



Counselor conversations with Common App: New counselor 101

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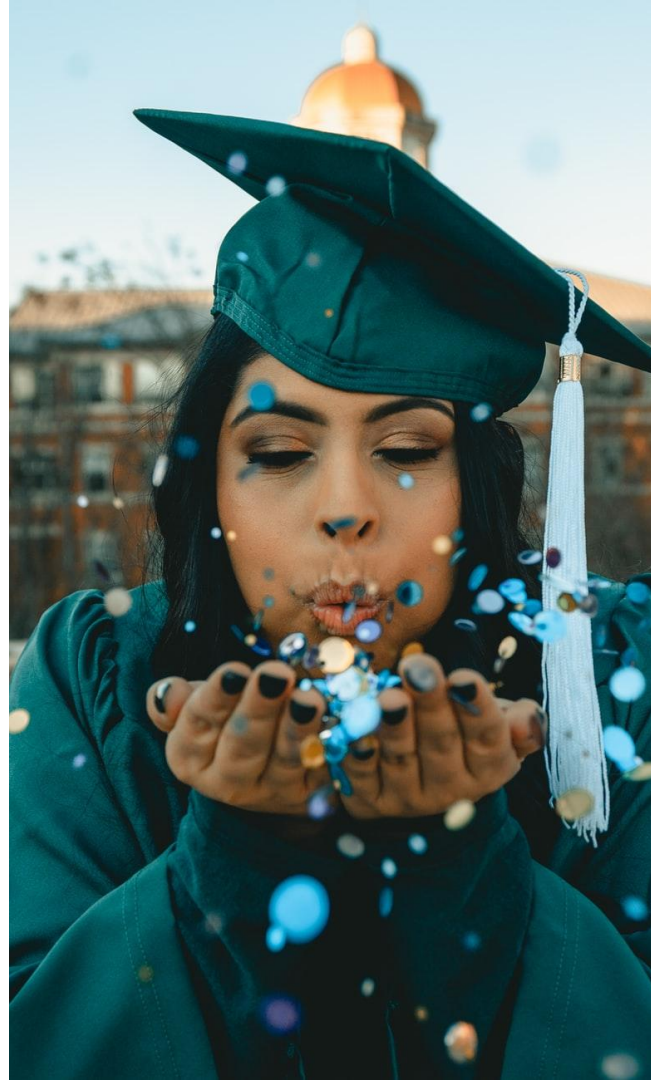
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Common App provides an online application that makes applying to college easy.

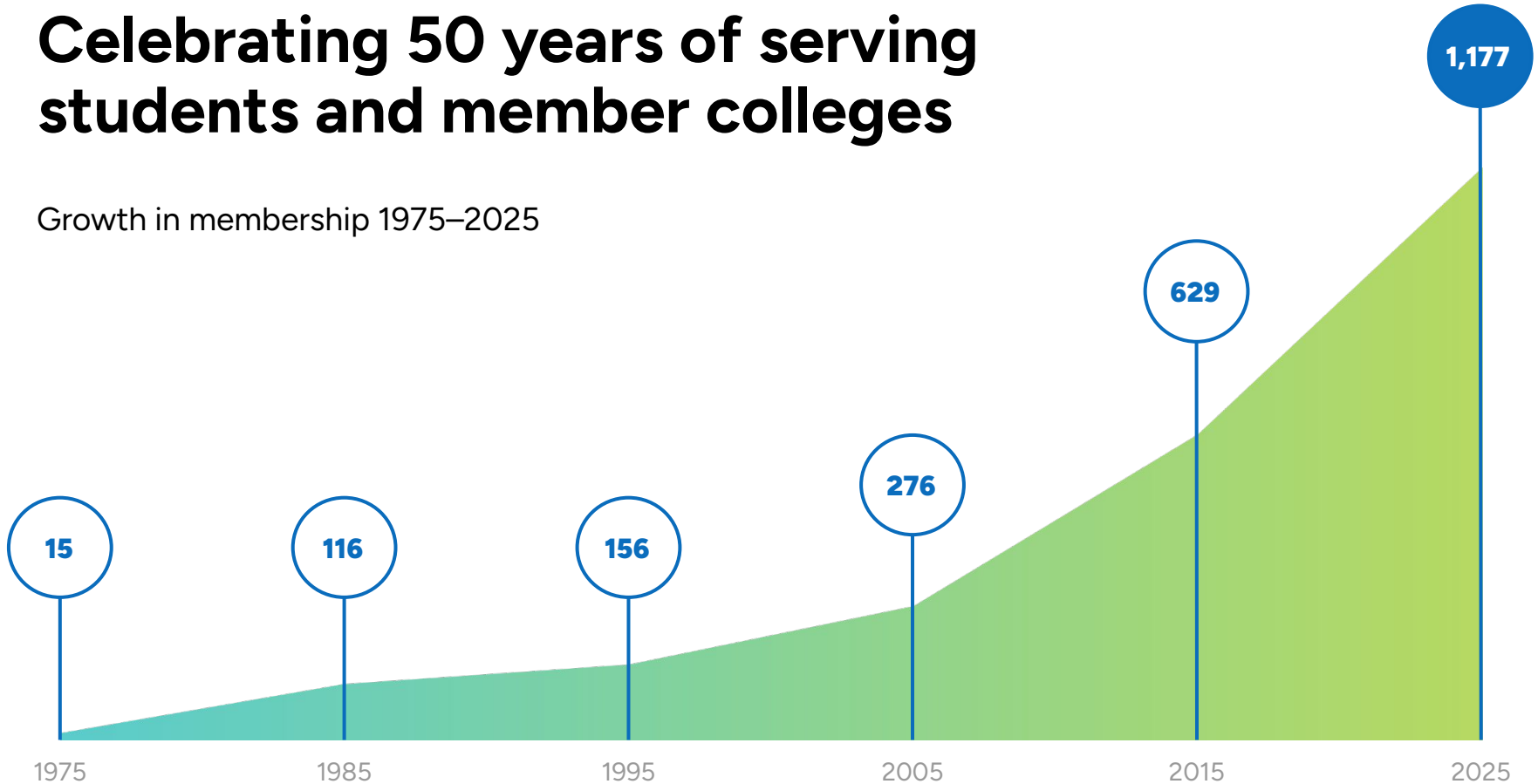
Each year, more than one million students — a third of whom are first-generation — explore and apply to over 1,100 member colleges and universities worldwide.

commonapp.org



Celebrating 50 years of serving students and member colleges

Growth in membership 1975–2025



5 reasons students use Common App

1

Complete one application to apply to multiple colleges



2

Use one transcript for multiple applications

3

Streamline the recommendation process

4

Qualify for an application fee waiver if there is financial need

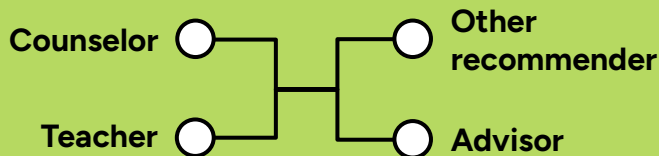
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Access mentoring, financial aid resources, scholarships, and direct admissions opportunities

Common App supports students applying to college for the first time or transferring to complete their degree.

First-year application

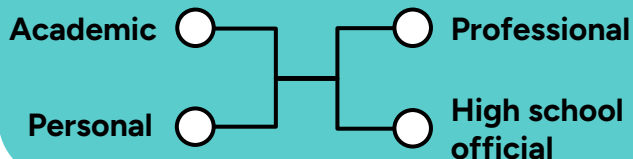
First-year recommender system



Recommender system integration partners

Transfer application

Transfer recommender system



First-year app: Recommender system integration partners



[FAQ: Who are the Common App recommendation system partners?](#)

Common App Application walkthrough



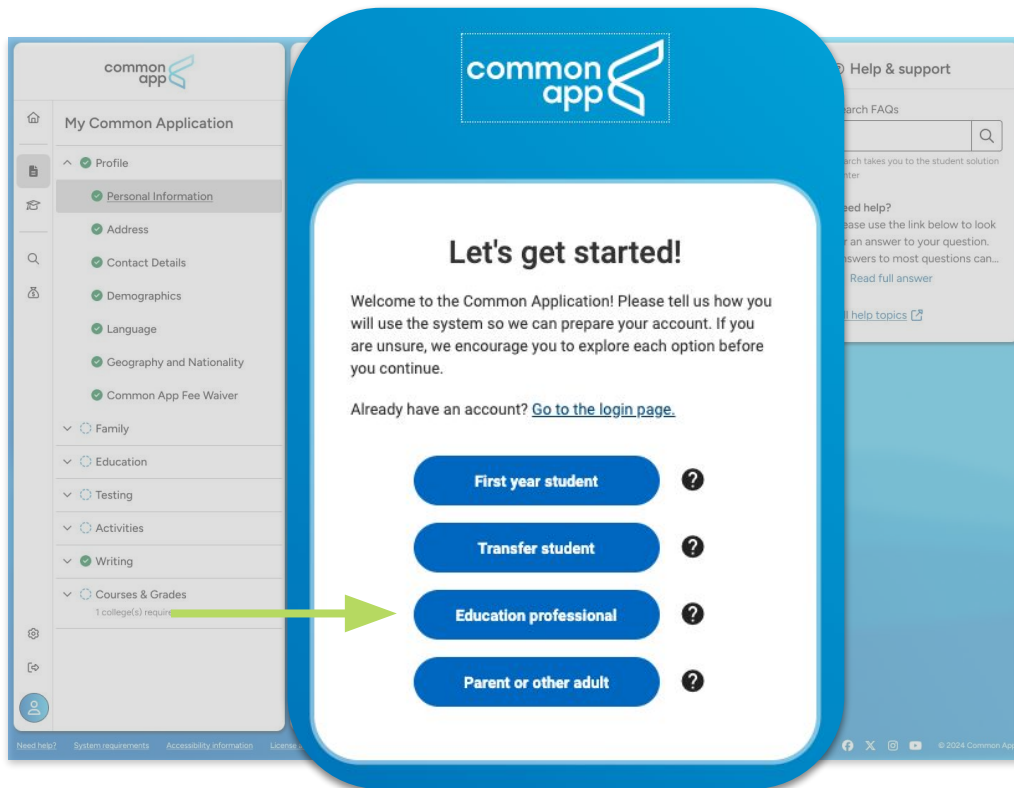
Create a practice student account (first-year application)

- Visit commonapp.org
- Click **Create an account**
- Choose your path

Select **Education professional**
to explore the student
experience

Did you know?

Students can create their
accounts prior to senior year
and take advantage of
Account Rollover.



**So... you've been invited as a
counselor to support a student's
Common App... now what?**



School forms and recommendations

Common App uses single-submission (“one-and-done”) to streamline the process for counselors, teachers, and other recommenders.

Each college determines which forms they require.

- School profile
- School report
- Early decision agreement
- Fee waiver
- Counselor recommendation
- Optional report 1 and 2
- Mid-year report
- Final report
- Teacher evaluation
- Other evaluation

Transcripts, recommendations, and school forms are sent to colleges once a student submits their Common App.

Common App Recommender guide

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Writing effective letters of recommendation

From counselors to coaches, professors to peers, colleges invite recommendation letters from individuals who see students from different vantage points. Their insights help application readers get to know a student better by identifying accomplishments, persistence, character, personality, and potential. Here are some suggestions for how to be the best advocate for your students.

Your student has a reason for asking you. Find out what it is.
By understanding your student's motivations — what they learned, how you challenged them, what they enjoyed, how they grew — you can turn an effective letter into a truly compelling one.

Tell a story that only you can tell.
Colleges don't need a recap of things they will read in the application. They need your unique insights on what makes that student a scholar, friend, competitor, leader, citizen, humanitarian, etc. — whatever role you see them in on a regular basis.

Anecdotes outline adjectives. Always.
Storytelling is a powerful device. Two sentences recounting how a student organized a community fundraiser are infinitely more effective than a few generic leadership descriptors.

Colleges value candor, not perfection.
Students — and teenagers in particular — are works in progress. By offering an honest assessment of your student's strengths as well as the areas where they are working to improve, you enhance your own credibility as a recommender.

“
Letters of recommendation provide an outside perspective and add important commentary to the profile, standardized test scores, and additional information found in a student's application. They help us look past the numbers and learn more about who the student is, what they will add to our campus, and whether they may be the best fit for our school.

— Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (New York, NY)

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Writing guide for counselors and teachers

Colleges that invite letters of recommendation are looking for stories that will help them better evaluate a student for academic potential and fit within their community. Counselors and teachers are powerful advocates in this effort, each poised to share unique and valuable insights. The context they offer helps clarify, support, and build upon information provided by the student.

How counselor letters add value
Counselors provide a view of an applicant within the context of an entire graduating class and school community, addressing a student's academic achievements, extracurricular accomplishments, and personal interests and goals, without repeating what is in the application.

How teacher letters add value
Teachers write from the vantage point of the classroom, using their firsthand knowledge of a student's intellectual curiosity, creative thought, quality of writing, class behavior, and work habits to depict the student as a scholar.

While both counselor and teacher recommendations capture a student's personality and strengths, there are distinct differences between the two perspectives. Below are examples of some key student characteristics admissions committees are trying to assess and how each writer might address them.

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Developing a school profile

What is a school profile?
A school profile is a document that provides contextual data about a high school community. The school profile may include information such as:

- Student demographics
- Curricular offerings
- Grading systems
- Special programs
- School policies

Counselors can upload a copy of their school profile in the profile section of the Recommender System. If your high school uses a college and career readiness platform that integrates with Common App, you will manage the school profile upload directly in the software you use. When you submit a school report for each student, Common App will include your school profile.

Why are school profiles important?
Every high school in the U.S. and around the world is different. School profiles highlight details about a school community to help provide context to colleges as they review a student's application, academic record, and supporting materials.

Did you know?
70%+ of applications submitted through Common App have a school profile attached from a counselor or school official. Applications that don't include a school profile are more likely to come from students attending small, charter, new, or rural schools.

What information should I include in a school profile?
The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) has a great guide on Best Practices for Developing a School Profile. Full (school profile essay). This guide highlights these fundamental elements a school profile should include:

- School and community facts
- School staff and contact information
- Grading system and related procedures
- Standardized test score information (if applicable)
- Overview of student educational outcomes
- Curriculum description, including special features
- Other unique information about the school, program, or curriculum

Research has found that school profiles are an important early tool in the college admissions process. One study identified 14 elements, broken into four categories, that are particularly important.

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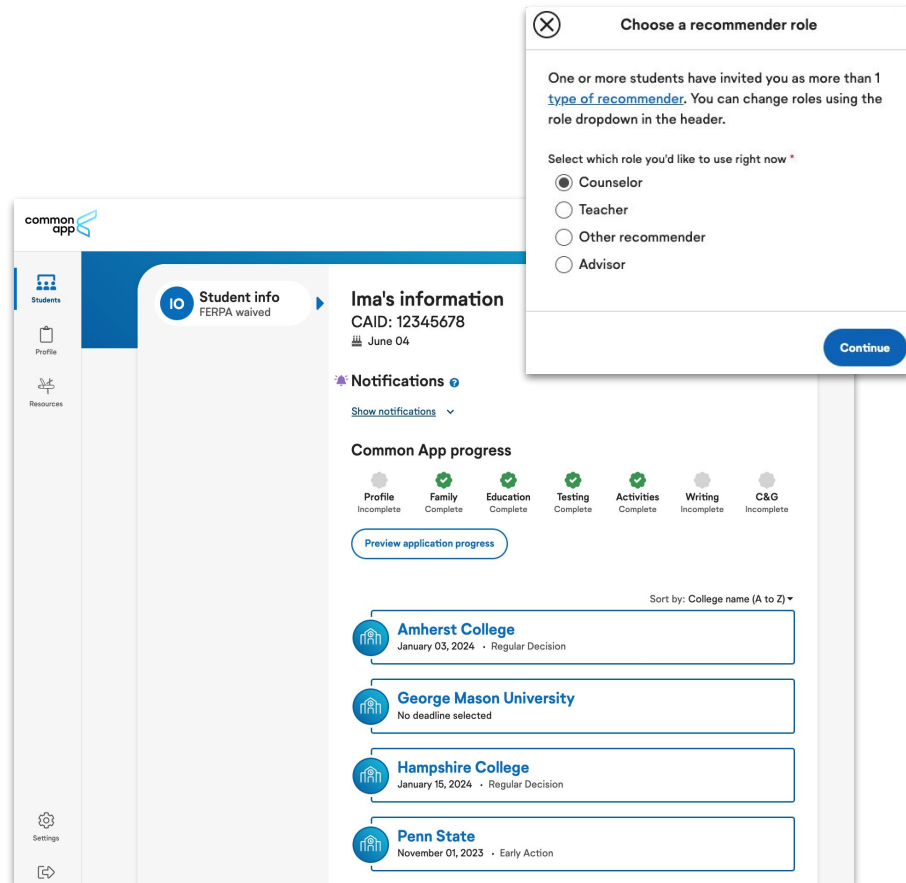
First-year recommender system

700K+ education professionals use the Common App to support students with the application process

Once a student invites and assigns a recommender in their application, an email invitation is sent. Recommenders **activate their account** in Common App's Recommender system.

- Submit school forms
- Download the Requirements Grid
- Use search filters to find cohorts of students
- Track student progress
- View college-level details for each student
- Access a PDF preview of in-progress applications, with student permission
- Export detailed lists to Excel

recommend.commonapp.org



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Next steps

- Create a practice student account
- Sign up for the monthly counselor newsletter
- Request a free map poster
- View the [Recommender guide](#)
 - Letter writing resources
 - Developing a School Profile
- Download [student handouts](#) in English and Spanish
- Watch counselor and student [video tutorials](#)
- Access [24/7 support](#) FAQs and resources
- Connect with us on social media



Supporter resources



EXPLORE COLLEGES

Help your students search, explore, and virtually tour over 1,000 Common App member colleges across the globe.

[Explore >](#)



ORDER A COMMON APP MAP

Request a free national or regional map poster of Common App member colleges for your office or classroom.

[Get a map >](#)



CREATE A PRACTICE ACCOUNT

Create a Common App practice student account as an education professional to familiarize yourself with the ins and outs of navigating the application.

[Create an account >](#)



TUTORIALS

Check out Common App's YouTube channel for video tutorials that walk students through different sections of the application.

[Visit our YouTube channel >](#)



ACCESS RESOURCES

Discover our toolkit of college application resources in English and Spanish.

[View the toolkit >](#)



VIEW RESEARCH

Follow application trends and learn key insights from our research briefs and state reports.

[Dive into the data >](#)



FREE TRAINING

Request in-person and virtual training for schools, districts, and organizations. These sessions can be tailored for your specific audience.

[Request training >](#)



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GET HELP

Need help? You're not alone. Get 24/7 support when you need it.

[Go to the help center >](#)

commonapp.org/advisors

Connect with us

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Contact 24/7/365 support when you need it

First-year application questions

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First-year recommender questions

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Q&A

