COLLEGE WISE

Inside the UC App:
Tips and Tricks for a Stellar Application

The 2023-24 Collegewise Guide to the UC System

A Collegewise Publication

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is meant to provide insight into how to complete a UC application that will be effective and stand out once it reaches the desks (or computers) of the UC admissions officers.

We wrote this guide to pick up where the UC application's instructions leave off. For example, the UC application outlines how to add your activities to the appropriate section, but we explain how to present them in a clear and compelling way. The UC app shows you where to input your first and alternate choice major selections for each of the UCs, but we tell you how to decide which majors to choose.

We *didn't* write this guide to tell you how to select which UCs you're applying to, how to correctly report your grades in the Academics section, or which dorm cafeteria is the least likely to give you the heebie-jeebies (though we're partial to UCLA's Café 1919). We think the UC application instructions and resources are very thorough, and we didn't want you to spend time reading about anything that's already available online.

This is our subtle way of saying, "Please don't ignore the UC application directions." As you work through the sections on the UC app, look for the Instructions and Help box to the right—they answer, clearly and well, a lot of obvious and not-so-obvious questions.

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Before You Start Your Application

(a.k.a. Boring but Necessary Information)

1. Bookmark **https://apply.universityofcalifornia.edu/my-application/login** (You'll be using this link a lot as you complete your UC application.)

2. Bookmark the UC's **applying as a freshman** or **applying as a transfer** pages. They offer a wealth of basic information on how to apply to the University of California.

3. Check out the University of California's **tips on how to write effective responses to the personal insight questions.**

4. Make sure spell-check is enabled in your browser. (If you're not sure how to do this, you can search your browser's "help" section, or ask about it in Google.)

5. Add yourself to the University of California Facebook page and Twitter feed. They offer timely and useful advice throughout the process: **Facebook** & **Twitter**

6. Increasingly, many schools are providing advice on how to approach their applications through social media. (And they'll likely announce on their pages when they'll be releasing admissions decisions)! Check out these specific links:

   UC Berkeley – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC Davis – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC Irvine – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UCLA - **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC Merced – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC Riverside – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC Santa Barbara – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC San Diego – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

   UC Santa Cruz – **Facebook** & **Twitter** & **Instagram** & **YouTube**

3 Easy Steps to Create an Account

(a.k.a. More Dull but Necessary Information)

1. When you are ready to begin, go to: **https://apply.universityofcalifornia.edu/my-application/login**.

2. After clicking on "Create New Account", you will be taken to a page that asks you to set up a login and a password.

Collegewise Pro Tip: When you choose your email address, avoid three common mistakes.

- Use YOUR primary email address and check it regularly. Although it's tempting to have a parent/guardian check in on your apps, it's up to you to make sure you're keeping up with your college emails. All UC correspondence will go to the account that you choose, so make sure it's one that you check often. Make it easier for yourself to check for college emails by adding this email account to the mail app on your phone.

- Use an appropriate email address. Make sure that your primary email address is neither silly (e.g. beachgirl24@aol.com) nor offensive (we'll pass on giving examples here).

Our best advice? Use an email account that's a version of your name **firstname_lastname@gmail.com**, **lastname_firstname@gmail.com**, or even **firstname_middleinitial_lastname@gmail.com**.

Keep in mind that UC admissions readers can actually see the email address you use for your application.

3. Confirm your full legal name as it appears on official documents (such as your passport or birth certificate), along with your place of birth.

Collegewise Pro Tip: Double-check the email address you provide on your application because all communication from any UC campus will go to this email. You don't want to miss any messages or requests from a UC you've applied to! Also be sure to confirm your legal name that you input is correct, because the UC you are admitted to and eventually decide to attend will be verifying any transcripts, test score reports, or documentation you send to that campus by matching the name on your application with all official documentation.

Sections of the UC App
Starting Your Application

Academic Level

After creating an account, you will start an application by selecting your application level.

You're a freshman if:
You are entering college straight out of high school, and you have not graduated high school yet.

OR

You have chosen to take college courses while you are still in high school, but you haven't taken any time off between high school and college (e.g. to take college classes).

You're a transfer student if:
You have completed high school.

AND

You have already begun taking college courses at an institution of higher education (i.e. community college or another four-year university) and wish to complete your undergraduate education at a UC.

Term

You'll then be asked to select the term for which you are applying. Make sure you select the quarter/semester that you plan to begin your college studies. For most of you reading this guide, you'll select Fall of 2023.

Collegewise Pro Tip: If you're seriously considering attending a UC, make sure you understand the differences between the quarter and semester systems. We've compiled a cheat sheet here:

Quarter System:
- Followed by all UCs except Berkeley & Merced
- 10 weeks of classes per quarter (3 quarters per academic year)
- Not typically followed by high schools

Semester System:
- Followed by UC Berkeley & UC Merced
- 15 weeks of classes per semester (2 semesters per academic year)
- System typically adopted by high schools

Quarter System:

Pros	Cons
- Fast-paced	- Fast-paced
- Classes start in late September (seriously!)	- Less time to study for finals and midterms
- Students typically take fewer classes at once	- Summer starts in mid-June so some internships may be more limited

Semester System:

Pros	Cons
- Similar pace to high school	- Students typically take more classes at once,
- More time to let important concepts sink in before finals and midterms	- Slow pace can feel less exciting

About You

Personal Information

This section will ask you for name, both legal and preferred, your birthdate, and where you were born.

Contact Information

The UCs may want to contact you, so it is important to provide a correct address and phone number.

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1. *Address*

   Make sure the address you provide is the place where you want your correspondence to go (obviously).

   💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** If, for whatever reason, your address changes after you submit your application, don't worry! You can always update it in your UC portal after you've clicked submit.

2. *Phone Number*

   Your listed phone number should be for a phone that is easily accessible, like your personal cell phone or a parent's cell if you do not have your own.

   💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** Make sure your voicemail is more professional than usual (yes, we all have to be appropriate during admissions season) and that your voicemail box has space available. Oh, and just so you know, people may leave voicemails for you, so you need to check. Yes, it's all so very last century.

Citizenship & Residency

This section starts by asking for your country of citizenship and, if applicable, your social security number (SSN). You are allowed to leave the SSN field blank if you do not have one. **Note:** if you select a country of citizenship other than the United States of America, you will have to select the appropriate citizenship/visa status.

You'll also be asked residency questions. These are used to determine if you are a California resident or Out of State resident for admission purposes. Make sure you answer this section truthfully.

💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** Keep in mind that residency for admissions and residency for tuition are two separate processes for the UC system. It's possible for a student to be considered a resident for admissions but a non-resident for tuition. Please navigate to **this site** if you have additional questions. Each UC has Residence Deputies who specialize in this area, and you can find each Residence Deputy and their respective campus **at this site.**

Collegewise Pro Tip: What if you are a DACA student or an undocumented student?

The UC System is supportive of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) students. The UC suggests the following approach for undocumented students: When you are asked to make your country of citizenship selection, you have the option to choose "No Selection." This option is considered a valid response and we recommend this choice for undocumented applicants, including those with DACA status. By choosing "No Selection," you'll avoid being asked other questions about permanent residency and visa status that are not applicable to you. The link to the official UC Undocumented Student Resource page can be found below:

http://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/applying-to-uc.html

You can be a DACA student and be considered a California resident. You'll just have to meet the requirements outlined by the UC. Generally, if you've lived in California for all of high school, you will qualify as a California resident. After you're admitted and have selected a UC campus to attend, you will need to submit an AB 540 exemption to secure in-state tuition. The AB 540 form will ask for some basic information about where you've lived, along with supporting documents (like your high school transcript) as proof that you've been living in California.

More information about qualifying as a DACA student and as a California resident can be found here:
https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/tuition-financial-aid/types-of-aid/who-can-get-financial-aid/ca-dream-act.html

UC Berkeley also has an outstanding website for DACA recipients, their families, and anyone supporting these students:
https://undocu.berkeley.edu/legal-support-overview/what-is-daca/

And finally, a word of caution. The current political climate has these things changing quickly. Like everything else within this guide, we'd suggest talking about your specific situation with your school counselor or the person helping you with your application, especially if you think any of this isn't the right answer for you.

Demographics

This is an optional section. Remember that, per California law, the University of California is not permitted to use race, ethnicity, or gender as part of their decision-making process. So, sharing your demographic information is only used for data collection purposes.

Your Background

Here, you'll answer a few questions about your family and background, including your first language, if you're a dependent of a military veteran or service member, or if you've ever been in foster care.

Your Household / Parent Information

These sections ask for information about your parents or guardians, income, and family size. It is also used to determine if you qualify for a fee waiver.

💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** If you don't report anything under household or family income, then you will not be considered for the application fee waiver when you go to submit the application.

💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** Some students are concerned about answering these questions transparently because they believe it will negatively impact their application. However, the UCs do not consider a student's financial status when determining their admission (this is commonly referred to as need-blind admissions). Any information helps provide additional context to the readers.

Statement of Legal Residence

You will be asked for your state of legal residence. This information will be used to determine if you will be considered a California resident or a non-California resident for tuition purposes. Students, read over this section carefully as this will help determine your tuition if admitted and enrolled at a UC campus

Campuses & Majors

There are nine UC undergraduate campuses, and this part of the application is where you select the campuses where you would like to apply.

UC Values

There's a community principles section where you will need to "acknowledge, value, and agree with these guiding principles." The four noted values are representative of the academic experience for all students in the University of California.

UC Davis

UC Berkeley

UC Merced

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Barbara

UCLA

UC Riverside

UC Irvine

UC San Diego

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Term & Level

You will reconfirm the term you are applying for and note whether you will be applying as a freshman, transfer, or other applicant. ('Other' should only be selected for those who already hold a bachelor's degree.)

Choose Campuses

Before you select every campus, remember that this is not exactly a cheap proposition, as the application fee is $80 (or $95 for international applicants) per UC campus. Applying to every UC will run you a whopping total of $720, which might be better used to purchase next year's textbooks (or even to decorate your dream dorm room). Fee waiver information can be found on page 26 of this guide.

Beyond the expense, there's a major flaw in the "just check every UC campus box" plan: few students would be happy and successful at every UC. Make sure that the UCs you're applying to offer your major (and other subjects that interest you, just in case you change your mind) and fit your other important criteria (location, size, semester/quarter system, internship opportunities, etc.).

Choose Majors

Depending on your campus selections, the ensuing pages will list your chosen campus' (or campuses') academic schools/colleges/divisions and the majors within. Select the major that most interests you. You can browse majors by 'College' or 'Category.'

1. **Alternate majors**

   Every UC campus allows students to select a second choice major. An alternate major permits some UC campuses to accept you into that second choice rather than your primary one. Normally, the alternate that you pick should be for a less competitive program. Please see the table with campus-specific details below.

   Collegewise Pro Tip: Some majors at certain UC campuses may be categorized as one of the below. Why? These majors tend to be very popular or desirable for students, and each campus has its own way of limiting enrollment so that upper-division courses are not too full.

2. **Capped majors**

   These majors have enrollment limits usually at the time when you apply to a UC campus. You should always select an alternate major that is a non-capped major on your application. If you are admitted to a UC campus but not for the capped major, it is unlikely you will be able to internally transfer into that program later once enrolled.

3. *Closed majors*

   Usually this is because you are a freshman/sophomore, and the program is one that requires the successful completion of prerequisite coursework at the UC campus before applying to the closed major. Keep in mind that some closed majors are very difficult to gain admission to, even after a student has completed the preliminary classes. You should always have a backup major in mind.

4. *Pre-major status*

   UCs admit students as a pre-major to certain academic programs, meaning you need to take lower-division coursework for the major, achieve certain grades and GPA in those classes, and then will be automatically enrolled under the official major.

   Supplemental Applications

   If you pick a major that requires a supplemental application—and this will almost always be the case when you want to pursue a discipline that involves either an audition or a portfolio—a notification will pop up with a link that will navigate you to supplemental application details. Acknowledge this message, as it's letting you know that you will need to go to that specific UC campus's website to review the requirements for that supplemental application.

   Students only receive access to a supplemental application once they've submitted their UC application. Most UCs that require a supplemental application will have a separate application portal for their supplements. At the end of the day, the main takeaway is to check your email!

   Collegewise Pro Tip: The deadlines for supplemental applications are shortly after the UC application deadline. We recommend turning in the UC application well **before the November 30th deadline**, so you have access to complete the supplemental application requirements with additional time. It can take a couple of days for the campus to process your application and send you information on how to submit your supplemental application.

   Collegewise Pro Tip: It is incredibly difficult to transfer into engineering later if you're not admitted as a first-year student at most UC campuses. For example, don't apply as a Nordic Studies major if you are really hoping to study Civil Engineering at UCLA.

   Students shouldn't look for a loophole or back door into a school. Stay true to your desired major and do not think you can get into your desired major later, as that simply isn't a guarantee. If you're on the fence regarding your major but are 200% sure about UCSB, you can be strategic in major choice, but this is only a good strategy if you are confident that you will be happy in another major.

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Campus	Does the campus admit by major?	Does the campus consider alternate majors?
Berkeley	It depends. The Colleges of Chemistry, of Engineering, and of Environmental Design all admit applicants by major. The College of Letters and Science and the College of Natural Resources don't seem to be admitting by major, but both will take major into account and potentially compare students to others within that same major pool.	No. Berkeley only guarantees a review of the primary major. Alternate majors may be considered for waitlisted applicants and on a space-available basis.
UCLA	No, for the College of Letters and Science, major is not considered. Yes, for the Schools of Engineering, Arts and Architecture, Music, Nursing, and Theater, Film and Television.	No. Except in the case of engineering—UCLA will only consider alternate majors for students who list majors within the School of Engineering as their primary & and alternate major choice.
Santa Barbara	It depends. No, the College of Letters and Science does not consider major as part of the selection process. Yes, the College of Engineering is highly selective. Majors in the College of Creative Studies are also selective and require a supplemental application.	Yes. Students applying to the College of Engineering or the College of Creative Studies **are highly encouraged to** select an alternate major in the College of Letters and Science.

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Campus	Does the campus admit by major?	Does the campus consider alternate majors?
San Diego	No. Freshman applicants are admitted to the campus regardless of their major selection.	Yes, if you are applying to a **"capped" major**. Then you are required to select an alternate major that is NOT capped, unless you are okay with UCSD admitting you as an undeclared major.
Davis	It depends. Davis tends to look more holistically at the school/college to which you are applying rather than the specific major you pick.	Yes. Davis will consider an alternate major if it is less competitive than the student's initial choice.
Irvine	Yes.	Yes. Will consider an alternate major.

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Campus	Does the campus admit by major?	Does the campus consider alternate majors?
Santa Cruz	Yes, but only for Computer Science, B.S. and Computer Science, B.A. degrees.	No. Unless you select one of the Computer Science degrees as your primary major, then an alternate major may be considered if you are not admitted to Computer Science.
Riverside	Yes. The majors in the Colleges of Engineering, School of Business, and College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences are selective. Some majors in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences are also selective.	Yes. Riverside will consider an alternate major if a student chooses a less competitive option.
Merced	No. No majors are impacted/selective at the first-year level.	No, not applicable.

San Diego College Rankings

If you're applying to UC San Diego, you'll need to rank your preference of their eight colleges. Your rankings will not impact your admission decision or your major. These are residential colleges that have their own themes, general education curriculum, residence halls, academic advisors, and more. Before you rank the colleges, make sure you learn about each one through the **admissions website** or through the **colleges website**. You're not guaranteed your first pick, so make sure to explore and be open to multiple colleges.

💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** Once again, how you rank the colleges has nothing to do with admission or major. You can study any major in any college. Think of the colleges as your home base on campus. With over 8,000 students in every incoming class, the colleges provide smaller, personal communities to connect to.

Academic History

UC Santa Barbara has created some fantastic **YouTube videos** on this section so we'll defer to their excellent instructions. But before you zoom off and start filling out your courses from memory, check out our pro tips below.

💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** Before you even touch this section, print out a copy of your high school transcript (and any transcripts from outside providers like community colleges, etc.)! Students can usually find their high school transcripts in their online school portals, but if you don't have one of those (or don't know what the heck we're talking about), ask your high school counselor for a copy of your unofficial transcript.

Why is this important? The UCs rely on your self-reported grades to make admissions decisions. That's why they don't require you to send in a copy of your transcript when you submit the application—they're trusting you to accurately report your coursework, and they'll double-check your final transcript for accuracy only after you've been admitted and decide to attend a specific UC campus.

Okay, fine. They're relying on my account of my grades. But why can't I just type out my courses from memory? If they find that you've misrepresented your grades, course titles, or honors designations, it's fair game for them to revoke your acceptance.

Whoa, okay! So I've printed my transcript. Now what? Keep that copy of your transcript handy and make sure you've entered the course titles, grades, and honors designations correctly for all the classes you've taken in high school.
For example, the abbreviations APUSH, AP US, AP US Hist all refer to the same course – Advanced Placement (AP) US History. You see why having your transcript will be helpful as you're reporting grades? The details matter, and you wouldn't want the UCs to see your self-reported coursework and think you were misrepresenting the classes you'd taken, right?

💡 **Collegewise Pro Tip:** If you take a college course outside of high school, you will need to report the grade and submit the transcript once admitted/enrolled into a UC. Some high schools offer to put the college course on the high school transcript, and that's fine, but just make sure to send both the high school and college transcript to a UC once you've enrolled.

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California Students & Academic History

What are "A-G" requirements?

They are a list of course requirements that fit into categories labeled by letters (a, b, c, etc.). Each letter corresponds with a core academic subject that the UCs expect you to have taken in high school.

What does it mean to fulfill the "A-G" requirements?

To fulfill these requirements, you have to take (and pass!) the minimum recommended courses **listed on the UC website**. Here's a (very cursory) breakdown:

- Two years of history/social science
- Four years of English (sorry, my math- and/or science-oriented friends)
- Three years of math
- Two years of science
- Two years of foreign language
- One year of art
- One year of a college preparatory elective

How do I know if my course is UC-approved?

Courses from California high schools and online schools that are used to fulfill the "A-G" requirements are approved by the UC. If you attend a California high school, you will be able to search for your classes that meet these requirements using the UC application. You can also verify which courses at your high school fall into their respective "A-G" categories on **this website**.

Collegewise Pro Tip: CA students, make sure you're selecting the 'right' course under the different "A-G" categories on the application. For example, economics is generally listed in the "G: College Preparatory Elective" category instead of the "A: History/Social Science" category. Why? Who knows. UCs are weird sometimes. If you can't find an approved class, you might be looking in the wrong "A-G" category.

I've fulfilled my "A-G" requirements! I can get into UCLA now, right? Hold up. These are the minimum requirements to be eligible for admission to any of the UCs. The more popular UC campuses (like Berkeley and LA) and majors (Engineering, Computer Science) often want more than what is listed above.

Non-California Residents

Do your best with representing your courses as accurately as you can. It is possible that your courses are not going to dovetail perfectly with the UC's "A-G" requirements. That's okay. Just describe all your courses as accurately and fully as possible.

Academic History Additional Information

You can use this optional section to tell the application readers more your academic experience. Keep it brief, because you will only have 550 characters. Here are some examples that you might want to share:

- A unique school curriculum or grading scale
- Why you took a certain course. Did you take US History at a community college? Why did you choose to do that instead of taking it at your high school?
- A dip in grades one term. What was happening during that time?
- Or anything else about your academic history that's not covered elsewhere

This is optional, so you should only share information if it adds to your application.

Test Scores

This section is pretty intuitive, so just follow the directions in the UC application.

SAT & ACT

University of California is test free, meaning they won't consider SAT or ACT scores when reviewing your application or awarding scholarships. If you've taken these exams, hold on to the score reports because they may be able to fulfill university requirements if you enroll at a UC campus.

AP & IB Scores

If available to you, pursuing a more rigorous curriculum (like Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate) can make your application more competitive. You're encouraged to submit your exam scores, although it's not required. Admissions readers want to see you challenge yourself by sitting for these exams. Just know a low score would never hurt your application, but higher scores can of course help!

You should report exams you've already taken and those you plan to take.

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English Language Proficiency Tests

Are you an international applicant? You'll need to submit an English proficiency test if you're attending school abroad and if the language of instruction isn't English. You can choose from the following tests:

- ACT
- SAT
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Duolingo English Test (DET)

We encourage you to learn more about meeting **English proficiency requirements** through the UC admissions website.

International Exams

You may attend a school with an international education system. If that's the case, you're required to report both completed and planned exams. Examples of international education systems are:

- GCSE/IGCSE/O-levels
- GCE A-levels
- Standard Board exams (India)

Activities & Awards

The UC application allows students to enter their activities and involvement into one of six categories: Award or Honor, Educational Preparation Program, Extracurricular Activity, Other Coursework, Volunteer/Community Service, and/or Work Experience. You can list up to 20 items with any combination of category. There is no hierarchy of these categories, and you should just list and select them as accurately as possible.

Always read the directions preceding each category. You'll find all sorts of pertinent examples of things that fit well in each category on the UC app. In the meantime, we've answered a few of your frequently asked questions.

Activities & Awards FAQs

1. ***Can I cut and paste my résumé as part of the Additional Comments section instead of completing this section?***

   Absolutely not! Admissions officers spend a lot of time constructing the applications so that they can collect all the information they need to know about students. If you send a résumé without being asked, it's like telling them that you didn't like the way they put the application together. This will create more work for them and will probably annoy them, and that is never a good idea.

2. ***How should I list my activities? In chronological order? In alphabetical order?***

   List each of your involvements in order of importance to you. Beyond importance, consider listing those activities towards the top that you have been involved in the longest/most consistently or where you held a leadership position. (Usually this matches up with importance for a student). It is far more important that you be authentic here rather than worry about being impressive.

3. ***Can I abbreviate? There's so little space!***

   We get it. Space can be limited in this section, so it's fine to abbreviate as long as the abbreviation is universally understood. It would be hard to find an admissions officer who doesn't know the meaning of "MVP," but if you're not sure, then spell out the acronym. In addition, you'll find you can save space by using numbers and abbreviations in the right place. "Senior Class Vice President" can also be "Class VP: 12," and "First Place in Conference Championship as a Sophomore and Junior" can be "1st in Conf. Championship: 10, 11." But be cautious. If you find yourself so desperate to squeeze in as much information as possible, you may want to consider using the Additional Comments section to give yourself some breathing room.

4. ***I don't have enough activities to utilize every space! What do I do?***

   You don't have to utilize every box afforded to you while filling out the activities section. Only have a few activities? Great! Put those down proudly and don't try and make other things fit there that just don't. And, whatever you do, don't try to make things sound important that just weren't. (More on that below.)

5. ***Wait—what should I list as Other Coursework?***

   Don't have anything? Don't worry. This is not the place to add a class for the sake of adding something, but instead should be used to list a course that shows your love of learning in a particular area. The UC app gives examples such as a Career and Technical Education (CTE) nursing careers course, a Spanish immersion program, your weekend Chinese school, and a non-transferable community college course. Don't worry if you don't have anything to list in this area. Just leave it blank.

6. ***What's an Educational Prep Program?***

   Did you participate in AVID, tutoring, EAOP, and/or study engineering for a summer and get to experience life as an engineering student? All of these would be great to put in this section. It could be a coding class you took over the summer or reviewing content of an AP course from an online provider.

7. ***What should (and shouldn't) I list as a Volunteer/Community Service?***

   Did you do a blood drive once in ninth grade for an hour? While that is great (and Red Cross math says that you saved up to three lives with that donation), it is probably not worth noting here. Try to focus on the volunteer experiences that meant the most to you and where you had a legitimate, tangible impact. If community service wasn't your thing, that's okay. Leave this section blank. It's best not to exaggerate (or invent) community service hours that just didn't happen.

8. ***What should I list as Work Experience?***

   List any jobs you got paid to do here. It doesn't have to be a formal job at a restaurant or store. This can be a paid internship, babysitting gig, or the neighbourhood landscaping business you started. Seriously, even if you tutored your neighbour's middle school student in math a couple of hours a month, you could list that as a paid job experience.

9. ***What should I list as an Award and Honor?***

   National Honors Society (NHS) is an activity that fits a lot better here than it does in the Extracurricular Activity section, especially if you are not super involved in NHS. Other good things to note here include MVP, Student of the Month, Honor Roll, Scholar Athlete, and other recognitions of this ilk.

10. ***What should I list as an Extracurricular Activity?***

    This is the catch-basin for anything else that you do outside the classroom that didn't fit in the other sections. This includes sport teams, music, theatre, student council, clubs/organizations, etc. Don't forget that hobbies count, too! Did you teach yourself how to play guitar by watching YouTube videos and spend a couple hours every week playing? Well, that's awesome – put it down. Many students think that for something to be entered under this category it must be an organized activity or something related to their school. We like to encourage students to put anything that takes up a decent amount of time during the week here. We've advised students to enter things like – their long, public transportation commute to and from school; taking care of little siblings or driving them to school; or even helping with the family business at the farmer's market on weekends. The things that take up time in your life should be input under this category.

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Scholarships

When you apply via the UC application, you'll be eligible for a range of scholarships based on merit, financial need, or both.

The UCs are a public university system, and most of this scholarship money is dispersed as financial aid to low-income students, not as merit-based scholarships.

You can access **https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/tuition-financial-aid/** for the most up-to-date information.

The UCs also offer "restricted" scholarships that only apply to some students. To apply for these scholarships, you should select the scholarship characteristics that are most relevant to your background and interests. However, make sure you are truthful and honest with the scholarships that connect to your experiences.

UC campuses also have campus-specific scholarship opportunities that students can apply for after they have submitted the UC application. You can find more information about how to apply for campus-specific scholarships on their associated websites.

Here Are More Popular Scholarships:

1. **Middle Class Scholarship (MCS)**

   What is it? This is exactly as billed: a scholarship for middle class families. The amount awarded will vary depending on family income and assets. For more information about specific income bands and other details, please **see this link.**

   How does financial aid from Pell Grants and other UC Grants factor in? This is a terrific scholarship, but you do need to understand that it is calculated after students are awarded grants like Pell, Cal, or other UC Grants. So, you can't combine the MCS with those other grants and scholarships to "go over" the amount that would have initially been awarded using the MCS calculation.

   More fine print. Additionally, this award is dependent on both the state budget and the number of eligible students in any given year. In some cases, students with demonstrated financial need will be eligible for Cal Grants or UC Grants that are worth more than the amount available through the MCS. The UC encourages us to think about this as a "minimum level" of financial aid as many can qualify for more grant funding, depending on their family circumstances.

2. **The Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan**

    What is it? This scholarship is for families who have an income of less than $80,000 a year and who qualify for financial aid.

    Can I apply for additional financial aid? Blue and Gold students with proven financial need can also qualify for more grant aid to help reduce the cost of attending a UC. What does this mean? Families who qualify for Blue and Gold might also be able to receive gift aid (these are grants and scholarships that don't need to be paid back, unlike loans that a student/family will have to repay after college).

    How do I apply? To be considered for Blue and Gold, a student needs to send in a FAFSA or California Dream Act Application and a Cal Grant GPA Verification. All forms are due by March 2 and students will be considered automatically if they qualify.

3. **The Regents Scholars**

    How do I apply? This one is a "don't call us, we'll call you" situation.

    Okay, then how do I qualify? Students cannot apply to be Regents Scholars. Instead, admissions committees refer strong candidates to an internal selection committee that is then responsible for selecting that campus' Regents Scholars. To qualify for Regents, you need to be a top applicant. Many Regents Scholars are high caliber students who are generally competitive applicants to other highly selective US institutions.

    What are the key factors? Grades and the level of your high school curriculum are all key factors for these. Your overwhelming charm and glorious personalities are not.

Support Programs

Wait, what's EOP? **The Educational Opportunity Program** provides mentorship, academic programs, financial assistance, counselling/advising, and other campus support services.

Who is EOP for? These services are for first-generation college students and/or students from low-income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Students must be California residents or American Indians from any state.

What information do I have to provide if I'm applying for to EOP? If you choose to apply to EOP by clicking the appropriate box, you will be required to provide certain information in your application:

- Your parents' level of education
- Family size
- Household income

What information do I have to provide if I'm applying for to EOP? If you choose to apply to EOP by clicking the appropriate box, you will be required to provide certain information in your application:

- Your parents' level of education
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- Household income

You report this information in the **Parent Information** and **Your Household** areas of the **About You** section.

You will also need to provide a short (240 character) response to the prompt "Discuss your reasons for applying to EOP."

Personal Insight Questions

Think of these as your blended interview, résumé, and best story showcase. Because you almost certainly won't be interviewed or submit letters written on your behalf, this is your greatest opportunity for the admissions readers to learn more about you.

How can I make the most of the space allotted?

Because your answers are limited to 350 words, you must get to the point quickly and stay on topic. In fact, UC admissions readers' most consistent pieces of advice are "give me the facts" and "don't include too much flowery writing." Other colleges encourage depth and personal exploration in their essay topics, but they also give students 500 words or more to do so and often have creative prompts that reflect the type of writing they expect you to submit.

How should I pick the four questions to answer?

The four UC questions you pick should each be designed to give your application readers specific insight into who you are and what matters to you. Your responses should be varied and discuss multiple facets of who you are. If you talk about your love of macramé in three of the four questions, while you are gloriously weird (and we like you), you are also on the wrong track. Successful applicants are adept at using the Personal Insight Questions to add new information or expand on something they had previously briefly mentioned elsewhere in the application.

Collegewise Pro Tip: Sometimes students have a passion they've spent a lot of time and energy towards, and they want to talk about it in two different UC PIQs. That's great! Just make sure to address different takeaways your passion provided you in the responses. (i.e., while playing on the soccer team 1) I learned how to be a more effective communicator and leader, and 2) I realized the importance of having community to cope with my own stress/anxiety).

Who should review my responses before I press submit?

This may seem counterintuitive, but we recommend that you not show your PIQ responses to your parents or to anyone who loves you. It's almost impossible for them to be objective. Instead, share them with a professional (a teacher, a high school counselor, or a trusted college counselor) who doesn't love you, but who has taken the time to know you or your story. Ask them to do two things: (a) Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation, and (b) Help you determine whether your response sounds like you and reflects your best self.

How can I determine if my style/voice is appropriate for a UC Personal Insight response?

Don't be too stiff. You are not writing a thesis for English class. Pretend you're speaking to a favorite teacher—this will ensure that you're not too formal (after all, we don't know any students who use words like "heretofore" in everyday conversation). If you write like you're talking to a teacher who you like, you won't be too informal, either. We've yet to hear a student use "no cap" in a conversation with a faculty member (and we'd like to keep it that way). Keep your voice. Authenticity is probably the most important single attribute in an interesting UC response.

Collegewise Pro Tip: Some of our former UC admissions officers recommended students read a PIQ question/prompt, and then record themselves answering the prompt out loud and verbally. Then students can listen to their recording and use that as a starting point while crafting their PIQ response.

The UC's guide to answering the questions can be found **here**. They offer some great prompts to help you flesh out your ideas and brainstorm potential answers.

Additional Comments

This page comes right after the UC Personal Insight questions. It offers a text box (with a maximum of 550 words) that allows applicants to explain unique circumstances. These circumstances can include personal situations that have affected the student's performance in school or anything the student feels the admissions readers need to know (that hasn't already been mentioned in other parts of the application).

Here are some examples of information you can include:

- If you took enough AP tests that you ran out of room on the application, that's something important that an admissions officer would want to know. List the additional scores and future test dates here.

- Include significant health circumstances, especially if they caused you to miss multiple weeks of school. Make sure to be specific about the dates you missed.

- If you attend a school with a specialized curriculum, like a performing arts school or a school with specialized religious instruction that takes up a significant portion of your class day, that's appropriate to list here. It's never a bad idea to make things as clear as possible for an admissions reader in the UC application; the more context you can provide will give the reader more information in your application review.

- Maybe you did a research project with a college professor, and you'd like to write a short summary of the project and your involvement in it. Keep it short and clear (think a simplified research abstract), but it deserves inclusion here.

- If another life event or experience had an impact on your studies or involvement, it would also be appropriate to place that information here (injury or illness, natural disaster, death in the family, or other extenuating circumstances).

Collegewise Pro Tip: If you choose to use this space, then the information should be new. Do not use this area to repeat something that has appeared elsewhere in your application or was part of an answer to one of your Personal Insight Questions. Instead, make the rest of your application as clear, organized, and complete as possible. Most students who do those things won't have anything compelling left to share—that's the sign of a thoughtful and complete application. Don't assume that blank space is bad or that more information is always good. In fact, two-thirds of our students at Collegewise don't write anything in the Additional Comments section. That's how strongly we believe in this advice.

Submitting The Application

The submission page provides you with an application summary and shows the completion status of all sections of your application. You will be able to review your entire application to ensure everything is correct. Take as long as you need to review everything before you submit it, because after you click your approval, you will not be able to make changes online. And if you do mess this up, trust us when we say that it's a huge hassle to have to contact every campus to which you applied and correct any errors.

You will also be asked to digitally sign an affidavit to confirm that, indeed, all the information you provided is truthful.

The payment page is the last subsection before final submission. It currently costs $70 for US applicants and $80 for international students to apply to each UC campus. Using a credit card is recommended, but they also allow applicants to pay by mail. If you decide to pay by mail, make sure you follow the instructions listed in the application.

Fee Waivers

If you qualified for an application fee waiver, you need to accept the waiver in this section too. Remember, the application fee will be waived for up to four campuses. If you apply to more than four, you'll need to pay $70 for each additional campus.

After You Submit

After you submit your application, we recommend printing out a copy so that you have a record of the application along with your Application ID. If you don't have a printer, or better yet, are ecologically inclined, save the document electronically so that you have access to this information. (Google "Print to PDF" to find out how to do this on your computer.)

How to Update your UC Application After You Submit It

Just so we're clear here, the UC states: "Minor changes to your activities, awards, volunteer work or employment are unlikely to have an impact on your admission decision." So, resist the urge to try to change things that aren't going to be perceived as a big deal. Winning an Olympic Gold Medal might be worth adding but letting them know you're moving from Treasurer to Vice President of the Red Cross Club isn't worth an update.

If there is anything that should always be updated, it is your address. If you move, be sure to keep your address up to date on your UC application account. The same holds true if you change your email.

Changes to your academic record are also a big deal. If after submitting your application, you:

- Change schools
- Add or drop a course
- Fail to get a C or better in a course

Then you need to notify the campuses you've applied to. Your correspondence must include your name and UC application ID number. Again, if this should occur, keep a copy of this correspondence for your records.

You can update all this information by logging back into your UC application and/or by contacting the campuses you applied to. Each campus has their own reporting instructions, so make sure you refer to their steps for changes.

Adding Campuses

If, after you have submitted your initial application, you want to add another UC campus, you might be able to do so, if it's before the November 30 deadline and if the campus is still open. Log in to your UC application to see which campuses are still accepting applications. You will need to pay the application fee for each new campus you apply to.

Final Thoughts & Tips

As mentioned earlier, be sure to regularly check the email you used to fill out the UC application for campus specific communication and updates. Some UCs will even request additional items from you after you've submitted (fall semester grades, supplemental information, letters of recommendation, or even proof of involvement and activities).

UC Application Helpdesk

Email: ucinfo@applyucsupport.net
Phone within US: (800) 207-1710
Phone outside US: (925) 298-6856

Learn About Collegewise

For more information about the authors of this guide, additional resources, and how you can get started with Collegewise, scroll ahead and read the next page!

About the Authors

Margo Macready

Margo is a Collegewise Counselor based in Irvine, CA. With parents who dedicated their careers to higher education, she spent her life growing up on college campuses and developed a passion for guiding students through the admissions process. She served as an Assistant Director of Admissions at her alma mater, the University of Redlands, and as an Admissions Officer at University of California San Diego. While at UCSD, she trained and managed a team of 30 evaluators for freshman application review. Margo's worked with students across the globe and has read nearly 20,000 applications, including first-year, transfer, and international files.

Joel Ontiveros

Joel is a Collegewise Counselor based in Seattle, WA. As a biased Californian, Joel only applied to colleges in his home state. After attending UCLA, he became an Admissions Officer and then Assistant Director that primarily recruited throughout Northern California and the San Francisco Bay Area. He then became a Regional Admissions Representative for UC Santa Cruz and primarily recruited out of state. He has reviewed applications to the UC for nearly eight years including first-year, transfer, and international files. He continues to believe in the power of the UC system, even with all of its issues and quirks.

Nicole Pilar

Nicole is a Collegewise Master Counselor based in the Collegewise Irvine, CA office. After graduating from Pitzer College, she spent two years as a Fulbright Scholar in Bulgaria teaching English and counselling students applying to English-speaking university programs. She is passionate about all things California higher education-related (ask her about the differences between the UC and CSU system if you dare!). Nicole hopes to one day rewrite the California Master Plan for Higher Education to allow more California students equitable access to the best system of public universities on the planet.

We couldn't have published this guide together without the help of those who came before us. Special shout out to Lisa Caruso, Megan Carlier, Paul Kanarek, and Monica Gallego Rude.

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Want More?

If you'd like to learn more about how we can help you or your students enjoy a more joyful college admissions process, just reach out and ask.

Collegewise is a private college counseling company that embraces two beliefs: (1) The college admissions process should be an exciting, adventurous time for every family, and (2) accurate, helpful college information should be made available to everyone. So, even though we are private counselors who work with families who can afford to hire us, we also enjoy working with anyone who is interested and willing to listen, whether we're writing, speaking, or teaching as much as we can.

Additional Resources

Collegewise's Resource Bank offers a complete collection of helpful resources!

Upcoming webinars & in-person events offers a complete collection of helpful resources!

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