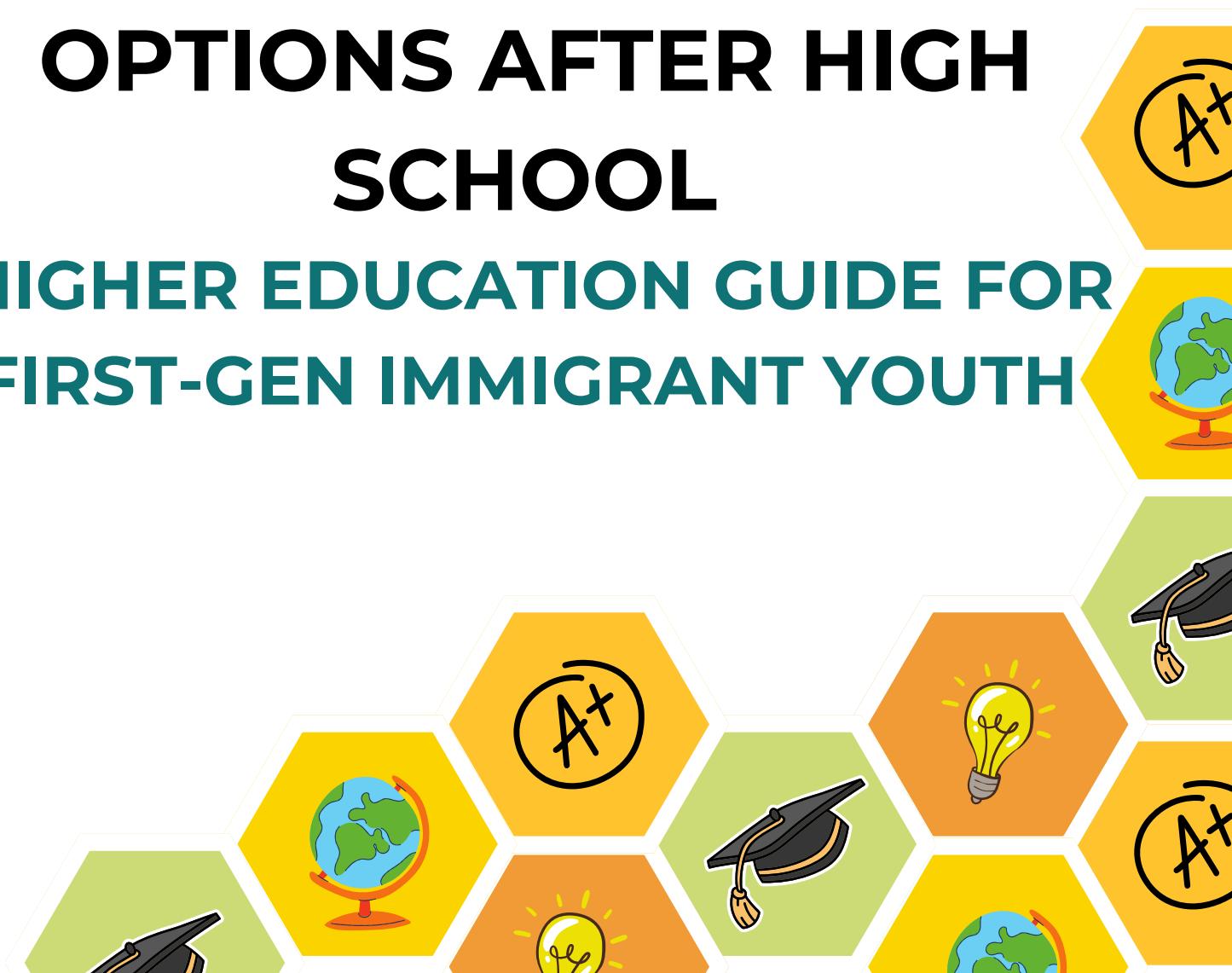




**New Jersey Consortium  
for Immigrant Children**

# **OPTIONS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

**HIGHER EDUCATION GUIDE FOR  
FIRST-GEN IMMIGRANT YOUTH**



# About NJCIC

## Mission & Vision

The **New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children** (NJCIC) is a state-wide legal services provider and policy advocacy organization dedicated to empowering young immigrants. We provide holistic, youth-centered legal representation, drive systemic change to advance immigrant rights, and build community through collaboration and education.

We envision a just and equitable NJ where young immigrants can flourish and lead full, fearless lives.

## History & Programs

The **New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children** (NJCIC) was founded in May 2015 to mobilize allies across immigration law and other disciplines in welcoming and serving an **unprecedented 80% increase** of unaccompanied children (UCs) to New Jersey. This movement of allyship increased in strength and catapulted into action during the height of the family separation crisis, with a **more than twofold increase** of UCs new to New Jersey and without strong networks of support nor access to critical legal relief and interrelated services. Today, NJCIC continues to meet this legacy of harm and current moments of crisis as the statewide legal services and policy advocacy organization dedicated to empowering New Jersey's young immigrants. We achieve our mission by 1) providing holistic, youth-centered legal representation, 2) driving systemic change to advance immigrant rights, and 3) building community through collaboration and education.

At the center of our mission is a holistic model developed to meet the needs and aspirations of immigrant children and youth, including **the more than 35,000 unaccompanied children** released to sponsors in New Jersey over the last decade. Across NJCIC's programs spanning lawyering, advocacy, and two-way community engagement, we meet young immigrants where they are, in their mother tongue, and with deep regard for their lived experience (in its totality) to address the highly intersectional challenges they face. This model is fueled by a shared 1) commitment to closing the service gaps that harm immigrant children and youth in their daily lives and upend their futures, and 2) belief that immigration status is a social driver of opportunities and outcomes across health, education, and economic status for young immigrants, their families, and broader communities.

# Three pillars shape our programmatic approach:

## 1) Holistic, youth-centered legal representation

- NJCIC conducts language-specific screenings and triages young immigrants to peer legal service providers for high-quality, free legal representation through our role as the central intake and referral hub for the **state-funded Legal Representation for Children and Youth Program (LRP)**.
- Our **Legal Team** also provides direct legal representation, advice, and counsel to immigrant youth who qualify for various immigration protections such as asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), U visas, and T visas. In addition to representation of UCs and similarly situated youth through the state's LRP, we host two additional direct representation and recently piloted programs:
  - **Florecer, a medical-legal partnership with Zufall Health**, a federally qualified health center,
  - and Beacon, an **educational-legal partnership with the Jersey City Public School District**.

## 2) Driving change to advance immigrants' rights

- Our **Policy Team** drives systemic change to advance the rights of NJ's young immigrants via **advocacy campaigns** addressing policy and systems affecting equitable access to justice, health, and education.
- **Narrative change and youth development** are facilitated through our **Immigrant Youth Advocates** program for first- and second-generation immigrant students. Advocates participate in a learning experience benefiting from weekly workshops led by community partners and together create a podcast, **Migrant with Migraines**, to discuss their experiences and echo up the needs and aspirations of impacted youth to the general public and decision-makers. This work helps build the advocacy skills of these young people and ensures they are equal and active stakeholders in shaping the policies and systems of bureaucracy that affect their lives.

## 3) Building community through collaboration and education

- Since our founding, our community of practice, **the Consortium**, has grown to **180+ professionals** representing **more than 25 organizations** working with young immigrants. The Consortium lends the convening power and movement-building that, in large part, shapes the collaboration and education piece of our mission across our Legal and Policy Advocacy efforts. Through bimonthly meetings, a growing and engaged listserv, and the maintenance of a catalog of best practices and resources.
- We provide **capacity-building and training** for allied professionals working with immigrant children and youth in New Jersey. This solution-oriented knowledge-building and resource-sharing allow us to better respond collectively (as a community of practice) and individually (as practitioners) to immigration law and policy issues surfaced through active discussion of community needs.
- Across our Legal and Policy efforts, **community engagement** is key and centered on building the self-advocacy skills of young immigrants and their support networks through access to tailored, language-specific, actionable information.



## Acknowledgments

We believe our best work is achieved through collaboration. Special thanks to YPIE Jersey City for their feedback on this guide.

## Summary of Guide

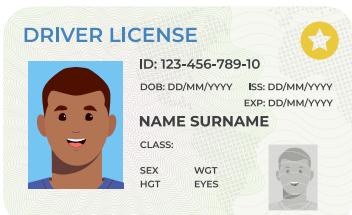
This project was produced by NJCIC's Policy Analyst, Alysia Colon with support from NJCIC's Policy Team. The information in this guide is general, is not legal advice, and is not a substitute for help from a lawyer who knows the specific facts of your case. For more information, additional resources are available at the end of this guide.

## Glossary

### D **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals**

**A** This policy was designed to protect undocumented individuals who arrived in the U.S. as children, called Dreamers, from deportation. It also allows those eligible to get a work permit, a social security number, and a driver's license. As of November 1, 2024, DACA recipients are also eligible to receive healthcare through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Unfortunately, protection under DACA must be renewed every two years and does not guarantee a green card or pathway to citizenship.

- **Currently, only DACA renewals are available.**
- **New DACA applications are not currently available.**



### Driver's Licenses for All

In New Jersey, all residents, **regardless of documentation status**, are eligible to obtain a driver's license. Read more [here](#).

## Public and Private Schools

**Public schools** are operated by the government and are funded by state and federal taxes.

**Private schools** operate separately from the government and are funded by tuition fees paid by students who attend.





## In-State vs Out-of-State Tuition

Because public institutions receive state funding, there can be a difference in the price of tuition:

-  **In-state tuition** is a lower cost for students who are attending a public school in the state they reside in.
-  **Out-of-state tuition** is a more expensive option because state taxes pay to help lower the costs for in-state residents only.

In New Jersey, the Tuition Equality Act, also known as the **New Jersey Dream Act**, allows undocumented students who are residents of New Jersey to qualify for in-state tuition at all the state's public schools of higher education.

## Room and Board

**"Room and board"** is a phrase used to describe the use of **school-owned dormitories** and **meal plans** by students at a higher education institution. Dorming and obtaining a meal plan can be mandatory for students at certain schools, especially first-year students.

## Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)

As a non-citizen, if you do not have a Social Security number (SSN), you may be assigned an **Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)** by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

In addition to paying taxes, your ITIN can be used to calculate your family's income to determine your financial aid packages.

Learn how to apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number [here](#).

## Safety, Match, and Reach Schools

These are phrases used to describe the chances of your admission to the schools you are applying to based on your transcript, resume, test scores, extracurricular activities, and the school's acceptance rate.

-  **Safety:** A high chance of acceptance due to qualifications and acceptance rate
-  **Match:** A moderate chance of acceptance due to qualifications and acceptance rate
-  **Reach:** A low chance of acceptance due to qualifications and acceptance rate

**Note:** Do not be discouraged to apply to schools that might be deemed a "reach," because your unique experience could be just what the admissions office is looking for!





## The Common Application, or “Common App”



**The Common Application**, also called the **“Common App,”** is a platform where you can apply to multiple schools at once. You can still personalize your application to each institution based on their requirements, but keeping all your information in one place is helpful. Your school counselors also have roles to play in your application, and the Common App helps simplify the process. When applying to schools, decide on which basis you would like to apply:

- Some schools offer **rolling decisions**, which means they accept and consider applications at any time.
-  **Early Decision (ED)** allows students to apply early to their first-choice schools, but if accepted, it is a final decision. You must commit to going to that school, regardless of whether you are accepted to other colleges.
-  **Early Action (EA)** allows students to apply early to schools, but luckily, it is not a final decision. This allows the benefit of applying and receiving a decision earlier without having to commit to the school.
- **Regular Decision (RD)** is the general timeline for students to apply and receive a decision.

## The Common Black College Application

Like the Common Application, the **Common Black College Application** is for applications specifically to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). While the Common App charges application fees on behalf of the institutions that require them (though not all colleges require this), the Common Black College Application charges a one-time fee of \$20 to apply to all schools participating on the platform. Check to see if you can get those fees waived when applying.



## Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA)

The **Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA)** is the New Jersey state agency responsible for all state financial aid, including but not limited to:

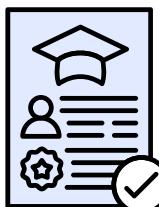
- **New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid** (Application specifically for immigrant students that do not qualify for federal aid)
- **New Jersey Tuition Aid Grant (TAG)**
- **Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG)**
- **New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS and NJ STARS II)**

Read more about these programs [here](#).





## Personal Statement, or “College Essay”



This is a roughly 650-word essay that accompanies your college applications. You can answer a prompt offered by the school or the Common App. The personal statement is an opportunity to show the school a unique aspect of yourself, such as an achievement you are proud of, a passion you have, or a challenge you have overcome. Not all schools require a personal statement, but many do.

**Supplemental essays:** some schools may require and/or accept supplemental essays in place of a college essay. These can be shorter essays answering a few questions given by the school. Again, this is an opportunity for college admission offices to get to know you as a person beyond what shows up on your resume.



## Majors, Minors, Concentrations and Certificates

A **major** is the subject area on which you would like to specifically focus on during your higher education studies. This will be what you earn your degree in.

A **minor** is a secondary subject you are interested in and does not have to be related to your major, though often times they are. Minors require less credits than majors do.

A **concentration** is an emphasis on a specific field of study within your major. You may be required to take certain classes within your program that satisfy its requirements.

A **certificate** is similar to a minor or concentration and allows you to explore other subjects you are interested in but do not want to pursue as a major. It is a shortened version of an undergraduate program, so you get the essential information.

A great part of college is being able to explore the variety of subjects you may be passionate about!

For example, you might hear from other college students:

- 💡 "I am an engineering major with a concentration in mechanical engineering and a minor in physics."
- 🧠 "I am a psychology and neuroscience double major with a certificate in English Literature."
- 🎬 "I am a theater arts major with a minor in dance and a certificate in applied mathematics."





## Fellowships

A **fellowship** is a program that usually provides short-term funding, training and professional development to fulfill a project proposal. These are usually awarded for postgraduate studies and can last anywhere between a few weeks to a few years.

Each fellowship opportunity varies depending on the type of financial support it provides, the organization that sponsors it and the rigor of the program. Like your college application, fellowships usually require a personal statement, resume, recommendation letters, a project proposal, and a higher education institution willing to sponsor the work.

These opportunities are available year-round, and every year, so do not hesitate to apply!

Find some fellowships for DACA recipients and undocumented students [here](#).



## Internships

An **internship** is a form of short-term experiential learning and entry-level professional training. These opportunities can be paid or unpaid. One can offer professional development, career exploration, and a great addition to your resume!

In the United States, there is funding available for internships for students without work authorization, which are listed [here](#).



## Apprenticeships

An **apprenticeship** is similar to an internship but will allow you to earn money while you learn on-the-job. These are available to anyone but are most common amongst trade school students to prepare them for highly skilled technical careers.

# General Information

Higher education is education beyond high school in the U.S. This includes colleges, universities, community colleges, and vocational-technical schools. Everyone is able to pursue higher education regardless of immigration status.

## Requirements to apply to colleges and universities

Policies for admission and financial aid for students can vary by school, but all schools require your high school diploma or GED and your high school transcript. Schools may also require SAT or ACT test scores, a certain grade point average, or a certain course load.

Most higher education institutions, if not all, require enrolled students to have a medical insurance plan. Because of this, a lot of schools offer their own insurance plans. These can be expensive, so make sure to research all of your options.

In New Jersey, the **Cover All Kids initiative** allows all children under 19 to enroll in the state's Medicaid program, NJ FamilyCare, regardless of immigration status. If you have a pending visa or asylum application, this coverage can extend until you turn 21 years old. Enrollment in this program does not affect you or your family's immigration status or any future applications for legal status.

For those older than 19, depending on your immigration status, you may be eligible under the Affordable Care Act. See if you qualify [here](#).

## Types of Schools

### **Colleges**

generally only offer undergraduate programs, which usually take 4 years to complete.

### **Community colleges**

are public colleges that offer undergraduate programs, which usually take 2 years to complete, and can offer vocational-technical programs.

### **Universities**

offer undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs and often contain smaller colleges with specialized programs.

### **Vocational/Technical Schools**

provide practical training and education focused on specific jobs and teach valuable skills needed for a particular trade or craft.



# Public vs Private Colleges/Universities

REMEMBER!

**Public schools** are operated by the state they are located in. The state and federal governments provide most of the funding.

Find public schools in New Jersey [here](#).

**Private schools** are operated separately from both state and federal governments.

Find private schools in New Jersey [here](#).

**Vocational/Technical schools**, or “**trade schools**” offer schools educational training of technical skills for a specific job. Examples of trade work include electric work, construction, patient care technician, veterinary science, culinary school, and more.

Find trade schools in New Jersey [here](#).

## Types of Degrees and Certifications

An **associate's degree** is usually a generalized course of study that prepares students to enter the workforce or transfer to a 4-year institution to obtain a bachelor's degree once completed. It is offered at technical schools and community colleges. Some examples of associate's degrees include:

- ◆ **Associate of Arts (AA)**, focuses on liberal arts
- ◆ **Associate of Science (AS)**, focuses on medical and STEM-related fields
- ◆ **Associate of Applied Science (AAS)**, focuses on a specific technical field to be entered upon graduation

A **bachelor's degree** is a more specialized course of study with a variety of subjects to choose from. When a job lists a four-year degree as a requirement or when your school urges you to get a degree, they are most likely referring to a bachelor's degree, as it has become more essential over the years. Some examples of bachelor's degrees include:

- ◆ **Bachelor of Arts (BA)**, study of arts, humanities and social sciences
- ◆ **Bachelor of Science (BS)**, study of medical and STEM-related subjects
- ◆ **Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA)**, study of visual, fine or performing arts
- ◆ **Bachelor of Nursing (BSN)**, study of nursing

A **master's degree**, or graduate degree, is a post undergraduate degree that allows students to continue their area of study in a more concentrated curriculum. Some schools may offer accelerated programs that allow you to get your bachelor's and master's degrees at the same time.

Some examples of a master's degree program include:

- ◆ **Master of Arts** (MA), focuses on arts, humanities, and social sciences
- ◆ **Master of Science** (MS), primarily focuses on medical and STEM-related fields but some schools offer MS programs for humanities and social science subjects
- ◆ **Master of Social Work** (MSW), focuses on social work careers
- ◆ **Master of Business Administration** (MBA), focuses on business management

Regardless of your degree, some professions require state **occupational licensing**. For example, teachers, accountants, nurses, and cosmetologists need licenses to practice. In New Jersey, you can obtain an occupational license regardless of your immigration status. Learn more [here](#).

## Trade Diplomas or Certificates

**Trade diplomas or certificates** signify completed study of a trade. Having a certificate can help potential employers understand your level of knowledge, skills and abilities of a skilled job. Some examples of trade certificate programs include:

**Mechanic and Repairs**, focuses on basics of mechanics and professional safety practices

**Construction**, focuses on basics of construction and professional safety practices

**Doctoral degrees (Ph.D.) and professional degrees** are the highest level of education with an intensive focus on research. A bachelor's degree is generally required, but some programs might require a master's degree to enroll. These programs require high-level classes, research experience, and creating and defending your very own research. Some examples of doctoral degree and professional degree programs include:

- ◆ **Doctor of Philosophy** (Ph.D.), highest level of education in any subject
- ◆ **Juris Doctor** (J.D.), required to become a lawyer
- ◆ **Doctor of Medicine** (MD), focus on medicine to become licensed medical professional
- ◆ **Doctor of Pharmacy** (PharmD), focus on pharmaceuticals to become licensed pharmacists

More information on this can be found [here](#).

## Why does this matter?

Knowing the difference between schools and degrees can help you decide which path you would like to take. Ask yourself: is a bachelor's degree from a college or training from a trade school going to help you achieve your goals?



# Application Process

## Steps for College & University Applications

It is never too early (or late) to start planning your future! Ask yourself:

- ◆ **Do I want to stay in-state or go out-of-state?**
- ◆ **What financial aid options are available to me?**
- ◆ **What would I like my career to be?**
- ◆ **Which program/majors/minors interest me?**
- ◆ **What are the schools that cater to my needs?**

Do not be afraid to ask your family, friends, teachers, and guidance counselors for help or advice with answering these questions.

Categorize the schools you are interested in as: reach, match, and safety schools

### Do Your Research!



- ◆ **Study** for and take the SAT or ACT.
  - ◆ See if you qualify for a fee waiver [here](#).
- ◆ **Create** a school resume: Track your jobs, school clubs, volunteer experiences, internships, leadership positions, and achievements in high school.

### Sophomore- Junior Year

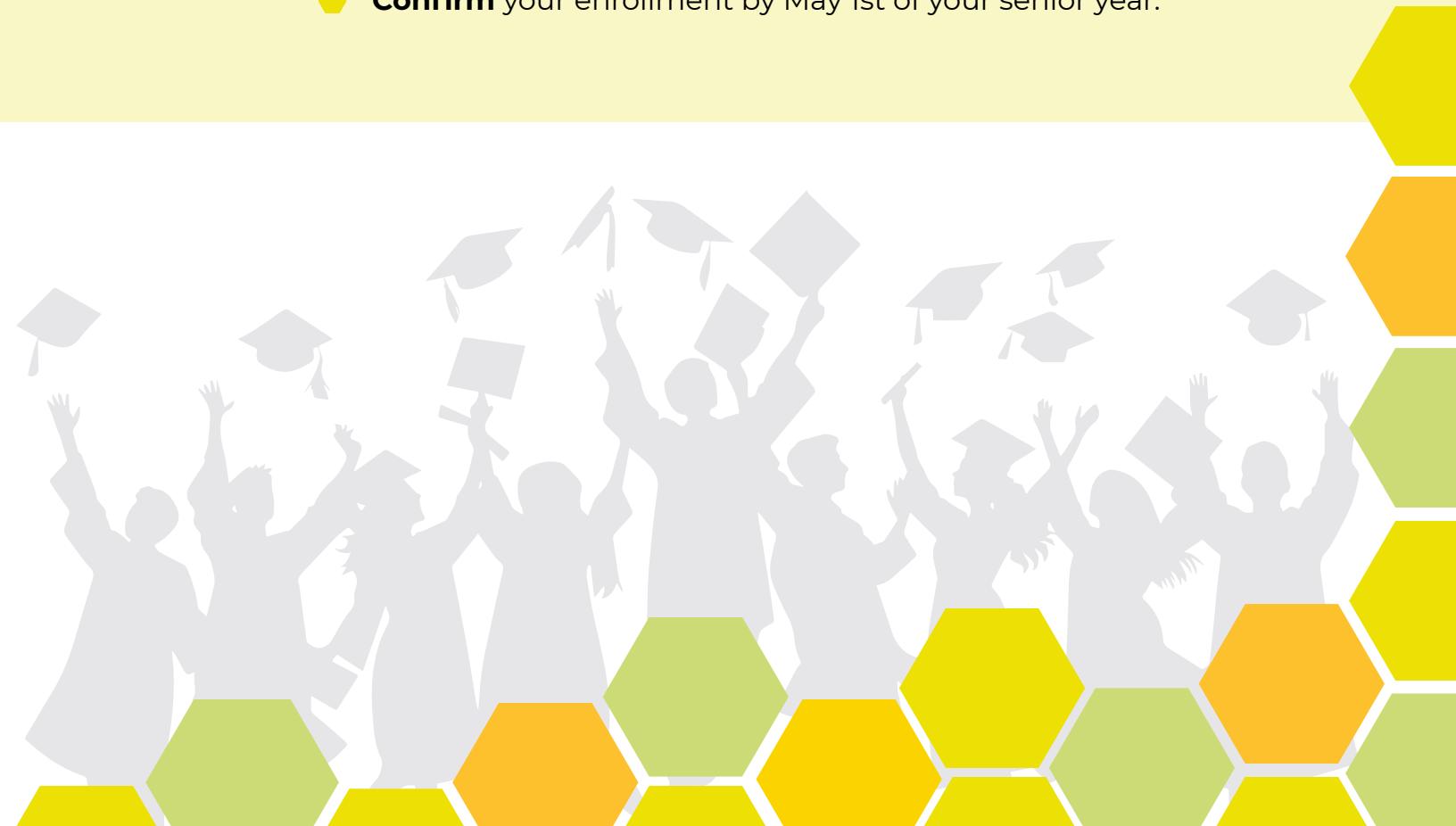
### Junior Year

Governor Phil Murphy signed into [law](#) that students must fill out financial aid applications to graduate high school.

- ◆ **Create** a Common App account [here](#).
- ◆ **Begin** working on your college essay. Resources can be found [here](#).
- ◆ **If applying for fine arts**, your application may require portfolios or auditions of your work.
- ◆ **Be aware** of the admission requirements for the schools you are interested in applying to. Testing, grades, and class schedule requirements can differ by school.
- ◆ **Most schools require** a copy of your high school transcript, letters of recommendation from your teachers, test scores, and college essay. Your high school is responsible for sending your transcript to the school you apply to but follow up when necessary.
- ◆ **Identify** what teachers you want to ask for letters of recommendation.

## Senior Year

- ◆ **Get recommendation letters ready.** Ask your guidance counselor and teachers to prepare their letters at least two weeks before your applications so they have time to write them. If the person you ask for a letter declines to write it, try to be understanding. If they do not feel they can write a strong letter for you, it is better to ask someone who can!
- ◆ **Look for application fee waivers** and start applying to schools!
  - ◆ **Fee waivers** are available based on income-eligibility, and if you qualify for a waiver for the SAT/ACT then you automatically get a fee waiver for applications.
  - ◆ **Tip:** You can also get a fee waiver by attending a school tour, in your email as incentive to apply to a certain school or try asking the school for one. It is possible they can be flexible with waivers.
- ◆ **When applying** to schools, decide on which basis you would like to apply as: rolling decision, Early Decision (ED), Early Action (EA), or Regular Decision (RD).
- ◆ **Apply for financial aid!** The FAFSA and NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application will typically open on December 1st for students planning on starting college in the fall semester. Remember to check eligibility requirements, what documents you will need, and to submit your financial aid application!
- ◆ **Stay updated** on your application progress! You might be missing key documents, or a school might want you to interview with someone from the admissions team before making a decision. You do not want to miss any important updates!
- ◆ **Check in** with your guidance counselor if you need support.
- ◆ **Confirm** your enrollment by May 1st of your senior year.



# Steps for Trade School Applications

## Do Research on Trade Schools



It is never too early (or late) to start planning your future! Ask yourself:

- ◆ **What career** are you interested in?
- ◆ **Does the school offer** opportunities for career advancement (internships, on-the-job training, job fairs, apprenticeships)?

If you did not graduate high school or did not receive a GED, see if the school offers a GED program to prospective students.

## Study for and take the SAT or ACT.

- ◆ See if you qualify for a **fee waiver**.
- ◆ **Your test scores** may not be necessary for trade school, but they benefit you by replacing placement exams or adding to your resume for applications to apprenticeships.
- ◆ **Enroll** in related hands-on classes if your school offers them.
- ◆ **Create** a school resume: Track your jobs, school clubs, volunteer experiences, internships, leadership positions, and achievements in high school

## Sophomore – Junior Year

**Reminder:** In New Jersey, you must be at least 17 years old to enroll in trade schools.

- ◆ **Start** contacting admissions offices of trade schools to see if you can receive an application fee waiver.
- ◆ **Gather** all necessary documents to apply.
  - ◆ You **will need** your high school diploma or GED, and a copy of your high school transcript.
  - ◆ **Test scores and letters of recommendation** are a plus, but not usually necessary.
- ◆ **Prepare** for placement exams!
- ◆ **Stay updated** on your application progress! You might be missing key documents, or the school might like to interview you or schedule an academic counseling session. You do not want to miss any important updates!

## Senior Year



# Financial Aid Options

Higher education can be expensive. Do not lose hope! There are options for financial aid available. Listed below are **SOME** of your many options.

## Earning Credits in High School

You can start planning financially around college while you are still in high school. If you are enrolled in **Advanced Placement** (AP) classes, an **International Baccalaureate** (IB) program, a **College Level Examination Preparatory** (CLEP) program, or **dually enrolled in high school and college** classes, you may be able to earn college credits. Earning these credits now can lessen your course load in college, which means you will not have to pay for more credits!



## Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), also known as Better FAFSA

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** is a federal aid program that residents and U.S. citizens can apply to for financial aid to cover the costs of attending a college, university, and/or a trade school.

Eligible non-citizens **include** permanent residents, asylees, temporarily protected status (TPS), T-visa holders and more. If you are part of a mixed-status family, it is important to know that **your parents' immigration status does not affect your eligibility**, meaning you may still be eligible for FAFSA if your parent(s) are undocumented. If you are unsure of your eligibility, reach out to your school's admissions and financial aid offices for counseling.

Learn more about FAFSA's requirements and deadlines [here](#).

## New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid Application

In the state of New Jersey, an undocumented student, or a **"Dreamer,"** may still be eligible to receive state financial aid by submitting the **NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application**. Make sure to check eligibility requirements! This financial aid can be used at both public and private higher education institutions!

The requirements are:

- **Attended** a New Jersey high school for at least three (3) years.
- **Graduated** from a New Jersey high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in New Jersey.
- Can **file an affidavit** stating that you have filed an application to legalize your immigration status or will file an application as soon as you are eligible to do so.

If you cannot apply for FAFSA, but meet the above requirements, apply for alternative financial aid [here](#).

## NJ STARS and other State Aid

The **NJ STARS** program allows eligible students who were in the top 15% of their graduating class in either junior or senior year to receive free tuition to their home county community college.

**Eligibility requirements** include:

- Be a U.S. citizen, eligible non-citizen or be eligible for the NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application (*meaning you **can** be an undocumented student*).
- **Must** be a resident of New Jersey for at least 1 year immediately prior graduating high school.

After applying to your home county community college, the college should notify you if you are eligible for NJ STARS.

Learn more about NJ Stars [here](#). Learn more about other forms of state aid [here](#).

Do not forget to look for scholarships within your own community! Community organizations, like churches, often create scholarships for local students.

**Tip:** There are financial benefits to living off campus. However, it can be difficult to keep up with rent, utilities, and groceries. As a student, see if you qualify for state and/or federal assistance with any of these programs\*:

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, provides supplemental funds for groceries.
- A great resource for groceries, regardless of using SNAP or not, are local **food pantries** or **food banks**. Usually hosted by community organizations, and oftentimes churches, these pantries offer **FREE** groceries for any individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.
- **Utility assistance programs** such as Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), the Payment Assistance for Gas and Electric (PAGE) Program, and Universal Service Fund (USF). Read program requirements in [here](#).
- **Rental assistance programs** offered by nongovernmental community organizations would be most beneficial for undocumented individuals. Learn more about NJ housing assistance [here](#).

**\*These programs are not a public charge, meaning they will not affect you or your family's immigration status nor any future applications for permanent residency.**

## Institutional Aid

**Institutional Aid** is a type of aid provided by the college or university you plan to attend. It is not federal money. It can have higher income eligibility guidelines than FAFSA. It is often used by private institutions and can include grants and scholarships. You can apply using a CSS profile [here](#).

Be sure to check your school's website and financial aid office for more institutional aid opportunities.

- Financial counseling at your school's financial aid office is **FREE!** Make an appointment, or walk-in if acceptable, at any time to discuss your tuition and eligibility for scholarships.
- Continue to look for scholarship opportunities for **all 4 years** of college!

## CSS Profile

**CSS Profile** is a form that many colleges and scholarships use to determine your eligibility for non-federal financial aid. Learn how to apply, check participating schools, get fee waivers, and access resources for parents and international students [here](#).

## Institutional Programs

- The college or university may offer its own, non-federal **work-study programs**.
- If the school is a research institution, inquire about paid participation in **research studies**.
- Inquire about positions like **Resident Assistants** (RAs) on campus, which often cover costs for room and board.
- The school may offer opportunities and programs that offer **stipends** to cover living expenses and tuition.

## Dream.US Scholarship

There are two scholarships specifically for undocumented students pursuing higher education. For New Jersey residents:

The **National Scholarship** covers up to \$16,500 for an associate's degree and \$33,000 for a bachelor's degree for qualifying students eligible for in-state tuition at participating schools.

The participating schools in New Jersey are:

- **Rutgers University Newark** (Public)
- **Rutgers University New Brunswick** (Public)
- **New Jersey City University** (Public)
- **Rowan University** (Public)

The **Opportunity Scholarship** covers up to \$80,000 of tuition, fees, and on-campus housing and meals for a bachelor's degree for qualifying students that live in "locked-out" states where they must pay out-of-state costs or are prohibited from enrolling in the state's public colleges altogether. **NOTE:** Please check if your state is considered a "locked-out" state as this will determine whether you should apply for the Dream.US National Scholarship versus the Opportunity Scholarship! Find more information [here](#).

Learn more about the Dream.US Scholarship's requirements and deadlines [here](#). Learn more about other national scholarships [here](#).

Additionally, if you qualify for DACA, [here](#) are some more scholarships you may be eligible for.

## Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF)

The **New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund** (EOF) provides renewable grants ranging from \$200 to \$3,050 annually to students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, support services such as counseling and tutoring are available for students in an EOF program. To learn more about EOF programs at different schools, contact the EOF Campus Program Director to discuss the eligibility requirements and the application process of their institution. Learn more [here](#).

You can apply for a school's EOF program **in addition** to submitting your FAFSA or NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application meaning you get more \$\$\$ to go to school!

## Student Loans

**Federal and state loans are different from private loans.** After you have received your financial aid packages from filling out FAFSA, you may find your federal or state loans do not cover all your financial needs. For this reason, you have the **option** to apply for private loans to help cover the remaining costs. **Applying for private loans is completely optional** and can have benefits for your education.

Important: **watch out for predatory lenders!** Interest rates vary and private lenders can take advantage of your inexperience with loans to charge you more. Interest rates for private loans are often higher than interest rates on federal and state loans.

- **Always** stay up to date on what you owe. Look into repayment and forgiveness plans.

# Next Steps

You have applied to several schools, submitted your financial aid application, researched scholarships, and now you have been officially accepted!

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Now, what comes next?

## Community Colleges & 4-year Institutions

### **Scheduling Classes**

The first thing you will be required to do once you have enrolled is to make your class schedule. You may have to meet with your **academic advisor**, a counselor that helps you create an academic plan for your next 4 years, first to plan your schedule before logging into your student portal to enroll in classes.

You want to be **strategic** about scheduling your classes for your first year at college but also look ahead to your next 3 years. Work with your academic advisor to make sure you are pacing yourself with the rigor of your courses while also completing all your major and minor requirements! It is great to have a combination of general education classes, also known as "**GenEds**", and classes for your major and minor, called "**electives**." If you are undecided about your major, try to choose a variety of general education classes that allow you to explore different topics.

**Tip:** Try to get a classmate's contact information during the first week of classes so you can share notes if one of you ever misses class.

Depending on the subject and how big your class sizes are, you may be required to enroll in supplemental classes called **labs** or **recitations**. For example, if you take an introductory biology class with hundreds of students in it, you may be required to also enroll in a lab course which will have fewer students and allow you to apply what you have learned in a science lab with a hands-on approach to what you will learn in the larger, lecture-style class. On the other hand, similar to labs, are classes called **recitations**, which are also supplemental smaller classes for any introductory subject or large class size. These requirements vary by school.

**Tip:** Some classes may require you to buy or rent a textbook for the semester. For science labs, you may even be required to purchase goggles and a lab coat. These can be pricey, so search for scholarships and grants specific to your required class materials!

## Dorming vs. Commuting

**Dorming** means living in one of the residence halls on your school's campus at 4-year institutions. Community colleges usually do not have dormitory buildings.

**Commuting** means you live at home and travel to school to attend classes. You might hear people use the phrase "on-campus" or "off-campus." To clarify, living **on-campus** is the same as dorming, living **off-campus** usually means you are *renting* near campus, and **commuting** usually means you still live at home.

**Tip:** No matter where you stay, you should take a tour to familiarize yourself with the campus. Find your classrooms before the semester starts so you do not get lost on the first day. This can also help you time how long it takes you to get to each class, so you will not be late in the future!

## Campus Life

**Office hours** are the times your professors are available outside of class time. You can meet with them 1-on-1 for help, to make up for missed work, and/or to build a relationship with them that can lead to mentorship from them, letters of recommendation, Teacher Assistant (TA) positions, etc. Professors want you to visit, so take advantage of this time to get ahead.

Joining **student organizations** is a great way to make connections! Student organizations are just the collegiate name for school clubs. There is a huge variety of groups on every campus. From cultural and arts organizations to academic and social, there is something for everyone. You can always start your own as well!

**Tip:** You will want to find your community on campus. Your support at school and at home will get you through the next 4 years!

**Networking** is vital to both your personal and professional life. This is the process of making connections with individuals who have interests or goals similar to yours. For example, if you are interested in a career in business administration, it is a good idea to introduce yourself to and build relationships with fellow business students, professors, and business professionals.

## Opportunities

**Research opportunities** can be a great way to build your resume while studying a topic you are interested in. They may focus on literature, common in humanities research, or on labs, typical in STEM-related research. One of your professors may be looking for research assistants, and it can be a great opportunity to learn more about the field that interests you! It looks great on applications for postgraduate studies or careers that use research.

Your school may offer **free tutoring** for students. This can be vital to you as you adjust to your new learning environment and the rigorous course load of a college or university. You could also apply to become a **tutor**, which can be a paid position and look great on your resume. Other free resources that can help you with your coursework include **study labs**, where tutoring often takes place, and **writing centers**, where peer editors can review, edit and strengthen your essays.

**Tip:** If what you need is professional help, see if your school has a **career center**, which can offer resume building services, mock interviews and job fairs.

**Internship opportunities** allow you to work in a professional learning environment and gain new skills. These often prepare you for careers after college. An internship is usually unpaid, but you can find paid positions or stipends that can support you while you work unpaid. Internships can also be applied for school credits and look great on your resume or applications for postgraduate studies.

**Mentorship programs** can connect you with experienced professionals working in the career you are interested in pursuing. A mentor is meant to guide and support you in your academic and professional journey. Building this connection can help you get a better understanding of your potential career and network with current professionals.

**Study abroad programs** are an opportunity to travel while learning. Study abroad usually counts towards your school credits as you can conduct research abroad, immerse yourself in a different language and culture, or just take general education classes offered at international universities. **"Study away"** is used to describe travel programs that are domestic, usually in a different state than the one your school is located in.

**Tip:** You should always check your visa requirements for studying abroad! **Seek legal advice** to better understand your options for studying abroad.

# Trade School

## 1) Scheduling Classes

The **first** thing you will be required to do once you have enrolled is to make your class schedule. You may have to meet with your academic advisor/counselor first to plan out your schedule. In trade school, your class schedule will be very structured and tailored to the trade you specialize in. You should expect smaller class sizes to enhance individualized learning.

## 4) Apprenticeships

Like internships, **apprenticeships** allow you to work in a professional setting. However, these are paid opportunities. With an apprenticeship, you receive paid on-the-job training in combination with classroom instruction to hone your skills.

**Tip:** Not sure about taking a registered apprenticeship position? Try pre-apprenticeships. This allows you to explore various programs before committing to one. Learn more [here](#).

## 2) Hands-On Learning

**Trade schools** value experiential, hands-on learning. This means your classes will be an intensive training of the particular trade you are learning every day. Additionally, you may be required to bring your own materials to class.

## 3) Internships

**Internships** allow you to work in a professional learning environment and gain new skills. These are meant to prepare you for your career upon completion of your program. An internship is usually unpaid, but you can find paid positions or stipends that can support you while you work unpaid. Internships look great on your resume!

## 5) Getting Licensed

As mentioned before, states have different requirements for **certifications and licensure** to practice specific trades. You should be studying for and working towards licensure in your field while enrolled in your trade program. Find out which professions require licensure in New Jersey [here](#).

## 6) Opportunities

Your school should have a **career services center**, which can be a vital asset for transitioning into the workforce. This center can offer resume building, mock interviews, and job fairs.

**Networking** is vital to both your personal and professional life. This is the process of making connections with individuals who have interests or goals similar to yours. For example, suppose you are interested in a career in construction. In that case, it is a good idea to introduce yourself to and build relationships with fellow construction workers, engineers, professors, and professionals already working in the field.

**Mentorship programs** can connect you with experienced professionals working in the career you are interested in pursuing. A mentor is meant to guide and support you in your academic and professional journey. Building this connection can help you get a better understanding of your potential career and network with current professionals.

# Resources

Below are some resources available to you as a student of New Jersey. These lists are not exhaustive lists of all opportunities in New Jersey and are meant to be used as starting points in your search.

## Legal Services

- ◆ [New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children \(NJCIC\)](#)
- ◆ [Kids in Need of Defense \(KIND\)](#)
- ◆ [American Friends Service Committee \(AFSC\)](#)
- ◆ [Camden Center for Law and Social Justice](#)
- ◆ [Make the Road NJ](#)
- ◆ [Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark](#)
- ◆ [Rutgers Immigrant Community Assistance Project \(RICAP\)](#)
- ◆ [Rutgers Program for Undocumented Students](#)
- ◆ [Legal Services of New Jersey](#)
- ◆ [Casa Esperanza](#)
- ◆ [Church World Services](#)
- ◆ [Immigration and American Citizenship Organization \(IACO\)](#)
- ◆ [International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#)
- ◆ [Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund](#)
- ◆ [Immigration Defense Project](#)

## Scholarships

- ◆ [Non-FAFSA Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [Bold.org Scholarship Search](#)
- ◆ [MALDEF's Scholarship Resources](#)
- ◆ [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)
- ◆ [HigherEd Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [Out-of-State Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [Get Schooled Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [Career OneStop Scholarship Search](#)
- ◆ [Golden Doors Scholars](#)
- ◆ [QuestBridge](#)
- ◆ [Davis-Putter Scholarship](#)
- ◆ [Scholarship America Search](#)
- ◆ [Global Citizen Scholarship](#)
- ◆ [Esperanza Fund](#)
- ◆ [Cooke Scholar - Community College to 4-Year University](#)
- ◆ [Grants and Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [Immigrants Rising Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [Edvisors Scholarships](#)
- ◆ [College Vine Scholarships](#)

## Programs for First-Generation Students in New Jersey

- ◆ [New Jersey City University's First Generation Warriors](#)
- ◆ [Rutgers' Programs](#)
- ◆ [Rutgers' RU1ST](#)
- ◆ [LALDEF's Futuro Program](#)
- ◆ [Rowan University's Flying First Program](#)
- ◆ [Centenary University's First Generation Society](#)
- ◆ [The College of New Jersey's First Generation Initiatives](#)



# New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children

