

Senior Information Packet- University Bound

Application Basics

- Keep all of your login usernames & passwords in one place
- CSU App Submission period: Oct. 1st-Dec 1st
 - calstate.edu/apply
 - some campuses have extended application deadlines, check [here](#)
- UC App Submission period: Oct 1st-December 1st
 - admissions.universityofcalifornia.edu
 - **Do Now:** work on personal insight questions (PIQ's) and activities/achievements section
- Private Schools/Out-of-State: application deadlines vary
 - commonapp.org (most private schools & some out of state) or institutional applications (directly on school's website)
 - Letters of Recommendation (private schools)
 - Must complete your [letter of recommendation packet](#) 3 weeks prior to deadlines (including early decision/action).
 - Must put in your recommender's names in common app so they can submit them
 - Counselors usually only write letters of rec if required by your school
 - **Do Now:** create commonapp account, add colleges, select application type to determine deadlines, work on personal statement, work on letter of rec packet.
 - You can use your personal statement for one of your PIQ's on the UC app!

College	SAT/ACT Scores	Letter of Recommendation	Essay	Official Transcripts
California State University (CSU)	No-Test Blind	No	No	Not unless asked for (rare)
University of California (UC)	No-Test Blind	No	Yes	Not unless asked for (rare)
Out of State Public	Check individual websites-Many are test blind or test optional	Usually not	Usually not	Yes-send after applying. Send again after 1st semester
Common Application Private (In or Out of State)	Check individual website-Many are test blind or test optional	Yes-usually 2 teacher and sometimes 1 counselor and sometimes one optional (coach, employer)	Yes	All transcripts sent by Counselor

- **Early Decision** = you apply early and get accepted early, **binding!** (apply to only **one**)
- **Early Action** = you apply early and get accepted early, non-binding
 - May be required to be considered for merit aid
 - May require test scores
 - If you don't get in through ED or EA, some schools move your application to the general pool for a second consideration

Application Type	Binding	Can I apply early to other colleges?	Can apply to other colleges under Regular Decision?
Early Decision	Yes	No	Yes
Early Action	No	Yes	Yes
Restrictive Early Action	No	No	Yes

Application Instructions

- Make sure all your outside courses (Cuesta classes taken through enrichment) taken between 9-11th grade are appearing on your transcript, this includes summer between 11 & 12th.
- Use your THS transcript, unofficial Cuesta transcript and [attached dual-enrollment instructions](#) when entering your courses in applications (see last page). Do not submit your application until a counselor reviews your course entry.
- **Remember:** THS is on the semester system, you are applying for Fall 2026 as a first-time freshman, you are pursuing a bachelor's degree
 - CSU/UC app: use auto-populated course titles when entering course history. Algebra 1/Geometry and Spanish in middle school need to be reported. Honors English 9/Algebra 2 w Trig Honors/Honors Computer Science AB are not approved honors level for CSU/UC (select "not honors"). Cuesta classes (enrichment and dual-enrolled) go in the **college courses section only**, not in the high school courses section.
 - UC: After submitting the application, you can log back into your application to see whether or not you've been designated as being in the top 9 percent of your class by selecting the "View how your application is reviewed" link.
 - Common App: consider waiving your FERPA rights (select "yes") so universities know you are comfortable NOT viewing your teacher recommendations.
- **College Application Workshops**
 - Wednesday 10/1 12:45-3:00 Room B2
 - Thursday 10/9 1:15-3:30 Room B2
 - Wednesday 10/22 12:45-3:00 Room B2
 - Wednesday 11/19 12:45-3:00 Room B2

***If you can't attend the workshops, have a counselor review your applications before you submit them**
- **Heads Up:** You usually need your SSN, parents estimated annual income, and SSID # (CSU app only)
- **Ranking/GPA:** THS does not rank. Although your GPA is accurate for you, it is not accurate for ranking purposes. For ranking to be accurate, GPA's must be normalized so as to eliminate advantages/disadvantages that occur when students take fewer or more total classes during their high school career. If you have a high unofficial class rank, counselors can mention this in a letter of recommendation and/or tell you if you are in the top 5.

- **Honor Roll:** 3.50-3.99 weighted GPA at the end of the semester (put this under awards/honors/recognitions portion of the application, if applicable).
- **Top Scholar:** 4.0+ weighted GPA at the end of each semester (put this under awards/honors/recognitions portion of the application, if applicable).
- **EOP:** first generation, low-income students should apply to each UC and CSU campus as an EOP student. Plan on submitting all EOP applications by November 30th although some campuses will accept after this date.
- **Honors College:** top achieving students may want to apply to the honors college program at campuses that offer it. Benefits can include: small class sizes, access to research opportunities, priority registration, more demanding courses, scholarships, etc. Drawbacks can include more rigorous classes, required to take certain classes, credits for some classes may not count toward degree.
- **Portals:** Set up a portal for every school you've applied to. You are prompted to do this via email after you apply. When you have a task in your portal (ex. submitting scores, sending transcripts, etc.) you will be emailed. Don't use your templeton email account. **Check your email on a weekly basis so you don't miss any deadlines.** If you do miss a requirement, your offer of admission can be rescinded.

SAT/ACT

- The California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) have suspended the use of ACT/SAT examinations in determining admission eligibility
 - If you are planning on only applying to a UC or CSU campus, you do not need to take the test. However, if you are planning on applying to private or out of state schools, **please check their individual websites to obtain their stance on standardized tests.**
- Test optional schools: your counselor can help you determine if you should send your score or not
 - [Here is a list](#) of all the test blind/optional universities in the U.S.
- If you do plan to attempt to take the SAT or ACT, we suggest taking it by the October test date; November/December test dates may also be accepted but check websites to be sure. [Here](#) is the link to check dates and register for the SAT and [here](#) is the link to check dates and register for the ACT.
- If you are taking the exams, you will need to pay to send your official SAT/ ACT scores to universities that have not received them
 - Before sending, check to see if you already sent the scores when you signed up for the tests
 - To check and send SAT scores log into your collegeboard.org account
 - To check and send ACT scores log into your actstudent.org account
 - Private Schools: some require you to send and report all tests attempted, some use best sitting, some super score, check with each
 - If you used a fee waiver for your SAT's or ACT's, you should be able to send scores for free

Financial Aid

- [FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\)](#): your family should fill this out no matter how much money they make. This application determines how much money you can get or borrow for college.
 - FAFSA aid opens: October 1, 2025 **DEADLINE IS MARCH 2nd 2026**. Counselors suggest completing the FAFSA no later than winter break.
 - Use 2024 tax returns. Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool in the application to upload your return electronically and save time.
 - It will ask what schools you will be applying to. **Every school you apply to must be listed in your FAFSA application!** If you apply to additional schools after submitting your FAFSA, you need to go back in and add those schools.
 - All seniors should add Cuesta Community College to their FAFSA list just in case! This is required in order to receive the Promise Scholarship.
 - A few weeks after you've been accepted, your student portal for each school will display your award summary in the financial matters tab/section. This shows you how much money you've been awarded in grants, loans, and scholarships. Award summary not showing? Not sure what your award summary means? Call the financial aid office of that school with any questions you might have.
 - Middle class scholarship automatic for any student attending a CSU/UC with family income less than \$234,000. Amounts vary by student and school. You won't be notified of the amount until July 2025 but it usually ranges from \$1,000-\$3,500 and can cover the cost of your books.
 - **CSS Profile**: Private universities often require a supplemental financial report in addition to the FAFSA to gather more detailed financial information about applicants and their parents.
- WUE (Western Undergraduate Exchange) offers tuition reduction for California residents to many public, out-of-state universities
 - WUE schools may require a separate application and may exclude certain majors. It is not a guarantee you will qualify since it can be based upon GPA and if you apply early enough.
 - [HERE is the WUE website](#) so you can see which schools and which majors are part of the WUE program.
 - If you get WUE, the cost of attendance can be just as affordable if not more affordable than a public California university
- Scholarships
 - **University Awarded Scholarships**: After applying, always check each school's scholarship website (even CSU and UC schools) to see if they have scholarship opportunities and applications. Private schools often have merit scholarships that have apps due by the application deadline. Some even require you to apply Early Action to be considered. Most CSU/UC scholarship apps are due around March 3rd but the sooner you apply, the better.
 - Cal Poly does not have a separate scholarship application
 - **Local Scholarships**: Check the [scholarship section on the THS website](#) often. Check your email for reminders and announcements from Mrs. Hanson. Local scholarship season typically runs Nov-Apr. This should be your main focus after submitting your college applications.
- Free/Reduced Lunch List
 - Students who qualify for free or reduced lunch should absolutely complete the application. If you fall within these income guidelines you will likely get hefty grants, waived application fees, and scholarships. Simply knowing you could qualify is important information for you, your parents, and counselor to know during the college application season. [Here is the link to the application](#)

**Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced-Price Meals
Effective July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026**

Household Size	Free Eligibility Scale for Lunch, Breakfast					Reduced-Price Eligibility Scale for Lunch and Breakfast				
	Year	Month	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Week	Year	Month	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Week
1	\$20,345	\$ 1,696	\$ 848	\$ 783	\$ 392	\$ 28,953	\$ 2,413	\$ 1,207	\$ 1,114	\$ 557
2	27,495	2,292	1,146	1,058	529	39,128	3,261	1,631	1,505	753
3	34,645	2,888	1,444	1,333	667	49,303	4,109	2,055	1,897	949
4	41,795	3,483	1,742	1,608	804	59,478	4,957	2,479	2,288	1,144
5	48,945	4,079	2,040	1,883	942	69,653	5,805	2,903	2,679	1,340
6	56,095	4,675	2,338	2,158	1,079	79,828	6,653	3,327	3,071	1,536
7	63,245	5,271	2,636	2,433	1,217	90,003	7,501	3,751	3,462	1,731
8	70,395	5,867	2,934	2,708	1,354	100,178	8,349	4,175	3,853	1,927
For each additional family member, add:										
	\$ 7,150	\$ 596	\$ 298	\$ 275	\$ 138	\$ 10,175	\$ 848	\$ 424	\$ 392	\$ 196

Sending Transcripts

- Refer to the chart on the first page to see if you need to have official transcripts sent. You will be notified via email if you are required to send one so check regularly. Use the THS counseling website to [complete a transcript request form](#) to have our registrar, Laurel Hanson send official transcripts for you. Counselors automatically send transcripts for any Common App school.
 - Sending final THS transcripts: In your checkout packet, you will fill out a transcript request form that tells THS where to send your final transcript; in other words, **Mrs. Hanson sends your final transcript for you!**
 - You must send an official transcript to your chosen university if you have earned any college credit at a community college (even dual enrollment). We suggest you do this in May even though most schools have a deadline of July 1st or 15th. This is your responsibility and must be requested at the community college.
 - Instructions: click [here](#) or MyCuesta -> Locate the "student account" card -> official transcripts. Send them directly to your university's admissions office. The first step in ordering requires an email to "send order receipt & status updates"; this is where you should enter your personal email address. *Always check your "Billing Account Summary" under the Billing & Payment box to pay any fees owed. Cuesta will hold your transcript if you owe any money.*
 - Currently taking a dual-enrolled class? To avoid having a transcript sent before your grade has officially posted to your transcript, unclick the option "send now (with work in progress if enrolled) and select "hold for ____ final grades.". This way, your transcript will not be sent until your final grade has been awarded.
- Primary reason for ordering: For transfer of Courses Taken Elsewhere

Making a Decision

- Most CSU/UC schools notify of acceptance late March or early April. Private schools notify you earlier especially if you applied early.
- Try to visit campuses in person in which you've been accepted before making your decision. Many campuses offer preview or admitted student days. Most offer extra guided tours during Spring break. Virtual tours are also a great option if you can't make it in person.
- You have to let your school know that you accept their offer of admission no later than May 1st. Typically, you are required to accept an offer through your portal. If required, an intent to register deposit typically ranges from \$100-\$300. Make sure to view your award summary in your portal before making a decision.

Once You've Accepted An Offer

- Conditional Acceptance:
 - Your offer of admission is conditional until you complete your senior year and any other to-do items as required by your university. Keep your grades up! Any D's or significantly lower grades, schedule changes, or missed deadlines could result in your admission being canceled.
- Check your email at least once a week. This is the way your school alerts you to important information about orientation, registration, housing, financial matters and other "to-do" items.
- Housing/Orientation:
 - Be prepared to pay a housing application fee (approx. \$50) and housing initial payment (approx. \$150-\$500). Reserve your spot early as housing options can be limited and first choice residence halls fill up quickly. Be prepared to pay for mandatory orientation over the summer.
- In May: Send AP scores and official transcripts from any community college you've attended (including dual enrollment) to your chosen university only.
 - AP Scores: log in to your College Board account to send all your scores. Make sure to list your chosen university on your AP tests in May of senior year to be sent for free
 - Request official transcripts from any community college you've attended, including dual enrollment courses at THS, to be sent directly to your university. Most community colleges let you order them online and will send your transcripts electronically.

Typical Timeline

When:	What:
Sep	Create Common App account, add colleges, select application type, view letter of rec requirements
Sep	Ask teachers and deliver letter of Rec Packet (give 3 weeks in advance)
Oct	Invite Recommenders/ Check Scholarship deadlines for Private Schools
Oct-Jan	Complete College Applications
Right After Applying	Send Test Scores if applicable (collegeboard.org to send SAT Scores, actstudent.org to send ACT scores)
Right After Applying	Set Up School Portals & Check Email Frequently
Right After Applying	Send Transcripts to out of state universities not on Common App
Right After Applying	Complete WUE Application (if applicable)
Right After Applying	Complete school specific scholarship applications (check each school's website)
Nov	Complete EOP Applications (for low income, first generation students)
Nov-Winter Break	Complete FAFSA
Jan-Feb	Complete school specific scholarship applications if haven't yet (check each school's website)
Varies	Complete THS advertised local scholarship applications
Jan	Send Mid-Year Transcripts to out of state universities not on Common App
Mar	FAFSA if not yet completed (deadline March 3rd)
Feb-Mar	Start Hearing Back & Reviewing Financial Aid Letters
Mar-Apr	Accept an Offer of Admission (usually the deadline is May 1st)
Varies	Complete Housing Applications, Sign up for Summer Orientation
May	Send AP Scores
May	Indicate chosen university on any AP tests you take Senior year
Late May	Send or pre-order Cuesta Transcripts to your chosen university
June	THS Registrar sends your final transcript to your chosen university

COLLEGE APPLICATION TRACKING CHART

	Username	Password
FAFSA		
CSU Applications		
UC Applications		
Common Application		
Other		

University Name:								
Average Freshman GPA & test scores:								
Major Reported in Application:								
Decision Type (early decision, early action, restrictive early action, regular, rolling)								
Application Type: (CSU, UC, Common App, school website, etc.)								
Application Deadline:								
Submitted Application?								
School Portal Username: Password: (set up & frequently check after applying)								

Type and # of Letters of Rec (ex. Two teacher, one other) (not required for CSU/UC)								
Separate WUE Application?								

Sent SAT and/or ACT Scores?								
Completed EOP Application?								
Separate Scholarship Application?								
Scholarship Application deadline:								
Transcript Required with Application? (not required for UC, CSU unless requested mid-year, Counselors send your transcripts for Common App schools automatically)								
Listed school on FAFSA application?								
Mid-Year Transcript/7-semester transcript sent? (not required for UC, CSU unless requested, Counselors send mid-year report for Common App schools automatically)								
Accepted?								
Checked Financial Aid Package? (view in portal or call financial aid offices)								