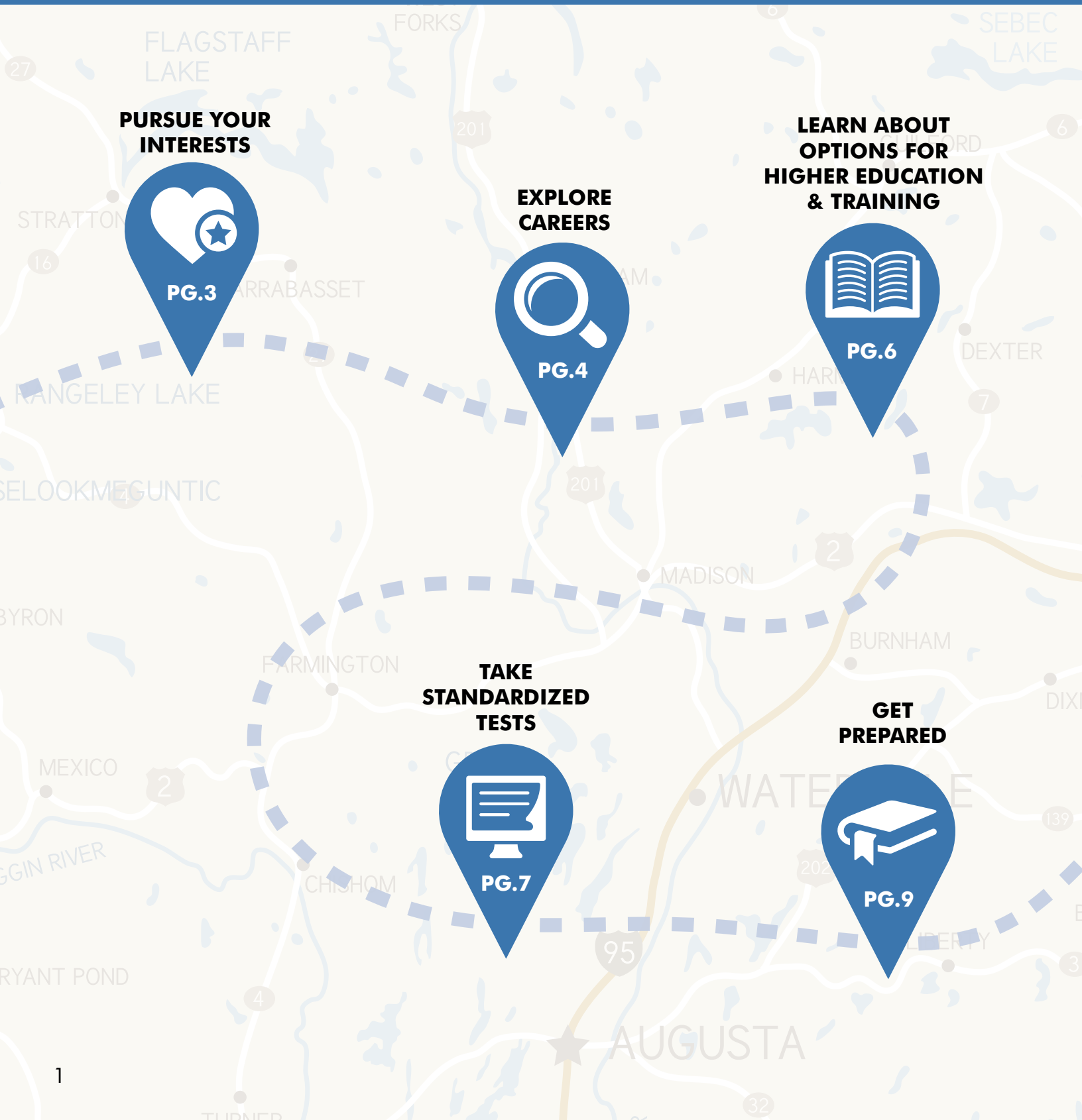
PLAN

TOOLS TO HELP YOU PURSUE EDUCATION AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Colby College

Your roadmap to education and training


FLAGSTAFF LAKE
FORKS
SEBEC LAKE
STRATTON
RANGELEY LAKE
DEXTER
MADISON
BYRON
FARMINGTON
BURNHAM
MEXICO
CHISHOM
BRYANT POND
AUGUSTA
PURSUE YOUR INTERESTS
PG.3
EXPLORE CAREERS
PG.4
LEARN ABOUT OPTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION & TRAINING
PG.6
TAKE STANDARDIZED TESTS
PG.7
GET PREPARED
PG.9

PLAN

TOOLS TO HELP YOU PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION

Follow this guide to get ready for education and a career after high school.

PURSUE YOUR INTERESTS

Schools and employers are looking for students who are well-rounded and prepared for life after high school, both inside and outside the classroom. Become a well-rounded student by getting involved in sports, clubs, the arts, volunteer work, community service and jobs.

EXPLORE INTERESTS AND **BECOME WELL-ROUNDED**

- Get involved and stay involved throughout high school.
- Focus on a couple of activities where you have a genuine interest and can demonstrate your commitment and leadership skills.
- Schools and future employers want to see students who are passionate and more heavily involved in a couple of activities rather than students who have done a little of this and a little of that.
- Find something you are passionate about. Caring deeply about something or taking pride in something you love will make it easier for you to develop a strong work ethic—a trait employers value tremendously.

CREATING A RESUME OR PORTFOLIO

A resume or portfolio will be a reflection of you and highlight your skills and accomplishments. Share your resume or portfolio with scholarship organizations and potential employers and colleges to show who you are and what you have to offer. Common categories to include:

PROFILE Give a quick summary of yourself including specific interests that relate to your higher education aspirations.

ACADEMICS High school, graduation date and statistics.

ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS Showcase your academic honors and extracurricular activities.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT List any paid or unpaid work and/or internships.

RESUME Don'ts

- Avoid non-standard fonts
- Be cautious of templates
- Avoid listing interests/skills not related to work
- Do not include graphics, clip-art or photos

EXPLORE CAREERS

Education after high school can help you explore your interests, meet new people, go to new places and get a better paying job. Deciding where to go or what to do is a big decision! Think about what you're interested in and connect that to a job you might like to have.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN, **ASK YOURSELF**

1. **WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS?** What are you good at? What do you like/dislike? Check out a free Interest Assessment at **CareerOneStop.org/Toolkit**
2. **WHICH CLASSES ARE YOUR FAVORITES?**
3. **WHICH CLASSES ARE YOU MOST SUCCESSFUL IN?**
4. **WHAT WORK OR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU LIKED? DISLIKED?**
5. **WHEN THINKING ABOUT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CAREER, WHAT HAS MADE YOU MOST SUCCESSFUL?**

CLAIM YOUR FUTURE

Explore future careers, salary, and learn basic money management at **FAME.ClaimYourFuture.com**

FIND THE COMMON THREAD in your answers to help you decide which jobs and careers will be of interest to you. Once you have a job in mind, learn about the education pathway to that career. Do you need to get a certification, go to college or do an apprenticeship? Want to learn how your strengths can translate into possible college majors and career fields? Create a free account on ACT Profile at **myACT.org** or **BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org**.

DO YOU PREFER **LEARNING ON THE JOB?**

If so, a career in the skilled trades might be right for you. Skilled trades are careers that require specific, often "hands-on," training or certification, such as a carpenter, electrician or welder. If you think a skilled trade could be a good fit for you after high school, consider exploring your options at a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center while in high school.

Maine has 27 career and technical education high schools located throughout the state. At these centers, students acquire the high quality technical skills that will prepare them for postsecondary education and entry into a range of careers. Learn more at **MaineCTE.org**.

CTE provides opportunities to gain technical skills, industry-recognized credentials and certifications. Approximately 40% of Maine CTE students earn at least one industry-recognized credential before they graduate from high school. Additionally, many CTE programs provide the opportunity for students to earn free college credits.

Skilled workers are in high demand in Maine, and in many cases these jobs are going unfilled.

CTE CAREER PATHS

Each CTE center offers a variety of defined career pathways connected to postsecondary educational or training opportunities, including:

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Architecture, Construction & Manufacturing
- Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications
- Business, Management, Administration, Finance, Marketing, Sales & Service
- Education & Public Service
- Health & Human Services
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Public Safety & Security
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) & Information Technology
- Transportation

CONSIDER THE **MILITARY**

In the military, you can develop skills such as leadership, perseverance and discipline. In addition, service members often receive education benefits and training that transfer to the civilian world. For more information on education benefits for service members, veterans, and their families, visit **FAMEmaine.com/military**.

The most common branches of the military are: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. Contact your local military recruiter for detailed information on requirements, obligations and benefits before making a decision.

Maine Maritime Academy

LEARN ABOUT OPTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

Higher education, sometimes referred to as postsecondary education or simply "college," is education after high school. This includes public and private two-year and four-year institutions, community colleges, trade schools, even apprenticeship programs.

TYPES OF **SCHOOLS**

ADULT EDUCATION CENTERS offer college preparation programs, industry certifications, and job training.

CAREER AND TRADE SCHOOLS generally offer certificate programs.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES offer certificate and associate degree programs.

PUBLIC COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES generally offer associate and bachelor's degree programs and may also offer master's and professional degrees.

TYPES OF **PROGRAMS**

APPRENTICESHIPS offer a combination of on-the-job training and instruction. Apprenticeships teach the practical and technical aspects of a skilled job. Apprenticeship programs can be sponsored by employers, employer associations or labor/management groups. Learn about the Maine Apprenticeship Program at **Maine.gov/labor/jobs_training/apprenticeship**

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS are undergraduate degree programs that are one year or less of full-time, directed study. Certificate programs can be pursued independently or in addition to an associate, bachelor's or master's degree to enhance skills or expertise in a specific area.

ASSOCIATE DEGREES are undergraduate degree programs that typically require two years of full-time study.

MONEY TIP

Think about the **return on investment** when considering a school. Make sure the education you receive is likely to "pay off" financially in the way you hope.

To learn more about costs, check out the College Board's Big Future **(BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org)** or the U.S. Department of Education's College Navigator at **NCES.Ed.gov/CollegeNavigator**.

To research careers and salaries, check out **CareerOneStop.org**.

BACHELOR'S DEGREES are undergraduate degree programs that typically require four years of full-time study.

MASTER'S & PROFESSIONAL DEGREES are graduate degree programs that typically require two to four years of full-time study after completion of a bachelor's degree.

MICRO CREDENTIALS are stackable, short-term "mini" certifications in specific fields and industries and vary in length of time to complete.

TAKE STANDARDIZED TESTS

Are Standardized Tests Important?

THE SHORT ANSWER IS, IT DEPENDS. Traditionally we've talked about standardized tests potentially impacting admission and merit scholarships at some schools. In these challenging times, standardized tests and their importance at individual schools is just one more area where things may change going forward. Be sure to check with the individual schools you are interested in applying to and ask them about the role of standardized tests to be sure you receive the most up-to-date and accurate information.

The SAT vs. The ACT

The SAT and the ACT are two different standardized tests that serve as college entrance exams. Both are nationally administered and help colleges evaluate applicants. Most colleges will accept either test equally.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO:

- The SAT does not have a science section; the ACT has a science section.
- The essays are different. Both tests have an optional essay, however the ACT asks you to come up with your own argument and support it. The SAT provides you with an argument and asks you to evaluate it.
- The SAT has a few fill-in-the-blank math problems and half of the math problems do not allow calculator use. The ACT lets you use a calculator on all its math problems and all answers are multiple choice.
- The SAT gives you more time per problem than the ACT.
- There is a fee to take either the SAT or ACT. Visit **CollegeBoard.org** for information about the SAT and **Act.org** for information about the ACT. Fee waivers may be available for tests. Check with your guidance department for more information.

Both tests take three to four hours to complete and both test your knowledge of math, English grammar and reading comprehension. Score comparison charts are available on both the ACT website, **Act.org** and the College Board website, **CollegeBoard.org**.

DATES AND DEADLINES FOR REGISTRATION SAT: **CollegeBoard.org** | ACT: **Act.org**

TOEFL

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a standardized test used to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers who wish to enroll in English-speaking universities. To determine if you are required to take this test, contact any college you are interested in attending. To learn more about the TOEFL visit: **www.ets.org/toefl**

HOW TO PREPARE

- Take the PSAT in preparation for the SAT, or the PreACT in preparation for the ACT.
- Start prepping early in your junior year for the SAT or the ACT to be taken in the spring.
- Be sure to register before the deadline to avoid additional fees.
- Take the SAT and/or the ACT during the spring of your junior year. Retaking the test is often recommended and can be done during the fall of your senior year.
- Khan Academy provides free individualized test preparation tools by linking your College Board account to your Khan Academy account. Find out more at **www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat**.

TEST TAKING TIPS

BE EQUIPPED

The night before, gather everything you'll need: admission ticket, photo ID, pencils, calculator and a watch. Leave your phone behind. There are strict policies against having your cell phone in a testing room.

Consider bringing water and a snack. It takes several hours to take the test. You don't want to be distracted by thirst or hunger.

BE COMFORTABLE

Get a good night's sleep before the test to help you feel fresh and clear-minded. Dress in comfortable layers so you can easily adjust if the room is hot or cold.

ARRIVE EARLY

Give yourself plenty of time to travel to the test center (doing a dry run the day before is a good idea if testing in an unfamiliar place). Arrive early so that you can be relaxed and acquainted with your surroundings.

IT'S OK TO GUESS

If you don't know the answer, guess. Eliminate the choices you know are wrong, and then make an educated guess from the remaining options. On both the ACT and the SAT, only correct answers count toward the score, so it is better to guess than leave a question blank.

MAKE YOUR WRITTEN RESPONSE STAND OUT

Make your response as powerful and impressive as possible. Use paragraphs to keep it organized and orderly. Use a conversational tone and include personal examples to convey your message in a compelling way.

If you have bad penmanship, write as clearly as possible. You don't want to lose points because your writing couldn't be deciphered.

GET PREPARED

MOST 4-YEAR COLLEGES **REQUIRE**

- **4 YEARS OF ENGLISH**
- **3 YEARS OF MATH**
- **3 YEARS OF SCIENCE**
- **AT LEAST 3 YEARS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**
- **MANY REQUIRE AT LEAST 2 YEARS OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Take Challenging Classes in Core Academic Subjects

Explore courses that are of interest to you. If you prefer to take courses that offer you more hands-on learning or job training, be sure to explore the options at your area Career and Technical School. Learn more about CTE on page 5.

Focus on your classes and on maintaining a good GPA. Having good grades can pay off. Better grades improve your chances of receiving merit aid and scholarships. Colleges and employers will want to see that you can demonstrate proficiency in your classes. Develop skills that will help you succeed in college and beyond.

No matter what your goals are after high school, communication, organization, time management, grit and perseverance are critical skills for building relationships and working in a team. These skills will help you be successful in school and help you turn your academic experience into a good job.

For an accurate list of prerequisites, contact your school's admissions office or your high school counselor.

MONEY TIP

SAVE MONEY

Consider taking Advanced Placement or Early College classes. Not only does this give you a head start on college, but can also save you money if you don't have to take these classes in college.

RESEARCH SCHOOLS

There are dozens of colleges just in Maine and thousands in the United States. To find those schools that are the best fit for YOU, consider the following:

SCHOOL AND CLASS SIZE Do you want to be where you'll see new people every day or where most people will become familiar to you? Do you prefer classes with 20-30 people, or do you think you'll easily adjust to larger, lecture-style classes?

ACADEMICS Do you learn best when you are academically comfortable or academically challenged? Are you looking for diversity among the students in your classes? Are you okay with some of your classes being taught by a teaching assistant? How do you feel about online classes?

LOCATION Are you looking for a different climate, culture or setting, or do you want to stay in a location that is similar to Maine? Do you want to be able to come home on the weekends?

CAMPUS LIFE What aspects of campus life are most important to you? Do you plan to live in a residence hall or off campus? What type of clubs would you like to join? What entertainment and recreational activities are offered on campus?

AFFORDABILITY Are you going to be heavily reliant on financial aid to pay for school? If so, focus on the Net Price of a school, not the sticker price. Learn more about Net Price on page 11.

Once you know what you are looking for, use these tools to find schools that might be a good fit.

- The College Board's Big Future (**BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org**)
- The U.S. Department of Education's College Navigator (**NCES.Ed.gov/CollegeNavigator**)

Use the **Fit Test Worksheet** on page 11 and the **College Comparison Worksheet** on page 14 to help you search for and compare colleges.

Interested in Learning More About the Schools You Are Considering?

- Check out the websites of the colleges you are considering. Look for virtual campus tours, student-created videos and blogs to help you get a sense of the college culture.
- Ask an Admissions Representative to take you on a virtual college tour or set up an on-line meeting with a current student.
- If it is an option, consider attending a college fair or visiting a school in person.

THE 2-2-2 APPROACH

Applying to college can be costly as application fees can add up (fee waivers may be available - check with your school counselor). Consider using the 2-2-2 approach and narrow your choices to six schools. Be sure at least one of your probable schools is a good fit financially.

APPLY TO: 2 PROBABLE SCHOOLS + **2 TARGET** SCHOOLS + **2 REACH** SCHOOLS

PROBABLE: Your GPA and test scores are higher.*
TARGET: Your GPA and test scores are very similar.*
REACH: Your GPA and test scores are slightly lower, but not by too much.*

**As defined by comparing yourself to the average admitted student. Visit BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org and look under the "Applying" tab for your interested schools to learn more about the GPA and test scores of those schools' incoming classes.*

FIT TEST

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY FOR NEXT TWO TO FOUR YEARS?
WHAT SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS MIGHT BE BEST FOR YOU?

Use your answers to help you find the best fit. To get started, check out the **BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org** and/or the **NCES.Ed.gov/CollegeNavigator** online search tools.

WHAT TYPE OF SCHOOL DO YOU WANT TO ATTEND?

☐ 2-year college ☐ 4-year college or university ☐ Public ☐ Private

WHAT SIZE SCHOOL WOULD YOU LIKE?

☐ Large (over 10,000) ☐ Medium (3,000 - 10,000) ☐ Small (under 3,000)

WHAT SETTING DO YOU PREFER?

☐ Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Rural

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

☐ Northeast ☐ Southeast ☐ South ☐ Midwest

☐ Southwest ☐ Northwest ☐ Canada

HOW SELECTIVE DO YOU WANT THE SCHOOL TO BE?

☐ Most selective (<25% admitted) ☐ Very selective (25-50% admitted)

☐ Somewhat selective (50-75% admitted) ☐ Least Selective (>75% admitted)

WHAT OFF-CAMPUS OPPORTUNITIES ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

☐ Public transportation ☐ Outdoor activities ☐ Volunteering ☐ Nightlife

IS THERE A PARTICULAR SPORT OR ACTIVITY THAT YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN?

☐ No ☐ Yes List _____

IS THERE A PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION YOU WOULD LIKE THE SCHOOL TO HAVE?

☐ No ☐ Yes

IS FINANCIAL AID IMPORTANT TO YOU?

☐ No ☐ Yes*

*If yes, be sure to use the school's Net Price Calculator to get an early estimate of your cost to attend a particular school.

NET PRICE CALCULATOR

COST - SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS = NET COST TO YOU

The Net Price Calculator is a tool that provides an estimate of what a particular college will cost YOU! Net Price Calculator is student- and school-specific and calculates net price — the difference between the published price (full cost) and any grants or scholarships that you may be eligible to receive. Some of the most expensive schools offer the largest grants and scholarships, making them more affordable than you may think. Each school is required to have this tool on their website, and it can typically be found on the school's financial aid page.

TOUR PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

Visit prospective colleges either in person or virtually whenever possible. It's important to get a feel for what it's like to be on campus. Walking around a campus can give you the best sense of whether or not a school feels right to you.

VISIT IN PERSON

On your tour:

- Have a meal in the dining hall.
- Sit in on a class.
- Stay overnight in a residence hall.
- Check out the surrounding area too. Make sure you will feel comfortable in the community.

TAKE A GUIDED TOUR

Contact the admissions office to schedule a guided in-person or virtual tour. These are often led by current or past students who can provide insight into the culture of the college. Be sure to ask questions. Their experience can be extremely valuable.

SHOW YOUR INTEREST

Colleges like to admit students who want to enroll there. If possible, speak with students and professors in the major you are considering. Asking questions shows that you are interested in the college, so compile a list of questions about the college itself and/or your desired major.

TAKE NOTES & SEND NOTES OF THANKS

Write down your thoughts about schools while they are still fresh in your mind. Whatever you decide about a particular school, send the admissions staff, as well as any professors you meet, a note of thanks for their time.

A good, in-person, campus visit takes two to four hours, including time to get a sense of the surrounding area. Don't try to visit more than two schools in one day.

TOUR QUESTIONS

ASK YOUR STUDENT TOUR GUIDE...

- What is the transition like from high school to college?
- How would you rate campus safety?
- How do you like the food and residence halls?
- How would you describe your personal experience at this school?
- Why did you choose this school?

ASK YOUR ADMISSIONS REP...

- How large are typical freshman classes?
- What unique programs are incorporated into your school's curriculum?
- What is the school culture like?
- What do students like most about this college/university?
- What academic and career services are available to students?

IN-PERSON CAMPUS VISIT NOTE SHEET

School Name: _____

Date of Visit: _____

TO DOs

- ☐ Take pictures
- ☐ Eat in the cafeteria
- ☐ See a residence hall
- ☐ Sit in on a class
- ☐ Talk with a professor
- ☐ Go to a campus event
- ☐ Check out the student newspaper
- ☐ Talk with current students about the school

RATINGS & NOTES

Take notes on your thoughts on these areas of campus. Rate them from 1 (dislike) to 5 (like) so that you'll have something to reference when remembering your visit.

Campus: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Residence Halls: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

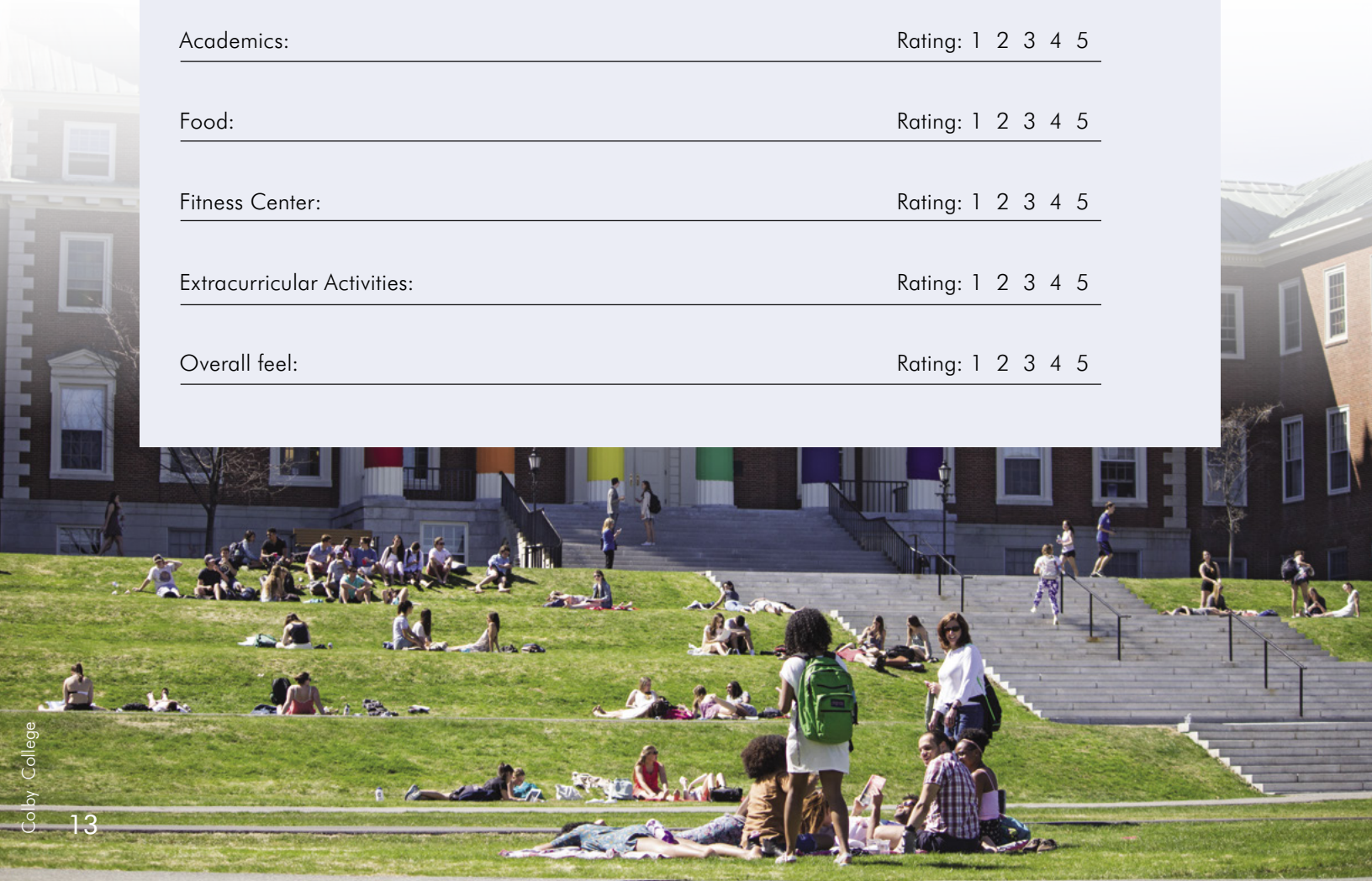
Academics: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Food: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Fitness Center: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Extracurricular Activities: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall feel: Rating: 1 2 3 4 5



Colby College

COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

Use the criteria below to help you compare your top schools.
Use the blank rows to add any other characteristics that are important to you.

SCHOOL				
Location				
Size				
Net Price estimate				
Average amount in loans				
Percent admitted				
Application deadline				
Standardized test requirements				
4-year graduation rate				

APPLY FOR ADMISSION

There are many steps and requirements in the admissions process. Schools have different types of deadlines and different requirements. Track schools' requirements on the checklist on page 18.

TYPES OF **ADMISSION**

EARLY DECISION When using Early Decision, you apply early and receive an earlier decision. If you are accepted, YOU ARE OBLIGATED TO ATTEND.

You can only apply to one school Early Decision and, if accepted, you must withdraw any applications at all other schools. Please be sure to read the Early Decision policy at the school to which you are applying.

EARLY ACTION This allows you to apply under an earlier deadline and be notified earlier, but does not obligate you to attend a school if you are accepted. Unless you apply under Single-Choice or Restrictive Early Action, you can apply to more than one school through their Early Action deadline.

SINGLE-CHOICE EARLY ACTION This program allows you to apply to one school through their Early Action deadline. However, like other Early Action deadlines, if accepted, you are not obligated to attend.

REGULAR DECISION This has a standard deadline and standard notification period.

ROLLING ADMISSION Rolling Admission has no set deadline so students can apply throughout the year. The school will review applications and fill spots on a first-come, first-served basis.

Sometimes schools have priority deadlines, meaning that applications submitted after the priority deadline will be considered, but the ones submitted before take priority.

Northeast Technical Institute

SOCIAL MEDIA TIP

Colleges and universities can find out information about you through the internet and social media. Keep any profiles you have (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) appropriate. Use these tools as a way to showcase yourself! Any time you post something or have something posted about you, think about how a potential college or employer may form an opinion about what they've seen.

The Common Application

- The Common Application is an online application accepted by more than 850 schools and most of the schools in Maine.
- Schools accept the Common Application in place of their own at no penalty to the student.
- The Common Application saves students time by allowing students to fill the form out once and send it to all of the colleges to which they apply.
- The Common Application process is simple, however, students will want to pay close attention and check if a college requires an additional supplement, also available through the Common Application.

For more information, please visit **CommonApp.org**.

Online Applications

While online applications are convenient and save money on printing and postage, don't forget to be diligent about grammar and spelling! Be sure to have someone proofread your application and essay before you submit them.

Let your school counselor know when you have applied so that they can send your transcript and any supporting documents to the college.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation are an important piece of your application materials. Most colleges require at least one, some require more. Typically, a college will let you choose who you will have write your recommendation, but be sure to check any specific requirements (e.g. English teacher, community leader).

CHOOSE WISELY

- Recommendations are strongly considered and reviewed by an admissions officer.
- Recommendations show how others view you in a variety of settings.
- Choose someone who knows you well and who can speak positively about you.
- The following individuals may make strong recommendation writers: Teachers, School Counselors, Work Supervisors, Coaches, Activity Advisors, Community Leaders.

LETTERS ARE NOT TYPICALLY SHARED WITH YOU

- If you use an online application such as the Common Application, your reference writer will receive a request via email to upload the letter themselves.
- Your reference writer may share what they wrote, but some may find that it's awkward to do so.
- There may be an option to waive your right to view the recommendation letters. Waiving your right gives more credibility to your reference as it shows your faith in their assessment of you.

CONSIDER PROVIDING GUIDELINES

- Ask your recommendation writer to focus on your strengths or characteristics that you believe will be an asset to any colleges.
- Provide a personal "info sheet" to your reference writer. This can be a resume, an activity listing sheet or a short paragraph to help individuals write a stronger letter of support for you.

ALWAYS FOLLOW UP WITH A THANK YOU NOTE TO YOUR REFERENCE WRITERS.

- A hand-written thank you note shows your gratitude and appreciation for their time and effort.

REFERENCES TIP

GIVE PLENTY OF TIME

Give your references at least two weeks to prepare their letters. You may also need recommendations if you are applying for scholarships. Keep this in mind when making requests and be sure your recommendation writer keeps a copy of his or her recommendation.

THE ESSAY

The essay is an important part of your application. Keep the following in mind so that the end result is an essay that represents you well.

START EARLY Give yourself plenty of time.

BE YOURSELF Take a moment to think about what interests you, what you love to talk about, what makes you sit up and take notice if it's mentioned in class. Then write about it. One of the biggest mistakes students make is writing what they think others want to hear, rather than about an issue, event or person that is significant to them. That type of essay is not just boring to write, it's boring to read.

TAKE A RISK Some risks can pay off. Don't settle for the essay that everyone else is writing. You want your essay to stand out. Beware though, things you believe are risky or funny may be offensive to someone else. Run your idea by your school counselor or another adult to be sure.

CHOOSE YOUR ESSAY QUESTION CAREFULLY
The Common Application publishes their essay prompts ahead of time. See the most recent essay topics below. Choose the one that looks like the most fun to write about. Stick to the main theme throughout the essay. You don't have to list all your achievements; that is what the rest of the application is for. Use the essay in a creative way to help the admissions officers get to know you as a person.

GET A SECOND SET OF EYES Be sure to ask someone to read it so they can offer feedback and proofread for any errors that can creep in as you write or edit.

USE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE & FORMATTING
Applying online may feel like you're sending email, but you're not. Avoid using informal email language, incorrect capitalization or abbreviations such as BTW or "thanx," which are not appropriate to a formal document. Make sure your online essay represents the best of you.

DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM AN ESSAY
Although your essay is important, and can sometimes make a difference in being admitted, it is only one piece of your application. Devote enough time and energy to write an essay that represents the best you, but keep in mind the importance of the rest of your application.

THE COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY TOPICS

- 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.
- 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?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- 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.
- 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?
- 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.

SCHOOL APPLICATION CHECKLIST

	Schools											
Follow-up	Check that all colleges have received all materials											
Aid	Financial Aid Submitted (FAFSA, PROFILE*)											
Interview	Interview Required											
	Thank You Note											
Test Scores	Test Scores Sent											
Recommendation Letters	Recommendation Request											
	Thank You Note											
	Recommendation Request											
	Thank You Note											
	Recommendation Request											
	Thank You Note											
High School Records	Transcript Requested											
	High School Report Request											
Applications	Application Sent											
	Regular Deadline											
	Early Deadline											

*if required

APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

Most families rely on financial aid to help pay for college. The good news is that virtually all students are eligible for some type of financial aid, which includes scholarships, grants, work study and loans.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID: MERIT-BASED AID AND NEED-BASED AID

Merit-based aid is based on academic, athletic, artistic or other talent, not on financial need. Merit-based aid is usually awarded by the admissions office, athletic or academic department. Earning good grades in high school is key to earning academic-based scholarships and can make paying for college much easier. Need-based aid is based on family financial circumstances and is typically awarded by the financial aid office. All federal grants, work-study and many federal student loans are need-based aid. Learn how to apply for both types of aid at each school you are interested in applying to attend.

FOCUS ON NET PRICE, NOT STICKER PRICE

Very few students pay the published or sticker price for a school because of financial aid. Focus on the net price – the published price minus any grants and scholarships you may be eligible to receive.

To find your annual net price at a school, use that school's Net Price Calculator, which is usually found on the financial aid page. The Net Price Calculator is student- and school-specific. Some schools you thought were financially out of reach may be very affordable.

FILE THE FAFSA

Everyone should apply for financial aid, regardless of income. Be sure to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at **FAFSA.gov**, and complete any other financial aid applications and paperwork required by the school. Some schools require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile® in addition to the FAFSA.

RESEARCH AND MEET DEADLINES

Meeting deadlines is extremely important when applying for financial aid. Not all schools have enough financial aid to meet the needs of all students, so many schools prioritize the students who meet their deadlines. Research financial aid deadlines early and be sure you meet them. Missing a deadline could mean missing out on some types of financial aid.

RESEARCH AND APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships can help bridge the gap between the cost of school and your financial aid package and reduce the amount you have to borrow. You will apply for most scholarships during senior year, but start researching scholarships early so that you have a list ready to go once applications become available.

To begin your search, check out:

- Local high school guidance office
- Employer/parents' employer(s)
- Local service organizations or town offices
- Faith-based institutions
- You can also search for scholarships online, but be sure to use only free scholarship searches. Start by visiting **FAMEmaine.com** to find a Maine-based scholarship search and other free scholarship search services.

UNDERSTAND THE DETAILS OF THE FINANCIAL AID PROCESS

Be sure to understand the details related to the entire financial aid process, which doesn't end with filing the FAFSA. Check out FAME's booklet *Pay: Tips to Afford Higher Education*. If you don't have a copy, go to **FAMEmaine.com/publications** to download a PDF or order a free copy. FAME also provides in-person information and help sessions statewide. Visit **FAMEmaine.com** for a list of financial aid information sessions and FAFSA help sessions.

SAVING FOR COLLEGE IS A GOOD THING!

Typically, parent savings have little to no impact on financial aid eligibility. Savings can help families cover their expected contribution, limit borrowing and/or cover the remaining balance when the financial aid is not enough. Having savings provides families with options!

Colby College

TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Once you've committed to a college and paid the deposit, it's time to celebrate! But there are a few things to do before you get to campus. Below are the major items to complete, but there may be more. Use the checklist on the next page to stay on track.

ATTEND ORIENTATION

Most schools offer a new student orientation, either in-person or virtually, so that students can meet new classmates, familiarize themselves with what the campus has to offer, finalize unfinished business and learn about important resources.

FOLLOW YOUR SCHOOL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow and interact with your school's social media accounts. This will help you feel connected to your campus even before classes begin.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES

The class registration process is different at each school, and may happen before, during or after orientation.

PAY YOUR BILL

No one looks forward to paying the bill, but doing so on time will prevent late fees and additional stress. Bills typically arrive by early July and are due in late July or early August. If you have questions about financial aid or are struggling to pay the bill, contact the Financial Aid Office.

COMPLETE ANY REMAINING REQUIREMENTS:

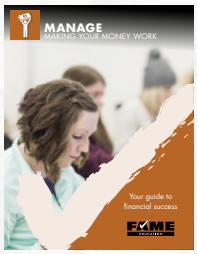
- Student Loan Entrance Counseling and Master Promissory Note: If borrowing a Federal Direct Loan, you must complete Loan Entrance Counseling and a Master Promissory Note before funds can be disbursed. Complete these tasks at **StudentAid.gov**.
- Housing Forms and Deposits: Make sure you have completed housing forms and submitted your housing deposit.
- Health Forms and Insurance Waivers: Schools require students to submit health forms before they are allowed to move onto campus or start classes. Because students are required to have health insurance, most schools automatically bill students for the school's insurance. If you already have health insurance coverage, provide proof of insurance and waive the school insurance by the deadline so the fee can be removed from your bill.

PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS EARLY

Once you have registered for classes, your school is required to provide a list of books needed for each class. Purchasing books online may save you some money. Get the list of required books from the bookstore and then research costs at sites like **Amazon.com** or **Chegg.com**.

CREATE A BUDGET

Create a plan for your money. Determine your available income and resources and make a list of your anticipated monthly expenses, setting aside money for savings. Even though your income may be minimal while you are in school, getting into the habit of saving even a few dollars is a good thing! If your expenses exceed your income, find ways to reduce those expenses or increase your resources. Evaluate your plan regularly and adjust as necessary.



For more tips on managing your money, check out FAME's booklet *Manage: Making Your Money Work*. If you don't have a copy, go to **FAMEmaine.com/publications** to download a PDF or order a free copy.

TRANSITION TO COLLEGE CHECKLIST

Be sure you are ready to go the first day of school. Each school is different but the tasks below are common at most schools. Not every item is required of every student (and some schools may have additional items). Contact your school with student-specific questions.

Review the following items carefully:

- ☐ Activate and regularly check your school's email. Most schools use that email address as the primary means of communication once you are accepted. **Check it daily,** especially leading up to orientation.
- ☐ Log in to your school's student portal and become familiar with information included on the portal. Write down all user names and passwords.
- ☐ Check "to-do lists" in student portal. Do this regularly.
- ☐ Complete any remaining financial aid or verification paperwork.
- ☐ If borrowing a Federal Direct Student Loan, complete Master Promissory Note and Entrance Counseling at **StudentAid.gov** (You will need your FSA ID – the user name and password students use to access all Federal Student Aid websites).
- ☐ Review the paper bill and/or view bill on the student portal.
- ☐ When is the first bill due? _____
- ☐ What is the plan to cover the bill balance (gap)? _____
- ☐ Report outside scholarships to the financial aid office – discuss impact on financial aid, if any.
- ☐ Understand the school's FERPA policy which protects student privacy and restricts the sharing of information (including with parents in most cases). Complete a FERPA release, if appropriate.
- ☐ Attend orientation.
- ☐ Complete placement testing, if required.
- ☐ Submit room and board-related form and deposit.
- ☐ Submit final high school transcript to school.
- ☐ Submit any early college transcripts from the colleges you attended (if applicable).
- ☐ Submit AP (Advanced Placement) scores (if applicable).
- ☐ Register for classes and/or connect with academic advisor.
- ☐ Plan to purchase books. Allot at least $500 per semester.
- ☐ Get any needed immunizations and submit documentation.
- ☐ If health insurance is listed on your bill, follow up to waive the insurance if you already have coverage.
- ☐ Connect with roommate and coordinate living space needs.
- ☐ Obtain parking permit (if applicable).
- ☐ Plan for additional expenses – incidentals, travel, etc.
- ☐ Make a transportation plan to get to college. First day: _____

NAVIGATING THE ROAD AHEAD CHECKLIST

High School Goals

EVERY YEAR

- ☐ Take challenging classes in core academic subjects. Most colleges require:
  - 4 years of English
  - 3 years of math
  - 3 years of science
  - At least 3 years of social science
  - And many require at least 2 years of a foreign language
- ☐ Keep a calendar of important dates and deadlines.
- ☐ Be involved in school and community activities. Keep track of these activities to use on your college resume.
- ☐ Considering a skilled trade? Look into attending a CTE program.
- ☐ Work on saving for college. Even small amounts can make a big difference.
- ☐ When visiting a new location, take the opportunity to visit local colleges.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- ☐ Explore careers based on your interests. The ACT Profile (**myACT.org**) can help you form a plan for after high school.
- ☐ Talk with your school counselor about your goals. Be sure you are on the path to success and fulfilling college course requirements.
- ☐ Take the PSAT in preparation for the SAT, or the PreACT in preparation for the ACT.
- ☐ Focus on your classes and maintaining a good GPA.
- ☐ Look for resume-boosting summer opportunities – camps, jobs, classes, volunteer work.
- ☐ Start making a list of schools that interest you. It's never too early to visit.
- ☐ Attend a college planning and/or financial aid night at your school or online.

Ready to start searching for schools? You can search online at **BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org**.

JUNIOR YEAR

September/October

- ☐ Attend an in-person or virtual college fair. Find one at **NEACAC.org**.
- ☐ Take the PSAT in preparation for the SAT, or the PreACT, which is a prep test for the ACT.

November/December

- ☐ Start your college search.

December/January

- ☐ Start prepping for the SAT or the ACT to take in the spring.

March/April

- ☐ If possible, visit schools during vacation weeks and long weekends and talk to current students.
- ☐ Gather information from schools. Request brochures and catalogs.
- ☐ Talk with your parents and high school counselor about schools that interest you.
- ☐ Research costs and use the Net Price Calculator tool for the schools that interest you.
- ☐ Attend a college planning and/or financial aid night at your school or online.
- ☐ Register for and take the SAT or the ACT.

May/June

- ☐ Take the SAT Subject Tests, if applicable.
- ☐ Attend an in-person or virtual college fair. Find one at **NEACAC.org**.
- ☐ Review your senior year schedule and make a plan for applying to schools and financial aid.
- ☐ Create your FSA ID at **fsaid.ed.gov**. The FSA ID is a username and password you will need to access the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

July/August

- ☐ Explore opportunities for volunteering, internships, or summer classes. Seek ways to be a well-rounded student.
- ☐ Visit schools. Take campus tours and explore the possibility of scheduling an interview with an admissions counselor.
- ☐ Initiate conversations with your family about paying for your education.
- ☐ Keep a calendar of application deadlines. Use the Application Checklist on page 18 to organize and track application and financial aid deadlines. If you are planning on applying Early Decision or Early Action to a particular college, these deadlines will likely be in early fall.

University of Maine

SENIOR YEAR

September

- ☐ Meet with your school counselor and begin putting together your application materials (e.g. essay, resume, and a list of extracurricular activities).
- ☐ Narrow your list of schools to between 6 and 8.
- ☐ Research financial aid and application deadlines. Use the school Application Checklist on page 18 to organize and track application and financial aid deadlines.
- ☐ Prepare to file your FAFSA. Gather information, including copies of tax returns and other financial statements.
- ☐ If either you or your parent doesn't have an FSA ID, create one at **fsaid.ed.gov**. The FSA ID is a user name and password you will need to access the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

October/November

- ☐ File your FAFSA at **FAFSA.gov**. The FAFSA is available starting on October 1.
- ☐ If you need help with your FAFSA, attend a FAFSA In-Person Help Session. A list of sessions can be found at **FAMEmaine.com**.
- ☐ File the CSS Financial Aid Profile, if required, by your college(s).
- ☐ Retake the SAT and/or the ACT if needed. Have your scores sent to the schools you are applying to.
- ☐ Begin the Common Application online at **CommonApp.org**. If the school(s) you are applying to do not accept the Common Application, fill out the individual application from the admissions website.
- ☐ Finalize your college essay.
- ☐ Select and speak with anyone that you want to provide recommendations for you.

December/January

- ☐ Research scholarships. Start by visiting **FAMEmaine.com**.
- ☐ Complete applications. Most schools' regular decision deadlines are between January 1 and February 15.

January

- ☐ Follow up with your counselor and recommendation writer(s) to be sure materials are sent to the schools to which you've applied.
- ☐ Make sure the financial aid office(s) have all of the documents they need to award your financial aid.

March

- ☐ Decision letters from colleges should arrive by mid-March.

April

- ☐ Compare your financial aid offers from the schools where you have been accepted.
- ☐ Visit the schools again if you are having a tough time deciding which to attend. Many schools will have Accepted Student Open Houses that you can attend.

May

- ☐ Typically, by May 1, you must send a deposit to the school you choose. However, different schools have different deadlines, so be sure you know the date of this important deadline at your school of choice.
- ☐ As a courtesy, inform other schools of your acceptance or rejection of their offers of admission or financial aid.

You should never have to pay to complete or submit your FAFSA. When applying, be sure to log on to FAFSA.gov.

got jobs?

NEED MORE HELP?

These resources are available in Maine.

Program	Serving	Services			Phone Number / Websites
		Career	Admissions	Financial Aid Information	
EMBARK A comprehensive high school-to-college transition program with a potential scholarship from Maine's Community Colleges.	High School Juniors and Seniors	●	●	●	EMBARK@mccs.me.edu EMBARK.me.edu
Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) Whether you're a parent of a young child, a high school student, a recent graduate, or an adult seeking new skills, FAME-education.com is your resource for higher education success.	All Ages			●	800-228-3734 fame-education.com TTY: 207-626-2717
GEAR UP Maine Works in collaboration with school districts and other partners to significantly increase the number of students who graduate high school and enroll and succeed in postsecondary education.	7th - 1st Year of College	●	●	●	207-685-3171 http://www.gearupme.org
JMG Identifies students who face barriers to education and guides them on to a successful path toward continued education, a meaningful career and productive adulthood.	6th - College Students	●	●	●	207-620-7180 jmg.org
Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training Programs provide outreach and information to foster the usage of the GI Bill.	Service Members, Veterans and Eligible Dependents	●		●	207-582-2100 MSAA.Maine.edu
TRIO Maine Educational Talent Search (METS) Early intervention program for eligible youth in grades 6-12 to prepare for higher education.	6th - 12th Grade	●	●	●	UMaine 800-540-0493 METS.Maine.edu UMPI 207-768-9620 umpi.edu/trio-college-access/educational-talent-search/
TRIO Student Support Services Helps eligible students (including individuals with disabilities) stay in college until they earn their bachelor's degree and provides tutoring, counseling and remedial instruction.	College Students	●	●	●	CMCC 207-755-5238 EMCC 207-974-4866 KVCC 207-453-5013 NMCC 207-768-2839 SMCC 207-741-5670 Thomas College 207-859-1111 UMaine 207-581-2320 UMA 207-621-3157 UMF 207-778-7297 UMFK 207-834-7532 UMPI 207-768-9613 USM 207-780-5203 WCCC 207-454-1064 YCCC 207-216-4424
TRIO Upward Bound Helps eligible high school students prepare for higher education and includes a summer residential component.	9th - 12th Grade	●	●	●	Bowdoin College 207-725-3559 UMaine 207-581-2522 UMF 207-778-7297 UMPI 207-768-9456 USM 207-780-5282

A GOAL OF 60%

MaineSpark is a 10-year commitment from Maine's most influential education and business leaders to work together to ensure that Maine's workforce is productive and competitive. MaineSpark organizations connect people with the education, training, jobs, programs and resources needed to thrive in Maine's robust and changing economy. MaineSpark is powered by a coalition of organizations—schools and universities, nonprofits and foundations, government agencies and businesses—with a common goal: by 2025, 60% of Mainers will hold education and workforce credentials that position Maine and its families for success. Learn more at **https://mainespark.me**.

This publication brought to you by:

FAME EDUCATION

FAMEmaine.com

MELMAC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

MelmacFoundation.org

The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) does not discriminate in the administration of any of its programs or in its employment practices on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, physical or mental disability, political affiliation, marital status or sexual orientation. FAME is an equal opportunity employer, provider and lender.

FAME provides links to other websites as a convenience and does not endorse or guarantee the content, accuracy or usability of such sites.

© 2021 Finance Authority of Maine.
All rights reserved. PLAN-2021