

# Ins and Outs of Applying Outside the California Public Universities

Margaret A. Rice, PGHS Counseling, 22 April 2026



# PGHS: Looking Ahead

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Information & Support

Activity		Presented by	Timeline
Senior Review	Individual student meeting	Counselor	August/September
Senior Shorts	Lunchtime & classroom presentations	Counselor	August/September
Apples to Apps Workshops	College Applications Support	PGHS College and Career Center	October-November
Applying to College: Information for the Class of 2027	Evening presentation	Counselor	September
Financial Aid Night	Evening presentation	Guest Speaker	January
FAFSA Cash for College Workshops	Evening workshops	Guest Presenters	October-February

# PGHS College and Career Center

Mr. Kent Leatham

[kleatham@pgusd.org](mailto:kleatham@pgusd.org)

PGHS Library

- MPC Dual Enrollment Registration Support
- College Fair (Fall and Spring)
- College Application Assistance
- Mock Interviews for Seniors
- College Search Assistance
- College Representative Visits
- MPC Registration for Seniors (March/April)
- Community Service Opportunities
- Individual appointments available for students at every grade level, upon request.

# Applying to College: What Are the Options?



- California Community College
- California Public University
  - University of California campuses (UC)
  - California State University (CSU)
- Private College
- Out of State Public University
- International University

# Exploring College Options Presentation



- SAT/ACT Information
- Overview of the College Options Available to students
- Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) Tuitions Savings
- Californiacolleges.edu tools
- Creating a Balanced College List
- Suggestions for Junior Year
  - Parchment Accounts
  - Campus Tours
  - College Fairs
  - College/Career Exploration
  - Community Service
- And more!



# Exploring College Options Presentation★

Class of 2027

# Early Action (EA)

# Early Decision (ED)



# General Information about ED & EA

- Roughly 450+ schools in the US offer an Early Action (EA) or Early Decision (ED) option (about 10% of US colleges and universities).
  - The UC/CSU do not offer ED or EA.
  - Private or out-of-state schools are more likely to offer ED and EA options.
- ED and EA have earlier application deadlines and admissions notifications.
- **ED is best for students who have completed their college research and are confident in their first choice college or university.**

[Early Decision and Early Action – Counselors | College Board](#) 

# Early Decision (ED)

- Students can only apply for ED to one school.
- ED applications are typically due in November. Students should check the deadline for each school they are considering for Early Decision as the deadline varies school to school.
- ED applicants receive admissions decisions in December.
- There can be higher admissions rates at some selective schools applying ED, especially for ED I admissions.
- While students can apply regular decision or EA to other schools, if admitted to their first choice school *Early Decision*, they must withdraw their applications to all other schools.
- Because an ED application is binding, colleges typically require ED applicants, their parents, and the school counselor sign a form stating the student understands the application is binding. Binding means the student agrees to enroll if accepted. **Ensure you make time for this step before you application is due.**

[What to Know About College Early Action and Early Decision | Applying to College | U.S. News.](#) 

# Early Decision I vs Early Decision II

- The primary difference between Early Decision I and Early Decision II are the deadlines and notification dates.
- For **Early Decision I**, the application deadline is typically early November, and you'll receive an admission decision in mid-December.
- In contrast, **Early Decision II** has a deadline in early January and notification comes in mid-February.
- Admissions rates are often more generous in the Early Decision I cycle.
- Early Decision II allows students more time to submit their applications as well as submit Semester 1 senior grades.

# What does Binding mean?

- A binding agreement in college applications refers to a commitment to attend a school if accepted through an Early Decision (ED) application plan.
- Binding agreements are not legally binding.
- However, if a student chooses to break an Early Decision agreement with a school, it may impact other admissions offers as schools share their ED lists with each other.
- Carefully review the ED agreement. Financial aid offers may include more loans than gift/grant aid than your family can afford.
- In cases with legit reasons, such as family illness, extenuating circumstance, change in financial circumstances, etc. the agreements *may* be broken.

# Early Decision Pros and Cons

## Pros

Students receive an admissions decision earlier.

There *can be* increased admissions rate for ED applicants, especially in ED I.

Applications are completed and done early in the school year.

You will need to submit your FAFSA as early as possible after October 1.

## Cons

Binding contract: You must attend the school if admitted ED.

You may not know the financial aid offers from other schools before you are accepted ED to your number one school.

You can only apply ED to one school.

You will need to submit your FAFSA as early as possible after October 1.

# Early Action (EA)

- **Non-Binding:** Students are not required to attend the college if they are accepted. This allows them to weigh their options and compare offers from other schools.
- **No Limit to Early Action Applications:** This is true for all Early Action options except for *Restrictive Early Action*.
- **Shows Demonstrated Interest:** By applying early, you're demonstrating to the college that you're serious about attending and invested in their program.
- **Earlier Admissions Notifications:** Receiving a decision earlier in the Spring can relieve stress and allow students to have more time to focus on other aspects of senior year.
- **Financial Aid:** With Early Action, students may receive their financial aid and scholarship information sooner, which can help them make a more informed decision about which college to attend.

# Restrictive Early Action (REA)

- Also can be referred to as “**Single Choice Early Action.**”
- Is a non-binding way that students can demonstrate that a school is their number one choice.
- The caveat to REA, is that, typically, you may not apply to any other private college/university under their Early Action, Restrictive Early Action, Early Decision, or Early Notification plan.
  - **Ensure you carefully review each Restrictive Early Action agreement before you apply.**

## Non-Restrictive Application Plans

### Regular Decision

Students apply by a specified deadline and receive a decision by a designated date, usually in late March or early April. UC/CSU application deadlines: Nov. 30 2026.

**Non-Binding**

### Rolling Admission

Students submit applications once the window opens and schools review applications as they 'roll-in'. Schools make admission decisions throughout the admissions cycle.

**Non-Binding**

### Early Action (EA)

Students apply earlier in the admissions cycle and receive a decision well in advance of the school's regular decision date. Students have until May 1 to make a decision.

**Non-Binding**

## Restrictive Application Plans

### Restrictive Early Action (REA)

Like EA, but students are likely restricted from applying ED, EA, or REA to more than one school. If offered REA, students still have until May 1 to make a decision.

**Non-Binding**

### Early Decision (ED)

Students commit to a first-choice school. If admitted to the school, you **MUST** enroll. If the student applied to any other school's regular decision, they are required to withdraw their applications.

**Binding!**

You are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider your options and confirm

You are responsible for following all restrictions for your admissions plan

# Interesting Articles about Early Decision & Early Action

- [11 Colleges Where Early Applicants Have an Edge](#) (US News & World Report) ★
- [3 Reasons to Skip Applying to College Early](#) (US News & World Report) ★
- [Early Decision Schools That Double Admission Odds - College Kickstart](#) ★
- [Early Action and Early Decision Deadlines](#) (List of Schools) ★

University of Vermont	Early Decision and Early Action	93.7% (ED)	65.3%	132 (tie), National Universities
Moravian University (PA)	Early Action	92.10%	54.2%	38 (tie), Regional Universities (North)
Augustana College (IL)	Early Decision and Early Action	89.8% (ED)	62.8%	96 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges
Southern Methodist University (TX)	Early Decision and Early Action	87.4% (ED)	63.3%	88 (tie), National Universities
Providence College (RI)	Early Decision and Early Action	85.5% (ED)	50.9%	2, Regional Universities (North)
Santa Clara University (CA)	Early Decision and Early Action	80.1% (ED)	48.0%	59 (tie), National Universities
Fairfield University (CT)	Early Decision and Early Action	79.8% (ED)	33.3%	139 (tie), National Universities
Illinois Wesleyan University	Early Action	69.60%	39.3%	2, Regional Colleges (Midwest)
Tulane University (LA)	Early Decision and Early Action	58.9% (ED)	14.0%	69 (tie), National Universities
University of Miami (FL)	Early Decision and Early Action	48.8% (EA)	18.9%	64 (tie), National Universities

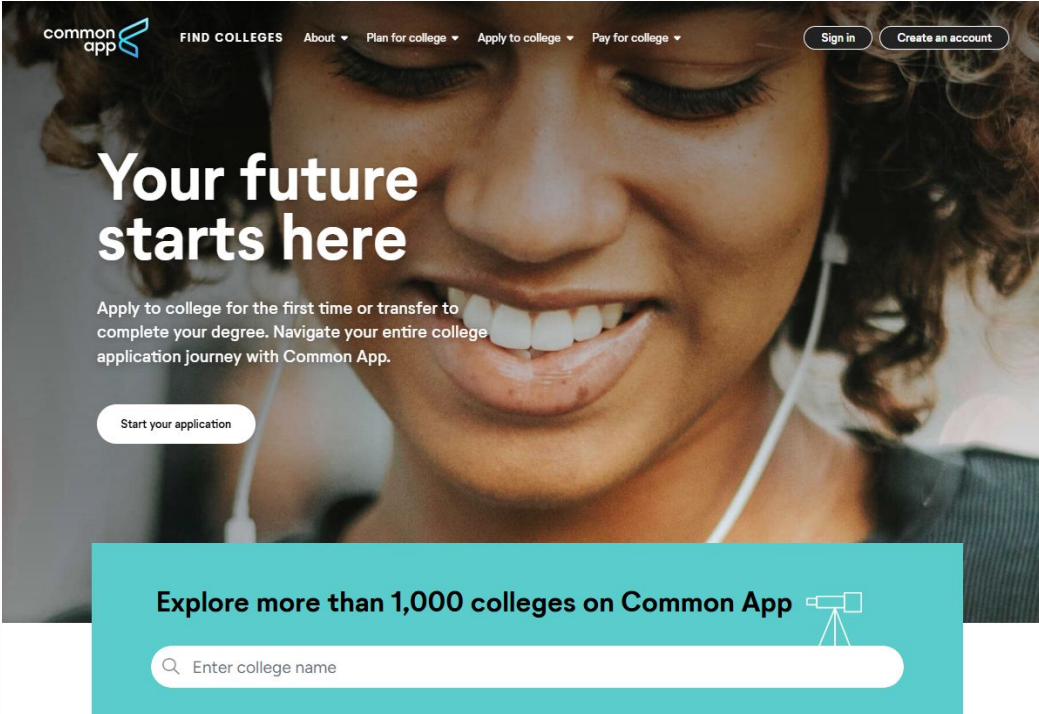


Source: 2026 U.S. News Best Colleges

\*Some colleges defer some applicants to the regular admissions pool, where they have an additional chance of admittance, so the percentage of early applicants who are eventually accepted may be higher.

# Common Application (App)

## Common App ★



The screenshot shows the Common App website homepage. At the top left is the 'common app' logo. To its right is a navigation menu with 'FIND COLLEGES' and several dropdown options: 'About', 'Plan for college', 'Apply to college', and 'Pay for college'. On the far right of the top bar are 'Sign in' and 'Create an account' buttons. The main content area features a large background image of a smiling woman with curly hair wearing headphones. Overlaid on this image is the text 'Your future starts here' in a large, bold, white font. Below this is a smaller white text block: 'Apply to college for the first time or transfer to complete your degree. Navigate your entire college application journey with Common App.' A white button with the text 'Start your application' is positioned below the text. At the bottom of the page, there is a teal banner with the text 'Explore more than 1,000 colleges on Common App' and a search bar containing the placeholder text 'Enter college name' and a magnifying glass icon.

common app

FIND COLLEGES About Plan for college Apply to college Pay for college

Sign in Create an account

## Your future starts here

Apply to college for the first time or transfer to complete your degree. Navigate your entire college application journey with Common App.

Start your application

Explore more than 1,000 colleges on Common App

Enter college name

# What is the Common App?

- Online platform that students use to apply to multiple colleges and universities with a single application.
- An estimated 1000 colleges and universities worldwide participate, making it a widely used application system.
- Allows students to fill out standardized information like name, address, and extracurricular activities only once.
- Opens on August 1st each year
  - Students can create and explore the website before it opens for applications.

[5 Things You Need to Know About the Common App - College and Career Readiness | ACT](#) 

# Common App Additional Options & Requirements

- Letters of Recommendation (LOR)
  - While the UC/CSU do not generally require Letters of Recommendation, many private schools do require LORs.
  - Students will need to complete and submit their PGHS Brag Sheets to each teacher/counselor they are requesting LOR from.
- Common App Personal Essays vs UC Personal Insight Questions
  - Not all schools on the Common App require a Personal Essay, but many do.
  - While often exploring similar themes, the writing style and expectations for the Personal Essay and UC Insight Questions are different.
- Supplemental Essays, in addition to the Personal Essay, for Individual Schools
- Offer Regular Decision, Early Action, and Early Decision Options

## My Colleges

California Institute of Technology (Caltech) ▾

Stanford University ▲

College Information

## Application

Questions

Recommenders and FERPA

Review and Submit - Common App

The University of Arizona ▾

University of Washington ▾

Yale University

## Stanford University

[admission@stanford.edu](mailto:admission@stanford.edu) · Phone [\(650\) 723-2091](tel:(650)723-2091) ·

Fax (650) 725-2846

Montag Hall  
355 Galvez Street  
Stanford, CA 94305-6106  
USA



## Application deadlines

## Fall 2025

**Restrictive Early Action** · November 01, 2024**Regular Decision** · January 05, 2025

## Links

- [College website](#)
- [Admissions office](#)
- [Financial aid](#)
- [Virtual tour](#)
- [College Navigator](#)



## Other deadline information

If you intend to submit an [Optional Arts Portfolio](#), your application **must** be submitted by October 15 for Restrictive Early Action (REA) or December 5 for Regular Decision (RD). Your School Report form, teacher/counselor letters of recommendation, and transcript(s) can be submitted by November 1 (REA) or January 5 (RD).

## Application information

Need help?




Can a college see the list of colleges on the My Colleges list?

A school cannot view any other schools on your **My Colleges** list and does not receive any information [Read more](#)

When is the deadline for my application submission?  
To meet an application deadline, you must submit your application materials by 11:59 pm on the deadline [Read more](#)

Common App College Search Financial Aid

**Stanford University**  
[admission@stanford.edu](mailto:admission@stanford.edu) · Phone (650) 723-2091 ·  
 Fax (650) 725-2846  
 Montag Hall  
 355 Galvez Street  
 Stanford, CA 94305-6106  
 USA







**Application deadlines**

Fall 2025  
 Restrictive Early Action · November 01, 2024  
 Regular Decision · January 05, 2025

**Links**

- [College website](#)
- [Admissions office](#)
- [Financial aid](#)
- [Virtual tour](#)
- [College Navigator](#)

**All students applying on the Common App need the Counselor to submit a School Report.**



Application information ^

**Application Fees:**

- First Year International Fee - \$90
- First Year Domestic Fee - \$90

**Standardized test policy:** ?


- Never required
- [Test Policy Information](#)

**Accepted English proficiency tests:**  
[See website](#)

**Courses & Grades:**  
 Required

**Recommendations:**

- School Report Required
- Counselor Recommendation Required
- Mid Year Report Required
- Final Report Required
- Teacher Evaluation(s): 2 Required, 0 Optional
- Other Evaluation(s): 0 Required, 1 Optional



**In addition to Teacher Evaluations, DOUBLE CHECK that you do not need a COUNSELOR LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION.**

## What is a Common App fee waiver?

Common App and member colleges want to make sure that application fees do not pose a barrier for any student. If you meet certain qualifications, you can request Common App fee waivers.

- You are enrolled in or eligible to participate in the federal free or reduced price lunch program (FRPL).
- Your annual family income falls within the income eligibility guidelines set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

- To complete the PGUSD Free and Reduced Meal application, please use the secure form:  
<https://lingconnect.com/public/meal-application/new?identifier=5762A8>
- The Common App, UC, and CSU use the same criteria, eligibility in the National School Lunch Program, for college application fee waivers.



# Letters of Recommendation



# Letter of Recommendation

- A Letter of Recommendation is a letter written by someone who can speak to the student's work or academic performance.
- The Letter of Recommendation should give a picture of the candidate's personal characteristics, performance and experience, strengths, capabilities, and academic promise.
- The recommender should be someone who has experience with the student.
- Many colleges and universities require a counselor Letter of Recommendation. Your grade-level counselor, [Mrs. Rice](#), will write your counselor letter.
- **All students applying on the Common App need the Counselor to submit a School Report.**
- The college selection committees rely on these letters to assist in making final admissions decisions. LOR provide a more complete picture of the student.

# Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

1. Confirm you need a Letter of Recommendation (LOR) for your school(s).
  - *Please note that Community Colleges, the UC, and the CSU do not require LOR.*
2. Confirm the deadline(s) your Letters of Recommendation must be submitted.
3. **Always, request your letter in person or via email before sending your recommender an official request.**
4. If your school use the Common App for admissions, be sure to request your counselor and or teacher LOR through the Common App.
  - Most teachers will not start your LOR until they receive official notification from the Common App.
5. Ensure you request your letter **at least two weeks** before the deadline.
  - Account for breaks, holidays, and weekends.

# Selecting a Recommender

- Request Letters of Recommendation from:
  - At least one teacher who teaches a core subject: English, mathematics, science, or social studies
  - A teacher who teaches the subject you plan to study or major in
  - Who has a positive impression of you as a student
  - Has taught you recently or has current experience working with you
    - For example, a teacher who has taught you in class and/or is an advisor for a club or activity you participated in
  - Your grade-level school counselor, Mrs. Rice, will submit your School Report and counselor letter of recommendation, if required.
  - ***Subject Area Teacher as requested on the application***

Do you waive your  
FERPA rights to view  
your Letter of  
Recommendation?

*What does that mean!?*



- It is simply asking if you waive the right to read your LOR before or after it is submitted to the colleges.
- Selecting to waive your rights lets colleges know that you are not reading your recommendations, which can help them trust that the letters are honest and candid.

# Pacific Grove High School Brag Sheet

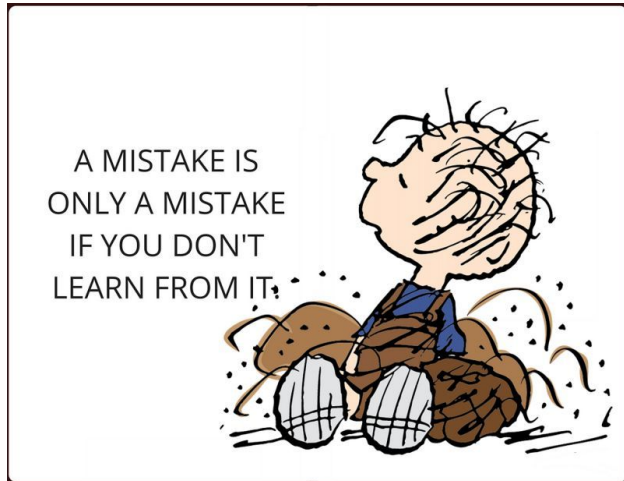


- A brag sheet is a document that lists a student's accomplishments, experiences, and other information that can help recommenders and admissions officers learn more about the student.
- Is less formal and contains more 'personality' than a resume.
- Provides the student an opportunity personally highlight their accomplishments, extracurriculars, and goals as suggestions to a letter writer of what they might showcase in the letter.
- Can be an opportunity for the student to organize their thoughts and ideas for their college applications.
- Is a **key tool recommenders use** to write an individualized Letters of Recommendation.

# Tips for Completing Your Brag Sheet

- Provide Concrete Examples
  - **Show, don't just tell.** Include additional details that illustrate how the characteristic, trait, or adjective describes you.
- Proudly share your accomplishments
  - It might feel uncomfortable (or a little liberating!) to talk about the wonderful things about yourself, but sharing the information helps your recommender write a letter that reflects the true you!
- **Be organized and use proper grammar.** The Brag Sheet is another opportunity to show your academic skills.
- Remember, you are young. You do not need to be Doogie Howser to have valuable experiences, contributions to your community, and characteristics that will enhance any college campus. Share your personal experiences with sincerity and honesty.

# Brag Sheet Pitfalls



- Handwriting the document
- Grammar, spelling, etc. errors
- Adding links to other documents instead of answer the question
- Copy and pasting your Personal Insight Questions or Personal Essay instead of answering the questions
- Limited responses that lack substance
  - I.E. Why do you want to study this field?
    - To make tons of money.

# Completing the PGHS Brag Sheet

- The PGHS Brag Sheet is located on the PGHS website. You can find it under the SENIORS tab, the FORMS tab, or in the College and Career section.
- [MASTER PGHS Brag Sheet \(Live Link ★\)](#)
- You will be directed to make a Copy when you use the link.
- Please delete 'copy of MASTER' in the title and **rename the document as your LAST NAME, FIRST NAME PGHS Brag Sheet. For example, Rice, Margaret PGHS Brag Sheet**
- **When you have completed the Brag Sheet, share it with all of your recommenders.**
- Save the Senior Brag sheet in your Google Drive. You will be able to use it for other recommenders, to complete scholarship applications, and to create a resume.



## Copy document

Would you like to make a copy of **MASTER PGHS Brag Sheet**?

Make a copy



When you make a copy of a Google Document, the title auto populates as Copy of Master Brag Sheet. Please delete 'copy of MASTER' in the title and rename the document as your **LAST NAME, FIRST NAME PGHS Brag Sheet**. **For example, Rice, Margaret PGHS Brag Sheet**



## Pacific Grove High School Brag Sheet

**Directions for Part #1:** Please complete this form as accurately and thoroughly as possible. Your counselor, teachers, coaches, mentors, and supervisors will use this information to recommend you for scholarships, college admissions, summer programs, and other honors/awards. Letters of Recommendation need to be requested 2-3 weeks in advance.  
**PLEASE NOTE: UC and CSU do not require Letters of Recommendation unless they specifically request one.**

Student's First & Last Name		Current Grade Level	
Date of Request*		Deadline for Letter Submission*	

\*Share/provide this Brag Sheet to the person from whom you are requesting the recommendation letter at least **TWO WEEKS** before your deadline, not including weekends, Breaks, or Holidays.

### STUDENT'S ACADEMIC HISTORY

#### Transcript

Please send or attach a PDF copy of your transcript with your PGHS Brag Sheet.

- Students can print or send free copies of their transcripts using their secure **Parchment Accounts**.
- To set up your free Parchment Account, see Mrs. Biondi, the PGHS Registrar in A-Wing.



#### GPA

PGHS Weighted GPA:	PGHS Unweighted GPA:
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How many Honors, AP, and Dual Enrollment courses have you taken?

Honors:	AP:	Dual Enrollment:
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List the courses you are currently taking this school year:

Period	Name of Class	Honors/AP/DE Course?	Name of Teacher
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

1. List your academic strengths (see page 4 for examples of strengths) and **give at least one example of how you demonstrated that strength.** *Be specific, i.e., problem-solving, writing, creative-thinker, collaborative, resilient, etc.*

Academic Strength	How have you demonstrated this strength?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

2. What types of courses interest you?

2a. Why do you find these courses interesting?

3. What is/are your proudest academic accomplishment(s)?

3a. Why are you proud of this accomplishment?

### FUTURE PLANS

1. What are your career goals?

2. What major do you plan on selecting?

3. What interests you about that field of study?

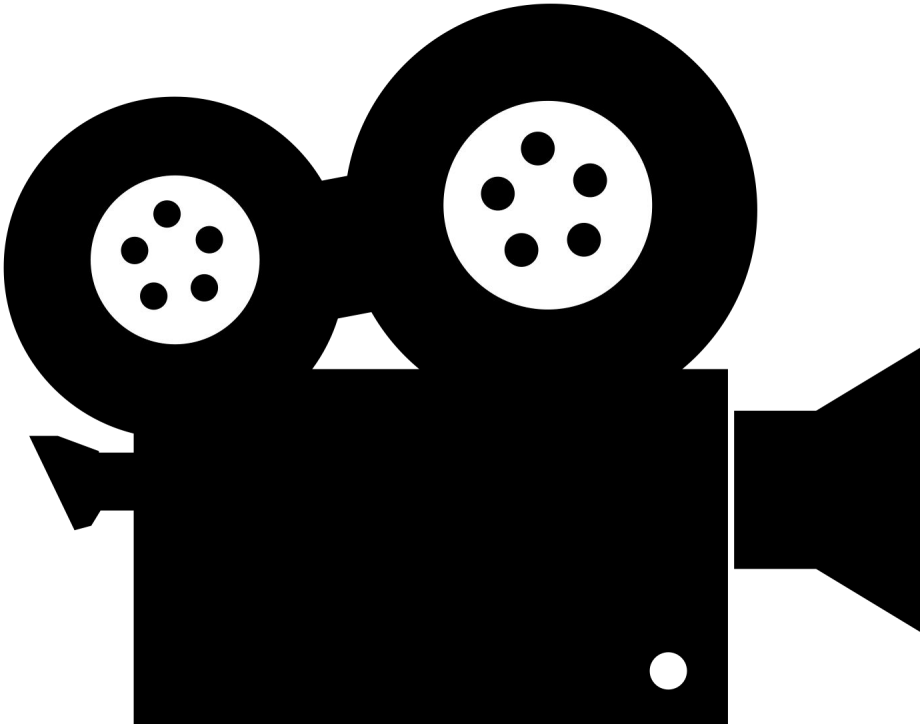
List the colleges and universities you plan to apply to:


### PERSONAL

1. Provide 3-5 characteristics/words (see page 4) that you or others use to describe you.

Characteristic	Why does this word describe you?
1.	
2.	
3.	

# Upcoming Events



# Coming Fall 2026! **Senior Shorts**

Single Subject Student  
Presentations to Support the  
College Application Process



CALIFORNIA  
COLLEGES *.edu*

DISCOVER. PLAN. LAUNCH

# Launching Your University of California Application

*Partner Districts*



# Questions?

Margaret A. Rice  
PGHS Counseling  
Grades 11 & 12  
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