



A GUIDE FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS

The College Admission Process

From building your academic profile to choosing the right admission plan:
a complete roadmap through the college application journey.

2026 EDITION - ADDISCODER WEEK 3



AddisCoder College Panel

Agenda

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6 US Colleges &
Admissions Overview

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Korean Colleges &
Admissions Overview

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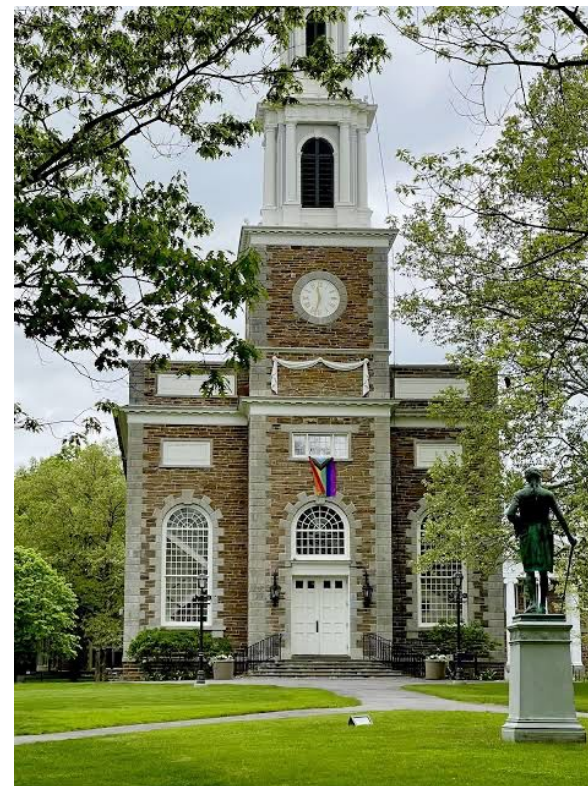
Resources &
Alumni Panel

1

US Colleges & Admissions Overview



Stanford University in California



Hamilton College in New York

Types of Universities

Public Universities

- **Large student population**
(e.g. 33,000 undergrad + 12,000 grad students = 45,000 for UC Berkeley)
- **State-funded** (Limited funding opportunities for international students)

e.g. UC Berkeley, UCLA, UIUC

Private Research Universities

- **Medium to large student population**
(e.g. 7,000 undergrads + 10,000 grad students = 17,000 for Stanford)
- **Research facilities**
- **Typically more global name recognition**

e.g. Ivy League, Stanford, MIT

Liberal Arts Colleges (LACs)

- **Small student population**
(e.g. 2,000 undergrads + 0 grad students for Hamilton)
- **Small class sizes** (usually 10-40 students)
- **Strong undergraduate focus** (no or minimal grad programs)
- **Often more rural and residential**

e.g. “Little Ivies” (NESCAC),
Claremont Colleges

Financial Aid: Need-Blind, Need-Aware, Full Need

Policies shift year to year as endowments and gifts change. Always confirm current status on each college's page before applying.



Need-Blind

Your financial need is not considered in the admission decision.



Need-Aware

Ability to pay may be considered, especially for borderline applicants.



Full Demonstrated Need

Once admitted, the college covers 100% of your financial need.

Need-Blind + Full Need (International)

Private research universities

- Brown University
- Dartmouth College
- Harvard University
- MIT (STEM-focus)
- Princeton University
- University of Notre Dame
- Yale University

Liberal arts colleges (LACs)

- Amherst College
- Bowdoin College
- Washington and Lee University

Financial Aid: Need-Blind, Need-Aware, Full Need

Not a comprehensive list & please refer to the college websites for latest updates as policies can shift year to year.

Need-Aware but Meets Full Need (International)

Private research universities

Northeast

- Cornell University
- Columbia University
- Johns Hopkins University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Yale University

West

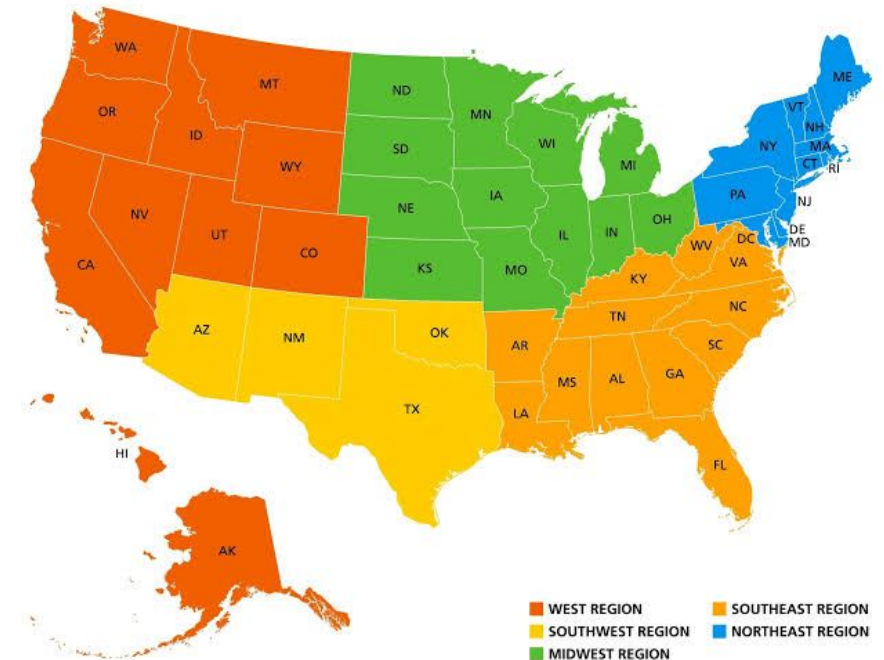
- CalTech (STEM-focus)
- Stanford University

Midwest

- Northwestern University
- University of Chicago
- Washington University in St. Louis

South

- Rice University
- Vanderbilt University



Map of the US

Financial Aid: Need-Blind, Need-Aware, Full Need

Not a comprehensive list & please refer to the college websites for latest updates as policies can shift year to year.

Need-Aware but Meets Full Need (International)

Liberal arts colleges (LACs)

Northeast

- Bates College
- Colby College
- Colgate University
- Hamilton College
- Haverford College
- Middlebury College
- Swarthmore College
- Wesleyan University
- Williams College
- Vassar College

Barnard College (Women's)

Bryn Mawr College (Women's)

Wellesley College (Women's)

West

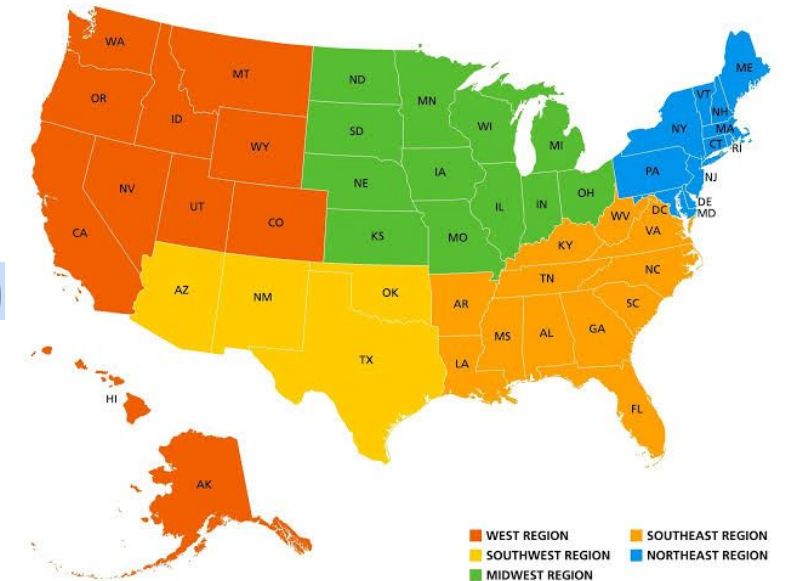
- Claremont McKenna College
- Harvey Mudd College (STEM-focus)
- Pomona College

Midwest

- Grinnell College

South

- Davidson College



CHOOSING YOUR SCHOOL

Also consider US University Campuses Abroad!

Not a comprehensive list & please refer to the college websites for latest updates as policies can shift year to year.

International student friendly and offer a lot of financial aid and scholarships

- NYU Abu Dhabi
 - Chance to study in the NYC campus
- Northwestern University in Qatar



NYU Abu Dhabi

Overall Strategies

Most students apply to 10-15 colleges:

- Reach / Target / Safety
- Lots of colleges have application fee (~\$30-90) waivers if you look or email admissions officers.

Prioritize private universities (research universities, LACs) that meet full need.

Ask yourself:

- Big or small student population/class sizes?
- General or STEM-focused?
- City or rural environment?
- Research the college motto, history, curriculum (e.g. open, core, courses, majors, study abroad), campus life (e.g. clubs, traditions), etc.
- For LACs, reach out to alumni or professors!



Application Types & Deadlines

There are four main ways to apply to US universities. Choose the option that matches your plan.

Binding Plan

Early Decision (ED)

If they accept you, **you must go**. You can only apply to one school this way.

Some colleges offer ED II.

Apply By

End of Oct. / Nov 1

Get Results

Winter (Dec. to mid-Feb.)

Many LACs, e.g. Amherst, Hamilton, Pomona, Williams

Free Choice

Early Action (EA)

Apply early to get your decision fast. You can still choose to say **yes or no**.

Apply By

End of Oct. / Nov 1

Get Decision

Winter (Dec. to mid-Feb.)

e.g. MIT, University of Chicago

Limited Early

Restrictive EA

Non-binding, but you **cannot apply early** to other private universities.

Apply By

End of Oct. / Nov 1

Get Decision

Winter (Dec. to mid-Feb.)

e.g. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford

Standard Path

Regular Decision (RD)

The normal way to apply. No special limits. You have **more time** to prepare but get your results later.

Apply By

Mid-Dec. to March

Decision

March or April

College Search Resources

- College websites
 - Specific subpages, e.g. Student Life, CS major
- Wikipedia
- College Niche
- US News, College Board BigFuture, Princeton Review
- CollegeXpress.com, Corsava.com (personalized recommendations), Common Data Set (comparative college data)
- Talk with alumni!!! (Some colleges have optional interviews – do them!)

COLLEGE | GRAD SCHOOL

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Overall Grade • 4 Year • Cambridge, MA • ★★★★★ 679
#1 in Best Colleges in America

See my chances
Add to list

Overview Academics Majors Cost Admissions Campus Life Students After College Rankings Reviews

• Overview
Report Card
About
Rankings
Admissions & A...
Will You Get In?
Cost & Tuition
Scholarship
Academics
Majors
Online Academics
Students
Campus Life
Sports & Athletics
Graduation Rat...
Similar Colleges
FAQs
Reviews

A+ Overall Grade [view all grades](#)

5% Acceptance Rate

\$20,996 Calculate your True Cost
Net Price Per Year

4,535 Total Undergrad Students

Midsize City
Cambridge, MA

web.mit.edu

MIT is an elite private college located in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the Boston Area. It is a small institution with a full-time enrollment of 4,489 undergraduate students and a part-time enrollment of 46 undergraduate students. Admissions is extremely competitive as the MIT acceptance rate is only 5%. Popular majors include Computer Science, Mathematics, and Mechanical Engineering. MIT graduates 96% of its students.

A+ Overall Niche Grade
How are grades calculated?
Data Sources

A- Academics
A- Diversity
B- Athletics
A- Professors
A- Dorms
A- Student Life

A- Value
A- Campus
A Party Scene
A- Location
B- Campus Food
A- Safety

Hide ^

College Niche

U.S. College Admission Requirements at a Glance

Show both **well-roundedness** and a **spike**.

- **Well-roundedness:** Strong across academics, extracurriculars, sports, arts, community service → Balance, adaptability
- **Spike:** A standout talent or achievement in one area, like winning a national math competition or excelling in music



Grades

Very selective: 4.0+
GPA (admit rate
<20%)

Selective: 3.75+
GPA (admit rate
20–50%)



Test Scores (SAT)

Very selective:
~1460+

Selective:
~1300



Personal Statement & Essays

A strong personal
statement

Tailored
supplemental essays



Letters of Recommendation

Three total:

College counselor

Humanities teacher

Science teacher
(Extracurriculars)



Extracurriculars & Athletics

Leadership

Academic competitions

Jobs/internships

Volunteering

Sports/Arts

Academic Performance: Grades & Coursework



Grades Come First

- Good grades are the foundation of every strong college application.
- Weaker grades in 9th grade can be offset if there is clear, demonstrated improvement over the following three years.



Challenging Courses/ External Courses

- Take the most rigorous courses available at your school, particularly in subjects related to your intended major.
- If advanced courses are limited, consider reputable online courses, university programs, or academic competitions to deepen your knowledge.
- Focus on mastering the material—not simply accumulating certificates



AP Exams

Over 38 AP subject options: Biology to European History to Music Theory.

You don't need to take the AP course to take the exam.

Consider testing in subjects that aren't already covered by your IB courses.

Standardized Testing: PSAT & SAT

- ✓ Know whether each school is test-required, test-optional, or test-blind.
- ✓ Take the PSAT as a practice run, typically in 10th or 11th grade.
- ✓ Take a diagnostic SAT to find your baseline (**Khan Academy** or varsitytutors.com/sat-practice-tests).
- ✓ Study consistently: practice, practice, and practice again.
- ✓ Choose your test date(s); see the 2026 windows on the right.
- ✓ Take the test, then compare your score to each college's requirements.
- ✓ Retake the SAT if you haven't met your target score (some universities will take your “superscore”)



2026 SAT Test Windows

Fall 2026

September - December

Spring 2027

March - June

Personal Statement & Supplemental Essays



Why It Matters

- Differentiates students with similar GPAs and test scores → A **unique** story!
- Shows your writing ability, intellectual curiosity, and the qualities you'll bring to campus
- Highlights achievements that don't show up on a transcript or score report

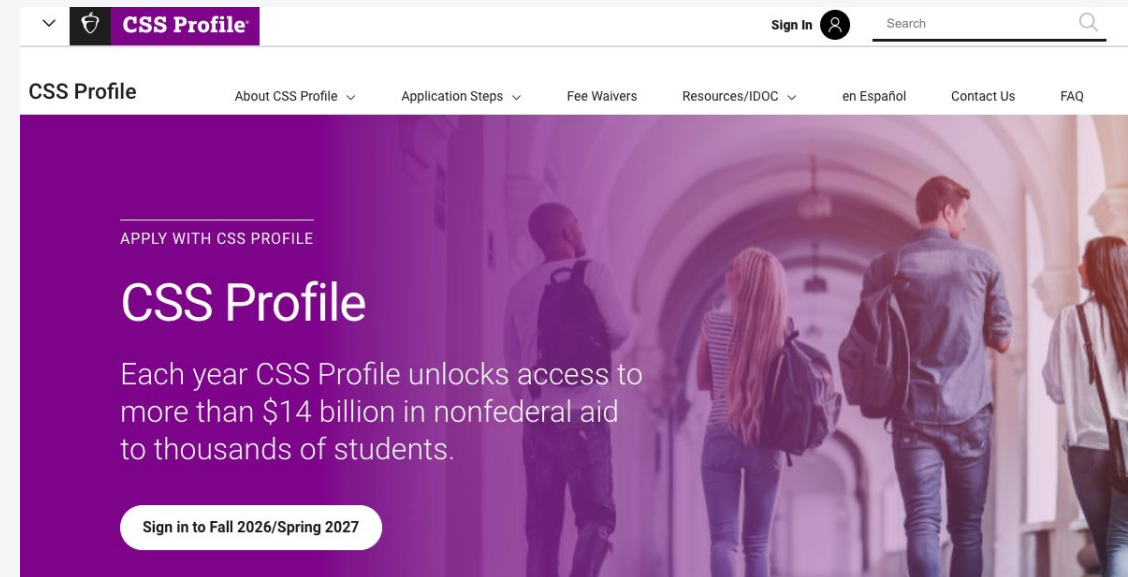
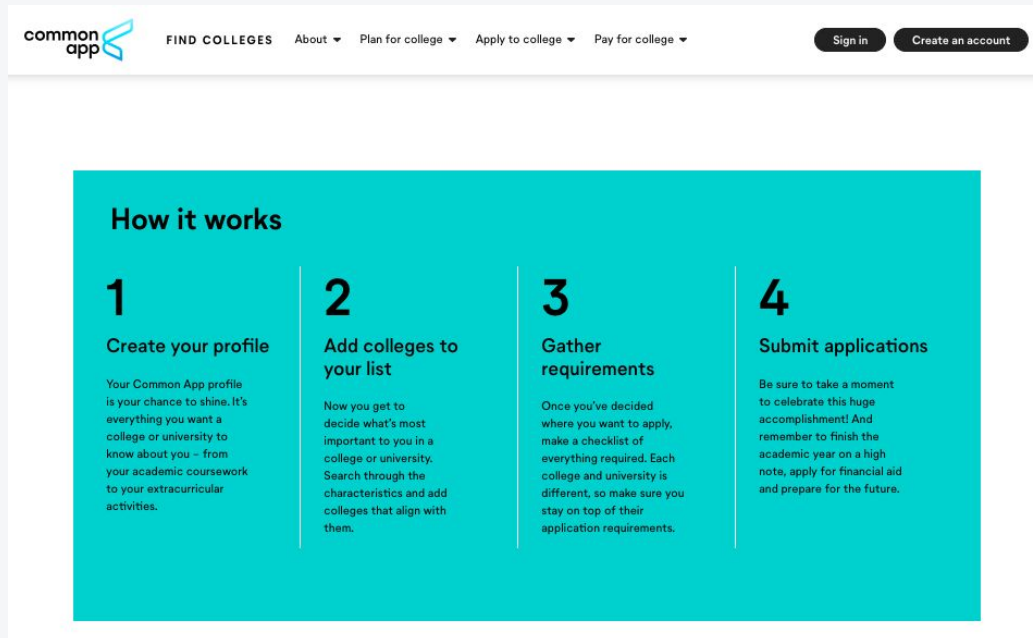


Best Practices

- Start early, and don't wait until the last minute (**write notes of ideas as the come to you**)
- Brainstorm more than one topic before committing
- Writing is iterative, so stay open to feedback
- Get 2–3 readers: a peer, a teacher, and a counselor (or...AddisCoder alum/TAs!)
- Proofread carefully for grammar, spelling, and formatting
- Tailor every supplemental essay; never copy and paste between schools
- Read examples of good and bad essays

Platforms

- **Common App:** Standardized platform used by many US universities for college applications
- **CSS Profile:** Financial aid application



Common App Essay Prompts

The seven personal-statement prompts have stayed consistent year over year, so pick the one that lets you tell the truest story.

1

A background, identity, interest, or talent so central to who you are that your application would feel incomplete without it.

2

A challenge, setback, or failure you faced, how it affected you, and what you learned.

3

A time you questioned or challenged a belief or idea: what sparked it, and the outcome.

4

Something someone did for you that sparked unexpected gratitude, and how it motivated you.

5

An accomplishment or realization that triggered a period of personal growth.

6

A topic or idea you find so engaging you lose track of time, and why it captivates you.

7

Any topic of your choice: reused, adapted, or entirely your own.

Letters of Recommendation



Three Required

- One school counselor
- One humanities teacher
- One science teacher

(Or extracurriculars)

Ask well in advance, by September 2026 at the latest. Don't wait until the last minute.

Build real relationships

Get to know your teachers well before senior year: talk during free periods, after class, or after school.

Participate actively

Active engagement often matters more to a recommender than grades alone, so speak up and volunteer to lead.

Save your best work

Teachers see many students over the years. Save your strongest essays and projects to jog their memory.

Follow up

Share your resume and best work when you ask, and don't expect your teacher to manage the process for you.

Extracurricular Activities That Matter

Above all: your activities should tell a coherent story about who you are, not just fill a list.



Depth Over Breadth

Sustained commitment in 2–3 areas outweighs a long list of one-off activities.



Real Leadership

Founding, organizing, or leading something, not just joining it.



Service & Impact

Volunteering that solves a real problem, not just logging hours.



Academic Pursuits

Clubs, research, olympiads, robotics, and debate.



Arts & Athletics

Consistent participation and visible growth over time.



Work & Independent Projects

Part-time jobs, internships, or something you built yourself.

Essential Resources to Navigate the Process



SAT Prep

Khan Academy (free) · College Board (free) · Princeton Review (paid) · PrepScholar (paid) · Kaplan (paid) · Prep Experts (paid)



Application Platforms

Common App (commonapp.org) · School-specific application platforms



College Essays

College Essay Guy (YouTube) · Quad Education Group's Supplemental Essay Guide



Personality Assessment

16personalities.com

Believe in Yourself!

- Use the handout + the TAs as resources
- Choose a major to apply with for some schools (not all)
 - You can change majors while in university to something that is a better fit

Bye (for now)

- I will be Addis Coder this Thursday :(
- I am sad to leave early but so happy I was able to be here and meet so many of you!!
- You all inspire me with your hard work, determination, and willingness to learn so much in so little time!
- Be proud of yourselves!
- Finish strong!
- Reach out on LinkedIn or email with questions



START TODAY

Your Action Plan Starts Now

- 1 Build the strongest GPA possible, starting now
- 2 Explore clubs, athletics, music, robotics, debate, and service
- 3 Read consistently and sharpen your writing skills
- 4 Start a running resume of activities, awards, and volunteer work
- 5 Build healthy study habits and time management
- 6 Take the most rigorous courses you can succeed in
- 7 Begin SAT preparation, start studying now
- 8 Pursue leadership roles, internships, research, or passion projects
- 9 Research colleges (those who give full ride) and explore majors
- 10 Keep your activities resume updated
- 11 Apply to competitive summer programs and internships

The strongest applications are built years in advance, not weeks.

2

Korean Colleges & Admissions Overview



KAIST University in Daejeon

Korean Universities (that offer full international scholarships)

Not a comprehensive list & please refer to the college websites for latest updates as policies can shift year to year.

Universities in Seoul

- Yonsei University - Underwood International College
- Ewha Woman's University (Women's)
- Sungkyunkwan University

Universities in Other Cities

- KAIST (STEM-focus)
- POSTECH (STEM-focus)
— began international undergrad admissions in Fall 2026 (news)

Other top universities, e.g. Seoul National University and Korea University (“SKY”) offer scholarships through the **Global Korea Scholarship (GKS) Program**.

KAIST Introduction



KAIST

12,348

students

1,574

faculty

7.8

s:f ratio

Daejeon

1,600,000

citizens

KAIST



Common programs at KAIST

Artificial
Intelligence



Chemical



Aerospace



Mechanical



NYU Minor
Program



CS



Electrical



Nuclear



Climate
Change



Startup
Program



Application Types & Deadlines

There are 2 application cycles at KAIST (and most Korean universities)

Early Cycle

Spring & Fall Intakes

Application Deadline

Sept 22 – Oct 22, 2026

6:00 PM (KST)

Regular Cycle

Fall Intake Only

Application Deadline

Nov 10, 2026 – Jan 14, 2027

6:00 PM (KST)

Application Fee Waiver

**Early Track:
Aug 25 ~ Sep 3**

**Regular Track:
Oct 6 ~ Oct 15**

Spring Intake

Academic Year Begins

End of February, 2027

Fall Intake

Academic Year Begins

End of August, 2027

KAIST Admission Requirements

Show both **well-roundedness** and a **spike**.

- **Well-roundedness:** Strong across academics, extracurriculars, sports, arts, and community service → Balance, adaptability
- **Spike:** A standout talent or achievement in one area, like winning a national math competition or excelling in music



Grades

Strong grades are important, but not the only criterion



Test Scores

SAT, ACT...,
or **national university entrance examination**



Personal Statement & Essays

5 shorter essays in total



Letters of Recommendation

up to two:

College counselor,
homeroom teacher,
match/science teacher



Extracurriculars

Leadership
Academic competitions
Jobs/internships
Volunteering

KAIST Essay Prompts

KAIST has 5 essays with 1000-1600 character limits

1

KAIST seeks to foster individuals with a questioning spirit. Write about a question you have in the field of STEM* that sets you apart from others, and describe the reason that inspired you to ask this quest

2

Please write the personal statement with a focus on what you learned from and felt during curricular and/or extracurricular activities (up to three) to which you attached meaning and devoted yourself in high school

3

Please cite any cases in which you thought and/or made attempts in ways different from those of others and describe how such ideas and/or attempts affected you and people around you.

4

Please cite any cases in which you practiced consideration, sharing, cooperation, and/or conflict management and describe what you learned from and felt during the process(es)

5

Please write if there is any other information you would like to tell us regarding your family/social background or difficulties you had to overcome in the past.

APPLYING TO KAIST

KAIST Scholarship

What the scholarship covers



TUITION

KRW

0

Standard tuition: KRW 3,433,000 per semester



MONTHLY STIPEND

KRW

350,000



National Health Insurance included



ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS

Additional

KRW **100,000**

per month



Tuition support by year



Freshman

Fully supported



From second year • GPA $\geq 2.7/4.3$

Fully supported



From second year • GPA $< 2.7/4.3$

Half supported

Applying to KAIST

Life at KAIST

We have a strong Ethiopian Community at KAIST

1

Academic Resilience

Academic life can be challenging initially. Stay resilient, be mentally prepared, and seek support when needed.

2

Clubs & Social Events

Vibrant student life with many diverse clubs and exciting community events.

3

Global Opportunities

Excellent exchange opportunities with top universities in Europe and the United States.

4

Lifelong Connections

Most importantly, meet and build friendships with truly awesome people.



3

Resources & Alumni Panel

AddisCoder 2026 College Resources (Handout)

US Universities

Public Universities

Liberal Arts
Colleges (LACs)

Private Research
Universities

TAs

***TAs are eager to help you, but it is easier when we know you!
Please don't feel shy introducing yourself, chatting with us,
and asking questions during the program.**



Alex
Harvard



Jennifer
UC Berkeley



Ethan
UIUC



Kim
MIT



Vidya
UC Berkeley



Matthew
California State



Saba
Stanford



Ernest
UC Berkeley



Jiin
Hamilton / Carnegie Mellon



Eban
Stanford



Abroad
Universities

Korea Universities

Europe
Universities

Other Universities

TAs



Aziz

Telecom Paris (France)



Assefa

USTC (China) /
U of Alberta (Canada)



Akotet

KAIST



Eulàlia

UPC Barcelonaia (Spain)



Piyush

NSIT (India)



Jiin



Nils

KTH (Sweden)



Bruno

UFMG (Brazil)



Erik

Lund (Sweden)



Ethiopian
Universities

AAU

AASTU

Other Universities

TAs



Eyob

AAU



Tamiru

AAU



Bahailu

AAU



Joseph

AAU



Amanuel

AAU



Fitsum

AAU



Haileamlak

AAU



Fasika

AASTU



Mahder

AASTU



Meron

AASTU



Mihret

AASTU



Meron

AASTU



Abdi



Naol

Adama S&T University



Eyader

Wolkite University



Meron

Mekelle University



Makda

Mekelle University



AddisCoder Alumni Panel Discussion



Merwan

AddisCoder 2025
Princeton 2030



Akotet

AddisCoder 2019
KAIST

Good luck!!!! :)



ADDENDUM

Amazing Summer Programs for High School Students

*Competitive · Open to international students (including Ethiopia) ·
Partially or fully funded · Ideal for driven, rising juniors and seniors*

TIER 1

Fully Funded or Need-Based Aid Available

Compiled from current published program information; verify deadlines and eligibility on each program's official site.



MIT Research Science Institute (RSI)

Free 6-week research program at MIT; about 100 students selected worldwide.



Telluride Association Summer Seminar (TASS)

Free 6-week humanities and social science seminar; open to US and international students.



MIT MITES Summer

Free 6-week STEM residential program for underrepresented and first-generation students.



Simons Summer Research Program

Hands-on lab research at Stony Brook University; stipend-based.



Yale Young African Scholars (YYAS)

Need-based aid; a YYGS sister program built specifically for African secondary students.



Jackson Laboratory Summer Student Program

Stipend-based genetics and biomedical research internship.

Prestigious Free Online Summer Programs



MIT MOSTEC

Free online science, technology, and engineering community program for rising seniors with financial need.



MIT PRIMES-USA

Free, research-based math mentorship program; runs alongside the school year with a summer component.



Stanford Code in Place

Free virtual coding intensive for young students exploring computer science.



NASA Office of STEM Engagement

Free virtual internships, challenges, and enrichment activities open to eligible international students.

Canada, Korea & China Summer Opportunities



Canada

Shad Canada

A month-long STEM and entrepreneurship program hosted at Canadian universities; need-based aid available for international applicants.



Korea

School Yonsei International Summer

Four- or six-week English-taught university courses in Seoul; tuition-based, with some fee-waiver partner pathways.



China

Mandarin Immersion & Culture Programs

Language and cultural immersion programs (such as CIEE or university-run summer sessions) combining Mandarin study with campus life.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN ADDIS ABABA

Name	Focus Area	Location	Website / Info Source
Nehemiah Autism Center	Education & support for autistic children	Addis Ababa	nehemiah-autism.org hamlinfistula.org+15netzskraft.net+15PMC+15
Joy Autism Center	Education & care for autistic children	Addis Ababa	Joy4autism@yahoo.com
Deborah Foundation	Inclusive education/support for disabilities	Addis Ababa	
Wegene Ethiopia Foundation	Education & community support for low-income families	Addis Ababa	
Yenegat Berhan	Youth empowerment and education	Addis Ababa	
Muday Charity	Women & children's shelter, education, food	Addis Ababa	

HOSPITAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ADDIS ABABA

Category	Name	Description / Focus	Location
Public Hospital	Black Lion Hospital	Major national referral and teaching hospital	Downtown Addis
	Saint Paul Hospital	Public hospital known for medical training	Gulele
	Yekatit 12 Hospital	Public hospital, general medical services	Sidest Kilo
Private Hospital	Hamlin Fistula Hospital	Specialized in treating obstetric fistula in women	Old Airport
	CURE Ethiopia Hospital	Pediatric orthopedic surgery for children in poverty	Entoto
	MCM Korea Hospital	Comprehensive care, Korean-run private hospital	Gerji
	AA Silk Road General Hospital	Full-service private general hospital	Mekanisa