



German International School
of Silicon Valley

Introduction to U.S. College and University System



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Requirements for U.S. Colleges start in Grade 9

Our graduation requirements are well above what is required for university admissions across the US and beyond, making GISSV students very competitive in the university admission process.

Application Platforms



SCOIR is the platform used by GISSV for the university application process.

- Connected to more than 1450 colleges and universities with statistics related to admission, entry requirements, cost, majors offered, etc. for students to research
- Create university lists
- All counselor and teacher documents sent via Scoir for universities accepting documents digitally – letters of recommendation, school profile, reports, transcripts, etc.
- Career and personality test and report available
- Career searches with all data provided related to outlook, salary, degree requirements, etc.



College Admission Criteria

- GPA in all courses
- Rigor of the school's curriculum and the student's course list (Honors, AP)
- Extracurricular involvement (demonstrated leadership, a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to service)
- Special talents, awards, and achievements (including internships)
 - Teacher and Counselor Recommendation
 - Personal statements / essays
 - (Standardized tests)



The College Search

- Culture (Location)
- Anticipated Major / Special Programs
 - Or go in “undeclared”
- Data (job/grad school placement, graduation & retention rates, etc.)
 - US News, but also collegesofdistinction.com
 - www.ctcl.org
- Fit over prestige
- Selectivity/Requirements - Be realistic
- Citizenship / Visa Status
- Cost / Financial Aid

The college search can begin as early as grade 9 by developing a four-year plan and planning accordingly.

Additional things to consider:

Extracurricular activities
Volunteer

Internships

Summer courses/programs



What's Out There?

Liberal Arts Colleges & Research Universities

California Public Universities

University of California (UC)
State Universities (CSU)
Community Colleges

Private Universities

Ivy Leagues



Liberal Arts College & Research University

- 90% private
 - **Undergraduate** education is the primary mission
 - **Focus** on broad skills in thinking and writing instead of more narrow pre-professional skills.
 - **Smaller classes** taught by faculty members
 - **Student life** centers around college
- $\frac{2}{3}$ public and $\frac{1}{3}$ private
 - involved in **research and public service as well as teaching** graduates and undergraduates
 - Size ranges from small (Cal Tech) to medium (Harvard) to very large (University of Texas)
 - larger classes; faculty teach fewer classes; teaching assistants for smaller discussion groups.

<https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/best-liberal-arts-colleges/s/california/>

<https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-a-research-university>

Specialized Programs

- Colleges for the Arts
 - Religious Colleges
 - Historically Black Colleges
 - Women's Colleges
 - Cooperative Colleges
 - Polytechnic Universities
-
- Student Athlete Programs



Julliard

University of Notre Dame

Howard University

Smith, Wellesley

**Rochester Institute of
Technology**

CalPoly



University of California (UC)

A public university system and part of the state's three tier public higher education system which includes the UC, CSU (CA State Universities) and CCC (CA Community Colleges)



California State University (CSU)

UC Berkeley

UCLA

UCSD

UCSB

UCSC

UC Irvine

UC Davis

UC Riverside

23 CSU campuses in
California

(San Jose State)

California Community College

Largest system of higher education in the world serving more than 2.9 million students in CA

Benefits

- High School Diploma sufficient
- No standardized tests required.
- Low tuition (sometimes even none!)
- after 2 years, students can transfer to a 4-year college
- also offers 2 year associate degrees in specialized fields
- flexibility in schedules for working students.



Private Universities

Private universities are independently funded and operated institutions. They often have smaller student populations compared to public universities.

- Tuition Costs: Generally higher tuition fees compared to public universities. But often more generous with scholarships and aid
- Funding: Funded through tuition, private donations, and endowments rather than state funding.
- Class Size: Typically smaller class sizes, leading to more personalized attention from faculty.
- Programs Offered: Offer a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, often with unique or specialized curricula.
- Campus Life: Emphasis on community, networking opportunities, and campus involvement.
- Often have strong alumni networks.

Examples:
Ivy League
Schools
(e.g.,
Harvard,
Yale)

Other
notable
institutions
(e.g.,
Stanford,
Duke,
University
of
Southern
California)

Preparation

GISSV offers a competitive college-preparatory high school program. Additionally, students have access to college and career workshops and individualized, as-needed college counseling, including college list review, essay review, activities review, and further guidance.

Students with a clear goal of a prestigious U.S. university admission can start in grade 9.



U.S. College Counseling (grade 9)



→ The students have received their first transcript

It shows the American letter grades as well as course titles and can be used, for example, for summer program applications.

→ For the American high school diploma, all grades from 9-12 count for the GPA (Grade Point Average)

This means that it is important for the student to reach an “A” (German grade 2 or higher) in as many subjects as possible.

→ Further preparation for a college application at this point:

- ◆ Develop effective study habits and time management skills. These are essential for academic success throughout high school and beyond.
- ◆ Get involved in a variety of activities, clubs, or sports. Colleges look for a well-rounded individual with a passion for their interest
- ◆ Build relationships with teachers, mentors, and coaches who can provide guidance and strong letters of recommendation in the future.

U.S. College Counseling (grade 10)



→ Grades 10 and 11 are particularly important for the U.S.

This means students should try for an “A” (German grade 2 or higher) in as many subjects as possible.

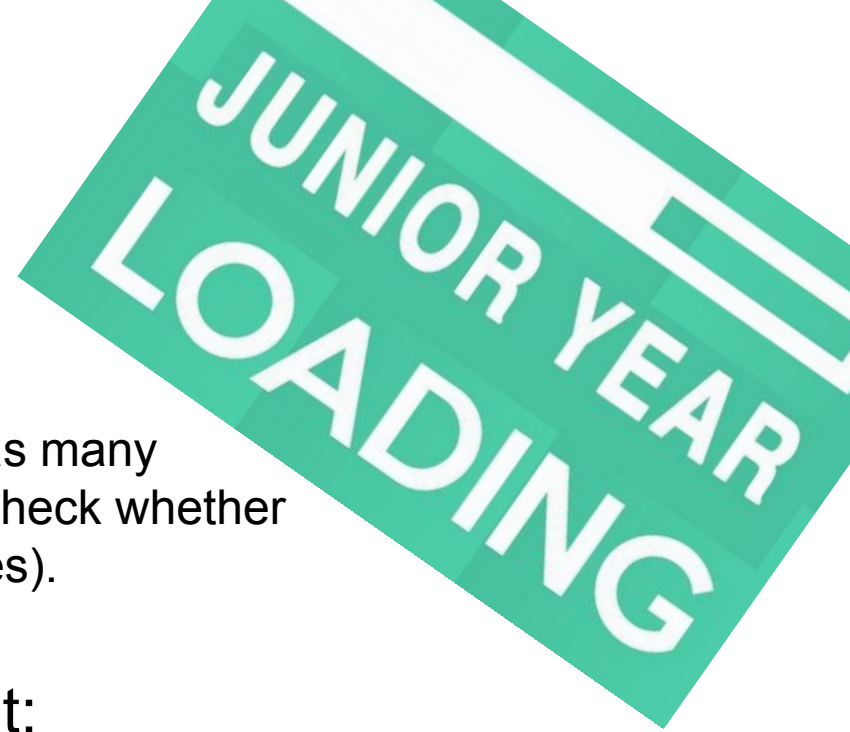
→ Further preparation for a college application at this point:

- ◆ Focus on a few extracurricular activities that the student is passionate about, rather than spreading themselves too thin. Leadership roles or significant contributions in these areas can be particularly impactful.
- ◆ Begin exploring potential career paths and college majors. This can involve job shadowing, internships, summer programs, or online courses related to the student’s field(s) of interest.
- ◆ Prepare for the pSAT 10 in order to find out whether the student can reach a high test score (which might still be helpful even if most colleges are test-optional).

→ Students will receive more guidance during the BESO workshop on February 5, 2024.



U.S. College Counseling (grade 11)



- Grades and course choices in grade 11 are particularly important for the U.S.

This means students should try for an “A” (German grade 2 or higher) in as many subjects as possible as well as taking challenging courses. Colleges will check whether students have taken the highest courses available to them (e.g. AP classes).

- Further preparation for a college application at this point:

- ◆ Continue excelling in your chosen extracurricular activities. Leadership roles or significant contributions in these areas can be particularly impactful.
- ◆ Figure out whether the SAT is beneficial for your application - especially strong scores can make a difference even for test-optional schools.
- ◆ Make thoughtful plans for the summer that align with students’ interests, strengths, and possible college majors.
- ◆ Start building a college list, considering factors like majors offered, campus culture, location, and financial aid. Choose reach, match, and target school.



U.S. College Counseling (grade 12)

→ Stay calm and carry on

IPs (Institutional Priorities) are the single most important factor for college admissions, and that is something you cannot impact.

→ Don't forget to update!

Students should be sure to check emails and log in to portals at the universities they applied often for missing info and admission decisions

→ Financials

- ◆ Complete financial aid forms like FAFSA and CSS
- ◆ Actively seek out and apply for scholarships

→ Avoid Senioritis!

Colleges do look at senior year grades, and a significant drop in academic performance can negatively impact admission decisions or scholarship awards.



Financial Considerations

In-State
Out-of-State
International

Financial Aid
Scholarships



Tuition Levels

- Public universities typically have lower tuition rates for in-state students
 - their family and they lived in the state prior to application) compared to out-of-state students.
 - This lower rate exists because residents contribute to the university's funding through their state taxes
- It important to verify residence requirements.
- Some universities also have an extra tuition level for international students (nonresident visas).

Each college is obligated to provide a “**net price calculator**” on their website which gives a family a rough estimate of the real price they would have to pay in tuition.

UC Cost of Attendance

Direct costs	On campus	Off campus
UC Tuition	\$15,384	\$15,384
Campus fees	\$1,700	\$1,700
Campus housing and meals	\$21,300	
Health insurance allowance/fee	\$3,700	\$3,700
Total direct costs	\$42,084	\$20,784

Direct costs	On campus	Off campus
UC Tuition	\$51,858	\$51,858
Campus fees	\$1,700	\$1,700
Campus housing and meals	\$21,300	
Health insurance allowance/fee	\$3,700	\$3,700
Total direct costs	\$78,831	\$57,531

Harvard College Tuition Rates	Academic Year 2025-26
Tuition	\$59,320
Health Services	\$1,800
Housing Rate	\$13,532
Student Services	\$3,676
Food Rate	\$8,598
Total	\$86,926



Financial Assistance

Financial Aid

- Need-Based Aid: Based on financial need; determined by FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- Merit-Based Aid: Scholarships awarded based on academic achievements, talents, or other criteria.
- Federal Aid: Available to U.S. citizens and eligible non-citizens; limited options for international students.

Scholarships

- Many universities offer scholarships
 - not many, but some specialized scholarship available for international students.
- Private organizations and foundations also provide scholarships based on various criteria (e.g., field of study, demographic factors).



BESO - College and Career Orientation and Counseling

Your BESO Team: Cornelia Guss and Jenny Jungeblut



[Jenny Jungeblut's appointment calendar](#)

[Cornelia Guss's appointment calendar](#)

