



# THE COLLEGE PLAYBOOK

**USC** Rossier

*Center for Enrollment  
Research, Policy and Practice*



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# BATTER UP: 9TH AND 10TH GRADE

## I. High School Coursework

### A. What is A-G eligibility?

- Meeting the class requirements universities want students to complete by the end of their senior year.
- Must have a C or better in these classes. (retake if necessary)
- Talk to a counselor to set you on an A-G path.
- Research what UC's, CSU's, and private schools require when it comes to completing A-G's.

### B. Challenge yourself.

- Take the recommended year of [A-G Courses](#).
- Take Advance Placement (AP) courses.
- Talk to a counselor to give you recommendations and register for these classes.

### C. Dual enrollment

- Taking classes at your local community college while you are enrolled in high school.
- Check to see if your school has dual enrollment.



- Classes can give you college credit at a community college and some universities. (Make sure you talk to your College Advisers/Counselors to confirm the class that will provide college credit.)
- Could help replace some A-G requirements.
- Taking college level courses could help boost your college application.

## II. Extracurricular Activities

### A. Get involved on campus and off campus.

- You can participate in athletics, art, band, academic clubs, work, local hospital, etc.

### B. Colleges want to see how you are spending your time besides academics.

- Being involved could help boost your college application, if you feel your grades are not the best.

## III. Scholarship Search

### A. Visit the career center to see what scholarships Your high school is offering for students.



**B. Scholarship websites (Visit career center for More information):**

- [Fastweb](#)
- [GoingMerry](#)
- [College Board - Big Future](#)
- [Peerlift](#)
- [MALDEF](#) (Dreamers/AB540)
- [CollegeNet](#)
- [Hispanic Scholarship Fund \(HSF\)](#)
- [JLV College Counseling](#)

**IV. Major and Career Exploration**

**A. Visit websites to take quizzes to see what careers you might be interested in.**

- [Big Future](#)
- [Career Zone](#)
- [Goshen College Questionnaire](#)

**B. Apply for internships or get involved (look at section II) in a field you are interested in so you can get experience.**



## V. PSAT

### A. PSAT (practice SAT)

- Allows you to familiarize yourself with what the SAT looks like.
- Test results allow you to see your strengths and weaknesses in each test section.
- Taken during the second semester of sophomore year.

## 1ST BASE: 11TH GRADE FALL (AUGUST-DECEMBER)

### I. College and Career Exploration

#### A. College Exploration

- [Big Future](#)
- [Career Zone](#)

#### B. After you have careers in mind:

- Research and select universities that offer majors similar to those careers.

- Pick 5 schools: write a letter to the admissions office requesting more information from them about the campus.
- You can also visit the admissions website for the school you are interested in and request further information.

## II. College Preparation

### A. Take PSAT

- PSAT taken during 11th grade year qualifies you for the National Merit Scholarship (NMSQT).
- Check if your school offers on-campus PSAT/SAT, If not, you can select a neighboring school on collegeboard.com and take the exam there.
- Use a Fee-waiver if you qualify. Ask your counselors about this option.
- Study using [Kahn Academy](#): This website can track the hours you study. If you study for 6 hours, you will have the opportunity to win a scholarship through College Board.
- Work on finishing the [Six Steps](#) to be entered into the Scholarship.



**B. Colleges will focus on academic 10th -11th grade GPA when reviewing applications.**

- Go over A-G's with counselor.

**C. Work hard to earn the highest grades you can.**

**D. Attend as many college representative presentations that may visit your campus.**

**III. Financial Aid**

**A. This year is when California Student Aid Commission (the people who give away Cal Grants) will begin to look at your GPA for financial aid purposes.**

**B. High Profile Scholarships**

- **[Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)**
  - This scholarship is open to high school seniors, who identify as being of the Hispanic heritage. Typically, it opens in January and is due in February.
- **[Questbridge Scholars Program](#)**
  - This application should be done in your Junior year and it is usually due at the end of March.

- **GATES Scholarships** open in July
  - See counselor/ English teacher to help you prep for it.

## C. Types of Aid

- Cal Grant
  - Available for documented and undocumented students.
  - How much Cal Grant you receive is dependent upon:
    - Your 10th - 11th grade GPA (Make sure you are doing your very best, “It Pays to Get Good Grades!”)
    - Your parent/ guardian’s income
- Pell Grant
  - Available for documented students.
  - Based solely on your parent/ guardians income.
- Institutional Aid
  - Available for all documented and undocumented students.
  - Privates give the most, then UC’s, then CSU’s.
- Outside Scholarships
  - Scholarships available for all documented and undocumented students (requirements vary).

***\*You do not need to pay back the money that you receive from grants and scholarships\****

- Look for local community scholarships.
- See [Page 5](#) for additional scholarship websites.
- Loans
  - Subsidized and Unsubsidized loans available for all documented students.
  - Private outside loans available for undocumented students.

## IV. Extracurricular Activities

### A. Continue to volunteer and get involved in/outside of campus.

- Build your resume and leadership skills.
  - [Cappex Step-by-Step Resume Guide](#)
- Update brag sheets.
  - [Fastweb - Building Your Brag Sheet](#)

## V. Types of Colleges

### A. California State University (CSU)

- Require at least a 2.0-2.99+ GPA to apply.
- Smaller class sizes.

- Most High Schools have a Cal State that they partner with (local serving institution) and it is usually the closest Cal State to your school.
  - Applying to local serving institution increases the chances of getting accepted.
- Essays are not required.

## **B. University of California (UC)**

- Require 3.0 or higher GPA.
- Large lecture halls taught by professors who are conducting their own research.
- World renowned research institutions.
- Can offer a little bit more financial aid than CSU's.
- Personal Insight Questions (PIQ's) are part of the application.
  - Allows you to express yourself in other ways aside from test scores & grades.

## **C. Private Institutions**

- Can generally offer the most financial aid.
- Great option for undocumented students because they can offer bigger financial aid packages.
- Each have their own deadlines.

## **D. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's)**

- Smaller class sizes
- Supportive Atmosphere

## **VI. Prepare for Summer**

### **A. Look for summer internships/ college programs.**

- Find out what you are interested in and apply for a summer program that can make your college application more competitive.
- Examples: [Aquarium of the Pacific Volunteer Program](#), [TXT](#), [The Intern Project](#)

## **SUMMER (JUNE-AUGUST)**

### **A. College Visits**

### **B. Attend summer internships / college programs**

### **C. Dual enrollment/ taking college class**

## 2ND BASE: 12TH GRADE - FALL FALL (SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER)

### I. Preparing for College Application Season

#### A. Am I “A-G Eligible”?

- Check your transcripts to make sure you have all the credits you need to get into the college of your choice.
  - [UC A-G Requirements](#)
  - [CSU A-G Requirements](#)
- Use [UC Doorways](#) to check A-G courses at your high school:
  - Enter name of high school
  - Select correct school/location
  - Click on course list, and begin looking
- Make an appointment with your counselors or college advisers and ask them to review it with you.

#### B. Taking the SAT/ ACT

- Register for the SAT/ACT.
- If possible, take it more than once to improve your score.
  - Many seniors retake the SAT/ACT in the fall.
  - The additional coursework since your last test could help you boost your performance. Plus, you already know what to expect on test day when you take it for the second time.

- Schools usually take your highest test scores.
- Check out to see if SAT Subject Tests are required for specific majors.
- Be sure to have your SAT/ACT scores sent to the colleges you're applying to.
  - [How to Send Scores](#)
  - Scores should be sent to CSU/UC by **DECEMBER 15**.

**C. Retake any class that you have a D or F that falls under college (A-G) requirements.**

**D. Student Athletes, sign up for NCAA Clearing House.**

- This applies to students who are interested in DI, DII or DIII Athletics.

**E. Start gathering materials for FAFSA/CA Dream Act application**

- SSN/ITIN# (parents/guardian and student)
- Parent or Guardian taxes (if applicable) from two years prior (ex: if you apply for 2021-2022 application, you will use taxes from 2019).
- Parent or Guardian's information: birth date, anniversary/date.



## II. Choosing a College

### A. Start your senior year by researching and finalizing your college list.

- 4 year universities- (CSU, UC, Private, and Out of State)
- 2 year colleges- (Community colleges)
- Visit prospective colleges and get a feel for the campus.

## III. Application

### A. Know your requirements:

- California State Universities (CSU):
  - [CSU Freshman Application Checklist](#)
- Applying for University of California (UC):
  - [UC Freshman Requirements](#)
- Applying for Community Colleges (CC):
  - [Admission Requirements](#)
- Private school:
  - [Common Application Guide](#)
- Application fee waivers are determined by the income provided on the application.

### B. Write your college application essays.

- This is an opportunity to show the college admission representatives who you are beyond the GPA and test scores.



- Don't be afraid to demonstrate your skills, your struggles, who you are.
- Be authentic.
- Don't procrastinate. Be sure to take your time writing these essays.

## **3RD BASE : 12TH GRADE - SPRING SPRING (JANUARY-JUNE)**

### **I. Applying for Community College**

#### **A. January-February: Most Community College applications have begun to open.**

- Opening dates will vary.
- Stay updated with deadlines by checking each school's website.
- Make sure you know your Social Security number (if you have one).
- Ask your college adviser/counselors or community college representatives about Promise Programs, Bridge, etc.

### **II. Applying for Financial Aid**

#### **A. Complete and submit your Financial Aid application. (PREFERABLY between Jan 1 – Feb 15)**

- You will need your parents' tax information to do so.
- If parents have not done taxes or if you have a special circumstance/ situation, please see an adviser or counselor for further support.
- Contact the admissions office of the colleges to which you have applied to make sure that your info has been received and confirm that no further documentation is required.
- Keep an eye out for financial aid workshops and seminars.
- If you completed your FAFSA you should receive your Student Aid Report via email (if you provided a valid email) within 4 weeks.
  - Edit and submit any corrections to the FAFSA processor: Adding a school, correcting your name or date of birth, making changes to your household size, etc.
- Keep completing scholarship applications.
- Activate Cal Grant account on [Web 4 Grants](#) website.
  - Site allows you to view Cal Grant status.

### III. College Acceptance Notifications

- A. Start receiving acceptance letters from 4 year universities that you applied to.**

**B. Check Emails- begin creating your portals to check admissions decisions.**

**C. Portals- Most schools will send you individual instructions on how to set up your school accounts.**

- Most Cal States will send you portal information via email.
  - CSULB does not give portals until you are admitted into the university.
- UCs will also send portal information via email.
- Portals will have your admission decisions, to do lists, financial aid award letters, orientation sign-ups, and housing applications.
- If you do not receive any portal information, contact the school's admissions office.

#### **IV. Comparing Admission Offers**

**A. Compare acceptance letters, financial aid and scholarship offers.**

**B. Statement of Intent to Register (SIR):**

- When you choose a college, you will have to pay a nonrefundable admissions deposit to hold your place in the entering freshman class (PRICE VARIES PER UNIVERSITY).

- Some students who qualify for financial aid will be able to get this deposit waived.
  - Some schools automatically waive the SIR non-refundable deposit for students with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0-5,000 from your financial aid application.
  - Other schools may have students fill out a Waiver Form.
  - Contact your college's Financial Aid department for more information.

**C. By **MAY 1 DEADLINE** you must have decided on a college and notify them of your acceptance.**

- Pay your deposit online or mail a check.

**D. Confirm school on [Web 4 Grants](#).**

**E. Pay for orientation.**

**F. If you wish to live on campus, submit your Housing Application. Deadlines vary by university.**

**V. AP Exams**

**A. AP tests can give you college credit.**

- For example: Passing the AP Spanish Language test with a 3 or better, will give you credit for one general education college course.

## **HOME BASE: GRADUATING AND FINALIZING ADMISSIONS**

### **I. Final Steps**

**A. Graduate HIGH SCHOOL!**

**B. Send final transcripts to the school you will be attending.**

- Arrange for your transcripts to be sent before you graduate high school. Do this through the office at your high school.
  - UC'S want your transcripts by **JULY 1st**.
  - CSU's want your transcripts by **JULY 15th**.

**C. Contact the college to find out when fees are due and how much they will cost.**

**D. Keep up with to-do list for your college.**



# 12TH GRADE TIMELINE

## AUGUST-DECEMBER

- Take SAT/ACT Exam

## AUGUST-NOVEMBER

- Apply for college:
  - Cal State Universities (CSU):
    - October 1st: Application opens
    - DUE NOVEMBER 30
  - University of California (UC):
    - August 1st: Application opens
    - DUE NOVEMBER 30

## OCTOBER-MARCH

- Apply for Financial Aid
  - FAFSA/ CA Dream Act:
    - October 1st: Application opens
  - [More information on the CA Dream Act](#)



# 12TH GRADE TIMELINE

## cont.

### DECEMBER-JANUARY

- Apply for private schools
  - Deadlines will be in January or earlier. Deadlines vary, so check on each university's website.
  - If you are applying to a private school or some out-of-state schools, you will need to complete the CSS Profile in addition to FAFSA or CA Dream Act.

### JANUARY-MARCH

- If you are interested in applying for community college, submit applications at this time.
- Start receiving acceptance notifications in March

### MAY

- Submit Statement of Intent to Register (SIR)



## **12TH GRADE TO-DO**

- **Take SAT or ACT**
- **Apply for College**
- **Submit FAFSA or CA Dream Act and CSS profile (if applicable)**
- **Receive Acceptances**
- **Submit Student Intent to Register**
- **Check Portals Clearing To- Do List**
- **Submit Housing Application if you are planning to live on campus**
- **Pass all A-G classes with C or better**
- **Send Final Transcript**



# Thank You!

## Still Have Questions?

**USC Rossier Center of Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice**

Visit [USC CERPP](#) for more resources!

### **COLLEGE ACCESS FOR ALL LA HOTLINE**

Monday-Friday, 9 am - 5 pm

**(323) 870-8600**

**Speak directly to a college adviser who can answer your college questions.**

The phone lines are staffed daily during business hours by our USC College Advising Corps (USC CAC) advisers. Via the hotline, USC CAC advisers can help you with:

- Applying to college
- Navigating financial aid
- Comparing financial aid offers
- Understanding how to pay for college during COVID-19
- Finalizing college enrollment
- And more!