

With thousands of accredited U.S. colleges, community colleges and universities in the United States, how do you find the one that is right for you? EducationUSA Advisers around the world offer information, orientation, and guidance as you search for higher education institutions in the United States that fit your needs.

1. Research Your Options

- Define your priorities
 - What you want to study and how should be more important than where. Figure out your field and the type of degree you want and then start looking for good, accredited schools that offer them. Once you've found several, then you can start narrowing by region.
- Familiarize yourself with U.S. Degrees
 - An **Associate Degree** is usually awarded by a community college, takes two years to complete and generally prepares the holder to pursue a Bachelor's Degree (which then usually takes another two years at a college or university).
 - A **Bachelor's Degree** usually takes four years and is often the minimum amount of education required by employers in the U.S.
 - A **Master's Degree** usually takes another two years after the Bachelor's (but there are both accelerated programs and programs that take longer).
 - A **Doctoral Degree (or PhD)** can take as little as three years to complete or as many as 10. Most doctoral programs in the U.S. require at least two years of coursework (while also teaching and conducting research) before the student can begin work on his or her dissertation.
- Learn about search options to explore thousands of accredited U.S. Institutions
 - A list of accredited U.S. institutions can be found at: <http://www.chea.org/>. One can search by institution or program. Search results contain the institution's relevant contact information.

2. Finance Your Studies

- Develop a budget
 - Universities and colleges will usually require a financial statement and guarantees as part of their application procedure. In addition, to apply for your student visa you will need to prove you are able to meet all the costs of your studies.
 - Estimated costs can be found on nearly every institution's website.
 - Personal financial information can be acquired from your bank.
- Find ways to reduce educational costs
 - Look for the institutions that offer you the highest quality education at the lowest cost.
 - Consider finding accelerated programs or accelerating your own studies by taking an extra class every semester.
 - Remember that famous schools are often more expensive than good schools without an international reputation, that certain regions of the U.S. are more expensive than others, and that urban areas are more expensive than suburban or rural areas.
- Search for scholarships and other financial aid
 - Does your home country offer financial assistance to students who would like to study abroad?

- Scholarships are usually merit-based, whereas financial aid is need-based. Visit <http://www.fundingstudy.org/> to search a database of available scholarships.

3. Complete Your Application

- Manage the application timeline
 - 12 to 18 months in advance
 - begin search for appropriate colleges or universities
 - register and prepare for exams
 - 12 to 14 months in advance
 - choose institutions of interest
 - obtain application forms & information
 - 12 months in advance
 - request transcripts
 - request letters of recommendation
 - complete admissions essay and/or statement of purpose
 - ensure entrance exam scores are satisfactory
 - 11 months in advance
 - double-check and/or re-request information and forms
 - 10 months in advance
 - complete and submit application
 - 4 months in advance
 - start visa application process
 - schedule a pre-departure orientation with your EducationUSA advisor
- Tackle application requirements, including required tests
 - each institution will have different requirements, but usually always the following:
 - educational transcripts
 - test scores (TOEFL, SAT/ACT, GRE, GMAT, LSAT)
 - a personal essay or statement of purpose
 - financial statements and guarantees
- Write personal essays or statements of purpose
 - Do not forget that you are, in a sense, advertising yourself. Find ways to clearly, concisely, honestly, and above all memorably tell the admissions staff who you are and how their institution would benefit from your presence.

4. Apply for Your Student Visa

- Understand which forms are needed
- Outline the visa application process
- Feel prepared for your interview
- visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange.html>

5. Prepare for Your Departure

- Know what to expect when you arrive
 - schedule a pre-departure orientation with your EducationUSA advisor
- Ease into your new academic environment
 - Your institution's Office of Internationalization is there to help you!
- Adjust well to U.S. culture and your new community
 - Make friends and have fun! Life is more than just studying!

EducationUSA is a network of hundreds of advising centers in more than 170 countries, supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. EducationUSA Advising Centers actively promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, and current information about accredited educational institutions in the United States. To find an advising center, visit EducationUSA.state.gov. Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education