



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

AP Exam

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

[Fairtest.org](https://fairtest.org) provides a list of over 2,000 test-optional schools

Activity List & Resume



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:

Arts/Music

Band - Concert

Position Held:

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.

EMPLOYMENT

Tree Department

Churchill's Garden Center - Chelmsford MA 01824

Customer service, grounds maintenance

Cashier/Bag

Market Basket - Chelmsford MA 01824

Customer service

HONORS & AWARDS

Honor Roll

Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

ACTIVITIES

Swimming & Diving

Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Band - Concert

Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Special Olympics

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

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 2026 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

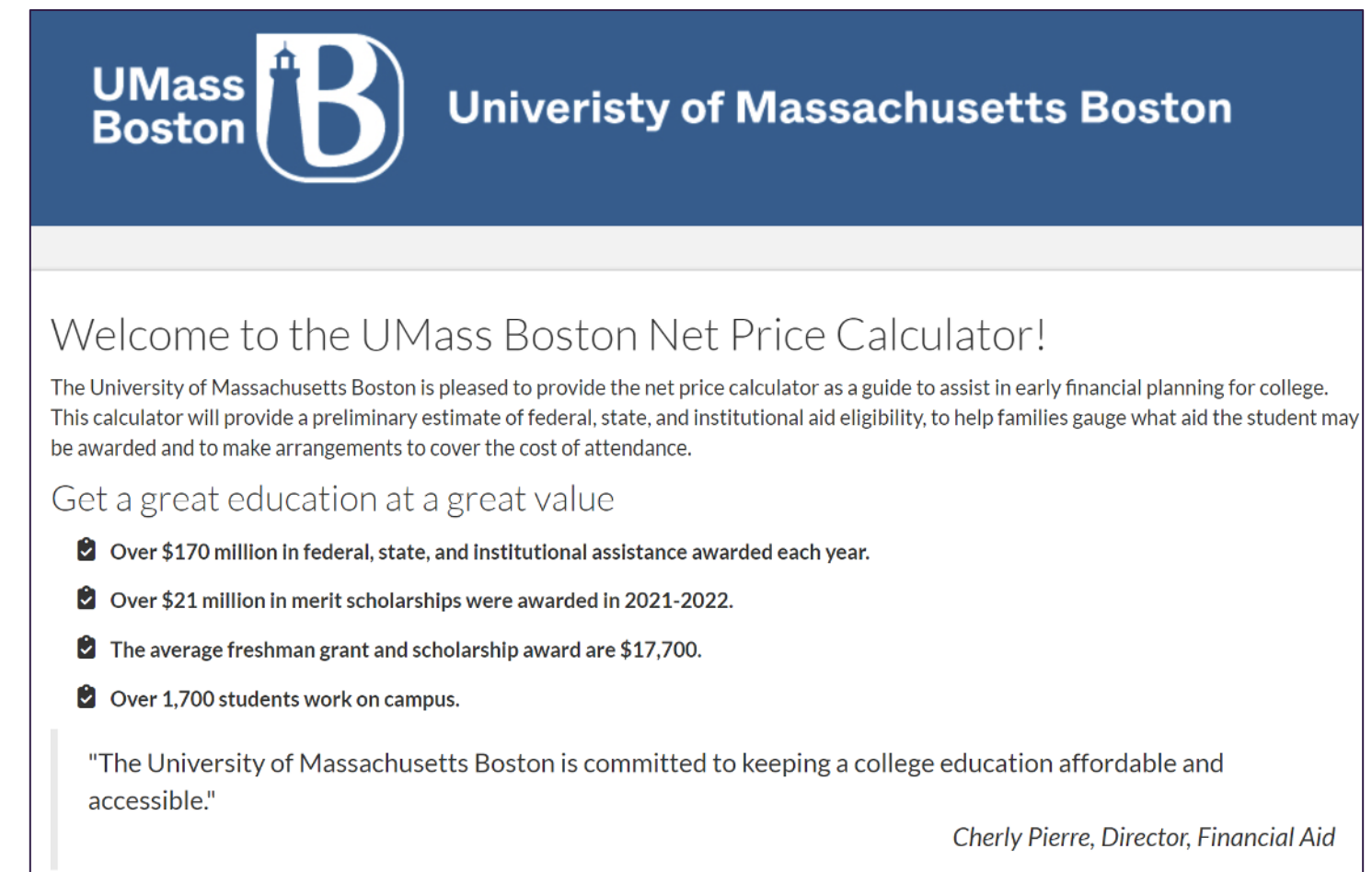
Understanding College Affordability

- 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




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



The screenshot shows the UMass Boston Net Price Calculator landing page. At the top is a dark blue header with the UMass Boston logo and the text "Univeristy of Massachusetts Boston". Below the header is a light gray section with the title "Welcome to the UMass Boston Net Price Calculator!". This is followed by a paragraph explaining the calculator's purpose: "The University of Massachusetts Boston is pleased to provide the net price calculator as a guide to assist in early financial planning for college. This calculator will provide a preliminary estimate of federal, state, and institutional aid eligibility, to help families gauge what aid the student may be awarded and to make arrangements to cover the cost of attendance." Below this is a section titled "Get a great education at a great value" which contains four bullet points, each preceded by a checkmark icon: "Over \$170 million in federal, state, and institutional assistance awarded each year.", "Over \$21 million in merit scholarships were awarded in 2021-2022.", "The average freshman grant and scholarship award are \$17,700.", and "Over 1,700 students work on campus." At the bottom of the page is a quote: "The University of Massachusetts Boston is committed to keeping a college education affordable and accessible." followed by the name "Cherly Pierre, Director, Financial Aid".

UMass Boston  Univeristy of Massachusetts Boston

Welcome to the UMass Boston Net Price Calculator!

The University of Massachusetts Boston is pleased to provide the net price calculator as a guide to assist in early financial planning for college. This calculator will provide a preliminary estimate of federal, state, and institutional aid eligibility, to help families gauge what aid the student may be awarded and to make arrangements to cover the cost of attendance.

Get a great education at a great value

- ✓ Over \$170 million in federal, state, and institutional assistance awarded each year.
- ✓ Over \$21 million in merit scholarships were awarded in 2021-2022.
- ✓ The average freshman grant and scholarship award are \$17,700.
- ✓ Over 1,700 students work on campus.

"The University of Massachusetts Boston is committed to keeping a college education affordable and accessible."

Cherly Pierre, Director, Financial Aid

Applying for Financial Aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®):

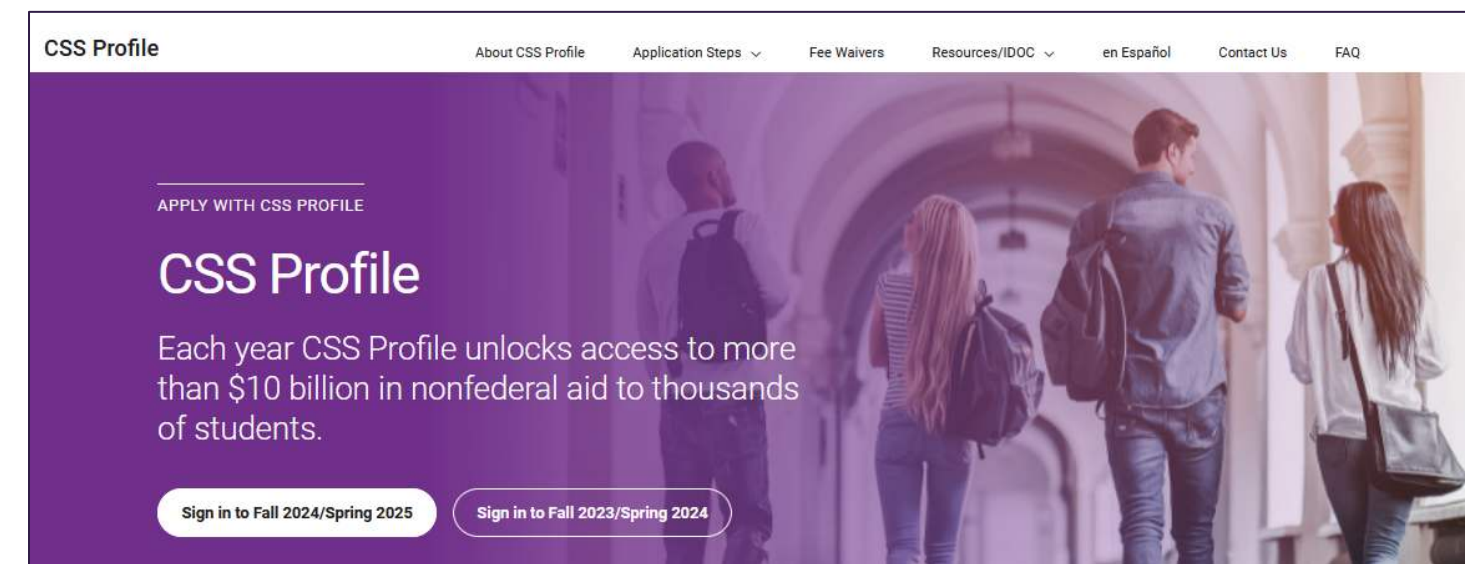
- Required by every college and university
- 2026-27 FAFSA will be available on Oct 1, 2025
- Will ask about 2024 income

CSS Profile™:

- Required by ~200 colleges and scholarship agencies
- 2026-27 Profile will be available Oct 1, 2025
- Will ask about 2024 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

MassEducate

- Covers tuition and fee costs for all community college students in MA

Tuition Break

- Reduction on out-of-state tuition costs at New England colleges for certain program

MA Tuition Equity Law

- Allows undocumented students to receive MA state financial aid & in-state tuition rates

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

Scholarship

Current Deadline - Yes

Nursing

Four-year College

Current HS Student

Full-time

Clear all

Show: 15 30 50

Back to School Nursing Scholarship Program

AMOUNT

\$2,500

AVAILABLE

1

RENEWABLE

No

DEADLINE

Continuous

SAVE

Canadian Nurses Foundation Scholarships

AMOUNT

\$1,500

AVAILABLE

50

RENEWABLE

No

DEADLINE

February 22

SAVE

Cynthia E. Morgan Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc.

AMOUNT

\$1,000

AVAILABLE

1

RENEWABLE

No

DEADLINE

February 25

SAVE

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 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

What You Can Do Now



Sign up for upcoming
MEFA webinars



Research colleges



Start creating your
college list

MEFA as Your Resource

Sign up for MEFA emails to stay on track



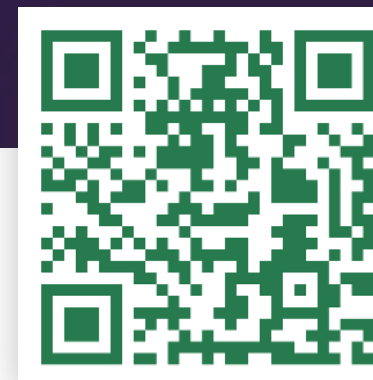
Listen to the MEFA Podcast wherever you get your podcasts



Access MEFA's Resource Center to find articles, videos, calculators, and webinars



Take advantage of one-on-one counseling with the MEFA Team
Request a virtual appointment:



Connect with MEFA on Social Media



Thank You!

Questions?



(800) 449-MEFA (6332)



collegeplanning@mefa.org