IN THIS CHAPTER:

RESEARCHING COLLEGES

PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

HOW TO APPLY
How do I research colleges?

- Visit: wcan.org/resources/college-map for a list of colleges in Washington state
- View college websites
- Sign up for college mailing lists
- Attend college fairs
- Tour colleges

What should I consider?

**Type of college** – technical, 2-year, 4-year

**Location** – distance from home, weather, urban or rural, etc.

**Degrees available** – associate’s, bachelor’s, certifications, and apprenticeships

**Programs available** – subject areas or majors offered

**Public vs. private** – public colleges are partially funded by government funds and private colleges are not directly publicly funded

**Special focus** – colleges that focus on a specific interest or student population such as arts, single-sex, religiously affiliated and specialized-mission colleges

**Diversity** – the types of cultures, languages and demographics represented on campus or in the community

**Size** – number of students, campus size, class size, city population, etc.

**Cost of attendance** – in- or out-of-state tuition, college fees, books, transportation and housing

**Selectivity** – measured by the percentage of students who get accepted based on admission requirements

**Graduation rate** – number of students who graduate within 4 or 6 years from that college

**GOOD TO KNOW:** Community colleges offer 2-year degrees with a path to transfer to a 4-year school and some offer bachelor degree programs.

**DON’T FORGET:**

Consider the admissions requirements and determine if the school is a reach, solid, or safety for you. It is recommended that you apply to at least one school in each category:

- **Reach** – You might not get in, but it’s worth applying to because it’s your dream school
- **Solid** – You’re a competitive applicant and will likely get accepted
- **Safety** – You’ll definitely get accepted, and it’s a backup in case the others don’t work out

TALK TO:

- Your high school counselor
- College admissions counselors or representatives who visit your school
- Family members, teachers, mentors and community members who have been to college

*Finalize your college search by the end of the school year and prepare for the SAT or ACT.
All colleges have an application. Typically, you can submit a vocational, technical, 2-year or 4-year college/university application online and sometimes in person, or by mail.

**WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO MOST COLLEGES?**

- **Your official transcripts** from high school and college if you have earned college credit
- **Your test scores** from the **SAT or ACT**

**GOOD TO KNOW:**

Some programs like apprenticeships, vocational and technical certifications have a unique application process. Check out [lni.wa.gov](http://lni.wa.gov) for more information on apprenticeships or visit [sbctc.edu](http://sbctc.edu) for vocational and technical training programs.

**WHAT ADDITIONAL STEPS MIGHT I NEED TO COMPLETE A 4-YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION?**

- **Personal Statement** – a way for the college to get to know you and why you are interested in the school
- **Short Answer Responses** – additional questions that may focus on specific concepts, such as diversity, culture and examples of persistence/overcoming adversities.
- **Activity Log/Resumé** – a list of extracurricular activities that can include clubs, sports, jobs and anything you do outside of school.
- **Letter of Recommendation** – a letter from a teacher, counselor, coach, etc. that can speak to your qualities, characteristics and capabilities.

**ANYTHING ELSE?**

You may need to pay a fee in order to submit a college application.

However, you may eligible to receive a fee waiver:

- If you are a College Bound Scholarship student
- If you receive free and reduced price lunch
- If you participate in programs like TRiO, Upward Bound, or GEAR UP
- If you are a youth in foster care
- If you took the SAT or ACT with a fee waiver

Contact your high school counselor, college admissions office, National Association for College Admission Counseling, or The College Board to inquire about fee waivers.

**DON’T FORGET:**

You could be competing against MANY other applicants. Make sure your answers are a clear and true representation of who you are and how you have prepared yourself!
APPLYING FOR COLLEGE: HOW TO APPLY

TIPS FOR APPLYING:

Complete and submit at least three college applications in the fall.

Apply for financial aid by completing the FAFSA or WASFA as early as October 1 to ensure you have options to pay for college.

Use a professional email address with your name. Check your email often, as you will receive important, time-sensitive messages.

Talk to your counselor if you are unable to pay application fees. You may be eligible for college application fee waivers.

Keep track of deadlines using a spreadsheet or to-do list.

Proofread, review and revise college essays. Have at least one other person (mentor, counselor, teacher, etc.) look over your finalized application.

Check the status of your college and financial aid apps to make sure they have been received. You typically can do this via the online college portal, email or phone.

Be sure to save all parts of your college application; you may be able to reuse them for other college or scholarship applications.

After you submit your application, you should receive a confirmation message. If you do not, contact the college admissions office to find out the status of your application.

WHAT IS THE COMMON APPLICATION?

The common application, or common app, is a college admissions application that is used by over 700 colleges in the U.S., including many private colleges in Washington. Once the common app is completed, it can be sent to any number of participating colleges. The common app is used exclusively for eligible 4-year colleges and universities. To start the common application, visit commonapp.org.

2-YR COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Apply online, by mail or in person.

Submit the FAFSA or WASFA.

Take a placement test at the college. Some colleges also accept transcripts or other info to determine placement.

Schedule an academic advising appointment.

4-YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Submit your FAFSA or WASFA.

Read admission requirements for each specific school.

Create an account for your online application.

Request letters of recommendation.

Request official transcripts.

Send SAT or ACT scores.

Write and edit your personal statement essay and other short answer responses.

Complete and submit your college application.

Receive a confirmation email that your application was successfully submitted.

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