

A GUIDE TO COLLEGE ADMISSION

YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE.



**MERRIMACK
COLLEGE**

LET'S GET STARTED!

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to college; everyone's journey is different. But at Merrimack, we believe in creating a personalized experience that's just as unique as you are.

As an Augustinian Catholic college, Merrimack is a caring community focused on helping each other—and YOU. We know college planning is uncharted territory and we will be there every step of the way to help.

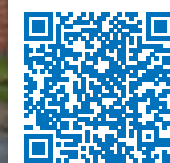
We hope this guide serves as a road map and a resource you can come back to throughout the college admission process. So—let's get started!



Your College Search Checklist

Stay on top of your college search with these helpful tips and tasks!

- BROWSE COLLEGES ON SITES LIKE BIGFUTURE AND APPLY**
These often have reviews from current students or applicant statistics which offer valuable insight about the school.
- BUILD A LIST OF POTENTIAL COLLEGES TO LOOK AT**
Remember to include a variety of sizes, settings and locations to find the right fit for you. If you already have a major in mind, make sure these schools have the programs you're looking for.
- SIGN UP FOR COLLEGE VISITS**
From tours to interviews to Open Houses, colleges offer a variety of visit options—and Merrimack is no exception! You can find all our visits and events at www.merrimack.edu/visit!
- CREATE A CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES**
Colleges have different admission timelines for applying, scholarships, special programs and more. Start talking with your parents/guardians about financial aid and if you'll be filing the FAFSA, too.
- BEGIN WORKING ON YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY**
You can find essay prompts on Common App to help get you started—and don't forget to proofread your work carefully!
- START GATHERING INFORMATION FOR YOUR APPLICATION**
Make a list of jobs you've had, community service you've performed, sports you've played, clubs you've joined and any other activities or achievements you can think of.
- THINK ABOUT WHO YOUR RECOMMENDERS WILL BE**
Some schools require recommendation letters from counselors, teachers, coaches or others that know you well. It's never too early to ask!
- CREATE YOUR COMMON APP ACCOUNT AND PROFILE**
The Common Application is used by over 1000+ colleges and allows you to apply to multiple schools with a single application. Don't forget to add Merrimack to your list!



HOW TO BUILD A COLLEGE LIST

Scan here to read our blog post about how to build a well-rounded college list.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF COLLEGE VISITS

Visiting the schools on your list is one of the most important steps in your college search. It gives you a chance to feel the vibe of campus, see what's around the neighborhood and imagine your life as a college student.

Colleges offer a variety of different ways to engage with their campus community. Here are some common options you might see:

CAMPUS TOUR

A guided walk around the college campus led by a current student or admission representative. During the tour, you will learn about the school and see students living their day-to-day life which helps you picture yourself as a student.

INFORMATION SESSION

A presentation about the school that covers general information such as majors offered, how to apply and more. These are typically paired with tours and are also hosted by student ambassadors or admission counselors.

OPEN HOUSE

A larger campus-wide event lasting a few hours or all day and usually include tours and info sessions, as well as other activities specific to academics, residence life, athletics, dining or other aspects of the college you don't experience during a normal visit.

INTERVIEW

A one-on-one meeting with an admission representative where you discuss your goals and qualifications as a student and why you would be a good fit for their community. Some schools might require an interview or encourage one as part of the admission process.

ADMITTED STUDENT DAY

Similar to an Open House, these events offer a variety of activities alongside other admitted students so you can start meeting future classmates and truly ask yourself if this is where you want to be next year!

HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT VISIT OPTION FOR ME?

There's no right or wrong answer; you can do all of these visits if you really want to! It simply depends on where you are in the process and what you're hoping to learn. Many schools now offer virtual tour options which is a great place to start before booking an in-person visit.



THINGS TO CONSIDER DURING THESE EXPERIENCES:



HOW FAR APART THE BUILDINGS ARE: imagine walking from your dorm to your classes to the dining hall in the dead of winter or peak of summer.



WHAT CURRENT STUDENTS ARE DOING: observe how people interact with each other and how they spend their time on campus. What is the vibe? Is this a community you can see yourself being a part of?

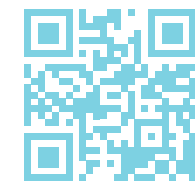


TIME OF YEAR: campus will be less busy during certain periods of time like finals week, holidays, summer, winter and spring breaks.



LOCATION: do some research about the surrounding area and consider things like safety, transportation and essentials (groceries, pharmacy, etc) in addition to the fun stuff like restaurants and attractions.

AT MERRIMACK, we are always adding new visits and events! Stay up-to-date on in-person and virtual options by going to www.merrimack.edu/visit!



CHOOSING A MAJOR

Not sure what you want to study? Don't worry! Feeling unsure is totally normal, but many students rush into picking a major because they feel like they have to. It's okay to apply to—and attend—college as an undeclared major, but here are some tips that might help:



» Merrimack offers free tools and resources that can help you narrow down potential majors, explore possible career paths and even job growth, demand and salaries.

← **SCAN HERE FOR FREE TOOLS AND RESOURCES!**

- » Some schools require you to apply directly into a major (Nursing, Engineering, etc) which can make it harder to switch. Other schools are just one general application for admission to the college as a whole. Be sure to find out from each school what their process is for changing majors so you aren't stuck in a program you hate!
- » Merrimack's Discover Program is designed specifically for undecided students to help explore options, fulfill requirements and declare a major by the end of sophomore year!

Remember: Your major is one small piece of the puzzle and it does not define your future or put you in a career "box" that you're stuck in forever. Adults change careers just as often as students change majors!

FUN FACT

An estimated 20–50% of students enter college **UNDECIDED**, while an estimated 75% report having changed their **MAJOR** at least once!

BestColleges.com, 2022



COMMUNICATING WITH COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

Representatives from colleges will sometimes visit your school or you'll see them at local college fairs. These might be admission counselors, alumni, student ambassadors or athletic recruiters.

If you don't know a lot about a school and aren't sure what to ask, here are some questions that might help kickstart a conversation:

- » **What are 3 words that describe your school?**
- » **What makes your school different?**
- » **What support services do you offer your students?**
- » **What are you looking for in a potential student?**
- » **What does it take to be successful at your school?**

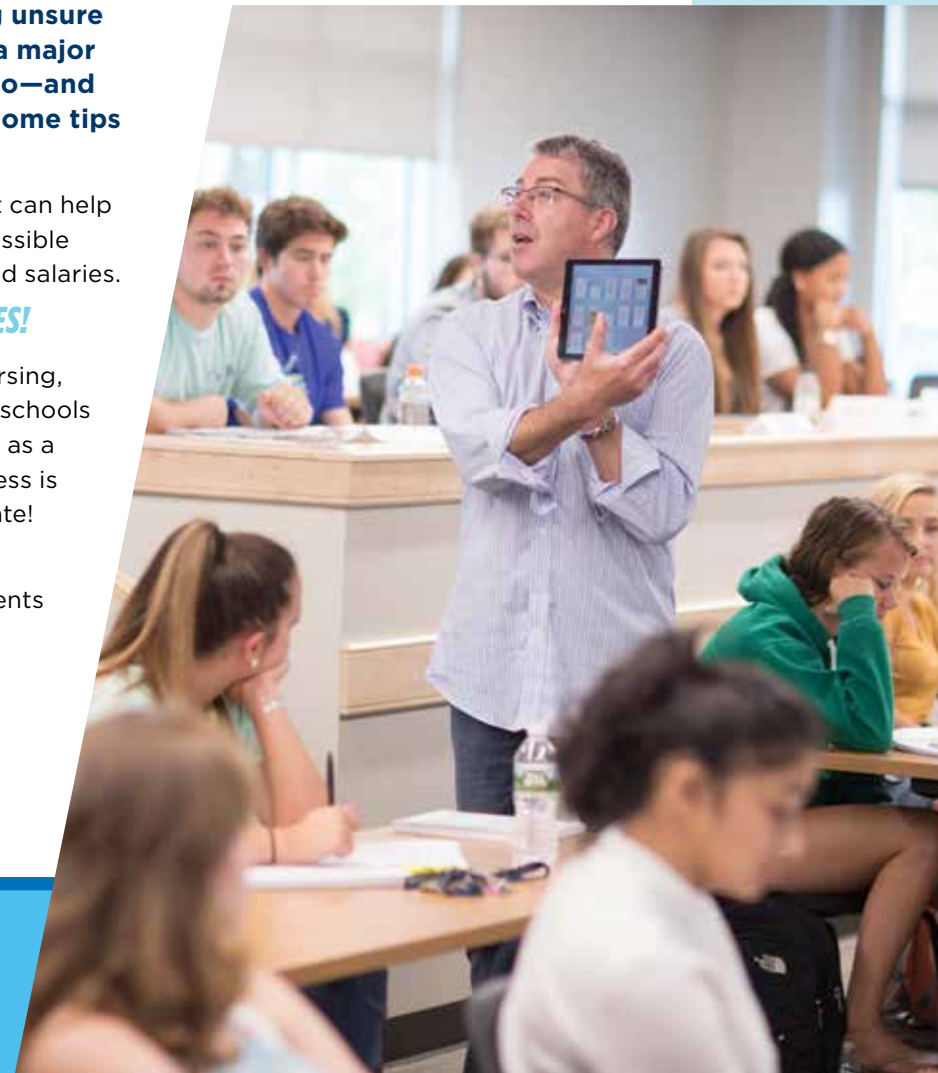
Remember: Admission counselors are here to help! Don't be afraid to reach out, ask questions and build connections because they will be your biggest advocates when it comes time to apply.



← **SCAN HERE TO FIND YOUR MERRIMACK ADMISSION COUNSELOR!**

PRO TIP

Colleges send A LOT of emails! Keep your inbox clean by creating a separate email account specifically for your college search process. Use this new email address on your applications, event registrations and more—but remember to check it daily!



NAVIGATING APPLICATION DEADLINES

With so many application deadlines to choose from, you may be wondering what they all mean and which one is right for you.



LEARN MORE ABOUT APPLYING TO MERRIMACK at www.merrimack.edu/apply!

EARLY DECISION:

This decision is binding, which means you sign an agreement saying you will enroll at the school if admitted. You can still apply to other schools but only one Early Decision (ED) application can be active at all times. If admitted ED, all other applications must be withdrawn so make sure this is 100% what you want!

- ✓ **Pros:** locked in early; more time to plan, celebrate and relax!
- ✗ **Cons:** deposits due early; very little wiggle room if you change your mind.

EARLY ACTION:

This option is great if you want your decision as soon as possible but you're still considering your options. This decision is non-binding, which means you can apply Early Action (EA) to as many schools as you want without any commitments.

- ✓ **Pros:** earliest admission decisions; keeps your options open.
- ✗ **Cons:** deadlines vary across the board; some earlier, some later.

REGULAR DECISION:

This is typically the last or latest deadline you can apply to a school. This option is nice because it gives you more time to work on your application, improve your grades or take on new extracurriculars. It also helps to have later options in case you are not happy with your Early Action choices.

- ✓ **Pros:** more time to perfect your app and put your best foot forward.
- ✗ **Cons:** latest decision notification; potentially miss out on some events.

Please Note: Merrimack offers a Regular Decision deadline on February 15th but then switches to rolling admission until August!

ROLLING ADMISSION:

This option means that applications are reviewed as they are completed and decisions are released when they're ready. In other words, you can submit your application at any time and receive a decision at any time. At Merrimack, this period is mid-February through August but some schools are rolling admission the entire time.

- ✓ **Pros:** flexibility; no deadlines to worry about.
- ✗ **Cons:** timelines vary; can feel a little unpredictable.



PRO TIP

Create a calendar of important dates and deadlines. Colleges have varying timelines for applying, scholarships, special programs, financial aid and more. Many students find it helpful to create a spreadsheet or Google calendar to stay on track!

SAMPLE MERRIMACK TIMELINE

JULY–SEPTEMBER

- » **Schedule a summer visit!** But keep in mind that campus might be a little less active during the summer vs the fall.
- » **Common App comes out in August** meaning you can create an account, view the essay prompts and start thinking about topics. (Don't forget to add Merrimack to your Common App list of schools!)
- » **Make a calendar of important dates** such as upcoming events and application deadlines to help stay on track.

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER

- » **Attend a Fall Open House** to see everything Merrimack has to offer!
- » **Request recommendation letter(s)** from your school counselor and/or a teacher.
- » **Finalize your application** and proofread your essay carefully.
- » **Submit your application** by November 15 for Early Action I consideration! Be sure to set up your Merrimack applicant portal so you can track your progress and make sure we received everything.

DECEMBER–JANUARY

- » **Receive an admission decision by mid-December** if you completed your application by the Early Action I deadline.
If you did not apply ED or EAI, winter break is a great time to hunker down and finish your application before our Early Action II deadline on January 15th!
- » **File your FAFSA;** the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) helps determine your eligibility for scholarships, grants, loans, work-study and more.

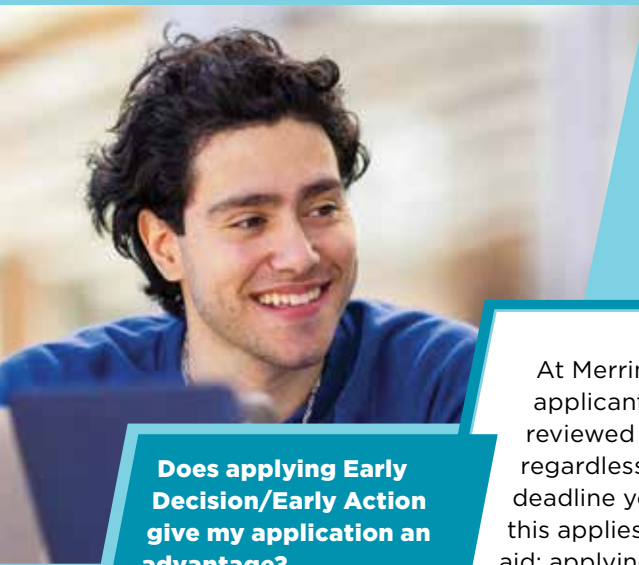
FEBRUARY–MARCH

- » **Receive an admission decision by mid-February** if you completed your application by the Early Action II deadline.
If you did not apply EAI, you can still submit an application for our Regular Decision deadline on February 15th!
- » **Attend Admitted Student Days,** Shadow Days and many other events and activities to meet your future classmates!

APRIL–MAY

- » **Join admitted student groups** on social media to start building connections and making friends.
- » **Review your financial aid package** and admission documents carefully, and reach out to our Admission team if you don't fully understand something.
- » **Make it official!** Submit your deposit by May 1 to hold your spot in the class.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Does applying Early Decision/Early Action give my application an advantage?

At Merrimack, we treat every applicant equally! Everyone is reviewed using the same criteria regardless of which application deadline you choose. Additionally, this applies to scholarships and aid; applying “late” does not mean receiving “less.”



What are colleges looking for in potential applicants?

It's not all about GPAs and test scores. In fact, we don't use test scores in our review process at all! We like to see what kinds of classes you're taking and how you've grown in those areas throughout high school. We also like to see how you spend your free time to better understand what motivates you and what you're passionate about. It's not about doing the most or being the best; it's about who you are as a person and if we think you'll be happy here.



What is FAFSA and why is it important?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the official form that you use to apply for financial assistance from the federal government. Basically, you're providing colleges with more information about you and your family. Then, that information is used to help calculate all the different financial aid options you qualify for such as scholarships, grants, loans, work-study and more. That means your potential aid can come from many different sources, so you should still file the FAFSA even if you don't plan on taking out any loans.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS TO KNOW:

Cost of Attendance (COA): The estimated amount it will cost to attend a college for one academic year. This amount includes tuition, room and board, fees and estimated costs for transportation and school supplies.

Demonstrated Interest: These are typically things like scheduling an interview or attending an Open House that show the school you're really excited about them.

Grade Point Average (GPA): A number that shows your overall academic performance in high school. It's calculated by assigning a point value to each grade you've earned, usually on a 4.0 scale.

Net Price Calculator: A resource that some schools provide where you can enter some basic information about yourself and it will calculate an estimate of your cost of attendance and/or potential scholarships and financial aid.

Priority Date or Deadline: The date by which your application—whether it's for admission, student housing or financial aid—must be received to be given the strongest consideration.

Student Aid Index: Formerly known as Expected Family Contribution, the SAI is a measure of your family's financial strength that is used to determine your eligibility for need-based financial aid.

Test Optional: When a school is test optional, it means that they will review your application with or without SAT, ACT or other standardized test scores. As the applicant, it's entirely up to you if you want to include your scores. (FYI: Merrimack is test blind, which means we do not use test scores at all in our review process.)



←
SCAN HERE TO VIEW
OUR FULL GLOSSARY

We're Here For You

When you pursue an education at Merrimack, you're never on your own. You have a dedicated team, including both an admission and a financial aid counselor, to help you through the process.

» **ADMISSION: 978-837-5100**

admission@merrimack.edu
www.merrimack.edu/apply



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315 Turnpike Street, North Andover, MA 01845

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