

Four Year Planning Guide

The road to college starts early. It's never too soon to start planning and preparing. After all, your choice of college will help shape and prepare you for your future. It's important to choose the college or university that will be the best fit for you and that will help you toward your goals. Don't wait until your senior year to begin thinking about college. Start now! The list below will give you some guidelines of what steps to take each year to being preparing for college.

9th Grade

For students:

- Take challenging courses to expand your knowledge and stretch your mind.
- Aim for As and Bs in all of your classes. Focus on your classwork and your homework to develop the study skills you will need to succeed in college.
- Participate in school orientation to learn about the different activities available at your high school. Join clubs, play sports and volunteer. Take elective courses that interest you and that meet the admission requirements such as music, art, theater, or a foreign language.
- Explore careers and different occupations. Ask family and friends what they do for a living, and what kind of education they needed.
- Find out what kind of classes you will need to take to prepare yourself for college. (*see FAQ's*)

For parents:

- Get information about what courses your student needs to take to graduate high school and be eligible for college by attending back-to-school nights and meeting with the high school counselor and teachers. Help your student plan his or her four-year high school curriculum so he or she will be eligible for college upon graduation.

10th Grade

For students:

- Take Geometry or Algebra II and college prep English.
- Try to earn As and Bs in all your classes. Studying hard in high school will help prepare you for college course work.
- Focus on your classwork and your homework to develop the study skills you will need to succeed in college.
- Expand your knowledge and develop your interests: Take part in enrichment programs and special summer workshops and camps at college and university campuses in music, science, engineering, writing, filmmaking, theater, language, and many other subjects.

- Meet with your school's counselor to discuss your academic plans.

For parents:

- Start talking to your student about what college they would like to attend and what subject they would like to major in.
- Begin to inform yourself about colleges, financial aid, scholarships and the educational requirements of the different careers your child may be interested in.

11th Grade

For students:

- Check with your high school counselor to make sure you are taking the college preparatory classes needed for admission, including Algebra II or advanced math and English.
- Strive for As and Bs, which are especially important during your junior and senior years.
- Register in October for the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test), a practice exam for the SAT I (Scholastic Assessment Test I), which is required for several national scholarships, such as the National Merit Scholarship, the National Achievement Scholarship, and the National Hispanic Scholarship, and may be needed for admission.
- Take the PSAT and use the results to see where you are strong and where you need to improve to be ready for college.
- If taking AP (Advanced Placement) subjects, register to take the AP exams in the spring. Scoring well on the test(s) will give you college credit for these courses!
- Start thinking about when to take college entrance exams, the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or the ACT (American College Testing). Register for the exam one month before the test date. If you take the exam in the spring or summer, you will get the results in time to see if you need to retake the test in the fall. Discuss this with your counselor.
- Gather information about schools you might be interested in. Attend college fairs, contact universities to request more information, and begin scheduling campus visits with college admissions officers.
- Begin to research available scholarships and grants.

For parents:

- Attend college information programs and meet with college or university campus representatives when they visit your high school.
- Visit college and university campuses. Contact the campus to schedule a tour and get information about academic programs, admission requirements and financial aid. Bring your student transcripts or a list of courses completed since the 9th grade.
- Help your student prepare for the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT (American College Testing) by reviewing test preparation books with sample questions. Have your student attend a workshop on how to prepare for these entrance exams. Financial aid may be available for some workshops or for the test fee; check with your counselor.

12th Grade

For students:

- Take advanced math such as trigonometry or analytic geometry/calculus, English, and other courses required for college admission.
- Review class schedules with your counselor to ensure that you are meeting all of your college preparatory requirements.
- Maintain good grades (As and Bs) in all your courses. This is especially important for college admission.
- Early September: Register for the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT (American College Testing). Your high school counselor will provide registration forms and information about fee waivers. You may retake these tests as many times as you wish.
- September-October: Begin the college application process. Be aware of application deadlines!
- Check frequently with high school counselors or career center directors for scholarships awarded by schools, local companies and community groups.
- If you haven't already, schedule a campus visit for your top choice(s). Visiting the campus, sitting in on a class, and meeting the students, faculty and staff can give you wonderful insight into the college community you are considering.

For parents:

- Visit college campuses you are interested in and meet with admission counselors.
- Attend college information programs, and talk to college representatives when they visit your high school.
- Once your student has decided on which college(s) to apply to, make sure they have submitted all of the necessary application paperwork, including official high school transcripts.
- January: Apply for financial aid by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) no later than March 2.
- February: Be sure your financial aid application including GPA (grade point average) for Cal Grant is on file with the California State Student Aid Commission (CSAC). Your high school must submit your GPA for Cal Grant consideration by March 2.