

the Road to

College



# The Road to College

**A College Guide for New York Immigrant Students**

brought to you by:  
the New York State  
Youth Leadership Council  
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# Why Go to College?

Many years ago, a high school diploma was enough to get a secure, living-wage job—a job that paid well and provided enough to take care of yourself and your family. Now, changes in our economy have made college and even advanced degrees one of the only vehicles for a successful future in the U.S.

Despite this fact, according to the 2007 American Community Survey, only 27.5 percent of the population 25 years and older have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

In NYC, just over 50% of recent immigrant students drop out of high school before graduation.

Students drop out for some of the following reasons:

- Language barriers
- Standard testing and assessment
- Poverty, the need to drop out and work to support themselves and their families
- Loss of hope due to immigration status
- Attend schools that are underperforming and have few resources
- Often denied basic educational services

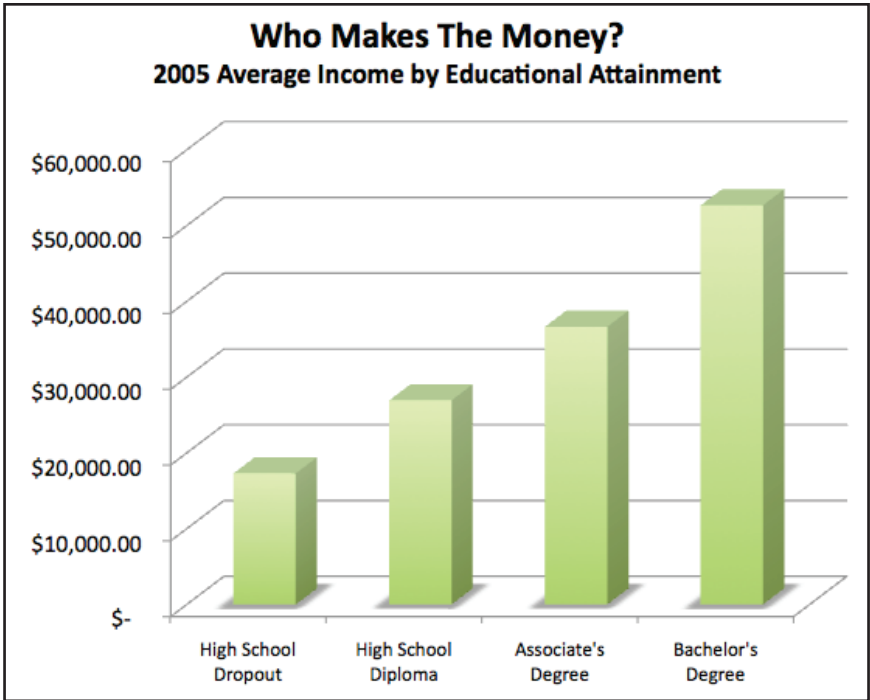
- Low engagement of parents
- Regents and other requirements are a challenge for recent immigrant students who have not had the same foundation and preparation as their peers.
- Some students are “Students with Interrupted Formal Education,” in other words, students who did not go to school regularly or at all in their home countries.

If you are an undocumented student, remember that although undocumented students do not have access to state and federal financial aid, you have the right to attend a college or university in New York.

## **But aren't I just wasting valuable time studying when I could be out working and making money?**

Take a look at this: The average college graduate with a Bachelor's degree will earn over \$35,000 more per year than someone who dropped out of high school.

That's over \$1.5 million over a lifetime in additional earnings. This difference gets even larger with masters and professional degrees.



As you can see, making sacrifices now has a big pay off for your future.

## Why Go to College?

### Why should I go to college and get a degree if I don't have papers?

Even if you are undocumented, having a college degree can open up opportunities for getting a good job with decent pay and working conditions—even if you are not able to work in the field that you studied in college. Getting a college education would enhance your knowledge and skills and empower you to assert your rights.

### What will I do with a college degree without papers?

If you are still undocumented upon college graduation, you can explore opportunities to continue your education and pursue an advanced degree. Some of our students have been able to enroll in advanced degree programs after finishing 4 years of college, while they wait for their immigration case to be considered or until congress changes immigration laws.

Remember that across the world, there is a global need for college educated individuals who speak more than one language—especially if one of them is English. But be careful not to lose sight of the ultimate goal of education, which is to reach your highest potential and be able to better contribute to society.

Your immigration status is only another obstacle that you will be better able to overcome with a college education. As Nelson Mandela, a South African civil rights leader said:

#### NOTE

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

# Graduating High School

The first step toward going to college is getting a high school diploma. To graduate in New York State, students need to meet the following requirements:

- 1 Pass Regents Exams in required subjects
- 2 Pass Required Classes to Accumulate 44 Credits

For high school graduation, New York State grants 3 levels of diploma:

Local Diploma: Passing score of 55-64 on required Regents Exams

Regents Diploma: Passing score of 65 and above on required Regents Exams

Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation: Passing score of 65 and above on required Regents Exams PLUS Math B Exam, an additional Regents Science Exam, and a Regents Foreign Language Exam

Adapted from NYS Higher Education Services Corporation

## Regents Exams

The following Regents exams are required for all levels of diploma:

- English Language Arts
- Math A
- Global History
- US History
- Science

## Regents Diploma with Honors

The “with honors” designation is added to either Regents Diploma option for students with an average score of 90 or more on all required Regents exams. Honors or Advanced Regents diplomas are not required to get into college, but they will help you get into more competitive programs.

## Regents Diploma with Technical Endorsement

Students enrolled in a Career and Technical Education program earn this endorsement if they also complete an approved technical assessment, a work-based learning experience, and a work-skills employability profile.

## Immigrant Students and Regents Exams

For immigrant students still learning English, most Regents exams are available in Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean and Russian (except the English Regents). Oral translation is provided to students who speak a language other than these five. (Keep in mind that it might not be necessarily easier to answer in your own language).

### ATTENTION NYC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Beginning 2010, most New York City students in public high schools will have to get a Regents diploma in order to graduate. Local diplomas will no longer be an option.

### Pass Required Classes to Accumulate 44 Credits

Each time you complete and pass a course for one semester, you are awarded one credit (one semester = half a year). You are eligible for graduation when you have received 44 credits.

High school students must get 31 credits in core courses and 13 additional courses.

### Core Courses

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| English:        | 8 credits |
| Social Studies: | 8 credits |
| Math:           | 6 credits |
| Science:        | 6 credits |
| Health:         | 1 credit  |
| Arts:           | 2 credits |

### Additional Courses

Additional courses credits vary depending on the level of diploma. The additional courses include: Foreign Language, Physical Education, and Electives.

### Local or Regents Diploma

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Foreign Language:                  | 2 credits |
| Physical Education:                | 4 credits |
| (a semester is valued at _ credit) |           |

### Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Electives:  | 2 credits |
| (Additional arts or foreign language, Technology) |           |
| Physical Education:                               | 4 credits |
| (a semester is valued at _ credit)                |           |

### But my school is telling me that I could drop out and get a GED!

First, an important fact: students have the right to attend public school in New York City until the age of 21. Prior to this age, no one has the right to instruct you to leave school.

Getting a GED, General Education Development test, must be a personal choice that you make, hopefully after consulting with your parents, family, guidance counselor and or teacher.

In making this decision, it is important to know the difference between a GED and a high school diploma.

### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You have the right to attend school in NYC until the age of 21, regardless of immigration status, credits earned or any other factor. If you are told to leave school before the age of 21, please call Advocates for Children's FREE Education Helpline at 866-427-6033.

### What is the GED?

GED stands for General Educational Development. It is a kind of a diploma for students who did not complete high school. You obtain a GED by taking a test.

### What's the difference between a high school diploma and a GED?

A GED is an equivalent to a high school diploma, but it is not the same. Having a high school diploma opens up many more options for higher education. Some schools do not accept first-year students who do not have a high school diploma. However, that doesn't mean that the GED option should be completely off the table for all students. Talk it over with your parents, teachers and guidance counselors to see if it's the best choice for you.

### Who is eligible to take the GED?

Any NYS resident, 16 years of age or older is eligible to take the GED.

For more information about eligibility requirements, please visit the General Educational Development Testing Office Website. You can find the website on our resource section.

### What if I didn't attend high school in the U.S.?

If that is your case, don't worry, you can still take the GED as long as you are able to fulfill the other eligibility requirements. Make sure that you visit the General Educational Development Testing Office Website for detailed information.

### In which languages is the test offered?

The test is available in English, Spanish and French.

### How is the test structured?

The test is broken down into five parts: Writing, Reading, Social Studies, Science and Math. If you don't pass all five sections, you must take the test again.

For more information about the GED, check our resources section on page 31.

# Road to College

## Action Plan

### Freshman Year (9th Grade)

- Earn good grades in all of your classes.
  - Improve your English skills. Read interesting books, magazines and newspapers. Keep a journal and write daily entries. Speak English with your friends even if they speak your native language.
  - Get involved in extracurricular activities.
  - Create a personal file with items such as:
    - Copy of report cards
    - Certificates and awards presented to you
    - A list of your extracurricular activities and volunteer work including length of service.
  - Develop relationships with your teachers.
- Do volunteer work. Colleges like that you have made a meaningful contribution to something that interests you.
  - Update your personal file with materials and information at the end of each semester.
  - Identify what you want in a school.
  - Look for schools, visit campuses.
  - Talk to your guidance counselor about attending college.
  - Begin preparing for the SAT and/or ACT.
  - Develop Relationships with your teachers, advisors, or guidance counselor.
  - Sign up for challenging courses such as AP classes and College Now classes.

### Sophomore Year (10th Grade)

- Keep your grades up.
- Take the PSAT.
- Think about joining two or three activities after school. Colleges are looking for commitment to and a passion for activities outside of the academic setting.

### TIP

It is especially important for undocumented students to develop a group of teachers and friends that can provide you support through the process of applying to college.

### Summer

- Join a summer program, do volunteer work or pursue an internship in an area of interest.

- Contact us for more information on places where you can join summer programs.

### Junior Year (11th Grade)

- Maintain a strong academic average. Very important!!!
- Continue with your extracurricular activities and volunteer service. (Try for leadership positions).
- Attend college fairs.
- Ask your teachers about their college experiences and what colleges they attended.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss college plans. Develop an initial list of 10 -15 colleges where you may be interested in applying.
- Research different majors and careers.
- Take the SAT I in May so that you can retake it if your scores are low.
- Take SAT Subject Tests in June. Pick two subjects in which you feel you will excel.
- Pass the English Regents.
- Research different scholarships.
- As for letters of recommendation from your counselor and teachers.

### Summer

- Continue with your volunteer work, attend a college summer program for high school students or get a job or internship.

- Visit colleges that you are interested in applying to.
- Work on the common application and your personal statement.

### Senior Year (12th Grade)

- Your grades will continue to count this year. Work hard!
- Meet with your counselor to finalize your college list.
- November is your last chance to take the SAT I.
- Continue with your extracurricular activities and volunteer work.
- Meet with college representatives and make college visits.
- Schedule campus or alumni interviews.
- Finish college applications by your counselor's deadline.
- File for financial aid after January 1st.
- You will receive college decision letters around April and deposits are usually due in May.

### Attention Young Men

Men living in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 26 who are U.S. Citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents, Asylees, Refugees and men without immigration status, are required to register for Selective Service, more commonly known as the Draft. The Draft gives the U.S. government a list of names of men from which to draw in case of a national emergency requiring rapid expansion of our Armed Forces.

You can register for the Draft online by going to [www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov). If you are undocumented, you must register by mail. Draft registration forms are available at any U.S. Post Office. If you don't have a Social Security Number, leave the space blank. Even if you did not register when you turned 18, as long as you are under 26, you can still register.

If you are undocumented, it is important that you register for the Draft because when you become eligible to become a U.S. citizen, you may be barred from doing so for failure to register.

### Here are some tips for you Parents!

- Ask Questions about your children's dreams
  - Have conversations about going to college
  - Be involved in your child's education: attend PTA meetings, talk to their teachers, ask them how they are doing in school.
  - Support your son or daughter's dreams. For many students, college is a time to figure out one's interests.
  - Go with your children on college trips.
  - Start saving money; open a savings bank account. Ask your bank representative about the requirements if you do not have a social security number.
  - Encourage your child to continue his or her education.
  - File your taxes on time (for financial aid purposes).
- Explore other payment options such as a payment plan, a loan from a relative, or attending school part-time

## Thinking about College

Congratulations on graduating high school. All your hard work so far has really paid off. You are on your way to achieving your dreams, whatever they may be. Remember to take a moment and reflect on this important milestone and be sure to celebrate. You've earned it!

### Questions to consider

- Big or small school?
- Close to home or far away?
- Public or private?
- Tuition, housing, and other costs
- Availability of scholarships and financial aid
- Choice of major/areas of interest
- Availability of other activities (sports, clubs, student organizations, volunteer opportunities, etc.)

### What is a college degree?

Bachelors and Associates Degrees: There are two basic types of degrees you can pursue in college. Bachelor's and Associates degrees. When studying full-time, students receive a Bachelors degree in about four years. Associates degrees can be completed in as little as two years. In the CUNY system, Bachelor's

degrees can only be obtained at Senior Colleges, while students can study toward an Associates degree at Senior or Community Colleges.

Keep in mind that many jobs and all graduate programs do require a Bachelors (four-year) degree, because of the longer preparation needed for these options. For example, you cannot pursue a career as a doctor, engineer, lawyer or many others with only Associates (two-year) degree. However, you can begin with an Associates degree from a Community College or another institution and then continue on to a Bachelor's degree and beyond.

**Dual Degree Programs:** In dual degree programs, students study for two different degrees at the same time, either at the same college or at a different school. These programs usually take less time than it would take to earn the degrees separately.

### **What's the difference between CUNY, SUNY & Private Universities?**

The higher education system in the U.S is two fold: public vs. private. In New York for example, there are public colleges that are funded by the city, state and federal government. The city's college system is known as CUNY, the City University of New York, and the state's college system is SUNY, State University of New York.

**CUNY:** City University of New York is the public university in NYC. It is made up of 17 colleges throughout the five boroughs. Within the CUNY system, there are two-year colleges known as Community

Colleges and four-year schools known as Senior Colleges.

**SUNY:** The State University of New York is the public university funded by NYS. These schools tend to be located outside of the five boroughs and have dormitories. Within the SUNY system, there are two-year Associate Degree colleges and four-year Bachelors Degree colleges. They are relatively more expensive than CUNY schools, but still at a much lower cost than private universities.

For more information on CUNY and SUNY visit their websites—you can find them in our Resources section.

**Private Universities:** Private universities are not government-funded. They are much more expensive than the CUNY and SUNY systems. Depending on the school, they may offer programs, housing options, student activities or other amenities that public colleges do not offer. Some examples of private universities in NYC include New York University, Columbia University and Pace University.

### **Once I attend my college for some time, can I transfer to another?**

Yes. There are different reasons for changing schools. Maybe the school you're in doesn't have the major you're looking for, or maybe you can only receive an Associates there. You might also just need a change. It's important to keep in mind that transferring will probably involve some work and a lot of care to make sure that the application is complete and has all the necessary parts.

When transferring to a new college or university, be sure to check the school's policy on application fees. For example, when transferring within the CUNY system, the \$70 fee is not required. Also, check your potential new school's policy on credit transfers, being that some of the classes you have taken may not count toward your degree in your new school.

In the CUNY system, any student who graduated from a Community College with an Associates degree is given a chance to complete a Bachelors degree at a Senior College, applying the first two years of credits earned at Community College toward that degree. This allows students to complete their Bachelors degree in an additional two years.

Programs available: In some Community Colleges there are vocational training programs. However, you will not find these programs at a Senior College. Likewise is also true: many specific academic departments and courses of study available at Senior Colleges are not options at Community Colleges.

### NOTE

**For financial aid and scholarships it is often required that you maintain full-time student status. Please see our financial aid section for more information.**

## Testing

### What is the PSAT and should I take it?

The PSAT (Pre-Scholastic Achievement Test) is a preliminary exam for the SAT's and it is not required for college admission. However, it is a helpful method of preparation for the SAT and can qualify you for some great merit scholarships. So yes, take it if you can as a method of practice and a chance to win some college bucks!

### What is the SAT & ACT and why should I take it?

The SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test) is an exam that tests critical thinking skills and is used along with other factors by colleges everywhere as part of the application process. It gives the colleges an idea on how you will do in your future college education and you should take it in order to apply for these institutions. Most college applications will not accept your application without it.

The ACT (American College Test) is an exam that tests specific subjects learned in high school, such as science, math etc. It is usually not required but some colleges do ask for such exams, especially if you are applying to a specific program. Check with the schools of your choice to find out which test they require. Some colleges accept either one.

## When can you take the SAT or the ACT?

These tests are given many times during the year. You need to register about five weeks before you plan to take them. For more information and to register for the test, go to the College Board website.

## Where do you take the tests?

Test centers are usually in local schools.

## How can I prepare?

- Get a Study Guide from your Guidance Counselor or a public library.
- Take a course (low-cost options available), Give examples of study prep courses
- Study Vocabulary words
- Do a lot of reading
- Take Practice SAT tests!

## Are there fees to take the SAT and ACT?

The fee for the SAT is \$43. The ACT costs \$30. There are fee waivers available, based on family income. If you qualify for free lunch in your school, you can get a fee waiver or request one specifically from your guidance counselor.

For links to additional information on all of these questions, see the Resources Section.

## Fee waivers

Fee waivers for college applications or SAT registration are open to students who are either American citizens or foreign nationals who are applying in the United States, Puerto Rico, or U.S. territories. Eligibility is determined by family income or by participation in a public assistance program, free-lunch and other programs for economically disadvantaged families. The income guidelines are based on those of the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

Private colleges and other universities also have their own guidelines for application waivers so make sure you check with their admissions counselor for an application and with your own high school guidance/college advisor.

[i] "College application fee waivers." www.collegeboard.com. June 17, 2008. [<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/applications/fee-waivers>]

# Applying to College

## College Application Requirements

### Application Form

The application form has all your basic information. You can submit the same application form to all CUNY schools. All SUNY schools use the same application form as well. For private schools, you have to get their respective application form—you can get it online, ask the school to mail it to you, or pick it up from the school itself if you live in the area.

#### TIP

Make sure to talk to your college advisor to figure out the best way to fill out the application forms.

### Application Fee

For CUNY and SUNY, you don't have to pay an application fee for each college that you apply to. You pay a one time application fee with your respective CUNY or SUNY application form. The application fee for each private school varies.

### High School Transcript

College Admissions Offices will review all the courses you took in high school and their respective grades. All this information is on your high school transcript.

### Test Scores

Depending on the college you are applying, you may have to submit your SAT, SAT Subject test, or ACT test scores. For example, CUNY senior colleges require SAT Scores, while the community colleges don't. Make sure to review the application requirements carefully and consult your college advisor to find out what test scores are required.

### Personal Statement

You are usually required to write a personal essay for your application. This gives the school an opportunity to get to know you better while they see your writing ability. Depending on the school, you may be asked to talk about an important experience that has shaped who you are, why you are applying to that school, or some other general topic. Make sure you have a few friends and teachers look over your essay and give feedback.

### Letters of Recommendation

Schools usually ask for letters of recommendation. When asking adults to write your letters, you should choose very carefully. Select people who know you best and who would best be able to speak to your character, accomplishments work ethic, and potential for the future. Teachers, guidance counselors, mentors or even employers are some examples of people who can write letters for you.

**WARNING**

Don't ask family members for letters of recommendation

### Extracurricular Activities, Leadership & Community Service

It is very important that you get involved in student clubs and community service activities. Although this is not part of the college application requirements, taking leadership roles will help you to grow as an individual and make you stand out from the rest of students applying to college. By participating in clubs and community service organizations, you provide the admissions office a better sense of who you are, your potential, and what you will bring to the college. Also keep in mind that a lot of scholarships and awards that will boost your college application are based on your participation in clubs, leadership and community service.

**TIP**

Be sure to send all parts of the application and get it in on time!

### Application Types: Early Action and Early Decision

Some schools will give you the option to indicate Early Action or Early Decision on your application, usually in November. However, it is important to know the differences between early decision and early action before sending in your

application. The rules may sometimes vary depending on the college. Check with your counselor to make sure you understand your rights and obligations.

Early decision plans are binding. This means that you commit to attend the college if you are accepted. Although you can apply with early decision to only one college, you may apply to other colleges through the regular admissions process. If your early decision school accepts you, you must attend that school, unless you can prove that the financial aid package they offered you is insufficient and will cause financial hardship. Usually, colleges insist on a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1.

Early action plans are similar but are not binding, unlike early decision. If you've been accepted, you can choose to commit to the college immediately, or wait until the spring. Under these plans, you may also apply early action to other colleges. Usually, you have until the late spring to let the college know your decision.

Single-choice early action is a new option offered by a few colleges. This plan works the same way as other early action plans, but candidates may not apply early (either early action or early decision) to any other school. You can still apply to other schools and are not required to give your final answer of acceptance until the regular decision deadline.

Confused? Here's a chart to help you on the next page!

|                            | Binding | Can apply early to other colleges | Can apply to other colleges under regular admissions |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Early Decision             | Yes*    | No                                | Yes  |
| Early Action               | No      | Yes                               | Yes  |
| Single-Choice Early Action | No      | No                                | Yes  |

\*unless you can prove financial hardship

### Final Choice

#### Accepted?

Congratulations! Your acceptance letters and financial aid offers should arrive by mid-April, unless you applied early.

Compare colleges and see which one fits you best. When you make your decision, be sure to respond on time to confirm your acceptance. Oftentimes students choose to go to the first school that accepts them without considering the other schools that may be offering better packages.

Make sure the school you accept is the best choice for you. Here are some things to keep in mind in comparing schools and their offers:

- What are the financial aid and scholarship packages?
- How much can my family and I afford?
- How much debt am I going to have when I get out of school?
- Does it have a good job placement program?

#### Waiting list?

Do not be discouraged if the school of your choice wait lists you. It simply means they did not have enough space to offer you a seat and want to hold on to you until more space becomes available. The best thing to do is decide if you really want to attend the school before you agree to remain on the waiting list. Maybe you want to attend a school that has already accepted you. Ask for the terms on which you are wait listed. There are often deadlines or housing options that change and you need to be aware of them.

#### Rejected?

Breathe and realize that that school may not be the right fit for you. Seeking higher education is the ultimate goal here and any college of your choice will take you where you want to go so long as you work hard for it. They are losing out on a great young mind and another college out there is anxious to have you there with them. Don't take the rejection too much to heart. Look at your other choices and continue on to a great college life.

# Higher Education & Immigrant Students without Status

According to the Urban Institute, it is estimated that between 60,000 and 65,000 students without immigration status graduate high school in the U.S. every year.

Immigrant students without immigration status cannot work legally, receive financial aid, some scholarships, or join the military. If this is your case, don't lose hope, you will be able to go to college and apply for scholarships that allow undocumented applicants.

## Types of Tuition

**In-State Tuition:** the tuition rate paid at public universities by students who can prove residence in that state. For example, if you live and attend to school in NY you are considered a NY resident.

**Out-of-state and international tuition fees:** Out-of-state tuition rates are much higher than in-state tuition. Students who attend college in a state different from the one where they graduated high school or obtained their GED are considered out-of-state students. International fees are also much higher than in-state-tuition, sometimes 5 times higher. Students considered international are those coming from a different country to study in the U.S. with a student visa.

## Immigration Status and In-State Tuition

In the following 11 states in the U.S., undocumented students are able to pay the in-state tuition rate when going to college.

- California
- Illinois
- Kansas
- Nebraska
- New Mexico
- New York
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Utah
- Washington
- Wisconsin

In other states, including New Jersey, undocumented students must pay out-of-state or international student tuition rates.

Whether a state offers in-state tuition or not, undocumented students are not eligible for federal or state financial aid, and cannot work legally to pay for their education.

You are only eligible for in-state tuition in the state where you obtained your GED or High School Diploma, not necessarily in any other state that may offer in-state tuition.

## Am I eligible for in-state tuition rates?

Non-resident tuition for state colleges and universities is significantly higher than in-state tuition. In New York, undocumented students are eligible for in-state tuition if you meet the following requirements:

- You have attended for at least two years and graduated from an approved New York State high school and apply for attendance at a SUNY, CUNY, state-operated, or community college within five years of receiving a high school diploma, or
- You have attended an approved New York State program for General Equivalency Diploma preparation, received a GED issued in New York State, and applied for attendance at a SUNY, CUNY, state-operated, or community college within five years of graduating high school

In order to claim residency status for tuition purposes, undocumented students must:

- File affidavit state that s/he has filed or will file application for legal residence
- Show proof of domicile (rent checks, pay stubs with a NY address, high school records, etc.)

It is important that your school be aware of your legal status in order that you may qualify for resident tuition rates. Check to make sure that you are not classified as an international student, as international students are charged higher tuition costs.

Here's a sample of the Required Affidavit for Undocumented Students The affidavit must be notarized stating that you have either filed an application to fix your immigration status or will file such an application as soon as you are eligible to do so.

### Affidavit of Intent to Legalize Immigration Status

\_\_\_\_\_ (student's name), being duly sworn, deposes and says that he/she does not currently have a lawful immigration status but, has filed an application to legalize his/her immigration status or will file such an application as soon as he/she is eligible to do so.

\_\_\_\_\_ (student's signature)

Sworn to me this \_\_\_\_ (day) of \_\_\_\_\_ (month) of \_\_\_\_ (year)  
State of New York, County of \_\_\_\_\_ (ie. Queens, Nassau, Kings, etc.)

Remember, this affidavit is simply stating that when you become eligible you will apply to gain immigration status.

## How do I answer questions about my immigration status and Social Security number?

Students who are asked about their immigration status should NEVER lie on their college applications. If you are not a U.S. Citizen or a Lawful Permanent Resident/Green Card holder, do not say that you are. When asked what your immigration status is, you can simply write “none” or “not qualified.”

No applicant is required to submit a Social Security number (SSN). If you do not have an SSN, leave the question blank.

If you have a Social Security card that states that you are not work authorized or that you are work authorized only with an employment authorization document, the SSN is still a valid number – even if you have no work permit – and should be included.

## Will the school report me to the federal government if I am undocumented?

Colleges and Universities are not required to call Immigration Services to inform them about students without immigration status. Colleges are required to report information to immigration authorities about international students who have student visas.

### NOTE

You are not an international student when you are undocumented

## Do private colleges and universities accept students without immigration status?

Every private college and university determines its own policy for students who are out-of-status. You can call the admissions office and ask about its policies for students without immigration status. Some schools have more flexible policies than others.

### TIP

If you are nervous about calling, ask a friend or guidance counselor to ask for you.

# Paying for College

## Financial Aid

Federal and state financial aid is not available to undocumented immigrant students; most of the following information applies to immigrants with immigration status (legal permanent residence or citizenship).

### TIP

If you talk to someone by phone about your financial aid, keep written notes of your conversation, including the person's name, telephone number, and date.

Many programs and scholarships are only open for U.S citizen students. If your parents are already legal permanent U.S residents, you should find out if they are eligible to apply for citizenship. If they do, we recommend that they apply so that you can become a U.S. citizen too.

Typically, Financial Aid comes in three forms:

- Scholarships and grants
- Work-Study programs
- Loans

## FAFSA

To apply for financial aid you will need to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You don't have

to be accepted to a higher education institution to apply for aid. You can apply for financial aid any time after January 1. To actually receive funds, you must be admitted and enrolled at the university.

You have to apply for financial aid every year, meaning you have to fill out the FAFSA every year. After your first year you will receive a "Renewal Application" which has information from the previous year's FAFSA. Your eligibility for financial aid may change significantly, especially if you have a different number of family members in college.

About 4 weeks after you send in the FAFSA form, you will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). Make sure all the information is correct. This report lists the expected contributions from your parents. In other words, it's the amount the government expects your family to pay. The difference between your expected family contributions (EFC) and the cost of college is the amount of aid you will need. The school you plan to attend will use this information to prepare a financial package for you.

Renewal of your financial aid package also depends on your making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree, such as earning a minimum number of credits and achieving a minimum GPA.

After mailing the FAFSA form, you will receive a letter in about 3-4 weeks stating that your information does not match Federal Financial Aid records. Don't

panic! This is ok, disregard this notice, it does not affect you in any way—it is only proof that you submitted the FAFSA.

In some cases, public or private colleges may ask you to fill out the FAFSA as part of a scholarship requirement. In this case, you should fill out but make sure that school is aware of your immigration status.


### Undocumented Students and the FAFSA

Undocumented students do not need to fill out the FAFSA, unless they are applying for the Peter V. Vallone Scholarship, which we discuss more in detail in pg. 21. If you have to fill out the FAFSA, you must apply via mail—not online. You can leave the Social Security Number space blank and only fill out your basic information. When asked about your citizenship and immigration status, you should check the option that says, “No, I am not a citizen or eligible citizen.”

#### TIP

Save your Parent’s FAFSA PIN and password in a safe place and choose a password that is easy to remember

## Scholarships & Grants

 This symbol indicates that the scholarship is available to undocumented students.

Grants and scholarships are financial awards for your tuition that don’t have to be repaid.

The U.S. government funds two of the largest grant programs:

- Federal Pell Grant:
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

Some states also offer grants.

Most grants and scholarships come from colleges or private sources such as:

- Community Service Groups
- Religious Groups
- Private Companies
- Employers
- Institutional Grants (colleges, universities)

Keep in mind that it is possible to be awarded more than one scholarship or grant. There are lots of scholarships out there so make sure to do your own research. Check our Resource page for places where you can start your research!

### Peter Vallone New York City Council academic scholarship

Established by the New York City Council, the Vallone Scholarship rewards high school graduates

#### How to Qualify

- Graduate from a NYC public or private high school with a “B” average or better and enroll directly into a CUNY college within a year of graduation.
- Maintain a “B” average or better and receive up to \$1,000 a year for five years. Associate’s degree students are eligible for 6 semesters. You may qualify for additional financial aid, based on need.

For more information on this scholarship and the application form, please check our Resources section

In the recent years the Vallone Scholarship has been about \$1000 per year. There is no separate application for the scholarship. Students are automatically considered for the award when they apply for admission to CUNY and complete a FAFSA every year.

#### To qualify you must

- Complete and submit a FAFSA
- Graduate from a New York City high school with at least an 80 (B) average
- Enroll at a CUNY college as a full-time student within one year of graduating from high school
- Register as a full-time student each semester (except summer) and maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA

- Attend CUNY before attending any other post secondary institution

#### In order to keep the scholarship you must

- Maintain continuous full-time enrollment within the City University of New York system
- You must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- In your first semester at least six credit hours of your full-time enrollment must be college credit bearing course work; Future semesters require at least 12 credit hours of college credit bearing work

#### NOTE

The award will not be restored once it has been lost

- The award is not restored once it has been lost
- If you are an undocumented student and have all the requirements mentioned above, pay close attention to how you are supposed to fill out the FAFSA.
- Most students can fill out the FAFSA on the internet, but undocumented students cannot. Undocumented students should get the paper application from the financial aid office
- When asked about your Social Security Number, leave it blank if you don’t have one

- When asked about your immigration status, check the box that says “No, I am not a citizen or eligible citizen”
- Fill in your address, school information, and other required information.
- Mail the form to the specified address.

### What are Pell Grants and how do they work?

Pell Grants are awarded usually only to undergraduate students who have not earned a Bachelor’s degree. The maximum Pell Grant award can change each year and depends on program funding.

### Who is Eligible?

Students with family incomes up to \$50,000 may be eligible for Pell Grants. However, most Pell awards go to students with family incomes below \$20,000. There is no charge to apply for a Federal Pell Grant.

### You also must meet the following requirements for Federal Aid:

- Demonstrate financial need; this means that your cost of education is greater than what your family can afford
- Be a regular student enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an eligible program at an eligible institution.
- Have a high school diploma or GED
- Pass an approved ability to benefit test (ATB)
- Not be simultaneously enrolled in elementary or secondary school
- Be a U.S. citizen or national, or a legal permanent resident
- Have a valid Social Security Number (SSN)
- Be registered with Selective Service, if required
- Certify, by signing a Statement of Educational Purpose, that he or she will use federal student aid only to pay for educational costs
- Not owe a payment on a federal grant or Federal Perkins Loan
- Not have borrowed in excess of the annual loan limits
- Not have property that can be taken away for a debt owed to the U.S.
- Be maintaining satisfactory academic progress
- Not have drug convictions

Students can receive Pell Grants for their undergraduate study until they complete a baccalaureate or their first advanced degree, such as pharmacy or dentistry.

### How Much Money Can You Get?

The maximum grant for the 2010 to 2011 school year was \$5,500. The minimum amount is usually \$400.

### How is the Award Determined?

Pell Grants are based on a formula that is applied in the same way to all applicants. The formula is revised

and approved each year by the U.S. Congress. The actual award a student receives depends on a number of factors including:

- The tuition cost.
- The family's financial situation, how much your parents can afford to pay for college
- Family size.
- Whether the student is attending full-time or parttime

### **Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant**

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) are for undergraduates with exceptional financial need. Pell Grant recipients with the lowest Estimated Family Contribution or EFC (will be the first to get FSEOGs. Just like Pell Grants, FSEOGs don't have to be paid back.

### **How much can I get?**

You can receive between \$100 and \$4,000 a year, depending on when you apply, your financial need, the funding at the school you're attending, and the policies of the financial aid office at your school.

### **If I am eligible, how will I get the FSEOG money?**

If you're eligible, your school will credit your account, pay you directly (usually by check), or combine these methods.

### **Federal Work Study**

Federal Work-Study (FWS) provides part-time jobs for students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses. The program encourages community service work and work related to the recipient's course of study.

### **Federal Perkins Loan**

A Federal Perkins Loan is a low-interest (5 percent) loan for both undergraduate and graduate students with exceptional financial need. Federal Perkins Loans are made through a school's financial aid office. Your school is your lender, and the loan is made with government funds. You must repay this loan to your school.

Your school will either pay you directly (usually by check) or apply your loan to your school charges. You'll receive the loan in at least two payments during the academic year.

The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), Federal Work-Study (FWS), and Federal Perkins Loan programs are called campus-based programs because they're administered directly by the financial aid office at each participating school. Not all schools participate in all three programs. Check with your school's financial aid office to find out which programs they participate in.

How much aid you receive from each of these programs depends on your financial need, on the amount of other aid you receive, and on the availability of funds at your college or career school.

Unlike the Federal Pell Grant Program, which provides funds to every eligible student, the campus-based programs provide a certain amount of funds for each participating school to administer each year. When the money for a program is gone, no more awards can be made from that program for that year. So, make sure you apply for federal student aid as early as you can. Each school sets its own deadlines for campus-based funds, and those deadlines are usually earlier than the Department of Education's deadline for filing a FAFSA.

### **AVOID SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS**

Never pay a fee for scholarship money or application information. Real scholarships never charge fees, and the information about applying is available.

## **Summary**

### **Federal Pell Grant**

Website for more info: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html>

Eligibility: Must be a U.S citizen or eligible non citizen

Basic requirements: Must demonstrate financial need, considering household income, size of family and tuition costs.

How much? You can get anywhere from \$400 to about \$4300 per year.

Will I need to pay this back? No

### **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant**

Website for more info: <http://www.fafsa.gov.edu>

Eligibility: Must be a U.S citizen or eligible non citizen

Basic requirements: Must demonstrate financial need, considering household of family and tuition costs. Also, the size of your grant and availability depends on the school you are attending.

How much? You can get anywhere from \$100 to about \$4000 per year.

Will I need to pay this back? No

## **Loans**

When you get loans, you will sign a contract, basically a legal document that shows that you pledge to repay the debt.

### **WARNING**

Review a loan's provision carefully before you accept it. Make sure you understand what you will have to repay and when. Most important, do not borrow more than you need.

### **Other Financial Aid opportunities for Undocumented Students**

CUNY scholarships and opportunities are open to undocumented students.

Students without immigration status cannot obtain federally-funded or NYS-funded

financial aid. However, students without immigration status can apply for some private scholarships and awards to help them pay for higher education. You may also be able to get student loans, but they are very difficult to obtain.

### Payment Plans for Tuition

TuitionPay is a plan that allows you to pay your tuition for the semester in interest-free monthly installments. It works well for students and families who cannot afford the entire bill at one time.

Under this plan, you still owe the same amount of tuition, but you have more time to pay and the payments are smaller and easier to manage.

### Scholarships and Awards for All Students

For a list of scholarships and awards that do not depend on immigration status visit [www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org) or [www.nysylc.org](http://www.nysylc.org). Additionally, on [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) you can fill out a profile indicating that you are undocumented and view scholarship matches that fit.

### Cuny Honors Programs

Acceptance to the CUNY Honors Program in CUNY is also open to undocumented students. The CUNY Honors Program usually pays for the student's entire tuition.

### Macaulay Honors College

(Participating CUNY colleges: Baruch College; Brooklyn College; City College;

Lehman College; Queens College; Staten Island; and Hunter College)

### Admission

If you meet the eligibility standards, you must apply by special application, available online at the Macaulay Honors College Website.

The application deadline is November 1 for early admission and December 15 for regular admission. Students applying to the Honors college need NOT file a regular admission application to CUNY. The Honors College application serves as the freshman admission application both to CUNY and the Honors College.

### Eligibility

- The Macaulay Honors College admits only new first-year students.
- Students in any major may be accepted.
- Must have a high school GPA of 94.6 or higher (on a scale of 100).
- SAT score (math and verbal) of 1395 or higher.
- demonstrate involvement on extracurricular activities and/or community service
- Personal initiative and leadership
- 2 recommendations from teachers or guidance counselors.
- Submit an energetic and thought-provoking essay, answering the specific question on the application.

## Students in the Macaulay Honors College receive

- Full-tuition scholarship
- A study grant of \$7,500 to fund enriching experiences such as study abroad and service learning away.
- Special interdisciplinary seminars using NYC as resource and text.
- A “cultural passport” providing entree to the riches of New York City, including concerts, theater, art, science and history museums and galleries.
- Intensive mentoring and advisement from faculty and dedicated honors advisors.
- First-day registration privileges.

### Requirements:

- All honors college students take four special interdisciplinary seminars focusing on NYC and fulfill additional liberal arts core requirements (depending on their major).
- In the upper division (junior and senior years), students may take additional honors college sponsored courses and must complete a senior project.
- Students must complete an internship or study abroad program and have a minimum of 30 hours community or college service over the course of the four-year program.

## Retention Criteria

- Students are expected to achieve an overall 3.3 G.P.A. by the end of their first year and a 3.5 G.P.A. by the end of the second year, which must be maintained until graduation.

In case you missed the deadline for the Macaulay Honors College, do not worry, there is another program some CUNY colleges offer, you may be eligible to apply, called Honors Program.

The requirements and benefits of this program may vary depending on the college you are applying to. So it is strongly recommended to visit the admissions office of the college of your choice to know the specifics.

For instance:

- full tuition may not be covered, but you might still get some scholarships or awards from the college.
- A small number of incoming transfer and continuing students are admitted to the program to the discretion of the director.

If you did not have a chance to apply to the programs previously mentioned, remember to locate the scholarship office, information center, welcoming center or office alike, in the college you are planning to attend, to inquire about awards and other opportunities the institution may offer. You may also want to check out our resources section on page 29, to find out additional information that can help you on your road to college.

# What now? Pass the DREAM Act!

## How can undocumented students legalize their status?

Currently undocumented students living in the U.S. can only get immigration status through:

- Family petition system, from which you will need to have an immediate relative who is a US citizen. Immediate relatives can petition for spouses, parents, unmarried children under the age of 21, and widows/widowers.
- Employment sponsorship
- Refugees/Asylum/Victims of Domestic Violence

Keep in mind that there are some high demand top careers you can pursue that might facilitate employment sponsorship.

### NOTE

Even if there is no way you can get your immigration status, there is still hope. The DREAM Act can provide a path to legalize your status!

## The DREAM Act

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act

The DREAM Act is legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for all undocumented students who:

- Have lived in the U.S. for five years or more,
- Arrived in the U.S. before they turned 16, and
- Demonstrate good moral character.

Upon high school graduation, the immigrant student could apply for conditional residence and have up to six years to complete one of the following requirements for unconditional lawful permanent resident (green card) status:

- Graduate from a two-year college; or
- Complete two years towards a four-year degree; or
- Serve in the U.S. military for two years

### CONGRATULATIONS ON GOING TO COLLEGE!

You've made an excellent choice to secure a successful future. The months and years to come may not be easy, but in the long run you will be glad that you took this important step. Good luck!

# Give Back and Get Active

## **The New York State Youth Leadership Council (YLC)**

The New York State Youth Leadership Council provides a great opportunity to give back to your community, helping immigrant youth and the children of immigrants access higher education, while also developing your own leadership skills. Join the YLC and support our efforts to pass the DREAM Act this year, and to educate our communities on their rights and opportunities, regardless of immigration status.

E-mail [GetActive@nysylc.org](mailto:GetActive@nysylc.org) for more information on how you can get involved!

The YLC promotes the advancement of immigrant youth and children of immigrants through leadership development, organizing and advocacy. We believe that improving access to higher education and creating equal opportunity for immigrant youth are a means to fulfill our mission.

Our legislative priority is the DREAM Act, a bill that if passed would allow immigrant youth who have grown up in the U.S. to adjust their immigration status if they meet certain requirements and complete at least two years of higher education or military service.

For more information, visit our website at [www.nysylc.org](http://www.nysylc.org)

email us at [info@nysylc.org](mailto:info@nysylc.org) or call us at 212-627-2227 ext. 248.

## **Promoting Immigrant Voices in Education (PIVE)**

Promoting Immigrant Voices in Education (PIVE), an organization that worked to educate immigrant parents on their rights in NYC schools, worked closely with the YLC to develop this guide in its early stages. Since then, PIVE has become part of the YLC and will now be expanding our work with immigrant parents. To find materials and information for parents, please visit our website.

# Resources

## Graduating High School

- New York State Higher Education Services Corporation  
[www.hesc.com](http://www.hesc.com)
- College Now  
<http://collegenow.cuny.edu/>
- General Educational Development Testing Office-GED  
[www.emsc.nysed.gov/ged/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ged/)

## Road to College

- College Board  
[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
- ACT test  
[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
- College Summit Student Essays  
[www.pbs.org/now/shows/417/student-essays.html](http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/417/student-essays.html)
- City University of New York-CUNY  
[www.cuny.edu](http://www.cuny.edu)
- State University of New York-SUNY  
[www.suny.edu](http://www.suny.edu)

## Higher Education & Immigrant Student without Immigration Status

- New York State Youth Leadership Council  
[www.nysylc.org](http://www.nysylc.org)
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center / A Guide for Immigrant Youth  
[www.ilrc.org/for\\_immigrants/living\\_in\\_the\\_us.php](http://www.ilrc.org/for_immigrants/living_in_the_us.php)

- CUNY University Student Senate  
[www.uss.cuny.edu/senate/international/nyic.html](http://www.uss.cuny.edu/senate/international/nyic.html)

## Financial Aid & Scholarships

- Federal Student Aid  
<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>
- Find Aid  
[www.finaid.org/fafsa/fafsa.phtml](http://www.finaid.org/fafsa/fafsa.phtml)
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund  
[www.hsf.net](http://www.hsf.net)
- Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund-MALDEF  
[www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org)
- National Council of La Raza-NCLR  
[www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org)
- New York State Youth Leadership Council-YLC  
[www.nysylc.org](http://www.nysylc.org)
- Peter F. Vallone Scholarship  
[www.web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/scholarships/vallone.html](http://www.web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/scholarships/vallone.html)
- CUNY Honors Program  
[www.macaulay.cuny.edu/](http://www.macaulay.cuny.edu/)
- Fast Web  
[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)



