

**THE  
NUEVA  
SCHOOL**

**College  
Counseling  
Handbook**

2018-19

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As is widely reported and discussed, the college search and application process continues to create anxiety for students and families. Colleges not only need to fill their classes, but fill them with the “right” configuration of students. Admissions committees’ decisions often seem mysterious, and students and parents continue to seek the Magic Bullet that will guarantee admission to the very top ranked colleges. Myths abound, and, honestly, there is a great deal of information and emotion to sort through.

This handbook is designed to put some structure on a process that can seem chaotic, and to provide you and your family with information that will help you tackle the multiple tasks leading to college admission. Each student and family will pursue a unique path to college, of course, so the information in this document is necessarily broad. By the middle of junior year, you will have a primary college counselor who will help you and your family develop your special plan. In the meantime, there are things all high school students should be thinking about and actions you can take that will ultimately build to a successful college search.

Please keep in mind that no one at Nueva wants you to spend all of your precious high school years worrying about getting into college — and missing out on a brilliant, fulfilling high school career in the process. Rather, consult this guide with “what to expect” in mind, and trust that by the time you sit down to complete your applications you will be very well prepared. Following is a year-by-year outline that will keep you on target.

## **NINTH GRADE**

The most important task of ninth grade is to figure out what high school is all about. How do you study best? Learning that skill will serve you well for the remainder of your academic career. If you haven’t already mastered time-management skills, this is good time to practice those. Juggling a high school workload and the many passions for which Nueva students are known can be a challenge, and finding that balance early in the game is a great help. Learn where to find help if you need it, and never be afraid to seek it out. Teachers are here to help you master their disciplines, make interdisciplinary connections, and help you develop your talents and abilities — if you hit a bump in the road, they want to help you over it! Work hard in your classes, and read and read and read. There is no better way to learn vocabulary and writing skills.

## **SUMMER AFTER NINTH GRADE**

Rest, recharge, and do something meaningful and fulfilling to you. Colleges will want to see that you used your discretionary time wisely, but there is no particular path they value more than another. Write short stories; work at a summer camp; volunteer at a hospital; attend sports camps; start an organic garden — there are literally thousands of engaging and fun ways to spend your summer. In general, colleges like to see your sincere commitment to the activities you pursue, and they also appreciate steady engagement rather than flash-in-the-pan involvement.

Consistent volunteer work at a soup kitchen, tutoring center, or senior center may seem less glamorous than a glitzy trip abroad to save the rain forest, but colleges will note and appreciate your passionate involvement in genuine activities.

### **TENTH GRADE**

College is still a long way off, and it's much too early for you to be thinking about building a college list. That said, tackling a strong college preparatory curriculum and working hard in your classes will help you achieve your college goals later.

Pursue your passions in and out of the classroom, and don't shy from taking risks. This is a good time to start saving strong academic work. Some colleges will ask for examples of classroom work, or you may be able to add work to college applications through a supplemental process. You can also use academic work to remind teachers of your level of achievement when you ask them for college recommendations at the end of junior year.

For many of you, tenth grade is the first time you will encounter standardized college entrance tests. These are VERY preliminary, and will not be shared with colleges at any time. In October, Nueva administers the PSAT. In the spring you will take a hybrid SAT/ACT test to help you determine which test plays to your strengths. These are very different tests, and some students score considerably better on one or the other.

Some of you will choose to take SAT Subject Tests at the end of tenth grade, especially in math. If you think you might want to take these tests, it would be a good idea to consult with your teachers and counselor in order to register for the appropriate levels.

### **SUMMER AFTER TENTH GRADE**

Use this summer as you did last, pursuing the things you love. If there is a way to build upon a project or activity you did last summer, by all means do so; colleges certainly appreciate sustained commitment. If the activities you pursued last summer were not as fulfilling as you'd hoped, find something new and exciting to do. Remember to recharge! Junior year can be a challenging one, and returning to school rested in September will go a long way to easing many of the stresses coming up.

You and your family will pursue your college search at a pace that is comfortable for you. Some students are anxious to get started on the process, and others would prefer to put it off for a bit. There is no single correct path. If you decide to begin exploring colleges, do so in a low-key kind of way. Perhaps you'd like to flip through some college guidebooks, or browse some college websites. It is premature for official college visits, but if your family travels take you near a college town, stroll the campus, maybe take in a tour. At this point, seeing a particular college or set of colleges is not as important as seeing different genres of colleges — so maybe take a look at a large state flagship school in an urban setting, and a relatively rural small

liberal arts college, and maybe take in a midsize private university. Every school has its own culture and “feel,” but by exploring a variety of schools you’ll potentially gain insight into which kinds fit you well.

You may want to spend some portion of your summer preparing for the PSAT/NMSQT that will be administered at Nueva in October of your junior year. More information about the PSAT/NMSQT is delineated below.

### **ELEVENTH GRADE**

Junior year is a very important year in the college application cycle for a number of reasons. First, the grades you earn in junior year will be the most recent grades colleges will see, especially if you apply under an early action or early decision plan. Additionally, your letters of recommendation are likely to come from junior year teachers, so it’s important that your teachers know how hard you work and how much you can contribute to a classroom.

This is the point at which we will begin to focus on the college tasks ahead in a serious way. Staying organized and focused will help you avoid unnecessary last-minute panic attacks. Take some time at the beginning of junior year to add test registration deadlines to your calendar. You may elect not to sit for a particular test, but you won’t miss out by accident because you missed the registration deadline.

Here are some key college related events that will occur in junior year.

In October, Nueva will administer the PSAT/NMSQT. This will be offered on a school day, and Nueva will take care of your registration for the exam. Unlike last year’s PSAT, the stakes get a little higher in eleventh grade, because this sitting of the test is also the first point of entry into the National Merit Scholarship Program. Some — not all — students choose to pursue some standardized test preparation for the PSAT/NMSQT. Recently the College Board has partnered with Khan Academy to provide free test preparation for the redesigned PSAT. If you think you might want to prepare, talk to your college counselor about resources that are available to you.

You’ll begin the college search process in earnest in the second semester of junior year. You and your families will be asked to complete comprehensive questionnaires that will help the college counselors with the important work of getting to know you well. You’ll have meetings with your counselor — typically an hour or so for the first meeting, with shorter meetings to follow. The counselors will be available to meet with your family too, and we welcome the opportunity to talk with them at length. We will conduct mandatory college counseling seminars where we’ll talk about how to build a college list, how to navigate Naviance (a very useful tool in the college process), writing essays, the Common Application, interviews, and making the most of college visits.

Remember that your college counselor is here to help you and to provide individualized advice regarding college choices, application plans, essay writing,

teacher recommendations, college visits, and whatever else might be on your mind. Your counselor will be the person who submits your secondary school report, which includes a comprehensive letter describing your unique talents and accomplishments. Your counselor wants to get to know you well!

In spring of junior year, you will want to take either the ACT or SAT. If you are potentially a recruited athlete, your college process is somewhat accelerated, so you'll want to complete your standardized testing in December, January, or February. Unlike the PSAT, when Nueva takes care of your registration, you will need to register for the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests on your own. Be sure to meet the registration deadlines outlined on page 11 of this document.

You and your college counselor will review your testing results from tenth grade, and based on those results discuss whether you might benefit from a test preparation course. Both ACT and College Board websites offer sample questions; for both the redesigned PSAT and SAT, College Board has partnered with Khan Academy to offer free, personalized test preparation.

In the 2018-19 academic year, Nueva has partnered with AJ Tutoring to provide a course preparing juniors for administration of spring standardized tests. Students will be offered diagnostic tests to track their progress in addition to preparation classes.

You may also want to take some SAT Subject Tests in the spring. Although these seem to be diminishing in importance at a number of colleges and universities, some schools still require as many as three. Talk with your teachers and your college counselor about the best tests to take; your preparation, potential major, and choice of institutions will influence this decision.

In consultation with your college counselor, you will want to identify the best teachers to write your letters of recommendation. Spring is not too early to ask your teachers if they will write for you, since many like to write their letters over the summer.

Junior year is a terrific time to begin connecting with college representatives who will visit Nueva. If a school in which you're seriously interested is visiting, make every effort to attend the information session. In recent years, many colleges have begun to track "demonstrated interest" as part of the application process, and attending a school session will work favorably for you when the admissions committee meets. You will register for these meetings using Naviance, which the college counseling staff will teach you to use at the onset of junior year. You will need to obtain teachers' permission to attend if the meeting is scheduled during class times. If your school-work or schedule don't allow you to attend the information session, it is fine to stop by to shake hands, say hi and explain your schedule conflict and your interest in the school. A follow-up note to the college representative reflecting on their visit is always a good idea.

Some colleges and universities prefer to host regional meetings rather than make individual school visits; often they travel in groups so you can learn about five or six schools in one session. Again, it's important to make an effort to attend these if you possibly can. There are numerous college fairs held in the area as well, the largest being the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) College Fair held at the Santa Clara Convention Center on Saturday, April 6, 2019. Those interested in majoring in the arts will want to attend the NACAC Performing and Visual Arts Fair at the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts on Thursday, September 20, 2018, 7:00-9:00 PM. Additionally, NACAC will sponsor a STEM College and Career Fair at The Santa Clara Convention Center on Sunday, October 7, 2018. These are all free and open to the public.

Every April, senior admissions officers from major colleges and universities across the country participate in the Bay Area Case Studies program. You and your family will want to attend these since they will give you an excellent sense of how admissions committees approach their difficult decisions. The college counseling office will provide details about how to participate as they become available.

Spring of your junior year is also a good time to start visiting colleges in earnest. Many families use February break and/or Spring break to schedule tours and information sessions.

### **SUMMER AFTER ELEVENTH GRADE**

You should of course continue to build upon the activities you pursued after ninth and tenth grades, but this summer is also a terrific time to do some serious college planning. Senior year can be quite demanding, and whatever you can do to accomplish some of your college application tasks during the summer will make your fall semester that much easier.

You and your family may want to do some in depth college touring. Colleges that conduct interviews — and many do — interview rising seniors throughout the summer. Schedule interviews well in advance, since appointments are sometimes limited. Even if the college you're visiting does not offer interviews, you'll want to stop by the admissions office to let them know you are there, in case the school is tracking demonstrated interest. You might also have the chance to meet the college's representative who is assigned to the Bay Area. Take notes! Not only will that enable you to keep the schools clear in your mind, but it will help you answer the dreaded "why are you applying to XYZ University" question most colleges ask in their application.

In some metropolitan areas, it may be possible to see two college campuses in a day. Do not attempt to see more than two in a day! Visiting colleges is exhausting — you're absorbing a lot of information at one time — and this is a clear case where less is more.

After you've visited a number of colleges, you may find that much of what you see and hear starts to sound similar. Dig a little deeper, and customize your visits by developing a list of questions on topics that matter to you. If you're not sure what those are, take a look at this booklet: [http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/NSSE\\_PocketGuide.pdf](http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/NSSE_PocketGuide.pdf). In addition, you'll gather a great deal of information if you take time to talk to students on campus who aren't paid by the admissions office. Stop by the café and join someone for a cup of tea; check out the posters on the bulletin boards; pick up student publications. Visiting colleges during the summer is convenient, but not optimal. If you are particularly interested in a school, think about whether it might be possible to return when students are there so you can really see the place in action.

If every graduating senior in the United States (and perhaps abroad) could offer one piece of advice to rising seniors, it would be "WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT!!" in the summer before senior year. At least take a good run at it. Some colleges will have their own essay prompts, and many that use the Common Application and/or the Coalition Application will require additional supplemental essays, but a good, basic, solid personal statement will ease a great deal of your anxiety and give you time to work on other critical components of your applications in the fall.

Nueva will offer an optional college application workshop in the summer between junior and senior year. During this time, students and counselors will gather informally to begin working on applications in earnest. This would be a good time for you to work on preliminary college essay(s) and to bring up any other concerns that may have emerged.

## **SENIOR YEAR**

It's here. The fun of being a senior; the anxiety of being a senior; the exhaustion of being a senior; the total relief of being a senior — it can be a whirlwind of a year. Stay focused. Remember to breathe. A year hence you will be heading to a school you love to begin the next portion of your journey, but right here, right now, it's senior year, and there is LOTS to do.

In the fall, you'll want to spend time with your college counselor, refining the final list of colleges to which you will apply and planning a course of action with early and regular decision plans. Work on your supplemental essays, and feel free to ask your counselor and Nueva's writing staff to review your essays and applications.

If possible, visit the schools that top your list. Attend a couple of classes to see how faculty and students interact, have some meals, spend an overnight if that's possible. You'll want to get a sense of the full college experience at your key choices. In fall 2018, seniors will have no classes on October 10, 11 and 12 in order to visit colleges, work on college applications or pursue additional college-related activities.

Depending on results of your spring and summer testing, you may want to take another battery of standardized tests in the fall. Typically November is the last test administration that can be used for early plans, although October allows for a bit more cushion. Again, you will want to plan this all with your counselor, since deadlines and requirements vary widely from school to school.

Fall is a heavy recruitment season for colleges and universities, and you can expect lots of visits from college representatives at Nueva and in the community. If you are particularly interested in some specific schools, try to attend these sessions even if it's only to say "I'm interested but I can't stay now."

Some among you will have good responses to early applications and will be essentially done with the college application process by winter break. Others may opt to apply only under regular decision, or may be deferred to regular decision from early decision or early action applications, and won't receive their good news until late March. The patient waiting and anxiety of January, February, and March of senior year can be a very difficult time for everyone. Be kind to your friends. Be happy for their successes, and be supportive if their news is not good. Especially, be kind to yourselves. There are thousands of great colleges out there, and you're going to add so much to one of them!

### **THE COLLEGE APPLICATION**

A college application has multiple components: transcript, standardized test scores, essays, extracurricular information, school profile, college counselor recommendation, and teacher recommendations. Some colleges also require an interview, either with an admissions officer, alum, or another trained interviewer associated with the school.

### **THE TRANSCRIPT**

Your transcript is the most important part of your application, and often is the first item an admissions officer reads. Colleges evaluate your grades, of course, but they are also interested in the rigor of your program and general upward, downward, or consistent trends in your transcript.

Nueva does not rank-order students, and so we cannot provide a class rank to colleges. Not ranking is a common practice among independent schools, and applicants are not penalized for lacking a class rank. Additionally, although Nueva will calculate a GPA for internal purposes (there is, for instance, no way to use Naviance without a GPA), that information will never be shared with colleges. Many colleges actually recalculate all GPAs. Some only count "academic" courses; some don't include your grades from 9<sup>th</sup> grade; some give additional weight to honors courses – so even if Nueva calculated a GPA, it's likely that your application would be evaluated with a set of numbers different from what we reported.

As you listen to admissions officers discuss how decisions are made, you will no doubt hear them say how much weight they give difficult courses. Your course



selection should reflect your interests and aptitudes, and demonstrate your continued commitment to your intellectual growth. When planning your program, remember that simply meeting Nueva’s graduation requirements or the UC’s minimum requirements will not present the most compelling curriculum. Take advantage of Nueva’s rich and varied course offerings, and stretch! Your advisor and college counselor can help you select classes that will both reflect your values and demonstrate your ability.

### **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

	Nueva’s Graduation Requirements	UC “a-g” Requirements *	Non-UC Suggested Recommendations
English	4 years	4 years	4 years
History	3 years	2 years	4 years
World Language	3 years	2 years required; 3 years recommended	4 years
Math	3 years	3 years required; 4 years recommended	4 years
Science	3 years	2 years lab science required; 3 years recommended	4 years
Electives	4 years	1 year	4 years
Visual & Performing Arts	1 year	1 year of a sequential subject	-
Athletics & Wellness	2 years	-	-
Interdisciplinary Studies	2 years	-	-
Science of Mind	4 years	-	-
CESL	2 years	-	-
Quest	4 years	-	-

**STANDARDIZED TESTING (also see “Guide to College Admissions Tests” later in this handbook)**

Results of standardized testing are an important part of your college application, but they are only one part. Admissions officers are far more concerned about the rigor of your curriculum and your level of achievement over time than how you performed on a couple of tests. Most colleges will accept results of either the ACT or the SAT for admissions purposes.

**Nueva’s CEEB code is 051213.** You will need to provide this code whenever you register for a standardized test.

Individual colleges’ requirements for standardized testing vary widely and change quickly. It is very important that you read each school’s website carefully to be sure you are meeting its requirements, which can also vary from department to department. Talk with your college counselor if you are unsure of a given school’s requirements.

While many colleges still require submission of standardized test scores as part of the admissions process, an increasingly large number are becoming test optional or “test flexible.” To view a list of schools with flexible test requirements, go to <http://fairtest.org/university/optional>.

Both ACT and the College Board give students the option of choosing which scores they want sent to colleges. Colleges differ on their policies about using this “score choice” option. Some require students to submit results of all their testing, while others allow students to suppress scores they don’t want the colleges to see.

Typically colleges select your best scores, but if a college does allow score choice, you may want to take advantage of this option. The process is exacting in that you must keep careful track of what is sent where, and it can be somewhat costly since releasing scores requires a fee, but often students and families feel more in control of the process when they can select the scores they send. If you intend to use score choice, be certain NOT to opt to send scores to colleges when registering for the exams.

In a similar vein, many colleges and universities “superscore” the SAT and the ACT, meaning they will select the highest score from each section of the exam and use that composite to evaluate your application. Be sure to consult the college’s website for accurate, timely information on how they will evaluate your scores.

## STANDARDIZED TESTING DATES AND REGISTRATION DEADLINES

2018-19 SAT and SAT Subject Testing Dates	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
August 25, 2018	July 27, 2018	August 14, 2018
October 6, 2018	September 7, 2018	September 26, 2018
November 3, 2018	October 4, 2018	October 24, 2018
December 1, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 16, 2018
March 9, 2019 (SAT Only)	February 8, 2019	February 22, 2019
May 4, 2019	April 5, 2019	April 19, 2019
June 1, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 19, 2019

2018-19 ACT Testing Dates	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Period
September 8, 2018	August 3, 2018	August 17, 2018
October 27, 2018	September 21, 2018	October 5, 2018
December 8, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 16, 2018
February 9, 2019	January 4, 2019	January 18, 2019
April 13, 2019	March 8, 2019	March 22, 2019
June 8, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 17, 2019
July 13, 2019	June 14, 2019	June 21, 2019

Typically, Nueva students will follow the testing pattern outlined below:

- Freshman year — In consultation with the college counselor, students taking Math 3 or higher might take the Math Level 2 Subject Test.
- Sophomore year — All sophomores take the PSAT in October.
- Again in consultation with the college counselor, students taking Math 3 or higher might take the Math Level 2 Subject Test. Some students may opt to take Subject Tests in the sciences as well.
- Junior year — All juniors take the PSAT/NMSQT in October.
- Juniors take the ACT in February, April, June or July.
- Juniors take the SAT in March, May, June or August.
- Juniors take SAT Subject Tests in May, June or August.
- Seniors may take ACT in September, October or December.
- Seniors may take SAT in October, November or December.

## EXTRACURRICULAR INFORMATION

Colleges are very interested in how you spend your discretionary time, and most will ask you to detail your extracurricular activities, typically in order of importance to you. You will have the opportunity to list your activities and estimate how many hours and weeks you devote to each. Colleges don't value one activity over another, and while they value well-rounded students, they also value well-lopsided students who have pursued one passion in depth! If you've held leadership positions in any of your pursuits, be sure to note them. We will discuss this section in more depth in the

college counseling seminar; as always, if you find any of this confusing, consult with your counselor.

## **ESSAYS**

Your essay is a critically important component of your application, and you should approach it with care. (See above — summer before senior year provides luxurious time for you to think, write, rewrite.) While your grades and scores demonstrate whether you can do the academic work at a specific school, your essay tells admissions officers more about you as a person and gives some insight into what kind of a community member you might be. Admissions officers will be looking for clarity of thought, critical thinking skills, strong writing prowess and creativity. Colleges want to know what you value, what motivates you, what excites you intellectually. This is not a time to be distant in your writing. Admissions officers want to hear your youthful voice. The most successful essays emerge from deep self-reflection. If you had a chance to talk to the admissions committee, what would you want them to know about you?

Do be careful to follow the essay prompt directions and any other instructions, including word limit.

## **OTHER ESSAYS**

While over 700 colleges and universities now use the Common Application and another 100 use the Coalition Application, many of them require students to submit additional, supplemental essays unique to their admission processes. Generally, these colleges want more information about you and are particularly trying to glean whether you will be a good match for them. Often supplemental essays have briefer requirements than your personal statement, but don't be fooled into taking them casually! Colleges read them carefully and want to know that you have researched their offerings. This is a good time to refer back to the notes you took when you visited the school, or met with a representative; they will remind you what attracted you to that college and help you write thoughtful responses. Colleges also often use supplemental essays as a way to verify the authenticity of the applicant's personal statement; a significant disparity between the prose of the statement and the supplemental essay hoists a huge red flag. Some admissions officers report that these short answers can be as important as your transcript. Work hard on them!

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT**

Most private colleges and universities require a secondary school report, composed of your transcript, a school profile, and a comprehensive personal recommendation from your college counselor. Your counselor will spend a great deal of time getting to know you, from personal meetings, questionnaires, and teachers' comments, and will present your abilities and accomplishments to the colleges in the best possible light. The school profile provides information and context about the unique nature of the Nueva community and curriculum, and it helps admissions officers understand your high school environment.

## **TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Most private universities, and some public ones, require applicants to submit one or sometimes two letters of recommendation from eleventh or twelfth grade teachers in English, science, math, social studies, or foreign language. These recommendations enable colleges to get a sense of what kind of student you are in the classroom and how you have contributed on your campus. Nueva students have a distinct advantage in this part of the application, because your teachers know you very well and have often watched you grow and develop intellectually over a period of years.

Keep these points in mind when asking for recommendations:

- Be sure to ask teachers who know you well. Generally teachers from junior year are best, because they've known you for a full year and their comments are current.
- If you are reasonably sure of a major — and you surely do not have to be at this point! — it is a good idea to ask a teacher in that discipline to write on your behalf.
- Be sure to give your teachers ample time to write. The end of junior year is not too soon to ask. College counseling will establish appropriate deadlines for the submission of teacher recommendations so that we can meet college deadlines.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a general rule, additional recommendations are welcome only if they say something about you that the remainder of your application does not. If you've performed hours of volunteer work, or worked hard on a job, or pursued an independent research project, your supervisor might be able to provide insights that would be helpful to an admissions committee. Letters attesting to your good character are not generally considered helpful, since your counselor and teacher recommendations will already provide that information.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Each college has its own interview requirements, and you should review the college's website carefully to be certain you meet those requirements appropriately. Some colleges provide no interviews. Some require alumni interviews, but only after you've submitted your application. Some might construe neglecting an interview as lack of interest. Your college counselor can help you review your list and advise on the best course of action. In general, if a college suggests that an interview is "recommended," they mean it! If you can't interview on campus, contact the college to see if off-campus interviews are available.

A college interview might seem an unnerving event, but most interviewers are interested in learning more about you and helping you flesh out your application. We will conduct mock interviews during your college counseling seminar so that you feel more comfortable with the process.

## **FINANCIAL AID**

Higher education is among the most significant investments that many families will make, and you may wonder if your family will qualify for financial aid. The college counseling office can provide advice and information about financial aid to ensure that your family has a realistic idea of what college will cost. Beware of services that offer to complete financial aid or scholarship information for you, and never pay for a service for scholarship or financial aid, except for the College Board's PROFILE. Even if these services look professional, they are almost always scams. If you are unsure about a particular resource, check with your college counselor.

Broadly, you will want to answer three questions for each school to which you plan to apply:

- 1) How much financial aid do I qualify for (what is my financial need)?
- 2) Will the institution offer me the money I qualify for (does the school meet full need)?
- 3) How will my aid award be structured (what is the breakdown between free money, work, and loans)?

You may also be interested in knowing whether institutions consider family finances as a factor in their review of admission application (commonly known as need-blind/need-aware admissions), whether schools offer merit scholarships, and how those scholarships would impact your qualification for need-based financial aid. Individual financial aid webpages will have information specific to that school, including information pertaining to the above questions and deadlines that you must heed. In addition, each school will have a net price calculator that will help you determine how much financial aid you might receive from that institution. You may be surprised to learn that attending a high-priced private institution might ultimately cost less than attending a more moderately priced state university.

To apply for need-based financial aid, you and your family will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which can be found at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>. The FAFSA becomes available for the upcoming school year on October 1, and must be submitted to each individual school by its published deadline. Many of you will apply to schools that also require the CSS PROFILE (<https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>). Both forms will require a copy of your household's "prior-prior year" tax return (e.g. an application for the 2017-18 school year would require a 2015 tax return).

If you think you might attend a school in California, you may also apply for financial aid from state of California. To apply for a CalGrant, a middle class scholarship, or any other state aid program, you need to sent your GPA (by mail or using the online Webgrants portal) and submit a FAFSA to the California Student Aid Commission by March 2, CSAC will notify you whether an for what you qualify.

Institutions use either the FAFSA only (Federal methodology), or the FAFSA and the PROFILE (Institutional methodology) to calculate your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). That number, subtracted from the school's total cost of attendance (including tuition, fees, room/board, travel, and personal expenses) reveals your demonstrated financial need – the answer to question (1) above. It will be your responsibility to fill any gaps between the financial aid that schools offer and their total cost.

As with other aspects of the college counseling process, the counseling office is here to assist you with the sometimes complicated process of applying for aid. Once again, it is imperative for you to meet all Federal and institutional deadlines in order to receive full consideration for aid.

## **A GUIDE TO COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTS**

### **The PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)**

The PSAT is a two-hour forty-five minute test with two primary sections, Evidence-Based Reading & Writing and Math. Nueva will preregister all sophomores and juniors to take the test, which will be administered on the Nueva campus on Wednesday, October 10, 2018. While the PSAT is simply a practice test for the SAT for tenth graders, scores for juniors are used to determine eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Program. Colleges DO NOT SEE PSAT scores as part of a college application.

### **The ACT ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org))**

The ACT is composed of four multiple choice tests in English, math, reading, and science, with an optional writing component. Many selective colleges require the ACT with writing, and some schools will allow you to substitute the results of this test for both the SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

You must register for the ACT on your own on the ACT website. Nueva is not a test site for the ACT, so you will need to register at a convenient location.

### **The SAT ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))**

You must register for the SAT yourself on the College Board website.

### **The SAT Subject Tests ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))**

SAT Subject Tests allow students to demonstrate knowledge within a certain discipline of study. Each test is one hour long, and you may take up to three tests at one test administration. However, the SAT and SAT Subject Tests are offered simultaneously, so you can only sit for one or the other on a given test day. Although colleges are increasingly making submission of results from Subject Tests optional, some still require them, particularly for engineering programs. Most Nueva students

will take Subject Tests at the end of junior year, although, as noted above, some students will be prepared to take Math Level 2 at an earlier date.

SAT Subject Tests are offered in the following disciplines:

Biology (ecological)	World History	Japanese
Biology (molecular)	Chinese with listening	Japanese with listening
Chemistry	French	Korean
Physics	French with listening	Korean with listening
Math Level 1	German	Latin
Math Level 2	German with listening	Spanish
Literature	Modern Hebrew	Spanish with listening
US History	Italian	

Not all Subject Tests are offered on all test dates. Consult the College Board website or your college counselor to be sure the test you want to take is available on a specific date.

### **ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMS**

Reporting of AP exam results is entirely optional in the college application process. Since Nueva does not offer AP courses, colleges will not expect to see results of AP exams from Nueva students. You may, however, have other compelling reasons for taking these tests. Consult with your teacher to see whether the curriculum in your course matches the AP curriculum, or whether you will need to do significant preparation on your own.

AP exams are scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 3 serving as a passing score, and 4 or 5 as honors scores. Colleges use AP credit in varying ways. Some grant college credit for scores of 3, 4, or 5; some only offer credit for scores of 4 or 5; some allow students to advance to a higher level course; some grant both credit and advanced placement; within a given college, departments may specify their own policies; and some colleges grant neither advanced placement nor credit for AP exams. Talk to your college counselor and your teachers about whether taking AP exams is a good course of action for you.

Nueva offers AP exams on campus during a two-week period in early May. If you decide to take an AP exam, let Nueva's Testing Coordinator know in early March. Only the Testing Coordinator can register you for AP exams, so informing that office of your intentions by early March is especially important.

### **TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS**

Both the ACT and College Board offer testing accommodations to students with demonstrated learning differences and medical conditions. Students and families seeking accommodations should meet with Nueva's learning specialist, Ericka Fur, and their college counselor to petition for approval as early as possible, since this is often a long and complicated process.



## **A GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Rolling Admission**

Rolling admission programs evaluate applications and make admission decisions in the order that applications are received, so it is to a student's benefit to apply early. Once the class is full, the admission cycle is closed.

### **Regular Decision**

Most colleges accept applications within the regular decision time frame, with deadlines falling sometime between early December and late February of senior year. Typically, students will receive decisions on or before April 1 and will have until May 1 to respond. Decision options include admit, deny, or wait list.

### **Early Decision**

Students with serious interest in one college may elect to apply to that college under its early decision plan. If admitted, the student agrees that s/he will enroll at that institution and must withdraw any applications that have been submitted to additional institutions. Early decision deadlines are typically in November, and decisions are released in mid-December. Decisions include admit, defer, or deny. A student who is deferred will be reconsidered in the context of the overall regular admission pool; a student who is denied will not be reconsidered for that admission cycle.

A student may apply to only one college under early decision and must be ready to file other applications if deferred or denied. Students must be sure that the school they have chosen for early decision is absolutely their first choice, since this is a binding commitment.

In recent years, a number of colleges have created additional, later early decision 2 deadlines. Typically, these deadlines are in January, with decisions released a month later. As in early decision, students admitted under early decision 2 are bound to attend.

### **Early Action**

Early action programs allow students to apply to colleges in November and receive a decision by mid-December, like early decision. If admitted, however, students are not bound to attend and have until May 1 to make a decision about enrollment.

Students are free to submit applications to other colleges and may apply to more than one nonrestrictive early action program.

### **Restrictive Early Action or Single Choice Early Action (REA/SCEA)**

These programs are like early action except that students may not apply to another private institution through an early action or early decision program. Students may apply REA and also apply to state institutions and internationally. Students may apply REA and if admitted under REA/SCEA students may still apply freely to other

institutions under regular decision. Students have until May 1 to commit to a college.

### **National Candidates Reply Date**

The common reply date for accepting a college's offer of admission is May 1, and no college may ask you for a response before that date. Students typically need to submit a nonrefundable enrollment deposit along with their commitment letter. Students may deposit at only one college to secure a place in the first-year class. Colleges learning that a student has double-deposited are free to revoke their admission decision. A student may remain on another college's wait list, however.

### **Wait lists**

Colleges may maintain a wait list (or alternate list) in the event that they do not enroll enough students in their first-year class. Usually a college that has not met its enrollment goals by shortly after May 1 will offer admission to students on its wait list. Most colleges release their wait lists by mid-June, although some may continue to pull candidates in later in the summer.

### **Common Application**

The Common Application (informally known as the Common App) is an undergraduate college admission application the applicants may use to apply to any of nearly 700 member colleges and universities in 48 states and the District of Columbia, as well as Canada, China, and many European countries. Member colleges and universities that accept the Common App are made up of over 100 public universities, nine Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and over 250 institutions that do not require an application fee.

### **2018-2019 Common Application Essay Prompts**

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma – anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

### **Coalition Application**

The recently developed/developing Coalition Application is a technology platform for applying to some 100+ selective schools. The Coalition Application features a modern, intuitive interface that adapts to a student's life, providing a seamless experience whether engaging through a notebook computer, tablet, or even mobile device. The application is designed to minimize student stress, confusion, and intimidation. It offers universities the flexibility and autonomy to ask questions that demonstrate their individual institutional priorities.

### **2018-2019 Coalition Application Essay Prompts**

- Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.
- Describe a time when you made a meaningful contribution to others in which the greater good was your focus. Discuss the challenges and rewards of making your contribution.
- Has there been a time when you've had a long-cherished or accepted belief changed? How did you respond? How did the challenge affect your beliefs?
- What is the hardest part of being a teenager now? What's the best part? What advice would you give a younger sibling or friend (assuming they would listen to you)?
- Submit an essay on a topic of your choice.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Here are some resources that will be useful to you along the way.

Reference

*The Fiske Guide to Colleges*

Edward Fiske

*The College Handbook*

The College Board

*The Best 368 Colleges*  
The Princeton Review

*The Book of Majors*  
The College Board

General College Information  
College Navigator (US Department of Education)  
<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

Big Future  
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>

#### Books

*Admission Matters: What Students and Parents Need to Know about Getting into College*  
Sally Springer, Jon Reider, and Marion Franck.

*Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*  
Frank Bruni

*How College Works*  
Daniel Chambliss and Christopher Takacs

*Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think About Colleges*  
Loren Pope

*Looking Beyond the Ivy League: Finding the College That's Right for You*  
Loren Pope

*The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College*  
Jacques Steinberg

*Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*  
William Deresiewicz

*The Pressured Child: Freeing Our Kids from Performance Overdrive and Helping Them Find Success in School and Life*  
Michael Thompson

*College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step by Step*  
Robin Mamlet and Christine VanDeVelde