REACH FOR THE STARS

Name:

A guide to college from Paterson students for Paterson students
Reach For The Stars is a college guide created by the Journalism III class at the John F. Kennedy Educational Complex, in Paterson, NJ in cooperation with the Paterson Education Fund and The Herald News. Special thanks to Ms. Lories Nye & Mr. Carlos Rios for all of their help putting the college guide together.

This year’s college guide theme relates to the limitless possibilities that exist for students as they finish their careers as high school students and prepare to move on to their post secondary education.

We tried to cover the obstacles that high school and college students may face, provide them with tips to manage some challenges they may encounter and, hopefully, make their journeys a bit easier. We also provide some experiences from current college students and graduates who were able to overcome obstacles on this important journey. After reading the articles in this guide, it is our hope you will have an easier time reaching for the stars.

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Learn about yourself; Create your path

By Mayar Eltorky

Success isn’t about how much money you make, it’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.
-Michelle Obama

Do you need help finding your career path? Are you having trouble deciding what to do after high school? The best way to make decisions like these is to spend some time learning about yourself.

First determine what type of career would make you most happy. Would you like to do the same thing everyday or would you like a job or schedule that is constantly changing? Do you want to work with people or would you prefer to work alone? Do you want a job that requires creativity or are you interested in something that is more straightforward?

By learning more about yourself, you will learn more about what will make you happy.

Once you figure out a career path, start researching the types of degrees that you need to pursue your dream job.

You can then start researching colleges to find out which offer the degree programs that interest you.

Taking a career or personality test is a great place to start when embarking on your journey to college. By beginning your research with yourself, you have a starting off point in what can be a complicated journey.

“After I took a personality test, one of the careers that matched my personality and interests was journalism, which is something I’ve been interested in for a while,” said STEM sophomore Reem Hajjar.

So if you are feeling overwhelmed by all of the career choices out there, start your research with the variable you know best- Yourself!

### TOP Careers Paths For 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Projected # of Jobs</th>
<th>Median Salary</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>23,300</td>
<td>$152,700</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse practitioner</td>
<td>44,700</td>
<td>$198,190</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician assistant</td>
<td>28,700</td>
<td>$98,180</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistician</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>$80,110</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodontist</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>$187,200</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anesthetist</td>
<td>7,400</td>
<td>$157,140</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actuary</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>$97,070</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podiatrist</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>$119,340</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>53,700</td>
<td>$131,600</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>$94,590</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>140,400</td>
<td>$67,190</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatric</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>$170,300</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer systems analyst</td>
<td>118,800</td>
<td>$85,800</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrician and gynecologist</td>
<td>4,300</td>
<td>$187,200</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometrist</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>$103,900</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Online Career & Personality Tests

- [www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com)
- [www.personality-testing.info/test/IPIP-BFFM/1.PHP](http://www.personality-testing.info/test/IPIP-BFFM/1.PHP)
- [www.careertest.net](http://www.careertest.net)
- [www.iperonic.com/career/](http://www.iperonic.com/career/)
- [www.mycareerquizzes.com/career-personality-test](http://www.mycareerquizzes.com/career-personality-test)
- [www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com)
- [http://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3503](http://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3503)
- [https://www.bls.gov/k12/content/students/careers/career-exploration.htm](https://www.bls.gov/k12/content/students/careers/career-exploration.htm)
9th Grade:

**Fall: Get Involved in Extra Curricular Activities**
- Extracurricular activities that are an important part of high school. Get involved with groups, clubs or teams that interest you.
- Make sure to be enrolled in college prep classes and key core requirements, such as English, Math, Science, History, and a foreign language. Take electives if there is room on your schedule.

**Winter: Start Saving**
- Make sure your grades are good because they will impact your GPA and class rank. College may seem like a long way, but it’s good to get in the habit of getting good grades.
- Consider college saving plans, now is a good time to start saving for college.

**Spring/Summer: Learn about college & make summer count**
- Start learning about college, check out their websites and view college profiles. Start a list of the colleges that interest you.
- Start visiting colleges so you know what you are looking for in a school.

10th Grade:

**Fall: Take the PSAT & explore Careers**
- Take the PSAT. It will help you get an idea of what the SAT is like so you can be prepared.
- Stay on track with your courses and focus on your work. Some colleges will begin to look at grades starting from 10th grade.
- Explore potential careers and find out what interests you.

**Winter: Stay Focused**
- Take on new roles and continue to be involved in extracurricular activities. Volunteer for community service opportunities.
- Get advice from your counselors and teachers on your future.
- Practice your writing because you will need to write essays for college applications.

**Spring/Summer: Keep your grades up & reach out to colleges**
- Consider getting a summer job or volunteering. When you receive your check, make sure you save money for your senior year.
- Start your college search and make a list of important categories that your college will need to fall into.
- Reach out to those schools so you can begin researching which will be the best fit for you.

“I started looking at colleges.”
-Ehab Zeineh, SET Class of 2020

“I participated in NHD and got into honors classes.”
-Katherine Casarrubias, STEM Class of 2020

“I looked through the courses that the school offered, thought about what my interests were and chose electives that interested me.”
-Edgar Rivera, STEM Class of 2019
11th Grade:

Fall: Take the PSATs Again & Research Colleges

- Stay on track with your classes and grades. If your grades have not been good up until this point, it’s ok because colleges like to see an upward trend.
- Once you determine your GPA and rank, you can identify colleges that would best fit you.
- Take the PSAT again. Your score could qualify you for the National Merit Scholarship program, which means you could earn money for college.

Winter: Prepare for Standardized Tests & Learn about the Types of Financial Aid

- Make sure to register for SAT. Most juniors take it in the winter or the spring.
- Educate yourself on the different types of financial aid available.

Spring/Summer: Look for Scholarships & Visit Schools

- Apply for an internship or a summer job. Look for jobs that are close to the field you want to study.
- Find scholarships and begin applying for them.
- Contact college admissions offices and schedule appointments with them for tours.

“I went to a college fair and I saw different colleges.”
-Aniyah East, SET Class of 2018

“I went to a college fair and filled out surveys for some colleges.”
-Alexander Hidalgo, ACT Class of 2018

12th Grade:

Fall: Continue Visiting Schools & Complete All Applications

- If you visit schools at this time classes are usually in session. You can talk to attending students and professors.
- If you did not already take the SATs or if you need to re-take them, sign up for the October or November test.
- Ask your teachers for recommendations early.

Winter: Keep Up with College Applications & Submit Financial Aid Forms

- If you applied early decision, then you’ll hear if you were accepted soon.
- Fill out financial aid forms like the FAFSA.
- Colleges still look at your senior grades, so go to your guidance counselor and ask them to submit your transcripts.
- Make sure to keep your grades up.

Spring: Finalize Your Decisions

- If you get put on the wait list don’t give up, it’s not a rejection.
- Make sure to pay close attention to the financial aid packages.
- If you have any questions call the financial aid office.
- Make your final college decision, by this time you should be sure of what college you are going to attend.
- Send in your deposit and all of the necessary acceptance paperwork in a timely manner.

“I tried to do a lot of extra-curricular activities, while keeping my grades up. I stayed dedicated to my grades until the end of the year.”
-Alayia Francis, BTMF Class of 2017
In the beginning of high school, many students may not take their grades too seriously and, unfortunately, they realize the importance of their grades too late. By the time they realize this, their only option to get back on track to graduate is to double up on classes or take credit recovery courses.

School of Business, Technology, Marketing and Finance (BTMF) senior Ethan Ruiz failed the majority of his classes during his freshman year. As a senior, he regrets all of it. While most of his classmates enjoy an early dismissal, Ruiz is in school until 9th period. He also has to take two physical education classes this year.

BTMF senior Julio Rodriguez was also in a similar predicament. Unlike Ruiz, Rodriguez didn’t fail any classes, however, he got straight Ds in the majority of his classes during his freshman year. He felt like it was a major setback because if he had obtained better grades, then he would have gotten accepted into a better college or university. Mistakes that both students made during their first year of high school still effected them four years later.

“Make sure you pass your classes and get good grades. Keep you average above a C and try taking honors or AP courses,” said Mrs. Pamela Holloway-Davis, a School of Education and Training guidance counselor when asked how students can stay on track in high school.

Tips to stay on track in high school:

- **Stay organized**- Buy a planner, it will help you stay organized with assignments and due dates.
- **Ask teachers for help**- Teachers will help you keep up your grades if you ask. Every teacher has time during the day to provide extra help.
- **Do not procrastinate** “It gets late really early,” says Nicholas Vancheri, STEM principal. Don’t leave assignments for the last minute, do them on time and do them right. Work piles up fast if you leave it until the last minute.
- **Go to class** The majority of your grade is based on your class attendance and participation.
- **Keep track of your credits**- Use the graphic below to make sure you have the credits needed to graduate. Guidance counselors will help, but it is best to learn how to be responsible for your self.
- **Standardized tests**- Know which tests and what scores you need to graduate. Requirements change based on the year you graduate. Check the New Jersey Department of Education website (www.nj.gov/education/assessment/parents/GradReq.pdf) to become familiar with requirements.

- **Growing up, one of the things a little kid looks forward to is entering high school. Going to high school is the first step towards adulthood and brings them one step closer to independence. Sometimes the freedom gained in high school is too much for some students. As a young 14 year old, the anonymity a large school offers, coupled with possibly travelling to all of their classes for the first time, students may not make the best choices for their future. Read about the experiences of two seniors who both fell into that trap and see what you can do differently so you can succeed in high school.**
There are many students who are tired of the mundanities of the slow-paced school day; so they look for a challenge.

For students like that, there are two fast-paced, high-level types of courses offered in all high schools: Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment.

Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses are as rigorous as college-level classes, which makes sense since both offer the opportunity to earn college credits.

More is expected from students enrolled in these types of courses. For example, students need to have a greater sense of responsibility and commitment. “Students enrolled in AP and Dual Enrollment classes perform well in their classes most of the time, but it requires work and dedication. Dual enrollment courses are especially difficult because they are college-level courses. If students are not really committed, then they perform poorly. When you take these higher level classes, they require extra effort and work,” Shadidur Rahman, a 2016 STEM graduate and Rutgers University student.

Rahman is something of an expert on the subject considering he graduated from high school with 32 college credits.

In order to earn the college credits, students must complete all dual enrollment course work. Students in AP classes must take the AP test and obtain a score of 3 or higher to earn the college credits.

Earning college credits in high school can help students save money once they get to college. Credits earned in high school are free; whereas the average cost of one credit in a state college is over $1,000.

More and more students are taking advantage of courses like these because, not only is it an opportunity to save money, the course also looks good on transcripts.

Students enrolled in advanced courses seem like better applicants because they appear to enjoy being challenged.

Advanced courses can also boost a student’s grade point average. They are weighted as a fifth point on the four-point scale. This means that a B in an advanced course counts as an A when determining GPA.

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**SCHOLARLY ADVICE**

**Shadidur Rahman**
Rutgers University
School Of Engineering
Accumulated 32 credits

**Q:** How will taking these classes affect a person’s lifestyle?

**A:** Taking these classes are a great experience and provide students with a little taste of college life. They are good preparation for college.

**Q:** Describe the teachers/professors who teach these courses:

**A:** They hold their students to a high standard and are very fair. They are always on task and expect the same from their students.

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**Percentage of Students with Varying AP and Non-AP Experiences Who Earn a Bachelor’s Degree Within 4-Years**

Data from a CollegeBoard.com
Although we have long been taught that good SAT or ACT scores were the most important part of the college application process, it turns out that colleges may not be using the scores as a primary reason to accept a student. “Admissions officers at top-ranked universities do not use the SAT to determine whether a student is college-ready. Instead, SAT scores help colleges interpret students’ overall academic performance in relation to the national applicant pool.” Ritger, Clara. (28 March 2013). How important is the SAT? Admissions officers weigh in. USA Today

However, since standardized test scores can be a factor in the admissions process, it is important to do your best on them. Success means studying for the tests in the months leading up to taking them. Kahn Academy offers free online SAT tutorials. Many high schools in the city also have some type of standardized test prep courses that they offer. Sign up for the tests early and start taking them during your junior year.

**SAT/ACT scores**

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**Keep your GPA up**

Coming into high school, some students may not see how important grades will be when applying to colleges. They may only think their GPA is important in terms of gaining admittance to the colleges of their choice; however, a high GPA can also be a way to earn scholarships.

“Having a high GPA can get you recognition from the school and access to honors societies that look great on your resume. If you finish a semester with a GPA of 3.5 or above, then you earn a spot on the Dean’s List of outstanding academic achievement,” according to the article “What is a good college GPA?” on BestCollegeValues.com.

**PrepScholar**

This is an amazing website for students who need some help with colleges and SAT scores. They also provide an informative feature called the “college acceptance calculator.”

The way to use this feature is to type a college’s name in the search bar of the google search engine with the word “SAT requirements.” For example, if a student were interested in Montclair State University, they would type in “Montclair State University SAT requirements.”

A tab will appear with the name of the college and a description, with the green URL at the bottom. Clicking on the tab, scroll down and the calculator will be at the bottom of the page.

Enter your SAT/ACT scores and your GPA and this will give you an idea of how likely you will be accepted to that school.

**Types of Schools**

**Reach Level Schools:** The high level schools that require a bit more than what you anticipated. They can also be dream schools.

**Same Level Schools:** Schools that have the same requirements in terms of GPA and standardized tests that you have.

**Safety Schools:** Schools whose admission standards fall below what you have. It is safe to assume that a student will gain admission to her safety school.
When to apply?

There are three ways to apply to college: Early decision, early action and regular decision. Regardless of how you choose to apply, make sure to pay close attention to deadline dates. You may miss out on the school of your dreams if you miss the application deadline.

**Early Decision** - Is a binding decision which means that if a student gets accepted to a college through early decision, they have to commit to that school. It is a good way to show a school that you are committed to them. Do not apply early decision if you are not completely sure that is the school you want to attend.

**Early Action I or II** - This is a non-binding decision which means that if the student gets accepted to a college through early action, they can still change their minds about which college they want to attend.

**Regular Decision** - A student applies using the school’s regular deadline and finds out if they are accepted during the spring.

Letters of recommendation

Most colleges need students to submit at least two letters of recommendation with their applications. Letters should come from a teacher and/or your guidance counselor. “I picked the teachers whose classes I had the best grades in during my junior year,” said SET senior Erika Martinez.

Be sure to ask the people you are soliciting letters from well in advance of the deadline because, chances are, they have many other letters they have been asked to write.

Keep it simple

The common application is your friend! Accepted by almost 700 colleges and universities, the common application can save you from having to fill out numerous and sometimes redundant college applications.

By filling out one application and, in some instances, writing only one essay, you can apply to many different schools.

Although some schools do require a separate essay, a part from the one attached to the common application, it still makes the whole process so much easier.

Visit [www.commonapp.org/explore-colleges](http://www.commonapp.org/explore-colleges) to see the list of schools that accept the common application.

Breathe

Even the most organized students can feel the pressure of senior year responsibilities, which is why it is important to step away occasionally and find a way to relax. “I would go to the park and read a book when I got too stressed out,” said Martinez.

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### What do you wish you had known prior to your senior year?

**I wish I realized how quickly deadlines can sneak up on you. I also wished I started preparing to apply to college during my junior year.**

-Yunior Grullon, STEM class of 2017

**I would have spent more time visiting college campuses during my junior year.**

-Omar Alhamayel, ACT class of 2017

**I wish I had better time management because I waited until the last minute to do everything!**

-Taylor Alavrez, SET class of 2017

**I wish I took more time to review everything and to really research all of the options out there.**

-Michelle Bruno, BTMF class of 2017

**I would have preplanned as much as possible. I would have figured out what I wanted to major in and done a lot more college research.**

-Kimberly Gutierrez, SET class of 2017

**I wish I started working on everything (applications, essays, financial aid forms) much earlier. I procrastinated a lot.**

-Daylis Foster, BTMF class of 2017
Two-Year School

Most two-year schools are community colleges. Students can earn certificates or associate degrees. They are nonresidential colleges and are typically supported in part by local government funds.

Community colleges are much less expensive than four-year schools.

Community colleges give students, who may be unsure about what to major in, the opportunity to explore their interests without spending thousands of dollars for a class.

Two-year schools also offer students the opportunity to raise their GPA before applying to four-year schools.

Four-Year School

A four-year school offers the opportunity to earn a bachelor degree, which can be completed within four years of full-time study.

There is the opportunity for students to extend their bachelor degree to a five-year program or to take online classes and/or attend summer sessions in order to finish in less than four years.

A four-year school is much more costly than a two-year college, but many do offer on-campus housing and a variety of clubs and organizations.

Some four-year colleges offer opportunities for students to earn advanced degrees, like a masters or doctorate. They also provide the opportunity for students to work on a masters degree while they are earning their bachelor degree.

Public or Private School

The main difference between a public school and private school is that public schools are funded by the state and, as a result, are much less expensive than private colleges. However, if a student attends a public college outside of their state, they will pay a different tuition rate.

Public schools tend to be much larger than private schools. They also usually have larger classes. Since private schools are smaller, students may get more individualized attention than students in public schools.

Private schools may be able to offer more financial aid because they are privately funded.

Technical Schools

A technical school does not offer a generalized education like two and four-year schools. Students only take classes related to their specific field of study, which means they can earn their certificate in less time than they would earn an associate or bachelor degree.

Most certificate programs are less than two years.

Popular trade school programs are:

- Culinary arts
- Medical assistant
- Cosmetology
- Automotive technology
- Information technology
- HVAC
- Dental assistant
Historically Black Colleges & Universities

HBCUs aren't only for African-Americans, students of many different races can apply. If the cost of going to one of these schools concerns you, don’t worry because they provide many different types of scholarships and grants. They are known for having a very supportive atmosphere. There are many clubs and organizations on campus. They have a high graduation rate for student athletes. There are 104 HBCUs in the Unites States.

Well-Known HBCUs:
- Howard University
- Hampton University
- Spelman College
- Xavier University of Louisiana
- Tuskegee University
- North Carolina A&T State University

Liberal Arts College

Liberal Arts colleges offer a general based education. For example, if they do not offer a specific major in engineering, you can still become an engineer through majors related to that course of study by taking classes in science, mathematics, and statistics. This means you can major in mathematics and still end up with a career in engineering. It does not mean that liberal arts colleges have less developed classes. They just offer broader areas of study.

Liberal Arts College Facts:
- Typically private & generally small size classes
- Higher tuition, but they do offer a lot of financial aid & scholarships
- Because of the small class sizes, the professors and students have closer relationships
- They offer fewer student organizations & clubs

Military Academies

Military Academies are colleges for students who want a college education and to serve in the military.

Graduates earn a Bachelor of Science, are commissioned officers and are required to serve a minimum of five years after graduation.

Some benefits of attending a military college is that tuition, room, and board are free.

Military Academies:
- United States Military Academy
- United States Naval Academy
- United States Air Force Academy
- United States Coast Guard Academy

Religiously Affiliated Colleges:

Have you ever thought of going to a religiously affiliated college? Are you a person of faith? If you are, you should think about attending one of these colleges. It’s an opportunity to explore your faith in-depth, while earning your degree. This is a place where you can meet people who share the same values. Attending one of these schools does not mean that you are making religion your profession, but if religion is an important part of your life, you should consider a religiously affiliated college.

Religiously Affiliated Colleges:
- Boston College
- Kenyon College
- University of Notre Dame
- St. Mary’s College of California
- Saint Peter’s College in Jersey City
- Seton Hall University

“I chose to attend a college with a religious affiliation because I'm really involved in my church's youth group and want to continue to grow my faith in college.”
- Kimberly Gutierrez, Saint Peter’s College class of 2021 & SET graduate

“My Story

“I wanted a college that had a different environment. I was looking for a small college in a rural or suburban setting. A large part of my decision was based on the type of financial aid package I was offered.”
- Jeferson Mendoza, Dartmouth class of 2021 & STEM graduate
Loans are another way to pay for college. You do not have to meet requirements or have certain academic achievements; however, they have to be repaid at a later date.

The good news is that there are many different types of financial aid available. Some aid is need based. The amount you will be eligible for is determined when you fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

Most scholarships are achievement-based. Although some schools will offer students scholarships based on their academic achievement in high school, there are many other scholarships out there. Try to dedicate some time each week to research and apply for various scholarships.

**Grants & Scholarships**

Grants and scholarships can be earned or given to students for various reasons and can help pay for college. Grants and scholarship money does not need to be repaid.

**Loans**

Loans are another way to pay for college. You do not have to meet requirements or have certain academic achievements; however, they have to be repaid at a later date.

**NJ STARS**

NJ STARS is a scholarship program that is exclusive to New Jersey. It is a program that allows students to attend any one of the 19 community colleges in New Jersey free of tuition. In order to be eligible, a student must be in the top 15% of their class during either their junior year or senior year of high school.

**Work-Study**

Work-study gives students an opportunity to gain work experience, while pursuing a college degree. However, not every school participates in the Federal Work-Study Program. The schools who do award this fund, do so on a first-come, first-served. That is one reason why it is important for students to complete the FAFSA as early as possible.

**EOF**

Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) is a program that provides financial aid and services to students who come from educational or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. 41 colleges in New Jersey are a part of the EOF program; however they all have different requirements, space available, and selection processes.

**Financial Aid Information**

- Fafsa.ed.gov
- Finaid.org
- Studentaid.ed.gov

**Scholarships**

- Zinch.com
- Fastweb.com
- ScholarshipPoints.com

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**My Story** By Aileen Mora, BTMF class of 2017

I qualified to be a part of the NJ STARS program (New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship) because I am in the top 15% of my graduating class.

As an NJ STAR, I can attend the community college in my county free of charge. In order to remain in the program, I need to maintain at least a 3.25 GPA. If I am able to maintain a 3.25, I will qualify for NJ STARS II, which will pay for me to attend a four year college or university to pursue my bachelor degree.

Although I was accepted into Montclair State University, I chose to participate in the NJ STAR program because I have the opportunity to get a degree and have no debt to pay off after I graduate.

Even though I may miss out on some typical college experiences in the first two years it’s worth it to have the opportunity to save money.

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**My Story** By Malasia Alexander, SET class of 2017

I was accepted to my first choice, Kean University, through the EOF program. I decided to attend Kean through EOF because it will help me financially and academically. The program takes about 6 weeks and starts at the end of June and runs until the beginning of August. It will prepare me for college level classes.

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**My Story** By Aileen Mora, BTMF class of 2017

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The rush of wind gushed around me as if trying to whisper something into my ear. I could feel it’s chilling fingers as it slowly elevated me way beyond my present reality. I was standing on the top of Garret Mountain, a small reservation on the outskirts of Paterson. The ledge on which I stood overlooked the buzzing city, and its rocky surface made it difficult to maintain balance.

As I allowed myself to be overtaken by the calm euphoria of the moment, I began to think of where I wanted my life to go. I began to imagine going to college, graduating, starting a family and eventually settling down. However, something inside of me went against the very thought of making a socially conforming choice. The more I thought about it, the more I realized how conflicted I felt about attending college. On one hand I wanted to take the safe route, go to college and graduate with the certainty of a secure job; but on the other I felt a burning desire to put both feet in the water, take a risk, and open a business. How on earth was I supposed to do both?

This is when the idea of taking a gap year first occurred to me. So what exactly is a gap year? According to dictionary.com, a gap year is “A period of time, typically an academic year, taken by a student as a break between secondary school and higher education.”

The idea of taking a gap year has become increasingly more popular. Every year more and more students postpone their college education for the experience of a lifetime.

It’s amazing how many different options are available for students who wish to take a year off from school. From international political internships to amazonian jungle adventures, there’s something for anyone interested in taking a gap year! The more I researched the topic, the more interested I felt in the whole idea.

Another senior who plans on taking a gap year is STEM senior class president, Brelin Sarita. Sarita decided to do the FEMA corps program. He will spend a year traveling all over the United States as he helps rebuild communities affected by natural disasters. “The thought of losing a year can be hard for some people, but I see it more as a year gained,” Sarita said.

Sarita found out about the program through his robotics adviser, Mr. Gilman Choudhury.

Although Sarita is happy with his decision, it was one that he spent a lot of time considering. “The decision about whether or not to take a gap year wasn’t the easiest, but I found through talking to people and doing research that it can be extremely beneficial in the long run. Within the year I can gain more real world experience, be a part of groups, volunteer and be able to network,” Sarita explained.

In doing his research, Sarita found that some schools, including Ivy League schools like as Harvard, actually encourage their students to take a gap year. One example is Malia Obama who will be coming off her gap year and starting Harvard in the fall.

Students should take advantage of any opportunities that present themselves. “One year away from schooling compared to the rest of my life seems so insignificant. I don’t want to start college with the thought that I should’ve done it. Education will always be there. The opportunity to take a gap year before starting won’t,” Sarita said.

After much deliberation and counselling, I finally decided to take a gap year. I plan on building a small marketing company while taking online classes. It’s important to stay educated, whether it’s taking classes at a local community college, or reading at your local library, just make sure that whatever choices you make contribute to your success and your long term dream.

Tips for taking a gap year:

• Have a definite plan.
• Try to do community service.
• Keep busy.
• Remember this is a break, not a leave, from your studies.
• Save money.

• You still should apply to colleges during senior year and defer your enrollment for a year. This way you don’t have to worry about what you will do when your gap year is over.
• Travel when possible. This could give you a new perspective on life.
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**Overcoming obstacles**

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Peer pressure can influence students many ways during their first year of college. With the new found freedom most students experience, to making new groups of friends, freshman year can be a series of potential obstacles.

Going to college means meeting new people, who may have different customs as you. Students who have been raised in families who look down upon drinking may be shell shocked when they get to school. According to a 2009 study by Johnston, O’Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg found that in the United States over 80% of college students have at least one alcoholic drink over a two week time period.

Another type of peer pressure students may encounter is the pressure to skip classes or to avoid homework. The desire to make and keep new friends may put pressure on new students. The freshman population is particularly looking for peer groups because they are new to college and are trying to adapt to the college lifestyle.

These obstacles may seem difficult to overcome, but being aware that they exist may help students avoid them. According to Western Kentucky University’s website there are some things students can do to avoid feeling peer pressured:

- Go in knowing yourself, your morals and values.
- Don’t be afraid to say “no.” In fact, you should practice saying it.
- Hangout with people who have the same morals and values as you.
- Find a positive way to spend free time. Join clubs or organizations that interest you.
- Stand up for others who feel like they are being pressured.
- Don’t judge people. If you respect other people’s decisions, this may help others to respect your choices.

Keeping busy is another important part of the equation. “Between work and classes, I kept really busy during my first two years of college, so there was no time to be social,” said Montclair sophomore and STEM 2015 graduate Asraful Islam.

**College life: Finding a balance**

Have you ever spent the whole weekend with your friends and only to remember late Sunday night that you have a project due on Monday? As high school students, there have probably been many times like this, but once you get to college, professors become much less understanding than your high school teachers were.

College students get excited by their new found freedom in college and can get distracted by all of the fun activities available, but that’s not what college is all about. In order to avoid losing sight of responsibilities, follow these tips from the College Confidential website:

- Make a habit of doing school work in the library and not your dorm room.
- Get outside help.
- Learning how to manage time is the key to success.
- Get your work done before any leisure activities.

Markeese Noble, a 2015 graduate from the School of Education & Training and a current student at PCCC, found a way to balance his social life and school work. “I tend to handle school work on days that I have classes because I have such gaps in my classes, so it’s not really an issue,” Noble said.

**How to avoid peer pressure in college**

Peer pressure can influence students many ways during their first year of college. With the new found freedom most students experience, to making new groups of friends, freshman year can be a series of potential obstacles.

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Ultimately if you have a sense of yourself and if you connect with people who share values, it will be easier to make the right choices and avoid situations where you may feel pressured.
Starting college means learning a new set of study skills. Professors expect more independent learning than high school teachers do, so it is important for students to alter their methods for studying. Below is a list of skills from Lynchburg College.

### Plan Ahead
Make a daily to do list at the beginning of the week. Use a planner or an app like “To do” to help you to remember what you have to do.

### Note-Taking
Copy the notes as the professor is writing them on the board. Rewrite the notes and paraphrase the professor’s words. Try to study them every night. Highlight important information in your book that helps you for that class.

### Read
Read materials more than once. Take notes as you read through the material. If possible, highlight important information in the document.

### Test Prep
As you take notes in class, make flash cards. Review the cards often. If you are having trouble with any concepts, see the professor immediately. Do not let issues pile up.

### Study Group
Find a group of students in your class or in your major and create a study group.

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**Bad Roomate**

Once you enter college, there are going to be a lot of challenges ahead of you. Trying to keep your grades up, worrying about time management, making new friends and getting used to a whole new level of independence were obstacles you anticipated, a bad roommate was not a problem you planned on dealing with.

Fortunately there are many resources available for students who are stuck with roommates who are not compatible with them.

Some colleges try to preemptively avoid roommate issues by having students fill out a survey. That way a night-owl will not get paired with early bird and a neat-freak will not get paired with a messy person.

Unfortunately, personalities may still clash, which means students need to identify resources on campus to help them deal with these issues.

The dorm’s Resident Adviser (RA) should always be the first person to consult when any problem exists. He/she can help you troubleshoot solutions to the problems that exist between you and your roommate and can also mediate conversations.

Sometimes the problems are so deep that the only resolution is for one person to move out. Genesis Diaz, a 2015 STEM graduate and Rutgers University sophomore ran into serious issues with her roommates this year. “From freshman year to my current year I had the same roommates and they were mostly concerned about themselves, there wasn’t much consideration for others around them. It came to the point that my roommates were saying cruel things about me behind my back,” Diaz said.

Although Diaz did turn to her RA for help, the problems persisted and her living situation proved to be too unhealthy for her. “The situation did not escalate until finals and it was a major distraction. It was constantly on my mind and I did not do so well in my finals. Although I passed all of my classes, I did not do as well as I wanted to do because of the stress I had dealing with them,” she explained.

Ultimately reaching out to her RA was beneficial. Once Diaz realized that she could not longer live in such a hostile environment, her RA helped her get new housing. “I am currently living with new girls and I am in a much more positive situation where I am getting along with my new roommates. My RA still checks with me to see how I am doing,” she said.
How to survive

The transition from high school to college can be difficult. Whether it’s balancing your social life with your academic life or trying to juggle too many activities at once, it’s not an easy thing. In high school our teachers constantly remind us when work is due; whereas, in college much more independence is needed. You may be asking yourself, “What can I do to make my own college experience easier?” Well, you’ve come to the right place!

Here, you will find some tips that will help you survive college life and will aid your growth so you can become an independent individual.

Double O

According to LiveCareer.com, one important tip is to GO TO ALL ORIENTATIONS! Orientations are very helpful when beginning your experience. They will help you learn the layout of the campus, which will lead to a better understanding of where all of your classes are located.

Orientations will also introduce new students to the various clubs and organizations that exist on campus. Being involved in extracurricular activities is an important component of college life.

Orientations can also provide general information about the campus, including on campus resources like who to contact for help for just about any situation that arises.

Organization is another necessity when it comes to maximizing your college experience. Whether it’s having a white board with an ongoing to do list or keeping a daily planner, find a way to stay organized from the start. Being organized can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and overstressed.

Study, study, study….But not too much

MyCollegeGuide.org suggests that you should set a study schedule for yourself. Although it is important that you study as much as possible, there is only so much you can cram into your brain at once. Making a study schedule will help avoid the need to cram.

Think ahead

Another useful tip is to think beyond the semester you are currently in. Make note of courses that you enjoy and professors who you like. This can help when choosing course offerings in the future.

Identify the courses you need for your major and plan accordingly. Some courses are only taught once a year.

Academic advisors

Your academic advisor should be someone you visit often. She can guide you to campus resources, inform you of important deadlines, help you find campus events and organizations that could benefit you. You should visit your academic advisor before and after registration.

They are also very helpful when you are struggling with any school-related problems.

They can help you decide which classes you should take, so that you can graduate on time.

Having a close relationship with your adviser will make your college experience run much smoother.

“Studying in college is a lot different than how it was in high school. In high school I rarely studied for a class or exam and I passed all of my classes without issue; however, college is a totally different ball game. In college you need to study or you won’t pass. Also, it’s not like in high school when you can study the night before and do well. In college you have to start studying for exams a minimum of a week before.”

-David Santiago, 2015 STEM graduate & Rutgers class of 2019
Independence is Happiness

Independence is key to surviving all four years. When you’re in college, one thing you have to remember is that you will NOT be babied. You must be capable of making your own decisions—every single one of them! This means you’re responsible for choosing your own classes and picking your own friends. There is a certain beauty to having independence. Not having to worry about parents and curfews and everything in between! Sounds cool, huh? According to Blog.YouVisit.com, “Nothing says you’re growing up like the ability to make, and be responsible, for all your own decisions.”

New Roomie

Roommates can be helpful when it comes to college. What if you are thinking about dorming? One thing to keep in mind is that you are going to have at least one roommate during your first year at college. The best thing to do in this case is to try to become friends with your roommate. Remember, you are going to have to live with this person for a year. You may not always see eye to eye in certain situations. You may even find you are polar opposites, but either way, you are pretty much going to be stuck sharing the same space with this person. How fun will your experience be if you are living with your worst enemy?

Money Talks!

Always spend your money wisely. One thing you learn in college is that money is your best friend. Whether you’re spending it on your tuition, buying overly-expensive textbooks or even buying ramen noodles to last you the whole semester, it is important to keep track of where your money is going.

Although it is important for college students to start establishing their credit, having credit cards may tempt you to spend money that you don’t have. According to the article “Students spending becoming increasingly reckless” from USA Today.com, college students today are more likely to have and use more than one credit card than they were in 2012. The article points to a survey done by financial aid company Higher One and education technology company EverFi, also found that those same students were “far less likely to pay their credit card bills, make and stick to a budget, put money into savings, balance their checkbook or track their credit score.”

Chances are, most college students graduate with some type of debt because of students loans they took out to pay for school. You definitely do not want to accumulate more debt by racking up credit card bills during your four years in college.

Here are some tips from the article “Five Common Credit Card Mistakes That College Students Make – And How To Avoid Them” from the website nerdwallet.com that you can use to avoid falling into debt and to keep track of your money:

• Only get one credit card and avoid using it as much as possible. Save it for emergencies and pay the balance off as soon as possible.

• Do the math. Look at how much you will actually be paying for something when you buy it on credit. That $5 cup of coffee at Starbucks may end up costing you $20 when you pay for it over the course of a couple months.

• Keep track of your spending. If you know how much you owe, you can make more informed decisions.

• Keep track of deadlines for bills. Missing a payment can lead to hefty late fees and increased interest rates. It can also mess up your credit.

• Create a realistic budget. Identify the amount of money you have coming in on a regular basis and the amount you need to spend.

• If you know that you may be tempted to go overboard with spending, avoid having credit cards.

Many college students do not manage their money, and as a result, graduate with an enormous amount of debt. Don’t be that person. It is as simple as that! Being more money conscious while you are in college will make your life easier when you graduate.
You finally finished your 4th year of college, you ran through all your courses, spent hundreds and thousands of dollars and then you get a job. All of a sudden you realize that you chose the wrong major. The field no longer interests you. You’ve wasted four or more years of schooling on the wrong career path. So how can you avoid this? How can make sure you choose the major and career path that is right for you?

Below is a list of tips from Princeton Review:

• Identify your professional goals and the major that you need in order to reach them.
• Take your time. Don’t feel pressured to know your major during your freshman year. Take your general education requirements while you try to figure it out.
• Research the components of your field of interest. What type of career would best suit your personality type?
• Consider how long you want to be in school. Does your career goal require an advanced degree? Are you willing to spend the extra years in school?
• Ask the expert. Talk to people who already work in the field that interests you.

“After spending 20 years pursuing a career in nursing, I still enjoy every single step in my journey.”
- Ines Alvarez, class of 1998 John F. Kennedy & Berkeley College class of 2017

“All college students have a universal fear that they won’t have sufficient money for college, but the true fear should be that they won’t have enough time.

College life can become so hectic that activities quickly pile on and then you no longer have a valid sense of the passing of time. Hours go by in minutes and deadlines are there before you even pick up a book.

By planning ahead and by anticipating any obstacles before they happen, new college students should be able to avoid falling into the time management trap.

Manage academics
The first thing you have to learn is that academics come first. You are spending your hard earned money on the classes, so you might as well try to do well. Keep a log and a planner to help you maintain a grip on due dates and to keep track of past events and completed tasks.

Manage personal time
Okay, now let’s be honest, it is unlikely that as a college freshman, you will solely dedicate all of your time and energy to studying, working, and going to class all day. You deserve a break, being the hard working student you are.

Take some “you time.” According to a study by University of Illinois psychology professor Alejandro Lleras, taking a break after a long period of working on the same project can improve your productivity by double.

When filling out your planner, make sure you make time for yourself, but always make sure to finish all of your academic tasks first.

Help is just a click away
Some students use their phone calendars, others use the classic paper planners to stay organized. If what you’re using isn’t working for you, giving up isn’t the solution. Just change tools and try again.

Below is a list of time management apps from lifehack.org:

• Rescue Time- Allows you to see where your time is being spent by sending you weekly reports.
• Remember the Milk- Helps you organize all of your weekly and daily tasks.
• Evernote- A free productivity tool that allows you to capture all your ideas, thoughts and images in many different ways, eg with voice, notes or images.
Activism is hard, but when you’re young, there is this specific bitterness that comes along with it. The younger you are, the more you are told to shut up and worry about “kid things.” No one wants to hear your voice and eventually, it becomes a violent scream trapped in the back of your throat and in the pit of your lungs.

Activism on campus is never easy, and it sure isn’t a walk in

**Steps to get ACTIVATED**

- **Decide your cause** What are you passionate about? Where do you see injustice in our society?
- **Educate yourself on the cause** What issues surround your cause? Do they align to your values?
- **Look up groups pertaining to your cause** Many colleges have clubs and organizations fairs, find out when it is and get involved!
- **Join the group** Find out when and where they meet and show up.
- **Participate in activities as much as you can** Never over extend yourself because your studies should come first, but get out there and make your voice heard.
- **Decide your level of involvement**. There are many different ways you can work in a club or organization. Decide which you are most comfortable with.

Natasha Torres (with megaphone)
takes part in a protest on the Rutgers New Brunswick campus. The group, United Students Against Sweatshops, were protesting to raise the minimum wage to $15.00 an hour.

Activism is meant to spread knowledge and to get justice for under represented groups. A study out of University of California, Los Angeles stated that students in their first year of college have recently been getting more involved with social change organizations. 33.5% of first year students at UCLA report being involved in some type of activist group.

As an activist, you see the world we live in shrouded in a new light. Sometimes being involved with a social change group can become a distraction. “School always comes first, activism is amazing, but it should not affect your studies,” said Torres.

Another benefit of becoming involved is that it may help you find a career that you are passionate about. Paterson resident and 2013 Dwight Englewood graduate Nisreen Yonis parlayed her passion for humanity into a career goal. The International Relations major who attends Montclair State University got an internship at the International Rescue Committee helping refugees. She hopes to continue working for humanitarian causes after she graduates.

“I come from a refugee family and as a Palestinian, the international struggle for human rights is part of my ethnic identity. International relations is also the study of the way people fundamentally interact on a global scale and their interactions are impacting the lives of everyone else.” said Yonis.

A pitfall students may fall into is being too passionate about their cause, which could then cause them to lose focus on their studies; however, this should not deter students from becoming involved. The world needs fixing, and though it will take time to do so and by joining the right activist groups, we can do it. “It is our duty as humans to fight for what we believe in,” said Torres.
What is the main purpose of college? Sometimes we may be afraid to ask ourselves this question. We are afraid of where the answer may lead; however, college is usually one of the necessary steps to become successful. Getting a degree can benefit you in several ways and it can change your life socially, mentally and physically.

Although getting a degree can initially be very expensive, according to the article “Is College Worth It?” from The New York Times, the true cost of a college degree is about negative $500,000. (https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/upshot/is-college-worth-it-clearly-new-data-say.html (May 27, 2014))

Those numbers mean that after you graduate and get a degree, you will make half a million dollars more in your lifetime than your peers who did not attend college.

Money is not the only reason to go to college. People who earn a degree and follow a career path that they enjoy report increased happiness than their peers who did not get a degree.

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center in 2014, 86% of people with a bachelors degree have a career-track job. Comparatively, only 56% of people without a degree have career-track jobs.

The same survey also found that 53% of people with a 4 year degree reported being satisfied with their job; whereas only 37% of people without degrees reported the same feelings of satisfaction.

Attending college can also be a major factor in preparing you to be more independent. “In college you grow up, you teach yourself, rely on yourself, and learn not to rely on other people. In high school, classes are given to you, you always see the same people, the same teachers. In high school teachers care about you, but in college you come in and have to pick your own classes, your own schedule, it basically teaches you independence,” said Sabreen Hajjar, 2015 Harp graduate.

When you enter college, you can take part in various clubs and community service opportunities that can provide valuable career experience. For example, if you have an interest in human anatomy or journalism, you can volunteer at a hospital or join the school’s newspaper. College can offer many non-academic experiences that can help you grow as a student and as a person.

Although there are many different reasons to pursue a degree, there are very few compelling reasons not to get one.

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**Why pursue a degree?**

- Community engagement
- Set an example for your kids
- Build self confidence
- Become more knowledgeable in different areas
- Career satisfaction
- Stronger earning power

---

**Earnings: Degree vs without**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Pay</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Degree</td>
<td>$751</td>
<td>$578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>$872 (+16%)</td>
<td>$661 (+14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>$1249 (+66%)</td>
<td>$956 (+66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s or Higher</td>
<td>$1385 (+84%)</td>
<td>$1049 (+82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>$1630 (+117%)</td>
<td>$1185 (+105%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

College is a time that many people experience their first taste of independence. A difficulty that comes along with that independence is making some tough decisions. Among those choices is one that determines a huge part of your college experience: To dorm or to commute? That is the question.

Dorming may not be an option because of the expense, but financial aid can help cover the cost. The extra cost may be worth it because living on campus can help with time management. Students are less likely to be late to classes and will have easier access to campus resources like the library.

Another benefit of dorming is that students can meet new people. Students can broaden their community of friends by meeting people who live in their dorm.

Commuting comes with its own benefits and drawbacks.

Saving money is one of the primary reasons students commute. According to the College Board, the average dorming cost for students costs about $8,887.

Some students commute because they do not want to leave the comfort of their own homes. “One reason I am commuting next year is because I don’t feel like I’m ready to leave home yet. Also, I’m not ready to live with strangers yet,” said Davin Goulbourne, a School of Education and Training senior who will attend Montclair State University in the fall.

The choice to dorm or commute is a personal one. Spend time reflecting on the type of person you are and decide what will work best for you.

Think carefully before committing one way or the other because the decision will affect your first year at college.
My Story

I believe the hardest part of being an undocumented student, or in my case a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) student, is feeling like your education is put on hold. I am fortunate enough to have received a work permit and deportation relief through the federal government’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program since its creation by President Barack Obama, August 2012. The purpose of DACA is to provide unauthorized immigrants who came to the U.S. before age 16, and have resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time- “a chance to stay in the U.S. to study or work, provided they meet certain conditions.” [1]

As a DACA participant I am allowed to apply for employment authorization card, Social Security number, and in all states but Nebraska receive a driver’s license. [2] DACA provides legal presence, but not legal status. DACA protection only lasts two years, but it can be renewed if you meet qualifications again.

My process for college applications began through the Common Application 2017-2018. I think the Common App creates a very friendly and straightforward system for undocumented students to maneuver their way through the Geography and Citizenship tab. An important point that DACA students need to remember when filing any college documents, including the FAFSA, is to select “Other (Non-US)” when asked about your citizenship status. This is important because DACA provides legal presence, but not legal status.

A DACA student can file the FAFSA electronically using the SSN they received. For many of us, college costs are the top of our concerns. DACA or undocumented students “are not eligible for federal student aid. However, you may be eligible for state or college financial aid.” [3] This certainly was great news for me because this gave me the opportunity to reach out directly to colleges/universities and be provided with state or college-based financial aid.

Not being able to afford college is very heartbreaking and my options are very limited. For example, although I graduated in the top 15% of my class and academically qualify for the NJ STARS and the Governor’s Urban Scholarship programs, I was not eligible to participate in this because students must be U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens and legal New Jersey residents. I am currently finalizing the search for college costs and scholarships. My advice for any undocumented student is not to give up and to keep the search going because there are many of us who truly believe in the love for education.

What is DACA?

On June 15, 2012, President Obama created a new policy calling for deferred action for certain undocumented young people who came to the U.S. as children. Applications under the program which is called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (“DACA”) began on August 15, 2012. Individuals who have deferred action status can apply for employment authorization and are in the U.S. under color of law. However, there is no direct path from deferred action to lawful permanent residence or to citizenship. It can be revoked at any time.

Who is eligible?

Individuals who meet the following criteria can apply for deferred action for childhood arrivals:

- are under 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012;
- came to the U.S. while under the age of 16;
- have continuously resided in the U.S. from June 15, 2007 to the present. (For purposes of calculating this five year period, brief and innocent absences from the United States for humanitarian reasons will not be included);
- entered the U.S. without inspection or fell out of lawful visa status before June 15, 2012;
- were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making the request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
- are currently in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the Coast Guard or armed forces;
- have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor, or more than three misdemeanors of any kind; and
- do not pose a threat to national security or public safety.

Resources:

- https://www.uscis.gov/i-821d
- http://www.immigrationequality.org
- https://cliniclegal.org/resources/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals

What are the benefits?

- Proof of deferred action which grants the beneficiary the right to stay in the U.S. temporarily (renewable three-year period) without the fear of removal/deportation.
- The right to work in the United States in the form of an Employment Authorization Document, better known as a work permit, for a renewable three-year period. This means you can also get healthcare through a job.
- The ability to apply for a social security number. This is not a part of the USCIS application but may be applied for after being granted DACA.
- The ability to obtain a driver’s license identification (depending on the state).
- Apply for a credit card and open a bank account; thus building your credit history.
- In some states (New Jersey is one of them), students can attend state universities and colleges and pay the rate for in-state residents.

How safe are DREAMers now?

After the detainment of “DREAMer” Daniela Vargas in Mississippi in March, the future of many DACA students seems unclear. Although Vargas was released after two weeks in detention and despite the fact that President Donald Trump has said many times “DREAMers” would be exceptions to his aggressive enforcement of immigration laws; new rules issued by the Department of Homeland Security make it clear that no undocumented immigrants would be safe from deportation proceedings.

The question on many undocumented students’ minds is now “How safe am I?” The most important thing undocumented students can do is get educated, learn their rights as DREAMers and keep up with current events. There are numerous websites online that provide all of the information needed to make informed decisions.
# TEST TRACKER

Keep track of your test preparation, your test dates and your scores with this chart. Remember, colleges average your best scores, so take the SAT several times to afford yourself the greatest opportunity to do well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSAT</th>
<th>First SAT I</th>
<th>Second SAT I</th>
<th>Third SAT I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject SATS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Score:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Score:</td>
<td>Composite Score:</td>
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## MY COLLEGE PREFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Features</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>College of Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four-Year Public College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four-Year Private College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-Year Public College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical/Vocational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-Year Private College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Liberal Arts College</td>
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<tr>
<td>University (rather than College)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single-Sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-Educational</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Suburban</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very small (&lt;1,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small (1,000 - 3,000)</td>
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<td>Moderate (3,000 - 5,000)</td>
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<td>Mid-Sized (5,000 - 10,000)</td>
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<td>Large (10,000 - 15,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Large (&gt;15,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely Selective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Selective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Selective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimally Selective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noncompetitive</td>
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</table>
**COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

Use this college application checklist and stay on top of your application tasks, paperwork and deadlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Checklist</th>
<th>1st College Name</th>
<th>2nd College Name</th>
<th>3rd College Name</th>
<th>4th College Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request info/application</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Regular application deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early application deadline</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety? Regular? Reach?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request for High School Transcript Sent</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Request for midyear grade reports sent</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT Subject Tests required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Release SAT Subject Test Scores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send SAT Scores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send AP Grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request letters of recommendation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send thank-you notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write and proofread admission essay/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have two people read your essays</td>
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<tr>
<td>College/on-site interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send thank-you note to interviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copy all application materials and give to guidance counselor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority financial aid deadline</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular financial aid deadline</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>File FAFSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receive response from college</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The future is ours