



Saratoga High School, CCC/College and Career Center

~ December 2023 newsletter ~

Hello, Falcon family! I hope you had a very restful Thanksgiving break!

Seniors have mostly applied to the UC's & CSU's, as well as private and public colleges throughout the rest of the country via Early and Rolling options, while the January Regular Decision deadlines are mostly January 1-15, and community college apps follow that.

Juniors are preparing for their college search and application process to begin in earnest in January, while sophomores may plan college visits, and 9th graders have plenty of time to prepare.

Here are some recent admissions, college, and career news highlights!

- [Post-Affirmative Action, Asian American Families Are More Stressed Than Ever About College Admissions](#) (11/26, LA Times)
- [After Supreme Court Ruling, Applicants Still Write About Race](#) (11/27, Washington Post)
- [After Affirmative Action, a White Teen's Ivy Hopes Rose, A Black Teen's Sank](#) (11/18, WashPo)
- [Early Application Data Are Rosy, If Complex](#) (11/16, Inside Higher Ed)
- [A "Near-Record" International Student Surge](#) (11/13, Inside Higher Ed)
- [The College Degree Isn't Dead](#) (11/12, The Atlantic)
- [Study Uses AI To Review Admissions Essays](#) (11/9, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Build Your Own College Rankings](#) (11/9, New York Times)
- [Recruiting To Campuses Far, Far Away](#) (11/28, Inside Higher Ed)
- [End-Of-Year FAFSA Launch Could Cause More Delays, Headaches](#) (11/16, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Buckle Up: FAFSA Processing Delays Are Coming](#) (11/15, Chronicle of Higher Ed)
- [College Completion Rates Remain Stagnant](#) (11/30, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Survey Finds Employer Confidence in College Grads](#) (11/30, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Why Are Gen-Zers Great Entrepreneurs? Same Reasons We're Called Terrible Employees](#) (11/30, Washington Post)
- [What It Takes To Become An Air Marshal, The Most Secretive Job In the Sky](#) (11/29, WashPo)
- [Helping Students Prepare For Life After College](#) (11/28, Inside Higher Ed)
- [The Envy Office: Can Instagrammable Design Lure Young Workers Back?](#) (11/26, New York Times)
- [Most Companies Say College Isn't Worth It For Their Employees](#) (11/24, Newsweek)
- [Colleges Refocus On Career Services As Students Seek Return On Degrees](#) (11/24, WashPo)
- [Two Years With America's Elite Firefighters](#) (11/21, New York Times)
- [Do You Talk More Like a Millennial Or A Boomer At Work?](#) (11/20, Washington Post)
- [What Determines Post-College Pay? Luck.](#) (11/20, Chronicle of Higher Ed)
- [New College Grads Are More Likely To Be Unemployed In Today's Job Market](#) (11/19, WashPo)

Seniors/Class of 2024

If you are applying to four-year colleges, focus for now on preparing for final exams, and set aside some time during the two-week holiday break to finish your apps and essays due in January. As with every year, a number of UC's & CSU's are still accepting applications (I've sent that list to you separately). Then there are the remaining RD Common App deadlines through February 1, as well as Rolling (colleges that accept apps with no official deadline, until they fill their class).

The two-year community college process and direct work entry will begin in the spring semester. We're also in the early stages of planning January's Financial Aid Night as well as both Community College Night and our Career Fair this spring, dates & times TBA. Additionally, our military recruiters periodically visit campus, normally at lunch.

Missing items. Another reminder that every year, many colleges email applicants, saying that various aspects of their application have not yet been received, especially rec letters and transcripts. Typically these messages are erroneous: **your rec letters and transcripts have in fact been sent by us, but the college's data systems are not yet acknowledging it.** If you continue to receive these messages a week to 10 days after a deadline, please let me or your counselor know.

January 1 website slowdowns. The Common App website has slowed down, frozen, and crashed in prior years on or just before January 1. Submit your app at least 3-4 days before a deadline. For example, **for January 1 deadlines, submit no later than Thursday, December 28.**

Application statistics for Saratoga's Class of 2024. We receive many requests from students and parents wishing to know how many of our students applied ED, EA, REA, and RD to various individual colleges, as well as overall as a class, plus the resulting application decisions. While it's understandable to be curious, we do not reveal these numbers until after the deadlines at the earliest, and most of the information not until May, when we look back after seniors have made their final decisions about their post-Saratoga plans, including non-college options such as gap years, work, and the military. Revealing this information live, before a major deadline, would cause a shift in our applications (ie, if seniors heard how many Saratoga students were applying to x college, they might change their own decision, and thus cause endlessly-changing moves). Stay tuned, thank you for your patience and understanding!

Please check your email daily! Colleges will often email applicants with important information about their application - including a link to their unique portal - so please check your email daily to be sure you don't miss anything, and also check your Spam.

SRAR: a Self Reported Academic Record is required by many colleges. It's a digital form you fill out reporting your 9th-12th grade classes and grades, on top of your transcript, and sometimes also on top of what you've already filled out in the Common App. While time-consuming, it's individual colleges' ways of standardizing all of their applicants' information in a way that conforms to their internal application systems, since many colleges use different computer systems as well as admissions reading. With thousands of high schools around the country, there are too many different types of transcript formats, and even the Common App isn't standardized enough for many colleges, because the Common App's courses & grades format isn't always exactly what the college needs.

College applications

The [Common Application](#) is accepted by over 1,000 colleges. If you haven't already, open and set up an account now, and get to work on the [personal statement](#) and any college-specific supplements! **Regular Decision deadlines are mostly January 1-15**, and some February or later.

A UC PIQ can be repurposed for your Common App, and one college's supplement could be similar to another's. In your GoogleDoc, arrange your essays in order of deadline, earliest at

the top to latest at the bottom, so that you work on them in order (no sense in working on a February 1 deadline if you have something due January 1).

Here are links to the [UC & CSU/Cal State](#) apps for campuses with deadlines after 11/30.

There's only one [Community College application](#) for all 114 campuses in California, and it opens in the spring of 2024, to be submitted by May.

Application and essay workshops & general help sessions

I've held frequent [application and essay workshops and help sessions](#) this fall during Tutorial working around our nearly 100 college admissions rep visits and school programming. More to come in the weeks & months ahead, for the Common App & Common App personal statement, as well as community colleges, and jobs/military.

College lists & ED/EA/REA application results

Most of you applying to four-year colleges have entered your list in Naviance's "Colleges I'm Applying To." Your counselors and I are still able to provide assistance to help you round out a list balanced by Reach/Target/Likely, and of course taking into account factors important to you.

[When you receive the results of your Early/Rolling apps, please adjust as necessary:](#) if things didn't go as hoped, adding a few more Likely or easier Target colleges; or withdrawing from some colleges you are no longer interested in, based on where you've been admitted. One of the benefits of Early is you see how things are going, while there is still plenty of time to adjust.

[If you are admitted ED, congratulations!](#) In fairness to other students who have applied there, [please immediately withdraw your applications to all other colleges that you applied to](#), since you will not be attending any of them and it would be unethical for you to potentially be admitted.

[Make the majority of your list Targets](#), and be aware that [applying to more Reaches does not increase your chances of being admitted to one](#).

Lastly, [please try to apply to no more than 20 campuses](#): more than 20 is generally excessive and unnecessary if your list is balanced. Note too that [applying to multiple UC's and multiple CSU's still count as multiple UC's and CSU's](#): even though they use the same applications, they are separate campuses and separate decisions, so for example applying to 6 UC's and 4 CSU's is not applying to 1 UC and 1 CSU.

Grades

Fall semester: colleges ask for an applicant's official fall semester grades, even if the senior was admitted Early or Rolling (SHS will send those via Naviance in January)

Spring semester: the one college a senior chooses to attend after graduating from Saratoga will ask us for their final transcript, to be sent by us by about July 1

Financial aid, Financial Aid Night (January, date TBA, 6:00-7:30pm), and scholarships

The [FAFSA](#)/Free Application for Federal Student Aid is for government financial aid for US citizens and permanent residents/Green Card; the [Dream Act](#) is for aid for undocumented students; and the [CSS Profile](#) can make you eligible for aid directly from ~400 colleges as well as some scholarships. There is no separate application for the [CalGrant](#), which is money granted you if you will be attending college in California.

[The FAFSA & Dream Act open in late December, date still TBA](#), so gather your tax returns and [create an FSA ID](#)!

Scholarship season is mostly in the spring, but some have fall semester deadlines. We are beginning to post those on our [CCC website](#), in order of deadline.

Family/student/parent planning meetings

I encourage Seniors to continue to set up appointments with me as needed; parents are welcome and encouraged to be part of these as well! I look forward to meeting you!

Juniors/Class of 2025

It's been your relative quiet time to this point. Things will get busier in the spring semester, which is also why **I begin my individual meetings with you in mid-January**. For now, focus on final exams, and have a very relaxing and restful two-week holiday break!

College applications

The [Common Application](#) is accepted by over 1,000 colleges, and opens for you around mid-January 2023. Your first deadline probably won't be until November 1, 2024, so no rush!

The [UC application](#) opens ~August 1, 2024, with a deadline of ~November 30, 2024

The [CSU/Cal State application](#) opens ~October 1, deadlines ~November 30, 2024

The [Community College application](#) opens in the spring of 2025, due by May 2025

Essays/UC PIQ's/supplements

If you are applying to the UC's, private, and/or out-of-state publics, **you'll be doing a lot of writing in the next year**. More details to come!

Application and essay workshops

I'll offer **application and essay workshops in the CCC** next spring; a June 10-12 (½-days) bootcamp after finals and graduation; a similar August 3-day bootcamp just before you return for your senior year; and weekly throughout next fall (2024), days TBA depending on the Saratoga school calendar.

I'll guide you through opening a Common App, UC, CSU, or community college account, filling out their basic information; drafting Common App essays, UC PIQ's, and college supplements; and building a balanced college list.

College list

If you think you'll be applying to four-year colleges, your counselors and I will provide assistance to help you complete a list that is balanced by reach/target/likely (more details to come in a future newsletter), strategized both by types of application plans and also their deadlines, and of course takes into account factors important to you such as geography, size, setting, majors, and so forth. If your list is balanced, applying to 10-15 colleges ought to suffice, no more than 20. Note that the UC's do not all count as one college, nor do the CSU's: they are distinct campuses, with separate application decisions.

Two great sources of information about colleges are the [Fiske Guide](#) and [Princeton Review](#), as well as Naviance's search feature.

Grades

The most important part of your college applications will be your transcript:

- course rigor, cumulative GPA, and trend in GPA

College visits

While some families stop at colleges here and there as they are traveling, or one or two close to home on a random weekend, **junior families can visit colleges with trips purposefully dedicated to seeing many of them on weekends, and during Winter Break (Feb. 17-25) and Spring Break (April 6-14).** College admissions tours are usually available Monday-Friday, and even some Saturdays. Most colleges allow you to walk around campus on your own, though some buildings can be accessed only by current students & staff. I can help recommend itineraries for your future college visit trips! Additionally, nearly all colleges offer virtual tours, so check their websites!



Standardized testing

Nearly all colleges that Saratoga students typically apply to have gone **test-optional**, waiving all standardized testing requirements (meaning students can submit them or not, complete list [here](#)), and some permanently. Going a step further, the UC's, CSU's, CalTech and some others are **test-blind**, meaning that test scores will not be considered at all.

In fairness, it's also important to point out that MIT, Georgetown, Georgia Tech, and Purdue require an ACT/SAT. And if you apply to a college that is test-optional, but you do not submit scores, more weight will be given to your transcript (schedule rigor, cumulative GPA, trend in GPA), extracurricular activities, and essays and letters of rec for colleges that ask for them.

In summary: this is the best time in history not to take an ACT or SAT. Even before the pandemic, plenty of excellent colleges had not required them, or had minimized their importance. Many colleges have said they feel this is the beginning of the end for testing, and it's not a wink-wink "we say we're optional, but prefer a score." Nothing is more important than your mental health, and too much test prep can take time away from school, other important activities, and sleep. If you don't take an ACT or SAT, you will still have plenty of excellent college options!

ACT

<u>Date of exam</u>	<u>Registration deadline</u>	<u>Late registration</u>
December 9, 2023	November 3	November 17
—>January 7, 2024, online practice exam with RevPrep! (sign-ups later this year)		
February 10, 2024	January 5	January 19
April 13, 2024	March 8	March 22
—>April 20, 2024, online practice exam with RevPrep! (sign-ups later this year)		
June 8, 2024	May 3	May 17
July 13, 2024	June 7	June 21

SAT

<u>Date of exam</u>	<u>Registration deadline</u>	<u>Late registration</u>
—>February 3, 2024, online practice exam with RevPrep! (sign-ups later this year)		
March 9, 2024	February 23	TBA
—>March 23, 2024 at Saratoga!! Register here!		
—>April 27, 2024, online practice exam with RevPrep! (sign-ups later this year)		
May 4, 2024	April 19	TBA
June 1, 2024	May 17	TBA
Register for the SAT here		

11th Grade College Night, "College Results" and 12th Grade College Night presentations

In **January, date TBA, 6:00-7:30pm**, we'll have our annual 11th Grade College Night presentation about the college search and application process. We'll provide details about all of the above, help you plan your spring semester with plenty of time, and answer questions.

Then in **May (date TBA)**, we'll host a "Results" presentation: information about how the college application process went for Saratoga's Class of 2024 (college application results, and their planned matriculations). This will include the colleges most commonly applied to by Saratoga seniors; where they plan to matriculate next fall; any trends we noticed for them; and any important national college admissions news to that point. We'll also include general information about those who are choosing not to attend college, to share information about their potential career fields.

Family/student/parent planning meetings

I encourage Juniors to set up individual appointments with me beginning in mid-January, to begin discussing your college search and application process in depth, and parents are welcome and encouraged to be part of these as well! I look forward to meeting and working with you!

10th grade/Class of 2026

Continue to develop good study habits and organizational skills, using a planner and calendar system to keep track of what you have to do: homework, exams, papers, meetings, presentations, practices, work, home responsibilities, and so forth. Stay focused on classes, and join available clubs, performing and visual arts organizations, and/or sports to help you meet new classmates who share an interest with you! And know that if you have responsibilities at home such as taking care of younger siblings or older relatives, or a job to earn money for living expenses, those are very important to colleges as well.

College visits

While some families stop by colleges here and there as they are traveling, or one or two in the Bay Area on random weekends, trips purposefully dedicated to seeing many colleges typically begin at the earliest in spring semester of sophomore year. See details above (Junior section).

9th grade/Class of 2027

We hope your first semester as part of the Saratoga community has been awesome so far! Be proud of what you have accomplished, and early on - so that they become habits - develop good study and organizational skills, using a planner and calendar system to keep track of what you have to do: homework, exams, papers, meetings, presentations, practices, work, home responsibilities, and so forth. If you want to meet new classmates who share an interest with you, join available clubs, performing and visual arts organizations, and/or sports!

Multiple grades, 9-12

CAREER FAIR (Grades 9-12)

This spring, date TBA, we will hold a Career Fair at SHS like last year. We want to help students get an idea of what different jobs and careers are like, from individuals with experience in various fields, whether the student will be attending college or not. More details to come!

EXTRACURRICULARS AND LEADERSHIP (Grades 9-11)

Beyond your transcript and possible test scores, college admissions wants to learn about you in other ways as well. Think about where your interests and passions lie. What you choose to do in your free time helps college admissions officers get a more complete snapshot of who you are. One of those aspects is what your life is like when you are not in class.

Throughout high school, find a blend of activities: some that you stay with for more than a year, as well as trying other new activities from time to time; if a former activity isn't providing you the enjoyment it used to, it's OK to move on to something else.

Also, try to take on leadership roles - where you have some responsibilities - including in the classroom, jobs, and at home.

VOLUNTEERING (Grades 9-12)

Volunteering opportunities abound, and many people and causes need assistance. Whether you want to work with animals, children, the elderly, environmental causes, voting rights and other political initiatives, social justice, or other possibilities, there's something for you! An extensive list of these will be added to our CCC website, updated with new opportunities.

COLLEGE FAIR (Grades 10-11), May 2: Save the Date!

Many colleges set up a table at free college fairs, where students and parents can talk with admissions reps in person. Three will take place around the Bay Area this spring, the closest one conveniently **at our neighbor West Valley College the evening of Thursday, May 2!**

MILITARY (Grades 9-12)

Each year, many high school graduates go directly into one of the military branches: **Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, or Navy**. This can be a fantastic way to serve your country and earn an education, while also being paid and provided with free housing and meals. Careers in the armed forces include communications, computer science, cybersecurity, doctors, drivers, education, engineering, finance, geography, intelligence, languages, lawyers, nurses, physical therapy, pilots, ship captains, wilderness survival, and more!

Closing thoughts

Students: take the initiative in your post-Saratoga process. It's been awesome to see so many seniors, as well as an increasing number of juniors - and even some sophomores and 9th graders - stop by the CCC to introduce themselves, ask questions, and set up meetings with me.

We have an outstanding CCC/counseling team with a very supportive administration, and all of us look forward to working with Saratoga students and their parents in 2024!

[Here's](#) the link to our CCC website with its abundance of information (more content to be added each month).

I hope you all have a relaxing, joyful holiday break, with plenty of time for family, friends, an abundance of rest, and whatever brings you joy! See you in 2024!

Brad

—

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