



GEAR UP HAWAI'I
A Hawai'i P-20 Initiative

SY 2026-2027

ROAD TO COLLEGE

It's your senior year – lock in and secure your future! Use this guide as a road map to help you stay on track with the college application process, and review it with your family so they can help support you along the way.



IT'S TIME TO
LOCK IN

SY 2026-2027

START HERE



AUGUST

- Take (or re-take) the SAT or ACT, if the school(s) you are applying to require you to take either test for admissions. Register for tests at: www.CollegeBoard.org and www.ACTStudent.org.
- My test date is:**
- Attend a virtual financial aid information night. Register for these free webinars at www.CollegelsWithinReachHawaii.com.
- Decide on your top three safety, match, and reach schools and list them here.

SAFETY

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MATCH

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

REACH

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



SEPTEMBER

- Decide which colleges you will apply to and use the chart below to track application deadlines and how you are planning to apply.

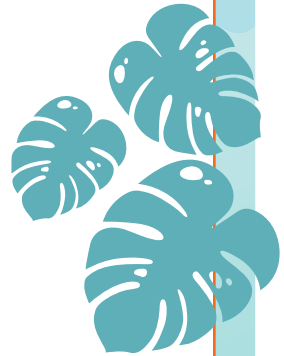
COLLEGE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
1. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Ask your counselor to submit your transcripts to selected colleges (if required).
- Send test scores (SAT, ACT, or TOEFL) to selected colleges (if required).
- Ask teachers for letters of recommendation.
- Finish college application essays.
- Research scholarships and start applying.
- Apply "early" to your reach schools. Deadlines are usually Nov. 1 or 15.

SCHOOL _____ **DEADLINE** _____ **COMPLETED**

SCHOOL _____ **DEADLINE** _____ **COMPLETED**

- Gather materials needed to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) www.StudentAid.gov/help/info-needed.
- Register yourself and your parent for a FSA ID (studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch). You will need this in order to complete the FAFSA at www.StudentAid.gov.





OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

- Starting October 1, complete your FAFSA at www.StudentAid.gov. Your FAFSA will require your individual (if applicable) and your parent’s 2025 tax information. Work with your parents to gather these documents to reference to complete your FAFSA application.
- Individual colleges or universities have their own internal institutional or priority deadlines for financial aid. Check to see if the colleges on your list require any additional financial aid forms such as the College Board CSS Profile ([CSSProfile.CollegeBoard.org](https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org)). Use the chart below to keep track of key financial aid deadlines for your college choices.

COLLEGE	FAFSA DEADLINE	CSS PROFILE DEADLINE
1. _____	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>
5. _____	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ <input type="checkbox"/>

- Many scholarship applications and college admissions application require essays that detail your college plans and your long-term educational goals. Review your personal transition plan essay as a start toward submitting your scholarship applications and college admissions applications.
- A letter of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, coach, or reverend, might be required for some scholarship applications. Compile a list of possible recommenders including contact information for each.
- Apply for as many scholarships as you can. These following sites are a good place to start: www.HawaiiCommunityFoundation.org and www.UHFoundation.org. Use the chart below to track application deadlines for the scholarships you’re eligible to apply for.



SCHOLARSHIP ORGANIZATION

DEADLINE

COMPLETED

1. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

DECEMBER/JANUARY

- Get help completing the FAFSA from your high school counselor or email FAFSA@Hawaii.edu for assistance. This resource is available year-round to all students regardless of where you plan to attend college.
- Continue working on your college applications and make sure to turn them in before the deadline. Ask your counselor if you need help completing your applications or need an application fee waiver.
- Continue applying for scholarships.
- Talk to friends or family members who are currently in college and ask them what it's like to go to school on the mainland.

FEBRUARY

- Turn in all remaining financial aid and scholarship applications.
- Check your email for any notifications from colleges and financial aid providers you applied to.

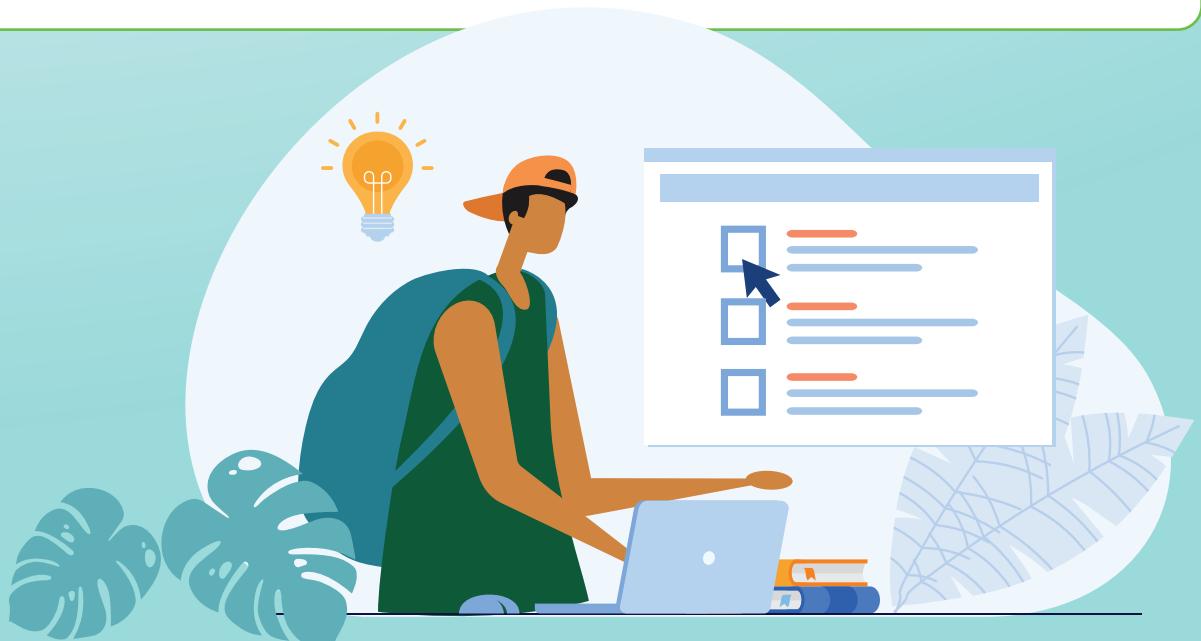


MARCH

- You should start receiving acceptance and rejection letters during this time. Use the chart below to compare the offers you receive.

College	Accepted/ Waitlisted	Total Cost	Total Financial Aid Received	Actual Cost (Total Cost - Financial Aid)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

- If you receive rejection letters, consider applying to other colleges.
- If you are waitlisted at your first choice school, send the admissions office a letter, making it clear that they are your first choice and that you would attend if they accept you.
- If you decided on which college you will attend, send in intent to enroll forms and any other important info like housing deposits.



APRIL

- Attend a spring college weekend for prospective students if your college is offering one.
- Create a budget for college needs.
- Determine if you need a student loan.
- Prepare for and take any placement exams for college classes.
- Complete any health clearance forms by getting a physical and necessary shots.

MAY

- Pick a college and notify their admissions office by the deadline (usually May 1).

My college choice is: _____

- Make sure to turn in all necessary
- forms to secure your space.



SUMMER



- Find a summer job to help with expenses. A job within your college major field will help you gain relevant experience.
- Check with your college if there are any summer opportunities available (i.e., summer bridge programs, etc.)
- Apply for work-study jobs on campus if you qualify.
- Attend a new student orientation on your college campus.
- Make an appointment with your college counselor or advisor to review your class selection.
- Register for classes by the deadline date.
- Make sure to submit any necessary documentation (ex. health clearance form) and tuition payments by deadline dates.
- Check your college school e-mail regularly for important information and updates.
- Pack (if you are moving away) and get ready to enjoy your new adventure!



Congratulations!
You're on your way to college!



For more college and career preparation information and resources go to:

CollegelsWithinReachHawaii.com



I did it!
Mission Accomplished
Upward Sky's the Limit
Flourish
Infinite Possibilities
Courage
Right On!
Wins
Passions
Purpose
Attainment
Top of the World
Victory
Accomplish
Intentional
Unlimited
Potential