College-going Tips for High School & Transfer Students: an undocumented student’s guide for completing college (transfer) applications

The guide’s purpose is to increase access to college resources for immigrant youth in the United States.
This guide was created to help undocumented students in high school or community college who are interested in transferring to a university in pursuit of a bachelor’s degree. It was written for students, by students. The Transfer Guide Committee from ScholarshipsA-Z decided that the information contained in this document needs to be shared with other undocumented students and ally educators after witnessing that most undocumented students in Tucson, Arizona, find themselves stuck at a community college without the hope of furthering their education beyond this level. While some undocumented students may access in-state tuition benefits at universities that reside in states offering such benefits (see http://nilc.org/basic-facts-instate.html for a list of states), the majority of students face more obstacles to attend a university. Since Arizona voters approved Proposition 300 in November 2006, every public university in the state will charge out of state tuition to students who lack legal residency or U.S. citizenship even if the student has lived in Arizona for more than one year. As a result, there are few financial and educational opportunities at four-year colleges and universities for undocumented students in Arizona. Thus, students feel obligated to search for opportunities out of state, and look for schools that are not only friendly, but also financially realistic.

What students must consider when applying to a four-year college or university:

- **Apply to ~15-20 schools** - The more you apply the more opportunities available.
- **Create a Common Application** - One same application will serve you to apply to most of the schools you are applying for.
- **Create a CSS Profile through College Board** – This document allows universities to know your economic status.
- **Save money** – Find new ways to earn money for your education. Create a budget.
- **Fill out a paper FAFSA Application** – Complete a printed FAFSA paper application. This can also serve as a proof of your economic status. *DO NOT SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION ONLINE OR TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT*
- **Talk to your parents about the option of moving out of state** - Make sure to keep a good communication with your parents since they are going to be the ones supporting you through many of these steps.
1. Pick your Schools.  
   (Remember to select over 15 schools)
2. Create your Common Application.
3. Request your High School to print official transcripts for all the schools you apply to.
4. If you are a Transfer Student get as many official transcripts as you can.  
   (Remember that in college you have to pay for your official transcripts. Be ready for this.)
5. Create your CSS Profile and have a PDF copy ready with you.
6. Fill out and print a paper FAFSA application.
7. Gather a list of counselors and professors who will write letters of recommendation for you.
8. Start saving money.
9. Have your personal statement ready.
10. Create a method to keep all documents from each school organized  
    (Create a folder for each school you are applying to.)

In order to keep yourself organized when applying to all schools, create a way of organizing all the documents and requirements you'll need to have for the application process.

Here is a To-Do list of all the tasks that YOU MUST do before starting the entire application process!!!
What is the Common Application?

The Common Application is a not-for-profit organization that serves students and member institutions by providing an admissions application both online and in print that students can submit to any of the 488 schools members of the Common Application organization.

Why should I use a Common Application?

- Keep in mind you are applying to 15-20 colleges and universities. The Common Application will provide you with one application for all the schools you are applying for if they are members of the Common Application program.
- You can keep track of your application status for each school on their website.
- You will do all the application processes from a single website
- Your college application process will be more organized

How do I start My Common Application?

1. Register at www.commonapp.org
2. Fill out the Registration Application. Make sure to indicate if you are a First year college student or a Transfer student. Make sure to create a username and a password for your Common Application account.
3. Now that you have an account, make sure to log in and start searching for the schools you are interested in applying to. Be aware that not all of the schools are always found on the Common Application search.
4. The final step will consist on filing out the different sections on the Common Application.

* Click here to watch a Common Application Demo. This video will walk you through detailed steps on how to create your Common Application account.

If you have any further concerns about your Common Application you can take a look at a Common Application guide created by the Santa Barbara City College Transfer Center. Here you will find very detailed explanations about each section found in the Common Application. Please Visit the University of Michigan Common Application Guide for more details.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>In this section you will submit information about your academic interest or major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>General information from the student. Name, address, phone number etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Information about the place where you were born. This information is confidential. Remember that the Common Application is trying to create a file for you that will be used by every college or university you apply for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Here you are going to list both of your parents’ information. The reason for this is that most colleges want to use this information for demographic purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Here you will give information about the college or University that you are currently attending. Also, here you would add information about your current academic counselor, and what kind of degree you expect to earn in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Tests</td>
<td>You must submit information about all the standardized tests that you have taken such as ACT, SAT, AP exams, or TOFEL. Make sure to submit official test scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Document all the extracurricular activities you have been involved in high school if you are a high school student or during college if you identify as a transfer student. Make sure to list the activities that are a priority for you. You can also add any work experience that you might have in this section. Also, if you believe that you need to add more about your involvement make sure to attach a resume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>You will write about one of your activities and your role. Also, you have to submit a minimum of 250 words personal statement. Make sure to have someone revise any writings before submitting them on your Common Application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplements</td>
<td>Each school you apply to will have different types of supplements or not have any at all. Supplements consist on different general or essay questions that you must submit if you want your application to be considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments</td>
<td>The common application will give you different options to pay for your application. Make sure to ask for an Application Fee Waiver Request, so that you won’t have to pay for your application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Forms</td>
<td>The Common Application provides you with diverse forms that you could or must use depending on the school you are applying to. The forms consist of college official reports, instructor evaluations, or a secondary school reports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is a CSS Profile?

The CSS Profile is the financial aid application service of the College Board, which is a national non-profit association dedicated to connect students to college opportunities.

- Serves as a proof of your economic status to many universities, and scholarship programs.
- The CSS Profile is able to replace a FAFSA application
- The profile will help universities and scholarship programs to award nonfederal student aid.

Note: If the school or scholarship does not accept the CSS Profile, ask about other forms they might accept to prove your economic status

How to create a CSS Profile?

1. Create an account with College Board. Visit the Following link to start your account: [https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp](https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp)
2. Once the account has been created, you will be able to create your Profile.
3. There will be a section where you will be able to add any colleges that you are applying to, and College Board will automatically send your profile to that specific school.
4. Answer every question that applies to your financial status.
5. In order to be able to see your profile you need to click on Check Status Update, and then click on Acknowledgement.
6. Once you click on the Acknowledgement section, you will be able to take a look at your profile. You could either print this information or create a PDF document.
7. When you finish all of the different questions asked, you will be able to download a PDF document, which will become your CSS Profile.
8. This document will be the one that you can mail or e-mail to any School or scholarship program you are applying to.
9. The Profile will include different sections such as:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Data</td>
<td>Personal Information such as your name, date of birth, address, student tax filing status, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Data</td>
<td>Personal information about your parents like name, occupation, phone number, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household information</td>
<td>How many people are in your parent's household?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent income and benefits (Divided into different years)</td>
<td>Work income, any benefits received from the government. (As an undocumented students most of the time your parents share your same immigration status; therefore, they are not allowed to acquire any financial government assistance, so most of this section could be left blank).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Assets</td>
<td>Information about any money that parents might hold in a bank account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Expenses</td>
<td>Any child support, medical, or loan expenses that parents might receive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student income benefits</td>
<td>Income student has earned in a year (if the student has a job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Expected Resources</td>
<td>Amount student expects to earn through wages, salaries, tips or any other type of governmental benefit. (Remember undocumented students can not have any type of governmental benefits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Assets</td>
<td>Information about money that the student might hold in a bank account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Expenses</td>
<td>Any type of child support and medical expenses the student might receive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations and circumstances</td>
<td>This is a section for you to write about your financial need. Also, for example if the family hasn't been able to file taxes, this section can be used to explain the reasons why the family hasn't filed taxes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Undocumented and Saving for College

As an undocumented student, we know it's hard to find money to help fund your education. As an undocumented student in high school or college you need to think of ways to fund your education. Remember that THERE ARE NOT as many scholarship opportunities for you, so you have to create your own.

* DO NOT WAIT until you are in college to start saving!!!

Tips on Funding your Education:

**Scholarships**

Make sure to look at the ScholarshipsA-Z scholarship list. There are several scholarships that are available for high school students. Be aware that there are not as many scholarships available for students already attending college. As a result, you have to be creative.

**Create your own Website/Blog**

Creating a Website will allow you to Advertise yourself. Write up a personal statement sharing your struggles as a student. Also, share your career goals, and personal interests. You would create a section where people can donate and support your education. Make sure to suggest a minimum donation amount. For an example of how to create your website visit Daniel Rodriguez Website at *Ever Since I was 7*. Here are some sites to use for free: WordPress, Weebly.

**Create a Chipin Account**

Chipin is a website that will assist you in fundraising for your education. This is an easy and secure way to collect money from supporters. This account will help you share the reasons for your fundraiser, how much you want to raise and by when, and it will also allow you to have control of the amount of money you have collected already. Visit the Chipin website to start.
Whether you are in high school or a transfer student thinking of attending an out of state college or university, you should start creating your own budget. Going to college will cost you a lot of money that you probably do not really have. As a result, it is very useful to understand how much your education will cost every year, and how you are going to pay for it.

DON’T PANIC!!! As long as you keep control of your income and how you spend your money, you will be successful.

What is a budget?

A budget is a tool to help you have a better knowledge of your income (how much money you bring in) and expenses (how much you expend) in a specific period of time.

Steps to create your budget

1. Divide your expenses into different categories.

For Example:

Tuition
Rent
Utilities
Food
Transportation
Personal Care
Miscellaneous

2. Create a spreadsheet in Excel with your income and expenses. Click here for a sample budget spread sheet.
3. Make sure to constantly review and update your budget because if you don’t do so, having a budget would be useless.
* As an undocumented student it can be frightening to contact a school and talk about your immigration status with any financial or academic advisor. However, it is better to be open about your situation with the school, so that you can certainly know your options at the college and have enough information to back up your decision when choosing schools to apply for. Sometimes the responses might be very offensive, but you have to remember that you don’t lose anything by trying. Remember, **DON’T BE AFRAID** to talk about your immigration status.

**Here is a list of questions to guide you on your application process:**

1. Who can I talk to about being an undocumented student at your institution?
2. What are some of the scholarships available for undocumented students at your institution?
3. Can I turn in a paper FAFSA Application to show my financial need?
4. Do you accept a CSS Profile instead of FAFSA to show financial need?
5. Does your institution have any additional forms available for me to prove my economic status?
6. Do you accept any support letters from teachers or counselors to verify my economic status?
7. Are any other undocumented students going to your institution?
8. Are there any pro-undocumented student groups at your institution?
How do I confront the school’s administration about my immigration status?

Here are various scenarios of real e-mail conversations between an undocumented student and the school’s administration. These can serve as a template to follow when calling or emailing a university to ask questions about your financial aid opportunities, scholarships, or your student status.

Scenario # 1

This is an example of a student explaining her immigration status to an admission’s office administrator. While asking for an application fee waiver she was denied because she was considered an international student.

Student:

Hi,
My name is Alexandra, and I am a transfer student who applied to the college. Here is my CSS Profile to give the university an idea of my economic status, and be eligible for need base financial assistance.

Thank you

University:

Can you confirm that you are not a US Citizen and will not be completing the FAFSA for need-based aid consideration? I am assuming this is the case. Just want to confirm.

Thanks,
Scenario # 2

Example of E-mail from a student to a Scholarship Program (applicable to college admissions):

*In this scenario the Scholarship Board didn’t accept the CCS Profile to prove the students' low economic status. The Scholarship program had its own paper work for the student to fill out to prove financial need.*

Student:

Hi,

I identify as an undocumented student; therefore, I’m not a U.S. citizen, and I can’t complete the FAFSA application.

University:

Thank you for the clarification, we will consider you for need-based university funding via the profile.

Student:

Hi,

My name is Alexandra [Redacted], and I am a student at a Community College. I do not have a Student Aid Report, but I do have a CSS Profile, which is an income report through College Board. I am wondering if it would be fine with the scholarship committee to turn in a CSS Profile instead of a SAR.

Thank you,
Alexandra [Redacted]

Tostitos Scholarship Board:

Alexandra,

Please use the attached alternative proof of income from in lieu of the SAR. Please let me know if you have any additional questions.
There are many colleges and universities that offer in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students who meet certain qualifications in their state (e.g. graduate from a state high school, etc.) You can see a full list of states where this occurs at http://nilc.org/basic-facts-instate.html. To help direct your efforts on finding colleges and universities where all undocumented students can attend, regardless of the state in which they reside, our Transfer Guide Committee has begun developing a list of schools that we consider “Friendly.” In order to be “Friendly,” colleges and universities must openly accept undocumented student applicants, offer substantial financial aid to help cover students’ expenses, and have an admissions office that knowingly supports undocumented students’ access into their institution.

The current List of Friendly Schools is being updated regularly. If you find an error, would like to send an update to our Transfer Guide Committee, or would like to be part of our committee, please contact us:

ScholarshipsA-Z
transfer@scholarshipsaz.org
(520) 305-9342

You can find our guide here: http://bit.ly/UndocuTransfer (online Google Doc)