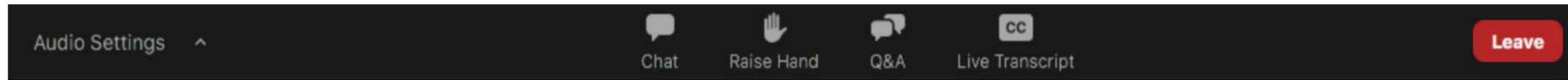


College Admissions & MEFA Pathway



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

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
- 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 applicants at those schools
- Longer waitlists
- Direct admissions

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

Families Need to Stay Organized!

Encourage 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 <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

College Navigator: CollegeNavigator.gov

College search with admissions, academic, & cost info

College Scorecard: CollegeScorecard.ed.gov

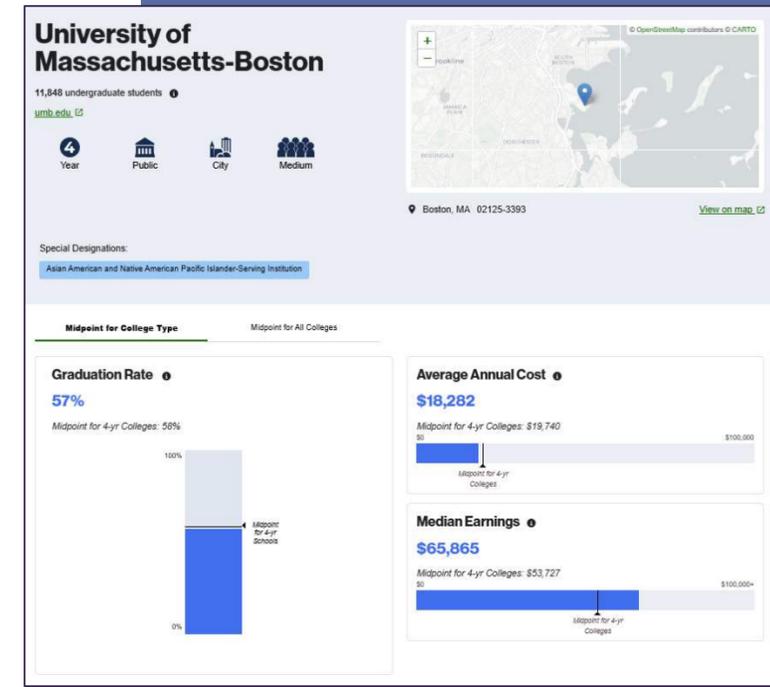
College info including average net price, student debt, grad rate, & alumni salary

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



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.

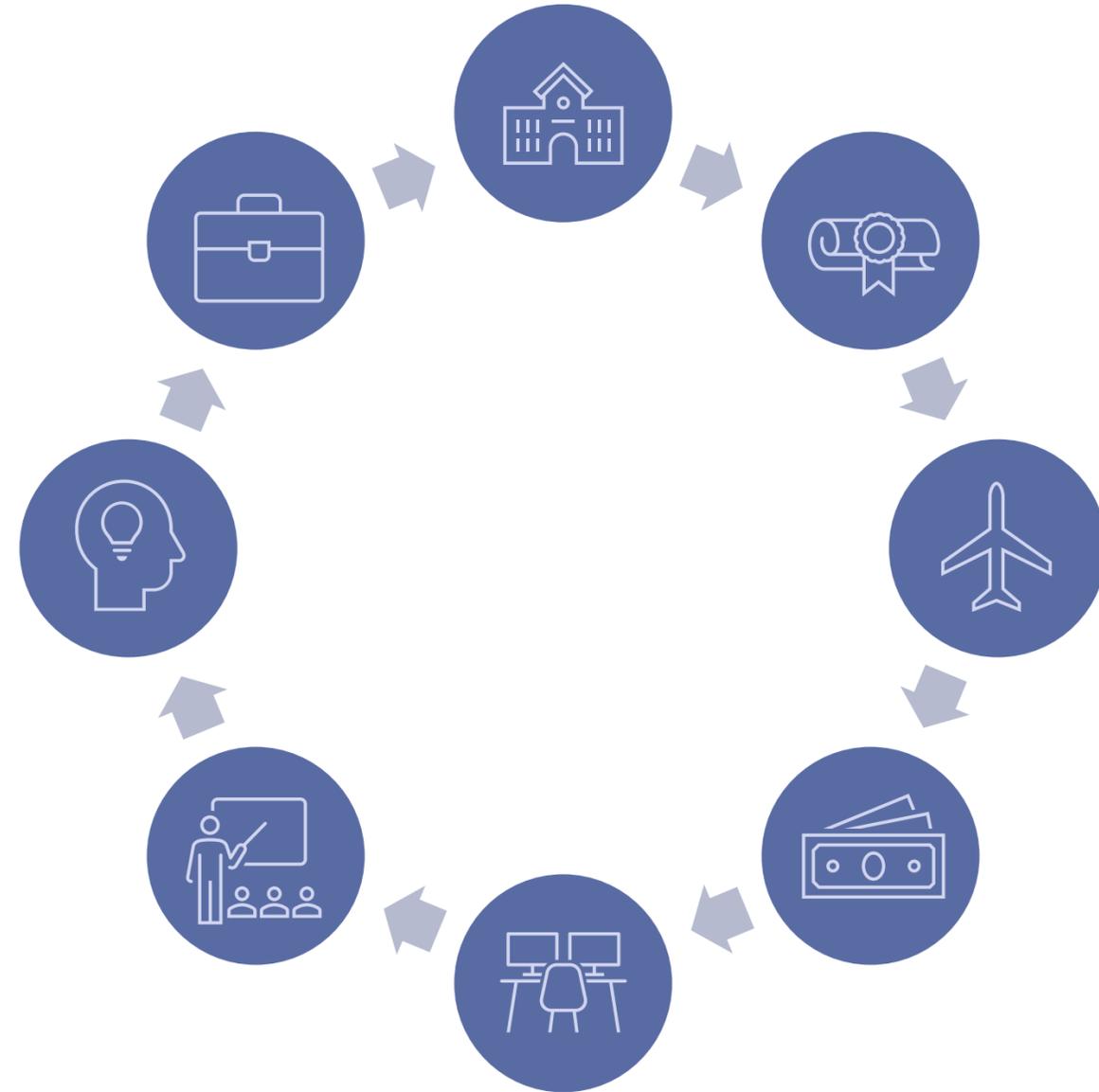
You have **14** Colleges on your list [ADD MORE COLLEGES](#)

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

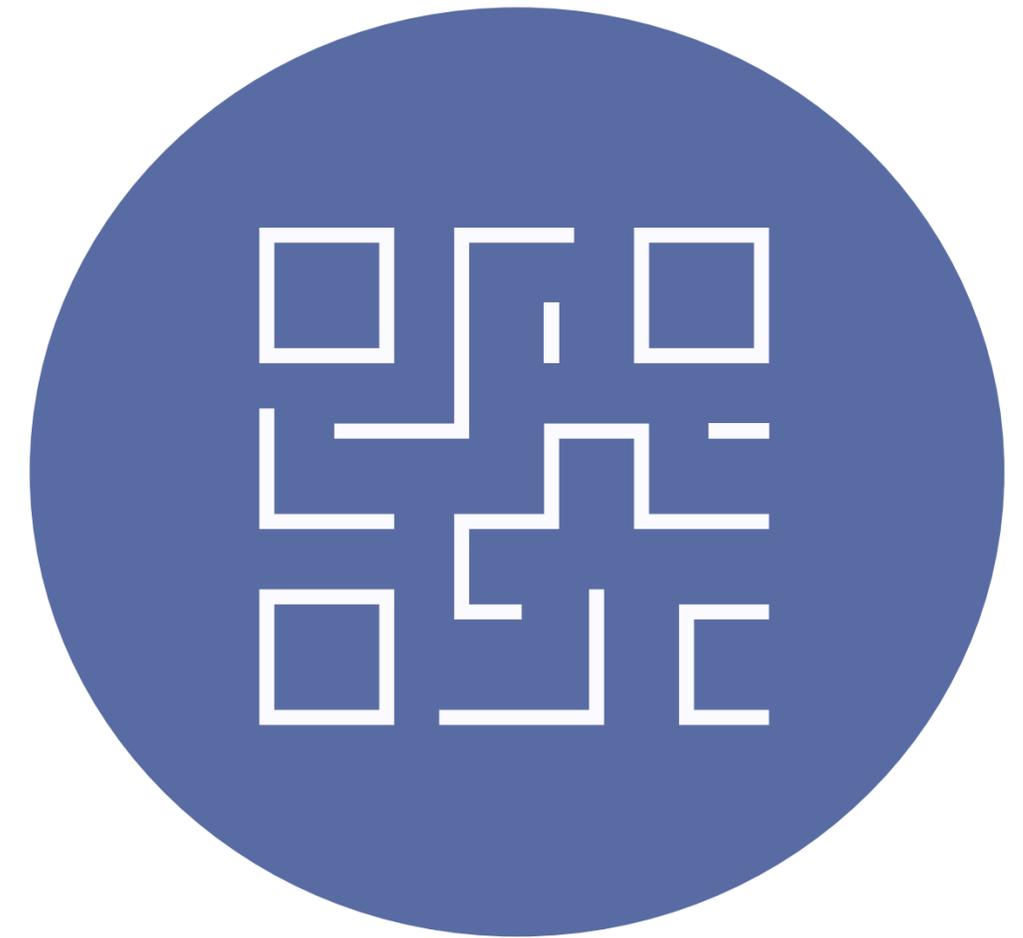
- Size
- Setting
- Culture

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 beginning
- 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

Students should 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

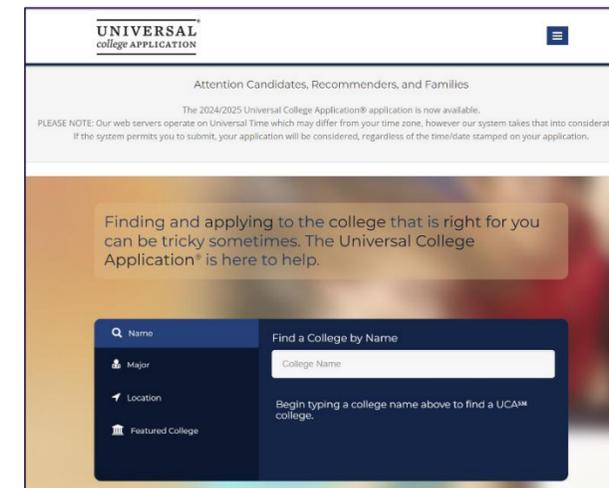
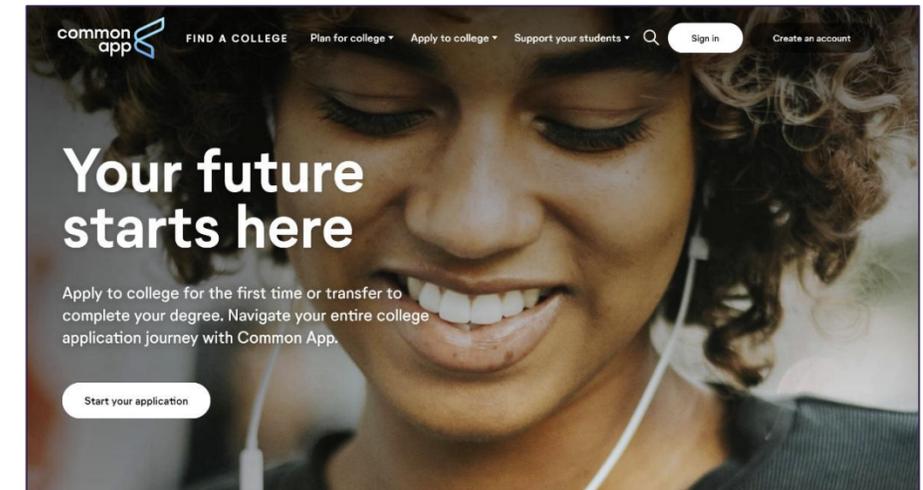
My Preferences		University of Massachusetts Lowell	Wentworth Institute of Technology	Florida Gulf Coast University	Central Washington University	Framingham State University
▼ Key Factors						
Type of School		Public	Private	Public	Public	Public
Setting	Small Town	Urban	Urban	Suburban	Small Town	Suburban
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

- 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.
- The 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 act.org

AP Exam

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

[Fairtest.org](https://fairtest.org) provides a list of nearly 2,100 test-optional schools

Activity List & Resume



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

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

Essays

Tips for Students

- 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 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.

Letters of Recommendation

- Adults who know students well can offer a helpful perspective on their strengths
 - What are your high school guidelines?
 - Who should students ask?
 - When should students ask?



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

Tips for Students

- 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

Students must deposit by the deadline (usually May 1st) to secure a 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

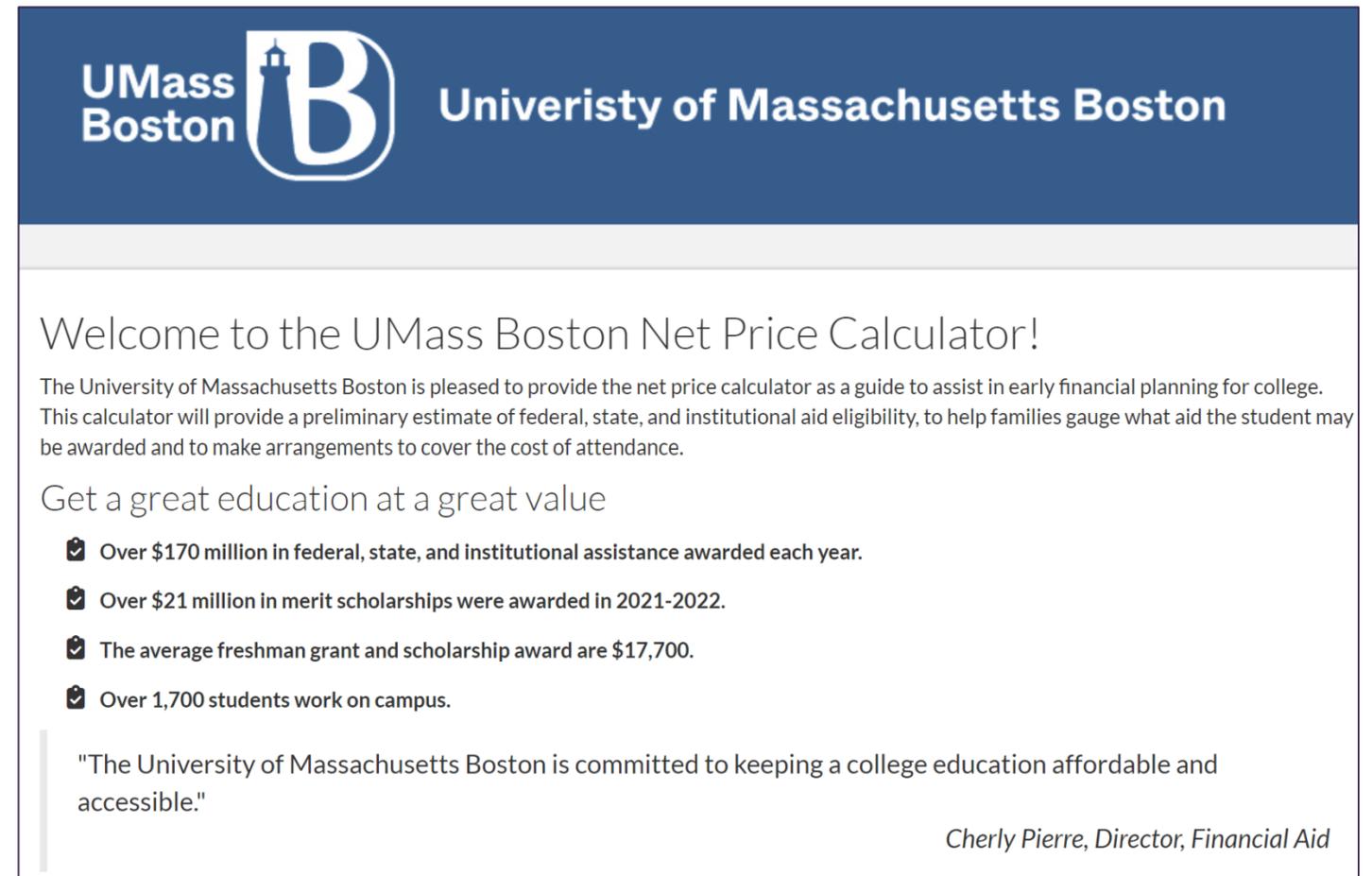
Understanding College Affordability

- What is the Cost of Attendance?
- What financial aid applications are required and when?
- Need-based aid vs. merit-based aid: potentially different deadlines
- Students should 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 top of the UMass Boston Net Price Calculator page. It features the UMass Boston logo and the text "Uiveristy of Massachusetts Boston" (note the typo). Below the header, the page says "Welcome to the UMass Boston Net Price Calculator!" and provides a brief explanation of the tool's purpose. It then lists several key statistics about financial aid at the university, each preceded by a checkmark icon. Finally, there is a quote from the Director of Financial Aid.

UMass Boston  **Uiveristy 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®):

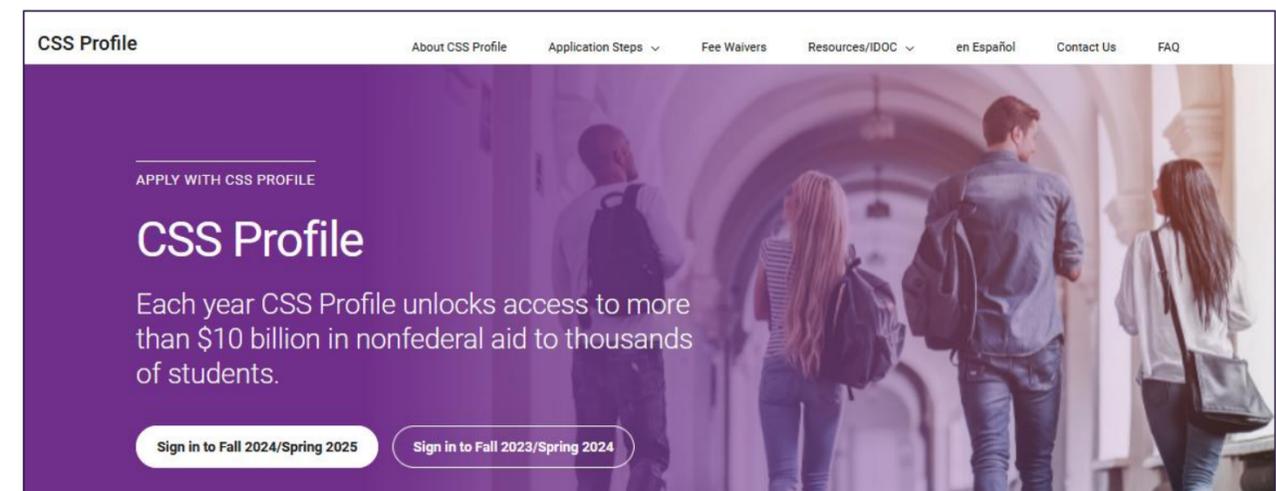
- Required by every college and university
- 2027-28 FAFSA will be available on Oct 1, 2026
- Will ask about 2025 income

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



Paying for College in MA



Free and Affordable College

Free and affordable college tuition and fees are here across public Massachusetts community colleges and four-year universities!

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.org/paying-college-massachusetts

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
- Students can 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 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

Things To Do



Register for upcoming MEFA Institute webinars and complete lessons to earn PDPs.



Share MEFA resources with families

Connect with MEFA on Social Media



Thank You!

Questions?



(800) 449-MEFA (6332)



collegeplanning@mefa.org