



**ROCK ACADEMY**  
**A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

College Handbook 2024-2025

Welcome to Your College Handbook 2024-2025

Mrs. Williamson is looking forward to working with you as you begin your journey on college selection and admissions. Her goal is to make this process manageable and understandable for you and your family. Use this handbook as a starting place and a reference guide, but remember, if you have questions, please contact me, and ask! I can help individualize the search to meet your needs to make sure that your college list reflects your interests and goals. Now take a breath and enjoy the process.

Continuous updates on college planning can be found on the Rock Academy website:  
<https://www.therockacademy.org/>

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## Naviance

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Naviance is the official college and career planning platform. Students and parents will be invited through an email to register and create an account in Naviance. If you have not yet registered with Naviance please contact *Nathalie Williamson* for an “invitation” to set up an account.

We hope you find this resource helpful. If you have further questions about Naviance, please contact Nathalie Williamson.

## Naviance will allow you to:

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- Get involved in the planning and advising process:

Build a resume, complete online surveys, and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges and careers.

- Research colleges:

Set filters for criteria important to YOU to find colleges that are a fit to your interests.

“Save” schools of interest. This will allow you to “follow” them until you are ready to apply as a senior. Compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data of students who have applied and been admitted in recent years.

- Research careers:

Naviance has a “Career Interest Assessment” that can be used to help match students with careers based on your individual interests. The “Search and Exploration” tool provides comprehensive career information and students can use filtered searches to learn about all kinds of careers.

- Manage college applications:

During senior year you will maintain an updated list of colleges you will apply to, request recommendations from your counselor and teachers and request transcripts (to be sent to colleges and scholarship providers).

## Naviance Curriculum

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### Freshman Year:

- Students are introduced to Naviance and established their account.
- Formal invitations are sent to each student through their school email to create an account in Naviance.
- Students will enter their personal information and invite their parents to register.
- Instruction given on how to use the college “search” features and begin “following” colleges of interest.

### Sophomore Year:

- Naviance in-service training - Spring Semester.
- Update personal and parent information.
- Update/add to the list of colleges they are “following”.
- Complete the “Career Interest Assessment” and “Character Assessment” to discover possible career matches.

### Junior Year:

- Naviance in-service training in the Fall Semester
- Update personal and parent information
- Update/ add to list of colleges they are “following.”
- Complete the “Activities & Achievements” section to build a pre-formatted resume of high school accomplishments to date.
- During the first week of the spring semester counselors will meet with junior year students to discuss college selection.
- Junior Parent “College Information Night” will be hosted in April.
- Parents will be invited to make an appointment for their Family College Planning meeting during the Spring Semester.

### Senior Year:

- Naviance College Application training during school (early September).

### Important Notes for Seniors:

- Seniors must add **every** college they will apply to in the “Applying” column found under “My Colleges”
- Oct 1 Deadline: all requests for teacher recommendations must be sent through Naviance
- Mrs. Williamson will complete recommendation letter(s) and a school report for each school seniors will apply to.
- Rock Academy will NOT send ACT or SAT test scores.  
It is the student’s responsibility to request test scores be sent from the College Board for SAT (collegeboard.org) or ACT (act.org) directly to the school.
- UC and CSU colleges do NOT require transcripts unless specifically requested via email.  
\*\*Be sure to check your email regularly to find out if a CSU or UC college is requiring you to send transcripts, test scores, or other information.
- Finally: Mrs. Williamson is available to answer questions or consult about your college choices in the Counseling Center. PLEASE ASK (DON’T GUESS!!). There are no bad or silly questions or discussions.
- During October and November, you will be assisted with your CSU, UC, and Common APP online applications in the Counseling Center during office hours on ODD academic days.

## CSU Application

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<https://www.calstate.edu/apply>

**Application filing period:** October 1st - November 30th

Log in or create an account

August 1: Applications opens

November 30: Deadline to Apply

*(Rock encouraged deadline = before Thanksgiving break)*

### **Starting the Application:**

Choose Undergraduate Admission Application

Select Fall 2025

Select a campus from the list and begin an application

Each campus requires a separate application, however when you start a new application by campus, the system will copy over the information you stored in the first application.

### **Enrollment Information:**

Term: Fall 2025

Select degree & major

CEEB School code: 054186

Rock students do not have an SSID#

If you have taken classes elsewhere and they are NOT on your Rock transcript, be sure to add the appropriate school before entering those classes

You are a "graduating high school senior with no college credit" (unless you have taken a course at a college or community college. AP credits not included here.)

### **High School Preparation:**

Rock is on a semester system

If you do not see a course listed, it does not satisfy the CSU requirement for that subject

If the course was ONE semester, choose "NO" for the second semester

leave semester grade "blank"

Senior Year: semester 1 = in-progress / semester 2 = planned

If you repeated a course, enter the higher grade in place of the original grade

Summer courses:

any course taken between freshmen and sophomore year should be entered as a freshmen course if it does not boost GPA

Enter as a sophomore course if it does boost GPA.

Any course taken between junior and senior year should be entered as a senior course if it does not boost GPA or as a junior course if it does boost GPA

Calculate High School GPA (Sophomore and Junior year grades ONLY)



**Educational Opportunity Program (EOP):**

For low-income, first-generation college students.

The family size (household) and income information you enter in the “About You” section will be used to determine your eligibility for this program.

**Review and Submit:**

Go to the review screen to look over and make edits.

**\*HAVE YOUR COUNSELOR LOOK OVER THE APPLICATION WITH YOU BEFORE SUBMITTING\***

**Standardized Test Scores:**

ACT and SAT test scores are no longer considered in the admissions process for any CSU school.

- The California State University system ranges from Humboldt near the Oregon border to San Diego near the Mexican border.
- There are currently 23 campuses in the California State University system with an enrollment exceeding 485,000 students.
- CSU is committed to enrolling the top third of California high school graduates who have met the CSU minimum eligibility requirements.
- Each campus has its own unique geographic and curricular character. All campuses offer undergraduate and graduate instruction for professional and occupational goals as well as broad liberal education.

**UC Application**

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<https://apply.universityofcalifornia.edu/my-application/login>

**Application filing period:** October 1st – November 30th Application deadline: November 30th

Log in or create an account

Deadline: November 30th

*(Rock encouraged deadline = November 23rd)*

Application opens 1 August

**Admissions Requirements/How to Apply:**

<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/applying-as-a-freshman/>

**Select Scholarships:**

Maximum of 16 are allowed (some may require supportive documentation)

**About You:**

Enter personal information to complete profile

EOP: for low-income, first-generation college students. The family size (household) and income information you enter in the “About You” section will be used to determine your eligibility for this program (as well as your eligibility for an application fee waiver).

**Academic History:**

7th & 8th grade math courses ONLY if you started in Geometry or higher in math at RA  
CEEB School code: 054186

If you have taken classes elsewhere and they are NOT on your Rock transcript, be sure to add the appropriate school before entering those classes

Rock is on a semester system

If the course was ONE semester, choose “NO” for the respective “blank” semester grade

Senior Year: semester 1 = in-progress & semester 2 = planned

If you do not see a course, it does not satisfy the UC requirement for that subject - If you repeat a course, you must report both occurrences

Rock students do not have an SSID#

Additional comments section: *Rock suggests you include “My school requires 8 semesters of Religion which limited my ability to take other electives or advanced courses.”*

**Activities and Awards:**

You will need the dates & hours you’ve performed each activity and a brief description (description MUST include action verbs - tell them what you DID)

**Standardized Test Scores:**

ACT and SAT test scores are no longer considered in the admissions process for any UC school.

- The University of California (UC) system has nine campuses and over 280,000 students, including undergraduate and graduate students offering instruction in a wide range of fields.
- Among the campuses are five medical schools, three law schools, and a school of veterinary medicine, as well as many professional schools including business administration, education, engineering, and oceanography.
- Admission to the University of California is quite competitive. The UC selects freshman applicants from the top 12 ½ percent of California’s high school graduates. To be eligible for admission to the UC system as a freshman, you must meet the “A-G” Subject Requirement, with a 3.0 GPA or better and no grade lower than a C.
- Meeting minimum requirements does not necessarily guarantee you a place at a campus or in the major of your choice.
- Because there are more applicants than there are spaces, admission is very selective. The campuses generally admit students with higher qualifications than the minimums required.



## **Common Application (or Common APP) – for application other than CSU or UC System**

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[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

Log in or create an account.

Common App tutorial: If you click on the First Year Students tab on the home page there is a step-by-step guide on filling out the Common Application.

### **Deadline:**

Varies by school (and whether you are applying regular or early).

\*Create a calendar with deadlines!

### **“Common App” tab:**

Information entered on this tab is given to every college you apply to.

Education Section Info: CEEB School Code: 054186

Rock **does not** rank students

Class size for 2024-2025: 36

Cumulative GPA on transcript (weighted)

Rock uses a 4-point grade scale

### **“Dashboard” tab:**

A visual indication of the status of your application.

### **“My Colleges” tab:**

Where you will complete requirements specific to each individual college (additional questions, supplements, letters of recommendation, FERPA).

FERPA Release:

Before you can assign recommenders, you must complete the FERPA questions and waive your right to access recommendations.

Letters of Recommendation: Requested through Naviance (see above Naviance info)

### **“College Search” tab:**

Add colleges to the Common App using this tab

### **Test Scores:**

Only self-report HIGHEST composite score on either the ACT or SAT. Send scores directly from [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) or [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) to each school on Common App.

\*Many colleges no longer require students to submit an ACT or SAT test score. Please check the website of each school you are applying to see if they require and/or accept test scores for this admission cycle.

**\*REMINDER:** If you add a school, BOTH Naviance and Common App must be updated (otherwise, your recommendations will not be sent to that school)

### **Previewing and Submitting the Application:**

Previewing is through the submission menu found on either the “Dashboard” tab or “My Colleges” tab.

**\*HAVE YOUR COUNSELOR LOOK OVER THE APPLICATION WITH YOU BEFORE SUBMITTING\*** The application will not be submitted until you sign, date, and click submit in step 3.

### **Seven Myths About College Admissions**

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**Myth #1:** Colleges receive so many personal essays they probably only glance at them.

**Fact:** Private college admission officers read personal essays with great care (same for the UC, now that they have the Comprehensive Review of applications). Writing about yourself in a way that makes you unique is the one significant thing you can do to overcome lackluster test scores and a mediocre school record. Don’t wait until just before the deadline to rush to write your essay just to get the application in the mail on time. Even at the UC, a well-written essay can tip the scales in your favor; the personal essay can make a difference.

**Myth #2:** Colleges don’t look at the senior year grades.

**Fact:** All college admissions committees analyze not only senior year grades in the first semester, but also the degree of difficulty of the senior year course of study. As for the second semester grades, if there is a significant change (decline) in academic performance from February to June (spring semester), the college that originally accepted you might require summer school, put you on probation for the first semester of college, or rescind your acceptance on the grounds that you are not the same strong student they originally admitted. The University of California will not officially accept you until they see your final transcript. Since that arrives in July or August after high school graduation, there are serious consequences for you if your admission offer is rescinded one month before the fall term begins.

**Myth #3:** It is important to have as many extra-curricular activities as possible to impress college admission people because it “looks good.”

**Fact:** Colleges are “looking” for quality of involvement, not simply quantity. They want a well-rounded student body made up of students who are passionately interested in activities, not those who haven’t spread themselves so thin that their extra-curricular commitments are superficial. Colleges prefer, for example, the student solely dedicated to being the yearbook editor over the student who has some participation in 10 different activities. This is what is called “productive follow-through.”

**Myth #4:** It is better to go to a big university that is well known than to a small college that few people know.

**Fact:** This generalization about large versus small schools is quite misleading. While a large university with wide name recognition (such as UCLA) may be ideal for many students, others may perform better in a smaller, more personalized environment (such as the University of La Verne). Just because your next-door neighbor hasn't heard of a particular college doesn't mean the school is not prestigious. Graduate schools and employers make it their business to know which colleges turn out the brightest and most capable graduates, and the size of the school has very little to do with it. It is important to define the things you want in a college – to understand yourself, not to be unduly influenced by the opinions of others.

**Myth #5:** The only private colleges worth applying to are the Ivy League colleges.

**Fact:** This is another cliché. The eight Ivy League colleges are among the most selective schools in the nation, but they may not offer what you want; besides, did you know that the “Ivy League” is simply an athletic league like the Big 10 or the SEC? Certainly, the Ivy League is known for its academic quality, but it does not have a monopoly on academic quality.

Suggested reading: Looking Beyond the Ivy League by Loren Pope.

**Myth #6:** Colleges just don't have enough money to give families financial aid.

**Fact:** Financial aid continues to be more readily available than you might think in the forms of grants, loans, work-study, and merit scholarships. Read the financial aid section in this handbook, attend evening financial aid sessions at school this fall and winter, and investigate websites such as [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) or [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org).

**Myth #7:** If I make the wrong decision about college, my life will be ruined.

**Fact:** While it is important to realize the significance of your college choice, take it seriously, and spend time on all the steps of the college process, you should remember to keep things in perspective. If you find, despite an informed choice, that you are not well suited to your college, you can transfer to another college. So be conscientious about the selection process.

## Where to Start

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The admissions process is an attempt by colleges and universities to select the most qualified students for their institution, carefully matching student, and program. The basis of this selection is determined by an evaluation of the following:

### Academic Information

1) The transcript which includes:

- a) Academic grades
- b) Type and number of courses
- c) Level of courses
- d) Grade point average (weighted cumulative)

2) Test results – most schools will be “test optional” for the class of 2025

- a) SAT or ACT
- 3) Personal information contained in:
  - 1) Autobiographical essay/writing sample
  - 2) Resume of extracurricular activities:
    - a) Leadership roles
    - b) Activities and clubs
    - c) Sports participation
    - d) Work and travel experiences
    - e) Unique talents and interests
    - f) Volunteer service
  - 3) School Recommendation
  - 4) A personal interview
  - 5) Letters of recommendation by teachers

### **Academic**

More than anything else, strong academic credentials build the foundation for college admissions. These credentials include your scholastic record and standardized test results. While scores on the SAT and ACT may be used by some colleges if you choose to submit them, the most important criteria will be performance shown by your four-year classroom record. Admissions officers place a high value on students with consistent academic success in demanding programs. A simple rule-of-thumb for courses and grades: Take the hardest schedule you can handle without getting a “C”. “C’s” are acceptable in college admissions, but “acceptable” doesn’t mean “desirable.” Of course, you should always do the best you can, and sometimes a “C” is doing the best you can. But you are going to have to be very realistic about your chances at selective institutions if the best you can do is a “C” in a high school level class. Colleges do not accept courses in which you earn “D’s” or “F’s”. “D’s” or “F’s” must be made up in summer school.

### **Some Perspective from the College Board**

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#### **Which factors most affect the admission decision?**

Many small, selective colleges pay greater attention to personal statements and essays, teacher and counselor recommendations, leadership experiences and the individual talents of applicants. They typically offer the chance for a face-to-face interview.

Large, public state university systems often use a mathematical formula based on a student’s grade point average (GPA) and scores on the SAT or ACT. They tend to favor in-state applicants.

#### **Personal**

Getting your academic house in order is the first rule for progress in the college application process. After that, it is time to find out who you are, what you are good at, and how adventuresome you are. Achievements outside the classroom are also a factor in admission of an applicant, and for many of the selective colleges, a student’s non-academic record can allow him or her to be accepted before applicants with similar academic credentials. Colleges are not as interested in students who participate or dabble in many activities as they are in applicants who have become sincerely involved in

a few meaningful endeavors. Choose the activities that interest you most and make a real commitment to them. If possible, work toward a leadership position in your activity.

Spend some time with yourself and notice what you think about, dream about, and perhaps want to try out. If you think you would be good at public speaking, take a class or become involved in student government. If you would like to develop artistic talent, take advantage of the excellent visual arts program at school, or ask about weekend programs at art colleges. Though it is important that you learn about yourself and develop yourself as a person, it is also important in the college admissions process. Colleges are looking for interesting people. You will hear that they want people who have a passion. Perhaps some of your classmates have already found theirs, but maybe you are still looking. There are unlimited opportunities for exploration. If you get stuck, see your counselor for ideas about volunteering, interesting classes, or summer opportunities. A growth curve is important. Most colleges are looking for students who are growing steadily as a student and a person. Achieving just a satisfactory level of performance and staying there often indicates complacency and a lack of motivation. If you apply yourself daily and pursue real interests, you will enter the college application process with confidence and direction.

### **Where Do I Apply?**

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Let's start with a reality check: 3,350 of the 3,500 colleges in the nation DO NOT turn down more applicants than they accept. So, does it make sense to limit yourself to the stressful, hardball game of highly selective college admissions? Only you can answer that. Ideally, you will have a range of colleges on your list, based not only upon selectivity, but also upon the important things: environment, programs, great teaching, the opportunity to meet interesting people and perhaps lifelong friends, and the chance to be challenged both personally and academically. In the field of college counseling, we call this the right match. And there is no perfect college for you. There are several colleges that may be right for you. While it is true that there is undoubtedly a type of college which is more suited to your needs than another type, it is not wise to narrow your sights to only one or two colleges. A better plan is to investigate several possible options and you will discover that each one has its own advantages.

### **Step 1: Factors to Consider in Researching and Selecting a college**

#### **What NOT To Do:**

Do Not put any faith in US News and World Report or similar rankings. Just because a school is highly ranked doesn't mean that you will like it or that it will suit your needs. The rankings are based on factors that include things like faculty salaries, average spending per student, alumni giving rate, and the number of students who transfer. While these factors are important to the college, they have little or nothing to do with whether you will be happy there.

Your best friend or older brother did not like the school he attended. Just because he didn't like the college doesn't mean that you won't. There might be a very specific reason that he was turned off by the school – a weird freshman year roommate or a professor with whom he didn't click. Those things can happen at any school. Be your own person in researching colleges.

“I heard that...” Much of the information that floats around about colleges is at least 10 years old, sometimes older. Many colleges that had lightweight academic reputations in the 70’s or 80’s have refocused their priorities and are now top institutions. Similarly, some schools were considered party schools, and others were considered easy to get into. Schools have changed, and the way they might have been 10, 20, or 30 years ago is the way they might seem to your parents. Do your research. What are the social and academic realities now?

I’ve never heard of it. Many of the small, liberal arts colleges are some of the best colleges in the country, and they might be some of the best-kept secrets too. The average well-educated person can probably name only a small number of the almost 3,500 colleges and universities in the United States. These tend to be older Eastern schools, the large state universities, those with outstanding athletic teams, or those that happen to be near home. It is important to remember that a college which may be right for you may be one that is unknown to you now, while some of the universities you are most familiar with may not be appropriate choices.

Start by making a list of things you want in a college. Some suggestions for consideration:

- **Size:** Do I want the anonymity of a large school versus the personal attention from professors at a smaller school? Think about the learning environment in a lecture hall of 400, where you might be able to go through four years without being called on more than a few times; as opposed to the smaller class size, even seminar classes at small schools, where your participation is expected. It is much easier to have a big impact on life at a smaller school, since you will be better able to get to know the administration and many of the other campus leaders personally. At large schools, meetings will be announced, but unless you seek them out, clubs and organizations won’t come to find you.
- **Weather:** Can I live through wind, snow, rain, and sleet – in a word: weather. We don’t really have that in Southern California, so this is an important question if you are considering leaving the area or the state.
- **Location:** Have I visited a school in a suburban or rural area, so that I know what it means to distinguish between urban, suburban, or rural campuses?
- **Programs:** Am I looking for a specialized school? (engineering, music, fashion design)
- **Co-Curricular Activities:** Do I want to attend a school with a strong sense of campus community? Big-time sports can make you feel like you belong the minute football season begins. Do you like the tradition that goes along with big-time sports programs? Or are you trying to find a school with an orchestra, an award-winning student newspaper, political demonstrations, or important guest speaker?
- **Academic Atmosphere:** What environment suits me? Tense or relaxed, competitive, or geared to individual progress, high or low academic expectations, opportunities for recreational and cultural activities to supplement academics, honor systems and academic discipline codes.

- **Graduation in 4 years:** Is it important to you to graduate in four years? You may not know that the norm for colleges to quote graduation statistics is now six years, as in “We graduate 65% of our students in 6 years.” It is possible to graduate in four years. Be sure to find out how many students do that at the school you are considering.
- **Social Structure and Campus Lifestyle:** Is a residential campus important? This is an especially important question for students planning to attend out-of-state colleges. Weekend social life, on and off campus, types of entertainment favored by the students, fraternities and sororities, and system of student rules are all important factors in the daily life of a student.
- **Position in the incoming class:** Do you want to be one of the better students at the school, or do you want the challenge of working extra hard to keep up with the top 25%? Would you consider entering an Honors program at a somewhat less competitive school to get the best education possible at a large school in a smaller group experience? Think Arizona State University or U Mass–Amherst.
- **Calendar:** Is the school’s calendar important to you – semesters or quarters?
- **Your Own Priorities:** Think about the dozens of other things that you as an individual might consider athletics, performing arts, distance from home or relatives, cost, public/private, religious affiliation, specific programs or interdisciplinary majors... add your own special considerations.

## **Step 2: Honestly Assess Your Profile**

A realistic self-assessment will help you examine your academic and personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as your reasons for going to college and what you are seeking in a college education. The process involves a combination of looking back at your high school career and looking ahead to how a college education will prepare you for your post-collegiate years. Answer these questions in an honest and thoughtful manner. A self-evaluation will help you understand what to look for in your selection of prospective schools, and it can prepare you for statements you will be asked to make about yourself in essays and interviews when you apply.

### **Goals and Values**

- What is your main educational goal?
- What values do you consider most important?
- What kind of person would you like to become?
- Which of your unique gifts and strengths would you like to develop?
- What events or experiences have shaped your growth and way of thinking?

### **Education**

- What are your academic interests?
- Which courses have been most satisfying for you?
- What interests beyond daily class assignments have you pursued in research papers, through independent projects, and recreational reading?
- How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss issues, and exchange ideas?
- What has been your most stimulating intellectual experience in recent years?

In what academic areas do you feel confident? Inadequately prepared?

Are there outside distractions which have interfered with your academic performance?

Consider such things as family problems, health, after-school job responsibilities.

### **Activities and Interests**

What activities outside of the daily school routine do you enjoy the most?

Which have meant the most to you?

Do your activities show any pattern of commitment, competence, or contribution?

What do you do for fun and relaxation?

What distresses you most about the world around you?

What would you do if you could change certain aspects of your world?

### **Personality and Relationships with Others**

Are you competitive? If so, to what extent?

What kind of a person are you?

What three adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

How would someone who knows you well describe you?

What are your finest qualities?

Your most conspicuous shortcomings?

How do you feel about choices and making decisions for yourself?

### **Step 3: Create a List of Colleges to Investigate**

You might want to create a section of a notebook for keeping track of your research. Make notes initially about size, location, selectivity, and special features based upon some of the qualities/characteristics noted in Step 1. Be honest about the kind of student you are. In terms of grades and standardized test scores, what kind of student are you?

Once you can be honest with yourself, you can begin to categorize colleges as Reach/Risky, Realistic/True Possibility, and Likely/Safety.

### **Help in your research:**

- Talk with your counselor who is a professional in college counseling. Meet with the counselor and keep open lines of communication. Counselors are there to answer questions and make suggestions, but they are not there to do your work for you. Research is work.
- Also take advantage of some of the excellent guidebooks available for purchase or in the reference area of your public library, such as *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *Princeton Review's Best 351 Colleges*, or *The College Board's College Handbook*.
- You can do searches online through Naviance, College Board and many other sites. These programs allow you to identify aspects of colleges, and then they will yield a list for you to research. Almost all colleges have websites to provide students with information. You can submit your name online to get on a particular college's mailing list. They will follow up with catalogs, view books, and applications.
- Don't forget the visits by college representatives to the San Diego area and college fairs. These are great opportunities to meet with the person who will probably be reading your application.



- A list of twenty or more colleges to research is reasonable. You need to begin narrowing your list down to a reasonable six to ten colleges. Narrowing down the list is a task made successful by good research. A good list will include some reach, target, and safety schools.

#### **Step 4: Visiting Colleges**

Beyond all your research, on the internet, in general reference materials and all the view books, video tapes, catalogues, and brochures from individual schools, there is nothing like visiting a campus and seeing for yourself what a school is like. You will want to visit the schools that especially interest you, and certainly the ones that accept you once you have completed the application process. If you are lucky enough to be able to visit major cities with loads of colleges, like Boston or Philadelphia, then, go and see as many schools as you can. If you are not, we recommend that you visit some campuses in Southern California.

You can visit virtually any type of college right here within driving distance. Some of the area colleges might approximate the size and setting of an out-of-state school that you may be considering.

#### **Before the Tour**

- The timing of a visit can make a significant difference in your impressions and opinion of the school. Try to plan your visit when school is in session, if possible.
- Planning with the college's admission office is important to help you make the most of your visit. Most colleges encourage campus visits, and many publish special brochures to help you plan one. The admission office can assist you with travel information, driving directions, and scheduling your itinerary (distances/driving times to nearby schools, the feasibility of visiting their school and another on the same day, etc.).
- Most colleges allow students/parents sign up for in-person campus tours via on their website. This is usually located under the admissions section of the website. These tours usually include an informational session on admissions prior to the campus tour. If this is a serious visit, you can contact the admissions office about sitting in on a class or getting information from a specific academic department.
- Admissions offices can provide lodging, restaurant, and cultural activities for the area.
- Learn all you can and take notes. You will never be indifferent after a college visit. You will have strong impressions. Write them down, good, or bad, and start learning about what you want in terms of size, type of school, people, dorms, activities, etc. You might want to make a comparison chart to take with you if you plan to see several schools at one time. If you do not make notes of some kind, you will find that your memory of specifics becomes vague after visiting several schools.
- Follow up with a thank you note to the admissions person who helped you arrange your tour, or who spent time with you on campus.

#### **What to Look for On a Tour**

- General appearance of the campus (poor maintenance, vandalism, campus pride)
- Student attire (J. Crew, Gap, very casual, sloppy)

- Friendliness (eye contact, offer to help, hello's)
- Student conversations (topic, tone, classes, papers, books, parties)
- Transportation (bikes, cars, foot, shuttles)
- Faculty presence (office hours posted, open doors, student interaction)
- Library (hours, easy access)
- Laboratory and computer facilities (hours, easy access)
- Fine arts facilities (studios, practice rooms, performances)
- Residence Halls (singles, doubles, suites, coed, substance free or wellness, guaranteed housing)

### **Questions to Ask Campus Representatives on a College Visit**

- What percent of applicants are accepted?
- What percent of first year students return as sophomores?
- What percent of entering students graduate?
- In how many years?
- How much flexibility will I have in my curriculum?
- Can I double major?
- Is a core curriculum required?
- What is the average class size?
- What is the faculty/student ratio?
- Will I be taught by graduate assistants?
- What percentage of the faculty teach first- and second-year students?
- How many credits/classes do students usually take in one term?
- What percent of graduates who apply to law school are admitted? Medical school? MBA programs?
- Honors programs?
- Financial Aid?

### **Questions to Ask Students on a College Visit**

- Stop several students and ask them about the school and their programs. Watch for their facial expressions and any hesitation in their voice.

*Some sample questions you could ask:*

- If they were choosing a college today would this college be their first choice?
- Is there anything about the school they could change?
- If so, what would it be? What are the school's strongest or most popular majors?
- Is housing guaranteed for freshmen?
- Will you need a car? Can you have a car on campus? Parking Costs?
- Is there public transportation to nearby destinations (shopping, museums, etc.)?

Also, ask questions about your own interests, such as internships in your field, fraternities/sororities, student organizations, intramural leagues and/or club sports, student government, and what campus life is like on the weekends.

### **Other Helpful Activities When You Are on a Campus**

- Look at school newspapers, kiosks, and bulletin boards for activities that interest you and give you insight into issues students care about.
- Eat in the dining hall (you might need permission from the admissions officer).
- Visit the student union.
- Talk to professors of classes or majors you may be interested in.
- Talk to coaches if you plan to play a sport.
- Visit the housing complexes.
- Visit the libraries.

### **Step 5: Meet with College Representatives and Attend College Fairs**

You can take advantage of meeting admissions representatives who travel to Southern California. Many out-of-state colleges have counselors who travel to their area of expertise and visit high schools. Many of these informational sessions are open to anyone who signs up to attend. Colleges that have counselors who travel will list their dates, times, and location on the visit section of their website. Our counselor's office will post announcements in the Weekly Warrior. Each year, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) hosts The San Diego National College Fair (typically held in April) where there are 250+ colleges from all over the country in attendance. Go online at [www.nacac.com](http://www.nacac.com) for more information. On that same website, see information regarding the Visual and Performing Arts National College Fair, a must for serious VPA students. The fair is held in the fall; location varies from year to year. Juniors should plan to attend. If you cannot visit the college in person, check out the college profile on Naviance and/or take a virtual tour of the college. Many colleges offer virtual tours directly from their website.

### **How Do I Apply?**

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#### **Step 1: Get the College Applications**

You know your sixth semester grades; you know your SAT or ACT scores (you might test again, but you have to go with what you know for this step); and you have done your research. You have your final list categorized by Reach/ Risky, Realistic, True Possibility and Likely/Safety.

Run the final list by your counselor for input and information that may be new to you and then get your applications. UC and CSU applications are online. Over 1,000 colleges use the Common App instead of intuitional applications. If one of your college choices does not use the Common Application, it will state that on their website. For example, Georgetown University uses its own application.

**Organizational Note:** Set up a filing system that works for you. Keep a separate file for each college to which you are applying.

## **Step 2: Keep a Log of Deadlines**

Chart each application deadline, counselor/teacher recommendation(s) required, personal essay requirement, SAT/ACT test dates and scores, and date mailed. Applying to colleges can be a draining and time-consuming business. Organization of files and information will help alleviate some of the stress during this time.

Deadlines are critical. Given that deadlines are as varied as the 3,000+ colleges out there, keeping track of them is crucial. In California, we have very early deadlines for our state university systems. You may apply to the California State University (CSU) from October 1 - November 30, and to the University of California (UC) from October 1 - November 30. Note the other school's deadlines carefully, as well as any standardized testing deadlines if you plan to test in the fall.

Some highly competitive colleges have deadlines called Early Decision and Early Action. You won't find many fans of these application options among high school counselors, because in our experience, there are tremendous changes in perspective among students as they move through the admissions process from October to May. But E.D. and E.A. exist, so explore them if you wish, but always proceed with caution. They both carry risks. E.D. and E.A. deadlines are usually November 1st, with a promise of an early answer, usually December 15th.

### **Early Decision (E.D.):**

If you are admitted as an EARLY DECISION applicant, you must attend that college, and you must withdraw all other applications. This is a highly competitive applicant pool, but because the college can get the best applicants early out of this pool, they sometimes take students with slightly lower overall grades/ test scores than it might in the regular application pool. The real issue for counselors, and hopefully for you too, is that you might change your mind between December and the May 1st decision date. Most high school seniors do, and if you are accepted E.D., the entire process of decision-making is short-circuited. You absolutely must see your counselor before you can send in your E.D. application anyway, since he or she must sign it, but do be careful that you have absolutely no doubt that if accepted, you will attend this school. There is no room for doubt - EARLY DECISION is a binding contract.

### **Early Action (E.A.)**

Refers to a non-binding early admission program. Students admitted under this program are not committed in any way, and may, if they wish, file admissions applications to other colleges. Colleges that have "Single Choice Early Action" (S.C.E.A.) programs do not allow candidates to apply to other schools during the early-action period only. However, once they receive EA (Early Action) decisions (mid-December), then applicants are free to apply elsewhere, if they so choose. Students receiving deferral notifications will be reconsidered with the regular applicant pool. Early action pools are also very strong, so if you aren't that strong, you might run the risk of being rejected outright. Talk it through with your counselor. There are issues concerning Financial Aid with both E.D. and E.A., so again, speak with your counselor regarding these early deadlines. Finally, you should be aware that if you file an application as an Early Decision or Early Action applicant to a school and are denied admission, you may not apply again to the same school for the same admissions year as a regular admissions applicant.

### **Regular Decision (RD):**

R.D is the most common application decision and where colleges admit 50% or more of their students. R.D. deadlines are typically early to mid-January, with students receiving their decision sometime in March. Carefully check your college of choice's website to verify the R.D. deadline.

### **Rolling Admissions:**

With rolling admissions, the admission application is reviewed as soon as the file is complete. The college notifies the student of its decision within a short time, usually four to six weeks. Due to the increasing competitiveness of college admissions, it is a good idea to apply early to these colleges.

### **Open Admissions:**

Some colleges do not practice selective admissions and offer admission to all students who apply. Generally, there are no admission deadlines for colleges that follow this policy. The community colleges are an example of this type of admission.

### **Step 3: Complete the Applications**

Do not procrastinate. Do not treat the deadlines as though they are flexible. Be sure you mark your progress on your Deadlines Chart. Welcome your parents pestering you to stay on top of the deadlines, because this is serious business, and it is not just about you.

With the UC and CSU, as soon as the applications are available online, you may begin filling them out as soon as they open and submit them any time after October 1.

Private school applications will generally require a School Report (completed by your counselor) and one or more Teacher Recommendations. Once you have requested these through Naviance, the teacher and counselor will do your recommendation.

### **Note:**

Early Decision or Early Action applicants must have their requests, resumes, and essay drafts to their recommenders ***no later than OCTOBER 1!*** All others must be in by OCTOBER 15. You may add to your list of colleges through Naviance and Common Application at any time, but you must notify your recommenders if you do.

If applying to private schools, provide your recommenders a resume. Most college applications will contain sections that ask for your activities and interests outside of the academic classroom setting. Completing these sections on several applications can be tedious and time consuming. Once you develop a resume it can facilitate filling out this section. A sample copy can be found in the Appendix of this handbook. The resume will be used by your counselor, teachers writing recommendations, admissions officers, and possibly a coach or interviewer.

Your resume should include information such as:

- **Personal data:** full legal name, address, telephone number, and email address.
- **Educational background:** school(s) attended, the CEEB Code 054186.
- **Extracurricular, personal, and volunteer activities** you have done either in the summer or during the school year while in high school – community service; family activities; church, or youth group projects or activities; school activities outside of class (sports, theatre, musical talents, art projects, cheerleading, scouting, student committees, etc.); significant travel experiences; summer camps or special outdoor programs; independent projects you have completed.
- **Include specific events, major accomplishments, special awards, or honors** in any of these activities (musical instruments played, acceptance to a program by audition, elected offices held, varsity letters, workplace awards, etc.), and note any leadership roles you may have held.
- **Indicate your level of involvement** with each item (hours per week, weeks per year, or overall time involved). The length of time spent in each of your endeavors is not the most crucial factor since the type of venture or your level of responsibility may be more important. However, time spent reveals the degree of your commitment.
- **Special interests and hobbies:** This category usually includes activities that show great dedication and participation over a long period of time.
- **Work experience:** Not only should you list your job(s), but also the number of hours you worked during the period(s) of employments.

**Note:**

Separate athletic, drama, music or other specialized resumes are very significant when applying for competitive programs. They should give a complete review of training, participation, and performance as well as future intentions. Include references with names, addresses and telephone numbers.

Limit your requests for teacher recommendations to one teacher and one counselor. A very few colleges ask for two teachers. It is important that you personally ask a teacher to complete the teacher recommendation and that you e-mail them through Naviance. The teacher you choose should know you well enough to give several specific examples describing your characteristics as a person and student, your written work, the degree and quality of class participation, and your interest in the subject. This is not necessarily the teacher who gave you an “A.” Recommendations should come from junior or senior level teachers.

***NO LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION ARE REQUIRED OR PERMITTED FOR UC OR CSU APPLICATIONS.***

Certain UC campuses will send you a request if needed.

**Letters of Recommendation: What NOT To Do**

- Assume that recommendations are quickly and easily prepared (they are not).
- Ask a teacher to write a recommendation on the day it is due – give them a minimum of two weeks’ notice (three weeks is even better).
- Request a letter at the last minute as you leave for vacation.

- Ask more than two teachers to write recommendations for you unless special circumstances dictate. This is an inefficient use of teachers' time and is an imposition on the third teacher when only one or two recommendations are needed.
- Neglect to thank the teacher for his or her help.
- Neglect to let the teacher know where you have been admitted, especially if they wrote and sent a letter of recommendation to a school where you have been accepted.

### **Writing Your Essays**

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There will be a prompt in the application if an essay is required. This can be anything from "Tell us something about yourself" to something off-the-wall that will enable the creative student to do his or her thing.

Usually, prompts look something like this:

- 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.
- The lessons 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?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- 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?
- Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Essays are important, so do not leave this piece until the night before you submit your applications. Write it (three or four rough drafts is the norm for writing a good essay), set it aside, revise it, have someone else edit it, and then finalize it when you know it really reflects who you are.

If you are short on ideas, one of these might help:

- Do you participate in class? Think of a time when something you said sparked an interesting discussion.
- Think of your best qualities: leadership, persistence, compassion, humor. Tell a story about a time when that quality exhibited itself in your life.

- Do you excel in some extracurricular activity? Do you play the French horn? Do you tear up the soccer field? Do you write so beautifully that it brings tears to eyes of the reader? Tell an anecdote from your life concerning your talent.
- Do you bring diversity to the (future) campus? If you have a different perspective to add to the student body at your hoped-for college, talk about it.
- Was there a time in your life when you failed at something, and now, looking back, you can see how much you learned from your failure/mistake?
- Did you gain insight after an experience, or after meeting someone special, that changed your outlook on a person, a group, or a situation? Talk about that personal growth.

### **Essays: What to Do**

- Be original in your word choices and the way you present your ideas.
- Personalize your essays. The admissions reader wants to know about you.
- Avoid generalities.
- Keep your essays short and stay within the space provided whenever possible.
- Have someone else read your essay and give suggestions. Your English teacher and counselors are good resources.
- Write about something you really care about.

### **Essays: What NOT To Do**

- Try to write a funny essay if you are not a good comic writer.
- Repeat information from other parts of your application.
- Use your essay to list things you have done.
- Write about “last summer” unless it is important to you.
- Write your essay for the admissions reader.

Write it for yourself but make it interesting for the people evaluating your essays. Tell your own story!

### **Official Test Scores**

Many colleges will remain “test optional” or “test blind” for the 2024-2025 admissions cycle. We still recommend that all students take an SAT or an ACT exam to see how they score. If your score is in the average range or above for a particular college, then you should send them your score. You should talk to your counselor about sending your score. You are responsible for sending official test scores to each college. If you coded colleges on your standardized test registration forms, then you have already sent official copies. If you didn’t, contact the College Board [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) or ACT [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to send the scores. There are charges for sending scores.

**Interviews** might be required for some colleges. If so, there should be a representative coming to the San Diego area. You must call and schedule the interview according to the instructions given in the application. Sometimes interviews are optional. If you are a borderline student, you should try to interview. Once the interviewer sees that you are a great student who would be an asset to the school,



the input from the interview just might tip the balance in your favor. Interviews are rarely make-or-break events, so relax and be yourself. Dress appropriately, speak well, make eye contact, and be confident that the interviewer will only ask you questions for which you know answers.

#### **Step 4: Submit the Applications**

Try very hard not to submit the applications the night before they are due. You will receive an acknowledgement via E-mail from each college confirming receipt of your applications.

#### **Step 5: Mid-Year Reports**

Most private colleges require your 7th semester (fall semester, senior year) grades. Please see your counselor to initiate this process. (Note: Counselors will send midterm transcripts during January.)

#### **Note:**

Transcripts are not submitted to the UC or CSU during the application process, nor do they accept mid-year reports; therefore, you generally do not need to send transcripts to these schools. Only the final transcript is sent once you have been admitted and graduated from The Rock Academy.

\*Exception to this rule – SDSU has been requiring 7th semester transcripts from admitted students the past several years. You will be notified in your online portal (or via email) of the need for this 7th semester transcript. Also, some UC Campuses have been asking certain students for 7th semester transcripts during the decision period in January or February. Watch your account web portal for this possible request.

#### **Step 6: Communicate Any Changes**

Take responsibility for communicating with the college admissions office if anything should change after you file your application. For example, if you drop a class that you listed on your application, you must notify the college in writing that you have done so. If you stated that you planned to be on a team or club during the year and you decided later not to participate, you must notify the college in writing of this change. If you receive a 'D' or an 'F' in a college prep class first semester, you must also either write or call and discuss the impact this might have on your application with an admissions counselor. See your counselor to discuss anything that you have doubts about.

## Sample Resume

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First Name, Last Name  
Name of High School  
City, State of High School  
Graduating Senior, Class of 20\_\_

### **Academic Awards/Achievements**

Principal's Honor Roll (4.0 and above) 4 semesters, 10th, 11th  
Semifinalist – National Merit Scholarship Competition  
Top Student Award – Biology 10th  
Top Student Award – Chemistry 11th

### **Extracurricular Activities and Leadership Positions**

Speech/Debate Club 10th, 11th, 12th grades 11th  
– Individual bronze medal, 2 events, regional competition Team silver medal, regional competition  
12th – Elected team co-captain  
Basketball  
9th – Freshman Team,  
10th – Junior Varsity,  
11th/12th – Varsity  
Voted MVP 11th –  
12th – Elected Co-Captain  
ASB Class Representative 9th, 10th  
Class Vice-President 11th  
Student Body Vice President 12th

### **Community or Volunteer Service**

Habitat for Humanity – Helped build houses – 8 hours on seven Saturdays, 9/12-9/14  
Hospital Volunteer – Assist nurses and visited patients – 4 hours per week, 9/12 - Present

### **Talents/Special Honors**

Voice – Sing in school choir 11th and 12th grades  
Public Speaking – Won Rotary Four-Way Test Speech Contest, 11<sup>th</sup>

### **Employment/Summer Activities**

Courtesy Clerk Local grocery store, summers 2021, 2022 – 25-35 hours per week  
Foreign Language Program Spent two months with a host family in Spain, summer 2023

## Testing

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### PSAT 8/9

All freshmen take the PSAT 8/9 in October. This test will help establish a starting point in terms of college readiness at a time when students are transitioning into high school.

### PSAT

All sophomores and juniors take the PSAT in October. The test is normed to juniors, so it is a valid indicator of where an individual stands in relation to other college-bound juniors across the country. It is also a strong indicator of the anticipated range of scores you will earn on the SAT. Top ranking juniors across the nation will qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program. The National Recognition Programs for African American, Hispanic, and Indigenous students also use the PSAT scores. The PSAT will only be administered digitally beginning in the Fall of 2023. Freshman and sophomore students will take the test from home, while juniors will take their test on campus. Tests are administered the same day in mid-October each year.

### SAT

Most colleges will accept either the SAT or the ACT for admissions consideration. It is advisable for juniors to take the SAT Reasoning Test by June of their junior year. Seniors have four test dates remaining for fall admissions: August, October, November, and December. All SAT exams are administered on Saturdays at national test sites.

Registration is available online at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). Make sure to observe registration deadlines.

\*Many colleges have suspended their requirement that students submit an ACT or SAT test score. Please check the website of each school you are applying to see if they are requiring and/or accepting test scores for this admission cycle.

### **SAT Test Dates for calendar year 2024-2025 (as of July, 10<sup>th</sup> 2024)**

#### **SAT Test Date**

August 24, 2024

October 5, 2024

November 2, 2024

December 7, 2024

March 8, 2025

May 3, 2025

June 7, 2025

## ACT

The ACT is a “separate, but equal” college admissions test. This means that it is accepted in place of the SAT at all schools. The ACT is administered on Saturdays, just as the SATs are, but never on conflicting dates. ACT is offered in September in the state of California, so this is an excellent advantage for students needing an early standardized test date. The ACT has four sections, each of which count as 25% of the composite score: Reading, English, Science Reasoning, and Math. Registration is available online at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org). Remember that you will need to upload a photo.

### **ACT Test Dates for calendar year 2024-2025 (as of July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024)**

Test dates and fees can change every year. Visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for up- to-date information. Here are tentative test dates:

#### **Test Date**

September 14, 2024

October 26, 2024

December 14, 2024

February 8, 2025

April 5, 2025

June 14, 2025

July 12, 2025

**Basic registration fee** – \$ See Website Includes reports for you, your high school, and up to four colleges requested at registration.

**Each 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> college choices** – \$ See Website Requested as part of registration, refundable if you do not test. Find out how much it costs to send your scores after you’ve tested.

\*Many colleges have suspended their requirement that students submit an ACT or SAT test score. Please check the website of each school you are applying to see if they are requiring and/or accepting test scores for this admission cycle.

#### **Test Preparation**

There are many excellent test preparation experts available. Test preparation is valuable if the student experiences test anxiety, if the student does not understand test-taking strategies, or if the student needs review of material studied several years ago (e.g., student took Algebra 1 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, or geometry in 9<sup>th</sup> grade). Please consult your counselor for a list of reputable tutors or companies.

FEE WAIVERS for testing are available in the Guidance Office for those students that meet the income requirements. One waiver per test per year is given.

## Financial Aid

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The first smart step in the college application process is to apply to a college that is a financial safety college. For middle-income families, the two-year community colleges or the CSU or UC systems might be the best choices available.

Who is most likely to get financial aid?

- Students with “A” averages who apply to schools where there are mostly “B” students. Another way to look at it is this - apply to colleges where academically you will be in the top 25% of the class, not the middle 50% or the lowest 25% of the class.
- Star athletes.
- Students whose family income is less than \$40,000.
- Underrepresented students (African Americans, Hispanics, or Native Americans) who apply to schools where they will be at least in the middle academic range for that college.

### To apply for financial aid:

Many colleges require that you apply even if you are interested only in a merit-based (versus need-based) scholarship or loan. To apply for financial aid, your parents will have to fill out one or more financial aid forms.

If your family has no financial need, then it is probably not worth applying for financial aid. If a college’s financial aid materials state that their admissions policy is “need aware”, that means the college is likely to admit applicants who are willing to pay the full sticker price. If paying full price for four years might jeopardize your family’s financial security, then, apply for financial aid.

If you are hoping to get need-based financial aid, then study hard. The better your grades and test scores, the more likely you are to receive a generous package. As noted above, you are more likely to receive aid if you apply to a school where you will be in the top 25% of the applicants.

You must meet each college’s financial aid deadlines. Check with each college. For early decision and early action, deadlines can be as early as October of the senior year.

### FAFSA:

For complete financial aid information, go to [www.fafsa.org](http://www.fafsa.org).

There are a few main financial aid forms. The most important one is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It is best to fill out this form as soon as possible after December 1st of your senior year; the deadline is March 2nd. If your parents’ tax returns are not finalized by that date, they must use estimates rather than miss the deadline. There is time to file an amendment if the estimates are way off – just don’t miss that deadline.

The FAFSA form is available online:

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. The FAFSA is automatically reviewed for:

- Federal Pell Grants: Unlike a loan, a Federal Pell Grant does not have to be repaid. Generally, Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a BA or professional degree. The maximum amount of the award is \$6,495 per year.
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG): A FSEOG is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need and gives priority to students who receive Federal Pell Grants. The FSEOG does not have to be paid back. The maximum amount awarded is \$4,000 per year.
- Federal Work-Study: The Federal Work-Study Program provides jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money at a campus job to help pay education expenses. The total Federal Work-Study award depends on when you apply, your level of need, and the funding level of your school.
- Federal Perkins Loan: A Federal Perkins Loan is a low-interest loan for both undergraduate and graduate students with financial need. Your school is your lender, with government funds, with a share contributed by the school. You must repay this loan to your school. The maximum loan amount is \$5,500 per year.
- Federal Stafford Student Loan: These loans may be subsidized or unsubsidized. Subsidized loans are awarded based on need, and interest does not accrue until after you have completed your studies. Unsubsidized loans are not based on needs and start accruing interest during your studies.
- Federal PLUS Loan: These are loans available to parents of dependent students.

**Note:**

If you list a California college on your FAFSA form, then you will automatically be considered for a Cal Grant, which is state-funded money which is not repaid. The Rock will automatically send your required GPA Verification form to the program.

Once you have filed your FAFSA form, it will be processed, and a Student Aid Report (SAR) will be mailed to you. If there are corrections to be made, make them at once and return the form as instructed. Remember that accurate figures from completed income tax returns are necessary.

The third form you might be asked to fill out is the CSS/Profile. This is a financial form used in addition to the FAFSA by some private colleges. If the school you are applying to is listed on the CSS Profile registration form, then you must fill it out. Go to [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) to complete your personalized Profile application. Site opens October 1st. It is not free, so be sure to fill out the registration form and send in the correct payment well in advance of January 1st. Individual forms customized for each college will be sent to you so that you can file them during the same time as the FAFSA.

A Financial Aid Night is offered to help parents with the FAFSA. It is usually held in early October at The Rock.

**Scholarships:**

Most students who receive large scholarships earn them from the institution they end up attending. There are, however, thousands of outside scholarships that range from very small amounts

(\$25) to very substantial (\$10,000). Most of these scholarship applications will ask for an essay. Here are some ideas for researching scholarships:

- If your parents work for a large company, be sure they check with their Human Resources office to see if scholarships are offered to children of employees.
- The most reliable website for scholarships out there is [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com). It is difficult to get through the thousands of entries, but there is a search engine that can help you sift through some of it. It is not always realistic in its search results, but at least it will narrow the list of those you have to read.
- If you belong to an ethnic group with an active club, they likely will offer scholarships. Call and find out.
- Local chapters of civic organizations such as the Optimists/Soroptimists, Rotarians, Eagles, Elks, etc. all offer some type of scholarship. Call the local offices and ask.
- Watch for announcements and advertisements in the local newspaper. It is amazing how many organizations decide to offer a scholarship and simply tell the local press.
- Visit The Rock website or Naviance for scholarships available.

**Note:**

Whatever you do, stay away from the scholarship scam artists. You will receive very official looking envelopes that offer to do the scholarship search for you. If you must spend money, then it is a scam. If they promise to find money for you that no one else can find, then it is a scam. There is no scholarship out there that a scam artist can find for you that you cannot find for yourself. Do not fall for their promises. Let your counselor know about these organizations if you are not sure about something you receive in the mail. It is imperative that they are reported to the Federal Trade Commission, who attempts to prosecute the worst of them. You can report them at [http://www.nacac.com/hill\\_activism.html](http://www.nacac.com/hill_activism.html). Click on “report scholarship scams.”

**Students with Learning Differences and/or ADHD**

Many students with learning differences have received accommodations during high school. They might be tempted to “go it alone” in college, but there are dangers to doing so. First, it is important to make sure that accommodations are approved and in place, even if the student does not take advantage of them. Once the school term begins, there is very little time before midterms and major papers are due. Should the student discover that help would be needed; accommodations cannot begin immediately upon request. It can be a long period of time - a semester or a full academic year - before all paperwork and evaluations are in place. A second reason you do not want to avoid utilizing assistance at college is that students will be missing one of the most important lessons colleges has to offer: how to find and use help. This step toward becoming an independent learner is crucial to success in college, and students with learning differences would be well advised to get all the assistance available at the beginning of the college experience.

No college has the right to ask an applicant if he/she has a learning difference. However, there may be very good reasons to self-disclose, such as:

- Grades in classes such as math or English were consistently lower than other classes.

- The learning difference was identified at a certain point in high school and grades improved dramatically once the student began receiving accommodations.
- The student was unable to pursue a high level of study in a certain subject, such as foreign language, due to the learning difference.

There are three categories of assistance provided by colleges:

- **Structured Programs:** Colleges with structured programs offer specific programs for students with learning differences that go well beyond mandated services. These services might include special admissions procedures, specialized and trained professionals, compensatory strategies, one-on-one tutoring, additional fees, compulsory participation, and monitoring.
- **Coordinated Services:** Colleges with coordinated services offer programs for students with learning differences that might be somewhat involved with the admissions decisions and might include voluntary participation, services beyond those that are mandated, low or no fees, and less structure.
- **Basic Services:** Colleges with basic services comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but rarely have specialized LD staff, do not have monitoring, and are totally dependent on student advocacy.

The student with learning differences must take these steps when applying to college to be eligible for services:

- Self-disclose the learning difference
- Request accommodations
- Submit current and appropriate documentation

The colleges will then exercise their right to independently examine the documentation and identify the services they feel are reasonable and appropriate.

### **Important Information for Athletes NCAA Eligibility Center**

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You may access the NCAA directly at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org) or through links from the NCAA's Website at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

- **IMPORTANT! New Eligibility Rules!**
- From the NCAA website, prospective student-athletes can access information needed to understand the Division I and Division II eligibility requirements, register with the NCAA and access individual records.
- Prospective Student-Athletes (Domestic) who are eligible for a waiver of the Initial-Eligibility Certification Fee may complete their Student Release Form (SRF) online. NOTE: to be eligible for a fee waiver, you must have already received a fee waiver for the ACT or SAT. Your high school counselor will also be required to submit an electronic fee waiver verification on your behalf



(high school counselors with PIN access may submit waivers for eligible students from the High School Administrator section of the Eligibility Center).

**General Information on the NCAA Website:**

- Links to the NCAA website.
- Core-course listings for high schools.
- Online version of NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete.
- Online information about Division I and Division II initial-eligibility requirements.
- Online Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

**Prospective Student-Athletes:**

- Athletes interested in competing at the Division I or II level need to create a certification account and pay a fee.
- Registered Students - Update your registration information (if necessary).
- Registered Students - Check your certification status.
- Athletes interested in Division III or are unsure about what level they will pursue, need only to create a free “profile page”.

**Eligibility Center Customer Services:**

- NCAA Eligibility Center  
Certification Processing  
PO Box 7136 Indianapolis, IN 46207

Toll Free phone numbers (domestic callers only): Customer Service Line - 877/262-1492

**Junior Checklist**

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**August**

- Verify accuracy of Junior year schedule

**September/October**

- Take the PSAT in October.
- September: Registration deadline for the November SAT.
- Keep your schedule strong and work hard. The grades you earn this year will finalize the GPA with which you apply to college next fall.

**November/December**

- November: Registration deadline for the December SAT.
- December: Registration deadline for the January SAT.
- Make your final exams count. This semester will finalize your 5th semester cumulative GPA. One more semester and you will know the GPA with which you apply to college in the fall.
- Make sure your parents attend Junior College Night.

### **January/February**

- January: Registration deadline for the February ACT.
- Schedule your Junior Family Meeting with the College Counselor.

### **March/April**

- March: Registration deadline for the April ACT.
- March: Registration deadline for the May SAT.
- April: Attend The Greater San Diego National College Fair.

### **May/June**

- April: Registration deadline for the June SAT.
- May: Registration deadline for the June ACT.
- Take AP exams in May (results arrive in July).
- Make plans for summer college visits. If interviews are available, make an appointment. Be sure to follow visits/interviews with thank you notes.
- Start a file of brochures and applications for schools you like.
- Finalize plans for summer jobs, camps, and educational opportunities.
- Read your local newspaper to find out which civic, cultural, and service organizations in your area award scholarships to graduating seniors. Start a file.

### **Advice to Juniors from Graduating Seniors**

- The cumulative GPA you have by the end of your Junior year is the GPA you will put on your college application. Work hard now. It is harder to raise your GPA in the senior year than you think it will be.
- Start looking at colleges in the spring; start your essays over the summer.
- When visiting campuses, ask yourself, “Could I feel at home here?”
- Ask about the negatives when you visit colleges.
- Quick campus tours can help you narrow your list. Fully visit your final choices.
- Like your back-up schools – you may need them.
- Don’t just pick a school because your friend likes it.
- Don’t get hooked on just one school – you might not get in there.
- Your ideas about what you want will change over time.
- Don’t obsess over the college process – you still need to do well in school.
- Don’t just focus on school. Find something you love and make a difference.
- Don’t let the college process dictate what activities you do.
- Start forming good relationships with teachers now so you have people you can ask to write recommendations for you.
- Ask your teachers early to write letters for you so they have time.
- If you want to submit artwork with your applications or audition, talk to your art, drama, or music teachers now about what you will need to do.
- Look at some applications now to learn what they ask.
- Plan carefully to take your SATs so you can fit them all in.

- Consider taking the ACT. Research ACT and SAT differences and similarities. You may find that you are better suited to one over the other. Current experts advise pick one test and prepare for one test.
- Save an excellent, highly graded writing sample from junior year.

## Senior Checklist

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### August

- Be sure to finalize your schedule making certain that you have all the classes you need to graduate and to meet college entrance requirements.
- Registration for ACT if taking.
- Begin to finalize your college list.

### September/October

- Add colleges to “applying” column in Naviance.
- Pay attention to the schedule of college visits to Rock. Get permission slips.
- Finalize your college essay.
- Finalize your college application list.
- Applications are accepted by the CSU campuses beginning October 1st. Go online to [calstate.edu/apply](http://calstate.edu/apply). The final application filing deadline is November 30th.
- Attend CSU and/or UC application workshops given during lunch by the counselors.
- Give teachers at least two weeks’ notice to write letters of recommendation for you and provide them the colleges you are applying. No letters of recommendation are required or permitted for the CSU system.
- Begin filing applications. Turn in a transcript request form with the Secondary School Report to your counselor for each private school you are applying to.
- Seniors: All male students must register with Selective Service on your 18th birthday. Those not registered break the law. You also will not be eligible for financial aid for college or graduate school, nor will you ever be able to be hired by state (most states) or federal agencies.
- Registration for the December SAT and ACT.
- Cal Grant Verification forms are completed by counselors and submitted to the state for you.

### November/December

- Add colleges you have applied to in the “applied” column in Naviance.
- UC deadline is November 30th. Go online to [www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions).
- Observe all college application deadlines.
- Attend Financial Aid Night and begin your FAFSA forms in December. These are the Free Applications for Federal Student Aid and require for need based college financial aid. Within 4-6 weeks you should receive a reply called a SAR. If you do not get this, call 1-800-433-3243. This is the Student Aid Information Center.
- Be sure all applications are in sent before Christmas break. Remember, many colleges have a January 1 deadline. You will not be able to reach teachers or your counselor during the break if you have forgotten to request letters of recommendation or transcripts.
- File the FAFSA.

- If applying to private schools, find out whether they require the CSS PROFILE supplemental financial aid form. Fees are required for filing the CSS. Check with your counselor for the CSS Registration Guide Booklet that explains everything and has a list of schools that require the CSS. Website: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) or call 1-800-778-6888.

### **January/February**

- By the beginning of February, you should have submitted all 7th semester transcript requests for schools other than the UC.
- If you are still submitting applications, make certain it is filled out completely, accurately, and legibly. Submit applications online whenever possible.
- Rank your finalized list of colleges.

### **March/April**

- Receive college admissions notifications.
- Plan time to discuss your options with family, teachers, and counselor.
- Carefully compare various financial aid packages.
- If you are waitlisted, decide on your options.
- Return all paperwork on time, paying special attention to the May 1 deadline by which many colleges must have your decision and a deposit.
- Visit campuses of schools you have not seen if still in doubt about a final college decision.
- Continue to apply for private and independent scholarships.
- Notify other schools that you will not be attending.

### **May/June**

- By May 1, select “enrolling” for that college in your Naviance account.
- It is still not too late to apply to colleges with rolling admissions (but don’t expect financial aid). Seniors still looking for colleges after May 7th, visit this page for a list of colleges with space available for qualified students: <http://www.nacac.com>
- Fill out and return all college papers regarding housing, student orientation registration, loan applications, etc.
- Make certain that your final transcript request has been filled out and returned to your counselor.
- Write polite letters of refusal to all colleges you will not attend if you have not yet done so.
- Notify your counselor which school you have chosen to attend and any awards or scholarships you have received. Update your Naviance account.

There are extensive resources available on the Internet for you to collect information on colleges and universities.

Try some of these favorites.

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

Do a college search, research colleges in the United States and beyond, find National College Fairs and Visual and Performing Arts College Fairs.

[www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)

College search

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

Explore campuses, file your UC application online. [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) Explore campuses, file your CSU application online.

[www.nacac.com](http://www.nacac.com)

Seniors still looking for colleges with space available after May 7th of their junior year. Transfer openings information also available.

### Testing

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

Register for the ACT.

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

Register for the SAT.

### Study Skills

[www.educationcorner.com/study-skills.html](http://www.educationcorner.com/study-skills.html)

A compendium of study skills and test taking skills information.

### Virtual Campus Tours

Most offer virtual college tours, web cams, interactive college maps, college videos, movies, and pictures via their website. You can find these tours under the Visit/Tours pages.

### Athletics

[www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)

Information for high school athletes regarding Division I, II, or III sports in college and NCAA Clearinghouse.

## Financial Aid

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

Comprehensive list of private scholarships; scholarship search.

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

Reliable information about financial aid, estimating family contribution, scholarship scams.

[www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov)

California Student Aid Commission – Information on Cal Grants. Assists in the search for state, federal, and institutional financial aid information for funding post-high school education. [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

Guide to applying for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Provides eligibility requirements and guidelines for those applying for federal student loans and aid. [www.salliemae.com/plan-for-college](http://www.salliemae.com/plan-for-college)

An excellent tool with which you can enter and compare award information from each school.

[www.studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch](http://www.studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch)

Students applying for FAFSA need to acquire a FSA ID before filling out the FAFSA application.

<https://dream.csac.ca.gov/landing>

California Dream Act application website.

<https://www.afrotc.com/scholarships/>

US Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps. This website provides information on how to apply for a USAF ROTC scholarship while attending a public/private university. San Diego State University has a USAF ROTC office that can help with questions.

<https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/find-your-path/army-officers/rotc/scholarships.html>

US Army Reserve Officer Training Corps. This website provides information on how to apply for a US Army ROTC scholarship while attend a public/private university. The University of San Diego has a USA ROTC program that can help with questions.

<https://www.netc.navy.mil/commands/naval-service-training-command/nrotc/apply/>

US Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps.

This website provides information on how to apply for a USN ROTC scholarship while attending a public/private university. The same application is used for USN/USMC ROTC. It is college/university dependent if it has USN, USMC or both. The University of San Diego has a USN ROTC program that can help with questions.

**NOTE: All ROTC scholarships have a military service commitment upon graduation.** The length of service is service and military occupation dependent.

## Glossary

**ACT:** This is an assessment in English, mathematics, social studies reading comprehension, and science reasoning. Accepted by most colleges in lieu of the SAT.

**Associate degree:** An Associate of Arts (AA) degree is traditionally earned in two years at a community college.

**Bachelor's Degree:** BA – Bachelor of Arts, BS – Bachelor of Science. A diploma earned after successful completion (traditionally in four years) of required courses at a college or university. **Calendar:** The system used by an institution to divide its year into instruction periods. The most common are semester, quarter, and 4-1-4.

- A semester system is a division of the school year into two parts, usually 18 weeks in length. Schools may have an additional 8-week summer session.
- A quarter system is a division of the school year into three quarters, usually 11 weeks in length. Students take three or four courses per quarter rather than the traditional five in a semester system.
- A 4-1-4 system consists of two terms of about 16 weeks each, separated by a one-month intersession used for intensive study in one area, research, or internships.

**Candidate Notification Date:** The date by which colleges notify students of admission decisions.

**Candidate Reply Date:** The date by which students must reply to the colleges that admitted them. The universal date is May 1st.

**CEEB:** Abbreviation for the College Entrance Examination Board, which creates and supervises the administration of the SAT and the Subject Tests. The CEEB code for TRA is 054186. You will need this number every time you register for an SAT, ACT, or apply to college.

**College:** The term commonly used to describe any institution of higher education. This is usually an institution that grants a bachelor's degree. A college may also be one part of a university. For example, undergraduates apply to Harvard College, not Harvard University. Columbia College is the undergraduate division of Columbia University.

**Common Application:** A form devised and accepted by 1000 colleges as equal to their own institutional application. The Common Application makes things easier for the student who can fill out one application for many colleges, rather than repeat basic information repeatedly. See [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) for additional information and a list of colleges who accept the Common Application.

**CSS/PROFILE:** A financial aid form used by some private colleges and universities in addition to the FAFSA (see section on Financial Aid in this handbook).

**Early Action:** An admission plan whereby the student applies by November 1st and receives a decision by mid-December. If accepted, the student is not required to enroll, but is expected to notify the college about his/her decision by May 1st.

**Early Decision:** An admission plan whereby a student can apply to a first-choice college by November 1st and receive a decision by mid-December. Upon making the decision to apply early decision, the student agrees to enroll if accepted. Also, the student is expected to make no other application if accepted and withdraw all other applications already submitted.

**ETS:** An abbreviation for the Educational Testing Service, an organization utilized by the College Board to write and administer its tests (SAT and Subject Tests).

**FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid (see more in the Financial Aid section).

**General Education Requirements:** Also called G.E.D., breadth, distribution, or core curriculum requirements, they are courses required by all candidates for the bachelor's degree at a college.

**Graduate School:** Usually part of a university, graduate school is an institution for students who have already earned the bachelor's degree.

**Greeks or Greek Life:** At a college campus, the collective term for members of sororities and fraternities. See [www.GreekPages.com](http://www.GreekPages.com) for information.

**Ivy League:** The term used to designate highly selective eastern colleges. Strictly speaking, however, it is an athletic league comprised of the following colleges: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale.

**Legacy:** An applicant who is the son or a daughter of an alumnus or alumna (or sometimes a more distant relative). Private colleges sometimes give special consideration to such candidates. **Liberal Arts:** The studies in a college (such as language, history, mathematics, literature, and abstract science) intended to provide chiefly general knowledge and to develop the general intellectual capacities, such as reason and judgment, opposed to professional or vocational skills.

**Major:** The field of concentration or specialization for a college undergraduate. Usually, students are asked to declare a major by the end of their sophomore year. A student normally spends one quarter to one third of their total undergraduate work in their major field.

**Minor:** A secondary area of academic concentration, but requiring fewer courses than a major, which may or may not be required by an institution.

**NMSQT:** The National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is combined with the PSAT, taken in October of the Junior year. Scoring well on this test is the first requirement toward recognition in the National Merit Scholarship competition.



**PSAT:** The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test is a scholastic assessment test administered to high school juniors. Scoring well on this test is the prerequisite towards qualifying for the National Merit Scholarship. Scores are reported on a scale from 20-80 for verbal, quantitative aptitude, and writing skills. Freshmen and Sophomores take this test for practice only.

**Rolling Admissions:** A decision notification program whereby colleges inform applicants of admission decisions throughout the year on a “rolling” basis, rather than by a specified date. Students who apply to a college with a rolling admission program usually learn the admission decision within 4-6 weeks after the application is submitted.

**SAT Test:** This is a multiple-choice test made up of Verbal, Math and Writing sections designed to measure skills that are related to college success. Students receive three SAT scores, Verbal, Math & Writing, each reported on a scale of 200 to 800.

**SAT Subject Tests:** The Subject Tests are curricular-based tests that measure achievement in a particular subject. Each test is one hour in length and is scored on a scale from 200 to 800. It is advisable for students to take the Subject Test while studying or immediately upon completing study of the subject.

**Scholarship:** Money or aid awarded that does not have to be repaid. Some scholarships are based on need, but most are awarded for exceptional talent or achievement in academics, athletics, or for special characteristics. In addition to awards offered by the colleges, many scholarships are awarded by corporations, ethnic organizations, and religious groups. Each scholarship opportunity has different eligibility criteria.

**Selectivity:** A term used by admission offices to describe the ratio of admitted applicants to the total number of applicants at a given institution.

**Transcript:** The complete official listing of a student’s academic record (courses, grades, credits). In the college admission process, this document is traditionally given the most weight.

**Undergraduate:** A college student who is a candidate for a bachelor’s degree or a program of study leading to a Bachelor’s Degree.

**University:** A public or private institution that has both undergraduate and graduate programs.

**Yield:** The number of students admitted to a college who ultimately attend that college. The yield is usually extremely high at selective colleges.