



ST. THOMAS MORE

COLLEGE APPLICATION HANDBOOK

Class of 2025

St. Thomas More Catholic High School

450 E. Farrel Rd

Lafayette, LA 70508

stmcougars.net

School Code (CEEB): 191438

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

St. Thomas More ACT Code

191438

STM Telephone

(337) 988-3700

Elizabeth Sandridge, Director of College Counseling

(337) 988-3700, ext. 145

elizabeth.sandridge@stmcougars.net

Kristen Brown, Counselor, Class of 2025

(337) 988-3700, ext. 146

kristen.brown@stmcougars.net

Mamie Romero, Registrar

(337) 988-3700, ext. 156

mamie.romero@stmcougars.net

The College Board (SAT, SAT Subject Tests, AP, CLEP)

National Office (866) 630-9305

South Regional Office (866) 392-4088

www.collegeboard.org

ACT

(319) 337-1000

www.act.org

Financial Aid

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

- (800) 4FED-AID (800-433-3243)
- www.fafsa.ed.gov

CSS Profile (additional profile required by some private institutions)

- (844) 202-0524
- www.collegeboard.org

NCAA Eligibility Center

- (877) 262-1492
- www.eligibilitycenter.org

December 2023

Dear Students and Parents,

Your *College Application Handbook* has a wealth of information to assist you in all aspects of college admissions from your college search to matriculation. We hope you will keep this resource handy and find it helpful in answering many of your questions during the upcoming year.

We are always available to help and support you along your college admissions path. Please do not hesitate to call, write, or stop by our office.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Sandridge
*Director of
College Counseling*



Kristen Brown
Counselor, Class of 2025

WHO DOES WHAT?

Seniors Must . . .

Take ownership of the college application process.

- Take the initiative to research and apply to schools you would like to attend.
- Fill out applications carefully and have College Counseling check over forms, essays and résumé before submitting.
- Request transcripts and recommendations in an appropriate, timely and gracious manner.
- Write thank-you notes to teachers or friends who write recommendations for you.
- Check with colleges to confirm that your file is complete **well before the deadlines**.
- Check e-mail, text messages, SCOIR, the College Counseling Moodle and listen to announcements for important information regarding applications, scholarships, and college representative visits.

College Counseling will . . .

Help the student navigate and complete the application process.

- Make recommendations for appropriate schools.
- Provide information on colleges, standardized tests, and financial aid.
- Review application forms, essays and résumés.
- Complete and send in all requisite supporting materials.
- Send official transcript to colleges at the student's request.

Parents should . . .

Be supportive.

- Encourage your student to research and explore several college paths.
- Take your student to visit schools.
- Set clear and consistent parameters for schools to which your child may apply.
- Allow your child to do the work of applying.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Learning about You	6
Exploring Colleges	8
How do Colleges Make Admissions Decisions?	
Useful School Websites	
The Campus Visit	
Sample Questions for the Campus Visit	
Applying to Colleges	13
The First Steps	
Class of 2024-2025 Calendar	
Application Types	
Using SCOIR	
Requesting Documents	
Completing the Common Application	
Completing the ApplyTexas Application	
Academy Application Requirements	
Prospective College Athletes: NCAA Eligibility Center	
The SAT and ACT: Preparation for Testing	
Résumé Sample	
Tips on Writing the College Essay	
Financing Your College Education	29
College Finances 101	
Financial Aid Terms	
Frequently Asked Questions about Financial Aid	
Scholarship Scam Warning Signs	
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA)	
Required Financial Aid Documents	
Completing the FAFSA	
Additional Resources	37
Glossary of College Admission Terms	
Helpful Websites	
Great Resources	
References	
2024-25 SAT/ACT Testing Dates	

LEARNING ABOUT YOU

Think about the differences between a career and a job. A job is usually in a place of employment that provides money with little or no personal fulfillment. A career, however, is a well-planned, conscious choice taking into consideration your likes and dislikes and merging them with your gifts and talents. Everyone has gifts and talents and there are many tools to help you find the careers that would fit you. There are hundreds of thousands of careers you may not even know exist! Take some time and really think about who you are and what you dream about when you envision your future. Find out what motivates you. Dig deep and challenge yourself to take an honest look at your likes and dislikes to better understand who you are. Because who you are is wonderful!

If you still don't know what you want to study or what you would be good at, now is the time to find out. Check out these resources for career interest inventories and planning guides:

- <https://www.laworks.net/mylife/>
 - Estimate your living cost, know how much you will need to earn for your lifestyle, explore careers.
- <https://www.lanext.com/>
 - Your guide to life after high school
- <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>
 - The O*Net Interest Profiler can help you find out what your interests are and how they relate to the world of work. You will find out what you like to do and it will help you decide on what kinds of careers you may want to explore.
- <https://www.bls.gov/k12/students.htm>
 - Bureau of Labor and Statistics student resources for STEM careers, career exploration, career outlook and much more.
- <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>
 - Free personality test based on Carl Jung and Isabel Briggs Meyers personality type theory. Learn about your strengths and your personality type. Discover careers that are most suitable for your personality type. Understand your communication and learning style.

EXPLORING COLLEGES

HOW DO COLLEGES MAKE ADMISSIONS DECISIONS?

Each school's admissions committee weighs these components to meet its individual admissions criteria based on the school's mission statement.

ACADEMIC COMPONENTS

- High school course selections
- GPA
- SAT and/or ACT (with writing)

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

- According to a NACAC study, about 50% of colleges claim that a student's demonstrated interest in the school is either highly or moderately important in the admissions process.
- Students should only contact the college or university when they have a legitimate reason to do so.
- Parents should not be more memorable than students.

PERSONAL COMPONENTS

Personal Achievement

- Extracurricular activities
- Awards
- Employment
- Community service
- Athletics
- Special talents and interests

Essay(s)*

- Should be well-written
- Should be interesting
- Reflection of an applicant
- Revealing a passion

Recommendation(s)*

- Provide personal insight into applicant
- Separate(s) applicant from other candidates
- Add(s) new information about the candidate

*Not all schools require essays or recommendations. Abide by the maximum number of recommendations a school wants.

USEFUL SCHOOL WEBSITES

**University of
Louisiana at
Lafayette**
louisiana.edu

**Louisiana State
University**
lsu.edu

**South Louisiana
Community
College**
solacc.edu

**University of
Mississippi**
olemiss.edu

**Louisiana Tech
University**
latech.edu

Tulane University
tulane.edu

**Loyola University
(New Orleans)**
loyno.edu

**Texas Christian
University**
tcu.edu

**Baton Rouge
Community
College**
mybrcc.edu

**McNeese State
University**
mcneese.edu

**Northwestern
State University**
nsula.edu

Louisiana College
lacollege.edu

**University of
Louisiana at
Monroe**
ulm.edu

Millsaps College
millsaps.edu

LSU-Eunice
lsue.edu

**Southeastern
Louisiana State**
southeastern.edu

**Spring Hill
College**
shc.edu

**Auburn
University**
auburn.edu

**Savannah
College of Art
and Design**
scad.edu

**University of
Alabama**
ua.edu

**University of
New Orleans**
uno.edu

Texas A&M
tamu.edu

LSU- Alexandria
lsua.edu

Baylor University
baylor.edu

**Centenary
College of
Louisiana**
centenary.edu

THE CAMPUS VISIT

STM seniors **have three excused** absence days to visit colleges. Check the STM calendar for holidays, early dismissals, and other school closings. Students must get a College Visit Form from Counseling BEFORE they visit a college campus.

Before you leave home . . .

- Many schools have special **weekend events** and **tours**. Take advantage of these.
- Allow sufficient time to visit, preferably a full day and not less than half a day, at each college.
- Make arrangements to take a **tour**, attend an **information session**, and attend a **class**. Make a list of informed questions.
- Familiarize yourself with the **college catalog** or **bulletin before** you arrive on campus.
- Know something about your own high school before visiting. Obtain a copy of **STM School Profile** to take with you. It explains our academic college preparatory program, sports, extracurricular activities, etc.
- Take a copy of your **unofficial transcript** and **résumé** with you.
- Give careful attention to your **appearance, grooming, and conduct** if you are taking a tour or meeting with a counselor.
- Prepare a list of thoughtful and informed **questions** to ask.

While on campus . . .

- Take a **guided tour** of campus, meet with an admissions counselor, and if time allows, explore for yourself.
- Visit **classes** and talk with students on your own. Ask them questions.
- Assess the cleanliness, comfort, noise level, privacy, and safety of the **housing**.
- Evaluate the resources, accessibility of books, hours of operation, and helpfulness of staff in the **library**.
- Eat a meal in the **dining hall** or student union.
- Be familiar with campus **security** and obtain crime statistics.
- Pick up a copy of the college **newspaper**. Read bulletin boards for insight into student interests and upcoming events.
- Talk with a **professor** or two.
- Check out **other areas of interest** such as fine arts facilities, newspaper office, labs (music, science, language), student services, and extracurricular options.
- Visit the **bookstore** to see what types of non-required reading material is available. This is an excellent indicator of the academic caliber and general interests of the students.
- Take **notes**.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE CAMPUS VISIT

Academics

- What is the average class size? Are large, first-level courses broken into smaller groups?
- Who will teach freshman courses - graduate assistants or full professors?
- What is the faculty advisory system like? How easy is it to meet with advisors?
- How are advisors assigned – by department, major, random selection, etc.?
- Are professors' offices located in areas with classrooms so you can have easy access for help, or are they far away? Are professors readily accessible for help?
- Is there a specific curriculum, or are there required courses for your degree?
- Do professors mingle with students?

Campus

- Does the campus appeal to you? Are locations easily accessible? Will you need a car?
- Is parking a problem? If cars are allowed, how much are parking permits?
- Are the students friendly, intellectual, preppy, studious, etc.? Is the campus clean, active, busy?
- How accessible is the campus-wide Wi-Fi connection?

Housing

- Is on-campus housing limited?
- Are freshmen required to live on campus?
- How is housing assigned? Is there a separate application? Deadline? Deposit?
- How are roommates assigned? Can you request a particular roommate?
- How many students per room? Are single rooms available?
- Are the study areas in the dorm satisfactory? Are there study hours or quiet rooms?

Students

- What drew the student to this college? What does the student like/dislike about the school?
- From the student's point-of-view, how is the student-faculty relationship?
- How demanding is the workload?
- How would the student describe the social and cultural life?
- Do students take advantage of the cultural opportunities?

Catholic Life

- Do they have a Catholic Church? What is their schedule like? Do other near-by colleges share one Church?
- What is the size of the Catholic community?
- Is the Catholic community tightly knit?
- What Catholic resources are available in the community? Are there Catholic Student Centers?
- How can I grown in my Catholic faith at this school?

APPLYING TO COLLEGES

THE FIRST STEPS

1. Complete Junior College Counseling Survey emailed to students and parent before winter break in December. Class of 2025, this survey is available to parents and student in your SCOIR account.
2. Review your school choices and plans with College Counseling and your parents. Determine expectations that you and your family will have for higher education funding.
3. Explore schools of interest. Know the specific application requirements and components. Explore College Board's "Big Future" to learn about individual schools.
4. For specific instructions regarding the Common Application, the Coalition Application, and the Apply Texas application, please see College Counseling.
5. Brainstorm about college essay topics and prepare résumé.
6. Determine which schools on your list superscore and which do not.
7. Request official scores to be sent to schools from ACT and/or College Board. If you have questions about this, please see College Counseling.
8. Check application status online well before the deadline to be sure application is complete. Schools need at least ten business days after receipt to post any activity on student's account.
9. File housing applications and fees.
10. Begin scholarship search.
11. Complete **FAFSA** and/or **CSS Profile** for financial aid/scholarship purposes starting in October of senior year.
12. Use your full legal name on all application components. Be sure the name on your application matches the one on your transcript and test score reports.

CLASS OF 2025 SENIOR CALENDAR

August and September

1. Finalize college list, making sure the distribution of Reach, Target and Probable schools makes sense.
2. Finalize your standardized testing plans.
 - a. Are you done? Planning to take another? If so, when? Have you registered for it yet?
 - b. What are the priority deadlines for the schools you are most interested in?
3. Finalize your résumé. Make sure to include your summer activities and the hours you have given to each activity. Also, watch your tense: ongoing activities should be in present tense. All activities should be logged in SCOIR.
4. Create a spreadsheet of the colleges to which you are applying. This spreadsheet should include:
 - a. Application plan you are applying under (Rolling, Early Action, Early Decision I and II, Regular Decision).
 - b. Application deadline. Note any priority or preferential deadlines.
 - c. Essay prompts.
 - i. Determine which essays (if any) you might recycle from other applications and which you will have to write from scratch.
 - d. Testing requirements:
 - i. Do they superscore? Only look at your best composite score?
 - ii. When will you send in your scores?
 - iii. Are you applying as Test Optional?
 - e. Date on which you intend to file your application.
5. If you are requesting a recommender outside of STM, reach out to that person, asking her/him to prepare a letter for you by a certain date, and have them send it to your STM College Counselor (CC) for review and submission.
6. If you choose not to sign the FERPA Waiver and the Release Authorization in SCOIR, you need to gather as many Transcript Release Forms (TRFs) from the CC as you require (one per out-of-state school **AND** LSU).
7. TRFs must be submitted to your counselor at least two weeks before the application deadline.
8. Attend college rep visits at STM. If you have applied or intend to apply to a school, you **MUST** attend the college rep's visit on campus. Register for visits through SCOIR.
9. Read our e-mails and texts.
10. Begin applications for admissions and scholarships. Scholarship information is in the College Counseling Moodle Page.
11. Begin writing and revising supplement essays. Your Apply Texas, Coalition and Common Application essays should be complete.
12. Parents gather 2023 tax data to apply for financial aid starting on 10/1.

October

1. FAFSA (need-based financial aid) application is slated to open on 10/1: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>.
2. Continue your applications.
 - a. Identify any merit-based scholarships at a college you can apply for or are automatically considered for by simple virtue of applying.
 - b. Begin search for community, organizational or other types of scholarships.
3. Continue writing and revising your essays.
4. Continue with standardized testing as needed.
5. Send in your test scores from ACT and/or College Board. YOU own your scores and must take charge of sending them to schools and making sure they arrive there.
6. UT Honors, Texas A&M Engineering Honors, and UGA Early Action (EA) deadline: 10/15.
7. Reach out to college reps to make contact (regardless of whether they are visiting STM or not).
8. Demonstrate your interest! Attend Lafayette-area events (college fairs, receptions, etc.) when college reps visit Lafayette but not STM.

November

1. Early Action (EA)/Early Decision (ED) deadlines either 11/1 or 11/15. Tulane ED II opens 11/16.
2. Continue and complete applications by end of the month. Check the College Counseling Moodle page for more scholarship opportunities.
3. Tulane Early Decisions and Early Action deadline: 11/1. Applications must be on file with these schools by 10/20 so your counselor can submit your supporting materials.

December

1. Finish all college applications by 12/15. Why?
 - a. You need a head free of applications for exam preparation.
 - b. LSU priority deadline is 12/15, UL Lafayette's is 1/31 and Ole Miss is 1/5.
 - c. You will need a total break from school/college stuff over the Winter Break.
2. Wrap up standardized testing as needed.
3. Early Action (EA)/Early Decision (ED) results released around 12/15 and continuing through January.
 - a. If you are admitted ED (or are admitted EA and ready to commit), rescind all other applications.

January

1. Most Regular Decision (RD) and EA/ED II deadlines: around 1/1 – 1/15.
 - a. Tulane Regular Admission deadline is 1/15.
2. UL Lafayette scholarship deadline is 1/31 and Ole Miss priority scholarship deadline is 1/5. Applications must be on file with these schools by 1/10 for UL and 12/15 for Ole Miss so your counselor can submit your supporting materials.

February

1. Students wait. Colleges are busy reading applications. While waiting, keep searching for community, organizational or other types of scholarships.
2. LSU Regular Admission deadline is 2/1 and Ole Miss Scholarship deadline is 2/15.

March

1. Regular decisions (RD)/financial aid offers will start to be released the 2nd or 3rd week of March.

April

1. Schools are obliged to let you know of their decision/aid offer by 4/1.
2. Compare offers, revisit schools if necessary, and commit to a school.

May

1. Students are obliged to accept or deny offers (admits and wait lists) by 5/1. If you are not accepting an offer, send an e-mail to the school's rep, thanking them and declining their offer.
2. If you are offered a place on the waitlist and accept it, reach out to the school with an update on what you've been up to, reiterate your enthusiasm for the school, and then assume that you won't get in. It will be impossible to know your chances to get in off their waitlist, so commit to a school you have been admitted to and move on. Think carefully about if you are offered a spot on the waitlist whether you will take it or not, as you are sometimes given a short time (24-72 hours) to accept a place or not.
3. Graduate.
4. Register for orientation, etc.

June

1. You and your parents will start to receive further information about the coming year: classes, scheduling, etc.

APPLICATION TYPES

Common Application (commonapp.org)

- **Create account no earlier than August 1, 2024.**
- List on Common App (CA) schools to which you are applying.

ApplyTexas (applytexas.org)

- **Create account no earlier than July 1, 2024.**
- Use for Texas **PUBLIC** schools only (UT system schools, A&M system schools, Texas Tech, Texas State, SHSU, SFA, UNT, etc.).
- **DO NOT USE** ApplyTexas for Trinity, TCU, SMU, or other private Texas schools.

Coalition for Access, Affordability and, Success Application (coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)

- **Create account no earlier than August 1, 2024. Student can also apply to Coalition school through their SCOIR account.**
- Use for the University of Florida, University of Maryland – College Park, University of Washington - Seattle
- **DO NOT USE** for schools also listed on the Common Application

Out-of-State Public Schools (those not on Common Application)

- Complete the school's online application available on school's website.

Please see College Counseling if your school has only a paper application available.

WHICH WAY TO APPLY

EARLY ACTION (EA) I AND II

In this non-binding application program, a student usually applies EA I on or before the first of November (sometimes Nov. 15) and receives an admission decision by the middle of December. If accepted, the student is not obligated to commit to the college until the mandatory May 1 “college deadline day.” EA II is a second chance to apply early at the beginning or middle of January, with a response back from a college sometime four, six, eight weeks out. Early Action colleges usually allow students to apply to other EA schools.

EARLY DECISION (ED) I AND II

In this binding application program, a student applies on or before Nov. 1 (sometimes Nov. 15) and then receives his or her admission decision by the middle of December. If accepted, the student is obligated to attend that college. (Upon acceptance, a student must withdraw all other applications.) If he/she is not admitted to an ED college, the applicant can then apply ED II to another college with a later deadline. Some Early Decision colleges even allow students to apply to other early application programs, as long as they are not binding, but others don't. Check this out on the admission section of colleges' websites. If a student is applying ED, they must complete the STM ED form and turn into the Counseling Office.

REGULAR DECISION (RD)

Regular decision is the normal process by which students apply by published deadlines, with promise of receiving an admissions decision no later than April 1 of their senior year.

RESTRICTED EARLY ACTION (or SINGLE-CHOICE EARLY ACTION), (REA)

REA is a non-binding early action admission option in which a student may not apply to any other private schools' early program, except:

- A college outside of the US
- A non-binding rolling admission program
- A public college or university whose admission is not binding
- An ED II program, if notification of admission occurs after January 1
 - Like EA applicants, a student has until May 1 to decide if she/he wants to attend the college or university. A few schools that offer REA programs are Boston College, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale. Applicants are asked to sign a statement stipulating that they agree to file only one early application.

ROLLING ADMISSION (ROLL)

This is an application program at some schools — usually larger public universities — in which complete applications are evaluated as they are received. Applications are accepted until the college fills all of its spaces. There is no limit to the number of Rolling Admissions schools to which you can apply even if you apply to EA, ED or REA colleges.

USING SCOIR

Student Access

- **Students were emailed a link to register their account. If a student does not have a registration link, please email Ms. Sandridge.**
- App.scoir.com/signin

Getting Started with SCOIR

This guide provides tips and tools so you can begin using Scoir with confidence. Scoir will help you stay connected with your counselor and prepare you for the college search process and beyond! To begin and make the most out of Scoir, follow the below steps:

1. Register for your Scoir account using [these instructions](#).
2. View this [instructional video](#) to familiarize yourself with Scoir and all of the tools & resources available to you.
3. [Build your Profile](#). Toggle to 'My Profile' and make sure your personal details and academic overview are accurate. Add your activities, achievements, and a personal bio. This may help you establish an approach to your college applications, remind you what sets you apart from others, and make it easier to transfer information over to your college application. Keep this information up-to-date so you can use the Scoir [resume template](#) when needed! The more information you enter into Scoir, the better your Counselor will be able to support you throughout the college search process.
4. [Explore, follow, and compare Colleges](#). Go to the 'College Search' tab and complete a Preference and Advanced Search. After you complete a search, explore colleges of interest and take advantage of the virtual tours, college wall, and college details to gain insight into each campus. Don't forget to use Scoir's [College Compare](#) tool to compare up to 4 colleges side-by-side.
5. Add Colleges to your My Colleges List. To keep track of colleges that interest you, make sure to follow them and add them to your 'My Colleges' list. You can access this list at any time and also keep track of and review Counselor and Parent college suggestions.
6. Learn about the application process on Scoir. If your Counselor is using Scoir to send application-related documents to colleges, it's important to review [this video](#) which shows how to request teacher recommendations and how to notify your Counselors to send required application documents such as your transcripts to the colleges you are applying to.
7. [Learn about your top aptitudes and suggested career paths](#). Ask your Counselor about YouScience and when/if they recommend you take YouScience to learn about your top aptitudes and career paths.
8. Download the Scoir mobile app. Download Scoir's mobile app in the App Store or in Google Play, and enable Push Notifications to receive important alerts and messages from your Counselor.

REQUESTING DOCUMENTS

In order for transcripts and teacher recommendations to be submitted on your behalf to an out-of-state school AND LSU, you must bring a signed Transcript Release Form (TRF) to College Counseling. If you are under 18, your parents must also sign the form.

Requesting Transcripts

- **Completed TRFs must be submitted to your assigned College Counselor in SCOIR. If you do not complete this form, we cannot legally send your transcripts.**
- Most schools can receive supplemental documents electronically through SCOIR. A few schools only receive paper materials.
- This step must be complete for any out-of-state school **AND** LSU. In-state schools (*other than LSU*) will pull your transcript from STS (Student Transcript System).
- **Note about Final Transcripts:** Official final transcript will be sent to the school student's select in SCOIR at the end of the year. State schools (UL, LSU) will receive transcripts from the state system (by mid-July). Out-of-state schools will be sent electronic/paper transcripts after graduation when grades are finalized. If by the end of July Universities still do not have a student's final transcript, please email Ms. Romero (mamie.romero@stmcougars.net). If you need an *official final* transcript for any reason, please contact Ms. Romero.

Requesting Outside Recommendations

- Meet with College Counseling **before** you request **ANY** recommendation.
- Most schools do not require outside letters of recommendation.
- **Follow up** with a thank-you note (not e-mail) **within a week** to the recommender.

Requesting Scores

- Admissions committees always require official test scores as part of the application. For the test scores to be official, **they must be sent directly from the testing agency.**
- It is **your responsibility** to submit your test scores to your colleges. Don't wait for the "perfect score". Universities want to see progress, grit, and stay in touch with students. You may lose out on an opportunity because you were waiting.
- If you wait to send your scores, the cost is \$13.00 per school. To register for the test(s) or to request scores to be sent, go to www.act.org for the ACT or www.collegeboard.org for the SAT, Subject Tests, and AP exams.

COMPLETING THE COMMON APPLICATION

1. Go to www.commonapp.org to see the complete list of participating schools.
2. **Register:** Complete personal information (Profile), create a username (e-mail), and password. You will need the e-mail information to match the Common App with Naviance.
3. **My Colleges:** Add schools to which you plan to apply using the Common Application. You may continue to add to this list at a later date.
4. **Complete the remainder of the application in this order: Family, Education, FERPA (waive your right), Testing, Activities, and Writing.**

Education Tab:

- GPA's are reported on a 4-point weighted scale.
- To report your senior-year courses, count your year-long courses and your semester-long courses separately. Put the total number in the box. *Example: If you are taking 5 year-long courses and one elective each semester, you will report 7 courses.* This number will create the number of boxes for you to insert all your courses.
- Choose AP or Honors only if the course is designated as such; STM does not offer Regents or IB. If the course is not designated Advanced or Honors on your transcript, do not check any choice.

After completion of the Education portion, you will complete the following two steps in order for College Counseling to submit supporting documents:

- Go to "My Colleges." Choose one of your colleges (any one). Click on it; to the right, you will see FERPA. You will check a total of four boxes/circles in two windows. **You MUST waive your right** in order for College Counseling to send any supporting documents (evaluations, transcripts, etc.).

Testing Tab: Self-report your scores in addition to sending the official scores from College Board and/or ACT (unless you are waiting on scores).

Activity Tab: Choose the number of activities to list in each category.

Writing Tab: Upload essay and any writing supplement(s).

Payments and Submit Tab/Button: Pay fees online with credit card or fee waiver.

COMPLETING THE APPLYTEXAS APPLICATION

Do **NOT** Use this Application for Texas Private Schools (Trinity, Southwestern, Rice, Austin College, etc.)

ApplyTexas is the application site for all **Texas public colleges**. Although several Texas private colleges accept ApplyTexas, please **use ApplyTexas solely for Texas PUBLIC schools**.

Create an Account

- **Do NOT create an account before July 1, 2024.**
- Go to **ApplyTexas.org**
- **Caution:** Do NOT create more than one account. Once you have created an account, you will use that information for every application
- **Caution:** Do NOT start more than one ApplyTexas application at a time. Once you have submitted the application to one school, the ApplyTexas application can be copied and submitted to another.
- Once you have created an account, ApplyTexas will generate your user-name.
- **Write down your user-name and password. Keep in a safe place.**

My Applications

- **Choose Fall 2024 as your entry date.**
- Select "Start New Application."
- Select "Create 4-year university admission application."
- Select "Target University."
- Select "Type of Application."
- Select "Freshman."
- Select "School(s)."
- Select "Majors."
- Select "Save and Continue."
- Complete the remaining pages.
- Save, sign, print hard copy, and pay application fee for each application you submit.

Helpful Hints

- A toolbar at the top of each page provides helpful information, special instructions, and answers to application questions.
- **DO NOT count Advanced courses as college credit.**

MILITARY ACADEMY APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Basic Requirements

- **Academic:** Each candidate should have an above-average college-preparatory academic record, which should include calculus and science(s) as a senior and strong standardized testing scores. The academies recommend taking both the ACT and SAT your junior year.
- **Physical:** Each candidate should have above-average strength, endurance and agility as demonstrated on the USMA Physical Aptitude Exam. This assessment consists of six physical and motor fitness events designed to measure muscular strength and endurance: basketball throw, pull-ups, shuttle run, modified sit-ups, push-ups, and one mile run.
- **Leadership:** Candidates should demonstrate his/her ability to be an effective leader through school activities, athletic teams, club and class activities and/or through synagogue, scout, and civic/community service activities.
- **Medical:** Candidates must be in good physical and mental health and pass a medical exam as directed by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board.

Apply for Nomination

Due dates are specific and firm. Carefully read each nominator's instructions. As a minimum, you should apply to your U.S. Senators, your member in the House of Representatives, and the Vice-President. Each member of Congress has multiple nominations available at each of the academies. Candidates found fully qualified for admission, but not selected for the specified vacancy for which they were nominated, are placed on a national waiting list. Each year several hundred nominated candidates are offered admission from this list.

Start A File

Each academy has a slightly different process, but each begins with the potential candidate's request for information or a pre-candidate questionnaire. Once these forms are completed and approved, the academy will notify the candidate and direct him/her to the formal application process. These procedures are online and have checklists to help the candidate monitor his/her progress.

Complete Testing

Candidates must take either the ACT or the SAT. **The academies recommend candidates take both tests.** Test results must be sent to all nominators (Congressional representatives) and the academy(ies) to which the candidate is applying. Although not required for admission, Advanced Placement Examinations are considered in several subject areas: mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, and social sciences. Results are evaluated for award of formal credit for course completion or scheduling individuals into higher-level sections or classes.

Await Status

A formal offer of admission is possible as early as November for qualified candidates who have completed all admissions requirements and receive a nomination. Admissions decisions are made on a rolling basis with majority of admission offers announced by mid-April.

NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER – PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE ATHLETES

Follow these steps to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center for DI or DII Schools

1. **Do NOT** complete until after sophomore year.
2. Go to www.eligibilitycenter.org
3. You will see a window “**Options 3: Academic and Amateurism Certification Account**”
4. Create an account.
5. Review the NCAA Registration Checklist for more information:

chrome-

extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfindmkaj/http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Registration_Checklist.pdf

6. **OPTIONAL:** Have scores (ACT and/or SAT) sent to NCAA. **CEEB** code for NCAA is 9999.

Remember: You must request transcripts from EACH high school you have attended.

Read more from NCAA Student Guide:

http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/CBSA.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3EomxuMGvdqElG98KoR-Cail9LWZaZf1MVrttWEqSh2Asr9vU8A9gBBvw.

THE SAT AND THE ACT - PREPARATION FOR TESTING

SAT and ACT

Colleges use standardized tests to help determine a student's admissibility to, and potential success in higher education.

STM College Counseling highly recommends students start with ACT and then take SAT if necessary. Colleges use the score that is best for each student's admission profile. Some students score better on one test than another. SAT and ACT practice booklets are available in the College Counseling office. Students may also access online test-prep resources at ACT.org and CollegeBoard.org.

Preparation with the PSAT (Taken in the junior year)

Research demonstrates the best preparation for the SAT is to review the two PSAT tests. The test booklet and answers to the questions (Score Report) are returned to the students. Students may also access the online "My College Quick Start" at collegeboard.org for in-depth explanations of each question at <http://www.collegeboard.org/student/testing/psat/psatextra.html>

SAT Question-and-Answer Service

For an additional fee, College Board will provide a copy of the SAT test and answers for the test you have taken for an additional fee.

- This service includes test questions, the correct answers, scoring instructions, and a report including your answers.
- This service is available only on the October, January, and May test dates.
- The Student Answer Service is available for all other test dates and provides a list of question types and difficulty as well as the status of your answer (correct, incorrect, omitted). It does not provide either the questions or the correct answers.

For additional help with test-taking skills, vocabulary development, math review, or other test-related questions, please see College Counseling.

- **Consider taking the SAT if you are struggling with the ACT. The writing portion should be taken at least once if you are considering an out-of-state school, Honors Program, private school, or extremely competitive school for admissions.**

RÉSUMÉ EXAMPLE

Résumés/ Activities:

Continue to be involved and passionate about your activities. Think about awards, club involvement, or community service that you have been involved in.

Use your resume as a guide for what to include in your college and scholarship applications. You can create a resume in SCOIR or follow templates in Google Docs. If you need assistance creating your resume, make an appointment with the Counseling Department.

STM Cougar Student 450 East Farrell Road • Lafayette, LA 70508 Sem2021@stmcougars.net			
EDUCATION		11 th	AP Scholar, Honoree <i>Honorees must have received scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Government and Politics (5), U.S. History (5), English Language and Composition (4)
8/10/18-5/17/21	St. Thomas More Catholic High School Lafayette, LA	11 th	St. Thomas More Spring Subject Award: AP U.S. History, Award Recipient <i>Subject Awards are given at the school's annual Spring Awards Ceremony. One student per academic subject is chosen by the department as the most proficient in that subject for the year.</i>
HONORS & DISTINCTIONS		9 th - 11 th	LHSRA Literary Rally (District), Awards Recipient <i>At this event held by the Louisiana High School Rally Association (LHSRA), one student per subject represents their school within the district by participating in competitive academic subject tests or events. These tests were taken at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biology I (1st place) Chemistry I (1st place) U.S. History (3rd place)
12 th	St. Thomas More Student of the Year, Honoree <i>Annually, a committee of faculty and teachers chooses one student from the senior class to represent the school in the Louisiana Student of the Year Awards Program. Eligible students must have a minimum 3.1 cumulative GPA to participate and submit a portfolio consisting of an application form, autobiographical sketch, academic records, and forms demonstrating leadership, activities, recognitions, and service/citizenship.</i>	10 th , 11 th	Diocesan Quiz Bowl Tournament, 3x Champion <i>An annual fall quiz bowl tournament is organized for Lafayette Diocese high schools. Typically, 10+ teams participate. A spring tournament was added for the 2019-20 school year.</i>
12 th	2021 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, Candidate <i>Candidacy is given on behalf of the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the U.S. Department of Education based on either outstanding performance on the ACT/SAT or nomination by a Chief State School Officer or one of the partner recognition organizations. Approximately 5,000 out of nearly 3.6 million high seniors were invited this year.</i>	11 th	Scholastic Art and Writing Awards (Regional), Awards Recipient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gold Key (Drawing & Illustration: "Lost and Found")
12 th	Scholastic Art and Writing Awards: South Louisiana Art Region, Awards Recipient <i>All entries are considered Gold Key, Silver Key, Honorable Mention, American Treasures Nominee, and American Voices Nominee Awards at the regional level, according to artandwriting.org. Gold Key works at the regional level will be considered for national awards.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gold Key (Art Portfolio consisting of 6 works: "No Name #1") Silver Key (Mixed Media: "Order and Chaos") 	11 th	Louisiana State Beta Convention, Awards Recipient <i>Division II represents 11th and 12th grade students.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Division II: Science 11th Grade Test (2nd place)
12 th	National Merit Semifinalist, Honoree	10 th	St. Thomas More Spring Subject Awards: AP U.S. Government and Politics, Chemistry I Honors, Awards Recipient
12 th	St. Thomas More National Honor Society, Honoree <i>Members are inducted for qualities of character, leadership, service, and active involvement in an extracurricular activity and service during junior year. They must maintain a 3.5 cumulative GPA and earn a total of 10 credits in honors or AP courses or a 3.7 cumulative GPA with a total of 12 credits in honors and AP courses (minimum 2 AP courses), as well as enroll in a minimum of 3 honors or AP courses both junior and senior year. 15 specified service hours are required during senior year.</i>	10 th	LHSRA Literary Rally (State), Award Recipient <i>This test was taken at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chemistry I (4th place)
9 th - 12 th	St. Thomas More Breakfast of Champions, 2x Honoree <i>Each teacher nominates one student in recognition of doing good deeds without expecting to be acknowledged. Nominations are based on attitude, motivation, service, discipline, and being "God's Servant first." There is usually a fall and spring breakfast.</i>	9 th	Spring Subject Awards: Biology I Honors, Art I, Awards Recipient
9 th	BVPA LUS/ LCG Rain Barrel Contest: 2nd place (community vote), Mayor-President's Choice, Awards Recipient <i>The Art Club painted a rain barrel along with 5 other high schools in the region. The Bayou Vermillion Preservation Association (BVPA) partnered with Lafayette Utilities System (LUS) and Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG) to conduct a painted rain barrel contest. The painted rain barrels promote eco-friendly practices and are auctioned to generate funds for green projects.</i>	9 th	St. Thomas More Top Cat, Honoree <i>Each member of the faculty and staff selects one student from his/her entire class enrollment. These students are chosen for displaying a positive attitude, being considerate to their classmates, being cooperative and helpful, and demonstrating other traits of a model student.</i>
9 th	BVPA LUS/ LCG Rain Barrel Contest: 2nd place (community vote), Mayor-President's Choice, Awards Recipient <i>The Art Club painted a rain barrel along with 5 other high schools in the region. The Bayou Vermillion Preservation Association (BVPA) partnered with Lafayette Utilities System (LUS) and Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG) to conduct a painted rain barrel contest. The painted rain barrels promote eco-friendly practices and are auctioned to generate funds for green projects.</i>	12 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead school Open House tours, 7th-8th grade middle school visit tours, individualized tours for prospective students, and greet visitors for special events
ACTIVITIES & SERVICE		9 th - 12 th	National Honor Society 1.5 hrs / 10 wks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete 15+ hours of varied service with a large focus on tutoring
9 th - 12 th	Quiz Bowl 1.5 hrs / 34 wks <i>Secretary (10th—Elected), President-Captain (11th, 12th—Elected)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead communication for practices and tournaments Transformed practice style to include a mix of formal game-style practice and informal, learning-focused trivia-style practice Serve as captain for tournaments 	9 th - 12 th	French Club 1 hr / 10 wks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote French culture on campus Decorated school and bulletin board during French week Read readings and petitions during the school's annual French mass Donated food for the French breakfast Made Christmas Cards for the local nursing home
9 th - 12 th	Art Club / National Art Honor Society 1.5 hrs / 34 wks <i>Treasurer (11th—Elected), President (12th—Elected)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped add a National Art Honor Society chapter to the Art Club (ongoing process) (11th) Create decorations for Academic Pep Rally and Homecoming Volunteer face-painting for school and outside events Sell plants in annual plant sale to generate funds for the Art Club 	9 th - 12 th	Cougars for Life (Pro-Life Club) 1 hr / 10 wks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve and volunteer face paint at the annual children's Easter Egg Hunt
10 th - 12 th	Campus Ministry 1.5 hrs / 20 wks <i>Light Retreat Team Leader (11th), Crossroads Retreat Team Leader (12th)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founded the Writing Ministry branch inviting the school community to write Catholic faith formative articles (12th) Light Retreat Team: lead faith formative retreats for 7th and 8th graders Crossroads Retreat Team: plan lead fall Homebase nights (faith formative meetings for Campus Ministers) and leads faith formative retreats for 10th graders. 	9 th - 12 th	"Construction" Can Drive ? hrs / ? wks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, students are encouraged to donate canned goods to St. Joseph's Diner and the Catholic Charities of Acadiana through a school-wide "Construction" competition. Personally donated 100+ cans over 4 years and helped build structures in homeroom classes for the competition to raise spirit of the collection drive
9 th - 12 th	Beta Club 2 hrs / 23 wks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete 20+ hours of varied service per year including volunteering at the local Children's Museum, participating in collection drives, and tutoring Competed in 2019-2020 LA State and National Beta Conventions (national was online due to the COVID-19 pandemic) Registered to compete in the 2020-2021 LA State Beta Conventions (online, currently ongoing) 	11 th	Hopefest Charity Music Festival Planning ? hrs / ? wks <i>Logo Design Team Leader</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, the junior class plans a charity music festival called Hopefest held at Parc International in Lafayette. The 2020 festival's beneficiary was the Boys and Girls Clubs of Acadiana but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Led the design and creation of the 2020 Hopefest Logo Created a graphic promoting the Hopefest 5k fundraiser aired on the school's student-run broadcast Cougar Cast
10 th - 12 th	St. Thomas More Student Ambassadors 2 hrs / 5 wks	11 th	St. Thomas More Summer Youth Art Camp 20 hrs / 1 wk <i>Teacher's Assistant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared art materials Assisted in teaching and aiding the children in activities

TIPS ON WRITING THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Remember: Brainstorm using the tools in the College Counseling Moodle page. Send your first draft to the College Counselor to begin the revising process.

The essay enables the members of the admissions committee to become better acquainted with you. Through the essay, they will try to answer these questions:

- What distinguishes YOU as a candidate?
- What has been YOUR classroom experience?
- What are YOUR ideas about the topic?

Unless the question is asking for specific information such as “Why do you want to attend our university?” or “What program interests you on our campus?”, write your essays in narrative form:

- Include details and anecdotes
- Avoid statistics
- Be personal
- Be interesting
- Tell a story
- Go a step beyond in the conclusion
- Leave your reader with a new and thought-provoking insight

OTHER HINTS

Write in a natural and clear voice.

- Write to convey your ideas clearly and easily; do not write to impress.
- Write about what is specific to you, not what you think the committee wants to hear.
- Express yourself.

A good test: At the end of a day of reading over 300 essays, does the admissions rep continue to think about your essay as he walks his dog late that night or as she commutes home?

Every story has a good beginning, middle, and end.

After you have thought about what you want to say, think about how you want to say it. Respond in an organized, lively, and interesting fashion.

- Do not merely repeat the question; introduce your idea in a unique or creative manner.
- Illustrate your points with specific examples and interesting details.
- Bring the reader to a conclusion without repeating what you have said.

Final Test: Does the essay say something meaningful in a dynamic way? As one admission committee member said, “The admissions committee readers want complexity of thought (not complexity of words), facility of language, and substantiality of development. All evidence of a **mind in action.**”

FINANCING YOUR COLLEGE EDUCATION

FINANCIAL AID TERMS

Financial aid falls into three categories: grants and scholarships, work-study, and loans.

Grants

Grants are offered by federal and state governments, based on demonstrated financial need, and do **not** need to be repaid.

Scholarships

Scholarships are offered by colleges, corporations, and philanthropic organizations to students based on specific criteria and do **not** need to be repaid.

Work Study

The college provides part-time work that helps pay for college expenses. A student usually receives a bi-weekly paycheck from the school to use toward various expenses.

Student Loans

Colleges offer students and parents the opportunity to take out loans to cover expenses that may not be covered by other financial aid or scholarships. Students must complete the FAFSA and/or CSS in order to qualify for loans.

Government loans include the **Stafford** and **Perkins** loans for students, and the **PLUS** loan to parents of undergraduate students. Guaranteed by the government, these loans offer lower interest rates and repayment plans

Alternative loans through banks and private financial institutions provide financing when the student needs more money than government loans can provide. These loans are not guaranteed by the federal government, so the interest is not subsidized. These loans can offer flexible repayment terms.

COLLEGE FINANCES 101

Subsidized vs. Unsubsidized Loans:

Subsidized loan – Federal government pays the interest charged during periods of at least half-time enrollment, as well as during the six months after the student ceases to be enrolled at least half time (graduation, withdrawal). To save on interest charges, students should maximize borrowing from subsidized loan programs before borrowing from unsubsidized loan programs.

Unsubsidized loans – Interest is due and payable as soon as the first disbursement of loan funds is made by lender. With the Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loan, student has the option either to pay the interest during in-school periods, or to let it accumulate (accrue) and be added to loan amount (capitalize) when student begins repayment. Student should borrow only when necessary to meet costs.

Federal Pell Grant: Awarded to undergraduates who demonstrate the most need.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant: Awarded to undergraduate students with exceptional financial need, if state funds are available.

Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS): TOPS is a program of state scholarships for Louisiana residents who attend either one of the Louisiana Public Colleges and Universities, schools that are a part of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, Louisiana approved Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools or institutions that are a part of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Federal and State Loan Programs: Nearly all students, whether they show financial need or not, will qualify for loan awards.

Federal Work-Study/State Work-Study: Limited funds awarded to undergraduate students who show a calculated financial need and who request employment awards on the FAFSA.

University Scholarships: Awards based on academic merit, in the majority of cases. Some require the applicant to show a calculated financial need.

Outside Scholarships: Awarded to students by funding sources other than school's financial aid office. Many times these funds are considered part of student's available resources in determining eligibility for other types of financial aid.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FINANCIAL AID

Q: What does it cost to go to college?

A: Student expense budgets include the costs for tuition and fees, books, educational supplies, room and board (on-campus, off-campus, or living at home), travel/moving expenses, and personal/miscellaneous expenses. Additional costs can be approved for documented special needs. These budgets reflect average expenses paid by current students and are designed to allow a modest but adequate standard of living.

Q: Can I expect to receive financial aid if I apply?

A: All students are eligible for some form of financial aid and are encouraged to apply regardless of their family's financial resources. Eligibility for financial aid programs can be determined only if you apply. Applying for financial aid using the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)* is free. The FAFSA is available from an institution's financial aid office or online at <https://studentaid.gov/>. In addition, some private schools also require students to complete the *CSS/ Financial Aid Profile* (registration fee and per school fee). This profile helps the schools award non-federal student aid funds.

Q: How much financial aid can I expect?

A: Typically, applicants who apply earlier in the admissions cycle are offered enough aid to meet their financial need. Financial need is calculated by determining your Student Aid Index (SAI) and subtracting it from the student expense budget (cost of attendance) determined by your school.

Q: How much will my family be expected to contribute towards my yearly college costs?

A: Your Student Aid Index (SAI) is calculated each year you apply for aid using a national processing formula. The formula considers your parents' and your income and assets, your family's size, and other financial information. The SAI may not be the same at any college you attend.

Each school is now required to post a Net Price Calculator on its website.

EFC estimators also are available online at the following sites:

- <https://studentaid.gov/>
- www.FinAid.org
- www.collegeboard.org

SCHOLARSHIP SCAM WARNING SIGNS

1. Does the scholarship application clearly state the number of awards, the amount or range of each stipend, and duration? (For example, is it a one-time offer or renewable, etc.)
2. Does the scholarship application clearly define who evaluates the application, including the qualifications and criteria (such as GPA, class rank, test scores, merit, state residency requirements etc.) for selection of the recipients?
3. Does the scholarship application state how awards can be used (funds sent directly to you, credited to your school account, or used to reduce student loans)?
4. Does the scholarship application clearly state deadlines for application and notification?
5. If there are any costs or fees to compete for the scholarship, are they nominal or can they be waived if financial hardship exists?
6. If there are fees included in the scholarship process, is there a brief and verifiable description of what the fees are used for?
7. Does the scholarship program provide relevant background information (for profit versus non-profit organization, longevity of the program, and program leadership, etc.)?
8. Upon your request, will the program supply you with names of winners from the previous five years?
9. Do you have access to financial information about the organization?
10. Is a privacy policy prominent?

To verify a scholarship's legitimacy or to report suspicious programs:

FTC Consumer Response Center: 1 (877) FTC-HELP or www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams

National Fraud Information Center: 1 (800) 876-7060 or www.fraud.org

Better Business Bureau: www.bbb.org

To locate number for State Attorney General's office: www.naag.org

LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is a Program of the [Louisiana Board of Regents](#), that strives to be Louisiana's first choice for college access by promoting, preparing for and providing equity of college access. LOSFA administers the state's scholarship and grant programs and the state's Internal Revenue Code Section 529 college savings program.

LA Office of Student Financial Assistance
P.O. Box 91202
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
(Located at 602 N Fifth St., Baton Rouge, LA 70802)

Among the programs administered by LOSFA are:

- **The Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS):** Louisiana's premier merit-based scholarship
- **TOPS Tech:** is offered to qualified high school graduates and provides up to two years of skill or occupational training to be pursued at an accredited Louisiana postsecondary institution that offers a vocational or technical education certificate/diploma.
- **TOPS Tech Early START:** dual enrollment for high school juniors and seniors in top demand job fields
- **Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship:** for students majoring in forestry, marine biology, etc.
- **GO Grant:** provides need-based aid for Pell Grant recipients with remaining unmet need
- **Chafee Educational Training Voucher (ETV):** financial aid for students who have aged out of foster care.
- **John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program:** for prosecutors and public defenders
- **Strategies to Empower People (STEP):** financial aid, funded by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) recipients
- **Go Youth Challenge Program:** tuition aid for students who complete this LA National Guard program
- **BESE Tuition Program for Teachers:** allows teachers to enroll in courses at LA colleges at state's expense
- **Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust Program (START):** Louisiana's 529 College Saving Program
- **START K12:** Louisiana's saving program for K-12 tuition expenses
- **LA ABLE:** Louisiana's 529A saving program for persons with disabilities

Students also have access to the **Louisiana Education Loan Authority (Lela)**. Lela is a division of the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority (LPFA), a nonprofit public trust established to bring financing assistance and advantages to the people of Louisiana. As a part of a nonprofit public trust, Lela's mission is to make higher education more accessible and affordable for the people of Louisiana.

REQUIRED FINANCIAL AID DOCUMENTS

FAFSA and CSS Profile

The *FAFSA* and *CSS Profile* are two different instruments used by colleges and universities to help them determine financial aid. All schools require completion of the *FAFSA* form in order for the student to be considered for financial aid; some schools (mostly private institutions) require the completion of the *CSS* in addition to the completion of the *FAFSA* for the student to be considered for financial aid.

FAFSA

The *FAFSA* is used in determining distribution of federal loans, grants, and work-study programs. Although both parents and students may apply for your PIN numbers now, **do not complete the form before October 1, 2024**; in fact, it is best to complete it simultaneously with your **2023** income tax forms because the information on the *FAFSA* is based on your fiscal year **2023**. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/> to complete the application online.

If you have specific questions about completing it, go to <https://studentaid.gov/> . One final hint: **Keep copies of the form and all income tax statements and keep them for subsequent years.** Also note: Schools will ask for the income tax form for verification.

NOTE: Starting with the class of 2024 the *FAFSA* will be changing. Some of the materials outlined in this handbook are best estimates of what students and their parents may need to complete this new *FAFSA*.

CSS Profile

Available in October, the *CSS/Financial Aid Profile*, under the auspices of The College Board - College Scholarship Service committee, is an instrument utilized by many private schools in their determination of financial aid. You will need your estimated or actual **2023** tax information. Go to www.collegeboard.org to complete the application.

The *CSS* recently reevaluated its methodology for determining need. Retirement, savings, and home equity have become more “protected” than they once were; age, number, and spread of siblings also have been reassessed. In addition, these *Profile* schools are often amenable to taking into consideration unusual financial circumstances not addressed in the black-and-white numbers on the form.

College financial aid officers highly recommend that even if you do not think you qualify for financial aid that you complete the appropriate forms for your schools for two reasons: If your financial picture changes during the school year, completing this form before the school year begins expedites the application process. Second, the more expensive private schools are typically more generous with their “need” packages than the public schools.

COMPLETING THE FAFSA

What You Need to Complete Your FAFSA

- Student's Social Security number
- Student's driver's license number
- Parents' W-2 forms
- Parents' federal income tax return
- Parents' current bank statements and records of stocks, bonds, and other investments
- Parents' records of other untaxed income received, such as Social Security or veteran's benefits
- Parents' business or farm records, if applicable
- Your alien registration number, if you are not a U.S. citizen
- If you are a **dependent student**, you will also need:
 - Your parent(s)' Social Security number(s)
 - Your parent(s)' income and financial records (as listed above)

Use income records for the calendar year prior to the academic year for which you are applying for financial aid. You will use your **2023** income information to complete the **2025-2026 FAFSA**.

Steps for Completing the FAFSA

1. Get a FSAID. To sign your FAFSA electronically, both the parent and student need U.S. Department of Education FSAID numbers. Apply at <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>.
2. Gather all the above financial information.
3. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. Print the pre-application worksheet.
4. Save your FAFSA.
5. Sign your application. If you have a FSAID, you may sign it electronically.
6. Submit the application electronically.
7. You will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) Information Acknowledgment electronically.
8. Review all of your answers on your SAR; make any necessary corrections and submit corrected form.
9. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/> after submitting your FAFSA to check on the status of your application.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GLOSSARY OF COLLEGE ADMISSION TERMS

Admissions

Common Reply Date (May 1) and is the date by which candidates under Regular Decision and Early Action must inform colleges of their intention to enroll. A deposit typically must be sent.

Deferred Decision postpones the decision on admission to be reviewed again at a later date.

Denial is the admission committee's decision to deny admission to that particular school. This decision may be appealed and overturned in some cases.

Double Deposit occurs when a student sends enrollment deposits to more than one college. This is **unethical** and damages the student's and high school's relationships with the institution.

Early Action allows students to apply in the early fall; however, if admitted, students are not obligated to attend. In other words, the decision is non-binding.

Early Admission accepts students for college study before they receive their high school diploma. **Do not confuse this with *Early Decision* or *Early Action*.** Early Admission is non-binding.

Early Decision allows students to apply in the fall, usually in October or November, to their FIRST CHOICE SCHOOL and to receive an answer by early winter. Early decisions are **binding**; applicants must contract to attend if admitted, and the students must withdraw all other applications.

Final Transcript is the eight-semester transcript available at the end of senior year; it is sent by the registrar to the school the student plans to attend.

Grade Point Average (GPA) is the numerical method of averaging grades: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0. STM reports grades 4.0 scale. Most Universities will use your core (English, Sciences, Math, Social Studies, Foreign Language and Art) academic GPA for admissions.

Matriculation is the student's enrollment at a particular institution.

Mid-Year Report is a seven-semester transcript and counselor's report required by many competitive colleges to assess a senior's progress.

Official Test Scores are the scores sent directly by you from College Board or ACT to the universities. Only you can send in your official scores. While most colleges and universities require official scores, some institutions are test optional.

Open Admission is the policy whereby the school will accept anyone who meets the basic requirements.

Regular Admission involves the usual application schedule for applying to schools in the late fall or winter and receiving an answer in the spring.

Restricted Early Action/Single-Choice Early Action is a non-binding early action decision plan that often restricts a student's early application to other schools. Read the fine print carefully when considering a Restricted Early Action/Single-Choice Early Action application.

Rolling Admission reviews applications as they are received and notifies students within a few weeks.

Transcript is the official record of a student's academic achievement recording the student's completed courses, grades earned, and cumulative GPA. Official transcripts are forwarded directly to the school by College Counseling. Only **unofficial** transcripts are available to **students**. See College Counseling for an official copy of a student transcript.

Class rank STM does not report class rank **Disclaimer: Colleges have the right to recalculate a student's GPA and/or rank according to its admission criteria.**

College/University Selectivity

Most Competitive schools are those where even superior students encounter a great deal of competition for admission. Generally, these colleges require high school GPAs of 94 and above. Median freshman test scores usually fall between 625 and 800 on both the verbal and math sections of the SAT and above 30 on the ACT. Most competitive schools usually admit less than 25% of applicants.

Highly Competitive institutions look for students with unweighted GPAs of 92 and higher. Median test scores range from 575 to 625 on both verbal and math sections of the SAT and 26 to 29 on the ACT. Generally, one third to one half of applicants are accepted.

Very Competitive schools traditionally admit students whose unweighted GPAs are no less than 90. They report median freshman SAT scores of 525 to 575 on both verbal and math sections and 23 to 25 on the ACT. Between one half and three fourths of applicants are accepted.

Competitive colleges generally have median freshman test scores between 450 and 525 on both sections of the SAT and between 19 and 22 on the ACT. Between 75% and 85% of applicants accepted.

Less Competitive colleges are those whose freshman median test scores fall below 450 on both the verbal and math sections of the SAT and below 19 on the ACT are included in this category. Some colleges require entrance exams but do not report scores and admit students who have averages below C. Usually 85% or more of all applicants are admitted.

College Size

Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges breaks schools down into the following categories:

Small - fewer than 1,000 students

Moderate - 1,000-3,000 students

Medium - 3,000-8,000 students

Large - 8,000-20,000 students

Extra Large - over 20,000 students

College Types

College is an institution that offers educational instruction beyond the high school level in a two-year or four-year program.

Community College is a two-year institution of higher education which provides academic, career, and vocational curricula via a *terminal* and/or *transfer* program.

- **Terminal Program** is complete in itself. A student who completes it may not be admitted to a four-year college without completing additional requirements.
- **Transfer Program** is designed to lead into a four-year program at another college or university. The two-year graduate transfers as a junior to the four-year institution.

Liberal Arts College is a four-year institution that emphasizes a program of broad undergraduate education. Pre-professional training may be available but is not stressed.

Nursing School is often affiliated with schools that are, in turn, under the auspices of teaching hospitals. Students may receive a R.N. diploma upon successful completion of training and state examination; at schools affiliated with four-year colleges, students may receive both a bachelor of science and a R.N. diploma. Community colleges may offer a two-year nursing degree, designated as an Associate of Science degree.

Military Academy prepares officers for the Air Force, Army, Navy, Merchant Marines, or Coast Guard. Upon completion of each academy's four-year program, a student earns a college degree. There is an obligation to serve in the military following graduation from a service academy.

Professional Schools and Conservatories offer specialized study in areas such as art, music, drama, dance, etc.

University is an academic institution which grants undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields and which supports at least two degree-granting professional schools that are not exclusively technological. It is composed of a number of colleges.

Standardized Testing

There are eight major types of tests used for college entrance, four of which are constructed by College Board. The student is responsible for registering for these tests and for requesting that scores be reported directly to the colleges by the testing services.

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT): Research has shown that the PSAT is the most valuable preparation for the SAT. The PSAT is administered annually in October to juniors at STM. Results are useful in forecasting the student's future SAT scores and used by some colleges, corporations, or organizations to award academic scholarships (NMSQT = National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). College athletic recruiters often ask for this score as a preliminary assessment of student's academic ability.

SAT: This test is similar to the PSAT in format and is designed to measure verbal, writing, and mathematical reasoning ability.

ACT: The ACT is composed of four sections in the areas of **English, math, reading, and science reasoning**.

SAT Subject Tests: Most highly competitive colleges require up to three subject tests. Check subject availability on each testing; not all subject tests are offered in the same sitting. **Most colleges do not require these tests for admission**, although many schools use these for placement.

AP (Advanced Placement) Tests: Sponsored by College Board, these examinations are given in May each year. The receiving college might grant credit or advanced placement for a similar course at that college.

CLEP (College Level Examination Program): An exam offered in various subjects. Students select to take these subject tests where they matriculate. If the student demonstrates proficiency in the subject, he/she may receive college credit or advanced placement. Prior proof of instruction in a subject is not required.

TOEFL: The Test of English as a Foreign Language is an admission test often required of students whose first language is not English.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

ACT.org

- Register for ACT
- Access resources for ACT preparation
- Research colleges, career planning, financial aid

BLS.gov/k12

- Free career search from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Collegeboard.org

- Register to take the SAT
- Access resources for SAT preparation
- Using your PSAT score report access **“My College Quick Start”** for full explanations of all the PSAT questions/answers
- Explore **“Big Future”** to research individual colleges, majors, vocations, financing, scholarships, and a host of other college topics

Common Applications

- www.applytexas.org
Application site for all Texas public colleges
- www.commonapp.org
Site for the national common application serving over 500 schools in U.S.

Ecampustours.com

- Offers video tours of hundreds of college campuses.

NCES.ed.gov/collegenavigator

- Official college search site of the U.S. Department of Education

Onetonline.org

- Has detailed descriptions of the world of work for use by job seekers, workforce development and HR professionals, students, researchers, and more!
- Use the **“I want to be a...”** quiz to discover careers that could be the ideal fit for your personality and education level

Princetonreview.com

- Provides information about free practice SAT exams under simulated testing conditions
- Research colleges and career interests

Scholarship/Financial Aid

- aie.org/scholarships
- cappex.com/scholarships
- collegeanswer.com
- collegeresults.org
- everychanceeverytexan.org
- fafsa.ed.gov
- fastaid.com
- fastweb.com
- finaid.com
- insidecollege.com
- myscholly.com
- scholarships.com
- schoolsoup.com/scholarship-directory
- studentscholarships.org
- zinch.com
- goingmerry.com
- chegg.com

Sorority and Fraternity

- greekpages.com
- houston-panhellenic.org/index.html

GREAT RESOURCES

Reading Lists for Students

- [Good Reads](#) – 101 great books for college-bound seniors
- [Young Adult Library Services](#) – book lists for the college bound

Search for Colleges

- [College Board College Search](#) – “Big Future”
- [College Net](#)
- [SCOIR](#)
- [National Center for Education](#)
- [Peterson’s](#)

Virtual Tours

- [Campus Tours](#)
- [eCampus Tours](#)
- [YOUiversity TV](#)

Scholarships and Scholarship Search Engines

- [Air Force ROTC](#)
- [Army ROTC](#)
- [College Board Scholarship Search](#)
- [Every Chance, Every Texan](#)
- [Fastweb Scholarship Search](#)
- Federal Trade Commission’s website on [Scholarship Scams](#)
- [Navy ROTC](#)
- [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)
- [QuestBridge](#) (for low income students)
- [SallieMae Scholarship Search](#)
- [Scholarships.com](#)
- [School Soup Scholarship Search](#)

Financial Aid Links

- [College Board CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE](#) (used primarily by private colleges and universities)
- [College Board IDOC](#)
- [College for All Texans](#)
- [FAFSA online](#)
- [FinAid.org](#)
- [Financial Aid Calculators](#)

Minority Students

- [American Indian College Fund](#)
- [American Indian Higher Education Consortium](#)
- [Gates Millennium Scholars Fund](#)
- [Hillel-Jewish Campus Life](#)
- [Hispanic College Fund](#)
- [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)
- [Japanese American Citizens League](#)
- [United Negro College Fund](#)
- [Jackie Robinson Foundation](#)

Students with Disabilities

- [All Kinds of Minds](#)
- [Association of Higher Education and Disability](#)
- [Attention Deficit Disorder Association](#)
- [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)
- [LD Online](#)
- [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#)

Free Test Prep

- [Actstudent.org](#)
- [Collegeboard.org](#)
- [Khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat](#)
- [Number2.com](#)
- [Schmoop.com](#)

REFERENCES

Many of the books listed below were used as resources for this handbook. Most of them are available at the local public library, bookstore, or in STM Counseling office.

- *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*. Barron's Educational Series: New York.
- *Best Buys in College Education*. Edward Fiske, Time Books: New York.
- *The Fiske Guide – 2019*, Edward Fiske, Time Books: New York
- *College Admissions Data Handbook*. Orchard House.
- *Colleges That Change Lives*. Loren Pope, Penguin Books: New York.
- *College Unranked: Ending the College Admissions Frenzy*. Lloyd Thacker, ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP.
- *Comparative Guide to American Colleges*. James Cass and Max Birnbaum, Harper and Row: New York.
- *Don't Miss Out*. Leider and Leider.
- *50 College Admission Directors Speak to Parents*. Sandra F. MacGowan and Sarah M. McGinty.
- *Getting In*. Paulo DeOliveiria and Steve Cohn.
- *Harvard Schmarvard*. Greene and Greene
- *How to Beat Test Anxiety and Score Higher on Your Exams*. Barron's Educational Series: New York.
- *How to Get Into the Right College*. Edward B. Fiske.
- *How to Prepare for the American College Testing Program*. Barron's Educational Series: New York.
- *How to Prepare for the College Entrance Examinations (SAT)*. Barron's Educational Series: New York.
- *Insiders Guide to Colleges*. Yale Daily News.
- *Insiders Guide to the Top 25 Colleges*. Tom Fishgrund.
- *Looking Beyond the Ivy*. Loren Pope, Penguin Books: New York.
- *Paying for your Education: A Guide for Adult Learners*. The College Board: New York.
- *Peterson's Guides*. Peterson's Publishing.
- *Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges*. Frederick E. Rugg. 32nd Ed.
- *Scaling The Ivy Wall*. Howard Greene and Robert Thinton.
- *Selective Guide to Colleges*. Edward Fiske.
- *The College Board Admissions and Guidance Services*.
- *The College Board Book*. The College Board: New York.
- *The Gourman Report*, National Educational Standards.

The STM Handbook was adapted from The Emery/Weiner School College Application Handbook for the Class of 2020. Special thanks to Mrs. Ashley Plaeger for sharing her knowledge with the STM community. Not for personal use.

2024-2025 SAT/ACT TESTING DATES

SAT and SAT Subject Tests

- Register online at www.collegeboard.org.
- College Board phone number: **(609) 771-7600**
- To register with credit card or obtain scores by phone: **(866)-756-7346**
- Registration fee includes score reports for four schools if student lists the schools while registering.

<i>SAT Test Date*</i>	<i>Registration Deadline*</i>	<i>Deadline for Changes, Regular Cancellation, and Late Registration**</i>
<i>March 9, 2024</i>	<i>February 23, 2024</i>	<i>February 27, 2024</i>
<i>May 4, 2024</i>	<i>April 19, 2024</i>	<i>April 23, 2024</i>
<i>June 1, 2024</i>	<i>May 16, 2024</i>	<i>May 21, 2024</i>
<p><i>August 24, 2024 (Anticipated)</i></p> <p><i>October 5, 2024 (Anticipated)</i></p> <p><i>November 2, 2024 (Anticipated)</i></p> <p><i>December 7, 2024 (Anticipated)</i></p>		

*Students [who need to borrow a device from College Board](#) will need to register and request their device earlier than the registration deadline—at least 30 days before test day.

**Late registration is available internationally starting in March 2024. [Additional fees may apply.](#)

ACT

- Register online at www.act.org.
- ACT phone number: **(319) 337-1270**

2023-2024 National Test Dates Schedule

Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline Late Fee Applies After This Date	Late Registration Deadline	Photo Upload and Standby Deadline
September 9, 2023	August 4	August 18	September 1
October 28, 2023	September 22	October 6	October 20
December 9, 2023	November 3	November 17	December 1
February 10, 2024	January 5	January 19	February 2
April 13, 2024	March 8	March 22	April 5
June 8, 2024	May 3	May 17	May 31
July 13, 2024*	June 7	June 21	July 5

*No test centers are scheduled in New York for the July test date.

Test Information Release for the 2023-2024 testing year will occur in September, April, and June. See www.act.org/the-act/tir for more information.

St. Thomas More Catholic High School (CEEB Code): 191438