



YOUR TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE TRANSFER

THINKING ABOUT THE TRANSFER ADMISSIONS PROCESS AND WONDERING WHERE TO START?

As you think about transfer, it helps to identify concrete steps to take at each stage of your educational career. Here are our recommendations for what you should focus on every step of the way.

While it's never too late to start, getting ahead of the game will make your life much easier!



Contemplating Transfer

Whether you are in high school, completing your GED, or ready to transfer from your current college, you should prepare yourself to build a strong transcript, student profile, and understanding of how college and admissions work.

- **Get the support of your family, friends, employers, and others.** Let them know you plan to attend college and that there will be a time commitment needed for you to do well.
- **Consider your ultimate goal in attending college.** Think about your long-term plans to earn a bachelor's degree and how to get the credentials and skills to become the very best in your field of study. Different schools may apply different admissions, financial aid, housing, and credit evaluations.
- **Do the research on your personal needs.** If you are an adult learner, veteran, DACA/undocumented student, have a disability, are on a student visa, or have other needs, determine what policies and services your potential schools have to meet your specific needs.
- **Determine all costs and how you will pay for college.** Keep in mind that in addition to tuition and college fees, you will also have to consider books, materials, and living costs, including housing and transportation. Do not get overwhelmed by the total costs. You may qualify for financial aid from multiple sources, and the colleges you are applying to may have their own institutional aid based on your merit or financial needs.
- **Keep important documents on file.** Locate any documents you need to enroll, including high school transcripts or a high school equivalency diploma and scores, immunization records, and proof of state residency (to qualify for in-state tuition at public institutions).



To qualify for federal financial aid, male students between the ages of 18 and 25 must register with the Selective Service, also known as the military draft.

- **Make sure you are well-versed in and ready to apply for financial aid.** For federal aid, including grants and student loans, complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). And nearly every state offers student aid programs for residents. To learn more about state, city, and county grants, head to the [National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators](#) website and click on your state or territory. To be eligible for institutional aid, you may need to complete the [CSS Profile](#). Based on your age, marital

and military status, household composition, and other factors, schools and government agencies will determine whether you are an independent or dependent student. Based on their determination, you will need to provide documentation including proof of your residency and/or citizenship status, Social Security Number, income for you and your spouse, your parents, and more.

- **If you have earned any college credits to date, make sure you can get official copies of your transcripts.** You will need them in the admissions process.



To release your official transcript, please note that most schools require any bills you owe them to be paid in full.

- **Visit colleges and become well versed in the language of transfer.** Terminology about college admissions, requirements, and financial aid is very important. Ask to speak with admissions advisors to discuss degree options, academic interests, strengths, and areas for improvement.
- **Avoid remedial courses, if possible.** These do not count toward your degree requirements and may prevent you from taking credit-bearing courses, and therefore may delay graduation. If you must take remedial courses, look for specialized or immersive programs that will help you complete remediation faster.
- **Enroll in suitable coursework.** Courses that can easily be applied to multiple majors and transferred to another school will help you the most as you prepare to transfer.
- **Explore out-of-classroom activities.** These will help to build your leadership profile.
- **Apply for special programs that may offer you additional support services.** Some colleges offer accelerated enrollment programs that may guarantee enrollment in courses or offer additional tutoring, specialized advisement, tailored courses for group needs, and additional financial support such as travel allowance, book vouchers, child-care services, and more.
- **Understand requirements around standardized exams such as the ACT and SAT.** While many schools do not require test scores from transfer students, obtaining high scores can further strengthen your application.
- **Prep for entrance exams required by some colleges.** For example, the City University of New York requires students to take an entrance exam in math, writing, and reading.

First Year at Pre-Transfer College

(0–30 credits)

Your first goal in college is to build a network that will help you excel at your pre-transfer school and develop a strong profile, with competitive courses and extracurricular activities, for transfer admission.

- **Become familiar with the academic calendar of your college.**

This will guide many registration policies and deadlines and help you understand your responsibilities. Be aware you will have a limited amount of time to add or drop courses and that there are deadlines by which you'll owe a certain percentage of tuition and fees to the school.

- **Get to know your college resources.** These may include your financial aid office, registrar's office, and medical and mental health services. Don't wait until you need help to start understanding your resources.



Become proficient with word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation programs.

- **Meet with faculty.** Get to know your professors and those who teach classes in the major(s) you are interested in. Let them know what your goals are, and make them aware of any concerns you may have or aspirations for the course.

- **Make sure you know your advisors.** Key contacts include financial aid advisors, degree or academic advisors, and overall leadership advisors. If you are not assigned an advisor, identify a person that will meet with you consistently to address questions or follow up with you to make sure you're thriving. You should know their name, title, schedule, email address, phone, and location on campus.



Have a working cell phone number and appropriate voicemail, as well as an email address for professional use that you check consistently. Get familiar with email etiquette, as you will need to communicate with your professors and classmates.

- **Attend college or transfer fairs to get familiar with four-year colleges that recruit from your school.**
- **Join honor societies like Phi Theta Kappa, and learn about requirements for scholarships like the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.** These organizations provide many leadership opportunities and scholarships for students that stand out.
- **Attend job fairs on campus to learn about employment, internship, and research opportunities.**
- **Assess what extracurricular activities best support your interests or help you explore the world around you.** Attend club meetings, get to know leaders and members of clubs, and give yourself the opportunity to learn from social interactions beyond the classroom.
- **Establish a study schedule and join study groups whenever possible.** Getting support from your peers will help keep you on track and involved with coursework and social life.



Spend wisely. Books and materials can be very expensive. Consult with your school bookstore or your professors to determine what books are needed. Not having your books on time can be detrimental to staying on top of your course work. Shop around and try to buy used books, especially online or from other students.

- **Assess personal and financial responsibilities.** Set realistic expectations for yourself and your family while in school. Have a plan to address any changes in your ability to provide financial support or care for your household.
- **Maintain records of your course syllabi.** You may need to show them to a transfer school to get credits appropriately transferred.
- **Get to know people in your field.** If you are interested in a particular field of study or career, aim to work, intern, or volunteer with people in that field to help determine if you're on the right track.



Learn how to conduct college-level research using academic and library resources. College libraries usually have workshops to help you develop these skills.

Second Year at Pre-Transfer College

(30–60 credits)

At the point when you have 30 or more credits, you'll have completed enough courses for your transfer school to evaluate you academically, and you'll also have had enough time to build connections with faculty and campus leaders through your participation in class, coursework, and extracurriculars.

- **Focus on accumulating (transferable) courses toward your degree.** Always keep in mind transferability. If you are unsure about your major or area of concentration, it's best to take a liberal arts or general studies track that will allow you flexibility once you decide your major.
- **Continue to explore fields you are interested in.** You can do this in a variety of ways, from work and internships to volunteer opportunities and networking.
- **Enroll in classes that demonstrate you can take advanced courses.** Making consistent academic progress is key. If you have any doubts about your ability to take advanced courses, speak with your academic advisor or the faculty teaching those courses.
- **Make sure your transcript reflects college-level proficiency.** At a minimum, this includes strong college-level math (pre-calculus) and English reading and writing skills (two semesters of English).
- **Identify transfer schools that match your goals.** If you are unclear about your major or career prospects, don't panic! Your undergraduate education should allow you to develop skills that will help you succeed in a variety of fields. Make a list of general fields of study that interest you (some examples: health care, education, business, social justice, or law) and research the different concentrations or specialties available in each field. This will allow you to narrow down your choices based on which schools excel in these areas.
- **Inform everyone involved in your educational trajectory, including faculty members and advisors, that you will be transferring and will be asking them for letters of recommendation.** Seek their advice on your strengths and areas of development in order to set a plan for you to build the skills necessary to thrive at your transfer school. Don't be afraid of feedback!
- **Get to know transfer advisors.** Check with your school to determine if there is a transfer office or transfer specialist who can help you in the transfer process. You may also speak to faculty members or your other advisors to help you identify transfer schools.
- **Start reaching out to transfer schools.** Sign up for open houses, local events, and on-campus events geared toward transfer admissions. Most colleges have at least one person in their admissions office that focuses on transfer applicants. Make sure you know their name, title, email, and phone number. Let them know that you're considering applying for transfer. Be ready to share your transcript, resume, and extracurricular/leadership profile.
- **Set a budget.** You will need to cover or get assistance in covering transfer application fees, transcript costs, postage, school visits, and other fees.
- **Schedule school visits and a timeline to work on your applications.** Because you will be writing multiple essays (per school), you will need a support network to review and help you revise your writing. Do not wait to get help!
- **Set a plan and timeline to collect documentation.** Letters of recommendation, college reports, transcripts, high school records, translations, and other forms will not collect and file themselves!
- **Deal with Incomplete or Withdraw grades.** If for any reason you have received a grade of Incomplete (I) or Withdraw (W) in any of your courses to this point, work with your college to fulfill Incomplete courses and find ways to explain Withdraw grades.



Many selective four-year colleges want their students to know pre-calculus, which will allow you to manage the workload of many science, business, and research courses.



Apply, apply, apply! This is the time for you to start the transfer application process. Register for the Common App and start signing up to get information from potential transfer schools, including about events in your area.

Transfer Application

It's time to apply! You have more options and more resources available to you than you might think, so make sure you give yourself time to discover the many different paths you can take to pursue your bachelor's degree and to find the support you need to get it.

- **Identify a list of at least 10 potential transfer schools.**

Make sure you consider reach, target, and safety schools that you can see yourself attending.

- **Be aware of your academic, professional, emotional, and social strengths and areas of development.**

Identify schools that will nurture your strengths and have the resources to address your areas of development. While your school should be strong in the areas you want to study, make sure the environment is one where you will thrive while being challenged.

- **Evaluate specific academic majors at potential transfer schools.**

But don't lose sight of your ultimate goals and how different majors and areas of study can prepare you to excel no matter what career you desire.



If you are interested in transferring as a pre-med, pre-law, or business major, keep an open mind about your options. Pre-med programs, for example, will provide you with most of the necessary requirements to have a competitive profile, but you can major in music if that is what you are passionate about. Make sure you learn about prerequisites to applying for specific majors.

- **Get fee waivers.** If you cannot afford to apply, let the school know and ask for a fee waiver by sending them a signed document stating you are unable to pay.
- **Be first in line for financial aid.** Submit applications to your final schools at least two to three weeks before the deadlines.
- **Set a schedule for interviews.** Some schools only have a limited window for these, so you'll want to make sure you get on their interview calendars.

- **Prove your financial need to schools.** Schools will need to determine how much financial aid they can provide and let you know how much, if anything, you're required to pay. To do this, they will look at your entire financial picture, which in some instances requires information and verifying documentation from parents/guardians, spouses, siblings, or extended family members. Their cooperation is key in getting you the documentation in a timely manner.
- **Follow up on your application status.** Don't assume your application has been received and accurately attributed to your file. Follow up once a week until you receive word that your application is complete. When following up, provide your name and the semester you are applying for, and explain that you are a transfer admissions applicant. If you already have a contact person, ask to speak to that person and follow up with an email thanking them and confirming what you discussed. If you don't have a contact person, ask if there is a person assigned to your application and if you can speak to or email that person.
- **Establish contact with faculty at transfer schools.** Faculty are usually the best experts on a particular major, subject, field of study, or overall department. Speaking with a biology professor who conducts research in an area that interests you, for example, can give you an idea of the academic environment at their school and what to expect, as well as what to expect from the field of study generally. Faculty are usually eager to meet prospective students and share insights into their school, as they want to work with the best students who are well informed about the school's programs and policies.
- **Have honest discussions with your friends, family, and network about what's next.** Share the short- and long-term benefits of your decision, as well as any changes or sacrifices everyone may have to accept. Most great things are achieved through partnership, and most people will happily be your partners on this journey!

For more on choosing the right transfer school, getting in, and receiving the best financial aid package, check out *Your Guide to College Transfer*.

