

Pathway of



College

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## **Introduction**

The college application process is just that; a process. A successful college selection and application process should begin no later than the 11<sup>th</sup> grade year and will continue through the entire 12<sup>th</sup> grade year. It is important to break this process into manageable pieces since it can become overwhelming. In the following pages you will find a detailed breakdown of each step you will need to take in order to successfully apply to college. Since there is tremendous variation based on your selected schools, please remember to ask your counselor about any questions that arise during your search.

## College Entrance Exams

Most Colleges and Universities accept either the SAT or ACT exam as an entrance requirement. Check with your institution which exams are accepted. Community colleges do not require these exams.

**PSAT** – Each October, Pembroke offers the PSAT exam to juniors during the school day. There is a minimal cost paid by the student. The PSAT is a practice SAT exam and is not used for college acceptance. It is also used for the National Merit Scholarship.

**SAT** – The SAT exam is offered by the College Board several Saturdays per year. They are available at various locations at a cost of approximately \$50.00. Students must register on line at **collegeboard.org**. SAT exams are NOT offered during the summer months. Students should plan to take the SAT exam during the spring of their junior year. This allows time to retake the exam (if the student wants to improve their score) in the fall of their senior year. The SAT exam tests Evidence-based Reading, Math, and Writing.

**SAT FEE WAIVER** – Under certain criteria, a student may receive a fee waiver in order to take the SAT. Please see you School Counselor for requirements.

**SAT Subject Area Tests** – These tests are only required by select colleges and universities. Please check with your institution.

**ACT** – The ACT exam tests English, Math, Reading, and Science and costs approximately \$40.00. A Writing section is optional (additional cost). Students can register for the ACT exam at **actstudent.org**. ACT exams are offered several Saturdays per year, at various locations. They are not offered in the summer.

## College Visits

Every college or university will offer the chance for you to visit their institution. The best time to visit colleges is in the end of your junior year or beginning of your senior year. It is extremely important that you visit before you make your final college decision. Sometimes visiting an institution will help you realize something you really love or hate about the school. For example: location, size, population, or atmosphere of the school and this could result in a revised application process.

Many colleges have open houses in the fall and spring, however you may want to call the admissions office of the institution to schedule a private tour for yourself and your parents.

Many students ask: “What should I do while I’m there?” That’s easy! Remember you’ll possibly be living at this institution for 4 years, and you will want to check out all that it has to offer you.

### **Consult this checklist on your visit:**

- ◇ Dormitories/apartments for freshmen and upperclassmen
- ◇ Dining halls and meal plan options
- ◇ Laundry facilities
- ◇ Clubs/Greek life/Athletics/Honor Societies
- ◇ Career Center
- ◇ Exercise facilities
- ◇ Parking
- ◇ Library
- ◇ Bookstore
- ◇ Transportation
- ◇ Distance to grocery stores/shops/mall
- ◇ Classrooms (class sizes)
- ◇ Commuter lounges



Before you leave, ask about an application fee waiver if you’re still interested in applying to their school.

# The College Application Process



## When to Apply to College:

By the beginning of your senior year of high school you should have an idea of several colleges to which you would like to apply. You may begin filling out college applications as early as the summer before your senior year. Each college sets their own deadlines for application which will be published usually on the Undergraduate Admissions Website. As a rule of thumb, we recommend that you plan to have your applications submitted by Thanksgiving, and no later than Christmas.

**It is IMPORTANT that YOU check the application deadline for each of your schools and submit your application accordingly!**

If your school states that they use *Rolling Admissions* this means that applications are reviewed on a continual basis and decisions are made as the applications are received. Otherwise, applications will be held until the application deadline and reviewed as a group.

## How to Apply:

There are several ways in which you can apply to college. Most colleges still offer the ability to apply online or by completing a paper application. Most applications are completed electronically. Even by electronic mean, you have several options available to you for completing your application. In almost every case that is described, you will be able to start your application, save it, and have the ability to return at a later date to finish it. Most college applications will take a significant amount of time to complete.



- **Applying Directly to your College:** Many colleges will give you the option to apply directly to their school by either completing a paper application or completing an electronic form that you would access through their Admissions website. Using this option is advisable especially when the college waives the application fee when you apply this way. If you are applying to a Community College, such as GCC (Genesee), ECC (Erie), NCCC (Niagara) or MCC (Monroe) be sure to apply on the College's website because it will be free. If you use the SUNY general application you will be charged \$50.
- **The SUNY APP:** SUNY is the State University of New York, or the system of universities across NY that are funded by the state. SUNY Colleges include Technical Colleges (i.e. Alfred State), Community Colleges (i.e. GCC), 4 year smaller University Colleges (i.e. SUNY Brockport), and University Centers (i.e. UB). You can apply to as many SUNY colleges as you would like using the SUNY APP. This is one application that is completed at [WWW.SUNY.EDU](http://WWW.SUNY.EDU). Once the general application is completed you can select and submit your applications to any SUNY Campus you would like. **You MUST PAY the APPLICATION FEE for EACH CAMPUS YOU SELECT!**

Once your SUNY APP is submitted you may be required to complete the **SUNY SUPPLEMENTAL FORMS**, which are only required by some SUNY campuses. You will be prompted to submit items such as writing samples, letters of recommendation, etc., based on the application requirements of each campus.

- **The Common APP:** The Common Application, better known as the Common App ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)) is exactly what the name suggests. It is an online application that asks a comprehensive range of question, requires an application essay, letters of recommendation, your high school transcript, etc. Colleges and Universities from around the country subscribe to the Common App and manage the entire application process through this one site. If you use the Common App you are able to complete one comprehensive application and apply to many colleges with just the click of a button instead of answering similar questions multiple times on separate applications.

**IMPORTANT:** Before you begin the Common App **BE SURE TO CHECK THE LIST OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES** to be sure your school accepts applications through this site.

- **Early Decision vs. Early Action vs. Regular Decision:** There are several different options for how to apply to your college of choice. Each application type has its possible benefits and drawbacks.

Regular Decision: This is the standard way to apply.

Early Action: This method should be reserved for your first choice school. It will indicate to the college your heightened interest in their institution. You will usually receive a decision on your acceptance earlier than if you chose Regular Decision, but you will not be obligated to withdraw other application upon acceptance, as is the case with Early Decision.

Early Decision: This option should **ONLY** be used if you are **ABSOLUTELY** sure that you want attend a particular school. Applying Early Decision means that you have already decided you will attend a certain school if they accept you. You are obligated to withdraw other applications and commit to attending this school if they accept you. You may incur financial penalties if you decide to attend a different college. If you use Early Decision the deadline for application will be earlier than Regular Decision and you receive your acceptance decision earlier than any other form of application.

## Letters of Recommendation



Many colleges will ask for a letter or letters of recommendation to support your application. The best people to write you a letter or recommendation are people who *REALLY* know you and will be able to give you a positive reference. Think about a teacher you had more than once, or who you really connected with. Coaches, counselors, advisors or a supervisor from a job all make good references. Remember; do not take a recommendation for granted. You **MUST** ask for a letter of recommendation and the recommender is not required to say yes. **YOU NEED TO EARN IT!** Also, be polite. If you want a good reference, give your recommender plenty of time to prepare it.

## Transcripts and Transcript Requests

A transcript is a legal record of the courses that you have taken and the final grades that you received in those courses. When you graduate you will have a High School Transcript and you may also have a college transcript if you have taken a course through GCC or MCC during high school. We are only able to provide you with your High School Transcript. **IN ORDER TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR COLLEGE CLASSES TAKEN DURING HIGH SCHOOL, CONTACT THE COLLEGE DIRECTLY AND ASK THEM TO SEND YOUR TRANSCRIPT TO THE COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE.**

Your high school transcript can be submitted as part of the application process in several different ways.

**If you use the Common App:** You will be prompted to enter your counselors name and email address. When you submit your application an email will automatically be sent to your counselor. We will then complete counselor recommendation and academic history sections of the Common App for you. This includes uploading an official copy of your high school transcript. Once uploaded, each college you have submitted an application to will be able to download and review all of your information.

**If you use the SUNY APP:** You will be prompted to print a form that you will give to your counselor. On this form we will complete several question about your academic history and graduation status. We will mail this form to the SUNY Processing Center along with your official transcript.

**If you apply directly to one or more colleges individually:** Come to the Counseling Office and complete the appropriate paperwork in order for us to send out your transcript. There is also an online Transcript Request Form available through the Pembroke Counseling Department website.

## College Application Essays

Many colleges require you to submit an application essay or writing sample. You will have the opportunity to develop an application essay as part of your 12<sup>th</sup> grade English class. Colleges will generally give you several topics to choose from and your essay will generally give you the opportunity to highlight personal qualities or experiences that have guided your decision making toward your future career. **BE SURE TO HAVE ANY WRITING STATEMENT PROOF READ BEFORE YOU SUBMIT IT!**



## Acceptance Letters

Once your complete application has been received and reviewed by the college or colleges of your choice, the admissions department will assign you to a specific admissions counselor who will be your contact person at the college. The Admissions office will review your application and make decision to accept your application. You may be offered acceptance, be put on a wait list, or denied. If you are offered acceptance the college will give you a date by which you must notify them of your intentions for the fall, (i.e. if you plan to attend their school or not). If you plan to attend they will usually ask for a deposit on your tuition in order to hold your seat.

You should wait until you receive your financial aid package, before making a final decision about your attendance at any school. See the Financial Aid Section for more details.

## **FINANCIAL AID FORMS**

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

Every student should complete the FAFSA (even if your income is high and you do not expect financial aid). A completed FAFSA is required for student loans, grants, scholarships, and work study. You must complete a new FAFSA every school year.

Parents and students are able to begin filing the FAFSA application on October 1 instead of needing to wait for January 1st. You will need your tax return from 2 years prior (they call it prior-prior year) for the FAFSA application.

**TAP** – Tuition Assistance Program (tap.hesc.ny.gov)

TAP is only for NYS residents who attend a NYS college or university. If you are attending a school out of NYS, you should not apply for TAP. Once you complete your FAFSA, there is a link to TAP that will transfer information from FAFSA onto the TAP application. You must complete a new TAP application every school year.

**NYS Excelsior Scholarship:** (SUNY’s free tuition) You must meet annually adjusted family income requirements to qualify for this program and you must apply within the application window (June-July). Students must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours per year in order to maintain this scholarship and then reside in NYS following graduation for the same number of years that they received the scholarship. More information is available at <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/nys-grants-scholarships-awards/the-excelsior-scholarship.html>

## **HELP WITH FORMS**

Financial Aid information seminars are available at Genesee Community College. Your child does NOT need to attend GCC in order to take advantage of this service. Contact GCC, Financial Aid office for details (585-345-6900). There is no cost for this service. You may also contact the Financial Aid office of the college your child will be attending.

## **AWARD LETTERS**

Once your child has been accepted at a college or university and you have submitted the FAFSA, the college will send an “Award Letter” from their Financial Aid office. This letter will indicate the cost of attendance minus financial aid (grants, scholarships, and loans). The balance will be what you will be required to pay out of pocket. You must read the award letter closely, as **LOANS are considered financial aid**. If you would like assistance with understanding the award letter, please contact your child’s Counselor.

## **TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID**

Government Grants – awarded by the Federal or State government to the student for the school year applied based on family income. This is free money, no repayment required.

College Grants/Scholarships – awarded by the college or university to the student for the school year applied based on academic standing. This is free money, no repayment required. Check your college website for available scholarships.

Federal Perkins Loan – Loan amounts vary based on need provided by the college/university. This is a loan and must be paid back.

Subsidized Stafford Loan – Federal government loan based on need, government pays interest while student is in school. Loan must be paid back.

Unsubsidized Stafford Loan – Federal government loan NOT based on need, students accrue interest while in college. Loan must be paid back.

PLUS Loan for Parents – Loan amount is maximum cost of attendance, less any other financial aid. Parent is responsible for interest and begins paying back the loan while the student is still in college.

Work Study – Student has an on campus job and receives a pay check. This is not applied to the tuition bill.



## **LOCAL SCHOLARSHIPS**

Corfu-Pembroke Dollars for Scholars  
[Corfu-Pembroke.dollarsforscholars.org](http://Corfu-Pembroke.dollarsforscholars.org)

Dollars for Scholars awards several local scholarships to Pembroke seniors. Students must complete the entire application through their website. The scholarships are diverse and intended for students of various academic levels and interests.

Individual Scholarships available through Pembroke High School

Information (i.e. titles, requirements, scholarship amounts) is available in the Counseling Office and on the Counseling page of the Pembroke District website. The scholarships are diverse (ex. Empire State Potato Growers Scholarship, Character Excellence Scholarship, Mental Health Association Scholarship) and are given to high school seniors for their freshman year of college.

Individual Scholarships through outside organizations

There are many businesses and community organizations that have scholarship money available. Examples include: Scouts, Rotary, Church, parent's employer, student's employer.

Athletic Scholarships

Contact the Pembroke Athletic Director for possible options.



