


2024-25

DISCOVER URBAN

ADMISSIONS GUIDE





A lacrosse player in a white jersey with "URBAN" and the number "28" is running on a green field. The player is wearing a black helmet with a white face mask and white gloves. The background is a blurred green field under a blue sky.

Urban School of San Francisco seeks to ignite a passion for learning, inspiring its students to become self-motivated, enthusiastic participants in their education—both in high school and beyond.

Urban School was founded in 1966 by a group of Bay Area parents seeking an innovative alternative to conventional secondary education. Our founders believed that high school should be a joyful experience designed around the creative, inquisitive and idealistic energy of adolescents. They aspired to build a diverse community of teachers and students working collaboratively in an atmosphere of trust, honesty and mutual respect. These values continue to define our mission today.

We believe that a young person's success cannot be measured or understood through flashy college acceptances or impressive GPAs; these are mere byproducts of an aspirational, multi-dimensional education that cultivate fundamental skills alongside more enduring qualities of mind and character: curiosity, determination, empathy, optimism, creativity, analytical acuity and—more urgently than ever—an authentic investment in making our world a better place

As you begin to explore Urban, note how the structure of our program enables a commitment to sustained dialogue about complex topics; curricular freedom to ignite and honor student interest; myriad arenas for collaboration and innovation; and a commitment to equity and social justice. Beyond that, sense if you can the unique alchemy of the Urban culture—a dynamic, purposefully engaged community of learners proud to be part of a singular institution ever restless to improve.

ACADEMICS AT URBAN

Urban's unique schedule and curriculum reflects our priorities:

- + longer class periods allow for deeper exploration of subject areas and creative teaching methodologies
- + three distinct academic terms facilitate an extraordinary menu of electives to inspire student interest and enthusiastic investment
- + letter grades are deferred until the end of each term to prioritize more substantive, actionable feedback.

If Urban had a three-part educational mantra, it might be *depth over breadth; learn how to think, not what to think; inspire joyful curiosity!* Here are three examples of our academic philosophy in action:

» URBANX LABS

Urban School's integrated and interdisciplinary approach to design, technology and engineering flourishes in UrbanX Labs. With offerings like Electronics and Robotics, Materials Science, Advanced Computer Science, Industrial Design, Architectural Design and more, we're teaching students how to develop, design and build their ideas. In our purpose-designed UrbanX lab, we teach students the fundamentals of discovery, innovation, creativity and problem solving—skills that serve them throughout their academic careers and far into their futures.

» MULTIDISCIPLINARY CLASSES

Urban offers, and continues to develop, electives that fuse and transcend specific academic disciplines and exist both within and beyond the traditional classroom. Classes like Voices of Incarceration, California Studies and Infectious Diseases to name a few, variously combine history, English, sociology, anthropology, epidemiology and issues of social justice. Particularly as students reach beyond the core curriculum, we seek to inspire engagement by exploring larger social issues with an immediate relevance that young people both crave and need as they mature into engaged citizens of the world.

» CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COURSES

Urban offers many classes that address different aspects of our relationship with the natural world, while building upon and making connections to students' prior knowledge from other disciplines, including science, history and English. Many of these courses, such as Marine Biology, Ecology, Naturalist at Writer and Cal Studies, include field trips as central components. Student understanding, classroom activities and major assessments all proceed from these field experiences. By taking Urban's environmental sustainability classes, students will expand their knowledge, personal connection and contextualization of key sustainability challenges.







420
STUDENTS

1:10
FACULTY TO STUDENT
RATIO

15
STUDENT AFFINITY
AND ALLY GROUPS

40+
STUDENT-LED CLUBS
AND LEADERSHIP
TEAMS

139
COLLEGES ACROSS THE
U.S. AND FIVE ADDITIONAL
COUNTRIES
(CLASSES OF 2020-24)

>103
FACULTY AND STAFF MEMBERS
(66% WITH ADVANCED DEGREES)

74%
OF STUDENTS
PARTICIPATE
IN URBAN ATHLETICS

\$5.23M
IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
PROVIDED TO 30%
OF FAMILIES

56%
STUDENTS OF
COLOR

174
COURSES,
68 OF WHICH ARE
HONORS LEVEL

15
AVERAGE CLASS
SIZE

STUDENT LIFE

Urban entrusts our students with an unusual degree of responsibility for creating the school they want it to be. Their contagious, enthusiastic investment creates a culture vibrant with showcase performances, spirit weeks, dances and school-wide events that foster excitement for the entire student body. Students are also the guiding energy behind more than 40 clubs and activities, ranging from student government, to the award-winning student newspaper and yearbook, to 15 different affinity and ally spaces, to our outdoor and international trips program. These young leaders are essential members of our admissions, discipline and curricular committees, and two students serve each year as ex officio members of our Board of Trustees.

Urban has evolved quickly in recent years to prioritize health and wellness in the broadest sense of the term. Increased staffing in counseling, academic support and college advising are only part of a larger initiative that includes an assigned grade-level Dean and advisors that accompany their grade for four years; courses in mindfulness and meditation; a robust health curriculum; a peer counseling and tutoring program, and a general school-wide recognition of the essential importance of mental health. Perhaps most importantly, a close-knit, intentionally small student body and an attentive faculty come to school each day in an intimately scaled campus. We see one another, and we look out for one another.





URBAN ATHLETICS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES



The same kind of initiative and enthusiasm that animates Urban classrooms also energizes the Blues in athletic competition. Urban Athletics provides an opportunity for both experienced athletes and for students trying out a new sport. JV and frosh-level teams focus on fundamentals and teamwork, while Varsity teams emphasize competition and advanced skills. During the 2023-24 school year, 75% of our students participated on a team, a testament to the importance and accessibility of athletics, providing an essential opportunity to emphasize universal values of resilience, effort, empathy, respect and cooperation.

The Blues have achieved notable competitive success in recent years, winning North Coast championships in multiple sports and Conference championships in many others. While student-athletes from Urban often go on to successful collegiate careers, the school does not consider applicants for admission specifically for athletics. Rather, we seek student-athletes who also want to participate fully in school life. It is not unusual for an all-conference athlete to play in the jazz band or for the captain of a championship team to work on the student newspaper.

In addition to our interscholastic sports teams, Urban also has a physical activity program designed to instill life-long habits and enjoyment in physical activity while also satisfying the state requirement for physical education. In order to honor a diversity of interests and abilities, students can participate in approved classes outside of school or those provided at Urban. Recent Urban offerings have included yoga, rock climbing, strength and conditioning, dance and hiking.



PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS

Urban has a well-deserved reputation for excellence in both the performing and visual arts and as a place where exceptional teachers and motivated student-artists can thrive. The school understands the arts as an essential element of a fully realized education, and two art credits, either performing or visual, are required for graduation. Urban recently completed a new Performing Arts and Community Center, creating a facility to match the ambitions of our talented performing artists.

All Urban arts courses are designed to help students achieve artistic awareness and technical proficiencies and to help them identify their creative instincts and act upon them with intent, joy and perseverance. Urban teachers—often professional artists and performers in their own right—mentor students to explore multiple disciplines, to experience the interplay of art forms, and to be open to both the intentionality and serendipity of the creative process.

There is a rich menu of offerings in both performing and visual arts, some classroom-based and others geared towards performances or exhibition. Students can participate in courses such as chamber orchestra, chorus, multiple jazz bands, plays and musicals, drawing and painting, stone carving, music theory or music production. The opportunities are extensive with still more on the horizon.



BELONGING AT URBAN

Values

From our founding nearly 60 years ago, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging have been critical to our mission and core values. We believe that the most meaningful, vibrant and lasting education occurs in a school community where students, faculty, staff and families, across the spectrum of identities and backgrounds, teach and learn together.

Program

Every day, we strive to create a school environment where each individual feels valued and supported. Our commitment begins with a comprehensive effort to diversify representation within each constituency group. This work continues in our drive to ensure a diverse and inclusive curriculum across academic disciplines. Urban also requires a four-year service learning program to engage students in issues of social justice, both in the classroom and through service opportunities in the larger community.

Beyond our academic programming, affinity and ally spaces offer a place for students to share their experiences, find support, and generate celebratory and educational programming for our community. Student-organized lunchtime forums, films, panel discussions and guest speakers are a regular occurrence at Urban, and take place almost daily in January during our Month of Understanding. During MOU, students work with faculty advisors to create a schedule of activities for the community that highlights various dimensions of their experience and/or issues of social injustice. For both student organizers and attendees, MOU events help develop the skills and desire to talk through challenging topics with empathy and respect.

Our community is committed to an honest appraisal of our strengths and our areas for improvement. Our work toward diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging will always be ongoing.



Access

Urban maintains a strong financial assistance program for both tuition and non-tuition expenses to create access and an equitable experience for all students and families. Levels of assistance are based on a family's resources and, beyond tuition, support everything from food on campus to global trips, to transportation to athletic equipment.

We also know from our students that feeling fully part of a community is not merely financial. A number of years ago students receiving financial assistance created an affinity space to share their experiences with one another and along with a faculty advisor, serve as a conduit to the administration as the school seeks to best support them.

While each family situation is unique and there are many different circumstances, we've pulled together a few examples of some family scenarios to give you an idea of qualifications and awards. For a full range of our financial assistance scenarios and more details, please visit urbanschool.org/admission/affordingurban

Financial Assistance Details

- » To evaluate a family's financial assistance package, we rely heavily on our financial assistance partner-platform, Clarity Tuition, (app.clarityapp.com) to assess a family's total income, expenses, assets and liabilities.
- » Applicants are considered for admission regardless of a family's request for financial assistance. If qualified, a financial assistance package will accompany the student's letter of acceptance to Urban.
- » Families reapply for financial assistance each year and significant changes to a family's financial situation are reflected in the student's financial assistance package each year.
- » Financial assistance applications for the 2025-26 school year are due on January 9, 2025.



APPLYING TO URBAN

- 1. Create a Ravenna-Hub account.** The link to Ravenna can be found on our website at urbanschool.org/admissions. Once the prospective student is added to the account, you can explore and apply to Urban School, all in one easy place! Detailed instructions and checklists on Ravenna will help walk you through each step of the process.
- 2. Come to campus!** All Urban admissions events are optional and can be scheduled on Ravenna. There are multiple ways to engage with Urban, including our Open House, student visits, parent/guardian information sessions, Affinity Night, Uniquely Urban, and/or an optional virtual Interview.
- 3. Applicants must complete an online application by January 9, 2025.** All components of the application, as well as recommendations and transcripts, are submitted through Ravenna.

To learn more about Urban School, please visit our website at urbanschool.org or contact us at admissions@urbanschool.org.

Scan this QR code for more information about applying to Urban School:

