

College Counseling Handbook

MOUNTAIN VIEW LOS ALTOS
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Funded by your



College Counseling Handbook

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The purpose of this handbook is to help students get prepared for what's to come in their Junior and Senior years of high school.

This handbook serves as a guide to exploring topics such as the various types of colleges, their admission processes, standardized testing requirements, the college essay, and the financial aid process. It will also help students keep track of the many details that are part of this process.

As usual, should you have any questions that this manual does not answer, you are strongly encouraged to ask the College and Career Center staff or your school counselor.

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Part I

Types of Colleges

Liberal Arts Colleges

Liberal Arts Colleges emphasize undergraduate study with a focus on interdisciplinary studies and analytical thinking. Most offer only undergraduate programs, some offer Master's level degrees. Some students assume that liberal arts colleges only teach fine arts, this is incorrect. Liberal arts colleges have the full spectrum of majors: humanities, STEM, etc. Many liberal arts schools offer opportunities for students to engage in research. Typically, liberal arts colleges prioritize high engagement between students and faculty.

Universities

Universities can range in size but tend to be larger than liberal arts colleges. They offer a wide variety of majors housed in smaller colleges (e.g. College of Letters & Sciences, College of Engineering, etc.). Universities offer graduate programs in multiple disciplines, usually through the doctoral level. Professors at larger universities may be highly engaged in research and less accessible to undergraduate students, graduate students may serve as instructors or teaching assistants in undergraduate classes.

Single-Sex Colleges

Women's colleges are single-sex colleges that only admit women; men's colleges are single-sex colleges that only admit men. These colleges vary about their admissions policy for students whose gender identity varies from their sex assigned at birth. There are a handful of women's colleges that accept transgender students. Currently there are 66 men's colleges (3 of which are non-religious institutions) and 34 women's colleges in the United States. Some single-sex colleges may have a partnership with another single-sex college or coed university where students can access resources and/or classes at either institution.

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution

An AANAPISI is a federal designation from the United States Department of Education. A community college is designated an AANAPISI when at least 10% of the student population identifies as AANHPI and at least 50% are Pell-eligible. 11 CSUs and all 9 UC campuses are AANHPIs.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

HBCUs admit students from all racial, social, and economic backgrounds. They are schools which were founded prior to 1964 with a principal mission of educating African Americans. There are 104 HBCUs in the United States, including public and private universities.

California Black-Serving Institution

A BSI has at least 10 percent of the college/university's enrolled students identifying as Black and/or African American or has at least 1,500 Black and/or African American students enrolled at the college or university. In 2024, Sacramento State University received recognition as the first Black Serving Institution in the state.

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)

An HSI is a college or university that has an enrollment of at least 25% Hispanic undergraduate students and is committed to assisting first generation, majority low income Hispanic students. There are over 250 HSI campuses in the United States, including several UCs and CSUs.

International Schools

Students may choose to attend all four years of college abroad at a university in another country. Most nations welcome international students, and some places are even seeking to enroll American students, including countries throughout Europe and Asia. Students will often need to be proficient in the native language of that country, though

this is not always the case. Studying internationally is a unique experience that will give students a global perspective in their field of study.

Some universities cost much less than American universities, making tuition more affordable. However, travel costs are higher and financial aid may be limited, although some colleges accept the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Note that the only federal or state financial aid that a student can use internationally are loans.

Admission criteria and application procedures vary by country/university, so it is important to research requirements early. It is also important to research whether graduating degrees will transfer back to the United States.

Military/Service Academies

Service academies are educational institutions that prepare students for service in the army, navy, marine corps, air force or coast guard. In the United States there are five service military academies: US Air Force Academy, US Coast Guard Academy, US Merchant Marine Academy, US Military Academy, and the US Naval Academy. There are also some colleges that educate both cadets and civilians (non-military students). All military academies are tuition-free institutions as they require military service upon graduation in exchange for their education.

Private Universities

Private or independent colleges and universities are schools that are not operated by the government. They range in size, from small to very large. Some private colleges are non-profit and others are for-profit, please do thorough research and speak with your college counselor as for-profit colleges can vary widely in quality. Tuition is the same for all students regardless of the state they come from. The cost of attendance at a private university is usually higher than public universities, however many private schools have the resources to meet most of a student's demonstrated need through grants and scholarships.

Public Universities and Colleges

Public universities and colleges are funded by local and state governments and usually offer lower tuition rates for students who are residents of the state where the school is located. Nonresident students will pay "out-of-state" tuition; "in-state" tuition will apply to resident students. In California, the University of California (UC) system, California State University (CSU) system, and California Community College (CCC) system are our three public university/college systems.

University of California (UC)

The UC system is driven by research-oriented practices and thorough academic experiences. The emphasis at the bachelor's level is on theoretical learning and analytical thinking. There are ten UC campuses; however, one campus, UCSF, is a professional school that high school seniors may not apply to. High school students are eligible to apply to the nine undergraduate campuses of the UC System.

California State University (CSU)

The CSU system is also based on research-oriented practices but also has more degrees with a professional focus. Many of the majors offered at the UCs are offered at CSUs, but CSUs have many accelerated programs that train California teachers, nurses and more. There are 22 CSU campuses spread throughout the state of California.

Community Colleges

The California Community College system is the largest system of higher education in the nation. The 116 colleges provide workforce and vocational training, certificate and degree programs, and preparation for transfer to four-year institutions. As of 2025, there are 30 bachelor's degrees offered in specific areas among 42 campuses.

Part II

Preparing for College

Four-Year Plan

Each year, your counselor helps you develop your four-year plan for graduation. This plan maps out your course sequences to ensure that you meet post-secondary goals.

College Entrance Requirements

Students and counselors work together to ensure that students meet all of the necessary requirements to be eligible for 4-year college admission. In California, the UC and CSU systems of higher education refer to these requirements as the “A–G” requirements. These are included in this handbook.

Naviance

Students use **Naviance**, our college information system throughout the four years of high school.

Naviance assists you with the following:

- Researching and exploring colleges
- Organizing college lists and application deadlines
- Identifying and researching careers
- Taking personality and career inventories
- Researching scholarships
- Building and updating a professional-looking resume
- Registering to attend college representative visits

In Naviance, there are four main tabs that you can navigate:

- **Colleges:** Where students will research colleges and scholarships, also, where you will organize your college applications
- **Careers:** Where students can research careers and take career assessments
- **Self-Discovery:** Information about the student (personality, career assessments)
- **About Me:** Information about the student (resume, surveys)

If you need assistance, please contact your College and Career Counselor.

MVLA Graduation Requirements versus UC/CSU

On the following page is a helpful graphic that compares the graduation requirements for our high schools versus those required by the UC/CSU systems. Notice that there is significant overlap between the number of semesters/years required for different subjects.

High School Graduation College Entrance Requirements

MVLA Union High School District		University of California		California State University	
Class of 2027+	Class of 2024-2026				
English 40 credits	English 40 credits	English 4 years		English 4 years	
Social Studies 40 credits	Social Studies 35 credits	History 2 years		History 2 years	
Ethnic Studies 10 credits	World Studies 10 credits	World Studies 1 year		Ethnic Studies 1 year	
World/Global Studies 10 credits	Addtl.Global Studies 5 credits	U.S. History 1 year		U.S. History 1 year	
U.S. History 10 credits	U.S. History 10 credits				
Civics 5 credits	Civics 5 credits				
Economics 5 credits	Economics 5 credits				
Mathematics 20 credits	Mathematics 20 credits	Mathematics 3 years		Mathematics 3 years	
Must include Algebra I	Must include Algebra I	Algebra I 1 year		Algebra I 1 year	
		Geometry 1 year		Geometry 1 year	
		Algebra II 1 year		Algebra II 1 year	
		(4 years recommended)		(4 years recommended)	
Science 20 credits	Science 20 credits	Laboratory Science 2 years		Laboratory Science 2 years	
Must include 10 credits of a physical science and 10 credits of a life science	Must include 10 credits of a physical science and 10 credits of a life science	2 of 3 disciplines: Biology, Chemistry, or Physics (3 years recommended)		Biology and one other college prep science course (Chemistry, Physics, Envir Sci AP or Forensics) Acceptance of "g" courses subject to change	
World Language/ Fine Arts/ Practical Arts 20 credits	World Language/ Fine Arts/ Practical Arts 20 credits	World Language 2 years		World Language 2 years	
20 credits in one area or any combination in the 3 areas	20 credits in one area or any combination in the 3 areas	Must be in the <u>same</u> language. (3 years recommended)		Must be in the <u>same</u> language. (3 years recommended)	
Physical Education 20 credits	Physical Education 20 credits	Visual and Performing Arts 1 year		Visual and Performing Arts 1 year	
1. All Freshmen will be enrolled in 9th grade P.E. for the entire year	1. All Freshmen will be enrolled in 9th grade P.E. for the entire year				
2. Refer to course catalog or BP6142.7 for options after 9 th grade to complete requirements	2. Refer to course catalog or BP6142.7 for options after 9 th grade to complete requirements				
Health Education 5 credits	Health Education 5 credits				
Electives 55	Electives 60 credits	Electives 1 year		Electives 1 year	
		One unit (two semesters), in addition to those required above, chosen from the following areas: visual and performing arts, social studies, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science, computer engineering/ technology, and language other than English.		One unit (two semesters), in addition to those required above, chosen from the following areas: visual and performing arts, social studies, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science, computer engineering/ technology, and language other than English.	
		(a third year in the language used for the world language requirement or two years of another language).		(a third year in the language used for the world language requirement or two years of another language).	
TOTAL 220 credits	TOTAL 220 credits				

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Standardized Testing

PSAT & SAT: Resources from the College Board

When a student takes the PSAT as a sophomore or junior, it's a good idea for them to create a College Board account. When a student takes the PSAT for the first time, their test generates an information profile with the College Board and creating a College Board account with the same information ensures that the information profile and College Board account get linked. Please visit www.collegeboard.org and click on "Register for the SAT."

A benefit from taking the PSAT is their partnership with the Khan Academy. After having received your PSAT scores, students will be able to link their PSAT scores with Khan Academy. In doing so, the Khan Academy will create a free customized SAT study plan so that you can work on improving your SAT scores. If you need help setting this up, you can stop by the College and Career Center or visit your counselor. Please visit www.khanacademy.org/sat to get started preparing.

Standardized Tests

College admissions policies around standardized testing have changed significantly since COVID-19. The predominant majority of colleges are test-optional. Please reference the section below, "Test-optional, Test- Flexible, etc" for more information. The most common college admission tests are the SAT and ACT. The Counseling Department recommends students take an exam for the first time during spring of junior year.

SAT

The SAT consists of an evidence-based reading and writing section, and a math section. The total SAT exam score is calculated by adding the two sections of the exam (scores range from 400-1600). Students can register online on the College Board website. The test is administered at various sites off campus several times during the year, deadlines and requirements vary by college. Visit: satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat

ACT

The ACT has the sections English, mathematics, reading, science and writing (optional). An ACT score is called a composite score as it's calculated by averaging the scores from the four different sections of the exam (scores range from 1-36). The test is administered several times throughout the year and should be taken no later than December of senior year. The writing portion is optional and is utilized by very few colleges. Before signing up for the ACT, students can register for this exam by visiting www.act.org.

All domestic colleges accept either the ACT or SAT.

SAT vs. ACT

	SAT	ACT
Structure	Math, Reading, Writing & Language	Math, Reading, Science, English, Essay (optional)
Length	2 hrs, 14 min	2 hrs, 55 min w/o essay 3 hrs, 40 min w/essay
Reading	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
Science	None	1 science section, tests critical thinking skills
Math	Covers: Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trigonometry, & Data Analysis	Covers: Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry & Trigonometry

	SAT	ACT
Tools	Some questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
Essays	None	Optional, tests how you evaluate and analyze issues
Scoring	Scored on a scale of 400-1600	Scored on a scale of 1-36

Test-Optional, Test-Flexible and Test-Blind or Test-Free Colleges and Universities

Test-optional admissions means that a student can send or not send an SAT or ACT test score to apply to a college. It also means that a student without a test score will not be disadvantaged in the admissions process without one – that's a true test-optional admissions policy. Test-optional also means that a student needs to be discerning about sending a test score, as students should only send test scores that will make them competitive in the admissions process.

Test-blind or test-free means that standardized testing is not used to evaluate applicants in admissions. Both the UC and CSU system do not utilize the SAT or ACT in the admissions process. The University of California (UC) states: (UC) "will not consider SAT or ACT test scores when making admissions decisions or awarding scholarships. If you choose to submit test scores as part of your application, they may be used as an alternative method of fulfilling minimum requirements for eligibility or for course placement after you enroll."

Whether a college requires testing or is test-blind, all of these policies can be overwhelming. The majority remain test-optional (e.g. Bowdoin: students can choose whether or not to submit test scores), several are requiring testing (e.g. Georgetown and MIT), and several are test-blind (e.g. CalTech, CSUs and UCs do not consider test scores at all). Visit fairtest.org for a more thorough list of college policies. College websites will have the most up-to-date information about their testing policies.

How Do Colleges Evaluate Your Test Scores?

According to Princeton Review's website: Some schools consider all test scores from all dates; some consider your highest overall score from a single test date; and some consider a composite of your highest section scores from all test dates. And at a growing number of schools, test scores are completely optional (as described in the previous paragraph). If a college has a test-optional policy, the student should carefully consider whether to apply with scores or not. This decision can be informed by researching the admitted 50% scores of the freshman class. Applying with a non-competitive test score does put students at a disadvantage, and they would be better off applying without a test score. It is important to understand how each college on your list evaluates your test scores. Visit the college's website and explore the Admissions section. You can also ask your college counselor or the college admission representative when he/she visits your high school.

What does superscoring mean?

The Princeton Review website explains superscoring as follows: Many schools (and the Common Application) will ask you to list the section from different test dates – such as your best ACT English, best Math, best Reading, and best Science scores – and then calculate a "super composite" or superscore based on these scores. Therefore, if you worry that some scores will rise as others fall when you take the ACT again, the "super composite" will reflect your best results. Both the SAT and ACT may be superscored, but the admissions policies for colleges vary as to which colleges allow the submission of superscores. For example, Colorado College allows the submission of an SAT superscore, but not an ACT superscore. Some colleges superscore across all your test dates, and some superscore across the test dates you choose to submit. (For example, you may take the test three times but decide to only submit two of those scores.)

Fee Waivers

Students with financial need can take these exams at no cost. Fee waivers, which are available at the College and Career Center, will cover the cost of each exam. Over the course of high school, College Board grants a student two SAT fee waivers, and ACT grants two ACT waivers.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

TOEFL is a college admission/placement test to evaluate English proficiency of students whose native language is not English. It does not replace the SAT or ACT. Check the admissions page of each college on your application list to see if you are required to take the TOEFL. If you are required to take the exam, it is best to take it in either the spring of junior year or fall of senior year.

Extracurricular Activities

According to the NACAC Guide to the College Admission Process: Although your academic credentials are the primary factors in determining admission, your record of involvement in activities can be a significant supporting credential. Mere membership is not the important factor; it is, rather, the level of involvement and accomplishment that is significant. It is better to be involved in one activity and to be a significant contributor to that activity than to be involved superficially in several organizations.

Admission counselors often state that, "Depth is more important than breadth," when evaluating extracurricular activities. We advise students to choose an activity or activities that they truly enjoy and wish to explore.

Part III

California Public System of Higher Education

Quick Facts



# of colleges	116	22	10 (UCSF is graduate/professional only)
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• application• A–G requirements• minimum GPA: 2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• application• 4 essays, activities and awards• A–G requirements• minimum GPA: 3.0
Apply	starting in April	Oct 1 – Dec 1	Oct 1 – Dec 1

University of California Admissions Overview

One major public university system in California is the University of California. They are known as the UCs and they consist of 10 campuses in California. They are all open to first-time freshmen, except UC San Francisco.

For complete information regarding how applications are reviewed, please visit:
admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/freshman/how-applications-reviewed

Here is a map (courtesy of www.universityofcalifornia.edu) to show where these campuses are located:



The A–G Requirements

In order to be eligible to apply to any of the schools within the CA public university systems (CSU and UC), students must complete the requirements below in order to be considered for admission. These are known as the A–G requirements.

History/Social Science	2 years required
English	4 years required
Mathematics	3 years required, 4 years recommended
Science	2 years required, 3 years recommended
Language other than English	2 years required, 3 years recommended
Visual & Performing Arts	1 year required
College-preparatory Elective	1 year required

- Remember that you must pass all of these classes with a 'C-' or higher. A 'D' or lower will need to be repeated for a higher grade to meet the requirements of A–G. To be competitive, especially for UCs and CSUs where the admit rates are lower, students are encouraged to go beyond the minimum requirements.
- The application to each campus costs \$80.00 (as of October 2025) to submit. However, there are questions within your application that help determine if you are eligible for a fee waiver. Please make sure you answer them correctly. When approved for a fee waiver, you are allowed to submit a total of 4 UC applications for free.
- You will need to answer 4 of the 8 Personal Insight questions as part of the application. Each response is limited to 350 words. Also reference page 22 - for more college essay tips.

On the next page you will find the list of the personal insight questions and tips directly from the University of California:

PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS: GUIDE FOR FRESHMAN APPLICANTS

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Getting started

This worksheet is designed to help freshman applicants start the writing process for the personal insight questions in the undergraduate admissions application. Additional hints and suggestions can be found on UC's admissions website at ucal.us/personalquestions.

What are the personal insight questions?

These questions are about getting to know you better — your life experience, interests, ambitions and inspirations. Think of it as your interview with the admissions office. Be open. Be reflective. Find your individual voice and express it.

While this section of the application is just one part we consider when making our admission decision, it helps provide context for the rest of your application.

The basics

- You will have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to any 4 of the 8 questions.
- Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.
- Which questions you choose to answer is entirely up to you: But you should select questions that are most relevant to your experience and that best reflect your individual circumstances.
- All questions are equal: All questions are given equal consideration in the application review process, which means there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.

Freshman questions & brainstorm exercise

The following exercises are suggestions to help you get started. Remember, you don't have to answer all eight questions – you only need to answer four. So if some questions aren't the right fit for you, that's OK. The important thing is expressing who are you, what matters to you and what you want to share with UC.

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.

How do you define "leader"? List three words that you think describe what a leader is:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do any of these words apply to you? How? Is there a time in your life when you displayed any of these traits?

2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

Can you think of a time your viewpoint was unique compared to others? What was the issue or problem from your perspective? Now think of the same situation from the perspective of another person who was there with you. How was your approach different from that other person's?

Was there ever a problem where your imagination and intuition guided you to the solution?

Do you have a passion for music, theater, visual art, dance, etc.? What have you gained from it that has affected other parts of your life?

3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

List three of your talents or skills:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Were these talents or skills the same a few years ago? What changed? What improved?

Which one of the three talents or skills you listed is the most meaningful or important to you and why? Does the talent come naturally or have you worked hard to develop this skill or talent?

PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS: GUIDE FOR FRESHMAN APPLICANTS

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4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

Feel free to speak about either an opportunity or a barrier. It's OK if you've experienced one and not the other.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

List any programs or additional classes that have better prepared you for college:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How did you find out about these programs or classes? How did you take what you learned and apply it to your schoolwork or other aspects of your life?

EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS:

Have you faced any barriers or challenges related to school and/or your schoolwork? How did you overcome or strive to overcome them? List three personal characteristics or skills you had to call on to overcome this challenge:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

Have you had a difficult experience in your life? How did you get through it? What did you learn going through this experience? If you're currently working your way through a challenge, what are you doing now and does that affect different aspects of your life? For example, ask yourself, "How has my life changed at home, at my school, with my friends, or with my family?"

6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

Think about all of the classes you've taken at school. Now fill in the blank: I would go to [class name] even if I didn't have to.

It doesn't have to be a class in which you've earned good grades – the important thing is you enjoyed the subject and it impacted you in some way.

(#6 continued)

Maybe there's a course you *haven't* taken at school that you wish you did take or are looking forward to taking in college. How have you pursued your interest in that subject outside of school?

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

Did you contribute to a positive change at your school or in your community? What steps have you taken to accomplish this? Remember, even small changes can have a big impact. Why were you inspired to act? What did you learn from your effort?

8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

From your point of view, what do you feel makes you an excellent choice for UC? Don't be afraid to brag a little. Here are a few lists to help you get started.

What do you value in your life? What's important to you? List three of them here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are you passionate about?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When you attend UC, what three things are you most looking forward to?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Does anything overlap? Is there anything from the lists that you want to expand on?

Next steps

As you filled out the worksheet, were there any topics that seemed particularly interesting? You might consider answering those questions as part of your application. But the choice is yours! Take your time in selecting which questions to answer and how to answer them. For more information, visit our website at ucal.us/personalquestions.

California State University Admissions Overview

The California State Universities or CSUs consist of 22 campuses throughout the state. On the following page you will find information regarding the admission requirements for the CSUs.



REQUIREMENTS

A–G	You must complete all 15 courses*
GPA	Minimum 2.5 or higher; based on 10th and 11th grade
Application Filing Period	October 1 - December 1

*For the complete A–G Requirements refer to page 11.

- In order to apply, go to www.calstate.edu/apply and create an account.
- No essay required for the CSU application.
- No letters of recommendation required.
- The application to each campus costs \$70.00 to submit. When approved for a fee waiver, you are allowed to submit a total of 4 CSU applications for free.
- For more information about the CSUs check out: www.calstate.edu
- CSUs are test-blind or test-free in the admissions process.

CSU Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

The primary goal of the CSU Educational Opportunity Program is to improve access to low-income, first generation and historically disadvantaged students with potential for academic success by making higher education a possibility.

EOP provides a comprehensive program of support services which include, but are not limited to, recruitment, pre admission counseling, orientation, summer program, diagnostic testing, financial aid follow-up, special admissions, pre introductory instruction, academic advisement, tutoring, learning skill services, and personal, educational and career counseling.

Applicants must complete the EOP portion of the Cal State Apply application at www.calstate.edu/apply. In addition to submitting an application EOP, EOP applicants must complete the EOP portion of the application, including:

- Two names and email addresses for the letters of recommendation
- Autobiographical portion of the EOP sections

EOP Recommendations

To apply to EOP, you must submit two recommendations. You should contact the individuals who you will use as recommenders before submitting the EOP application to get the correct spelling of their names and accurate email addresses. Talking to your recommenders in advance will help determine if they have the time and are willing to complete the recommendation form. The recommenders will be answering questions about your academic skills, characteristics, motivation, achievements, and barriers to success.

EOP Biographical Questions

The biographical questions listed below are included in the EOP application. We recommend that you prepare your responses in advance and ask a teacher and/or a College Counselor to help with proofreading. Having completed responses in advance will save time when completing the EOP application.

Answers to these questions will help EOP determine your eligibility to the program. Please be sure to respond as precisely and honestly as possible and expand on each answer. Use complete sentences and avoid responses such as “yes” or “no.” Responses to each question have a 2500-character limit.

1. Briefly describe your family’s economic background. Include information about your financial challenges.
2. Why would you like to attend college? Discuss your career and personal goals. Are there any particular circumstances, school experiences, or persons that influenced your preparation or motivation to attend college (e.g. cultural/financial background, family, teachers, schools you attended)? Please explain.
3. Briefly discuss your academic background. Did you utilize any additional support at your high school, such as tutoring? Do your grades in high school and/or college reflect your academic ability or potential?
4. List any volunteer, extracurricular activities, or work experience in which you are or have been involved in the past two years.
5. Is there any additional information you would like EOP to consider in determining your admission to the program?

To find out more about the eligibility requirements, visit the Questions about EOP page at www.calstate.edu/attend/student-services/eop

California Community College

Is Community College Right for You?

Attending a community college can be very advantageous for many students. There are 116 in the State of California from which to choose. Some even have dormitories.

There are many great community college options right in our backyard:

Foothill College, Los Altos Hills	foothill.edu
DeAnza College, Cupertino	www.deanza.edu
Cañada College, Redwood City	www.canadacollege.edu
College of San Mateo, San Mateo	collegeofsanmateo.edu
Mission College, Santa Clara	missioncollege.edu
West Valley College, Saratoga	www.westvalley.edu

What is community college?

Community college is the most common type of two-year college. These colleges offer many types of educational programs, including those that lead to associate degrees and certificates. Certificates and some types of associate degrees focus on career readiness. Other types of associate degrees are good preparation for study at a four-year college where graduates can earn a bachelor's degree. The California Community College System is the largest system of higher education in the nation, with 2.1 million students attending 116 colleges. These colleges provide students with the knowledge and background necessary to compete in today's economy. With a wide range of educational offerings, the colleges provide workforce training, basic courses in English and math, certificate and degree programs and preparation for transfer to four-year institutions. Today, 42 community colleges in California offer bachelor's degrees. Students enroll in community college in the spring of their senior year, and the SAT/ACT is not part of the application process.

It is a good choice for you if:

- You wish for an excellent value in education. The California Community College System offers quality education at a low cost.
- You plan to earn a bachelor's degree by spending your freshman and sophomore years at a community college and then transferring to a four-year college or university at the junior level.
- You wish to attend college for 1-2 years to learn career skills and receive the training necessary to enter the job market.
- You're not sure of the field of study that you wish to pursue and want to explore several subject areas.
- You wish to begin your college career while remaining in your home community.
- You wish to receive a bachelor's degree in one of the following high-need fields listed below:

California Community Colleges now offering Bachelor's Degrees:

Airframe Manufacturing Technology: Antelope Valley College

Automotive Career Education: Ventura College

Automotive Technology (Management): De Anza College, Rio Hondo College, Santa Ana College

Aviation Maintenance Technology (Avionics): West Los Angeles College

Biomanufacturing: Los Angeles Mission College, Los Angeles Pierce College, MiraCosta College, Moorpark College, Solano College

Building Performance: College of the Canyons

Building Performance & Environmental Design: Palomar College (*coming soon*)

Cyber Defense and Analysis: San Diego City College

Dental Hygiene (Administration): Cerritos College, Cypress College, Foothill College, Fresno College, Oxnard College, Taft College, West Los Angeles College
 Drone and Autonomous Systems: Fullerton College (*coming soon*)
 Ecosystem Restoration & Applied Fire Management: Feather River College
 Electronic Digital Instrument: Rio Hondo College
 Emergency Management: Moreno Valley College
 Emergency Services Administration: Mission College (*coming soon*)
 Equine and Ranch Management: Feather River College
 Health Information Management: San Diego Mesa College, Shasta College
 Histotechnology: Mt San Antonio College
 Industrial Automation: Bakersfield College, Imperial Valley College (*coming soon*)
 Interaction Design: Santa Monica College
 Mortuary Science: Cypress College
 Occupational Studies: Santa Ana College
 Paralegal Studies: Santa Ana College
 Paramedicine: Siskiyous College (*coming soon*)
 Public Safety Management: San Diego Miramar College
 Research Laboratory Technology: Bakersfield College
 Respiratory Care/Therapy: Antelope Valley College, Crafton Hills College, East Los Angeles College, El Camino College, Foothill College, Hartnell College, Los Angeles Valley College, Modesto College, Napa Valley College, Skyline College, Victor Valley College
 Water Resource Management: San Bernardino College (*coming soon*)

New degree programs will be added twice a year. Check for the latest update:

<https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Curriculum-and-Instruction-Unit/Curriculum/Baccalaureate-Degree-Program>

How can I transfer to a UC or CSU?

California has intentionally aligned its Community College system with both the UC and CSU systems, so that a student may begin their educational career at a community college and transfer to a 4-year college and obtain their bachelors within two years at that UC or CSU. Part of the charter for the UC system is that for every two first-time freshmen admitted, they must admit one transfer student. Students interested in transferring should research the program's Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) and associate degree for transfer (ADT) – specific transfer programs for the UC and CSU system, respectively. Students do not need to participate in these programs to transfer to a UC or CSU, as there are many different pathways to transferring. What is recommended is meeting with a community college academic adviser frequently as the advice for a student attempting to transfer into UC San Diego's biochemistry major would vary vastly from a student transferring in Cal Poly SLO's anthropology major.

Can I get financial aid?

Yes. At our local community colleges, applying for financial aid can often make it FREE to attend. For eligible California residents, the California Promise Grant will usually waive enrollment fees at most California Community Colleges. Some community colleges, such as DeAnza and Foothill, will also cover the cost of books. Application steps vary for the Promise program, please investigate the details at the community college you're interested in attending.

Admission Requirements:

California community colleges are required to admit any California resident possessing a high school diploma or equivalent. Additionally, California community colleges may admit any nonresident possessing a high school diploma or equivalent or anyone (resident or nonresident) over the age of 18 without a high school diploma or equivalent who, in the judgment of the board, is capable of profiting from the instruction offered.

Community colleges may admit minors who do not hold high school diplomas, or equivalent, to its credit courses as special part-time or special full-time students. Most community colleges have established requirements for K-12th grade concurrently enrolled students. Complete the MVLA Out of District Course Permission form and ask for

permission from your principal. Please visit the website of the college you are interested in attending for instructions on admission and registration.

Special Admission Programs at Foothill College, for example:

Dental Assisting, Dental Hygiene, EMT & Paramedic, Pharmacy Technician, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Radiologic Technology, Respiratory Therapy Technology, and Veterinary Technology.

Community College Matcher:

The following website contains information for all of the community colleges in California: www.cccco.edu/students

How do I apply to Community College?

The following CCCApply website is your first step in the application process. Again, please visit the website of the college you wish to attend. There you will be given specific instructions regarding admission and registration: www.cccapply.org/en/apply

What famous people have attended community college?

Annette Bening, award-winning actress - San Diego Mesa College, Halle Berry, Oscar-winning actress - Cuyahoga Community College, Gwendolyn Brooks, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet - Kennedy King College, IL, Jessica Chastain, Oscar-winning actress - Sacramento City College, Beverly Cleary, bestselling children's author - Chaffey College, Eileen Collins, former NASA astronaut - SUNY Corning Community College, Guy Fieri, award-winning restaurateur & TV presenter - College of the Redwoods, Morgan Freeman, Oscar-winning actor - Los Angeles City College, Tom Hanks, Oscar-winning actor - Chabot College, Steve Jobs, Apple co-founder - De Anza Community College, Joyce Luther Kennard, California Supreme Court justice - Pasadena City College, Jeane Kirkpatrick, former ambassador to the United Nations - Stephens College, MO, Queen Latifah, award-winning singer & actress - Borough of Manhattan Community College, NY, Jim Lehrer, news anchor - Victoria College, TX, George Lucas, award-winning filmmaker - Modesto Junior College, Fred Ramsdell, 2025 Nobel Prize winner in Medicine/Physiology - Foothill College, Jackie Robinson, legendary Major League Baseball player - Pasadena City College, Nolan Ryan, retired Major League Baseball player - Alvin Community College, TX, Arnold Schwarzenegger, actor & former Governor of California - Santa Monica College, Sam Shepard, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright - Mt. San Antonio College, James Sinegal, co-founder and chief executive officer of Costco - San Diego City College, Amy Tan, bestselling author - San Jose City College, Maxwell Taylor, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Metropolitan Community College, MO, Gabrielle Union, actress & model - Cuesta College, Steve Wozniak, Apple co-founder - De Anza Community College

Part IV

Private Colleges and Universities

Private institutions are another option for students to consider. Private colleges and universities can be found both in-state and out-of-state. In order to apply to these schools, students would need to create an account with the Common Application website or via the Coalition. Via the Common App, students may be able to apply to hundreds of private universities throughout the United States. It is important to note that unlike the CSU and UC system, the deadlines vary from school to school within the Common App and Coalition. It is important to note the different dates and deadlines for your schools of interest.

Please visit www.commonapp.org and/or www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org to create an account.

Admission Options

Colleges require applications to be submitted within a specific timeframe or by a set deadline. In your college search process you may encounter the following admissions deadline terms. It is the student's responsibility to research and adhere to the deadlines of the colleges they plan to apply to. For each admissions plan, students are expected to submit their application in full to be considered for admission:

Regular Decision (RD)

Regular decision is the traditional application deadline. Students who apply RD are considered within the larger pool of applicants. For the UC and CSU campuses, the Regular Decision deadline is November 30. The RD deadline for private and out-of-state public universities will vary from campus to campus but typically falls between early January to mid-February. Colleges notify students of an admissions decision by April 1.

Early Action (EA)

The Early Action deadline comes before the Regular Decision deadline. Most Early Action deadlines are in November; some out-of-state public universities have an October EA deadline. Students who submit their application during the Early Action period will receive an earlier admission decision, typically by December 15. Students who apply EA may be admitted, denied, or deferred (re-considered among the Regular Decision applicant pool). Early Action is non-binding, meaning that students admitted through EA have until May 1 to accept or decline their admission offer and may apply to other schools under EA terms.

Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action (REA/SCEA)

Some highly selective private universities only allow students to submit one Early Action application. Students applying REA or SCEA are expected to refrain from applying to other private universities during the early application period or applying to any binding programs. Students should check the specific requirements and expectations of the university's REA or SCEA admissions process. An acceptance through REA or SCEA is typically non-binding and students have until May 1 to submit their decision.

Early Decision (ED)

Early Decision is a binding admissions agreement; therefore, if you decide to apply Early Decision to a university, it should be your first choice school. Students apply early, typically in November, and receive an earlier notification of their admission decision around mid-December. Similar to Early Action, students may be admitted, denied, or deferred. The student, parent and counselor sign documents agreeing that the student is applying ED to only one school and, if admitted, will withdraw all other applications and not accept any other offers of admission. Reneging on your agreement after being offered ED admission could result in other colleges refusing to admit you. Insufficient financial aid is the only legitimate reason to back out of an Early Decision agreement.

Students should research a school's financial aid policies and use its net price calculator to determine if the school will be affordable and/or if the school will be able to meet a significant amount of your financial need.

Early Decision II (ED 2/ED II)

ED II is the same binding policy as ED I, just with a later deadline, typically the first week of January. Students receive a decision in February.

Priority Deadline

Students who submit their complete application by the priority deadline (earlier than the regular decision deadline) have a higher chance of being considered for scholarships. Students may also have a better chance of being admitted to competitive majors and/or honors programs.

Rolling Admissions

Some universities do not have a definitive deadline, but instead process applications as they receive them. Students receive an admission decision within a few weeks of submitting the application. This process can sometimes be called “first come, first served” and students who apply later in the application filing period may not be accepted if the university has filled its incoming freshman class.

Should I Apply during the Early Action or Early Decision period?

Applying early may decrease stress in the winter if you receive a favorable admissions decision; however, it may create additional stress due to the accelerated college application timeline. Students who apply early will be expected to have a complete application by the EA or ED deadline. A student who does not have a consistent academic record or believes they will be able to show improvement in their senior year fall grades should not apply EA or ED.

Admission Decisions

Waitlist

A student may be placed on a waitlist, if they meet the admission requirements, but the college has already accepted the number of applicants it has room for. Colleges make predictions of how many students will accept the college’s offer of admission and the waitlist serves as a way to reach their goal number of incoming freshmen. The college will ask if you would like to remain on the waitlist. You should still accept an admission offer at one of the schools to which you have been admitted in order to save yourself a place. If you are waitlisted, you should check with your college counselor to determine how to best advocate for your admission.

Candidates’ Reply Date/College Signing Day

May 1 is the national college decision day. Students should take the month of April to review their admission offers and decide which campus is the best fit. You are expected to decline offers of admission from the universities you do not plan on attending. Officially declining an offer of admission helps the university to properly plan their freshman class and offer a spot to other students who are interested in attending. When accepting an offer of admission, most universities will expect you to submit a nonrefundable deposit. It is unethical to accept admission to more than one university – after all, you cannot attend multiple colleges in the fall. Replying after this date, may result in a loss of your spot at the college.

Application Components

Many colleges and universities will require additional documents that supplement your application form. Colleges may request all or some of the following materials before your application will be considered complete. You should review the admissions page of each school on your list to determine what is required.

Application Form

Most colleges allow students to submit the application online using a digital form. The application may be accessed from the school’s website or it may be a campus which accepts a general application through a system such as the Common Application (Common App) or the Coalition for College.

The application form will usually request the following information:

- Personal and Educational Information
- Honors and Awards
- Extracurricular and Volunteer activities
- Employment, internships, and summer activities

- Essays, personal statement, or short response questions
- Disciplinary information
- Application fee
- Signature/Electronic signature
- Audition or portfolio for some programs

Official Transcript

Your transcript is a record of all of the courses you have taken since your freshman year of high school, including any pre-approved off-campus coursework. Our district's transcript includes your grades, courses in progress, and your GPA. It does not include your standardized test scores (SAT, ACT, AP, etc.). An official transcript is one that is either signed and sealed by the registrar or sent directly from your counselor through electronic submission. Our high schools do not rank.

Teacher Recommendation Letter

The teacher letter of recommendation provides further context about the applicant's academic abilities, strengths, work ethic, and strength of character. The teacher recommendation discusses how you are in a classroom setting: your level of participation, your critical thinking skills, your ability to meet deadlines, your maturity level. Colleges would like to know what their faculty can expect from you as a college student. Most colleges prefer letters from teachers who taught you in the 11th or 12th grade in a core academic subject. As the student, it is your responsibility to ask your teachers to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Ask in the spring of your junior year; it is not only courteous but necessary to ensure that your writers have enough time to write a comprehensive letter of recommendation.

Secondary School Report/Counselor Recommendation Letter

The counselor letter of recommendation explains who a student is beyond the classroom. Your counselor will use the information provided in the counselor letter of recommendation request form (which includes information from you, your teachers, and parents) as well as personal interactions to write your letter of recommendation. The counselor letter is submitted with a copy of your official transcript, the secondary school report (SSR), and a school profile.

Midyear Report

The Midyear Report is sent early in the spring semester, after fall grades have been posted on the official transcript. This is sent by your academic counselor.

Standardized Test Scores

The most common college admission tests are the SAT and ACT. More and more, admissions offices are allowing students to self-report their test scores by simply inputting their SAT and/or ACT scores into their application. The opposing policy to self-reporting is official score reporting. When a college requires official test scores, a student must login to their College Board or ACT account, request to send a score report, and then pay to send their score to each campus that requires the scores. **All domestic colleges accept either the ACT or SAT.**

Interview

An interview may be offered, strongly recommended, or required. This information should be available on the college's admissions page. Interviews are offered so that a college can get to know you better and answer questions you may have about their university. A college interview may be with a college representative or with a local alumnus. Speak with your college counselor or visit the College and Career Center for tips and advice on your college interview.

Essay

Some applications require an essay or personal statement. The essay is an opportunity to reveal your best qualities and to show admission officers who you are. The following pages include helpful tips for creating a personal statement for college admissions.

Writing a Good College Application Essay

What is a college application essay?

Some college applications require that you write an essay as part of your college application. Often this essay can be on a topic of your choice—the section below goes into the common types of college essays most of our students complete. Your college essay is often your opportunity to show your personality, passions, and interests to the admissions committee. Choose a topic that you are an expert on, because to write about something well you need to know it backwards, forwards, and side-to-side. At its core, a college application essay is a story about you that shows multiple parts of your life. Because you are writing about your life, you will use first-person to tell your narrative—which can be a new experience in a semi-formal writing context.

How is a college essay part of the whole of your college application?

For colleges that use essays, often the other parts of the college application include your academic record, your personal information, your activities/extracurricular list, information about Mountain View/Los Altos High School, letters of recommendation, etc. All of these other parts of your college application are somewhat predetermined elements—as in you did get to pick your classes, but you didn't get to pick the classes that your high school decided to offer. Or, as is the case with letters of recommendation, you have no direct input in that part of your application. The college essay is the ONE opportunity you have to really control the narrative with the admissions office and show them who you are. Use this opportunity wisely.

Types of College Essays

College essay types can vary widely between different colleges. Often colleges will give word count or character limit counts on how long a response can be. Some colleges will even provide further context on their admissions website about the information that they are looking for in your response (UC's do this). College essays are part of a college application that take a solid chunk of time to do well. Get started on brainstorming earlier, rather than later. Note that college applications also have Additional Information boxes for students to include additional context (this was particularly helpful with activities and events that were canceled due to COVID, for example). Do not use Additional Information boxes to submit another essay, use them only if you feel you have context to include about your high school experience that would help an admissions officer better understand your application.

Common College Essay Types for MVLA Students

Common App Personal Statement

- 500-650 Words
- Students choose one out of eight question prompts to answer.
- The same personal statement answer gets reused for most colleges a student applies to on the Common App. But do know that the personal statement, like all parts of the Common App, could be modified between submissions if you would like to do so.
- It's recommended that the focus of this response not be an academic topic, but more about who you are as a person.

UC Personal Insight Questions (PIQ's)

- Up to 350 words
- Students choose four out of the eight prompts to answer.
- Students submit the same four answers to all UC campuses they apply to, so PIQs cannot focus or mention one UC campus.
- Technically, PIQ's should not be thought of as essays (there's no introduction paragraph or conclusion paragraph), think of them as short interviews on paper.

Supplemental Essay Questions

- Word count varies (short as 20 words, or as long as 650)

- For each college, there are usually about two supplemental essays. But some can have quite a few more (and yes, they all need to be good responses).
- Usually these supplemental essays are part of the Common App. When you apply to any college on the Common App (for the most part), they will receive your Common App Personal Statement and your Supplemental essays, so all of those responses together should provide helpful background context for you as a person and applicant.
- It's common for supplemental essays to have more narrow topic choices (i.e. why do you want to study the major you've chosen, or why do you want to attend our college?). Because these responses often have an academic focus, this is why it is advantageous to not choose an academic topic for your personal statement.

Steps to Writing the College Essay

Step 1 – Reflect

- Self-reflection is a really important step in the college essay writing process. It helps you “dig” for important experiences, moments, and other things that make you you.
- Reflect without college essay prompts in front of you. If you start this process by looking at the college essay questions, you are going to generate responses that are similar to students who've also just looked at the questions and have decided what to write.
- Reflect by thinking about important experiences (big or small) that you've had, places you've traveled, foods you love to eat or make, hobbies you've enjoyed learning, family or friend traditions you love, a time you realized something about yourself, fun or odd hobbies you've become an expert at, an object that's very meaningful to you, etc.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to reflect by not even writing but by drawing, taking pictures, or going for a walk.
- Take notes on the thoughts that bubble to the surface.

Step 2 – Brainstorm

- Take a week off from reflecting, and dive into something else. Taking mental space is an important part of this process.
- Look at your notes from your reflection. What stands out to you? What do you know a lot about that you're an expert on? What could you write pages more about?
- Now it's time to look at the college essay prompts. Based on what you brainstormed, which prompt do you want to answer? How would you need to shift your idea? Are there other brainstorming ideas that could also be incorporated into your response? Or did you not reflect enough? Go back to reflecting if so.
- For the Common App personal statement, there are two common approaches on how to answer these prompts. One approach is to tell a narrative that has a beginning/past, then a turning point, and then your current present/change. The other approach is to have three chunks of your story (whether those chunks are experiences, ideas, characteristics, is up to you) that are connected by a theme.
- “Brain dump” your responses to a few of the college essay prompts that you are interested in using. To brain dump, you write down everything that comes to mind to answer the question. The goal is to write so fast that you do not have time to judge your responses, get everything on the page fast.

Step 3 – Draft, Draft, Draft Again

Again, take a week off from brainstorming your college essays (it's important, promise). By letting a piece of writing sit, you will be able to come back to it with more fresh eyes than before. What seemed so important last week, might not seem as interesting once you read it again—pay attention to your thoughts on it once you reread it.

- Reread your brain dumps. What response do you like the most? What seems intriguing? Use the response that shows multiple parts of your personality and interests. Make sure that your response is focused on you (not a family member) and on the current you (essays that focus on experiences in elementary school or middle school need to be changed).
- When getting feedback on your college essays, choose your readers wisely. Choose people who have relevant experience reading college essays and avoid people who want to influence your narrative too much. Work with one person at a time, as readers will often give you the same feedback on the same draft. We help with essays in the CCC, at any point in the college essay writing process – check out your CCC website for details about how to get our help on essays.

Writing Tips

- Use details to show things about yourself, do not just tell the reader about yourself. For example, instead of telling the reader “I am very creative”, it would be better to show that you are creative, “I’ve learned how to use the contrast of light and dark images in photography to evoke moods for the viewer”.
- Write about something that the admissions officers may not learn from the rest of your application.
- Consider spicing up your introduction to catch the reader’s attention and start with a “hook” to capture your reader’s interest.
- Give specific, detailed explanations and examples.
- Use vivid images instead of generalities.
- Write an essay within 50 words under the word limit. If no length is suggested, aim for 500 words for the main essay and 200-300 words for smaller ones.
- Proofread **every word**.

Things to Avoid

- Repeating your resumé: Do not narrate your activities list as your Common App personal statement.
- Acronyms: Write out acronyms the first time you write them, and put parentheses around the acronym so you can use it later in the essay (for example, College and Career Center (CCC)).
- Clichés: A cliché is a phrase that is repeated so often that it is no longer original (i.e. lighter than air, think outside the box, blood, sweat, and tears, etc). The antidote to clichés is being more explicitly specific in describing the situation.
- Passive voice: The passive voice is when the object of the sentence becomes the focus, not you. It makes you sound disempowered and not active. If you are using “being” or a different tense of the verb “to be”, you are writing in the passive voice.
- Passive Voice – The school of management will thoroughly prepare me in the world of business.
- Active Voice – As a business major at the school of management, I will learn the vital concepts of organizational psychology, managerial accounting, and leadership skills.
- Generalities: It can be tempting to zoom out on a concept to capture the enormity of how important something is. Resist this temptation because broad framing and generalities come across as though you do not know what you are talking about.

Part V

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)



In addition to the CSU, UC, and Common Application and Coalition schools, another great choice for our students are schools that are part of the Western Undergraduate Exchange or WUE (pronounced Woo-eee) for short. This consortium of colleges and universities includes ones in the western United States that offer discounted tuition for all students within those states who choose to attend there regardless of their home state.

On the next few pages you will find the information on the Western Undergraduate Exchange for your review.

NOTES:



WUE

Western Undergraduate Exchange

ATTEND COLLEGE IN THE WEST FOR LESS

How does WUE work?

The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is a tuition savings program that makes attending out-of-state colleges and universities more affordable for students. Through WUE, you receive a reduced tuition rate, giving you more education options for your money.

Out-of-state tuition is expensive, sometimes two to three times the cost of in-state tuition. With WUE, participating public colleges and universities across the West agree to charge out-of-state students no more than 150% of the school's in-state tuition. Tuition savings may vary depending on the college or major. **The bottom line: You save big with WUE and almost always pay less than out-of-state tuition.**



170 institutions



\$12,517 average savings per student



How do I get started?

1. **Check your eligibility** by home state/territory, college and major through our online WUE Savings Finder.
2. **Meet admissions requirements and deadlines** for the WUE college.
3. **Apply directly** to the college(s) of your choice.
4. **Contact the college** — it's the best source of information about how you can save money through WUE.



Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Questions? Visit wue.wiche.edu ✉ info-sap@wiche.edu ☎ 303.541.0267

Participating colleges and universities

As of September 2025

Residents of the following 15 U.S. states, as well as American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam, are eligible to apply.

* denotes a 2-year college

ALASKA

University of Alaska Anchorage
University of Alaska Fairbanks
University of Alaska Southeast

ARIZONA

Arizona State University/Downtown
Arizona State University/Polytechnic
Arizona State University/Tempe[†]
Arizona State University/West Valley
Arizona Western College *
Central Arizona College *
Chandler-Gilbert Community College *
Cochise College *
Coconino Community College *
Eastern Arizona College *
Estrella Mountain Community College *
GateWay Community College *
Glendale Community College *
Mesa Community College *
Mohave College *
Northern Arizona University
Northland Pioneer College *
Paradise Valley Community College *
Phoenix College *
Pima Community College *
Rio Salado College *
Scottsdale Community College *
South Mountain Community College *
University of Arizona[†]
Yavapai College *

CALIFORNIA

Barstow Community College *
Cal Poly Humboldt
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
California State University, Bakersfield
California State University, Channel Islands
California State University, Chico
California State University, Dominguez Hills
California State University, East Bay
California State University, Los Angeles
California State University, Monterey Bay
California State University, Northridge
California State University, Sacramento
California State University, San Bernardino
California State University, San Marcos
California State University, Stanislaus
College of the Siskiyous *
Feather River Community College *
Lake Tahoe Community College *
Lassen Community College *
San Francisco State University
San Jose State University
Sonoma State University
University of California, Merced

COLORADO

Adams State University
Aims Community College *
Arapahoe Community College *
Colorado Mesa University
Colorado Mountain College *
Colorado Northwestern Community College *
Colorado State University
Colorado State University-Pueblo
Community College of Aurora *

Community College of Denver *
Fort Lewis College
Front Range Community College *
Lamar Community College *
Metropolitan State University of Denver
Morgan Community College *
Northeastern Junior College *
Otero College *
Pikes Peak State College
Pueblo Community College *
Red Rocks Community College *
Trinidad State College *
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs
University of Colorado Denver
University of Northern Colorado
Western Colorado University

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Northern Marianas College *

GUAM

University of Guam

HAWAII

University of Hawai'i at Hilo
University of Hawai'i at Manoa
University of Hawai'i Maui College
University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu

IDAHO

Boise State University
College of Eastern Idaho *
College of Southern Idaho *
Idaho State University
Lewis-Clark State College
North Idaho College *
University of Idaho

MONTANA

Dawson Community College *
Flathead Valley Community College *
Great Falls College Montana State University *
Helena College University of Montana *
Highlands College of Montana Tech *
Miles Community College *
Montana State University Billings
Montana State University, Bozeman
Montana State University, Northern
Montana Technological University
University of Montana
University of Montana, Western

NEVADA

College of Southern Nevada *
Great Basin College *
Nevada State University
Truckee Meadows Community College *
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of Nevada, Reno
Western Nevada College *

NEW MEXICO

Eastern New Mexico University
Eastern New Mexico University - Roswell *
New Mexico Highlands University
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
New Mexico Junior College *
New Mexico Military Institute *

New Mexico State University
New Mexico State University-Alamogordo *
Northern New Mexico College
Santa Fe Community College *
University of New Mexico
Western New Mexico University

NORTH DAKOTA

Bismarck State College *
Dakota College at Bottineau *
Dickinson State University
Lake Region State College *
Mayville State University
Minot State University
North Dakota State College of Science *
North Dakota State University
University of North Dakota
Valley City State University
Williston State College *

OREGON

Eastern Oregon University
Oregon Institute of Technology
Oregon State University
Oregon State University - Cascades
Portland State University
Southern Oregon University
Western Oregon University

SOUTH DAKOTA

Black Hills State University
Dakota State University
Northern State University
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
South Dakota State University
University of South Dakota

UTAH

Salt Lake Community College *
Snow College *
Southern Utah University
University of Utah
Utah State University
Utah State University Eastern *
Utah Tech University
Utah Valley University
Weber State University

WASHINGTON

Central Washington University
Eastern Washington University
Evergreen State College
Washington State University
Washington State University Everett
Washington State University Tri-Cities
Washington State University Vancouver
Western Washington University

WYOMING

Casper College *
Central Wyoming College *
Eastern Wyoming College *
Gillette College *
Laramie County Community College *
Northwest College *
Sheridan College *
University of Wyoming
Western Wyoming Community College *

[†]limited number of eligible majors

Part VI

Building the College List

Aim to Create a Well-Balanced List!

Do Your Research

Students should learn as much as possible about each of the colleges and universities on his or her list.

You should not apply to a school if you do not plan to enroll if you are admitted. A complete college list is one that has a mix of reach, target, and likely-to-be-admitted schools. To determine how a college on your list would be categorized (reach, target, or likely/safety) you should view the university's freshman profile and review Scattergrams in Naviance to see how you compare to other students from your high school who have been admitted in previous years. The Freshman Profile/Applicant Profile usually includes the school's admit rate, average GPA or GPA range, and average test scores of last year's admitted class.

Financial fit is also an important consideration when deciding where to apply to college. Remember that there is need-based financial aid and merit-based financial aid. You can predict how much need-based aid you would qualify for by using a few net price calculators. Google the name of your college followed by *net price calculator* and it will usually be one the first search results. If you do not qualify for any need-based aid, then if you don't go hunting for merit-based aid, you are assuming that you are paying the full \$26,000–90,000 out of pocket for four years. Talk with our college counselor if you have more questions about financial aid.

When considering out-of-state public universities, keep in mind that many of these universities prioritize admitting applicants from their own state. The admit rate for out-of-state applicants will likely be significantly lower than the rate for resident applicants.

Reach Schools

A college or university is a reach school if your academic credentials fall below the school's range for the average admitted freshman. Highly selective schools are also reach schools. There are some universities that admit very few students into its freshman class each year. Even if your GPA and test scores match or exceed the averages, a highly selective school (i.e. admits 20% or less of its applicants) will be a reach for all students applying. Aim for 2-3 Reach Schools on your College List.

Match/Target Schools

A university is a target if your test scores and GPA match those of the most recently admitted freshman class. A target school must admit more than 20% of its applicants to have predictable admissions trends. Keep in mind that public universities, often their flagship campuses like UT Austin, often admit different percentages of out-of-state applicants so their admissions rate at first glance might appear higher than it actually is for CA students. Aim for 4-6 Target Schools on your College List.

Likely/Safety Schools

Most colleges would not like to be considered "safety" or "back up schools." Likely schools are colleges that you "like," and that you can be nearly certain that you will gain admission because your test scores and GPA are well above the average of the previous year's admitted class. It is also a good idea to look at schools with an admit rate of 50% or higher. These should also be schools where you would be happy to attend. Aim for 2-3 Likely/Safety Schools on your College List.

Selectivity

Anxiety has increased over college admissions in the past few years, due to news about colleges being very selective and the increased difficulty of being admitted. These headlines are about a small number of colleges and universities. According to the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), the average admit rate for

4-year colleges and universities in the United States was about 73% in 2022. Applying broadly and creating a well-balanced list will increase a student's chances of having multiple options for the fall.

Summary of Likely/Safety, Target, and Reach

You may have heard your counselor mention that your college list should consist of Reach, Target, and Likely schools. Below you will find guidelines for how to identify if a school is reach, target or likely for you.

LIKELY/SAFETY:

- Your scores and GPA exceed the mid-50% range of scores and GPA for last year's admitted freshman class AND the college's admit rate was 50% or more.
- Aim for 2-3 colleges in this category

TARGET:

- Your scores and GPA put you in the mid-50% range of scores and GPA for last year's admitted freshman class AND the admit rate was more than 20%.
- Your scores and GPA exceed the mid-50% range of last year's admitted freshman class AND the admit rate is less than 50%. The higher your stats are compared to last year's freshman class, the lower the admit rate can be to still call a school a Target.
- Aim for 4-6 colleges in this category

REACH:

- Your scores and GPA are below the mid-50% range of last year's admitted freshman class AND the admit rate is less than 20%.
- Colleges with admit rates of 20% or less can be considered a Reach even for students with outstanding stats.

Remember:

- selectivity can vary by programs/majors within a college if it admits by major;
- this does not take into consideration hooks (sports, legacy, etc.), institutional priorities, extracurricular activities, etc.

College Research Tools

There are a number of great websites available for researching the more than 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States. Here are a few of our favorites:

Naviance: student.naviance.com/auth/fclookup

Within Naviance, there are many different search features you can use to research colleges. Among our top choices are the college maps feature, which lets you search for different types of colleges and provides a visual of where they are, and the college search feature, which enables you to input a great deal of specific information about yourself to get personalized recommendations you can add to your "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list.

College Board: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search

BigFuture on the College Board's website is another great option. It's visually pleasing and lets you tailor your search according to subcategories such as major, cost, athletics, region, academic credit, and so on. Many students prefer this option.

Appily: www.appily.com

Appily has a lot of interesting tools in addition to a customary search feature. These include tools that calculate your admission chances at any given school and a best-fit meter to see if a school meets the criteria you feel are important in your prospective colleges.

College Navigator: nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator

If you are interested in comprehensive statistical information about colleges and universities in the US, College Navigator is a good resource. It is owned by the US Department of Education, so it can provide incredible details that can easily be exported into spreadsheets for future reference.

Unigo: www.unigo.com

While it includes a nice search tool, Unigo's defining feature is its college reviews. Students at nearly every college in the country provide first-hand reviews of things ranging from food to dorm life to political climate. It's another fun secondary research to use in whittling down your list to a manageable number of schools.

College Results Online: www.collegeresults.org

This is a great site to research specific data points, including four-year graduation rates, first-year retention rates, post-graduation debt, and post-graduation earnings.

U-CAN: www.ucan-network.org

Maintained by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, U-CAN provides easy access to often hard-to-find statistics, such as student debt, net tuition costs, and undergraduate class size.

CollegeData: www.collegedata.com

This site gives information on the number and percentage of freshmen who receive merit aid at a particular school. You can also find admissions profile data and the selection factors that are most important in the admissions process.

Niche: www.niche.com

This site is known for its student reviews. It also gives letter grades for different aspects of student life. You'll find lists of the best schools in different categories based on reviews.

College Xpress: www.collegexpress.com

This site offers a college search tool that helps you to match best fit colleges, compare schools, view college lists and rankings, and search and apply to scholarships.

Campus Pride: www.campuspride.org

This site and the Campus Pride Index provides resources for students seeking safe, inclusive, and LGBTQ friendly campuses.

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com

LinkedIn offers an option to search for colleges by name, major, location, and other factors. Universities have their own LinkedIn pages where you can learn about the school, its history, its curriculum, and its students. You can even research alumni of the school to see their professions and learn which companies they work for.

College Visits

Visiting colleges is a great way to get a feel for a campus. Oftentimes, students visit colleges during summer break or even during spring break. Going to visit a college campus when there are students present can give you an insider's look at the school environment. You can walk onto campus and explore on your own or you can register for a student-led campus tour. The College Board provides some great tips and guidelines when planning your college visits and hope that you find their college visit guide helpful and informative.

If you are not able to visit colleges in person, virtual college visits are another great option. www.youvisit.com and www.youniversitytv.com are good sites for virtual tours. You can search directly on the college's website.

GET THE MOST OUT OF A CAMPUS VISIT IN **6 STEPS**

1 DECIDE WHERE AND HOW

See if your school arranges group trips to colleges or if you could get a group of friends together and visit the campus. A family trip is another option and allows you to involve your family in the process.

2 PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT

Before you set out, get a map of the college campus and pick out places of interest. Call the college's admission office to schedule a guided tour of the campus.

3 TAKE YOUR OWN TOUR

Just wandering around the campus on your own or with friends can be the best way to get a feel for what a college is like.

4 EXPLORE THE FACILITIES

Find the spots on campus where students gather or ask a student where the best place to eat is to get a feel for the character of the college. Visit the library and check out the gym or theater. Ask an admission officer if you can tour a dorm and a classroom.

5 MAKE CONNECTIONS

Talk to current students. Ask the students at the next table or sitting nearby what they like best about the college.

6 TAKE NOTES

During your visit, write down some notes about your experience. What did you see that excited you? Are there aspects of the college that you don't like? If so, what are they?

Questions to Ask During Your Visit:

ASK TOUR GUIDES/STUDENTS

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- What's it like to go from high school to college?
- What do you do in your free time? On the weekends?
- What do you love about this college?
- What do you wish you could change about this college?
- Why did you choose this college?
- What is it like to live here?
- What does the college do to promote student involvement in campus groups, extracurricular activities, or volunteerism?

ASK PROFESSORS

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- Can a student be mentored by professors, graduate students, or upperclassmen?
- How are professors rated by the college? Does the college think mentoring and meetings for project guidance are important?
- How does the college help students have access to professors outside class? Do professors join students for lunch, help with community service groups, or guide student organizations?
- How many students do research or other kinds of projects for a semester or more?

ASK THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

- How much has your total college cost for each student risen in the past year?
- How much do your students usually end up owing when they graduate?
- What is the average income of graduates who had the same major that interests me?
- Will my costs go up when your tuition goes up, or can we use the same tuition rate I started with so I'll know the costs for four years?
- How many students usually graduate in the major that interests me? How long do these students usually take to get their degree? In what ways does the college help students graduate in four years?

Part VII

Special Programs

Many colleges offer special programs geared toward supporting students in varying ways. Below are only a few examples of these programs:

Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Schools and Programs

If you are applying to a specialty institution or special program within a university, you may be required to send in additional materials (such as a portfolio), attend an audition, or upload video or audio files for a pre-screen. Read the audition or portfolio requirements carefully. If you submit an application through Common App, you can use Slide Room to submit art supplements. If you apply via The Coalition you can upload multimedia within the application system. Oftentimes, application deadlines for VPA schools and programs will be earlier – usually in November.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)

ROTC is a scholarship, leadership, and military career training program on college campuses that trains students (cadets) to serve in one of the branches of the US military: Air Force, Army, or Navy/Marine Corps. Each branch has its own ROTC program. Cadets take additional courses on leadership, military science, and physical fitness. Students admitted into an ROTC program receive a full scholarship and a stipend for four years of attendance. ROTC cadets commit to service for a set number of years, which begins after earning his or her undergraduate degree. Visit the specific branch's ROTC website to view application requirements, service commitment, and other information.

Honors Programs and Colleges

Some campuses offer honors programs or colleges that provide students with a wide range of opportunities. An honors program can be a learning community, an academic program within the larger university, or some combination of the two. Students in an honors program can typically expect increased rigor, smaller class sizes, and greater access to resources and faculty. Additional benefits of being part of an honors program may include a merit scholarship or special housing. An honors program may have increased graduation requirements such as a research project or senior thesis. Depending on the college/university, students can apply to the honors program their senior year of high school, during their freshman year of college, or may automatically be considered for an honors program after submitting the college application.

3-2 Programs

Some liberal arts colleges create the opportunity to combine 3 years of liberal studies and 2 years of engineering in order to earn two degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in one subject, plus a bachelor's degree in the engineering discipline the student chooses. Many liberal arts schools with a 3-2 program have partnerships with a separate institution (e.g. Colby College has 3-2 program partnerships with Columbia University and Dartmouth College).

Accelerated Professional Degree Programs

Some colleges offer joint degree programs which accelerate the time in which it would typically take to earn both a bachelors and professional degree (MD – medicine, JD – law, DDS – dental, etc). For medical programs, students earn a BS or BA and then proceed directly into their med school program. For law programs, students earn their bachelor's and proceed with their law school program. Accelerated medical school programs would be completed in 7-8 years; accelerated law programs would be 6 years. These programs are ideal for students who are confident in their future educational/career goals and who have strong grades and test scores and would like the advantage of saving on the cost of tuition for one year. The application period will vary depending on the institution and program; for some the application is due when applying for admission to the university and for others it can be completed after enrolling in the college/university.

Taking a Year Off/Gap Year

Taking a year off before starting college has become more familiar since Malia Obama chose to take a “gap year” before enrolling at Harvard. According to the NACAC Guide to the College Admission Process: If you’re a bit unsure whether you’re ready for college at all, consider taking a year off. You can use that time to work, travel, volunteer, or participate in any of the hundreds of education, leadership and career exploration programs for young people. There are gap year program fairs that are similar to college fairs: they’re available online currently, but are slowly returning in-person, and you and your family can learn about all of the offerings in one place. If this option appeals to you, talk to your counselor and family about gap year options. As attractive as it may seem right now, hanging out in front of the TV gets old fast, and it doesn’t help you with your college or career decisions. You may find yourself teaching English in a foreign country, living in a kibbutz in Israel, studying endangered species in the rainforest, or building houses in an economically disadvantaged area. Your experience may make you more attractive to your first-choice college or change your mind and help identify possible career paths.

Student Athletes

If you want to compete in NCAA Division I or II athletics in your first year of college, you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center and be certified academically and as a non-professional athlete. The summer of junior year you can contact coaches at schools you are interested in if you plan to play sports in college. The coaches can give you information about sports programs and athletic scholarships. If you want to play Division I or II sports, complete the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse form and submit it after you have completed your sixth semester of high school. The NCAA has permanently suspended SAT/ACT testing requirements for student athletes.

Part VIII

NCAA

Student-Athletes

Prospective student-athletes who hope to play for Division I or 2 schools, must register with the **NCAA Eligibility Center**. In the following pages, you will find helpful information about the NCAA requirements and the registration process:

Initial-Eligibility Standards

If you want to compete in NCAA sports, you need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at eligibilitycenter.org. Plan to register before your freshman year of high school. For more information on registration, visit on.ncaa.com/RegChecklist.

Academic Requirements

Division I and II schools require you to meet academic standards. To be eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship in your first year of full-time enrollment, you must meet the following requirements:

Division I

1. Earn 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in the following areas:

ENGLISH	MATH (Algebra I or higher)	SCIENCE (Including one year of lab, if offered)	EXTRA (English, math or science)	SOCIAL SCIENCE	OTHER Any area listed to the left or courses listed in additional discipline (world language, comparative religion or philosophy)
4 years	3 years	2 years	1 year	2 years	4 years

2. Complete your 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in eight academic semesters or four consecutive academic years from the start of ninth grade. If you graduate from high school early, you still must meet core-course requirements.
3. Complete 10 of your 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits, including seven in English, math or science, before the start of your seventh semester. Once you begin your seventh semester, any course needed to meet the 10/7 requirement cannot be replaced or repeated.
4. Earn a minimum 2.3 **core-course GPA**.
5. Ask your high school counselor to upload your **final official transcript** with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

Division II

1. Earn 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in the following areas:

ENGLISH	MATH (Algebra I or higher)	SCIENCE (Including one year of lab, if offered)	EXTRA (English, math or science)	SOCIAL SCIENCE	OTHER Any area listed to the left or courses listed in additional discipline (world language, comparative religion or philosophy)
3 years	2 years	2 years	3 years	2 years	4 years

2. Earn a minimum 2.2 **core-course GPA**.
3. Ask your high school counselor to upload your **final official transcript** with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

Division III

While **Division III schools** set their own admissions and academic requirements, **international student-athletes** (first-year enrollees and transfers) who are enrolling at a Division III school after Aug. 1, 2023, must be certified as an amateur by the Eligibility Center. Contact the Division III school you plan to attend for more information about its academic requirements.



GRADE
9
REGISTER

- » If you haven't yet, **register** for a free Profile Page account at eligibilitycenter.org for information on NCAA initial-eligibility requirements.
- » Use NCAA Research's **interactive map** to help locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- » Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at eligibilitycenter.org/courselist to ensure you're taking the right courses, and earn the best grades possible!

GRADE
10
PLAN

- » If you're being actively recruited by an NCAA school and have a Profile Page account, **transition** it to the required **certification account**.
- » Monitor the **task list** in your NCAA Eligibility Center account for next steps.
- » At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.
- » If you fall behind academically, ask your high school counselor for help finding **approved courses** you can take.

GRADE
11
STUDY

- » Ensure your **sports participation** information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
- » Check with your high school counselor to make sure you're on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved **core courses** and graduate on time with your class.
- » Share your **NCAA ID** with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its **institutional request list**.
- » At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.

GRADE
12
GRADUATE

- » **Request your final amateurism certification** beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account at eligibilitycenter.org.
- » Apply and be accepted to the NCAA school you plan to attend.
- » Complete your final NCAA-approved **core courses** as you prepare for graduation.
- » After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your final **official transcript** with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

How to plan your high school courses to meet the 16 core-course requirement:

$$4 \times 4 = 16$$

9th GRADE

(1) English
(1) Math
(1) Science
(1) Social Science
and/or other

4 CORE COURSES

10th GRADE

(1) English
(1) Math
(1) Science
(1) Social Science
and/or other

4 CORE COURSES

11th GRADE

(1) English
(1) Math
(1) Science
(1) Social Science
and/or other

4 CORE COURSES

12th GRADE

(1) English
(1) Math
(1) Science
(1) Social Science
and/or other

4 CORE COURSES

CONTACT THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

U.S. and Canada (except Quebec):
877-262-1492 (toll free), Monday-Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time



[@ncaaec](https://twitter.com/ncaaec) [@ncaaec](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCncaaec) [@ncaaec](https://www.facebook.com/ncaaec) [@playcollegesports](https://www.instagram.com/playcollegesports)



ELIGIBILITY CENTER

NCAA is a trademark of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. September 2023.

Part IX

Financial Aid

Another key component in the college application process is financial aid.

Before diving into more specifics about the financial aid process, here are some important terms to know:

- **FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), the financial aid form for students who are US citizens and permanent residents: studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa
- **CA DREAM ACT:** The financial aid form for students who are undocumented, including DACA students: dream.csac.ca.gov
- **CSS Profile:** The CSS Profile is an online application used by colleges and scholarship programs to award Institutional (their own) aid. Reference the CSS participating schools list to confirm requirements and deadlines.
- **COA:** Cost of Attendance, the full cost of attending a particular college, which includes tuition/fees, books, housing etc.
- **SAI:** Student Aid Index. This number is used by financial aid officers to determine financial need. SAI is very similar to its recent predecessor, the EFC or Expected Family Contribution. The SAI formulas use the financial information students provide on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) or California Dream Act (for specific undocumented students) to calculate the SAI. Financial aid administrators subtract the SAI from students' cost of attendance (COA) to determine their need for the following federal financial assistance offered by the U.S. Department of Education: Federal Pell Grants, Subsidized Stafford Loans through the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Federal Perkins Loans, and Federal Work-Study (FWS).

Basic Financial Aid Formula: $COA - SAI = Need$

- **Types of Financial Aid:**

- **Scholarships:** Free money. Some are merit based while others are need based. Students apply for these individually; check Naviance for the most up to date information on scholarships available.
- **Grants:** More free money
 - **Cal Grants:** A, B, C (Need based entitlement grants)
 - **Middle Class Scholarship:** Need based
 - **CHAFEE Grant:** Grant for foster youth
 - **Pell Grant:** Federal government grantsLearn more: www.csac.ca.gov and studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants
- **Loans:** Must be paid back. Know the terms of your loan and how much debt you might incur. Certain loans are better than others, talk with your college counselor if you have questions.
- **Work Study:** Money that you can earn by working an on-campus job. This is money that is paid directly to you that may be used for personal expenses.

FAFSA

The **FAFSA** is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This application must be filled out in order to determine your eligibility for federal financial aid. Before filling out the FAFSA, please collect the information listed below:

- Social Security Number: both yours and your parents'
- Alien Registration Number: if you are not a citizen
- Your and your parents' 2024 1040 or income taxes and W-2's

- Bank statements
- Any records of untaxed income: child support, Social Security benefits, welfare benefits
- List of colleges/universities you are interested in attending
- Parent Marital Status: date of marriage or divorce
- Household Size

FAFSA Submission

In order to submit your FAFSA online, you and your parents will need to create an FSA ID. Think of the FSA ID as an electronic signature to sign FAFSA with. When a student and parent each create an FSA ID, it verifies the student's and parent's Social Security Number. If your parent does not have a Social Security Number, speak with your college counselor. The verification of an FSA ID requires unique email addresses for each user.

Net Price Calculators are available on university websites. A net price calculator will help a family estimate the financial aid (often need-based aid) that their student would qualify for upon admission. Net price calculators are strongly recommended for a family to understand financial fit when creating a college list.

AB 540 Students

Undocumented students can be charged out-of-state tuition fees, which are more than double the cost for legal residents. However they can become an AB 540 student to receive regular in-state tuition fees, if they meet the following criteria:

- Have completed at least 3 years of a combination of elementary, middle, or high school in California or have earned the equivalent of three years of credit from a California high school
- Have graduated or will graduate from a California high school
- Must sign an affidavit that states you will begin the process to legalize your residency as soon as you are able to do so.

Go to: www.csac.ca.gov/undocumented-dreamer-students

AB 540 Students and Financial Aid

With the passage of AB 131 and AB 540, eligible students may file for benefits including Cal Grants and State University Grants. Instead of the FAFSA, eligible students would use a separate application from the California Student Aid Commission called the Dream Act: dream.csac.ca.gov

CA Dream Act

The CA Dream Act gives students financial aid from the state of California. Student and parent financial information is shared with the California Student Aid Commission and the financial aid offices at the colleges the student is applying to (not the federal government). To complete the CA Dream Act students will need the following documents/information:

- You and your parents' 2024 1040 or income taxes and W-2's information
- Bank statements
- Any records of untaxed income: child support, Social Security Benefits, welfare benefits
- Month and year you and your parents moved to CA
- List of colleges/universities you are interested in attending
- Parent Marital Status: date of marriage or divorce
- Household Size
- DACA number, if you have one

After students submit the FAFSA or CA Dream Act Application, they are encouraged to establish a **WebGrants 4 Students** account to monitor their state financial aid.

Part X

Scholarships

Scholarship Tips

Please keep in mind the FAFSA and the California Dream Act Application are used to award Cal Grants, State Grants, and Board of Governors Fee Waivers. To supplement your financial aid, please remember to check Naviance for up-to-date scholarships. For additional scholarship information, please visit the following websites:

www.hsf.net

www.latinocollegedollars.org

<https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/>

www.scholarships.com

www.myscholly.com

www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources/

www.fastweb.com

www.salliemae.com

www.goingmerry.com

www.appily.com/scholarships

Part XI

Resources

Websites

Naviance

naviance.com

College Research

Big Future

www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org

Fiske Guide to College

www.fiskeguide.com

Princeton Review

www.princetonreview.com

Peterson's

www.petersons.com

CollegeNet

www.collegenet.com

Colleges of Distinction

www.collegesofdistinction.com

Western Undergraduate Exchange

www.wiche.com/wue

Search 4 Career Colleges

www.search4careercolleges.com

U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard

collegescorecard.ed.gov

Colleges That Change Lives

www.ctcl.org

Database of Higher Ed Institutions

www.findaschool.org

Women's College Coalition

www.womenscolleges.org

Test Prep & Information

www.collegeboard.org
www.act.org
www.khanacademy.org
www.number2.com
www.kaplan.com

Applications

www.commonapp.org
www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org
www2.calstate.edu/apply
apply.universityofcalifornia.edu
www.cccapply.org

Essay

UC
<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/applying-as-a-freshman/personal-insight-questions.html>

The College Essay Guy
www.collegeessayguy.com/college-application-hub
www.youtube.com/channel

Your Steps to College
www.yourstepstocollege.com

College Miscellaneous

Info For College-Bound Athletes
www.ncaa.org

College Newspapers & Local Papers
www.newslink.org

Public University Honors Programs
publicuniversityhonors.com

Education Conservancy
www.educationconservancy.org

Test Optional Universities
www.fairtest.org/university/optional

Academic & Adventure Summer Camps

www.educationunlimited.com
www.summerfuel.com
www.supercamp.com
www.summerdiscovery.com
www.adventurecamp.com

Career Exploration

www.mappingyourfuture.org
www.myfuture.com
www.onetonline.org
www.self-directed-search.com

Military

ROTC Information
www.bestcolleges.com/resources/rotcprograms

AFROTC
www.afrotc.com

NROTC
www.nrotc.navy.mil

Army ROTC
www.goarmy.com/rotc.html

Army
www.goarmy.com

Air Force
www.airforce.com

Navy
www.navy.com

Marines
www.marines.com

Coast Guard
www.gocoastguard.com

International Colleges and Universities

British Council (Study in the UK)
www.britishcouncil.us

4International - International School Database
www.4icu.org

Association of American International Colleges & Universities
www.aaicu.org

Education Ireland:
www.educationinireland.com

Top Universities - Study in Europe:
www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/region/europe/guide

Study in Europe.eu: www.studyineurope.eu

The Complete University Guide:
www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

Top Universities - Study in Asia:
www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/region/asia/guide

Financial Aid Information

www.ed.gov
www.finaid.org
www.fafsa.ed.gov
www.csac.ca.gov
dream.csac.ca.gov
www.fastweb.com
www.gocollege.com
www.fastaid.com
www.scholarships.com

California Colleges

www.californiacolleges.edu

Independent CA Colleges & Universities
www.aiccu.edu

University of California (UC)

Office of Admissions
www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions

A-G Guide
www.ucop.edu/agguide

Berkeley
www.berkeley.edu

Davis
www.ucdavis.edu

Irvine
www.uci.edu

Los Angeles
www.ucla.edu

Merced
www.ucmerced.edu

Riverside
www.ucr.edu

San Diego
www.ucsd.edu

San Francisco (Graduate Programs Only)
www.ucsf.edu

Santa Barbara
www.ucsb.edu

Santa Cruz
www.ucsc.edu

California State University (CSU)

CSU System Information
www.calstate.edu

Bakersfield
www.csub.edu

Chico
www.csuchico.edu

Dominguez Hills
www.csudh.edu

East Bay
www.csueastbay.edu

Fresno
www.csufresno.edu

Fullerton
www.fullerton.edu

Humboldt
www.humboldt.edu

Long Beach
www.csulb.edu

Los Angeles
www.calstatela.edu

Cal Poly Maritime Academy
maritime.calpoly.edu

Monterey Bay
www.csumb.edu

Northridge
www.csun.edu

Cal Poly Pomona
www.cpp.edu

Stanislaus
www.csus.edu

San Bernardino
www.csusb.edu

San Diego
www.sdsu.edu

San Francisco
www.sfsu.edu

San Jose
www.sjsu.edu

San Luis Obispo
www.calpoly.edu

San Marcos
www.csusm.edu

Sonoma
www.sonoma.edu

Stanislaus
www.csustan.edu

Community College Information

American Association of Community Colleges
www.aacc.nche.edu

CA Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
www.cccco.edu

Statewide Transfer Info for CA
www.assist.org

Associate Degree For Transfer
icangotocollege.com/associate-degree-for-transfer

UC Transfer Admission Guarantee
universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/transfer-requirements/uc-transfer-programs/transfer-admission-guarantee-tag.html

Local Community College Campuses

Foothill College
www.foothill.edu

De Anza College
www.deanza.edu

Mission College
www.missioncollege.org

West Valley College
www.westvalley.edu

San José City College
www.sjcc.edu

Evergreen Valley College
www.evc.edu

Recommended Reading

Books

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance
by Angela Duckworth

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success
by Carol S. Dweck

Mi Voz, Mi Vida: Latino College Students Tell Their Life Stories
by Andrew Garrod & Robert Kilkenny

Colleges That Change Lives
by Loren Pope

College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step by Step
by Robin Hamlet & Christine Vandevolve

There Is Life After College
by Jeffrey J. Selingo

Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be
by Frank Bruni

Colleges That Create Futures
by Princeton Review

How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success
by Julie Lythcott-Haims

Your Turn: How to Be an Adult
by Julie Lythcott-Haims

Who Gets In and Why
by Jeffrey J. Selingo

The College Solution: A guide for Everyone Looking for the Right School at the Right Price
by Lynn O'Shaughnessy

Articles

Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good Through College Admissions
tinyurl.com/TurningTideGSE

Turning the Tide II: How Parents and High Schools Can Cultivate Ethical Character and Reduce Distress in the College Admissions Process
tinyurl.com/TurningTideGSE2

How to Survive the College Admissions Madness
tinyurl.com/SurviveMadness

14 Reasons Why US News College Rankings are Meaningless
tinyurl.com/RankingsMeaningless

How to get the Most out of College
tinyurl.com/MostoutofCollege

More than 300 college deans explain what they want – and don't want – to see from applicants in the COVID-19 era
tinyurl.com/CollegeDeans

Part XII

Worksheets

Creating a Professional Email Address

As students prepare for the last 2 years of high school, it is important to understand the importance of having a professional email address. While all students have an mvla.net account, many prefer to use a personal email account. Here are some tips as you create or modify your email account:

- Please have an appropriate email address, as this is the email you will list on all of your college related applications. etc. Nicknames or inappropriate words should not be used.
- After having submitted any type of applications, please be sure to check your email! Colleges and universities send you emails regarding your next steps as an applicant, instructions, and required or missing documents. It is very rare that you will actually receive paper mail.
- For students planning to compete in athletics in college, it is a good idea to create an “athletic-recruiting” email address that includes your graduation year. College coaches associate you with your graduation year and position, such as: **SammySpartan2019@Gmail.com**, **EddieEagleGoalie2020@Gmail.com**

To help you keep track of your email, you can use the space provided below to record your email username and password.

Username and Passwords

ACCOUNT	
USERNAME	
PASSWORD	

ACCOUNT	
USERNAME	
PASSWORD	

ACCOUNT	
USERNAME	
PASSWORD	

Next page: **Junior and Senior checklists**

JUNIOR YEAR

AUGUST

- ☐ Make sure you are meeting graduation requirements
- ☐ Make sure you are meeting “A–G” course eligibility requirements for UC/CSU
- ☐ Discuss any course changes with School Counselor
- ☐ Update your resume in the Naviance account and add colleges to your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list
- ☐ Plan a strategy to achieve the SAT and/or ACT scores you want, using study guides, preparation courses, Khan Academy (free online prep)

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Visit College and Career Center website to investigate resources
- ☐ Continue with community service and club activities during school year
- ☐ Register with NCAA Clearinghouse by end of Junior year if you want to play competitive sports in college (Division I or II); discuss with your coach(es)
- ☐ Register for SAT and/or ACT, AP Exams
- ☐ All Juniors are automatically registered for the PSAT but can opt to take the SAT (LAHS)
- ☐ Attend college visits in the CCC or virtually
- ☐ Attend College Fairs virtually or in-person, mini-college fairs (MVHS)
- ☐ Attend the MVLA District College Fair

OCTOBER

- ☐ Junior Parent College Night (MVHS)
- ☐ Complete all Naviance self-discovery assessments (LAHS)
- ☐ Discuss college finances with parents (Will you qualify for need-based aid? If not then you should focus on merit-based aid or scholarships.)

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Continue keeping a list of colleges, careers, and majors that may interest you
- ☐ Reflect on learning styles you enjoy: in-class discussions, Socratic seminars, or lectures. For classes you really enjoy, why do you enjoy them? For classes you are not as strong in, how do you improve your learning?
- ☐ Research college visits, in-person visits are

preferable, but virtual ones are more convenient

- ☐ Visit local college(s) over Thanksgiving break

DECEMBER

- ☐ Prepare for your finals, finish strong

JANUARY

- ☐ Attend Junior Interview appointment with School Counselor (JAN – MARCH) (LAHS)
- ☐ Register for Senior year courses
- ☐ Continue to work hard in classroom, keep grades up
- ☐ Continue all activities (community service, extracurricular activities, volunteering)
- ☐ Check the testing requirements for your colleges on each college website
- ☐ Register and prepare for SAT/ACT
- ☐ Review PSAT scores with your Math and English teachers (LAHS)
- ☐ Attend College Counselor Process Presentation
- ☐ College Process Presentation in US History classes (MVHS)
- ☐ Make an appointment to meet with College Counselor
- ☐ Research and sign up for summer programs and internships (when possible)
- ☐ Read this Handbook!

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Attend your Junior Interview with your School Counselor (FEB - MAR)
- ☐ Make list of your top 10 –15 colleges, investigate them
- ☐ Visit colleges during February break
- ☐ Get College Sports information sheet from coaches if applicable
- ☐ Explore careers/majors in more depth: visit CCC
- ☐ Attend workshops hosted by the CCC for college lists or college essay writing (MVHS)

MARCH

- ☐ Research and sign up for summer internships (when possible)
- ☐ Check your colleges’ website for SAT/ACT requirement

JUNIOR YEAR cont.

- ☐ Take SAT and/or ACT
- ☐ Check your transcript for errors, talk to School Counselor if corrections are needed
- ☐ Keep your grades up

APRIL – MAY

- ☐ Visit colleges during Spring break
- ☐ Naviance: update Resume, begin Counselor Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire (MVHS)
- ☐ Take AP Exams in MAY
- ☐ Continue to research colleges; focus on fit (academic, social, financial) rather than college rankings
- ☐ Ask two teachers for recommendations based on who knows you best, some colleges prefer that teachers be from your Junior year and from core academic subjects
- ☐ Take SAT and/or ACT, if you are applying to schools that require testing
- ☐ Parent College Night for Junior Parents (not a student event) (LAHS)
- ☐ Review SAT/ACT scores with College Advisor, decide about re-testing and whether to take a preparation course or workshop
- ☐ Continue to develop Art/Music/Drama portfolio, if applicable
- ☐ Talk to coach to obtain video of sports highlights if applicable
- ☐ Attend local College Fairs (WACAC, NACAC) as well as the MVLA District Countdown to College event
- ☐ Register for the CCC College Application Bootcamp (MVHS)

MAY – AUGUST

- ☐ Naviance: Continue to add to resume and revise college lists
- ☐ Narrow down your college list to 6 -10 schools (not including UC and CSU campuses)
- ☐ Attend Counselor Letter of Recommendation information session (LAHS)
- ☐ Continue to collect information on your top colleges, majors, and career choices
- ☐ Take summer classes if interested (community college/4 year college/ Independent Learning schools)

SENIOR YEAR

- ☐ Volunteer or get work experience
- ☐ Check college websites for access to college essay prompts (UCs open app AUG 1)
- ☐ Take test preparation classes if you are taking tests in SEPT/OCT, if appropriate
- ☐ Visit more colleges during the summer
- ☐ Decide if you will apply Early Decision/Early Action
- ☐ Create the first draft of UC personal insight questions, if applicable

AUGUST

- ☐ Attend College Application Boot Camp (immediately before school begins)
- ☐ Complete all Naviance information for School Counselors (resume, survey) (MVHS)
- ☐ Attend School Counselor Letter of Recommendation Workshop (LAHS)
- ☐ Continue to edit “Colleges I’m thinking about” list in Naviance
- ☐ Complete Counselor College Application Packet
- ☐ Register for additional testing
- ☐ Check transcripts to make sure any errors are corrected
- ☐ Continue to work on college essays (get prompts from college websites/Common Application when available)
- ☐ Begin online college application for the colleges you are definitely applying to
- ☐ Research if your colleges track demonstrated interest, and if so, interact with those colleges to accrue interest
- ☐ Add your name to college contact lists online, if applicable
- ☐ UC online application opens AUG 1; create account if appropriate
- ☐ Common Application online opens AUG 1; create your account if appropriate
- ☐ Attend individual appointment with School Counselor (AUG - OCT)
- ☐ Check CCC website and individual college websites for scholarship opportunities throughout the year, deadlines will vary

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Register for AP Exams

SENIOR YEAR cont.

- ☐ Make an appointment with College Counselor
- ☐ Finalize college list
- ☐ College Process Presentation for all Seniors
- ☐ Visit College and Career Center
- ☐ Attend college visits in the CCC and the MVLA College Fair
- ☐ Schedule further testing (SAT/ACT), if necessary
- ☐ Senior parent night (MVHS)
- ☐ College Process Presentation for parents (LAHS)

OCTOBER

- ☐ UC and CSU online application submissions open OCT 1
- ☐ Create first draft of UC personal insight questions, if applicable
- ☐ Complete essays for ED/EA if you are applying early
- ☐ Complete applications for EA/ED, rolling admission
- ☐ FAFSA, Dream Act and CSS Profile application available OCT 1, check individual colleges for financial aid deadlines

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Continue working on applications and essays for all colleges
- ☐ Work on CSS Profile if your college choice requires it
- ☐ Research if your colleges accept self-reporting of SAT/ACT scores or require official score reports
- ☐ For colleges that require official test scores (SAT/ACT) send your scores through your CollegeBoard/ACT account
- ☐ Complete the CSS profile if required by college for financial aid

DECEMBER

- ☐ UC and CSU application deadline is DEC 1
- ☐ Continue working on essays/applications for private colleges and out-of-state colleges
- ☐ Check your college accounts/portals to make sure your file is complete
- ☐ Complete all testing (ACT/SAT) the last date to take test for some colleges
- ☐ Early Decision/Early Action decisions released
- ☐ Early Decision Admits must withdraw from all other colleges they applied to

- ☐ Self-advocate with counselors and teachers for any Regular Decision applications before the start of winter break

JANUARY

- ☐ Regular decision deadline for most Common Application colleges JAN 1
- ☐ Continue working on FAFSA/Dream Act if not complete and submitted
- ☐ Send thank you notes to teachers and counselors for writing your recommendation
- ☐ Keep checking your portal/email for correspondence from College Admission and Financial Aid Offices
- ☐ Check for Mid-year requirements for non-Common App colleges

FEBRUARY – MARCH

- ☐ FAFSA/Dream Act Deadline MAR 2
- ☐ Most Priority deadlines for CSS Profile are in FEB
- ☐ Check for assessment test requirements and dates, if applicable, on college website
- ☐ Regular Admissions decisions released throughout MARCH

APRIL

- ☐ Send Intent to Register to college of your choice, and send Withdraw Notification to all other colleges you are not attending by MAY 1
- ☐ If you are taking a Gap Year you must notify and receive confirmation from your college in writing
- ☐ Check for housing or any other deadlines

MAY

- ☐ National College Decision Day: Send deposit by MAY 1 to college you are attending
- ☐ Make sure final transcript is sent to college you are going to attend
- ☐ Complete Senior Survey (MVHS)
- ☐ Take AP Exams
- ☐ Attend Senior Awards

JUNE

- ☐ Senior Clearance (LAHS)
- ☐ Graduation



Take advantage of all the resources offered by the College & Career Center!

Spring

- Countdown to College
- Community College Workshops
- Junior Appointments
- Workshops during Tutorial/ACT
- Drop-in Hours

Summer

- UC Application Seminar
- One-on-One Counseling Appointments
- Application Boot Camp

Fall

- College Information Sessions – over 100 colleges visit each year
- College Fair – over 70 representatives in one night
- Mini College Fairs at lunchtime
- Junior Parent Night
- Senior Parent Night
- UC and CSU Night
- Financial Aid Night
- Senior Appointments
- Workshops during Tutorial/ACT
- Drop-in Hours
- College Essay Feedback



Funded by your