

College Planning Timeline

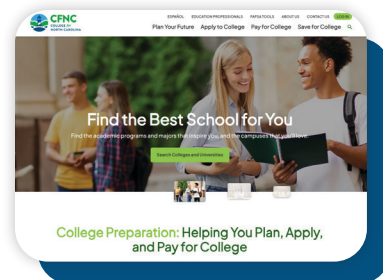
No matter where you are in your college journey, this timeline gives you clear steps to keep you moving. Exploring college options can be both exciting and a little overwhelming, but CFNC is here to make it easier for you to work through it.



Getting Started

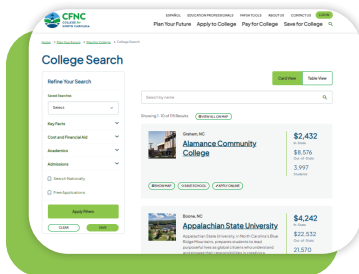
Whether you are a freshman just starting to think about college or a senior navigating the college application process, here's what to do first.

1. **Create a free CFNC account** on CFNC.org.
➤ Use this account to take career assessments, apply to colleges, and order transcripts.
2. **Create a professional email address** to communicate with future colleges and employers.
3. **Start your personal resume** to keep track of your extracurriculars, volunteer hours, awards earned, and more. Update this resume regularly.
4. **Learn about ways to save and pay for college** at CFNC.org/pay.
➤ Scan QR code to learn more.



Time to Explore

Explore your interests to get a better sense of the future you want to work toward.



1. **Complete assessments** through NCcareers.org that will help you get to know your strengths and interests better and see which careers could be a good fit and what education you need.
2. **Research college options with the CFNC College Search tool** at CFNC.org/collegesearch.
➤ Think about the differences between earning a short-term credential, a 2-year degree, or a 4-year degree.
➤ Consider the majors offered, the location, and the campus life.
3. **Learn about college entrance exams.**
➤ Many colleges use entrance tests like the ACT and SAT. Prepare through CFNC.org under "Plan for College" in the "Plan Your Future" tab.

Explore options for earning college credit in high school by asking your school counselor about Career and College Promise.



Do Your Prep Before Taking the Next Step

Prepare for the college application process. The time to start applying is near!

1. **Learn about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** at CFNC.org/fafsa101. The FAFSA is an important tool to help you receive money to help pay for college.
2. **Register for the ACT or SAT** if you have not already taken one. Don't forget to use the CFNC College Search tool to see if the colleges you are interested in are test optional.
➤ Currently a sophomore? Register for the PSAT to participate in the National Merit Scholarship Program.
➤ Make note of important deadlines for applications at CFNC.org/admissionsdeadlines.
3. **Attend free college fairs and financial aid programs** at your school or in your community.
➤ Visit the campuses of the colleges you are considering to give you an idea of campus life.
➔ Can't physically visit? Many colleges offer in-depth virtual tours!

Juniors have the opportunity to enroll in the CFNC Next Step program to better prepare for senior year.

- With Next Step, share your contact information with NC colleges, learn more about FAFSA, learn the differences between majors and degrees, rank your top colleges, and more. Visit CFNC.org/NextStep for more information.

NEXT STEP ➤



Take Action

● You are ready to start applying to colleges and learn how to pay for them! These actions are for seniors or juniors graduating early.

1. Complete the NC Residency Determination (RDS) through NCResidency.org.

➤ Completing RDS will tell you if you qualify for in-state tuition at an NC community college or public university, as well as state scholarships like the Next NC Scholarship or the NC Need-Based Scholarship for Private College and University Students.

2. Submit college applications along with your high school transcript through the application hub on CFNC.org/apply.

➤ Use your CFNC.org account. Pay attention to which colleges require application fees, but submitting your transcript is completely free.

➔ Many NC colleges participate in College Application Week, usually the third week in October, where many waive application fees for students submitting applications through CFNC.org.

➤ If you completed any college credit while in high school, you'll be asked to submit your official transcript from the college in which you received the credit. Requesting transcripts from colleges does cost money, so plan accordingly.

➤ If you took AP tests, submit your test scores as well.



NCSEAA
RESIDENCY DETERMINATION
SERVICE (RDS)

NEXT NC
SCHOLARSHIP



NCSEAA
NC NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIP FOR PRIVATE
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



3. Complete the FAFSA through FAFSA.gov.

➤ Completing the FAFSA lets you know what you qualify for.

➔ Important to know: The FAFSA is just a tool to give you information. You don't have to accept any aid, take out any loans or commit to any colleges.

➔ You will get the chance to list up to 20 colleges where you want your FAFSA information sent. Submit to every college you applied to or were accepted into so you can compare their aid offers.

➤ Even if you do not qualify for certain grants, many colleges and outside organizations require the FAFSA for other scholarships.

4. Start searching and applying for other scholarships.

➔ CFNC's scholarship search portal hosts over 100 scholarships for NC students at CFNC.org/scholarships.

➤ Looking for more scholarships? The North Carolina Community Foundation offers more than 130 scholarships for NC students accessible through one application at NCCCommunityFoundation.org/Scholarships.

5. Compare all the financial aid offers you receive from colleges. Colleges will usually send out financial aid offers around March or April.

➔ The Award Advisor app allows you to upload a photo of each financial aid offer you receive and will easily convert them into offers you can compare. Go to AwardAdvisor.org for more information. You can also download CFNC's financial aid offer comparison sheet through CFNC.org/pay.

Once you choose the college that best fits your interests and budget, offers the education program you're looking for, and is where you feel you belong, contact them to learn how to enroll.

➤ Most will require a deposit that counts towards tuition, and some will have deadlines.

➤ You may need to sign up for housing and a meal plan.

➤ Attend on-campus orientation where you can learn about the campus and enroll in your classes.

➤ Set up your student account on the campus portal and watch out for payment deadlines.

Once you commit to college, celebrate your choice on Decision Day May 1st!



CFNC
COLLEGE for
NORTH CAROLINA

➔ **CFNC.org**

