

CONGRATULATIONS!!!!

For many of you, the college acceptance letters and notifications have begun to arrive and your excitement is off the charts. **CONGRATULATIONS!** This is one of the many benefits of applying early. Now you can start your “next steps” with extra time to make your decision. If you have not started the application process yet, you should get a move on...

When you start getting accepted, the pressure you feel to send in the enrollment deposit and commit to a college can be overwhelming. Let me say this to you: **RELAX, TAKE IT EASY!** Enjoy the moment and wait until you have all the information you need in order to make an informed decision before you send an enrollment deposit to anyone. **The national decision deadline is MAY 1, 2021.** You have time to make a decision and there is information you need before you do that.

The process goes like this,

1. You apply...
2. The College or University accepts you and sends you a letter of acceptance, maybe even an initial award based on the merit of your academic success AND a list of Next Steps you must take...do the next steps...
3. NEXT STEPS:
 - a. Create a student account with the college you have been accepted by.
 - i. Maybe you already created one in order to apply. Then log-in to your account.
 - b. Make sure you have (and know) your student email with each school and keep your Log-in information handy. **SCHOOLS COMMUNICATE WITH YOU THROUGH THAT EMAIL...about EVERYTHING!** You might want to add a parent to your account to help you keep everything in order...and to keep up with it all. **CHECK THAT EMAIL REGULARLY.**
 - c. Send your FAFSA to that school...ALL financial aid requires that you send the FAFSA to each school in order to receive any financial aid. Log into your FAFSA account and have your results sent to each school you have been accepted by.
 - d. **Communicate with the financial aid office and learn about additional scholarships that are available to you and the process you have to go through in order to get them. The majority (if not all) of the money you will receive will come from the school you attend.**
 - i. Some schools automatically consider you for the scholarships you qualify for.
 - ii. Some schools require you to apply for additional scholarships in order to compete for them...IT'S UP TO YOU TO FIND OUT HOW EACH SCHOOL DOES IT. And, there are always deadlines for those additional scholarships, so it is in your best interest to get on it right away so you don't miss out.

- iii. Honors programs often have additional scholarship available if you qualify, so make sure you look into that as well.
 - e. Find out about housing...options etc. Mostly, you want to know about how it is arranged and if you have choices about roommates and the type of dorm.
 - f. Ask about your financial aid packet and when you should expect to receive it.
- 4. Financial Aid Packages will be sent to you AFTER they have received your FAFSA and all scholarships have been awarded. (These offers will start coming to you in January and February, you should have all of them by the end of March...) The Financial Aid Offer (Package) is an Official Statement or Contract they will send to you that lists the total cost of attendance: tuition, estimated fees and book costs, room and board, meal plans etc. They will subtract grants and scholarships you received, student loans you qualify for and any other money that will be applied to your package. And then there will be a bottom line...the amount you will have to come up with in order to attend. THAT is what you will compare with other financial aid offers from other schools...it is called The Gap.
 - a. The Gap represents the money that is not accounted for and usually comes from your savings account...sometimes you can enter into a payment plan that allows you to make monthly payments to pay off "The Gap".
- 5. Contact the Financial Aid office and discuss their financial aid offer to figure out if you can come up with "The Gap" amount...this is often the deciding factor in whether or not you can attend that school... Be proactive in gathering this information...take the initiative and call them, especially if it's March and you haven't heard from them.
- 6. Compare ALL the information...The type of school, location, degree, financial aid offers, etc... and make a decision.
- 7. Send in your Enrollment (Housing) deposit and start making plans.
 - a. Enrollment deposits are usually nonrefundable...
 - b. Don't "Double Deposit". Even if you can afford it... the only acceptable reason to do so is if you are waitlisted at your first choice and you deposit there and at your second choice just to make sure you are able to go someplace.
 - i. Schools can rescind their admission and offer if they find out you have deposited at two or more schools. Not worth the risk...
- 8. Start Making Plans! Contact your roommate and begin the journey.