



American Indian Education Foundation



Tools For Success

**Getting Into College:
A Guide for High School Seniors**

American Indian Education Foundation

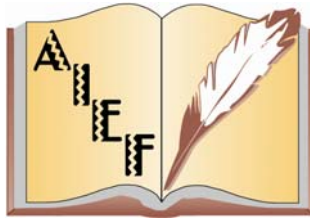
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**Our Mission: To give American Indian Students
the tools, resources, and opportunities to learn
and succeed.**

What is AIEF?

The American Indian Education Foundation supports Native American students by giving them the tools and opportunities to learn. We do this by supporting primary and secondary students with supplies, infrastructure, and incentive programs, and offer scholarships and mentoring programs to Native American students in college.

For more information visit our website: www.aiefprograms.org

What Is This Handbook?

The AIEF hopes to provide students with valuable information so you can easily plan for college. Knowing when to sign up for tests, which forms to fill out and when, and where to begin looking for the right school can be an overwhelming task for a lot of high school students. With this handbook you'll be able to make a plan for your senior year. This book provides information on:

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The First Step: Thinking about College

You may be asking yourself: Why go to college?

Get a Better Job!

By obtaining a certificate or college degree, your chances of acquiring a job and making more money will increase significantly. Some estimates indicate that college graduates make nearly two times more than high school graduates every year! This is perfect for those of you with a strong desire to give back to your community.

Make a difference in your community!

Getting a certificate or degree can open up a world of knowledge and experience for you! This is information you can take back to your community and apply in a real-world setting. Also, by pursuing a certificate or college degree, you are setting a good example for future college-bound students who may need a role model to look up to.



Which College Is Right For Me?

Now that you've decided to look into college, you should know about the different types of schools that are available to you!



Tribal Colleges

Tribal Colleges are schools that are owned and operated by a tribe. Many of these schools are on reservations and most or all of the students who attend are Native American. Costs to attend tribal schools are often considerably less than public and private colleges and trade schools. This may be a good fit if you think you might get homesick, would like to study in your community, or don't have the money to jump into a larger school. Tribal colleges offer the same programs as any public or private community college or university.

Community Colleges

Community Colleges are two-year schools that often offer Associate's Degrees. The Associate Degree is the first degree you can obtain, most often after only two years of study. Community colleges are often considerably cheaper than most 4-year colleges and universities. It also may be easier to find a community college that offers courses in a subject you're interested in studying while still staying close to home

Four-Year Colleges & Universities

Four-year colleges and universities are often larger, more expensive schools. Many of these schools offer housing on campus and meal plans. Four year colleges and universities offer Bachelor and sometimes Master and Doctorate Degrees. Although it may be more expensive, if you want to get a Bachelor's Degree and wish to stay at the same school the entire time, without transferring, this might be the type of school for you.

Trade & Vocational Schools

Trade and vocational schools are specialized schools that offer certificates in specific areas. Often these schools offer programs that take less time to complete and the cost of them varies, from very cheap to very expensive. If you're planning on being an auto mechanic, medical technician, or beautician then a trade school is probably right for you. Many trade schools also will work with your financial aid, so the cost of education can be significantly less.



Some questions to ask yourself:

- ✓ How much can I afford to pay for school?
- ✓ Do I want to stay in my community?
- ✓ Can I meet the school's application requirements?
- ✓ Does the school have courses that interest me?
- ✓ Do I want to participate in sports?
- ✓ Is the school accredited (so I can use my financial aid)?
- ✓ Do I want to live at home, on campus, or somewhere else?
- ✓ How long am I planning to spend on working towards my degree?

Ask your guidance counselor for more information on different types of schools or check out www.collegeplanning.org

Paying for College

No matter which college or school you decide to attend, paying for it is always one of the most difficult issues students face. Luckily, there are some options for you.



Financial Aid Form (FAFSA):

All students should fill out a FAFSA. This form will help the government and your school determine what type of aid you are eligible for (you must indicate on the form which schools to send the information to.) Some scholarship applications require that you fill out the FAFSA as well.

Four or five weeks after sending in your FAFSA you should receive an award letter from the government showing you what aid you have been awarded. You can cross out any aid you don't want to keep and send the form back in. There are a few different types of awards you may receive from the government:

A **Grant** is money that you will not have to pay back. Many low-income students receive one grant or another from the government. The Pell Grant is the most common government grant.

A **Subsidized Loan** is money you will have to pay back. The loan starts to accrue interest after you graduate from your school.

An **Unsubsidized Loan** is money that you will have to pay back. The loan starts to accrue interest as soon as you receive the money. If possible, you want as few loans as you can have.

You will need your parent or guardian's help filling out this form because it will ask for their income. If you have questions, you should call the financial aid office of the school you are applying to or look on the web at www.fafsa.ed.gov. You can fill out the form on-line or request one from the financial aid office of the school you are applying to. Also, you might be able to get the form from your high school guidance counselor.

Tribal Scholarships:

Many tribes offer tribal members scholarships to help pay for school. If you are enrolled in a tribe, you may be eligible to receive money to help pay for college. You should contact your tribe's education office in January and ask for an application.

Other Scholarships:

There are hundreds of thousands of dollars available to students who want to go to school and need help paying for it. The AIEF has published a booklet on Native American Scholarships which lists dozens of awards that you should apply for. You may ask your guidance counselor for a copy of our booklet.



Helpful internet links:

<http://collegeapps.about.com>

This website includes information on everything from initially looking at colleges to preparing applications and applying for financial aid and scholarships.

www.collegeview.com

This website lets you search for specific college information and allows you to identify colleges that fit your needs and desires. You can also find financial aid information and employment opportunities after college.

www.finaid.org

Contains information on loans, grants, scholarships, and military aid.

www.fastweb.com

Fastweb is a free internet financial aid search engine. Use this link to identify scholarships that apply to you.

www.indianz.com

This website gives information on colleges, Native American programs, and financing your education.

<http://www.oiep.bia.edu/>

This site links you to the BIA Office of Indian Education Program and shares information on scholarships, grants, getting into college, employment opportunities, and other educational resources.

Taking Tests: the SAT & ACT

What is the ACT? What is the SAT?



The ACT and SAT are separate standardized tests that many colleges use to determine whether they feel a student would be successful at their school. Usually a school will require that only one of these tests be taken. Some schools will require you to get a certain score if you want to attend and some schools have no requirement.

Although you may have chosen a school that requires no score, it is still a **very** good idea to register for and take either the ACT or SAT. A lot of scholarship programs require you to provide your test score; you may also be in a situation in the future when the ACT or SAT score is requested.

How Do I Register for the ACT/ SAT?

Depending on which high school you attend, it may be more common to take one of these tests over the other. Some high schools only offer information on the ACT; some high schools only offer information on the SAT. If your school has a guidance counselor, that person can help you decide which test (if not both) you should register for. You should look closely at the requirements for the school, college, or university you're planning on attending and share that information with your counselor. If your school does not have a counselor, talk to someone in the main office. Many high schools will have information on how to register for these tests. There are generally a few different ways to register:

- **Through your high school guidance counselor/by mail.** A lot of times the best way for students to get information on registering for these tests is through their high school counselors. If you do not have access to the information at your high school, you can request information via their website and they will mail it to you. See website information below. Generally there are fees involved with taking both the ACT and the SAT. For students from low income families, fee waivers are often available through high schools. This means there will be no charge for you to take the test. Ask your guidance counselor, or someone in your school's office, how you can qualify for and receive a fee waiver form.



- **Over the internet.** To get information on taking the ACT check out: www.actstudent.org. To get information on taking the SAT check out: www.collegeboard.com. These sites will give you information on test dates and locations, practice tests, college search information, and more. If you register via the internet, you will need to have access to a credit card number for the fee payment (for more information on fees and fee waivers, see “How Do I Pay for the Test?”)

- **By Phone.** If you have taken either test, and would like to register for the test again, you are able to do that over the phone. The number for the SAT is (609) 771-7600. For the ACT the number is (800) 525-6926. There are \$10 fees (additional to the main registration fee) for both tests to re-register via phone.



Unfortunately, fee waivers are not available to students who are re-taking either test.

Contact your high school guidance counselor or check the appropriate test website for additional information.

How Do I Pay for the Test?

The fee for taking either the ACT or the SAT is approximately \$30. There is a fee waiver form that any low income student may fill out which will cover the entire cost of taking the test. This form (for either test) is not available online and can only be retrieved from your high school guidance counselor. If you decide to use a fee waiver to cover the cost of your test you will have to register via regular mail or through your high school/counselor.

When and Where Will I Take the Test?

If you've registered via your guidance counselor (or through your high school in general) that person will be able to tell you the date, time, and location of the test. Some schools will provide transportation, others will not and you will have to get to the test location on your own. You should plan ahead for this as a fee waiver can only be used once. If you miss the test and need to retake it, you will have to pay the \$30 fee.

If you have registered over the internet, you most likely were able to choose the test location, date and time. If you have questions about this call the testing center.

Be sure to have the following information:

- ✓ Which test you want to register for (depending on what's more common for your high school as well as the requirements of the school you plan on applying to)
- ✓ How to register to take the test (s)
- ✓ How much it will cost you to take the test
- ✓ Where the test will be held
- ✓ The date and time the test will be administered.

Applying To College

Now that you have been thinking about which type of college you would like to attend, you should start the application process.

Obtaining an application:

You will have to fill out an application form and submit it for any school you want to attend. This form can be obtained by contacting the school, college, or university and requesting that a form be sent to you.

Paying for the Application:



Although all public and private universities and colleges will charge an application fee, many tribal colleges do not charge a fee to apply to their schools. The amounts of application fees are extremely variable—the average fee is around \$25. Some schools charge up to \$60.

Most colleges offer an application fee waiver to low-income students:

For students who have taken the ACT, when you call a school to request an application be sent to you, ask about the fee waiver and have the school send you the form.

For students who have taken the SAT, if you were eligible for a fee waiver to register for the test you are eligible for the *College Board* college application fee waiver. You may apply to up to four colleges or universities using these waivers. You obtain these application waivers from your high school guidance

counselor. If you have no guidance counselor then you must acquire the form from someone at your high school. The form is not available on the internet or by mail.

Call the school to find out if any application fee is charged, and whether they accept application fee waivers.

High School Transcripts:

In order for a school to accept you, they must be able to assess how well you have done during your years in high school. Most schools will request that an ‘official’ copy of your high school transcripts be sent to them along with your application form.

To have these records sent, you must contact your guidance counselor or the high school office, and ask to have them sent. It’s okay if you don’t have your current quarter or semester grades on your transcript. Most likely the initial transcript will only have grades through your junior year. At the end of your high school year, have your transcripts sent again.

Essays:

Some schools request that you write an essay to send in with your application. Unless the school gives you specific questions to answer, you should write about your life, your plans to pay for college and what you’d like to accomplish with your degree, the biggest barrier you’ve overcome, and how you’ve gotten to be where you are today.



Ask a teacher or your counselor for help writing the essay. You can also get tips from the web (go to www.collegeboard.com and click on “Essay Skills.”)

To Apply for College, you'll need to do the following things:

- ✓ Request an application from the school (ask about fees)
- ✓ Find out if you are eligible for a fee waiver
- ✓ Fill out and return an application
- ✓ Write an essay and return with the application (if necessary)
- ✓ Have your high school send a copy of your transcripts to the school(s) you are applying to
- ✓ Fill out FAFSA and return
- ✓ Search and apply for other scholarship.

Timeline

September

- Begin thinking seriously about the different types of schools that you may want to attend. Contact the schools you would like to apply to, or learn more about, and ask for them to send you an application and their admissions requirements. If you know what is required to get into these schools (which tests to take, which classes you need, etc.), and how much it will cost for you to attend, it will help your guidance counselor make sure you are taking the appropriate steps.
- If your high school has a guidance counselor, now is the time to make an appointment to speak with them. Talk about your plans for college. Discuss different types of schools. Ask if they know of any resources that can help you pay for college (such as scholarship and grant information). Make sure you have taken all of the necessary classes and



have all the credits you will need to get into the school of your choice.

- Register for the Fall ACT or SAT test.

October

- Begin receiving applications and information from the schools you are interested in attending.
- Take the ACT or SAT. Remember to indicate (when you take the test) which schools you would like your scores to be sent to. You may want to register for the winter (December/ January) test at this point as well and talk to your counselor about ways to raise your score.



November

- Fill out the applications for any school you would like to attend and mail it to the school.
 - Ask your guidance counselor or someone in your school's main office about how to send your high school transcripts to any schools you are applying to. Have the transcripts sent.



December

- Go over the previous month's timeline points and do anything you have not yet done at this point.

January

- Take the ACT or SAT test for the second time. Remember to have your new scores sent to the schools you would like to receive them.
- Fill out your FAFSA and make sure to indicate on the form which schools you are thinking about



attending. The Information will automatically go to those schools.

- Contact your tribal education office and find out whether you are eligible for a tribal scholarship and ask for an application to be sent to you.
- Start searching for other Native American scholarships that you can apply for (usually deadlines are sometime during the spring).

February

- Within 5 weeks after sending in your FAFSA, you will receive a SAR (Student Aid Report), follow the directions to make any changes you want to make and send the form back to the address marked.
- Contact the admission offices at each of the schools you applied to and make sure they have all of the necessary application materials from you.



March/April

- You should begin receiving acceptance letters from the schools you have applied to.
- Begin thinking about which school you would like to attend of those that accepted you.
- Contact the school and ask about housing options for students on campus. The school may have already sent you information on housing by this point

May/June

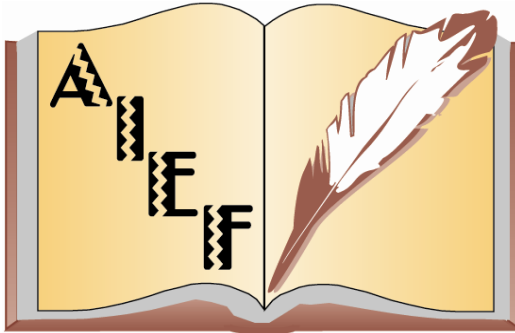
- You should narrow down your choice of schools to one
- Have your high school send your final transcripts to the school you have chosen to attend.
- You should be receiving final award letters from the schools you have chosen to send your FAFSA information to.



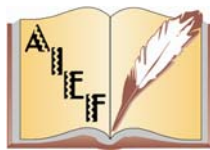
- You will be hearing back from scholarship programs you have applied to. Make sure to contact the Financial Aid Office at the school you have applied to and let them know of the awards you receive.
- Make a financial plan to pay for tuition, expenses and housing.

July-September

- Call and ask the school's Admissions Office about participating in an "orientation" (if the school provides one.)
- If the school does not provide an orientation program, call and schedule a time when you can take a tour of the school.
- If you're planning to live on campus, you should be working out the details of those arrangements now.
- Get ready for your new life as a college freshman!



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