

College Planning Guide for Parents and Guardians



California Career Resource Network (CalCRN)
www.californiacareers.info

COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

This guide will help you and your student develop an understanding about applying to college in California and to start developing a plan for earning a college degree. This information is helpful whether your student is just beginning high school or entering their senior year.

Use this guide as a starting point. If you have questions or concerns, seek assistance from school counselors, advisors, and resources from your student's school, your community, and the internet.

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A college education builds on the knowledge and skills acquired in earlier years. It is not too early to begin planning for college in grade seven or eight. Your student should begin by taking challenging courses in academic subjects and committing to learning as much as possible in those courses.

Upon entering high school, advise your student to:

- explore their skills and interests
- participate in service organizations and school activities
- do volunteer work
- find internships

Along the way, your student will meet and interview a variety of people in different occupations.

For additional information, visit the [California Career Center](#).

YES, YOUR CHILD CAN GO TO COLLEGE!

PREPARING YOUR STUDENT FOR COLLEGE

College preparation is a process. Use this guide to help your student stay on track:

Middle school:

- Learn about the A–G course requirements and take challenging courses to prepare for college preparatory coursework in high school.
- Choose science, math, and world language classes to get a good foundation.
- Develop talents through music, sports, drama, speech, or other activities.
- Begin exploring high school, college, and careers on the California Career Center at www.calcareercenter.org.

9th grade - Freshman:

- Map out courses for high school with a school counselor or advisor.
- Include all available A-G courses for each grade level.
- Research college entrance requirements for several colleges.
- Use the California CareerZone at www.cacareerzone.org to identify career goals.
- Participate in extracurricular activities in school or the community.
- Start building a resume and keep it current.

10th grade - Sophomore:

- Take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in October when offered by the school; request the fee waiver if needed. Use summer to study for the test.
- Begin taking Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses.
- Continue investigating career and college options. Visit colleges during the year.
- Take on leadership roles in extracurricular or community groups.
- Set up an e-mail account to use for the application process. Create a username that gives a good impression.

11th grade - Junior:

- Take the ACT, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Reasoning, and SAT Subject tests (required by some colleges) in the spring of the junior year.
- Narrow college choices down. Consider programs, cost, size, and location.
- Begin working on sections of the college applications, such as the activities list and personal statement.
- Start scholarship and merit award searches. Talk to the high school counselor or advisor.

12th grade - Senior:

- Confirm college application deadlines before beginning your senior year. Consider applying early to the top choice if they have an early decision option.
- Take the ACT, SAT Reasoning Tests and SAT Subject Test, if needed, one last time by December.
- Confirm all the required elements of a college application are in the application packet before submitting it to a college. Some colleges or college programs require essays or teacher recommendation letters. Check with the college and

the program office to see if essays and/or letters are required.

- Submit applications a few days before the deadline in case there are problems.
- Confirm which financial aid forms need to be submitted and their deadlines.
- Submit financial aid forms as early as possible and at least a few days before the deadline.
- Monitor e-mail account for college acceptance and financial aid letters in the spring.

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COLLEGE OPTIONS

Californians are fortunate to have a wide variety of institutions offering associate and baccalaureate degrees. Here is some background information about California's colleges and universities to start the college exploration process.

California Community Colleges

www.cccco.edu for information and www.cccapply.org to apply

The California Community College system is the largest system of higher education in the world serving students on 112 college campuses. Students can choose to work toward an associate (two-year) degree in hundreds of academic and technical fields, or a one- or two-year training or certificate program in a variety of occupational fields, such as health professions and high-technology. Students may also complete coursework to enable them to transfer to a college or university to complete a baccalaureate degree.

The California State University

calstate.edu/ for information and www.csumentor.edu to apply

The California State University (CSU) system offers instruction to undergraduate and master's degree students in the liberal arts, sciences, applied fields, and professions including teaching, nursing, social work, and engineering. Students can choose 1 of the 23 CSU campuses. Each campus is unique because of its location, size, programs of study, and other special characteristics.

The University of California

universityofcalifornia.edu/ for information and admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/ to apply

The ten general campuses of the University of California (UC) offer undergraduate and graduate instruction in a wide range of fields. Students can major in one of the hundreds of programs offered through the UC. While all of the campuses have the same requirements for undergraduate admission, they differ in size, enrollment, and in academic programs offered. The UC campuses are located in both rural and urban settings throughout the state with enrollments ranging from 5,000 to 35,000 students.

Independent Institutions

www.aiccu.edu/

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) represent 75 California private, nonprofit colleges and universities. These colleges and universities range in size from large prestigious universities to small liberal arts colleges and

specialized professional schools. Students can apply to many of these schools using the Common Application www.commonapp.org.

Attending an Out-of-State College

nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

Don't be afraid to explore attending an out-of-state college. The myth is that it's too expensive to go out of state, but the reality is, the cost may be comparable or even lower than in-state colleges. Look into the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) at <http://wiche.edu/wue> to explore possible reduced tuition rates.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT COLLEGE

There IS more than one school that could be right for your student. But how to decide which one is the best fit? The sooner potential schools and admission requirements are identified, the better. The following steps will help direct your student's college selection process:

Step 1: *Identify a career goal before beginning college*

Just going to college may be a great experience but even better is having an end goal for how it will ensure career success. Students should identify an initial career goal and make college choices that support entry into that field. The California CareerZone at www.cacareerzone.org is a great place to explore careers.

Step 2: *Prepare*

In order to attend either the California State University or the University of California after high school, students need to take the A–G sequence of courses. These courses will also prepare students for admission to most independent colleges and universities. Students also need to take college entrance exams (such as the ACT, SAT, or Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOFEL]).

Step 3: *Ask the advice of others*

High school guidance counselors and teachers can be good sources of information about colleges. Advise your student to discuss the results of their career exploration (completed on the CareerZone at <http://www.cacareerzone.org/>) to get advice on which colleges might be best for them. Encourage your student to seek advice from professionals in the career field they hope to enter.

Step 4: *Learn more about colleges*

The more information collected about the colleges that interest your student, the better the chance of making a good decision. Begin gathering information by visiting Explore Colleges at <https://secure.californiacolleges.edu>.

Step 5: *Make a preliminary list*

Make a preliminary list of 8–10 colleges of interests. Get information from each of these schools. Divide this list into three categories: ones your student KNOWS s/he can get into; ones that may be a STRETCH to get into; and ones that your student is not sure s/he can get into but LOOK INTERESTING. For more information on selecting the right college for your student, go to:

What is the Right College for Me?

<https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=196>

Resources to Assist You with College Selection

<https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=197>

Step 6: Visit colleges

Probably the best way to learn more about a college is to visit the campus. If possible, plan to visit a college during the school year when classes are going on. Most colleges schedule campus tours and will provide overnight accommodations in campus housing if arranged in advance.

Step 7: Finalize your list and submit applications

Once your student has gathered information, visited campuses, and talked to others, reduce the list down to 1–3 colleges in each category. An average number of colleges to apply to is 5–6. If applying to out-of-state colleges, increase submissions to 8–11. Begin a calendar of application due dates. Know which colleges have *Early Decision* and *Early Admission*. Keep a paper file on each college to keep things straight.

Step 8: Make a decision

After receiving acceptance letters, the last step is to make the “big” decision—assisting your student in choosing the college s/he will attend! The “universal” due date for notifying colleges is May 1 but you will have to decide earlier if you have taken the *Early Decision* or *Early Action* options. After accepting an offer, follow up on enrollment and housing. Don’t miss deadlines!

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COURSES REQUIRED FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION

A–G Courses Required by California Public University Systems

To be admitted to a CSU or UC campus, students must complete California's minimum high school graduation requirements and the A–G course requirements while in high school. Students must also meet their local graduation requirements and earn a "C" or better in each course.

The minimum number of A–G courses needed is:

- (a) History/Social Science—two years* (U.S. History, World History)
- (b) Language Arts (English)—four years
- (c) Mathematics—three years (Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2 at a minimum)
- (d) Science (Laboratory)—two years required, three recommended: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics
- (e) Foreign Language—two years required (recommended in the same language)
- (f) Visual and Performing Arts—one year
- (g) College Preparatory—elective

*The California state required minimum for graduation is three years.

You can review your high school’s approved A–G course list on UC Doorways at www.ucop.edu/doorways/.

Both the CSU and UC systems provide more detail about admission and high school subject requirements. These resources are on the Web at:

CSU: www.csumentor.edu/Planning/high_school/subjects.asp

UC: www.ucop.edu/agguide/

Always confirm the requirements of any college your student is considering by going to the college's Web site. And remember, the minimum college admission requirement is a high school diploma so make sure your student understands what the local school district requires to earn a diploma. Remind your student that grade point average (GPA) can be a key factor when applying to a college or university and that they should try to graduate with the highest possible GPA to have the most college options.

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COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

Students applying to college need to be aware of the different exams used and/or required by the colleges they are considering. It is a good idea for students to begin preparing for these exams early in their high school career.

Check with the high school for testing dates, registration information, etc.

Preparation Exam

PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) www.collegeboard.org

This test is given each year in October and is for juniors; however freshmen and sophomores may also take it. Test results for the junior year are the only results considered for NMSQT. (The National Merit® Scholarship Program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships.)

College Application Exams

SAT Reasoning

www.collegeboard.org

The SAT Reasoning test is a multiple-choice test with reading, math, and writing sections.

SAT Subject Tests

www.collegeboard.org

The SAT Subject tests are one-hour tests designed to measure your level of achievement in a particular subject. Tests are offered in Literature; United States History; World History; Mathematics Level I; Mathematics Level 2; Foreign Languages; and Sciences. Not all tests are offered at the same times. SAT subject tests are no longer universally required but are still required for some programs. Check application requirements for your target colleges. Check the College Board Web site for registration information, testing dates, and locations. Register early!

ACT

www.actstudent.org

The ACT test consists of four tests of general educational development and an optional

writing section with multiple choice questions and writing prompts. The four general test sections are: English, Reading, Math, and Science Reasoning. The academic tests cover the subjects of English usage, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Natural Sciences. Check college application requirements to see if the writing section is needed. In addition to the tests, the ACT Web site also provides a unique Interest Inventory and a Student Profile Section. Check the ACT Web site for testing dates, registration information, and fees.

English as a Second Language

If your student has been studying in the United States for less than two years and his or her native language and school language of instruction prior to study in the United States was not English, s/he must demonstrate English proficiency. For more information, have your student speak with the school counselor or advisor.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities may request testing accommodations. Your student should see his/her counselor or advisor for more information on this. It is important to start this process early in order to meet documentation requirements by registration deadlines.

Fee Waivers

Your student will have to pay a fee to take college admission exams; however, these fees can be waived. Direct your student to get fee-waiver information from their high school counselor.

Remind your seniors

Colleges and universities require standardized testing be completed by December so make sure your senior confirms test dates and registration deadlines.

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FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES

Colleges assume the family and the student will pay for college. However, many students need help paying college costs. Financial assistance given to a student to help pay for college is called “financial aid.” To be eligible for the federal financial aid used by most colleges, you and your student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Many colleges also require submission of the College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE. Also, California-specific aid is available through the California Student Aid Commission.

For information and assistance, your student should check with the high school counselor, advisor, or college financial aid office in addition to the following online resources:

Free Application for Federal Student Aid
www.fafsa.ed.gov
1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)
TTY 1-800-730-8913

California Student Aid Commission
www.csac.ca.gov
888-294-0148 or 916-526-8989
TTY (916) 526-8988

Pell Grants and other federal programs
Federal Student Aid Information Center
studentaid.ed.gov/
1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)
TDD 1-800-730-8313

College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE
<http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>
Confirm if schools you are applying to require the CSS PROFILE.

Additional Helpful Sites on the Web

Help completing the FAFSA <http://studentaid.ed.gov/resources#fafsa>
The Financial Aid information page www.finaid.org
FastWeb www.fastweb.com
Mapping Your Future <http://mappingyourfuture.org/>

Watch for financial aid workshops offered by the school or local library.

NOTE: Legitimate financial aid programs do not charge fees for applications or materials.

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THE COLLEGE APPLICATION

The following is a list of common college application requirements. Check college admissions office Web sites for specific requirements. You can find a College Application Tracking Chart in the California Career Center at <https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=406>.

Application Forms

These forms may be online or paper depending on the school(s) you apply to. You can apply to specific or multiple California Community College, UC, and CSU campuses by using each system's online application. You can apply to over 400 private colleges using the Common Application. Check individual college Web sites for application options and preferences. College Application links:

- California Community Colleges www.cccapply.org
- California State University www.csumentor.edu/AdmissionApp/
- University of California admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/
- Private Colleges www.commonapp.org

Application Fees

College application fees vary so make sure you know the cost for the schools that interest your student. Check to see if any of the colleges have fee waivers and if your student is eligible for the waiver.

High School Transcript

The transcript is the record of classes taken and grades earned. Your student will need to ask the high school to send their transcript, along with a school profile, directly to the colleges to which s/he is applying. Have your student give the transcript request to the person at the school that processes them and include the information for the colleges to which s/he is applying. At the end of the senior year after final grades are posted, your student needs to request the high school to send the final, official transcript to the college your student has decided to attend.

Admission Test Scores

Some colleges require or recommend scores from exams such as the SAT or ACT. Check the college Web sites to find out if either exam is required and consider taking both. Visit the testing organizations' Web sites for registration deadlines and fees. Check to see if you are eligible for a fee waiver. Students must ask the College Board and/or the ACT to send the scores directly to the prospective colleges.

Letters of Recommendation

Colleges may require letters of recommendation from teachers or other adults who know your student. These reference letters should be requested well in advance of the deadlines to allow the person writing the recommendation enough time to write it. Writers may want your student to give them a short written summary of their achievements to help them write the letter. Advise your student to ask the high school counselor or advisor about procedures for requesting letters from teachers at the school.

Personal Essays

Personal essays are a chance for your student to give admission officers a better idea of their character and strengths. Advise your student to carefully proofread their essays before sending them to the college. Students need to be honest and sincere in their personal essays.

Auditions and Portfolios

Music, art, or theater programs may want to see samples of student work. This means there may be an audition or the need to send a portfolio or video showing artistic ability as part of application. Advise your student to ask the music, art, or theater teacher for advice.

Interviews

Even if an admissions interview is not required, it's a good idea for your student to ask for one. It shows serious intent and provides the chance to connect with someone in the admissions office.

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PARTICIPATING IN COLLEGE-LEVEL SPORTS

If your student is an athlete and wants to participate in college-level sports, you may

want to offer them the following advice:

- Set priorities making academic/educational choices first.
- Apply to colleges in multiple divisions, including I, II, III and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).
- Contact colleges early and communicate interest in playing on the team.
- Be sure to register for the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Clearinghouse.
- Ask the school to send official transcripts to the NCAA Clearinghouse.

Eligibility Standards

National Collegiate Athletic Association

www.eligibilitycenter.org

National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)

www.playnaia.org/

California Community Colleges

Students interested in participating in sports at a California Community College need to check with that college's athletic department.

Be sure your student checks with the high school athletic director to clarify which eligibility rules apply to them!

YOUR CHILD CAN GO TO COLLEGE!

Get started now!

Produced by the California Department of Education's California Career Resource Network on the Web at www.californiacareers.info.

Special thanks to the Tulare County Office of Education for creating the original College Planning Guide for Parents and Students.

Note to schools: This guide can be personalized for your school or district—add graphics, edit content, use selected pages—anything that will make it a useful resource for your parents and guardians.

For additional exploration and planning support, visit the California Career Center at www.calcareercenter.org and the California CareerZone at www.cacareerzone.org.