

# The College Application

## Preparation

During junior year, students complete the various college search features available on **Naviance** to assist them in selecting their list of colleges:

- **College Search** allows students to indicate college preferences and research schools that match these preferences.

- **College Match** and **College Search** allow for specific college queries based on name or location, and comparisons of prospective colleges.

- **My Colleges** Create the list of colleges which you are considering, and move them to the application list later. \*Required for teachers and counselors submitting online letters of recommendation.

- **College Visits** Sign up for college representative visits at Mercy. Attend local college fairs, and college informational sessions throughout the Bay Area.

- **Visit college websites** to review application requirements, majors and departments, campus facilities and housing, and request informational materials.

- **Arrange college visits.** Make appointments with admissions offices to tour the campus, attend classes, or stay overnight in a dorm.

## Types of Applications

- **Common Application** – single application accepted by 300+ colleges. A brief supplemental application or essay may also be required. [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

- **Online Application** – accessed through the college website. Preferred by most colleges, some will waive fees if you file an online application.

- **Paper Application** – No longer accepted at UC's. If you mail a paper application, make a photocopy and get a "Certificate of Mailing" from the Post Office.

### Application Advice

- **Be organized!** Keep all your college information in an expandable file folder with labeled sections (test scores, financial aid, etc.) and keep each application in its own section.

- Download a paper application to use as a worksheet.

- Make a college application checklist to keep track of the dates you submitted your applications, requested transcripts or letters of recommendation, sent test scores, mid-year reports, etc. *Be sure to follow up to make sure the colleges have received all the required materials.*

- Keep copies of your final application, even if you applied online.

## College Application Components

**Academic Record/Transcript** A transcript is a record of courses, grades, credits and test scores. Official transcripts, which include an authorized school signature and seal, are sent directly by Mercy to prospective colleges. Colleges consider the difficulty of classes offered and taken by the student. Grade Point Average (GPA) may be calculated differently by various colleges.

**Essay** Most private and some public colleges require students to provide an original essay or personal statement, or answer essay prompts of varying lengths.

**Recommendations** Many private colleges require teachers and/or counselors to provide letters of recommendation for the student. If requesting letters of recommendation from Mercy teachers and counselors, the Senior and Parent Questionnaires must be completed and submitted by the start of school in August. You must also list your colleges on Naviance for teachers and counselors to submit online.

**Test Scores** Send your scores in a timely manner, by December, to avoid paying for Rush Score Reports. You are responsible for sending your test scores.

**Mid-Year Report** Some private colleges may require a report of your first semester senior year grades.

**Supplemental Application** Required by some private colleges in addition to the Common Application.

## Financial Aid

There are numerous sources of aid, but the major contributors include the federal and state governments, as well as the institutions themselves. In general, private schools tend to offer more options for financial aid than public institutions. Therefore, it is important to consider every type of institution in your college search, regardless of the school's price tag.

Financial need is the difference between the estimated cost of attendance at college and the amount your family is expected to contribute. Your family's *Expected Family Contribution* (EFC) is determined by assessing the family's and student's assets, income, and number of other students in your family attending college. While all four-year colleges will require the FAFSA, some will also require additional forms (e.g., CSS/PROFILE) that ask for supplemental financial information about the student and their family.

### Important Financial Aid Forms

It is advised that you check with each college's financial aid office for priority and regular deadlines.

- **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)** - Federal form used to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) for college. Parent and student both apply for a pin number at ([www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)) to file online at ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)) after January 1 of senior year. The deadline for submitting this form varies by college, but most schools and Cal Grants set the deadline around March 2.
- **CSS/Profile** - a supplemental financial aid form for non-federal aid, required by some private institutions. Asks more specific questions about family and student equity and income. Register for this form and access a list of colleges requiring it at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).
- **Institutional Aid Form** – a supplemental financial aid form produced specifically by the individual college.

Within a few weeks of submitting the FAFSA, you will receive the *Student Aid Report* (SAR). This document summarizes the information contained in the FAFSA, and includes your family's *Expected Family Contribution* (EFC). This information will be sent to the colleges you indicated when you filed the FAFSA.

By April, colleges send award letters, outlining the financial aid package they are able to offer you. It may be comprised of the following:

- **Loans** - money that must be repaid. There are different types of loans available to students and parents, some of which include deferred interest payments. Examples: PLUS and Stafford loans
- **Grants** - money that does not need to be repaid. Examples: PELL Grants, Cal-Grants, Institutional Grants
- **Work-study** - provides the option to work part-time at the college to help offset the cost of attendance
- **Outside Scholarships** - free money provided by private organizations. Example: Ronald McDonald Foundation Scholarships. Visit the Naviance website for a detailed list of private and institutional scholarships. Scholarship applications are often online or may be picked up in the College & Career Center. For a comprehensive list of scholarships, also visit [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) or review Mercy's scholarship books.

**Scholarship Scams** - Be especially wary of companies offering to conduct scholarship searches on your behalf for a fee. Such offers are usually scams and do not produce significant results. The most useful information about the financial aid application process will be available at the Mercy Financial Aid Night or in the College & Career Center. An extensive list of financial aid websites can be found under **Resources** on Naviance.