



~ September 2023 ~

Hello, Falcon family! I hope you've enjoyed the first couple of weeks of school, and are looking forward to some well-timed rest and relaxation over the long Labor Day weekend!

For seniors, that might include a little bit of time plowing ahead on some college applications and essays. Many juniors visited colleges during the summer and some are preparing for an ACT/SAT, while sophomores and our new 9th grade still have plenty of time to prepare.

The effects of June's SCOTUS' landmark decision ending race-conscious admissions have been substantial and colleges have adjusted accordingly, such as revising some of the essay questions they are asking applicants to write about. Meanwhile, the topic of money remains in the forefront, with the combination of the FAFSA's major revision and the ongoing student loan/debt crisis: please carefully consider how much you can afford to pay for college, in particular how much you are willing to borrow...always best to begin to plan in 9th grade, but not too late for seniors!

- [Ban Or Embrace? Colleges Wrestle With AI-Generated Admissions Essays](#) (9/1, New York Times)
- [Applying To College? Here's How AI Tools Might Hurt, Or Help](#) (9/1, New York Times)
- [We Generated Essays For Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Using Chatbots](#) (9/1, New York Times)
- [How To Stop Giving the Rich A Special Boost in College Admissions](#) (8/28, Slate)
- [Will Lawmakers Ban Legacy Admissions? The Public Wants Them To](#) (8/16, Chronicle of Higher Ed)
- [Colleges Want To Know More About You and Your Identity](#) (8/14, New York Times)
- [An Equity-Based Defense of Legacy Admissions](#) (8/7, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Biden Administration Releases Guidance On Affirmative Action](#) (8/15, Inside Higher Ed)
- [UC System Admits Record Number of Californians](#) (8/10, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Cal State Makes Some Progress On Graduation But Lags On Key Graduation and Equity Goals](#) (8/3, EdSource)
- [Colleges Change Essay Prompts After Affirmative Action Ruling](#) (8/2, Inside Higher Ed)
- [An Early Peek At How Admission Applications Are Changing After the Supreme Court Ruling](#) (8/1, Chronicle of Higher Ed)
- [Why Fixing the Transfer Process Is An Equity Issue For Colleges](#) (8/22, Chronicle Of Higher Ed)
- [12 Things Student Loan Borrowers Should Know About the Return To Repayment](#) (8/31, NPR)
- [New Analysis Finds Most Families Can't Cover College Costs](#) (8/18, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Going To College? Here's What You Should Know About Student Loans](#) (8/15, AP)
- [A New FAFSA Form Is Coming, Along With Changes In College Aid](#) (8/11, New York Times)
- [Colleges Spend Like There's No Tomorrow. 'These Places Are Just Devouring Money'](#) (8/10, Wall Street Journal)
- [Americans See College's Value But Question Its Price](#) (8/9, Inside Higher Ed)
- [For First Time, US Releases Data On Basic Student Needs](#) (8/1, Inside Higher Ed)
- [Remote Work Is Harder To Come By As Companies Push For Return to Office](#) (9/1, NPR)
- [Best Place For A.I. Jobs \(New Report Says\) Won't Surprise You](#) (7/20, New York Times)

# **Seniors/Class of 2024**

You're now the class in the driver's seat! Be sure to plan ahead by adding college app deadlines and college rep visits to SHS in your calendar, as well as ample time to write essays; whenever you feel some creative energy and inspiration to write, thinking of a potential idea at the dinner table, while driving, watching a movie or game, go with it! (if you are driving, please pull over) That said, during this holiday weekend, also set aside some time to relax and nap, so you can recharge. Go, Seniors!

## **12th Grade College Night and "College Results" presentation and data**

At Senior Parent Night on August 29, I presented some preliminary information about how the college application process went for Saratoga's Class of 2023 (college application results, matriculations, etc) as well as some cumulative stats and trends from our last six years' worth of applicants. We want to report facts to you, instead of just rumors and speculation circulating, and hope this data helps you as you decide where, when, and how to apply. More details to come!

## **Application and essay workshops!**

Help sessions will continue several days each week this fall, days TBA depending on the Saratoga school calendar. [Here's](#) the link to the schedule.

I'll guide seniors through opening a Common App and UC account, filling out their basic information; drafting Common App essays, UC PIQ's, and college supplements; building a balanced college list; and more!

## **College admissions rep visits begin!**

About 85 colleges sent admissions reps to visit Saratoga HS last year to make presentations and answer questions, and we're already planning for the same this year! They'll be here during Tutorials, lunch, 7th period, and after school, so as to minimize conflicts with classes. Check the schedule in Naviance! Visits are for senior and junior students only (no parents, sorry).

## **College applications**

The [Common Application](#) is accepted by over 1,000 colleges, and is now open for you. Your first deadline probably won't be until November 1 (with a few mid-October exceptions)!

[The UC application opened August 1, 2023](#), with a deadline of ~November 30

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

The [Community College application](#) opens in the spring of 2024, due by May 2024

## **Essays/UC PIQ's/supplements**

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

A good place to be by early September, is a solid draft of your Common App personal statement; 3 UC PIQ's; drafts of supplemental essays for at least one "why I want to attend this college" and "why I want to major in this field"; and both your Common App & UC accounts open and well underway, even mostly completed. Know that some/many colleges have been updating their supplemental essays based on June's SCOTUS ruling. You've got this!

[Here](#) is a link to the CCC's college webpage, which includes all of the Common App personal statement choices, as well as the UC's PIQ/Personal Insight Questions.

## 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.

Your list should take into account **factors** such as geography, weather, size, setting (urban, suburban, rural), cost, majors and minors, as well as other aspects that may or may not be important to you, such as politics, diversity, school spirit, religious versus secular, Greek system, competitive versus collaborative environment, etc. Think of your happiness and mental health!

You should also balance your list by **reach/target/likely**. **Reaches** are unlikely for any student, but it's still OK to apply to a few...just please limit them, since applying to more of them does not mean that a student has a better chance of being admitted to one: they all make decisions independently of each other. **Targets** should be the majority of your list: they are more like a 50-50 chance, could go either way. Lastly, you should have several **likelies** on your list as well, where your chances of admission are very good to excellent, and you still like everything about the college. Naviance can help assess whether a college is a reach, target, or likely; just know that it doesn't indicate whether prior applicants applied early or regular, what major they applied as, or other factors such as legacies, major donors, recruited athletes, etc.

Also, strategize your list both by **types of application plans** (Early, Rolling, Regular) as well as their **deadlines** (Rolling, November EA/ED/REA, and January Regular).

**If your list is balanced, applying to about 15 college campuses 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. Also, please remember that the more colleges you apply to, the more emails, portals, essays, and deadlines you need to manage, which is increasingly difficult.

Two great sources of information about colleges are the [Fiske Guide](#) and [Princeton Review](#), as well as the search features in Naviance, [Scoir](#), and the [US DOE's College Scorecard](#).

## Teacher recs

Please refer to the counselors' presentation for the protocols for asking for your teacher/counselor recs. If you haven't already, be sure to **ask your teachers ASAP**, since many set a maximum number that they will write. Please ask me or your counselor if you need advice!

## 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, senior families can visit colleges with trips purposefully dedicated to seeing many of them on weekends, into the fall; **Labor Day weekend (Sept. 2-4)** and Fall Break (Oct. 7-10) are excellent. 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

Students planning to apply to four-year colleges normally take their first [ACT](#) and/or [SAT](#) in the spring of junior year, and then again another in the fall of senior year, often a total of three, to

see which they do better on (1 ACT and 2 SAT's, or 2 ACT's and 1 SAT). Some also spend substantial amounts of time and money prepping.

Nearly all colleges that Saratoga students typically apply to have gone **test-optional**, waiving all standardized testing requirements (meaning students can submit scores 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, or not to have done well on them. 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> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| September 9, 2023                                                                | August 4                     | August 18                |
| —>September 16, 2023, online practice exam with RevPrep!                         |                              |                          |
| October 28, 2023                                                                 | September 22                 | October 6                |
| 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> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| —>September 23, 2023, online practice exam with RevPrep!                          |                              |                          |
| October 7, 2023                                                                   | September 7                  | September 26             |
| November 4, 2023                                                                  | October 5                    | October 24               |
| December 2, 2023                                                                  | November 2                   | November 21              |
| —>February 3, 2024, online practice exam with RevPrep! (sign-ups later this year) |                              |                          |
| March 9, 2024                                                                     | February 23                  | TBA                      |
| —>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                      |

## PSAT

—>September 10, 2023, online practice exam with RevPrep!

Saturday, October 14, 2023; or, October 2-31 on a high school's chosen weekday

### **Financial aid, scholarships, and reducing your college costs**

Seniors will complete a [FAFSA](#)/Free Application for Federal Student Aid or [Dream Act](#) to apply for federal/government aid, and a [CSS Profile](#) to apply for aid directly from several hundred colleges (not all of them use the CSS Profile). While the FAFSA usually opens October 1 each year, this year it's undergoing revisions and won't be available until around December 1. However, because ED 1 deadlines are generally November 1-15, before the FAFSA will be available, [colleges that use the CSS](#) may allow you to use just the CSS as a benchmark for a fairly accurate idea of how much aid you might receive, which will help you determine if you can attend their college if you're admitted ED 1. Also, while the CSS profile costs money, it's free for families whose income is under \$100,000. Stay tuned!

As for scholarships, the main scholarship season is January-March, though a small number have deadlines from September-December. Last year I began a [scholarships list on the CCC website](#), and I'll be greatly enhancing it with dozens more!

### **Family/student/parent planning meetings**

I encourage Seniors to [set up individual and family meetings](#) to discuss post-Saratoga plans! Parents are not only welcome, but encouraged to attend these!

## **Juniors/Class of 2025**

Congrats on completing your first few weeks of junior year! While it's still early, make any necessary changes to your study habits, organizational skills, and so forth to help you succeed in this busy year. Also consider your extracurricular life, continuing with some activities of interest as time allows in junior year, or joining some if you weren't very involved in your first two years.

### **Standardized testing**

For students considering attending a four-year college, you might take your first ACT and/or SAT in spring semester of junior year. Even so, nearly all colleges are now test-optional (details above in the Senior section), many already indicating they will continue this for the Class of 2025.

Also note that one of the biggest changes in the history of standardized exams will be the SAT going digital starting next spring, 2024 (the ACT is exploring that option as well); we'll send more details this fall! [Be sure to sign up for an online practice exam \(schedule above\)!](#)

### **College visits**

Some families stop by colleges here and there as they are traveling, or one or two in the Bay Area on random weekends, so keep these up! See more details above, in the Senior section.

## **Sophomores/Class of 2026**

Welcome to the beginning of sophomore year! Now that things are more familiar to you since this is your second time around, while it's still early make any necessary changes to your study habits, organizational skills, and so forth. Also, consider your extracurricular life, continuing with some activities of interest if you can in sophomore year, or joining some if you weren't very involved in 9th grade.

# **9th Grade/Class of 2027**

Welcome to Saratoga HS! The college process is far down the road for you. While it's still early in the year, make any necessary changes to your study habits, organizational skills, and so forth, since high school can be much more challenging than middle school was. Also, consider your extracurricular life, continuing with some middle school activities of interest if you can, or joining some new ones!.

## **Multiple grades, 10-12**

### **WORK PERMITS (Grades 9-12)**

**I issue these from the CCC.** Target, Safeway, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Jamba Juice, In N Out, Panda Express, Chipotle, Panera, Starbucks, Peets, Philz, movie theaters, libraries, lifeguarding, camp counselors...so many opportunities for some extra cash, discounts and/or free food, and developing some skills that will be useful in any career! Work permits required until you turn 18!

### **EXTRACURRICULARS AND LEADERSHIP (Grades 10-12)**

Beyond your transcript and possible test scores, college admissions wants to learn about what else is important to you and how you spend your time aside from your classes. Think about where your interests and passions lie. What you choose to do helps college admissions officers get a more complete snapshot of who you are.

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 perfectly OK to move on to something else. Activities include the arts, athletics, non-Saratoga classes, home responsibilities, internships, jobs, volunteering.

Also, try to take on leadership roles - where you have some responsibilities - including in the classroom, jobs, and at home; taking care of younger or older relatives is valued by colleges!

### **VOLUNTEERING (Grades 10-12)**

Volunteering opportunities abound in Santa Clara County, and many people and causes need assistance. Whether you want to work with animals, children, the elderly, environmental causes, the homeless, voting rights and other political initiatives, social justice, or many other possibilities, there's something for you! An extensive list of these is being added to our CCC website as new opportunities become known.

### **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**

It's been great to see so many of you during these opening weeks, bringing your energy and spirit back to campus! Please enjoy your upcoming long holiday weekend with some time to refresh, which includes sleep! Midday naps on weekends and holidays are one of the best things in life.

[Here's](#) the link to our CCC website with its abundance of information.

Go Falcons!!

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