Welcome to the Indigenous College Planning Guidebook.

This guidebook was created by three teams of Indigenous college students who participated in the College Board summer internship program.

Now we’re sharing some of the lessons we learned when applying to college to help make your own process as simple and effective as possible.

We wish you all the best on your college journey!
Make the Most of Your Junior Year

College planning kicks into high gear when you're a junior. Here are some things you can do to stay on track.

Fall

☐ **Sign up for College Board Opportunity Scholarships:** Turn your efforts into scholarships by signing up for the scholarship program for all students that guides you through the college planning process.

☐ **Practice for the SAT:** Use Official SAT® Practice on Khan Academy® to get ready. If you've taken the PSAT/NMSQT® or SAT already, you'll get a personalized SAT practice plan based on your results.

☐ **Explore AP:** Taking Advanced Placement® courses can help you earn college credit, saving you time and money. Register for the AP® Exams given in May. See page 9 to learn more.

☐ **Create your college list on BigFuture:** Ask friends, family members, teachers, and college students for input, and then make a list of at least 6 colleges. See page 15 for more information about exploring your college dreams.

☐ **Estimate your financial need:** Financial aid can help you pay for college. Use the Net Price Calculators for the colleges on your list to estimate how much you'll actually pay at each one.

Winter

☐ **Register to take the SAT in the spring:** Register online or through your school. Ask your counselor if you're eligible for an SAT fee waiver.

☐ **Start researching scholarships, grants, and other financial aid:** Use the College Board Scholarship Search to find scholarships you may qualify for. Look into tribal, local, and state aid sources. Ask a counselor to guide you.

☐ **Stay involved with extracurricular activities:** Colleges look for consistency and leadership in your nonacademic activities.

☐ **Create a folder for college application materials:** Put forms or college information in a hard copy or digital folder. If you’re interested in drama, music, or art, start creating a portfolio.

☐ **Research college prep programs:** Based on what you’re interested in studying or where in the country you’d like to go to college, begin researching summer programs to apply to.
Spring

☐ Meet with your counselor about your college list: Get input about your college choices, and ask about college visits.

☐ Take the SAT and/or SAT Subject Tests: The SAT is offered in March, May, and June. You can test again in the fall of your senior year before applications are due.

☐ Apply to a college prep program: Applications generally open in the spring—get application deadlines from the programs.

☐ Create a challenging schedule for senior year: See page 9 for more information about challenging yourself academically in school.

Summer

☐ Take advantage of your summer break: Consider summer courses for high school or college credit and college prep programs like College Horizons, or visit college campuses.

☐ Research applications: Find out if there are different early decision dates or rolling admission options. Check for early/regular decision application deadlines.

☐ Continue the search for scholarships: Search on BigFuture™ for scholarship opportunities and apply for them.

☐ Start working on your personal statement: The essay is an important part of your college application, so give yourself plenty of time to write, edit, and rewrite. See page 23 for more tips.

“During my junior year, I took classes at my local community college and was able to learn about subjects that I wouldn’t have been able to at my school. When I entered college, I had the ability to skip my freshman year because of the credits I earned while in high school.”

—Monica, Columbia University
Get to Know Yourself

Your future begins with you—it’s a journey. Asking yourself questions can help you figure out who you are and where you want to go.

What are some things you feel you do well?

What challenges you?

What do you do for fun?

Who do you look up to?

What’s something you’ve always wanted to try?

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

What’s your favorite class?

What do you read about in your free time?

If you could do any job for a day, what would it be?

What now?

Keep asking yourself questions like these and you’ll make important discoveries about who you are. Stay open to the places and interests they lead to.

Tip: If you have lots of interests but don’t know if you can make any of them a career, explore majors and careers at collegeboard.org/majors-careers.
You’re More Than Your Grades

A list of extracurricular activities is an important part of an effective application. These activities give people who don’t know you a glimpse of your life outside the classroom. They also demonstrate your strengths, interests, and skills.

Examples of skills and attributes to include:

- **Leadership skills**: Serving in student government or as an officer for a school club.
- **Determination**: Being a member of a sports team.
- **Compassion**: Volunteering at hospitals, shelters, and community centers.
- **Commitment**: Participating in religious or cultural events regularly.
- **Time management skills**: Working at a part-time job while keeping up your grades.
- **Responsibility**: Helping with siblings or family chores.
- **Musical or creative skills**: Playing an instrument, dancing in a halau or a youth group, or singing in a choir.

**Next**: Make a list of activities you participate in or groups you joined outside of school, with the dates you began, the number of hours a week you commit to each, and any leadership positions you hold in clubs or organization. Also, write down the names of advisers, coaches, or supervisors who could give you a reference for your résumé or a letter of recommendation.

If you’re interested in continuing your activities, search for colleges with similar student organizations or clubs you can join.

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“I started getting involved my freshman year. I took part in student council, cross country, and the Boys & Girls Club. Extracurricular activities will help you build your leadership skills and refine great college/scholarship applications. I would encourage you to get involved with something you’re passionate about.”

—Lane, San Diego State University

“I was really active in school with sports and extracurriculars, which helped me make many connections leading to jobs and future recommendations. I not only realized what my passions were—I also realized what didn’t interest me as much. While extracurriculars are important, don’t overcommit while in school. Finding time to sleep, eat, and study should be prioritized too.”

—Holly, Dartmouth College
Find a Mentor

A mentor is a trustworthy adult or older student, and a mentee is a student like you looking for insight. A mentor is available to answer your questions about college life, and can also be a role model and support you in reaching your full potential.

Why seek out a mentor?
Mentors can give you perspective on how to move forward in your college journey and navigate next steps. They can help you look forward to your life beyond college and open your professional network.

How can I find a mentor?
Through your school, extracurricular activities, or community centers. If you’re looking for someone in a specific career, start by talking to your school counselor.

What can I talk to my mentor about?
You can share with your mentor your career or college aspirations, academic challenges, and interests. Mentors share their experiences and insights to inform you on your college journey. Remember that mentors offer advice but don’t decide your path.

Tip: Once you find a mentor, set up monthly or biweekly check-ins to ensure you both have enough time to meet throughout the semester.

“I would argue that it is essential for Native students who come from very rural communities to get in touch with someone who understands where they come from in an institution. This type of mentorship has afforded me the chance to be as open as I can, and not be judged. I have also been fortunate to have mentors that care about my future and provide me with options to enhance my abilities and grow as a professional in education.”

—Monty, University of Oklahoma

“In high school, I had two mentors. One was my AP English teacher, and the second was one of my dormitory aids. I would visit with them to ask them questions about their journeys and to tell them what I was thinking in regards to college. Each person presented me insight into their college and career experiences, and they provided me overwhelming support in pursuing my college goals.”

—Megan, Arizona State University
Take Challenging Courses

One of the best ways to get ready for college is to take challenging courses like Advanced Placement. They’ll help you build new skills, give you an idea of what college classes are like, and show admissions officers you set high academic goals.

The College Board AP Program offers college-level classes—you can choose from 38—where students develop and apply skills like reading critically, solving problems analytically, and writing clearly. If you take an AP Exam at the end of the year and earn a high enough score, you can get credit and/or advanced placement at most U.S. colleges and universities. Go to exploreap.org/now to learn more.

Honors classes cover the same material as regular classes but in more detail or at a faster pace. You may be able to take college courses while still in high school, either at your school or on a local college campus.

Next: If you think AP might be right for you, talk to your counselor or teachers about registering for classes. Talking with your family or friends about AP is a good way to get another perspective on the program. Learn more about the AP experience at exploreap.org/experience.

If your school doesn’t offer honors or AP-level classes, don’t worry—admissions officers will take this into consideration when reviewing your application.
Search for College Prep Programs

**College prep programs** are a great way to learn about the college experience. Many focus on admissions, increasing academic readiness, and even special interests (tribal sovereignty, medicine, etc.) while helping you get ready for college by being on campus or learning about the admissions process. Here are some programs specifically for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students.

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<tr>
<th><strong>College and Career Access</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>College Horizons</strong></td>
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<td>A five-day summer program for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian high school sophomores and juniors, with individualized programs to help students find their best fit college. <a href="http://collegehorizons.publishpath.com">collegehorizons.publishpath.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Native Pathways</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian College Fund’s Native Pathways to College program supports a college-going culture among Native American and Alaska Native students through individualized college admissions coaching. <a href="http://collegefund.org/student-resources/native-pathways-to-college">collegefund.org/student-resources/native-pathways-to-college</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kamehameha Scholars</strong></td>
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<td>This year-round program helps Native Hawaiian students earn a postsecondary degree and find a career. Students in grades 9–12 participate in workshops and activities, earning points that translate to dollars and lead to a merit scholarship to help pay for college. <a href="http://apps.ksbe.edu/kscholars">apps.ksbe.edu/kscholars</a></td>
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<th><strong>College Specific</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dartmouth Bound: Native American Community Program</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Dartmouth Indigenous Fly-In program is open to rising Indigenous high school seniors, who get an unedited view of life at Dartmouth from the perspective of Native students. <a href="http://admissions.dartmouth.edu/visit/visit-programs/dartmouth-bound-native-american-community-program">admissions.dartmouth.edu/visit/visit-programs/dartmouth-bound-native-american-community-program</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado State University Native Education Forum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A six-day summer program for rising high school juniors and seniors, who gain university classroom experience, earn one academic credit, research issues critical to Native American/Indigenous communities, and get college application assistance from professionals. Students discuss issues that affect Indigenous communities with university faculty, staff, and enrolled students. <a href="http://admissions.colostate.edu/ner">admissions.colostate.edu/ner</a></td>
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**Tip:** Start your own summer programs search with keywords “summer college prep programs” or “summer enrichment programs.”

**Tip:** Ask your mentor if they were in any college prep programs and if they have any recommendations.
In high school, I took part in College Horizons, a college admission program for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. It was an amazing experience and changed the way I think of Native American identity. It was so impactful and empowering and provided me with all of the information that I needed to apply to college. When I attended College Horizons at NYU, I visited Columbia University nearby. I was instantly interested in the school. In the end, I chose Columbia University because of its outstanding chemistry department, diverse student body, and urban campus setting. It felt like the perfect match."

—Christian, Columbia University
Take Your First SAT

Why should I take the SAT this spring?
The SAT is accepted by every college in the U.S. and is an important part of the college application process. **By testing in the spring, you keep your options open for improving your score.** Most students who test more than once see their scores go up.

How is the SAT organized?
The SAT has four tests, but the Essay is optional. The three tests everyone takes are (1) the Reading Test, (2) the Writing and Language Test, and (3) the Math Test. The timing and number of questions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Time Alotted (Minutes)</th>
<th>Number of Questions/Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing and Language</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT Essay (optional)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong> (230 with Essay)</td>
<td><strong>154</strong> (155 with Essay)</td>
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</table>

Three Steps to Get Ready
The SAT makes it easy for you to show your best work. Use this checklist to stay organized as you prepare.

1. **REGISTER**
The registration deadlines are approximately one month before the test date. Check [sat.org/register](http://sat.org/register) for test dates and registration deadlines.

   It’s a good idea to have what you need—and get comfy—before you start to register.

   - Sign in to your free College Board account. Your parent or counselor can’t register for you.
   - Provide your full, legal name and other identifying information. Make sure it’s the exact same name and information shown on your photo ID.
   - Decide if you want to answer other questions about yourself. This takes time, but it’s worth it if you want colleges and scholarship organizations to find you. Learn why you should opt in to Student Search Service®.
   - Decide whether to sign up for the SAT with Essay. See which colleges recommend or require it.
   - Upload a photo that meets the College Board requirements.
   - Check and print your admission ticket.
2. LINK
The College Board partnered with Khan Academy to give you free, personalized SAT study tools—you just have to link your Khan Academy account with your PSAT™ 8/9, PSAT™ 10, PSAT/NMSQT, or SAT scores.

Here’s how to get started:

- Log in to Khan Academy
  - Go to sat.org/kappractice and sign in or create your Khan Academy account.

- Link your accounts
  - Agree to link your Khan Academy and College Board accounts.

- Send your scores
  - Log in using your College Board username and password, and hit Send to get personalized study questions.

3. PRACTICE
Just like playing a sport or an instrument, you have to practice if you want to do your best on the SAT. The more you practice, the more confident you’ll feel on test day.

Here’s how to make sure you get enough practice:

- Make the most of your study time
  Because you linked your Khan Academy and College Board accounts, you can use Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy to focus on the areas you need to work on most.

- Set a goal
  You should aim to study for at least 12 hours before test day.

  My goal is to study for _____ hours before I take the SAT on _________________.

- Choose a practice schedule
  Go to sat.org/kappractice, and click Choose Your Practice Schedule to make a plan for achieving your goal.

Every month from January through October 2019, students who practice for the SAT for 12 hours using Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy and improve their score by 100+ points—either from their PSAT/NMSQT to SAT or SAT to SAT—will earn a chance at a $2,000 scholarship.

opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/improve
Explore Your College Dreams

Native students take diverse paths to college, major, and career. It’s important to acknowledge the benefits of attending college and to think about which subjects interest you.

To start your college list, consider what your priorities for college are. Keep these questions in mind when thinking about colleges you want to apply to.

- **Kinds of colleges**: Do I want to go to a 2-year or 4-year college? Am I limiting my choices by focusing on whether a college is public or private?
- **Location**: How close to home do I want to be? Do I want to stick to a setting I’m used to or try something new? Am I staying near home because I think it will be less expensive? Do I want to be near Native communities?
- **Campus setting**: Do I see myself at a college with lots of students or in a smaller community? Do I want to be at a college where students stay on campus most of the time? Do I want to live in a dorm? Do I want to be at a college where sports are a big deal? Or one that’s known for its activism or hardworking students?
- **Cost**: Do I have the facts about what college will cost? Will I qualify for financial aid? Am I eligible for scholarships?
- **Majors**: What are my favorite subjects? Do I want to take classes in many different subjects or focus mainly on one? Are there Indigenous studies majors or Native faculty members?
- **Learning environment**: Do I learn best when I’m academically comfortable or academically challenged? Do I prefer to be part of small-group discussions or to listen to lectures? How much interaction do I want with my professors? What balance am I looking for between studying and social life? Do I want to choose most of my classes myself, or do I prefer more structure?

Next: Share these lists with a counselor, teacher, mentor, parent, or peer for feedback and additional advice about applying to college. What are their recommendations?

Create a College List

Next, dedicate some time to researching colleges that align with your interests. Go to [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search) to start your college search. Enter the answers to the questions above to find colleges that match what you’re looking for, compare colleges, and save the colleges you’re interested in to your list.

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**Tip:** Look up the application requirements for each college on your list and write them down for future reference. The requirements could include personal statements, test scores, interviews, and letters of recommendation.

**Tip:** Research services for Native students or specific to your major or area of study at the colleges on your list. This will be important when you begin narrowing your options based on resources colleges may or may not offer Native students.

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Students in the class of 2020 who build a college list with six or more colleges on our college planning site, BigFuture, can earn a chance at a $500 scholarship. Starting in July 2019, students who update their college list on BigFuture to have a mix of safety, match, and reach schools will earn a chance at a $500 scholarship. [opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/build](http://opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/build)
Go to a College Fair

A college fair is a gathering of college representatives looking for the right students for their institutions. They’re there to spread the word about their college—and they want to talk to you.

College fairs may be held at your school, a conference center, or a local community center, and the colleges may be local or from around the country. The representatives usually sit at booths or tables and hand out brochures and cards. They can tell you about everything from academics to campus life at their college, and they can also answer more general questions about college. Ask your counselor or a teacher how to find college fairs in your area. If you can, go to more than one to get a good sampling of what’s out there.

Before You Go

- **Find out which colleges will be at the fair.** Make a list of 3–5 you want to learn more about.
- **Look at college websites,** and then write down any questions you still have about the colleges.
- **Bring a bag** to hold all the brochures, pens, and flyers you’ll receive.
- **Be ready** to give representatives your email address!

“Don’t let fear of rejection stop you from applying to your dream college. Most colleges evaluate applications holistically; they look beyond GPAs and test scores to find unique, well-rounded individuals. If your application showcases those qualities, you have a chance.”

—Ashley, Harvard College
While You’re There

- **Introduce yourself.** Smile. Extend your hand. Give a firm handshake, and tell the recruiter who you are.
- **Visit booths, and ask representatives questions about their college.** For example, you can ask: “What kind of students are you looking for?” or “What make the campus special?”
- **Take a minute to jot down any information** you think is important on your phone or a notepad.
- **Be sure to check out other booths** when you’re done with the colleges on your list.
- **Ask about information sessions or recruitment programs** at each college.

When You Get Home

- **Ask yourself** which colleges stood out and why.
- **Organize the materials** you collected, and review them for things you liked and want to learn more about.
- **Share pamphlets** from colleges you’re not interested in with your younger siblings or community members.
- **Do more research** on the colleges you’re thinking about. Explore their website, contact an admissions officer, and ask about a campus visit.

Strengthen Your College List

The College Board will award 100 Strengthen scholarships every month from July through October 2019.

The scholarship opens in July 2019.

[opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/strengthen](opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/strengthen)
Search for Native Student Resources

You may need support as you transition from high school to college. Fortunately, many colleges have services and programs specifically for Native students.

Some examples include:

- **Centers for Native students**: Colleges like Northern Arizona University, the University of Idaho, and Purdue University are home to centers that work to maintain a supportive network for Indigenous students. Some colleges, including Columbia University, Dartmouth College, and Stanford University, also host powwows for Native students and those who want to learn about Native American culture.

- **Native-centered housing**: There are residential programs that allow Native students to live together in a close-knit network that supports Native culture and history. Some colleges that offer this option: the University of California, Berkeley; Washington State University; and Colorado College.

- **Native fraternity or sorority**: There are Greek organizations focused on Native culture. Alpha Pi Omega Sorority is the oldest historically Native American sorority and has 20 chapters across the country. Phi Sigma Nu is a Native American fraternity that has 13 chapters, with almost 400 brothers representing more than 55 tribal nations.

- **Native majors or courses**: Some institutions offer coursework, minors, or majors focused on Native, Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, and Native American, and Indigenous studies. Examples include American Indian studies at Arizona State University and Indigenous studies at Haskell Indian Nations University.

- **Native student organizations**: These often provide student-led community support, advocacy, and cultural programming to campuses to promote Native heritage. Membership in all organizations and clubs is usually open to all interested students.

- **Recruitment programs**: Many institutions, including the University of Arizona and the University of Miami, offer programs such as Native SOAR and Upward Bound specifically to recruit Native students.

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**Questions to ask colleges about Native-specific services:**

- Can you connect me with Native students who can share their experiences?
- What programs are available to help Native students transition to campus life and thrive there?
- Are there housing options for Native students to live together?
- Are there any Indigenous studies classes I can take or Native studies majors I can pursue?

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“I created my college list based on schools that had a chapter of the Alpha Pi Omega sorority, the first Native American sorority in the U.S. I realized that it was a group I really wanted to be a part of and that if that school had a chapter, then there were definitely strong leadership opportunities for Native students like me.”

—Rachel, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and University of Miami
Own Your Senior Year

**Fall**

- **Narrow your list of colleges** to your top 6 choices.
- **Participate in college visit programs.** Many colleges host open houses and group tours. Some colleges have fly-in programs specifically for Native students. Make a list of what you like best about each college you visit so you can compare them when you get home.
- **Request documents** from your tribe, including your Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) or Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB), letter of descent, or enrollment verification. You may need them for college and scholarship applications.
- **Take the SAT one more time.** Many seniors retake the SAT in the fall—additional coursework and practice since your last test could boost your score.
- **Decide on early decision (ED)/early action (EA)/rolling admission applications.** Colleges may require test scores and applications November 1–15.
- **Fill out college applications.** Breaking the work into chunks will make it easier. Complete at least one application by Thanksgiving break. See page 22 for a checklist to track your application process.
- **Ask a counselor, teacher, or community member for recommendations, if needed.** Give them an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities, and at least one month to write your letter. Send thank-you notes to your recommendation writers.
- **Complete your personal statement** and ask for feedback from advisers, family members, and peers. If you’re applying for early decision, you should finish your final draft by mid-November.
- **Ask counselors** to send your official high school transcripts to colleges. Give them the proper forms at least 3 weeks before the application deadlines.
- **Gather documents for financial aid.** Ask your parents/guardians for a copy of their tax returns to complete the FAFSA, which opens on October 1, and the CSS Profile™ (if needed).

**Winter**

- **Make and keep copies** of your applications and essays.
- **Follow up with your counselor or teacher** to see if any colleges you’ve applied to require a second-semester transcript, and send it as soon as it’s available.
- **Apply for scholarships.** Complete all required materials, and send the applications by the deadline.
- **Register for the AP Exams** given in May.

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**Tip:** Look for financial aid sources throughout your junior and senior years of high school. The summer before your senior year is a perfect time to find scholarships to apply for. Scan local newspapers to see which civic, cultural, and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating high school seniors.
Spring

☐ If you can, visit your final college options to help you make your decision. You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. If you have questions about offers, talk to your counselor or call the college.

☐ Review any financial aid awards, and be sure to share the different aid packages with your family before deciding which college to attend.

☐ Notify your counselor of your final choice, and let every college that offered you admission know by May 1 if you will or won’t be going there. Colleges can’t require your deposit or commitment to attend before May 1. Talk to your counselor or adviser if you have questions.

☐ Take any AP Exams to show what you’ve learned in your AP courses. A successful score could even earn you college credit, advanced placement, or both.

☐ Ask about first-year fellowship programs. Once you’re accepted, you should be able to search and apply to specific enrichment and readiness programs for additional support, mentorship, or scholarships beyond your first year.

☐ Relax! The college admissions process isn’t easy. Congratulate yourself, and thank those who helped you throughout your journey.

Summer

☐ Start making lists of things you need when you go to college such as clothes and dorm essentials.

☐ Get experience, and earn some spending money by finding a summer internship or job.

☐ Stay up to date on events at your college/university through their website or social media platforms.

☐ Take summer enrichment courses or courses at local colleges. Check that your college will accept the courses offered if you’re seeking credit or placement into a specific course or track.

“After attending Dartmouth’s Native Fly-In program during my senior year, I knew the college was the one for me. The Native students and faculty were so welcoming, and I liked that Dartmouth had spaces specifically for community members to come together to work and relax. Visiting the school made the application process much easier because I got to talk to admission officers about what they’re looking for in a prospective student.”

—Kourtney, Dartmouth College
Track Your College Application Process

You’ve taken a lot of the steps in this guide on your road to college. By senior year, it’s time to apply. Having a list of tasks to complete for each college application will make the process go smoothly and help you meet deadlines. You can make a copy of this page for each application.

Application
- Create a digital or hard copy folder for your application materials.
- Create a new application on the college’s portal or website.
- Check for specific program requirements.
- If necessary, compile material for a portfolio (drama, music, art).
- Record regular/early decision/early action deadlines.
- See if you’re eligible for an application fee waiver; if not, pay the fee.
- Sign the application, and send it.
- Receive a letter from the admissions office.
- Meet the deadline to accept admission and send the deposit.

Interviews
- Schedule an official college or alumni interview (if you’re interested or it’s required).
- Prepare 2 questions for the college interviewer, and practice by yourself and/or with a counselor/mentor.
- Arrive for interview on time.
- Send a thank-you note/email to interviewer.

Counselors/Mentors/Teachers
- Request to have high school transcripts sent to the institution.
- Meet with teachers/mentors to discuss plans, and request letters of recommendation (one month prior to due date).
- Share your résumé and/or writing samples with your recommendation writers.
- Send thank-you notes/emails to your recommendation writers.

Personal Statement
- Draft an initial personal statement or supplemental essay.
- Have 2 people read your essay.
- Revise and proofread your essay.
- Upload essay to application.

Testing
- Find out what tests are required by the colleges you’re applying to (admission, SAT, SAT Subject Tests™, etc.).
- Send all official test scores to the college.

Financial Aid
- Gather tax documents.
- Write down financial aid deadlines.
- Complete and submit the FAFSA and CSS Profile (if needed) with your parent/guardian.
- Consider the expected family contribution (EFC).
- Write down tribal scholarship deadlines.
- Make copies of CIB/tribal enrollment card.
- Receive financial aid award letter.
- Submit state aid form (if needed).
- Accept financial aid offer, or submit a request to the institution for review.
- Plan for enrollment deposit fee.

Starting in October 2019, students who apply to two or more colleges will earn a chance at a $1,000 scholarship.

opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/apply
Write Your Personal Statement

Your essay reveals an important part of you that your grades and test scores can’t—your personality. It gives admissions officers a sense of who you are while showcasing your writing skills. The first suggestion from admissions officers for writing your essay is “Be yourself.” The second is “Start early.” Check out these other tips before you begin:

Choose a Topic That Highlights You
- Don’t focus on the great aspects of a college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor, or the number of extracurricular activities you took part in during high school.
- Do share your personal story and thoughts. Take a creative approach, and highlight areas that aren’t covered in other parts of the application.

Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal
- Don’t try to cover too many topics. This makes the essay sound like a résumé and doesn’t provide any personal details about you.
- Do focus on one aspect of yourself so readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that readers should be able to follow your main idea from beginning to end.

Show—Don’t Tell
- Don’t simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as, “I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests.”
- Do include specific details, examples, reasons, and thoughts to develop your ideas. Using the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Who did you talk to? What did you take away from the experience?

Ask a Teacher or Parent to Proofread
- Don’t turn your essay in without proofreading it, and don’t rely on your computer’s spell check to catch mistakes.
- Do ask a teacher or parent to proofread your essay, and ask them if the writing sounds like you. Reading your essay aloud also helps.

Tip: Colleges are looking for students who will bring their viewpoint to classroom discussions and to the campus. Use your writing to describe what you’ll contribute to the campus community. You might also consider how your Native identity informs your perspective and career path. Are you planning to help your community in any way through your studies? Write about it and why it’s important to you.

Tip: Make an appointment with your mentor to ask if your personal statement sounds like you—if it doesn’t communicate who you are, ask how you can enhance your goals or story.

“Most Native people are taught not to brag or be boastful. However, this is the time to do just that. Let the reader know ways that you have succeeded and what about you as a person has allowed you to succeed. Don’t simply make claims about yourself without using supporting examples and stories.”

—Bryan, College Board Higher Education Services
Apply for Financial Aid

For many students, college may seem too expensive. By investigating college costs and how to pay for them, you’ll discover that higher education is within your reach.

College Costs Vary

The biggest part of college costs is usually tuition, which is the price you pay for classes. Additionally, you’ll probably have to pay fees to enroll in and attend a college. Other costs include room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. You should also think about the cost of going home for family and community gatherings if you attend college away from home. Just like tuition, these costs vary from college to college, but there are ways to save money on them.

Financial Aid Reduces the Cost of College

Financial aid is money given or lent to you to help you pay for college. It may be awarded based on your financial need or based partly on factors such as academic or athletic ability. Most full-time college students receive some form of financial aid. The financial aid application process usually has its own forms, deadlines, and requirements. You don’t have to be admitted to a college before you apply for financial aid.

collegeboard.org/applyforfinaid

How to Apply for Financial Aid

☐ Submit the FAFSA: Completing the FAFSA allows you to be considered for the greatest amount of financial aid from federal, state, and college sources—and it’s free to fill out at fafsa.ed.gov.

☐ Submit PROFILE, if any of your colleges require it: PROFILE is used by colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their aid dollars. To get the most aid, you need to complete the PROFILE before the priority deadlines. You’ll need information similar to what you gathered for the FAFSA. Find out if the colleges you’re applying to require it at cssprofile.collegeboard.org.

☐ Search and apply for tribal scholarships: Your tribe may award scholarships based on need or merit. You may have to submit a financial need analysis form or a copy of your financial aid package. Contact your tribal office or department for more information.

Remember, it’s your responsibility to meet deadlines. You must submit your applications on time to qualify for financial aid. Financial aid resources are limited and, in many cases, are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.
Review Each Aid Offer Carefully

The college that offers the most aid may not have the best overall offer. Use the Compare Your Aid Awards tool at bigfuture.org to compare overall costs or the form of the award, which may be mostly loan-based for some colleges. Remember that the college with the best financial aid offer may not be the right one for you—you should choose a college that’s a good fit based on your goals.

“Before I started college, my mother and I made sure to sit and talk to a financial aid officer to learn more about my financial aid package and what to do when money was tight. I learned about department scholarships, how to accept loans, and work-study. It was a two-hour visit but worth it!”

—Megan, Arizona State University

“I didn’t know how I was going to pay for college, but I knew I would figure it out. Through College Horizons, I learned about the QuestBridge National College Match. I applied to QuestBridge in my senior year; in December, I was matched to Columbia University with a full-ride scholarship. Now that I’m able to reflect on my own experience, QuestBridge taught me to embrace my story with its adversity and struggles, and to see that college is possible.”

—Kendall, Columbia University

Tip: Need financial aid? Ask whether funds will be available if you’re accepted. Also, it’s important to know what’s required to continue receiving financial aid from year to year and how your aid may change in future years. Work with a counselor to resolve any admission or financial aid problems.

Starting in October 2019, students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will earn a chance at a $1,000 scholarship.

opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/complete
Apply for Scholarships

Scholarship organizations and programs are working to provide more financial opportunities to support Indigenous students in higher education. Here are a few tips to guide you through the scholarship application process.

Start Your Research Early

Researching scholarships, requesting information, and completing applications all take time. Go to collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships to get started. You can filter the search specifically for scholarships for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. You can also look for scholarships with eligibility requirements based on test scores, state residence, and first-generation and/or low-income status.

Read Eligibility Requirements Carefully

If you have a question about whether you qualify for a certain scholarship, contact the scholarship sponsor. Native American–specific scholarships typically require documentation and proof of Native American descent, lineage, and/or enrollment. Read the eligibility requirements carefully.

Get Organized

Mark all due dates on your calendar, and work your way backward to figure out how much time you have to get each piece of the application finished. Make a separate file for each scholarship, and sort the files by application deadlines. Be sure to gather all items you need to submit your application, including:

- High school transcript
- Standardized test score reports
- Student Aid Report, CSS Profile, and your parents’ tax returns
- Personal statement and/or supplemental essays
- One or more letters of recommendation
- Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) and/or birth certificate

Check Your Application

Before you send the application in:

- Contact scholarship offices if you have questions.
- If you can, fill out the application digitally.
- Check that you haven’t used any incorrect names or references.
- Run spell check and grammar check on the application. Have someone you trust read your essays to catch mistakes and give you feedback.
- Remember to sign and date your application.
- Copy all materials.
- Track the package if you submit the application by mail.

Tip: Talk to your counselor about military academies or ROTC scholarships. Four-year ROTC scholarship applications open the summer before your senior year.

Starting in February 2020, students who complete all six actions (Build, Practice, Improve, Strengthen, Complete, and Apply) will earn a chance at a $40,000 scholarship.

opportunity.collegeboard.org/about/build
Choose Your College

Congratulations—you’ve completed the admissions process and you’re getting acceptance offers. Now it’s time to decide where you want to go.

Priorities

First, create a list of your priorities. They can be as personal or as academic as you need them to be.

Academic

Financial

Community

Emotional

Future Opportunities

Balancing Support and Opportunity

Having the support you need to graduate is important, but so is knowing you’ll learn as much as you want about your major or your future career.

Try to talk to people in fields that interest you about how and why they chose their colleges.

“I applied to schools based on their location and chemical engineering/chemistry department. I was looking for a change after high school, which is why I did not choose schools in southern California.”

—Christian, Columbia University

Tip: Some colleges invite accepted students to visit to learn more about campus resources (example: the Dartmouth Acceptance Program). Once you’re accepted, ask the college admissions office about a campus visit.

Reminder: You have time to make your decision. Many colleges don’t expect your final decision until May 1.

Tip: If you’re having a hard time deciding, take time to chat with your mentor. Ask what they would do in your position but remember: They don’t decide your college future—you do.
Junior Year

Junior year marks a turning point when your student begins developing a college game plan.

**Summer**
- Get the facts about college costs. The published price of attending college isn’t usually what students actually pay. They often pay less, thanks to financial aid.
- Explore financial aid options. These include grants and scholarships, loans, and work-study programs. Visit the BigFuture Scholarship Search for more information.

**Fall**
- Make sure your student meets with the school counselor. If possible, sit in on this meeting to hear the counselor’s perspective on the college application process.
- Help your student stay organized. Work with them to make weekly or monthly to-do lists of tasks required to be ready to apply to colleges.
- Help your student get ready for the PSAT/NMSQT in October. This preliminary test helps students practice for the SAT, assesses their academic skills, and offers scholarship opportunities.
- Encourage your student to set goals for the school year. Working toward specific goals helps them stay motivated and focused.

**Winter**
- Review PSAT/NMSQT results together, then have your student share their scores with Khan Academy to get their personalized SAT practice plan.
- Discuss taking honors or Advanced Placement courses next year to prepare your student for college work and create a strong academic record.

**Spring**
- Search together for colleges that meet your student’s needs to help create their college list.
- Help your student make summer plans, including searching for scholarships, attending college prep programs and fairs, visiting colleges, or finding summer jobs or internships.
- Encourage your student to take the SAT and/or SAT Subject Tests. The SAT is offered in March, May, and June. You student can test again in the fall of their senior year before applications are due.
Senior Year

Senior year is a whirlwind of activities, from schoolwork and extracurricular activities to the college application process. Use these suggestions to help your student successfully navigate this important time.

Summer

- **Encourage your student to get started on applications** by filling in as much required information on them as possible.
- **Discuss early application** if your student is set on going to a certain college, because early applications are usually due in November.
- **Gather financial documents**, including your most recent tax returns, to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on October 1.
- **Find a college’s actual cost**. Once your student has a list of potential colleges, use the College Board Net Price Calculator together to find out the potential for financial aid and the true out-of-pocket cost—or net price—of each college.

Fall

- **Encourage your student to meet with the school counselor** to complete and submit college applications.
- **Create a calendar with your student** that includes application deadlines. If your student has saved their college list on BigFuture, they’ll be able to view upcoming dates and deadlines.
- **Help your student prepare for college admission tests**, such as the SAT, through online resources on BigFuture and at satpractice.org.
- **Help your student find and apply for scholarships**. Information about scholarship opportunities is available from the school counselor.
- **Fill out the FAFSA and CSS Profile** to apply for financial aid beginning October 1.

Winter

- **Encourage your student to take SAT Subject Tests and AP Exams** to showcase their interests and achievements. Qualifying AP Exam scores can get your student valuable credit or placement in college.
- **Work together to apply for financial aid**. Have your student contact the financial aid offices at the colleges on their list to find out what forms are needed to apply for aid.
- **Learn about college loan options together**. Borrowing money for college can be a smart choice—especially if your student gets a low-interest federal loan.

Spring

- **Help your student process college responses and financial aid offers**, and offer support as they make their final decision.
- **Help your student complete the paperwork** to accept a college’s admission offer.
Glossary

College Application Resources

**Admission tests:** Tests designed to measure students’ skills and help colleges evaluate how ready students are for college-level work. The ACT and the SAT are two standardized admission tests used in the United States.

**BigFuture:** College Board online tool that gives students free, comprehensive college planning resources.

**Common Application:** Standard application form accepted by all members of the Common Application association. You can fill out this application once and submit it to any one—or several—of the nearly 700 colleges that accept it.

**Coalition application:** Standard application form accepted by members of the Coalition for College. You can use it to apply to any of the more than 130 Coalition member colleges and universities.

**Deferred admission:** When there isn’t enough room for an admitted student in the class year they applied for, a college can defer the student’s admission to the next year’s class.

**Early action (EA):** Option some colleges offer with an October or November deadline and decisions released by mid-December. Unlike early decision, early action isn’t binding, so students can apply to other colleges and compare financial aid packages. Note: Some colleges use restrictive early action, which means that although they’re not binding, you can’t apply early action to other colleges.

**Early decision (ED):** Option some colleges offer with an October or November deadline and decisions released by mid-December. Early decisions are binding, which means students must commit to attending if accepted.

**Fly-in programs:** More than 65 colleges offer free summer and fall visits for underrepresented and diverse students. If you’re unsure if a college offers a fly-in program, contact them.

**Need-blind admission:** Policy of making admissions decisions without considering the financial circumstances of applicants. Colleges that use this policy may not offer enough financial aid to meet a student’s full need.

**Personal statement:** Essay a college requires students to write and submit as part of their application. Some colleges give applicants specific questions to answer, while others simply ask applicants to write about themselves.

**Priority date or deadline:** Date your application—whether it’s for college admission, student housing, or financial aid—must be received by to be given the strongest consideration.

**Regular admission/decision:** Traditional college application option. These deadlines vary, but most regular admission applications are due by early to mid-January. The sooner applications are filled out, the better.

**Rolling admission:** A system where colleges assess applications as they receive them. Candidates are often notified of the college’s decision within a few weeks of submission.

**Universal application:** Standard application form accepted by all Universal College Application members. Once you fill it out, you can submit it to as many of the more than 3,044 colleges that accept it as you want to.

**Waitlist:** List of applicants who may be admitted to the college if space becomes available. When admission offers are declined, a college can fill the new spots with waitlisted students. A student will usually hear if they’re accepted from the waitlist by summer.

Financial Aid

**Award letters:** Documents that state the college’s financial aid offer. The information includes the types and amounts of financial aid, what’s required of students to maintain the award, and a deadline for accepting the award.

**CSS Profile:** Financial aid application offered by the College Board and used by more than 300 colleges, universities, and private scholarship programs to award financial aid.

**Demonstrated need:** Difference between your expected family contribution (EFC) and the total cost of attending a college.

**Expected family contribution (EFC):** A measure of your family’s financial strength. States and colleges use this number to help determine your financial aid award. The EFC is calculated using information you supply about your family’s financial circumstances.

**Financial aid:** Money given or loaned to you to help pay for college. Financial aid can come from federal and state governments, colleges, and private organizations.

**Federal Pell Grants:** A federal grant for undergraduate students with financial need. Unlike loans, they don’t have to be repaid.

**Financial need analysis (FNA):** A form filled out by the college or university’s financial aid office that includes exact amounts for tuition, room/board, university fees, and books. This document must be signed by the financial aid officer and returned by a specific date so a student can be considered for a scholarship or award.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The free application you submit to apply for federal financial aid. It’s required for all students seeking federal student grants, work-study programs, and loans. Most colleges require it as well. The FAFSA may also qualify you for state-sponsored financial aid.

**Grants:** A type of “gift aid”—financial aid that doesn’t have to be paid back. Grants are usually awarded based on need.

**Loan:** Money you borrow from the government, a bank, or another source. Loans need to be paid back, usually over an agreed period of time. You’ll most likely also have to pay interest on a loan (a fee for borrowing the money).

**Merit aid:** Financial aid given to students based on their personal achievements. Most scholarships are considered merit aid, because they’re generally awarded for success in school, the arts, athletics, or another area.

**Need-based aid:** Financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study opportunities) given to students when their families can’t pay the full cost of college. This is the most common type of financial aid.

**Net price:** The true amount a student will pay for a college.

**Scholarships:** Funds to help pay for college that are awarded for academic or other achievement.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** Report sent to your family after you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It reports your expected family contribution (EFC).

**Tribal scholarships:** Scholarships and financial assistance provided by a tribal education office to support eligible tribal members pursuing a postsecondary degree. Please ask your tribal office for more information.
Tuition: Amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition doesn't include the cost of books, fees, or room and board.

Work-study: A program that allows students to use a part-time campus job as part of their financial aid package. To qualify for the government-funded Federal Work-Study Program, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Some colleges have their own work-study programs.

Tests and Academic Programs

ACT: A standardized college admission test. It features four main sections: English, math, reading, science, and an optional essay section.

AP: The College Board Advanced Placement Program, which offers college-level curricula and examinations to high school students. Colleges and universities may give advanced placement, credit, or both to students who receive high scores on the exams.

Khan Academy: An online instruction program that offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard to empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside of the classroom.

PSAT/NMSQT: An assessment that includes a Math Test, Writing and Language Test, and Reading Test, but no essay. It’s also the official route of entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program. The PSAT-related tests include the PSAT 8/9, the PSAT 10, and the PSAT/NMSQT.

Placement tests: Tests that measure the academic skills needed for college-level work. They cover reading, writing, math, and other subjects. Placement test results determine which courses you’re prepared for or if remedial classes would be beneficial.

SAT: The College Board standardized college admission test. The SAT has two sections: 1) Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and 2) Math. The SAT comprises four tests: Reading, Writing and Language, Math, and the optional SAT Essay.

Types of Higher Education Institutions

College: An institution of higher education that grants degrees and certificates. The term also names the colleges within a university, such as the College of Education or the College of Engineering.

Community college: Two-year college offering associate degree programs that prepare you to transfer to a four-year college or for a certain career.

Four-year college: College offering degree programs that lead to a bachelor’s degree.

Graduate: A student who has earned a bachelor’s degree and is pursuing additional education in a specific field.

Liberal arts college: College offering a broad base of courses in the liberal arts, including literature, history, languages, mathematics, and life sciences.

Online/distance learning: Online programs that let you earn an associate or bachelor’s degree—or just enjoy a course.

Private university: An institution that relies mainly on tuition, fees, and private sources of funding. Private donations can sometimes mean generous financial aid packages for students.

Public university: An institution funded by local and state governments, usually with lower tuition costs than private colleges.

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs): Institutions that foster Native American culture, languages, and traditions. They serve a variety of people, from young adults to senior citizens, both Native and non-Native.

Two-year college: College offering programs that last up to two years and lead to a certificate or an associate degree.

Undergraduate: A college student working toward an associate degree or a bachelor’s degree.

University: A postsecondary institution composed of undergraduate, graduate, and professional colleges, all offering degrees.

Miscellaneous

Audit: An arrangement that lets you attend the class as a "visitor" with the instructor’s approval. You’re enrolled in the course, but you won’t receive credit.

Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB)/Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB): An official U.S. government document that certifies an individual has a specific degree of Native American blood of a federally recognized Indian tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community. They’re issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

College credit: Credit granted after passing a college-level course. You need a certain number of credits to graduate with a degree.

Concentration: A specific area of emphasis within your chosen major. Like minors, colleges don’t usually require you to declare a concentration; instead, they’re used as an optional tool to help you customize your college experience.

Full-time status: Applies to a student enrolled in a full-load class schedule.

Gap year: A yearlong break between high school and college or between college years. This time can be used for traveling, clarifying goals beyond college, building a résumé, volunteering, participating in an internship, getting a head start on academics, serving the community, or developing areas of interest.

Half-time status: Applies to a student taking fewer classes than a full-time student.

Major: Area of study a student focuses on during the last two years of studying for their degree.

Minor: Area of study that typically supplements a major.

Networking: Exchanging information or services with individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically, building productive relationships for employment or business.

Pass/fail courses: Courses not graded with letter grades or grade points, only "pass" or "fail." Pass/fail course evaluations don’t count toward the student’s GPA.

Quarter system: Divides the academic year into three quarters: fall, winter, and spring. The fourth quarter, the summer session, gives students the chance to take more classes and possibly graduate early. A typical quarter lasts 10 weeks, and students usually take 3 classes per quarter.

Resident adviser/assistant (RA): An upperclassman or graduate student who lives in the dorm with younger students to provide support and advice.

Retention rate: Percentage of a college’s full-time first-year students who continue to matriculate the following year.

Semester system: Divides the academic year into 2 15-week sessions: the fall and spring semesters, with a winter break in between. About 90% of colleges in the United States run on the semester system—it’s the most common academic schedule.
Resources

Go to bigfuture.org and the sites below for resources to help you prepare for, find, apply to, enroll in, and pay for the right college for you.

Advanced Placement Program
exploreap.org/now

American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC)
aigcs.org

Cobell Scholarship
cobellscholar.org

College Board Opportunity Scholarships
opportunity.collegeboard.org

College Search
bigfuture.org/college-search

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
fafsa.ed.gov

Majors and Career Search
collegeboard.org/major-careers

Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy
satpractice.org

Scholarship Search
collegeboard.org/applyforscholarships

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