

International Students

For the International Student Applying to College or University in the United States

If you are an international student, you have many opportunities in the college system within the United States, but you also need additional information specific to you. Failure to familiarize yourself with the details could stall the process. Any questions should be directed to the college counselors or the director of international students.

APPLICATIONS

Many colleges have separate application forms for international students, even those who have attended a U.S. secondary school such as Lawrence Academy. You should always ask for application materials that are appropriate for you. It is good to request these forms over the summer before your senior year, so that your parents can fill them out and sign them where needed.

TOEFL

Colleges usually require that international students take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) because they need to be assured that a student has sufficient English proficiency to succeed at the college level. As for TOEFL scores, almost all colleges look for a score over 550 on the paper-based test, 213 on the computer-based test, or 79 on the internet-based test. The most selective colleges have higher standards. It is important that you research the average minimum TOEFL scores for the colleges in which you are interested. The College Handbook, Foreign Student Supplement, published by the College Board, is one of the best resources for this information. Data can also be obtained from individual institutions.

CERTIFICATION OF FINANCES

International students must certify in writing to each institution to which they apply that they have enough money in the bank to pay for tuition and other expenses. Most colleges have a form for this purpose on their websites; some use the College Scholarship Service's (CSS) International Profile; and some ask for an original copy of a statement from the responsible parent's bank verifying the amount of money available, in dollars. It is essential, therefore, that, at the beginning of the application process, i.e. in the spring of the junior year, every international student find out what kind of documentation each college requires, and make sure all appropriate forms are completed correctly and on time. If a college requires a statement from a parent's bank, this should be obtained over the summer before senior year, and students should return in the fall with 8 to 20 original copies (not photocopies!) of the bank document.

Note that without a certification of finances, colleges will not issue an I-20 form!

FINANCIAL AID

At most, but not all, American colleges, international students are *not* eligible for need-based financial aid. All student aid from the Federal Government is reserved for U.S. citizens, though a few institutions have private financial aid funds available for students who are not U.S. citizens. Your counselor will have a list of these schools.

Some colleges offer merit scholarships (that is, awards not based on financial need) to students with exceptional academic, athletic, or other ability. You may be eligible for these scholarships. Students do not generally apply for these grants. Instead, the college might offer them upon receipt of the application.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Before finalizing the list of where you will apply for admission, as an international student you should try to determine, together with your counselor, how well your academic qualifications match up with those of previously successful applicants from Lawrence. The final list must include some institutions where your chances of acceptance appear to be very good, as well as colleges where you are less likely to be accepted.

Some colleges offer ESL and language support classes for the student whose language skills are not quite ready for the rigors of college work. If a student has a low TOEFL, some colleges offer a transitional program in which the first-year student would primarily take language and composition with a few other courses. In this type of program, it would usually take more than the traditional four years to graduate. The vast majority of Lawrence Academy's international students are successful in our regular English program and do not need this type of support.

Thus, many opportunities for college admissions in the United States exist for international students. You do need to do some extra research, stay very organized, and work closely with your LA college counselor.