

**2025**

# **TITAN PLANNING GUIDE**

**HENRY M. GUNN  
HIGH SCHOOL**

CEEB: 052-347

COLLEGE & CAREER CENTER

Phone: 650-354-8219

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

Phone: 650-354-8212



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE: WHAT TO DO &amp; WHEN .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CAREER RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>NAVIANCE STUDENT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
How to Activate Your Account .....	5
Features to Explore.....	5
<b>COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
SAT vs. ACT Comparison Chart with Testing Dates.....	7
<b>RECOMMENDATION LETTERS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Who to Ask and When .....	8
Types of Recommendation Letters.....	9
<b>FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A COLLEGE .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BUILDING A COLLEGE LIST .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Admissions Requirements .....	14
Application Process .....	15
Map of Community Colleges .....	16
<b>CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITIES (CSUs).....</b>	<b>17</b>
Admissions Requirements .....	17
Application Process .....	20
Map of CSUs and UCs .....	21
<b>UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (UCs) .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Paths to Eligibility .....	18
UC Personal Insight Questions .....	20
Application Process .....	19
Map of UCs and CSUs .....	21
<b>PRIVATE &amp; OUT-OF-STATE PUBLIC COLLEGES .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Application Process .....	22
Common Application and Naviance.....	23
Common Application Essay Questions .....	25
<b>EARLY DECISION, EARLY ACTION, ROLLING ADMISSIONS, ETC.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>COLLEGE VISITS &amp; INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Snapshot of a “Good” College Visit.....	28
Tips for the College Interview.....	29
<b>FINANCIAL AID &amp; SCHOLARSHIPS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
FAFSA .....	30
CSS Profile .....	30
Scholarships .....	32
<b>ACCEPTANCES, WAITLISTS, DENIALS, &amp; APPEALS.....</b>	<b>32</b>

# What To Do & When

A tentative timeline of events for college planning spring junior year through fall senior year

## DECEMBER - MARCH

- o SAT: 12/7/24
- o ACT: 12/14/24
- o Junior Assembly: 1/19/25
- o Athletes - register with NCAA clearinghouse: January
- o Junior Family Meetings begin: January
- o Junior Conferences begin: February
- o Course Selection: February 1-28th
- o ACT: 2/8/25
- o SAT: 3/8/25
- o SAT @ Gunn: 3/17/25 (for all juniors)

## APRIL

- o Junior Conferences continue
- o Continue to research colleges/career options
- o Visit colleges
- o ACT: 4/5/25
- o Begin adding colleges to "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list in Naviance
- o Explore summer opportunities (internships, jobs, volunteer, etc.)

## MAY

- o SAT: 5/3/25
- o AP Exams (if applicable)
- o Parent-to-Parent Panel
- o Request letters of recommendation from teachers
- o Prepare for finals!

## JUNE

*Enjoy Summer Break!*

- o Summer School (if applicable)
- o SAT: 6/7/25
- o ACT: 6/14/25
- o Explore colleges and post-grad opportunities

## JULY/ AUGUST

- o Continue to explore colleges and post-grad opportunities
- o ACT: 7/12/25
- o Common Application opens: 8/1/25
- o UC application opens: 8/1/25
- o Senior Assembly @ Gunn: 8/22/25
- o SAT: 8/23/25

## SEPTEMBER

- o Senior Conferences begin
- o ACT: 9/6/25
- o Common App
- o Finalize College List on Naviance and
- o Confirm Rec Letters with teachers
- o College Rep Visits in C&CC
- o Senior Workshops in C&CC
- o Senior Parent Night

## OCTOBER

- o FAFSA opens 10/1/25 (anticipated)
- o CSU application opens: 10/1/24
- o College Rep Visits in C&CC
- o Senior Workshops in C&CC
- o SAT: 10/4/25
- o Palo Alto College Fair: 10/17/25 (anticipated)
- o ACT: 10/25/25
- o Senior Conferences continue

## NOVEMBER

- o SAT: 11/8/25
- o College Rep Visits in C&CC
- o EA/ED deadline: November 1 and beyond
- o UC/CSU Application deadline: 11/30/25

## DECEMBER

- o SAT: 12/6/25
- o ACT: 12/6/25
- o *Enjoy Winter Break!*

# Post-High School Options

## WHAT DO I WANT AS A CAREER?

What are the significant skills you possess? Are you good with your hands, good at problem solving, a motivator of people? Are you attentive to detail, fast with numbers, quick to catch on? What are your strong points? It is important to connect the things you know about yourself to the career areas you are considering. Do your plans for education after high school match your career hopes? You will need the help of your school counselor, parents, college and career advisor, and friends, but it is **YOUR** future. Talk with the Exploratory/Work Experience Coordinator to discuss employment possibilities. Summer jobs and/or internships will help you find out more about what you might consider for the future.

## SHOULD I GO TO COLLEGE?

If your answer is “yes,” read *Factors to Consider When Choosing a College* – whether community, state, UC, or private. Continue to explore career opportunities at the same time.

If your answer is “maybe” or “no” look into the possibility of:

- **VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS:** These may be more appropriate than a public institution. For example, private conservatories of music permit a student to specialize more narrowly in the study of music than do public institutions. This is also true in the areas of art, business, modeling, court reporting, computer programming, drafting, fashion designing, etc. Some courses can be completed in nine months, but do not offer the AA (Associate of Arts) degree that a two-year community college course offers. Always investigate the school you are considering to be sure that it is an accredited school that is operated ethically.
- **US JOB CORPS:** Offers programs that provide educational and vocational training. There are seven training centers in California, including in San Jose and at Treasure Island. There are also centers in Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah. For general information go to [www.jobcorps.gov/Home.aspx](http://www.jobcorps.gov/Home.aspx)
- **CET (Center for Employment Training):** Job training and placement programs. For information call 1- 800-533-2519.
- **AMERICORPS NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps):** Ten-month program. Offers young people the opportunity to gain experience in a number of areas while helping the environment and/or other people. While in service earn living stipend, health insurance, and education award of up to \$5,775. Some information is available in the College & Career Center. You may also go to [www.americorps.gov/](http://www.americorps.gov/) or call 1-800-942-2677.
- **CCC (California Conservation Corps):** CCC hires young men and women, 18 to 23, to work for one year on a variety of environmental and community projects and to respond to such emergencies as forest fires and floods. California residents not on probation or parole are eligible. For information, go to [www.ccc.ca.gov/](http://www.ccc.ca.gov/) or call (916) 341-3100.

# Career Resources

Sooner or later, everyone will seek employment. Over one-fourth of all high school students are already working at part-time jobs. About three-fourths of college students work during vacations and/or part-time while on campus. Almost all financial aid packages for college students expect the recipients to work for part of their total expenses. And, of course, some students choose to go to work full-time after graduating from high school.

Visit the College and Career Center as often as you can to gather information to assist in planning for your future, either work or college. Listed below is some of the career resources, activities, and services available.

## CAREER EXPLORATION/ NAVIANCE

Career exploration opportunities for students are continually updated on Naviance. Features to explore include:

- **CAREER INTEREST PROFILER:** A career interest survey about interest in types of work activities. Use the results to explore suggested occupations; examine the education, training, and skills required.
- **DO WHAT YOU ARE:** A personality survey. Use the results to explore suggested college majors and careers based on your preferences and strengths.

## WORK EXPERIENCE & EXPLORATORY EXPERIENCE

The Work and Exploratory Experience teacher is a great resource for students interested in finding paid and internship opportunities.

### WORK EXPERIENCE

A combined on- and off-campus learning experience with the job site as classroom. Students must be at least 16 years old and in grades 11-12. Students can earn variable credit depending on hours worked. Five credits can be earned each semester for 8-10 hours per week of work in addition to the required one-hour of classroom time. With additional work hours, up to 10 credits can be earned in one semester. Just attending the required hour-long class each week will earn 1.5 credits. A student must have a Social Security card, file a work permit, agree to the regulations as stated in a training agreement, and submit pay stubs regularly. Students are evaluated each quarter. Work Experience is an excellent opportunity for students to learn about the world of work. Students interested in enrolling should meet with the Work Experience teacher to discuss the requirements. Depending on total credits earned, this program meets all or part of the Career/Vocational Education requirement for graduation.

### EXPLORATORY EXPERIENCE

An off-campus elective class for high school students in grades 10-12 who wish to explore a career by volunteering in the community. Students are placed with a professional person in the field in which the student has a career interest. Students spend 60 hours volunteering during the semester to receive five units of career-vocational education credit. On-campus class time is by arrangement with the teacher. Students may also be required to complete certain related instruction assignments. Some preparation in certain fields may be necessary for placement, e.g., drafting for placement with an architect. Students interested in enrolling should meet with the Exploratory Experience teacher to discuss an appropriate placement. Depending on total credits earned, this program meets all or part of the Career/Vocational Education requirement for graduation.

## **JOB BOARD**

Information on job opportunities and work permits is posted in Schoology. For more information, please reach out to Gunn's Work Experience Teacher, Rachael Kaci. She can be reached at [rkaci@pausd.org](mailto:rkaci@pausd.org).

## **WORK PERMITS**

California work permits are required for students aged 14-18. They are obtained from the Work/Exploratory Experience Coordinator. Please include your Social Security number and parent signature.

- Students ages 14-18 are not allowed to be employed without a permit.
- Work permits must be re-issued and updated five (5) days after the start of each school year.
- Consult back of work permit form for regulations and restrictions regarding minors and work.
- Work permits downloadable from [gunn.pausd.org](http://gunn.pausd.org)





## WHAT IS MAIA LEARNING?

MaiaLearning is a Web-based college readiness platform to help students prepare for life after high school. It is a comprehensive website that students and parents can use to help make decisions about colleges.

MaiaLearning lets us share information about upcoming meetings, news, and events, as well as other web resources for post high school planning. MaiaLearning can be accessed through your computer, phone, or tablet.

## ACCESS YOUR ACCOUNT

From the ClassLink portal, select the MaiaLearning app and choose “Sign in with Single Sign On”.


*Please note: Parents have view-only access to their student(s) accounts; they cannot edit.*

## FEATURES TO EXPLORE

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION	HOW TO ACCESS
<b>Résumé</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record your high school activities, awards, volunteer experience, etc. Use <i>Suggested Examples</i> in each section for examples.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click <b>Portfolio</b> in the navigation menu.</li> <li>Select the <b>Resume</b> tab.</li> <li>Select <b>Add Resume</b></li> </ol>
<b>College Search</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set search criteria to yield a list of colleges to explore (<i>Location, Type of School, Admissions, More</i>). Save your search to access/modify later.</li> <li>Click on the various tabs of the college profile (<i>Overview, Community, Admissions, Degrees &amp; Majors, Varsity Sports, Costs &amp; Aid</i>) to learn more information.</li> <li>Click the heart next to the college name, to make it a favorite and add the college(s) you’re interested in to your <b>Considering List</b> for future reference</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click <b>Universities</b> in the navigation menu.</li> <li>On the <b>Search</b> 🔍 tab, search by keyword or use the filters to find colleges of interest.</li> </ol>
<b>Scholarship List</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Search for National scholarship opportunities. Database lists entries by name, award amount, deadline and application requirements; filter by your specific criteria (<i>Gender, Majors, Location, etc.</i>)</li> <li>Search for Local Scholarships uploaded by your school or district. Sort by Name, Deadline or Amount. Search by Keyword</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click <b>Financial Plan</b> in the navigation menu.</li> <li>On the <b>Scholarships Search</b> tab, add eligibility criteria and click “Search” to find national scholarships.</li> <li>On the <b>Local Scholarships</b> tab, search local and regional scholarships uploaded by your school and/or district.</li> <li>Click on a scholarship name to learn more. Click the heart to add it to your <b>My Financial Aid Awards</b> wish list.</li> </ol>

## COLLEGE APPLICATION STATISTICS

All application outcomes are self-reported by graduating students. To protect student privacy, if fewer than 4 students applied to a college, the statistics are not available.

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION	HOW TO ACCESS
<b>Application History and Scattergrams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary of Gunn application results (total applicants, students accepted, average GPA and test scores)</li> <li>Historical application results (accepted, denied, deferred) represented in a scattergram graph; applicant GPA appears on the y-axis and applicant average SAT/ACT scores on the x-axis. N.B.: For an applicant to be represented on a scattergram for a given college, three things must be present: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an application result (accepted or denied)</li> <li>a GPA</li> <li>a test score</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click <b>Universities</b> in the navigation menu</li> <li>Search for a college from the <b>Search</b> tab or select a college from your <b>Considering List</b>.</li> <li>Click on the college name to open the University Fact Sheet.</li> <li>Click on the <b>Admissions</b> tab. Scroll down to view the <b>Admissions Statistics (Scattergram)</b>, <b>Historical Statistics</b> and <b>Application History</b> sections.</li> <li>In Admissions Statistics, <b>Use Concordance Values</b> includes both SAT &amp; ACT scores in one view</li> </ol>
<b>College Compare</b>	Compare your GPA and test scores to the average GPA and test scores of Gunn admitted students for colleges you are considering.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click <b>Universities</b> in the navigation menu.</li> <li>Click on the <b>Considering</b> tab.</li> <li>Click <b>Compare All</b> to see how your GPA and test scores compare to all colleges on your <b>Considering List</b>.</li> </ol>
<b>Enrichment Opportunities</b>	The <a href="#">Teen Life database</a> lists opportunities such as summer programs, gap year programs, after-school enrichment, and volunteering as well as search by keywords like the name, location, etc. Learn about program dates and costs (if available), any requirements, and the sponsor's website for more information and the application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access this database through the  symbol on the upper right side of the dashboard</li> </ol>



# College Entrance Tests

***With recent changes in college application requirements, it is critical that you check the testing policy of each college to which you may apply to better understand their policy on the SAT and ACT.*** Historically, college admission tests have been required by many colleges as a part of the application process. They are also used as a criterion for some financial aid and scholarships. These tests are useful to the student in demonstrating strength in academic areas when college and career decisions are being made.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- You may register online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) . Information about the SAT, and ACT are also available in the College & Career Center.
- Registration for AP exams begins in the fall and is coordinated through Gunn. Exact dates will be announced in January.
- At time of registration or on test day, students have the option to select four college choices to receive scores directly (included in test registration fee).
- See the College & Career Center staff for fee waiver eligibility requirements if you think you may qualify.
- **Always** use your legal name on all forms that you fill out. No nicknames!
- **Read all instructions carefully!**

### **PSAT (Preliminary SAT)** *offered to all Gunn juniors in October*

The PSAT is a co-sponsored program by the College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). It's a standardized test that provides first-hand practice for the SAT Reasoning Test. It also qualifies students for National Merit Scholarship programs.

### **SAT (Reasoning Test)** *Registration completed online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)*

Effective March 2024, the SAT will be offered in a digital format. Scoring will stay the same, but the structure of the exam will change. The SAT is an entrance exam used by colleges and universities to assist in making admissions decisions. It is a multiple choice, pencil-and-paper test administered by the College Board covering verbal, numerical reasoning, and English writing skills.

The purpose of the SAT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. The SAT is an acceptable alternative to the ACT for all colleges. Recommended testing window is from Spring of 11th grade through Fall of 12th grade.

### **ACT (American College Testing)** *Registration completed online at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)*

The ACT is an entrance exam used by colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. It is a multiple-choice, pencil-and-paper test administered by the American College Test covering English, Math, Reading, and Science reasoning.

The purpose of the ACT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college, and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. The ACT is an acceptable

alternative to the SAT for all colleges. Recommended testing window is from Spring of 11th grade through Fall of 12th grade.

### AP EXAM ( Advanced Placement Program)

Registration completed online through Gunn at <https://user.totalregistration.net/AP/052347>

Tests specific knowledge in subject matter based on full year college level course taken in high school.

These are 3-hour tests that are NOT REQUIRED by colleges, but can be used for college placement or credit. Students enrolled in an AP course will have the opportunity to take these tests at the conclusion of the course.

## SAT VS. ACT

	SAT	ACT
<b>Why take it</b>	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit scholarships	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit scholarships
<b>Test Structure</b>	Reading Writing & Language Math	English Math Reading Science Reasoning
<b>Length</b>	~ 2 hours	2 hours, 55 minutes
<b>Reading</b>	54 total questions	4 reading passages
<b>Science</b>	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
<b>Math</b>	Covers: Arithmetic Algebra I & II Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis	Covers: Arithmetic Algebra I & II Geometry, Trigonometry, Probability, and Statistics
<b>Essays</b>	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
<b>How it's scored</b>	Scored on a scale of 400-1600	Scored on a scale of 1-36

# Recommendations

Many private colleges and scholarship organizations require recommendations from teachers and a school report from your counselor. Good, well-written recommendations describing you are of great help in supporting your application. Gunn teachers and counselors pride themselves in helping with a student's transition from high school to college by providing thoughtful and informative recommendations. Asking teachers early is a good plan, and towards the latter half of second semester junior year is the ideal time. We encourage students to kindly ask teachers in person, expressing their appreciation and reasons for choosing that teacher.

The Recommendation Request Form (on Naviance) must be completed online when a letter of recommendation is requested. Take time to carefully fill in the details and answer questions. Have a parent/relative fill in the appropriate brag sheet information online.

## TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1-2 teacher letters required for most private colleges and a few out of state public universities.

## PURPOSE

To highlight your personal attributes as a student

## WHO SHOULD I ASK?

- An academic teacher(s) from a core subject (English, Social Studies, Math, Science, or World Language); preferably teachers from junior year.
- Identify a teacher(s) that you have developed a relationship with and will be able to accurately assess your talents and abilities. If in doubt, don't hesitate to ask if they feel comfortable writing a recommendation on your behalf. In some cases, you might not have a choice about whom to ask (i.e. the college requires a letter from a teacher of a specific subject) but when you do, make the best choice possible. Think about asking a teacher who can speak to one or more of the following:
  - Your overall passion, interest, and engagement in a particular subject
  - Achievement on a particular project/unit of study
  - An academic challenge you overcame/academic growth
  - Your contributions to class discussions
  - Your ability to interact, collaborate, and demonstrate leadership with peers
  -

## HOW/ WHEN SHOULD I ASK?

- In person
- Preferably during 2nd semester Junior year to allow those who want to write over the summer, the opportunity to do so. Given their many responsibilities, some teachers set a limit on how many letters they will write. Allow a minimum of four-weeks notice before the due date.
- Your teacher may ask you to complete a questionnaire or provide a summary of your experience in their class.
  - Talk to them about what you remember about their classes and your participation
  - Reference specific units, projects, or assignments you completed, what you learned in the class, and any challenges you overcame.

- While the thought of having such a conversation with your teacher might be a bit intimidating, remember that they are asked these questions quite often and are often expecting it! Even if you're uncomfortable doing so, practicing how to advocate for yourself is very important and is a skill that will serve you well in college.

## FOLLOW UP

- Write an email summarizing the conversation and any action items.
- Thank the teachers who write recommendations for you.

## A COMPARISON OF COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS WITH TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS ( also called "School Report")	TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS
Holistic overview of student, including academic, extracurricular, athletic, and community activities	More focused view of student in the classroom; an academic report
Requires input from multiple sources: <i>Recommendation Request Form</i> , teacher feedback, <i>Supplemental Information Form</i> , Senior Conference Interview, etc.	Teacher writes based upon the student's academic performance in a specific class.
Written by your school counselor	Choose teachers who know you best. It may be wise to choose one teacher from Math/Science and another who teaches English/History/World Language. Most colleges prefer letters from junior year teachers in academic courses.

In most applications, you'll be asked if you want to waive your FERPA rights, or, the right to review confidential letters of recommendation.

- Waiving your right lets colleges know that you do not intend to read your recommendations, which helps reassure colleges that the letters are candid and truthful.
- Some recommenders may decline to write a letter for you if you do not waive your rights. Check with your counselor or teachers to see if any of them follow such a policy.

# Factors to Consider When Choosing a College

## ACADEMICS

- What colleges offer the kind of education or training I am interested in?
- How academically challenging is the school?
- Will I be happy with the challenge?
- Are my GPA and test scores in line with other students from Gunn who were accepted at these colleges? See information on Naviance.

## SIZE

Colleges range in size from 150 - 60,000 students. Size does make a difference.

- Will I feel closed in or trapped at a small college?
- Will I welcome the personal, friendly atmosphere a small college affords?
- Will I feel lost and overwhelmed at a large institution?
- Will I feel more independent and free at large university?
- Will I want large or small classes?

## ATMOSPHERE/STUDENT BODY

Colleges, just like any group working and living together, create their own atmosphere.

- How do students at the university approach responsibility? Is it an academic or less serious mood?
- Is the school single sex or coeducational?

## COST

A major factor to be considered is the cost of attending college. Ask: How much can my family and I afford for an education? The total cost for a year as computed by the college financial aid office, includes tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. While cost is important, don't limit your choice of colleges to only those you can afford without financial assistance. Many of the more expensive private schools have solid financial aid programs, which may cover anywhere from 20% to the full cost, depending on your need. All college sites have a **net calculator** so you can estimate the price tag. You may also contact financial aid officials at a college to get more information.

## LOCATION OF THE COLLEGE

The decision of a location and campus setting for your college should ultimately include those schools where you would be most comfortable living for the next two or four years of your life.

- Do I want to go away to college?
- How far away?
- Do I want independence or would I like to stay closer to my family?
- How expensive will my travel costs be?
- How important is the climate and the weather?
- Do I want to live in a big city or in a more rural setting?

## **SOCIAL STRUCTURES & CAMPUS LIFESTYLE**

- What are the types of dorms? (Coed, shared facilities, student-controlled, etc.)
- Are housing accommodations readily available on or near campus?
- Are there sororities and fraternities?
- What is the weekend social life like, both on and off campus?
- What are the extracurricular opportunities?
- Are the athletic facilities important to me?

## **STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP MAKE DECISIONS**

1. Talk to your parents, your teachers, and your friends. Meet with your School Counselor to review your choices.
2. Look at college viewbooks, catalogs and handbooks in the CC&C, or go online.
3. Use Naviance to create lists and visit college websites. Check requirements for admission (grades, courses, college entrance tests). Do in June after the group of seniors have had their data entered.
4. Visit the college website and look at courses offered in your major or area of interest.
5. Investigate the costs of attending the colleges. Find out about financial aid, part-time work, loans, scholarships, etc., if you will need financial help to go to college. Check out the Gunn scholarship database. Talk with Mr. Lang.
6. Attend college representative meetings in the C&CC. Dates are published on the C&CC events calendar.
7. Visit as many campuses as possible. Colleges are happy to make arrangements for such visits. Students may be excused for a maximum of five school days per year for college visits as long as the permission forms are submitted in advance. Remember that these visits should not affect the satisfactory completion of your senior year courses or jeopardize your offer of admission.



# Building a College List

**Do you know that less than 15% of U.S. colleges admit fewer than 50% of applicants?** That means there are 2300+ four-year colleges to choose from that admit more applicants than they reject; in fact, **65% of four-year colleges admit 75% or more of their applicants.**

If you want to end up with a variety of options to choose from, you should **create a balanced list with at least 2 likely, perhaps 4 reaches, but mostly targets. Apply to 8-12 colleges** (the UCs and CSUs all count as 1 because the application is systemwide, but there should be a range of selectivity among those colleges too) in order to do a quality job on your applications. **If possible, your college list should include at least one non-binding early admissions or rolling admissions college that is either a safe target or a likely.** A college where applying early in rolling admissions or early in terms of EA is a pretty safe bet that you will be admitted. And, it also must be to a college that you would be happy to attend. Locking in a likely early in the game will help you relax a bit while you wait for results from other colleges in April. The reaches (possible stretches and/or statistical long-shots) should never constitute more than half your list!

Often, the decisions about which colleges make it to your list will come down to values. I challenge you to consider schools that will be a good fit – academically, socially, and financially; all colleges on the list should be ones that you'd be happy to attend –whether they are your “likely” or “reach” colleges.

## DETERMINING IF A COLLEGE IS A LIKELY, TARGET, OR REACH?

- The SAT or ACT score range (if applicable) for the middle 50% of accepted freshmen
- The percentage of admitted students with your GPA and below or the average GPA of the admitted students
- The admit rate (the percentage of applicants admitted)

You can get this information on most colleges' websites, through Common Data Sets, the college profiles on the College Board and Naviance.

You should also collect the data above for Gunn applicants by looking at the Scattergram graphs in Naviance to note Gunn trends.

In terms of grades, don't consider a weighted GPA. Selective colleges might recalculate GPAs, but you should look at your unweighted grades in core courses. That's also going to be the GPA used most frequently in awarding merit scholarships. If a college recalculates your GPA, a weighted GPA might be used, and some schools will only use that, but **more than the actual GPA, colleges will be looking at course selection (the number of years of math/science/foreign language, etc.), the number of Honors and AP courses taken, and other signs that this student has challenged himself or herself within the opportunities available in our school context.**

## LIKELY

- An applicant's scores exceed the midrange of scores and GPA for the prior year's admitted class, AND, the college's admission rate was 50% or more. This kind of school usually accepts candidates with your credentials and is a **solid** choice.

## TARGET

There are a couple of ways to determine if a college is a **TARGET**.

- An applicant's grades and scores place them in the middle 50% range of last year's admitted class, AND, the college's overall admission rate is more than 50%.
- An applicant's grades and scores exceed the middle 50% range of admitted students, AND, where the admissions rate is less than 50%. The higher your stats are compared to those of the average incoming student, the lower the admissions rate can be to still call the school a target.
- This is a school where your chances of being accepted are better than your chances of being rejected; your admission is **possible**.

## REACH

There are a couple of ways to determine a college is a **REACH**:

- An applicant's grades and scores are below the middle 50% range of admitted students, AND, the admissions rate is less than 50%. This is a school where your chances of being rejected are higher than your chances of being accepted, but, it is *possible* because some students with credentials like yours have been admitted.
- ***Even for students with perfect grades and test scores, a college with admission rates of 25% or less is considered a reach.*** This might be a school you would like to attend but **your chances of acceptance are a statistical reach.**
- **Test scores alone don't tell you whether a college is likely to be a likely, a target, or a reach.** If you're interested in test-optional colleges, check out: [www.fairtest.org/](http://www.fairtest.org/)

We encourage you to keep in mind, "Selectivity" is used to describe the level of difficulty of admission. It should not be used as a mark of quality, fit, nor the predictor of future success. The college that is best for you may not be the place that is the hardest to get into.

# California Community Colleges

[www.cccapply.org/](http://www.cccapply.org/) and [www.cccco.edu/](http://www.cccco.edu/)

## ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

High School Graduation
<u>OR</u>
Pass the GED or California High School Proficiency Test
<u>OR</u>
Be at least 18 years of age
<u>OR</u>
Testing and personal interviews for certain two-year career programs such as dental assisting, nursing, automotive tech, etc.

## TRANSFER PROGRAMS

Community Colleges offer a full range of academic courses, covering the first two years of college that enable a student to prepare for transfer to UC, CSU, or a private college. A transfer student who plans carefully can enter a four-year college as a junior. Each community college has transfer agreements with specific UC, CSU, and private colleges. Information about California Community Colleges and transferable courses can be found at [www.assist.org](http://www.assist.org)

## SANTA CLARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- **De Anza College**, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino 95014; (408) 864-5678; [www.deanza.edu/](http://www.deanza.edu/)
- **Evergreen Valley College**, 3095 Yerba Buena Road, San José 95135; (408) 274-7900; [www.evc.edu/](http://www.evc.edu/)
- **Foothill College**, 12345 El Monte Road, Los Altos Hills 94022; (650) 949-7777; [www.foothill.edu/](http://www.foothill.edu/)
- **Gavilan College**, 5055 Santa Teresa Blvd., Gilroy 95020; (408) 847-1400; [www.gavilan.edu/](http://www.gavilan.edu/)
- **Mission College**, 3000 Mission College Blvd., Santa Clara 95054; (408) 988-2200; [www.missioncollege.org/](http://www.missioncollege.org/)
- **San José City College**, 2100 Moorpark Avenue, San José 95128; (408) 298-2181; [www.sjcc.edu/](http://www.sjcc.edu/)
- **West Valley College**, 14000 Fruitvale Avenue, Saratoga 95070; (408) 867-2200; [www.westvalley.edu](http://www.westvalley.edu)

## NEARBY COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- **Cabrillo College**, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos 95003; (831) 479-6100; [www.cabrillo.edu](http://www.cabrillo.edu)
- **Cañada College**, 4200 Farm Hill Blvd., Redwood City 94061; (650) 306-3100; [www.canadacollege.edu](http://www.canadacollege.edu)
- **College of San Mateo**, 1700 West Hillsdale Blvd., San Mateo 94402; (650) 574-6161; [www.collegeofsanmateo.edu](http://www.collegeofsanmateo.edu)
- **Hartnell College**, 156 Homestead Avenue, Salinas 93901; (831) 755-6700; [www.hartnell.edu](http://www.hartnell.edu)
- **Monterey Peninsula College**, 980 Fremont Street, Monterey 93940; (831) 646-4000; [www.mpc.edu](http://www.mpc.edu)
- **Ohlone College**, 43600 Mission Blvd., Fremont 94539; (510) 659-6000; [www.ohlone.edu](http://www.ohlone.edu)
- **Skyline College**, 3300 College Drive, San Bruno 94066; (650) 738-4100; [www.skylinecollege.edu](http://www.skylinecollege.edu)

# APPLICATIONS TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES

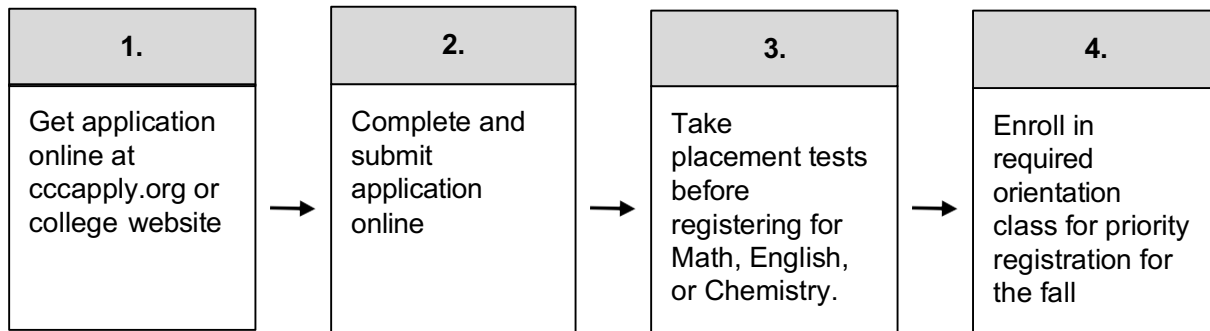
**Application Date:** March/April onwards for summer or fall entry

Applications for admission to community colleges are available online at [www.cccapply.org](http://www.cccapply.org). California residents may attend any community college in the state. (*See list of community colleges with residence facilities on following page*). California community colleges are open to all students who are at least 18 or have a high school diploma or a GED.

If you wish to enter a special career program, there may be specific requirements and earlier application dates. Make an appointment in January of your senior year to see a community college counselor if you are interested in two-year programs, such as dental assisting, marketing management, nursing, X-ray technology, law enforcement, auto mechanics, etc.

Financial aid is available at the community college level. You must complete the FAFSA (the federal government form). Check with the Financial Aid Office of the community college in which you are interested for further information.

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS



# CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES



# California State Universities (CSUs)

[www2.calstate.edu/Apply](http://www2.calstate.edu/Apply)

**Application Window Opens:** October 1

**Application Filing Period:** October 1 - November 30

## SUBJECT REQUIREMENTS

You must have taken at least 15 units of CSU/UC approved courses and completed each course with a C- or better. A unit is equal to an academic year (two semesters) of study. The A-G requirements are distributed by discipline as indicated below:

- A) History/ Social Science:** Two years required; one year of US History OR one semester of US History plus one semester of American Govt./Civics AND one year of World History.
- B) English Composition and Literature:** Four years required.
- C) Mathematics:** Three years of mathematics (Algebra, Geometry, and Intermediate Algebra (Algebra 2); four strongly recommended.
- D) Laboratory Science:** Two years required; three years strongly recommended (one must be a biological science).
- E) Foreign Language:** Two years of a language other than English; three years in the same language highly recommended. "Years" refers to level of competency (e.g. Spanish 2 or French 2).
- F) Visual/ Performing Arts:** One yearlong course of art, theatre, music, or dance.
- G) College Preparatory Elective Courses:** One year required, in addition those required in "A-F" above, chosen from the following areas: History, English, Advanced Mathematics, Laboratory Science, Foreign Language, Social Science, and Visual/Performing Arts.

## SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENT

Applicants must earn at least a 2.0 GPA in the CSU approved courses in grades 10-12.

## EXAMINATION REQUIREMENT

The California State University (CSU) no longer uses ACT or SAT examinations in determining admission eligibility. ACT/SAT scores can be used as a measure to place students in the proper mathematics and written communication courses upon admission.

## ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admission offices at the 23 campuses use three factors to determine eligibility. Most applicants who are admitted meet the standards in each of the following areas:

Specific high school courses (referred to as the "a-g" courses)

Grades in "A-G" courses

Graduation from high school

Many CSU campuses have higher standards for particular majors or for students who live outside the local admission area. Because of the number of students who apply, several campuses have higher standards (supplementary admission criteria) for all applicants.





[www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions)

**Application Window Opens:** August 1st

**Application Filing Period:** November 1 - November 30

## **PATHS TO UC ELIGIBILITY FOR FRESHMEN**

There are two paths to UC eligibility for prospective freshmen: (1) superior academic performance in a statewide context, (2) and superior academic performance in the local context. All paths require a high school diploma, or a California Certificate of Proficiency (awarded upon successful completion of the California High School Proficiency Examination), or a certificate of proficiency from another state, or the General Education Development Certificate (GED).

The first path includes the subject and scholarship requirements. The second path confers UC eligibility upon the top 9 percent of students at individual California high schools. ***Students who fulfill these eligibility criteria will be entitled to a comprehensive review of their UC application(s).***

## **PATH I – ELIGIBLE IN THE STATEWIDE CONTEXT**

This is the path that most prospective freshmen follow to attain UC eligibility. Students must satisfy specific course pattern, scholarship, and test requirements.

### **SUBJECT REQUIREMENT**

You must have taken at least 15 units of CSU/UC approved courses with at least 11 of the units earned in the first three years of high school. A unit is equal to an academic year (two semesters) of study. The A-G requirements are distributed by discipline as indicated below.

- A) History/ Social Science:** Two years required; one year of US History OR one semester of US History plus one semester of American Govt./Civics AND one year of World History.
- B) English Composition and Literature:** Four years required.
- C) Mathematics:** Three years of mathematics (Algebra, Geometry, and Intermediate Algebra (Algebra 2); four strongly recommended.
- D) Laboratory Science:** Two years required; three years strongly recommended (one must be a biological science).
- E) Foreign Language:** Two years of a language other than English; three years in the same language highly recommended. "Years" refers to level of competency (e.g. Spanish 2 or French 2).
- F) Visual/ Performing Arts:** One yearlong course of art, theatre, music, or dance.
- G) College Preparatory Elective Courses:** One year required, in addition those required in "A-F" above, chosen from the following areas: History, English, Advanced Mathematics, Laboratory Science, Foreign Language, Social Science, and Visual/Performing Arts.

### **SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENT**

Applicants must earn at least a 3.0 GPA in the CSU/UC approved courses in grades 10-12.

### **EXAMINATION REQUIREMENT**

UC will not consider SAT or ACT test scores when making admissions decisions or awarding Regents and Chancellor's scholarships.

## **PATH 2 – ELIGIBLE IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT (ELC)**

Students will be identified in the top 9 percent based on GPA in UC-approved coursework completed in the 10th and 11th grades. To be considered for ELC, you must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and complete 11 of 15 "a-g" courses prior to your senior year.

Following junior year, high schools will identify the top 9 percent of students in the class and may be asked to forward a copy of their transcripts to the UC for evaluation. As an applicant from California, your application will be automatically screened for ELC eligibility when you apply. There's no extra paperwork.

After submitting your application, you can return to the My UC Application page to see whether or not you've been designated as being in the top 9 percent of your class.

### **MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY FOR REVIEW VS. SELECTION**

Students who fulfill at least one of the two paths to UC eligibility will be entitled to a comprehensive review of their UC application(s). Most UC campuses use criteria that exceed the minimum to select students. Therefore, meeting the minimum eligibility criteria is not a guarantee of admission. The comprehensive review process varies by campus. For more information, see:

<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/freshman/california-residents/local-path/index.html>

## **UC PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS**

### **WHAT ARE THE PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS?**

These questions are about getting to know you better-your life experience, interests, ambitions, and aspirations. Think of it as your interview with the admissions office. Be open. Be reflective. Find your individual voice and express it. While this section of the application is just one part they consider when making admissions decisions, it helps provide context for the rest of your application.

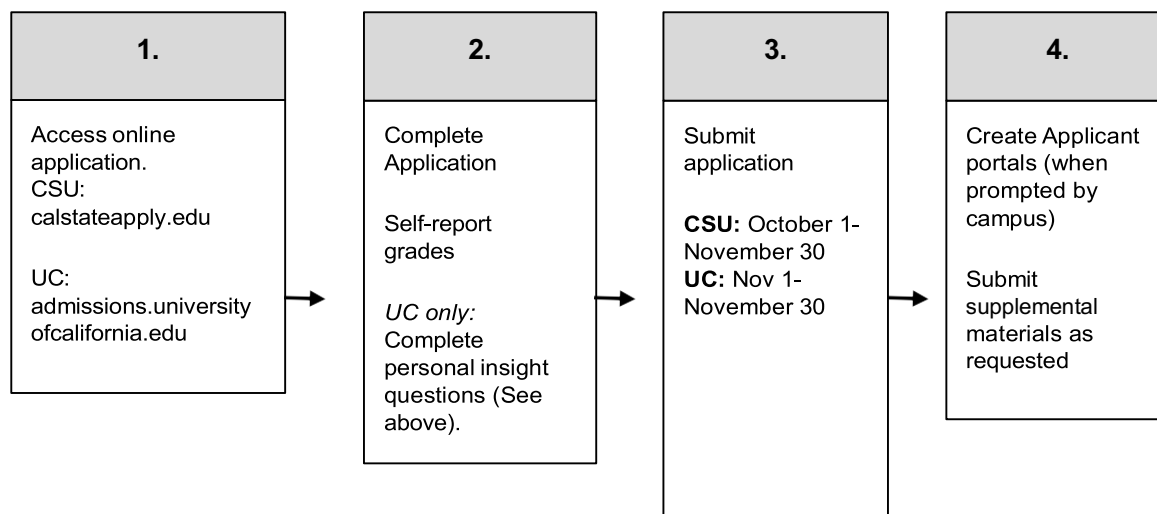
### **THE BASICS**

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

## PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTION PROMPTS

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.
2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?
6. Describe your favorite academic subject and explain how it has influenced you
7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
8. What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?

## CSU & UC APPLICATION PROCESS



# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOCATIONS

## University of California (UC)

UC Website: [www.ucop.edu/pathways](http://www.ucop.edu/pathways)

UC, Berkeley  
UC, Davis  
UC, Irvine  
UC, Los Angeles  
UC, Merced  
UC, Riverside  
UC, San Diego  
UC, San Francisco  
UC, Santa Barbara  
UC, Santa Cruz

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CAMPUSES



## CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES



## California State University (CSU)

CSU Website: [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu)

CA Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo  
CA Polytechnic State University, Pomona  
CSU, Bakersfield  
CSU, Channel Islands  
CSU, Chico  
CSU, Dominguez Hills  
CSU, East Bay  
CSU, Fresno  
CSU, Fullerton  
CSU, Long Beach  
CSU, Los Angeles  
CA Maritime Academy  
CSU, Monterey Bay  
**CSU, Northridge**  
CSU, Sacramento  
CSU, San Bernardino  
CSU, San Marcos  
CSU, Sonoma  
CSU, Stanislaus  
Humboldt State University  
San Diego State University  
San Francisco State University  
San Jose State University

# Private Colleges & Universities

## APPLICATION TO PRIVATE COLLEGES

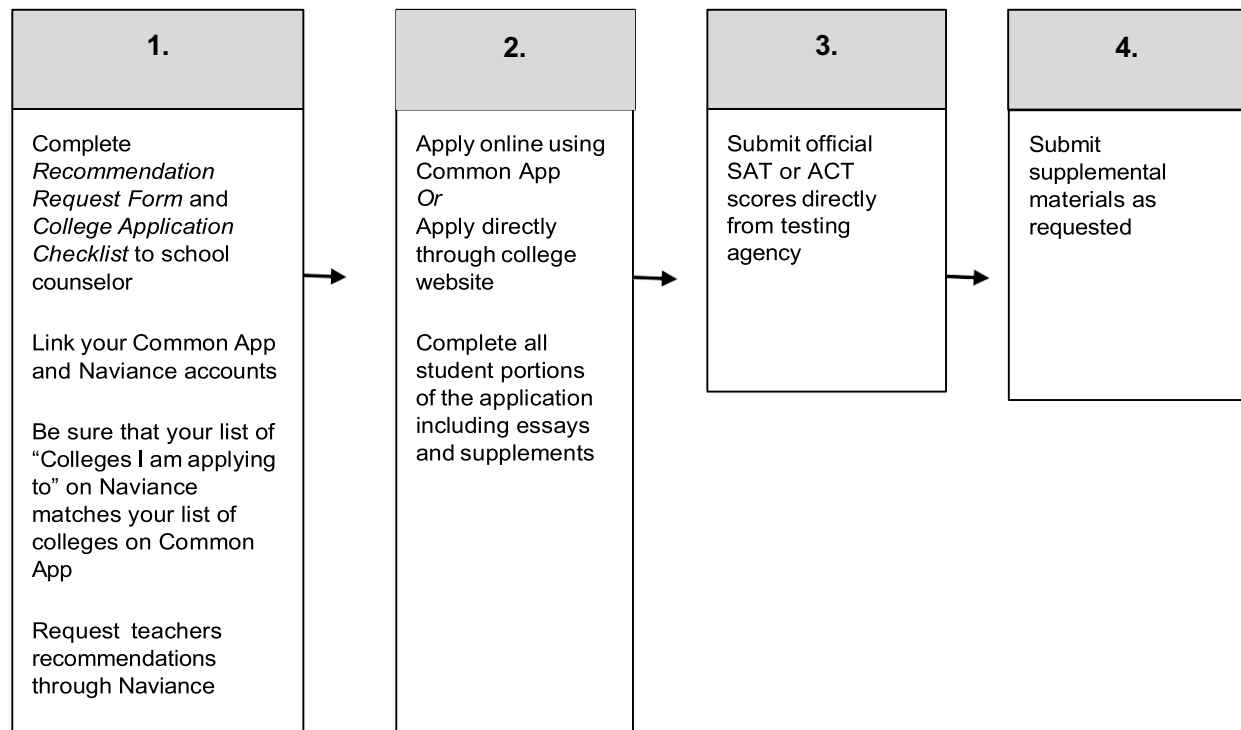
The Common Application may be used for hundreds of private colleges. Fill in one application and send copies to all of your schools that are listed at the top of the application. The Common Application is available on the web at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

- If applying online, be sure to follow all instructions carefully.
- For all applications, include a written explanation of anything appearing on your transcript for credit which needs explaining, e.g., Exploratory Experience.
- Fill in **ALL** information requested.
- Check that your **signature** is there if requested.
- Be sure that the application fee is paid, usually by check or credit card. See your school counselor if you think you may qualify for a fee waiver.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher and school counselor recommendations are a requirement for many private college applications. Plan on securing 1-2 teacher recommendations (preferably from different academic disciplines). Read *Recommendations* section in this handbook.

## PRIVATE & OUT-OF-STATE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS



## NAVIANCE & COMMON APPLICATION

Gunn uses Naviance to track student applications and upload school documents (transcripts, letter of

recommendations, school report, etc.). See the next pages for instructions on how link your accounts.



## NAVIANCE eDOCS & THE COMMON APP

This guide provides an overview of the two systems used to complete recommendations. It will also review some commonly asked questions to help both you and your students.

### THE RECOMMENDATION PROCESS

There are two commonly used systems to submit recommendations and school forms: The Common App Recommender System and Naviance.

If your school uses the Common App to complete and submit recommendation forms, recommenders will receive an invitation (after being assigned by a student) to create a Common App recommender account.

If your school uses Naviance eDocs to submit recommendation forms, counselors and teachers will complete the recommendation process in Naviance. ("Other Recommenders" will always have the ability to complete recommendations through the Common App.)

### COMMON APP & NAVIANCE

When an applicant's high school information has been entered into the Education section of the Common App tab, it will recognize which system your school uses to complete recommendations. For this reason it is important to ensure that the high school information is entered correctly.

After entering their school, an applicant navigating to the Recommenders and FERPA screen for any school on their My Colleges list will see information on how to proceed with the recommendation process. If your school uses the Common

App, they will be prompted to invite their recommenders. If your school uses Naviance, informational text will be displayed providing information on how to proceed.

**PRO TIP: Provide your students with your school's CEEB code to make the high school search easier.**

## COMMON APP

Recommenders for George Mason University

*Note: All dates are Eastern Time*

### • Counselor

You must invite a school Counselor who will complete the School Report and other forms for you.

[Invite Counselor](#)

### Teacher

Please select and assign the Teacher(s) below whose recommendation will be submitted to this college on your behalf. You must first invite a Teacher using the 'Invite Teacher' link before you can assign them for this college.

Required: 0

Allowed: 2

[Add Another](#)

## NAVIANCE eDOCS

Recommenders for George Mason University

*Note: All dates are Eastern Time*

### • Counselor

Your school is using Naviance eDocs for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. If your counselor wishes to submit forms via mail, you can download printable forms that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply.

#### PDF Forms

- [School Report](#)
- [Counselor Recommendation](#)
- [Optional Report](#)
- [MidYear Refill](#)
- [Final Report](#)

### Teacher

Your school is using Naviance eDocs for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. Once your teachers submit their recommendations online you will see the status below. If your teacher(s) wish to submit forms via mail, you can download printable forms that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply. [PDF Form](#)

Required: 0

Allowed: 2

## NAVIANCE TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

### Matching Student Accounts

Within Naviance, students need to use the same email address and date of birth that they used to create their Common App account in order to match their Common App and Naviance accounts. Don't forget, students will also need to add at least one school to their My Colleges list and complete the FERPA waiver in the Common App before matching can be completed.

### Recommendation Invitations

If a student was able to invite you to complete a form in the Common App, most likely they entered their high school information incorrectly, and the system wasn't able to identify that your high school uses Naviance. If you receive this type of invitation, please follow up with your student, as they should go back into the Common App and correct their high school information in the Education section.

If you're invited by a student at a school that does not use Naviance, or if you're invited as an Other Recommender in the Common App, the student can send you paper forms to complete offline (they'll find them in the Recommenders and FERPA area of the Common App). Alternatively, the student can add you in the Common App with an email address that is **different** from the one linked to your Naviance account.

**If you have any questions, please visit our Solutions Center at [recsupport.commonapp.org](http://recsupport.commonapp.org) or email us at [sfsupport@commonapp.net](mailto:sfsupport@commonapp.net).**

# COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY QUESTIONS

## INSTRUCTIONS

The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the **1** option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.)

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 lesson we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when 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 all 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 on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that respond to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

## ADMISSIONS TESTS (See *Tests* section in this handbook)

College admissions examinations may be required by colleges. Consult the college website or college reference books in the College & Career Center to determine which entrance examinations, if any, are required and when they should be taken. Registration information is available on the SAT and ACT websites. The College & Career Center also has information, instruction booklets, and the current college admission test schedules for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and ACT.

# Early Decision, Early Action, Rolling, Etc. & What It Means for Financial Aid

## RESTRICTIVE

### EARLY DECISION (ED1)

Early decision plans require careful consideration, because they are binding. When you choose this option, you are telling a school that they are your top choice. If accepted, you will attend, if financial considerations make it possible. You can only make one school this choice. Many schools that offer ED will allow you to apply Rolling or Early Action elsewhere, as long as you do not make a commitment to attend another school. If accepted ED, you must immediately withdraw applications you have submitted to other schools. Chances of receiving non-need-based aid decreases during ED because the school doesn't need to use award money to entice the student.

*If finances are a big factor in your college choice, you should think seriously about applying ED.* If need-based aid is required, you should fill out a preliminary form (a pre-FAFSA or other form) found on the college's website. You should also consult the college's website for their NetAid calculator. Some colleges provide an estimated financial award when admitted in mid-December; others wait until March when all financial aid applications are processed. But, when applying ED, there will be no opportunity to receive or compare aid packages from other colleges; so, either you'll accept that college's financial offer or forfeit your admission if you can't afford it.

### EARLY DECISION II (EDII)

When you apply ED II you are also bound to attend the college if accepted. The difference between ED I and ED II is the due date is much closer to (and sometimes the same as) regular decision. This gives more time to prepare your application, but still let the school know they are your first choice. This is great if you do not get into your first choice or are waiting for first semester grades or test results to strengthen your application.

Restrictive Early Action or Single Choice Early Action – Through using this choice, you imply this school is the top choice, but you are not bound to attend. You can still (and should) apply to other schools Regular Decision and Rolling. You then have until May 1<sup>st</sup> to make a final decision.

## NON-RESTRICTIVE

### EARLY ACTION I & EARLY ACTION II

This is a way to apply early, and hear early, without legally binding yourself to a school. You can apply to as many Early Action schools as you like. Early Action I deadlines are in early November for notification in December. For Early Action II, due dates are late December with notification in February to late March.

### ROLLING ADMISSIONS

Colleges with rolling admissions usually respond within 6 weeks of a completed application. As soon as they receive an application for a student they believe to be a match for their campus, they will offer admission. You should apply as early as possible to a school that offers rolling admission to ensure greater chance of admission.

### REGULAR DECISION

Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time. Non-binding commitment.

# Tips

# Writing the Essay

## WHEN YOU WRITE YOUR ESSAY

- **Do write lean!** A cardinal rule put forth by former Cornell University professor William Strunk, Jr., is for the writer to omit needless words. Strunk, with noted author E.B. White, wrote *The Elements of Style*, a concise and practical "carry along" handbook on the art of writing. The two men believe that "vigorous writing is concise... A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, and paragraph no unnecessary sentences for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts."
- **Do start early.** Leave plenty of time to revise, reword, and rewrite. You can improve on your essay.
- **Do read the directions carefully.** You need to answer the question as directly as possible, and you'll want to follow word limits exactly. Express yourself as briefly and as clearly as you can.
- **Do focus on an aspect of yourself that will show your best side.** You might have overcome some adversity, worked through a difficult project, or profited from a specific incident. A narrow focus is more interesting than are broad-based generalizations.
- **Do feel comfortable in expressing anxieties.** Everybody has them, and it's good to know that an applicant can see them and face them.
- **Do write about your greatest assets and achievements.** You should be proud of them! *But...*
- **Don't repeat information given elsewhere on your application.** The committee has already seen it - and it looks as though you have nothing better to say.
- **Don't write on general, impersonal topics.**
- **Don't sacrifice the essay to excuse your shortcomings.**
- **Don't use clichés.**
- **Don't worry about trying to come across as an extremist.** Don't force being overly witty, opinionated, or an intellectual.
- **Always reread before you hit the "send" button.**

## REMEMBER

1. A "gimmick" essay rarely goes anywhere. The committee may be amused, but unimpressed with your candidacy.
2. Write a serious essay, from the bottom of your heart, in the most mature manner possible.
3. A college is interested in getting more information about you! This is NOT the place for a creative writing piece of fiction. Think more in terms of autobiography style. Only two pages, double spaces are allowed. They will not send a third page with all your additional accomplishments.
4. Read the supplemental letter request and answer that question. This is not the time for a rehash essay.

# What does a good college visit include?

Most importantly, a productive visit depends upon your being able to schedule enough time to absorb something of each campus, especially if you are travelling a great distance. Be sure to contact the Admissions office in advance to make these arrangements.

The ingredients of a successful visit include the following:

- Make an appointment to get a campus tour (they are usually available year round)
- A personal interview (when allowed)
- A visit to at least one class in an academic area of interest
- At least one meal in a campus dining hall or an overnight stay at a dormitory – must plan in advance
- A thorough study of college information
- Reading a recent copy of the student paper
- Plenty of free time to stroll the campus (and local areas), observe all ongoing activities, and talk with random students

## SNAPSHOT OF THE CAMPUS VISIT & INTERVIEW

When you call to request information and an appointment, you will be able to do the following:

- 1. Learn if the day and time you would like to visit are convenient.**  
If you have scheduled an interview, ask for a written confirmation of your appointment day and time.
- 2. Find out if a separate reservation is needed for a campus tour.**  
If it is, be sure you know when the tour begins and if your name is included on the list.
- 3. Have information about the college mailed to you in advance of the trip – use Naviance to do this.**  
You will use this (along with any other information you may have put together) to make a list of important points you wish to convey about yourself and questions you would like to ask the people you meet at the institution.
- 4. Ask if you need to bring anything with you.**  
Some interviewers would like you to bring a resume or unofficial copy of your high school transcript and test scores.
- 5. Find out what special accommodations might be available.**  
Such as dining hall meal tickets, and overnight dormitory facilities. If the school does not provide dorm space, ask about other overnight accommodations.
- 6. Ask about driving distances and times between your home, the college, and other institutions that may be on your tour.**  
You might also ask what attractions may be worth seeing while you are in the area. Sometimes, other attractions give younger members of the family something to do while you are scrutinizing the college.

A successful campus visit and interview requires a great deal of advance planning. You need enough time to visit each college and make certain that a personal appointment will be available to you when at each college. Generally two per day is enough.

If you do not think you will be able to make it to a campus for an interview, contact the admissions office to see if they offer alumni or officer interviews locally.



# THE INTERVIEW

## WHERE & WHEN TO INTERVIEW

If the website "suggests" or "recommends" an interview, then the statement should be taken seriously, and every effort should be made to comply. If it's "optional" then you have a choice to make. It is *very* important to interview at difficult schools. It's important, but not as important, as reasonable schools and much less important as a likely schools. Be sure to find out where to meet and dress accordingly. Most meetings are held in public venues; make sure you know how to identify your interviewer.

Know how long the appointment will be.

## WHEN YOU INTERVIEW.....

- **Do go prepared!** You need to do plenty of advance study on yourself and the college! "Lack of preparation" is the number 1 complaint of college admission counselors. Be prepared to discuss intelligently exactly why you are serious about the school. Always state multiple reasons for wanting to attend. ***NOTE: Interview practice is available by appointment through the College and Career Center.***
- **Do take an unofficial copy of your transcript along.** Don't present the document unless the interviewer asks for it.
- **Don't slouch in your chair, and don't fidget.** Eye contact is important. Grooming is relevant.
- **Do take your lead from your interviewer**, who might open the session with any number of questions, including some that are rather audacious: "Tell me about yourself!" "Why do you want to go to college?" "What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?" "Let's hear about your most valuable experience?" "What do you think about.....(a current issue)?" "What are your strengths? Weaknesses?" "How would your friends describe you?"
- **Don't give one-word answers to a question.** Give complete responses. Be as concise as possible when the interviewer is simply trying to clarify a point. The dialogue should flow naturally. The best interviews are really just conversations.
- **Do open up, pose questions, and do a fair amount of talking.**
- **Do be genuinely enthusiastic about particular activities, but beware of a bragging tone.**
- **Don't come on too strong or appear overanxious to impress.** Practice an interview with an adult. Ask them for feedback on how you presented yourself.
- **Need help?** Sign up for a practice interview in C&CC. See Mrs. Kirsch's door for a sign-up sheet with dates and time. If you need to interview for a job, scholarship, or internship – that is fine too. Make a note on the sign-in sheet.

# Financial Aid Sources & Purposes of Financial Aid

Financial Aid is available from both the federal and state government and may be supplemented by colleges or universities that have the resources to do so. The College and Career Center, is available to answer many of your questions relating to financial aid.

## FAFSA OR CA DREAM ACT APPLICATION

Families are required to complete a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** or **Dream Act Application** (for undocumented students), to demonstrate need and establish eligibility for aid. **All two- and four-year colleges, public and private, require the FAFSA.** The FAFSA is required for families applying for some of the federal loan programs. [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) or <https://dream.csac.ca.gov/>

Both the student and the parent need a **Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID)** to electronically sign and submit the FAFSA. New to the FAFSA is **creating an FSA ID** account. An FSA ID gives you access to Federal Student Aid's online systems and can serve as your legal signature. Only create an FSA ID using your own personal information and for your own exclusive use. You are not authorized to create an FSA ID on behalf of someone else, including a family member. You can create your FSA ID today by visiting <https://fsaid.ed.gov/>

## GPA VERIFICATION FORM

The **California Student Aid Commission** uses the information provided on the **FAFSA** and your **GPA (10th & 11th only)**. The College and Career Center will submit Cal Grant GPA electronically by uploading the GPAs directly to the California Student Aid Commission online system. Gunn will submit your GPA electronically to the CSAC by the March 2 filing deadline. Students that receive a Cal Grant as a freshman in college will have their final GPA submitted electronically to the CSAC. If a student wants to check or verify the Cal Grant please visit the "WebGrants 4 Students" site at <https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/> then click on "Create an account."

## CSS/ FINANCIAL AID PROFILE

Many private colleges and universities use the information collected from a form called the *CSS/Financial Aid Profile* in addition to the FAFSA. Some private colleges have their own form in place of the PROFILE. Follow the directions colleges send with their application materials to be certain you meet their **specific requirements and due dates**. The PROFILE can be completed online at <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>. There is a registration fee for customizing the Profile Application. There is registration fee for submitting the CSS Profile Application. The CSS PROFILE registrations guides are available on the College Board website, <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- \* **December 31:** FAFSA is available on the web
- \* **March 2:** FAFSA/Cal Grant application deadline
- \* **September 1:** FAFSA deadline for Community College

**Check with each college or university about that institution's form deadline.**

## SCHOLARSHIPS

A scholarship listing is compiled and updated weekly to assist students and their parents who are looking for scholarships in your **Naviance Student** under the “Home” screen then scroll down to “scholarship list”.

## GUNN SCHOLARSHIP PROCESS

Gunn scholarship process go through the College and Career Center, please have recommendations sent to Mr. Lang. Students' transcripts for scholarships are free and will be accompanied with the scholarship application by Mr. Lang. Your scholarship packet must be turn-in to College and Career Center 3 days before deadline. Students are responsible for the cost to mail (postage/envelope) the scholarship.

**Naviance Student** will be your major resource for finding scholarship. Scholarship applications are filed by Names in the **file cabinet** next to the door in the College and Career Center. We also recommend that students research the colleges applying to for scholarships. Please visit the Mr. Lang in the CCC so, he is able to alert you of special scholarship opportunities (let me know via email).

There are several community and school scholarships whose sponsors have asked the Gunn Scholarship Committee to nominate and/or select students to receive the awards. Because the Scholarship Committee doesn't know every students' needs, students who wish to be considered for need-based or merit awards need to review the scholarship listed in Family Connection Account or visit the College and Career Center.

# Acceptances, Waitlists, & Denials... & What To Do Next

## WHAT IF YOU ARE ADMITTED?

Even if you've been accepted at your first choice it is worth a visit to a few other institutions that said yes to you. Before committing the thousands of dollars and four years, you owe yourself a visit to the prime competitors. That visit might help you see some things you missed that may be significant enough to change your mind.

Another reason is money. One or more of the colleges that accepted you may be willing to offer you a scholarship or better financial aid package, guaranteed housing, even a no-closeout guarantee when registering for classes. You may need to ask for these items. Colleges will make such amenities available to entice students who might choose another college. Your chances are best if your grades and SAT scores are well above the average student's at the college.

Let your counselor know what is happening with your college choosing. If you know that you will not be attending a college, please let them know so that your seat can be released.

## THE WAITING LIST

### **What is an "alternate"? What is the "waiting list"?**

It means that your application received strong enough support from the Admission Committee to be approved for admission. However, the school's size prevents the colleges from admitting all such students. As an "alternative" to the class, you are given the opportunity to be placed on the "waiting list".

### **What are your chances of being admitted from the waiting list?**

This is hard to predict. Different schools have different records for the last three or four years. They will not know about spaces availability for alternates until after the first week in May when the accepted students notify them of their decisions.

### **Is it fair to accept an offer of admission from another school while waiting to hear from this school?**

#### **What about other waiting lists?**

Certainly. All schools expect students to commit to one (and only one) school by May 1. However, students may remain on any schools' waiting lists throughout the summer. The only rule is that you must withdraw your admission from a school once you accept another school's offer (i.e. commit to only one school at a time).

### **Are financial aid opportunities different for those students admitted from the waiting list?**

Need based financial aid is guaranteed for all students who qualify, if all appropriate forms have been filed on time. However, merit-based scholarships are usually not available to students accepted from the waiting list.

### **Is housing guaranteed?**

Students offered admission from the waiting list might be waitlisted for on-campus housing.

### **What can I do to increase my chances of admission?**

Let your counselor know! Send the appropriate reply (via the method they request) when you are sure that you would like to accept a place on the waiting list. If you would like to add anything else to your file

informing the school of your accomplishments or interest in college, mail those in promptly. Check with your counselor about sending third quarter grades, or other supplemental information. In the same vein, if you have no interest in attending that college, please let the college know immediately.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET DENIED?

It's hard to deal with a rejection from your first-choice college, but hopefully your list had many other sites that will work well for you. Consult with your school counselor or the CC&C. Remember: rejection does not automatically mean you were not good enough. There are many reasons the seat was not given to you.

## THE APPEAL

If you decide you simply must try an appeal, contact the college for advice. The number of College applications have increased over the past few years. Seats have not risen to meet demand. Even our public college system is feeling the impact and some have wait lists. In private colleges, admissions decisions are often based on hard-to-change factors: the college must have a diver or an oboist, it is obligated to big donors, etc. Schools take a minimal number of students on appeal. You must show that something significant was missed or was in error. If nothing has changed, students usually do not have grounds for an appeal. Bottom line: Think carefully about keeping your hopes pinned on one school.