

Your Senior Year Checklist

August – December 2026

AUGUST

APPLICATIONS

- ☐ Common App opens Aug 1 — create your account, add your high school
- ☐ UC application opens online Aug 1 — you can start filling it in, even though submission doesn't open until October
- ☐ Finalize your college list: reach schools, match schools, safety schools, and at least one local community college as a backup or plan A
- ☐ If you're planning community college (Chaffey College, Crafton Hills, San Bernardino Valley, or Norco), check their fall priority application/enrollment dates — CCs have rolling admission and no essay, but early application gets you priority registration
- ☐ Create your StudentAid.gov account now (you'll need it in October for FAFSA — takes 1-3 days to process ID) or, if you are undocumented, create an account on dream.csac.ca.gov (California Dream Act Application)
- ☐ Log in to CaliforniaColleges.edu through ClassLinks

ESSAYS

- ☐ Start your Common App personal statement (650 words)
- ☐ Start 2 of your 4 UC Personal Insight Questions (350 words each) — draft, don't finalize
- ☐ Update your activities resume/list with hours, titles, dates

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☐ Ask 2 teachers (junior or senior year) for letters of recommendation — do this in person, not by text
- ☐ Give recommenders a resume and a brag sheet if your counselor provides one

SCHOLARSHIPS

- ☐ Gates Scholarship application opens July 15 — deadline is Sept 15, start now if you qualify (Pell-eligible, U.S. citizen/permanent resident, 3.3+ weighted GPA)

SEPTEMBER

APPLICATIONS

- ☐ CSU application (Cal State Apply) portal review — filing period opens Oct 1, but you can preview the app now
- ☐ Continue UC PIQs — aim to have all 4 drafted by end of month
- ☐ If retaking SAT/ACT, confirm your test date and send scores to schools that require them

SCHOLARSHIPS

- ☐ **Gates Scholarship deadline: Sept 15**
- ☐ **QuestBridge National College Match deadline: Sept 30** — this is a full-ride match program for high-achieving, low-income students; even if you don't match, it can lead to Regular Decision consideration at partner schools
- ☐ Ask your counselor for a local scholarship list (Rotary Club, Elks Lodge, community foundations, employer/union scholarships tied to parents' workplaces) — most of these have Nov–Feb deadlines

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- ☐ Complete any placement/assessment steps and orientation your local CC requires for spring or fall enrollment

OCTOBER

APPLICATIONS

- ☐ **UC application filing period opens Oct 1 — closes Nov 30.** Submit as early in the window as you can; there's no advantage to waiting.
- ☐ **CSU application filing period opens Oct 1 — closes Nov 30.**
- ☐ FAFSA for 2027–28 is expected to open around **Oct 1, 2026** — file as soon as it's live. List every school you're considering, even ones you haven't been accepted to yet.
- ☐ If undocumented or AB 540-eligible, file the California Dream Act Application instead of FAFSA (same October window)
- ☐ Common App: many private schools' Early Action/Early Decision deadlines fall around **Nov 1** — check each school individually and don't miss it

SCHOLARSHIPS

- ☐ QuestBridge finalists: match rankings and agreement forms due **Oct 15–16**

FINANCIAL AID

- ☐ Ask your counselor to submit the Cal Grant GPA Verification Form alongside your FAFSA (many schools do this automatically — confirm yours does)

NOVEMBER

APPLICATIONS

- ☐ **UC application deadline: Nov 30**
- ☐ **CSU application deadline: Nov 30**
- ☐ Common App Early Action/Early Decision deadlines — most fall Nov 1, some as late as mid-November; verify per school
- ☐ Double-check every application shows "submitted" status, not just "draft"

SCHOLARSHIPS

- ☐ Keep applying — most local/community scholarships have deadlines through Nov, Dec, Jan, and Feb. Don't stop after the big national ones.

FINANCIAL AID

- ☐ Confirm FAFSA submission was processed (check your Student Aid Index/SAI report)
- ☐ Research CSS Profile requirements if applying to any private colleges that use it (separate from FAFSA)

DECEMBER

APPLICATIONS

- ☐ Common App Regular Decision deadlines for many schools fall late Dec through mid-Jan — confirm each school's date and finish early if possible
- ☐ **QuestBridge Match notifications: Dec 1**

SCHOLARSHIPS

- ☐ Finish any scholarships with December/January deadlines
- ☐ Start tracking application status in one place (spreadsheet or notebook): school, deadline, submitted date, decision date

WRAP-UP

- ☐ Request that your school send transcripts to any remaining schools that need them
- ☐ Start thinking ahead to spring: Cal Grant deadline is **March 2**, and admitted-student deposit deadlines (usually May 1) will come up fast after decisions arrive

Programs Worth Knowing About

- ☐ **QuestBridge National College Match** — full four-year scholarships for high-achieving, low-income students at 45+ partner colleges. Deadline late Sept.
- ☐ **Gates Scholarship** — last-dollar, full-cost scholarship for Pell-eligible students of color with a 3.3+ GPA. Deadline mid-Sept.
- ☐ **Cal Grant** — need-based state aid; comes through the FAFSA/Dream Act application plus GPA verification. Deadline March 2.
- ☐ **EOP (Educational Opportunity Program)** — CSU and UC campuses each have their own EOP application for first-generation/low-income students, usually due around the same time as the general application.
- ☐ Ask your counselor about local scholarships tied to your area (Fontana/Rialto/San Bernardino County community foundations, Rotary, employer-sponsored awards) — these are usually less competitive than national programs and easy to miss.

Note: Dates reflect the 2026–27 application cycle for fall 2027 enrollment. Individual college and program deadlines vary — confirm directly with each school's admissions page.