



STEM SCHOOL

HIGHLANDS RANCH

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STEM SCHOOL HIGHLANDS RANCH

College Application Handbook

2020 - 2021

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The College Application Process- The Basics

Applying to College is FAST:

Fees

Application

Send Scores

Transcript

FEES: You will pay the application fee or submit a fee waiver (if you qualify - see the information about Application fee waivers below) at the end of your application. Fees per application can range from \$45.00- \$120.00.

The Colorado Department of Higher Education has teamed up with colleges and universities all across the state of Colorado to waive college application fees for all Colorado students on Free Colorado College Application Day which Tuesday, October 13, 2020.

APPLICATION: State, private and prestigious universities utilize the Common Application found on commonapp.org. Applications become available online for students on August 1, 2020. Some students may choose to apply directly to the university through the university portal, but students should be aware that they will not be able to copy an application this way. By using the Common Application, students can easily copy their application information over to another application. The only advantage students have in applying directly through the university is that sometimes a fee waiver is offered. I highly suggest using Common Application; if it is not offered at a school, then the student should apply through the university's portal. An application typically includes student demographic information, course history, residency questions, extracurricular and volunteerism, talents awards & honors, employment information, and essays. Other portals students may use are SendEdu and Coalition.

Different types of Applications | Early Action vs. Early Decision

- Both EA & ED have a higher admissions rate than Regular Decision
- **It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that if a university offers EA, students apply EA**
- Not all universities do not have EA or ED
- Early Action means that you really like this school and it is one of your top choices.
- Early Decision means “D” for “Done” – Early Decision is a **legally binding agreement**, which means you and your family must be okay with the finances associated with attending your ED university (whether or not you are offered grants or scholarship) because it is highly unlikely that if you are accepted ED you will get out of it! **You are only able to submit one ED application.**
- **Early Action** is like dating. You can submit multiple applications. **Early Decision** is like marriage – you are telling that school they are your top choice/your one and only!

Non-Restrictive Application Plans			Restrictive Application Plans	
Regular Decision	Rolling Admission	Early Action(EA)	Restrictive Early	Early Decision
Submit an application by a specified deadline and receive a decision by a designated date	Submit when ready. Schools review application as they "roll-in". They make admission decisions throughout the admissions cycle	Apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the school's regular response date	Apply to a school and receive a decision early. You may be a restricted from applying ED, EA, or REA to other schools. If offered, you have until May 1 to confirm	Make a commitment to a first-choice school where, if admitted, you will definitely enroll. The application decision deadline occur early.
Non-Binding!	Non-Binding!	Non-Binding!	Non-Binding!	Binding!
You are not restricted from applying to other Institutions and have until May 1 to consider your options and confirm enrollment.			You are responsible for following all restrictions	

SEND SCORES: Send SAT or ACT official scores to the colleges you are applying to. If you have not taken one of the exams yet, the college you are applying to cannot consider your application until you have at least one set of scores from one of the tests. Junior colleges are the exception to this rule. Community colleges will ask for current SAT or ACT scores; however, if you have not taken the SAT or ACT, most have a placement test you must take to register for classes.

SAT sign up, send scores, & testing dates: <https://www.collegeboard.org/>

ACT sign up, send scores, & testing dates: www.actstudent.org

TRANSCRIPT: There are multiple methods for submitting transcripts. If a student applies using Common Application, the counselor they list as a recommender will upload their transcript. If a student applies via a university website, they may send an electronic transcript request using sendedu.org to Kandace Lytle. If the university does not utilize sendedu.org, students may fill out a transcript request form (TRF) google form on-line (posted on the College & Career website and the newsletter).

Fee Waivers: To be eligible for fee waivers, students must be on free and reduced lunch. If you think you might be eligible, please check this link for information:

<http://www.dcsdnutritionservices.org/letter-to-household>

Students on Free & Reduced lunch are able to take their SAT and ACT exams for free. After taking the SAT, students are given 4 fee waivers in their College Board account to apply to college. Some universities offer other services for students on Free & Reduced Lunch.

Applying for Free & Reduced Lunch:

To apply for these benefits, please complete the online application at:
<https://www.myschoolapps.com/>

Families will need the following information available when completing the online application:

- Student's legal name (first and last), birth date, and assigned student ID number (if known)
- Student's school name
- All household gross income and/or SNAP (formerly food stamps) or TANF eligibility determination group number (EDG # - this is not the Case #)
- Last four digits of the parent's/guardian's social security number

Families who do not have internet access may:

- Visit their child's school and complete the application on a school computer
- Request a paper application from their child's campus
- Utilize the computers at a local library to complete an application

How to Choose a College

Students primarily choose colleges based on their major of choice and whether or not they fit the admission criteria. Other factors **include level of prestige, cost, location, size, and extracurricular activities.**

It is important for students to set realistic goals for themselves and apply to schools that are within their reach and a little above their reach. Students should sort and classify the schools they apply to in order to ensure they are setting realistic, possible college goals. Read the criteria below to determine if you are choosing colleges that within a reasonable set of expectations.

Match A match school is one where your academic credentials (GPA, SAT or ACT scores, and extracurricular involvement) fall well within (or even exceed) the school's range for the average freshman. There are no guarantees, but it is not unreasonable to be accepted to several of your match schools.

Dream A dream school is one where your academic credentials are below the school's range for the average freshman or a school that is incredibly competitive (private universities, Ivy Leagues). Dream schools are long-shots, but they should still be possible (and not a dream).

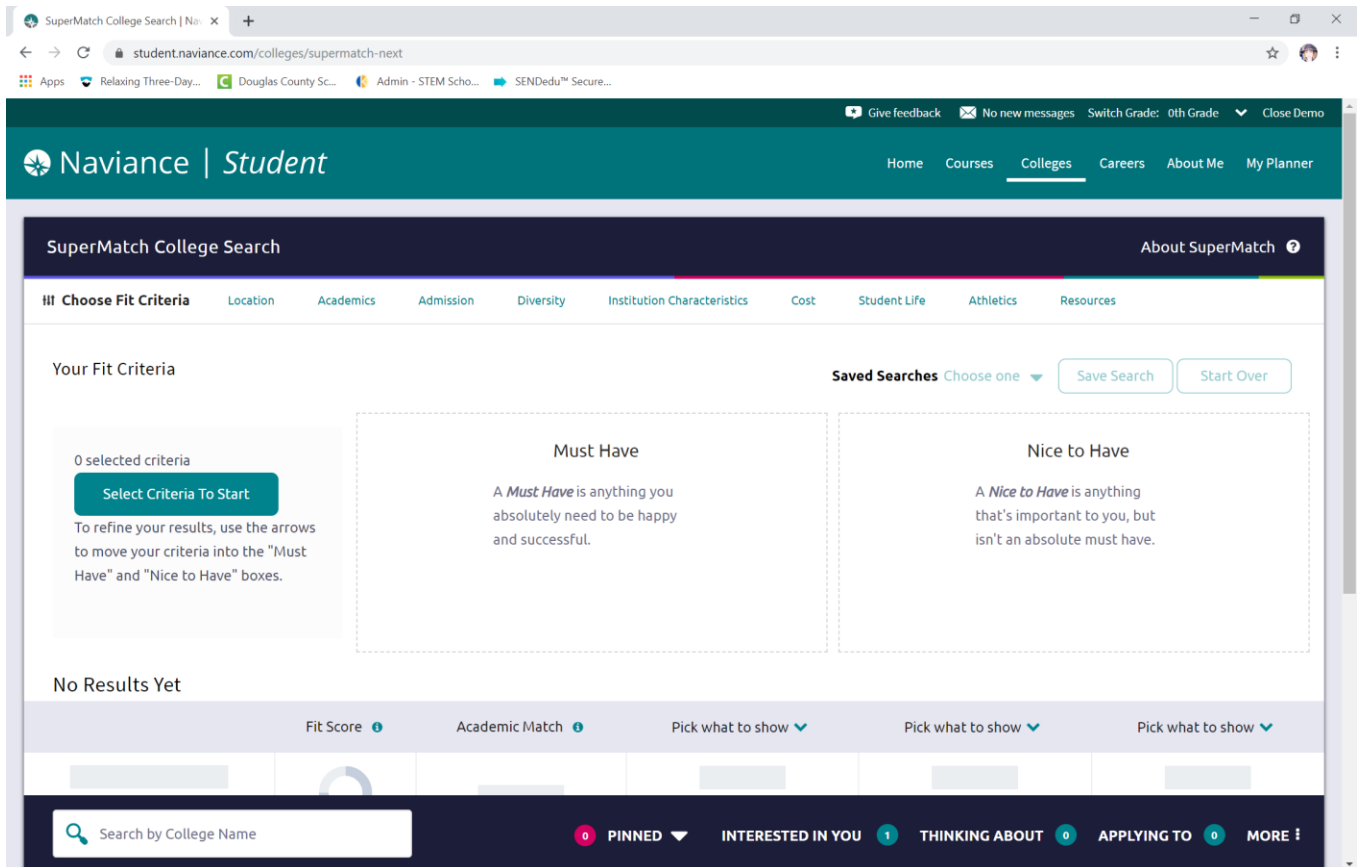
Safety A safety school is one where your academic credentials are above the school's range for the average freshman. You should be reasonably certain that you will be admitted to your safety schools. Like the rest of your list, these should also be colleges you would be happy to attend. In addition to an admissions safety school, it is a good idea to include a financial safety school on your list, one that you and your family can afford even if you received no aid at all.

I highly recommend that all students apply to 2 Safety, 3-4 Match, and 1-2 Dream universities.

College Research Tools

The number one recommendation is for students and parents to research options and ask questions early. **Naviance is an excellent resource when it comes to choosing a college.** If students are undecided about their majors, they can re-visit the results of their Strengths Explorer tests and read about their personality. Students can also read about careers and add them to their career list while considering possible college majors. One of the best research features in Naviance is the Super Match College Search. **Students can use this feature to search for colleges based on interest, size, location, cost and test scores. Students can view admission information in order to determine if the college is a realistic option.**

To access the SuperMatch search tool in Naviance, click on Colleges → Find Your Fit → SuperMatch College Search:



Naviance College Comparison: In addition, students can use NAVIANCE College Compare to compare institutions side by side.

Big Future: Another fantastic resource is Big Future, created by College Board. There is

also a College Search function for students on the website.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

Transcript Requests

Unofficial Transcripts:

Students may need to request unofficial transcripts for scholarships, summer camps, to have for their own records, or, sometimes, for employment. Parents may request an Unofficial Transcript by completing the transcript request form (TRF) on-line (posted on the College & Career website and newsletter).

Official Transcript Requests:

Official Transcripts for College Admission:

There are multiple methods for submitting transcripts. If a student applies using Common Application, the counselor they list as a recommender will upload their transcript. If a student applies via a university website, they may send an electronic transcript request using sendedu.org to Kandace Lytle. If the university does not utilize sendedu.org, students may fill out a transcript request form (TRF) on-line (posted on the College & Career website and newsletter).

Official transcripts for Scholarships:

All official transcript requests for scholarships are made by filling out a TRF (transcript request form). The student needs to be sure to include the address where the transcript needs to be mailed.

Official Transcripts for mid-year and final requests:

Students should let their counselor know if they need a mid-year report. Note, most students using the Common Application will need to have a mid-year report and mid-year transcript sent. ALL students applying to college will need to send final transcript. Students will follow the directions posted at the end of May to request their final transcript.

Note About Deadlines & Requests:

Transcripts are only sent on days the school is open Monday-Friday. Students should check their college and scholarship deadlines carefully. If a deadline is after a long break, students should not make transcript requests over the break with the expectation that the office will be sending transcripts. For official transcript requests for scholarships, students should ensure they submit to the transcript request form to the office at least one week before the scholarship deadline.

Recommendation Letter Instructions

Not every school requires letters of recommendation by a teacher or counselor. Research the school you are applying to before you request a letter. If you know you need a letter/ form, you should speak with or email your counselor/ and or teacher at least **three weeks before the deadline.**

When you request a letter of recommendation, it is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED that you provide the following information:

The Post-Secondary Planning Packet (PPP) will be given to the Class of 2021 in the Spring. Juniors must complete before their college planning conference with their counselor and Ms. Lytle. Students **MUST** complete this in order to receive a letter of recommendation.

For Counselors: A completed Post-secondary Planning Packet (PPP).

For Teachers or other LOR Writers:

-A resume that includes course work, GPA, community and extracurricular involvement and/or a copy of your PPP

-Submission deadlines for EACH institution you are applying to

- All schools you are applying to **(If this changes, and you choose to add a school or not apply to a school, contact the teacher and/ or counselor immediately)**

- The type of submission your letter requires (Which schools require this sent electronically?

Which schools are you using the Common Application with? Which schools require the teacher/ counselor to mail the letter?)

The College Resume

Please see the Resume Writing Handbook posted on the STEM College & Career website for more information.

Resumes should be given to teachers and/or counselors for letters of recommendation, and, sometimes, students will send a resume as an additional supplement to their college application. This is your chance to elaborate on some of the criteria you were not able to elaborate on in the application, but do not simply repeat the information found in your college application.

Information to include in your resume:

While there is no standard format for resumes of this type, they are typically one or two pages long and generally include much of the following information:

- **Heading:** Identifying information such as: name, address, phone number, email, date of birth, and high school.
- **Objective or Overview (optional):** Can be used for a specific purpose such as consideration for a scholarship or intended major

- Key Stats: You can include a high GPA (above a 3.5), SAT/ACT scores, SAT Subject Test scores
- Education: High schools attended. (Optional: Senior year classes & AP or impressive courses taken prior to senior year)
- School Activities: List activities and grade (e.g. 9, 10,11) including clubs, class activities, sports, performing groups, sports, etc. Note leadership roles and special recognition. Be descriptive: Instead of “High School Newspaper”, consider (if accurate) “Feature Editor (11) Reporter (9, 10) School Newspaper Recognized as Best in County in 2007”.
- Honors and Awards: List along with grade (e.g. Debate Finalist – 9, 10)
- Community Activities: List activities, leadership roles and grades during which you participated.
- Enrichment Activities: Include relevant programs, special projects, travel experiences, hobbies, musical accomplishments,
- Work Experience: Starting with the most recent, list each work experience (paid, unpaid or your own business) including job title; business name and location, dates of your employment. Include anything else that would be impressive (e.g. specific duties, recognition).
- Other: (optional) Special circumstances and situations; additional details about “hook” or “wow factor”
- References (optional): Name and relationship

The College Essay

Reminder: Not EVERY college requires an essay. And, certain colleges require different essays than others. Make sure you check on the website of the college you are applying to before you start writing your essay.

The Common Application Essay Topics | 2021 Admission Cycle

Check with your university to see if your school requires an essay, and, if so, which essay they require. Think through this essay thoroughly and make sure you have several people proof read before you submit.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. [No change]
2. The lessons we take from *obstacles we encounter* can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a *challenge, setback, or failure*. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? [Revised]
3. Reflect on a time when you *questioned* or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your *thinking*? What *was the outcome*? [Revised]
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to

identify a solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Supplemental & Optional Writing Samples

Some colleges have “optional” essays and/or short answer questions. **If a college has an optional essay section, it is highly recommended that you write it.** Completing the optional essay gives you a chance to indicate your interest and share something completely dynamic that the admissions readers do not already know about you. It is your chance to be creative and show your genuine interest in the college, as well as let the admissions readers in on a little-known fact or two about you.

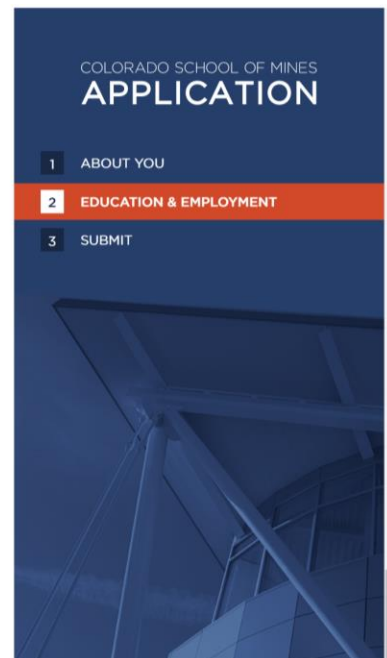
The more information you can give a college about yourself, the better. For instance, Colorado School of Mines has two optional essays for their application last year:

CAN YOU RELATE TO FLORENCE CALDWELL? (OPTIONAL)

Florence Caldwell was the first woman to graduate from Mines. She enrolled in 1895 and found that her fellow classmates discouraged her attendance. She persevered through that discouragement and graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1898. She was described as a problem solver who was loyal, kind and sympathetic to others and displayed unwavering courage. Describe a time when you overcame an obstacle, persevered through a situation or displayed characteristics similar to Florence Caldwell.

PERSONAL STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

If you like, please tell us why Mines is the best fit for you or tell us something about yourself that you feel the rest of your application does not communicate, such as “What’s your favorite high school class and why?” “You visited Mines and see yourself here because ...” or “What are you most passionate about (choose one)? Leadership? Teamwork? Innovation? Community? Something else?”



College Visits:

There are many ways to find out about a college, from online sites, to brochures, to college fairs, but there is no substitute for seeing the campus yourself. Check on college websites for Junior or Senior Visit Days and Open Houses. Individual visits can also be arranged. Make your reservations early.

Before you go:

- Call the Admission Office in advance, tell them the date you would like to visit, and the time of day you expect to arrive. Many colleges also offer online campus registration for visit days.
- Inquire about scheduling an interview, attending an information session, visiting classes, meeting with current students, and talking with faculty.
- If you want to stay overnight in a residence hall, ask if they can make arrangements.
- Research the college using the college's website. - Write down anything that struck you as "cool". You will not remember all of it later on!
- Make a list of questions that you want answered (examples below)

Questions to Ask on a College Visit:

Admissions:

- What are the application deadlines for admission?
- Do you offer Early Decision or Early Action?
- What is the average high school GPA of the entering freshman class?
- Do you accept AP credit? Is there a limit?
- When do I have to declare a major?
- What if I do not meet admission requirements?
- Do you accept transfer credits? Is there a limit?

Academics:

- What is the average class size of introductory classes?
- What is the average class size of upper-level classes?
- What is the largest class on campus? What is the smallest?
- What are the most popular majors?
- What types of internships are available?
- Are there study abroad opportunities available?
- How do you assign faculty advisors to students, especially those who are not sure about their major?
- What is the student to faculty ratio?
- What opportunities are there for undergraduate research and funding?
- How many students participate in undergraduate research?

- Do you have an Honors College? Is there a separate application for it?
- Do you have a learning community, learning dorm, or other freshman experiences that I should be aware of?
- What type of tutoring programs do you have?
- What additional academic services are offered to students (career counseling, mock interviews, study skills workshops, etc.)?
- Do you have a writing center on campus?
- What is your four-year graduation rate? What does it take to graduate in four years?
- What percentage of your freshmen return their sophomore year?

Financial Aid & Scholarships:

- When is the priority deadline for financial aid applications?
- What kind of financial aid is available?
- What percentage of your students receive financial aid from the university?
- What types of scholarships are available to freshmen?
- What is your average financial aid package?
- What work-study opportunities are there?

Campus Life:

- What percentage of your students live on campus?
- What kind of dorm choices are there?
- What percentage of the study body belong to a sorority or fraternity?
- What organizations and extra-curricular activities do you have on campus?
- What events are popular on campus?
- Is there transportation on and off campus? Is it easy to get to town and/or home?
- What is the climate during the school year?
- What is your relationship with the community like?
- What do students do in their free time?
- How are roommates selected?
- How does the meal plan work?

Questions to Ask Current Students:

- Why did you decide to attend this college?
- What was your freshman experience like?
- Do you feel there is a strong support / transition program for freshmen students?
- What is your favorite thing about this college? Least favorite?
- Where is your favorite study place on campus?
- Where is your favorite place to eat on campus? Off campus?
- What are you studying here? How did you choose your major?
- If you could change one thing about this college, what would it be?
- What sort of campus events does the college host?

- Do you have advice for an incoming freshman?
- How approachable are the staff/faculty/administration?
- How would you describe the community and atmosphere?
- What clubs or extracurricular activities do you recommend?
- Did anything surprise you when you became a student?
- Who is your favorite professor or what is your favorite class you have taken? Why?

Colleges Visiting STEM Highlands Ranch:

There is a calendar posted in Naviance home page that displays the day colleges are coming to our campus during lunch. Ms. Lytle will also be sending out College Visit information within the STEM Weekly Newsletter. Students should take this opportunity to meet their admissions counselor, get their contact information & establish a relationship. This person can advocate on the students behalf for admission & scholarships.

STEM Highlands Ranch Policy for College Visits

Students turn in an **excuse note** from parent to the attendance office within **2 days of the absence**. Consider making college visits in the summer, before second semester begins, on fall, winter, or spring break, or weekends. Most colleges have big Saturday events in which you can visit the campus with other prospective students.

How Much Does College Cost with Aid?

Many students will receive financial aid and loans from the government in order to attend college. In order to plan for the future, you can estimate how much you will be expected to pay using the resources below.

FAFSA Forecaster:

If you know you will be applying for financial aid, and you want to get an estimate of how much you will be paying, you can fill out the FAFSA forecaster. It will show you how much the government expects your family to pay for college. This will help plan for the future.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator>

Net Price Calculator:

Most schools also have a net price calculator on their website.

The net price calculator will often expect you to know this: (You obtain this using the FAFSA forecaster.)

A median expected family contribution (What FAFSA calls an EFC)

The net price calculator will give you:

The average grant and scholarship aid the school awards to students like you.

The school's "net price" - the difference between the total cost of attendance and the average aid awarded. This is the amount you will have to come up with for your freshman year; you can do this through a combination of cash, loans, and scholarships/grants.

How Much Does College Cost Without Aid?

Cost of college is broken up in many parts. Tuition alone is not the total cost of college. Students must factor in housing, meals, additional fees, cost of books etc. The university websites should help with an estimate of what college costs. Remember that loans and grants are available if you qualify, and you have to fill out the FAFSA to apply.

Colorado Opportunity Fund – COF

<https://highered.colorado.gov/Finance/COF/>

Overview

The College Opportunity Fund program provides a stipend for new and continuing in-state students going to college in Colorado. To receive the stipend, a student must apply for and authorize the use of the stipend at their respective institution. The stipend replaces traditional direct legislative appropriations to the state's colleges and universities. Without the stipend, a student is responsible for the full amount of tuition which equals in-state tuition plus the stipend amount.

The goal of the COF program is to bring awareness to Colorado resident students that state funds exist to help finance their college education and improve access with a particular emphasis on higher education/K-12 linkages and strengthening accountability.

Public Institutions

Undergraduate students at participating public institutions may receive a stipend from the College Opportunity Fund if they meet the following requirements:

- Enrolled at a state institution of higher education
- Classified as an in-state student for tuition purposes
- Have applied for and been accepted into the COF program
- Have requested a payment from the COF on their behalf to their attending institution
- Are receiving undergraduate instruction
- Have not exceed their lifetime credit-hour limitation (145 credit hours) or have already completed their baccalaureate degree and are eligible to receive stipend payments for an additional 30 undergraduate credit hours

Private Institutions

Undergraduate students at participating private institutions may receive a stipend from the College Opportunity Fund if they meet the following requirements:

- Classification as an in-state student for tuition purposes (CRS 23-18-102 (5)(a)(II)(A))
- A graduate of a Colorado high school or has successfully completed a nonpublic home-based educational program (CRS 22-33-104.5) Private institutions may choose to accept the GED test as equivalency for the high school diploma based on Commission policy.
- Demonstrate a financial need through the student's eligibility for the Federal Pell need based program. (CRS 23-18-102(5)(a)(II)(C))
- Receive undergraduate instruction and have not exceeded the 145 credit hour limit or have completed a baccalaureate degree and are eligible to receive stipend payments for an additional 30 credit hours. (CRS 23-18-202-(5)(c)(I))

ASSET – Undocumented Students

In March 2013, the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 13-033, often referred to as the Colorado ASSET legislation. This legislation modifies several procedures concerning the classification of students for tuition purposes. The Colorado Department of Higher Education is in receipt of many questions from campus and school administrators regarding the ways in which Senate Bill 13-033 will be implemented, the changes it makes to current state law, and the ways in it affects existing administrative procedures. This document is intended to serve as a general reference for commonly asked questions concerning SB 13-033. This guidance will be revised as new, unique questions are received by the Department of Higher Education.

FAFSA

What is FAFSA? The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (known as the FAFSA) is a FREE online form prepared annually by current and prospective college students (undergraduate and graduate) in the United States to determine their eligibility for student financial aid (including the Pell Grant, Federal student loans and Federal Work-Study). This free form can be found at fafsa.ed.gov, and it becomes **available for Seniors to fill out beginning on October 1, 2020**. You cannot get loans or grants without this form. Even if you plan to pay for college on your own or think your income level will be too high, you may be able to receive free money.

What do I need to fill this form out?

1. Get a PIN. Get a U.S. Department of Education personal identification number (PIN) by filling out the short application at www.pin.ed.gov. Write this down somewhere you will remember.
2. Your Social Security Number
3. Your Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U.S. citizen)
4. Your most recent federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned. (Note: You may be able to transfer your federal tax return information into your FAFSA using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.)
5. Bank statements and records of investments (if applicable)
6. Records of untaxed income (if applicable)

7. A Federal Student Aid PIN to sign electronically. (If you do not already have one, visit www.pin.ed.gov to obtain one.

For an amazing step-by-step guide visit: <http://www.understandingfafa.org/>

Scholarships

Finding scholarship money isn't as hard as we might think, but it takes time, effort, and resources. You will need to research and read the eligibility of a scholarship to see if you fit the criteria.

Scholarships through Universities:

Most universities offer a scholarship application or it may be part of the admission application. Check with the university you are applying to in order to find out the scholarship deadlines, what you may be eligible for, and how to apply for their scholarships. Do not wait to do this as scholarship deadlines for universities tend to be early fall.

Scholarships in Naviance:

STEM School Highlands Ranch posts all the scholarships we hear about in Naviance. Students have access to this list and should use it throughout the year. This is THE FIRST place students should check for their scholarships outside of university scholarships. Many of the scholarships posted in Naviance are local. Many scholarships from the community appear around January and close in the months between February and June. View this list frequently for new additions as scholarships are updated weekly.

Scholarship search engines:

The following search engines can be used to search for scholarships.

zinch.com

scholarships.com

cappex.com

scholarshippoints.com

fastweb.com

collegenet.com

finaid.com

collegeboard.com

scholarshipmonkey.com

[raise.me](https://www.raise.me)

Waitlisted/Deferred Applicants

If a student is interested in attending a college where they are waitlisted, it is important to stay in contact with that university. Send the Admissions Counselor assigned to Colorado updated materials such as:

- Improved GPA/Grades or a Midyear Report
- Awards or Achievements since sending the original application
- An updated resume if you have several updates
- Additional Letters of Recommendation - particularly from teachers or individuals in your field that can speak to why that University should admit you/why you are an excellent candidate
- Any other information that might be helpful for the Admissions Officer when reconsidering you for admission

Letter of Continued Interest:

It is imperative that waitlisted or deferred students contact their Admissions Counselor with a letter of continued interest. Here are some helpful templates and links regarding this process:

<https://blog.collegevine.com/deferred-or-waitlisted-tips-for-writing-a-letter-of-continued-interest/>

<https://ingeniusprep.com/blog/letter-of-continued-interest/>

<https://blog.prepscholar.com/letter-of-continued-interest-sample>