

The Road to College



It's never too early to start preparing for college, especially during these tough economic times. With the right steps, students and their families can stay on the path to higher education.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Meet with your school counselor and discuss your goal to attend college. Take pre-algebra and, if possible, algebra I and a foreign language.
- Find out if you qualify for a Gifted and Talented program
- Join clubs or teams at your school
- Try to earn A's or B's in all classes
- Put extra effort into English, math and science.
- Review your ninth-grade schedule with a parent or guardian. Make sure it includes Algebra I or geometry, college preparatory English and other "A to G"-approved classes.



NINTH GRADE

- Map out a four-year class schedule with your counselor. Needed: three to four "A to G" courses each year.
- Take Algebra I or geometry, college-prep English and other "A to G" courses.
- Most English-language development classes don't meet university English requirements. If you're an English learner, consider taking community-college courses to catch up.
- Strive for A's and B's, and seek extra help as soon as you need it
- Get involved in sports, extracurricular activities or volunteering
- Start a college information folder

10TH GRADE

- Review your four-year scheduling plan
- Take Geometry or Algebra II, college-prep English and other "A to G" courses
- Sign up for the PSATs
- Find a study guide for the California High School Exit Exam, which you'll take in February or March.
- Research colleges; find out about programs, admissions standards, tuition and location
- Visit at least one college campus



11TH GRADE

WINTER

- Register for the SATs and/or the ACTs six to eight weeks in advance. Ask your counselor if you're eligible for a fee waiver. Find SAT information at www.collegeboard.com and ACT information at www.actstudent.org.
- Practice taking the SAT and/or ACT with sample tests
- Meet with college reps that come to your school

FALL

- Make sure you are still on track to graduate with C grades or better in 15 "A to G" courses. By now, you should have completed six to eight
- Take advanced math, college-prep English and other college-prep courses, such as laboratory science or social science
- Sign up to take the PSAT in October
- Narrow your list of colleges
- Attend a college night or a college tour

12TH GRADE

- Continue college visits
- Take the SAT and/or ACT
- Look for scholarships
- Review your senior class schedule with your counselor; consider advanced placement, honors and community college courses
- Look for summer jobs, courses and volunteer opportunities

SUMMER

- Organize list of colleges into three categories: safe, realistic and reach
- Make a checklist of what each college needs (personal statement, transcript, letters of recommendation)
- Write a draft of your personal statement
- Mark a calendar of important dates and deadlines for the upcoming year
- If you plan to retake the SAT or ACT in the fall, register for the test

FALL

- Meet with a counselor to make sure you are still on the right track
- Request letters of recommendation from teachers and/or community leaders; give each writer a stamped, self-addressed envelope and form
- Ask a teacher to review your personal statement
- Double-check deadlines for college applications and financial aid
- Last chance to take SATs and ACTs
- November: Apply to CSU and UCs. Deadlines or priority deadlines for many private colleges
- Send SAT or ACT scores to each college, as well as a preliminary transcript
- Ask three or four people you trust to make sure your applications are complete

WINTER

- December: Some scholarship applications are due
- January: Apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with a parent or guardian. Need help? Go to a Cash For College workshop in your area.
- February: Most financial aid deadlines
- Sign up for summer orientation or bridge program



SPRING

- Make sure transcript is sent to the school you've chosen
- College orientation

WINTER

- March 2: Cal Grants deadline
- April: Check the mail for college decisions and financial award letters
- If you're wait-listed, let admissions officers know you're still interested
- May: Tell each college that has accepted you whether you plan to attend
- Send a deposit to the school of your choice
- Look for follow-up financial-aid forms from your college
- Need to take placement exams?
- Apply to a community college if you plan to attend in the fall



Sources: UC Berkeley's College Tools site, CSU Mentor and Oakland school district's College and Career Readiness Office KATY MURPHY, JEFF DURHAM/STAFF

ABOUT THE SERIES: This is the first of a three-part series about how students should plan for college.

COURSES YOU NEED TO TAKE The below courses, known as "A to G" requirements, must be passed with a grade of C or better to be eligible for UC/CSU admission.

- *A = U.S. History and Social Science - two years
- *B = English - four years
- *C = Math (Algebra I, Geometry and Intermediate Algebra) - at least three years, UC recommends four
- *D = Laboratory Science - two years, UC recommends three
- *E = Foreign Languages - two years, UC recommends three
- *F = Visual and Performing Arts - one year