

# FAQ for New Students in the US

For refugees who have recently resettled in the United States, embarking on the path to pursue educational opportunities is both exciting and challenging. As you navigate this transition, we recognize that questions and uncertainties about the education system and available pathways may arise. Bridge4Students is committed to offering guidance and support to assist you in making informed decisions about your educational journey.

This guide, carefully curated by students Lina Ngo and Daniil Rusanyuk, who have been working with Bridge4Students and themselves have been going through the application process in the US, offers comprehensive insights to facilitate a well-informed approach to educational pursuits. For any contributions, inquiries, and suggestions to this FAQ page contact Lina ([lina@bridge4students.org](mailto:lina@bridge4students.org)) or Daniil ([daniilrusaniuk@gmail.com](mailto:daniilrusaniuk@gmail.com))

Look at

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/college-basics/types-of-colleges/types-of-colleges-the-basics>

## **Q: What purpose does this guide serve?**

A: To provide practical insights into the intricate dynamics of the US education system, drawing upon the experiences of our contributors.

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## **Q: I've recently arrived in the US. How can I discover educational opportunities in my vicinity?**

A: Begin your exploration within the local community, with a special emphasis on community colleges. These institutions, supported by experienced advisors, provide personalized guidance tailored to individual aspirations. We also encourage you to find your local communities and leverage digital platforms, such as Facebook groups, to connect with those who have previously walked in your shoes. Talk to as many people as you can for diverse perspectives. And in the process you will be able to determine what is most useful for you.

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**Q: What is the difference between a 4-year university degree and a 2-year colleges?**

A: Four-year institutions are referred to as undergraduate colleges. Four-year colleges specifically offer bachelor's degree programs. These include universities and liberal arts colleges.

Two-year colleges offer certificate programs that can be completed in under two years. They also offer two-year associate degrees. These include community colleges, vocational-technical colleges, and career colleges.

<p><b>4 year university degree</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Enroll directly in a bachelor's degree program.</li><li>● Generally more expensive.</li><li>● Typically require standardized test results (SAT/ACT, TOEFL, IELTS, or Duolingo).</li><li>● Opportunity to explore various subjects during the first 2 years before choosing a major.</li></ul> <p><b>Other important information:</b></p> <p>If you have received a full ride scholarship, you will be able to keep it for the entire 4 years.</p> <p>Academic Rigor: 4-year universities often have a more rigorous academic curriculum, challenging students with advanced coursework and research opportunities.</p> <p>Campus Resources: Universities typically offer extensive resources, including libraries, research facilities, laboratories, and extracurricular activities, enhancing the overall learning experience.</p>	<p><b>2-year associate degree from community college</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Enroll in an associate's degree program.</li><li>● Cost-effective alternative to start with; transfer to a 4-year university for the remaining 2 years to get a bachelor's degree.</li><li>● Usually no on-campus housing; students must find independent accommodation.</li><li>● Often do not require standardized test results.</li><li>● Immediate focus on a chosen major (in most cases)</li></ul> <p><b>Other important information:</b></p> <p>Community colleges will accept you even with an intermediate level of English and help you bring it up to a certain level.</p> <p>Flexibility: Community colleges often offer flexible schedules, including evening and weekend classes, catering to students who may have work or family commitments.</p>
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<p>Faculty Expertise: Universities often have renowned faculty members who are experts in their fields, providing students with the opportunity to learn from leading professionals.</p> <p>Networking Opportunities: Larger universities tend to have vast alumni networks and connections with industries, providing students with valuable networking opportunities for future careers.</p> <p>Extracurricular Activities: 4-year universities tend to have a wider range of extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations, providing a more diverse and vibrant campus life.</p>	
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**Q: What funding opportunities do I have access to?**

A: If you arrived in the United States as a refugee, your legal status likely qualifies you for federal or state funding. If not, or if you need additional support, consider applying for private or foundation scholarships. Begin your search with our list of notable scholarships and resources at our [Scholarship Opportunities page](#)

**Federal and State Financial Aid:**

Explore federal programs such as grants, loans, and work-study via [Federal Student Aid](#) Each state features unique funding programs; visit the [NASFAA website](#) for state grant agencies.

Notable state-specific programs:

- Washington: WASFA
- California: Cal Grant
- Texas: TASFA
- Florida: FFAA
- New York: TAP
- Illinois: MAP

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**Q: What does the process of enrollment look like?**

The enrollment process for international students in the USA typically involves several key steps. Initially, you should research and select educational institutions that align with your academic goals and needs. For community colleges or high schools, it's beneficial to contact them directly for specific enrollment procedures. If you're aiming for a 4-year university, be aware of any standardized test requirements (such as the SAT or ACT for undergraduate programs, or GRE/GMAT for graduate programs) and English proficiency tests like TOEFL or IELTS. The next step is to apply directly to your chosen institution, usually through their online application portal. During this process, it's highly recommended to reach out to academic advisors or international student offices at these institutions for personalized assistance and to understand specific requirements for international students, such as health insurance, and accommodation options. Additionally, they can provide valuable guidance on scholarships, financial aid, and work-study opportunities specifically available for international students.

- Contact local community colleges or high schools for guidance.
- For 4-year universities, consider standardized test requirements.
- Apply directly to the chosen institution online.
- Reach out to academic advisors for personalized assistance.

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**Q: What documents are required? How to prepare them?**

Each school may have its own document requirements beyond the basics like transcripts and test scores. Check the specific needs of your chosen institution and note any additional items like recommendation letters or a personal statement. Before you start, review the school's official guidelines for application documents. Create a checklist based on their requirements and pay attention to any formatting preferences. Check if your documents need translation or notarization. When in doubt, reach out to the admissions office for clarification. Be prompt and respectful in your communication, and avoid asking questions easily answered with a quick online search.

In short, while standard documents are key, tailor your application to meet the unique requirements of each school. Don't hesitate to ask questions and ensure you're submitting a well-prepared application.

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**Q: How do I adapt to the US education system?**

Adapting to the US education system can be a smooth process with the right approach. Start by attending orientation sessions offered by your institution, as they provide valuable insights into campus life and academic expectations. It's important to understand the grading system and classroom etiquette, which may differ from your home country. Regularly consult with academic advisors who can offer personalized guidance and consider joining study groups to connect with peers and enhance your learning experience. Additionally, take advantage of resources like the writing center, library workshops, and language support services if needed. Remember, adapting is a gradual process, so be patient with yourself and actively seek opportunities to immerse in the academic culture.

- Attend orientation sessions provided by your institution.
- Familiarize yourself with the grading system and classroom etiquette.
- Seek guidance from academic advisors and join study groups for additional support.

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**Q: Are there resources for language support?**

**A:** If English is not your first language, don't let the language barrier hold you back. Most institutions understand the importance of diversity and are ready to support students with varying levels of English proficiency. In fact, many schools offer English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to help you improve your language skills.

Some institutions require students to take an additional English course before fully entering their degree program. This is not a roadblock but rather an opportunity to enhance your language proficiency and ensure success in your studies.

Community colleges, in particular, are known for providing robust language support for students at different proficiency levels. Enrolling in ESL programs at these colleges not only helps you improve your English but also serves as a great way to adapt to the new academic environment and make friends with fellow students who might be facing similar challenges.

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**Q: How do I get involved in campus life?**

**A:** Getting involved in campus life is a fantastic way to make friends and feel more at home here in the USA. Start by checking out the campus events, club fairs, and orientation activities - they're super fun and a great way to meet people. Also, consider joining some student clubs or organizations that match your interests. Whether you're into sports, arts, or tech, there's something for everyone! And don't forget about volunteering or internships; they're not only rewarding but also a great way to gain experience and connect with others. Most importantly, be open to new experiences and always stay curious.

- ✓ Attend campus events, club fairs, and orientation activities.
- ✓ Join student clubs, organizations, or sports teams.
- ✓ Volunteer for community service projects or internships.

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**Q: Can I change my major once I'm enrolled?**

Absolutely! Changing your major is a common decision among students, and most U.S. institutions are quite flexible with this. However, it's important to check with your academic advisor to understand the specific process and any implications it might have on your study timeline or visa status. They can provide valuable guidance and ensure a smooth transition. Also, consider exploring your new interest by taking some introductory courses in the field. This approach can give you a better feel for the subject before making a final decision. Remember, it's all about finding the right path for you!

- ✓ Many institutions allow students to change majors within certain guidelines.
- ✓ Consult with academic advisors to understand the process and potential impacts.
- ✓ Consider taking introductory courses in your new field of interest.