

A Guide to California's Community Colleges

Who attends community college?

Community college is designed for students who are seeking a technical/career certificate, a two-year associate's degree, or credits to transfer to a four-year university to obtain a bachelor's degree. Students may also take courses to enhance their job skills, improve their knowledge of basic English or math, and for personal enrichment or enjoyment.

Community colleges attract students with a broad range of backgrounds, abilities, and interests. About 80% of the more than 2.5 million community college students in California work as well as go to school. Many students are the first in their family to attend college or are raising a family while attending school. About half of the student body is between the ages of 18 and 24, and about 60% attend school part time.

Are all community colleges the same?

Each of the 110 community colleges in California is distinct and reflects the area where it is located. All try to meet the needs of all students. However, some colleges—particularly those in regions with multiple colleges—specialize in specific areas.

If there are two or more colleges near your home, learn how they differ in terms of the career programs they offer and their transfer agreements with California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) campuses. Often the college's course catalog can be downloaded from the Internet. In addition, you should make an appointment with your high school or community college counselors to find out what your local colleges offer. It's also a good idea to visit the campuses.

Can high school students take community college classes?

High school students may be able to enroll in courses not provided by their high school. And some school districts offer programs—often referred to as “middle college” or “early college high school”—in which students take high school-level courses from high school teachers and community college-level courses from college instructors. These programs sometimes take place on the college campus. Talk to your high school counselor or administrator for more information.

What if I am uncertain about what I want to do as a career?

Community colleges offer many opportunities to explore careers. If you are unsure whether you want to go to a four-year university, for example, you can keep your options open by carefully planning your schedule. Many courses that fulfill requirements for an associate's degree also meet the prerequisites if you want to transfer to UC or CSU campuses. Typically there are fewer community college courses accepted by UC than CSU, and fewer accepted by CSU than for an associate's degree. For example, if you need to take a math course, choose one that meets the criteria for all three: UC, CSU, and an associate's degree.

All students entering community college should meet with one of the college's counselors to plan their schedules. It is even more important to do so if you are not sure which university you want to attend and/or what major you want to pursue. Well-meaning advice from friends, teachers, or others could cost you time and money.

What do community colleges have to offer?

Community colleges provide career programs in hundreds of areas, such as technical and industrial trades, health occupations, business and finance, electronics and computer sciences, agriculture, police and fire, food science, and building and landscaping. Depending on the occupation, training may take from six months to two years. Associate degrees and certificate programs are available for many fields.

Students who want to earn a four-year degree may choose to first go to a community college for a number of reasons, such as:

- Closeness to home;
- Lower cost;
- More time to explore their options and interests;
- Smaller classes and more direct contact with faculty;
- Inability to qualify for a university because they don't meet all the admissions requirements.

Does it matter how well I do in high school?

If you didn't do well in high school, you can still attend community college as long as you are 18 or older. If you are younger than 18, you can attend if you have a high school diploma or have passed the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE). (See www.chspe.net.)

How hard is community college?

Not working hard in high school will make college more difficult. If you are a junior or senior, taking your schoolwork seriously those last years in high school can make a difference in how well prepared you are for college.

Completing the general education requirements that many high schools require may not be enough to prepare you for community college. To pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), you must meet only 10th-grade standards in English and 8th-grade standards in math.

Whether or not you have a high school diploma, you will likely be assessed through placement tests and other measures, such as your high school grades, to determine what level of English and math classes you are ready for. Some students end up taking remedial classes, which can lengthen their stay at community college and thereby increase the cost of their education.

Thus, it is important to take the most challenging courses your high school has to offer and to do well in all your classes. Try to take English and math classes all four years so it will be easier for you to pass college placement tests.

How do I apply?

Contact the admissions office of the college you would like to attend to get a copy of the application or visit www.cccapply.org where you can apply to many colleges through a common online application and link directly to college websites for those colleges that require their own application. Also make an appointment with the college's counseling office. Many courses, particularly entry-level required classes, fill up quickly. To make sure you get the courses you want, ask your high school counselor or administrator about the best time to apply—typically spring or early summer—to your local college.

Some students begin college in the summer to get a head start. Some colleges offer a short orientation class that includes help in signing up for classes. If students take that class in the summer, they have an advantage over the freshmen who will enter college in the fall.

Some high schools work with their area community colleges to offer college tours and help seniors fill out their applications, take their placement exams, and sign up for courses. Check with your high school counselor or administrator to see if your school has such a program.

What does it cost?

In 2004–05 the fee was \$26 per semester unit or \$780 a year if you take a full load of 15 units each semester. Books and supplies usually average about \$1,260 a year. These costs are significantly lower than for UC or CSU.

Most community colleges do not provide dormitories for students. However, some colleges in rural areas offer access to limited dormitory or apartment housing with varying prices. For example, in 2004–05 students attending Columbia College could get a double occupancy room in a supervised student apartment for \$1,540 per person per semester. A list of colleges that offer dormitories can be found at: www.cccco.edu/find/dormitories.htm

Where can I find out more?

Talk to your high school and community college counselors. Look for notices of open houses or information meetings sponsored by the colleges in your area. Look up your local colleges on the Internet. For further information, see the following websites:

- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office: www.cccco.edu
- University of California Office of the President: www.ucop.edu
- California State University system: www.calstate.edu
- Community college financial aid: www.icanaffordcollege.com
- EdSource: www.edsource.org for a free student/parent guide—*Community College: A First Step to a Bachelor's Degree*

Is financial help available?

About 25% of students receive Board of Governors Enrollment Fee Waivers, and more than \$1 billion in financial aid was provided to community college students throughout the state in 2003–04. Some students get assistance with books and living costs, such as housing. Visit the financial aid office at your community college to get help applying for grants, low-interest loans, work-study (on- or off-campus), and scholarships. Also go to www.icanaffordcollege.com to apply for financial help or find out more.

In addition, reduced rates for public transportation are often available, and most campuses provide low-cost childcare.

How to navigate community college

New students are not always aware of how community colleges work. Here are a few tips:

- Take advantage of orientation provided for new students to find out how to make the most of the services available.
- Sign up for classes early to ensure you get the courses you need.
- If a class you need is full, you can often sit in anyway. Typically some students drop the course, allowing you to add it. Always talk to the instructor for guidance about adding the class.
- Be sure to pay all your fees, even parking tickets, on time. If you haven't paid your fees, you can't register for classes. Slowing up your registration by even one day to clear fees can cost you a space in the most sought-after courses. ☐☐

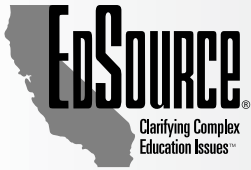


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Community College:

A first step to a bachelor's degree

Community college is an excellent, popular, and low-cost option for California students who want to transfer to a four-year state university. About 28% of high school graduates go to community college immediately after graduation.

About one-third of University of California (UC) and two-thirds of California State University (CSU) graduates began at a community college.

If I'm going to a community college first, does it matter how well I do in high school?

Not working hard in high school will make college more difficult. When you apply at a community college—*whether or not you have a high school diploma*—you will likely be assessed through placement tests and other measures, such as your high school grades, to determine what level of English and math classes you are ready for. Some students end up taking remedial classes, for which they receive no credit. These courses can lengthen their stay in community college and thereby increase the cost of their education. These students are also less likely than their better-prepared counterparts to transfer to a four-year university. Try to take English and math all four years in high school so it will be easier for you to pass these placement tests.

How do I know if I am prepared for college-level work?

First, take the college-prep courses at your high school and work to get grades of A, B, or C.

In addition, at some high schools in your junior year, you can take an expanded version of the English and math STAR tests. If you test proficient or above, CSU considers you ready for college. If you don't test proficient, then you can improve your skills and knowledge by taking English and math courses offered at your high school or community college during your senior year.

Although all high schools must give the STAR tests, each high school can decide whether to offer the expanded CSU version. If you are a junior, ask your high school counselor or principal if it would be appropriate for you to take this expanded version.

Once I'm enrolled at a community college, what do I need to do to transfer to a four-year university?

Generally students take the first two years' worth of college-level requirements—called lower-division courses—before transferring as a junior to a state university. That adds up to 60 semester or 90 quarter units. (Quarters are generally about 10 weeks long compared to 16 to 18 weeks in a semester. Simply multiply semester units by 1 1/2 to change them into quarter units.)

Community college transfer students are first in line at UC

UC campuses give *first priority* to eligible community college transfer students over all others, including transfers from a CSU. And UC and CSU do not require admissions tests from transfer students.

If you want to transfer before you have taken 60 semester units, go online at www.ucop.edu/pathways for UC and www.csumentor.edu for CSU to find out about alternatives. Also be sure to talk with a college counselor.

What are lower-division units?

General education (GE) requirements make up more than half of these lower-division units. GE requirements cover all areas of academic interest—arts, humanities, social sciences, sciences, math, and English—and are required by all universities as a way to ensure that students have a well-rounded education.

The rest of the units should be in courses that prepare you for your major. Generally, students who have taken all the GE requirements and the lower-division (freshman and sophomore) classes for their major stand a better chance of transferring to the university of their choice.

To receive credit, students must earn at least a C in a course, except for a limited number of pass-fail courses. While completing those requirements, many students also earn an associate's degree. All community colleges offer transfer courses, though each college requires a somewhat different set of classes.

Is there any way to guarantee I'll be admitted to the university of my choice?

Each UC and CSU campus has transfer agreements with some community colleges. These "transfer guarantee" programs assure students who fulfill the requirements a place at that university, but not necessarily in a specific major. Find out which community colleges have such agreements with your preferred university by going to the college or university websites or by talking with your community college counselor.

Beginning with the 2006–07 school year, CSU and community colleges are streamlining their process for students interested in 30 popular majors—ranging from art to biology to mechanical engineering to nursing. The set of required courses for each major will be standardized. If you complete the set, you will have met the requirements for that major at any CSU campus. (Currently each CSU campus can have its own requirements, and the required courses often have different numbers depending on which college you attend.)

In addition, if you commit to attending a particular CSU campus,

you will be guaranteed a spot in your chosen major if you complete the set of courses. If you are interested, speak to the transfer center or counseling office at your community college. Counselors will have the list of 30 majors, and that list is expected to grow. (Some UC campuses may also decide to join this program.)

What if I don't know which university I want to attend?

To satisfy the lower-division GE requirements at all UC and CSU campuses, you can take a series of courses called the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC—pronounced “I get C”). Each community college has different courses that meet the IGETC requirement. If students complete those courses at their community college, then they know they have met the GE requirements for at least some of the majors at all state universities.

For some students, however, IGETC is not the right approach. Some majors—particularly those in engineering and the sciences—require more or different GE requirements than the IGETC courses. If you know which major you want to pursue, check the list of required courses in your major's department at the university you plan to attend. Many departments also expect transfer students to have completed introductory courses in their future field of study.

IGETC requires completion of a minimum of 37 semester units of lower-division work with a C grade or better in each course. C- is not allowed. In addition to the above requirements, you must also have proof of proficiency in a foreign language by:

- Passing an exam in the language;
- Taking two semesters of the same foreign language at a community college;
- Or, for some majors at some universities, providing a transcript showing that you took three years of the same foreign language in high school, earning at least a C average the last year. Some majors and colleges within the universities require specific foreign languages or more foreign language credits.

What if I want to attend a CSU campus but am not sure which one?

If you know you are going to attend a CSU campus, you can take a set of courses called GE-Breadth units instead of the IGETC courses or the required courses for a specific CSU campus. GE-Breadth requires a minimum of 37–39 semester units of lower-division courses. Students who complete this set of courses have fulfilled all lower-division GE requirements at any CSU campus. No proof of proficiency in a foreign language is required.

If students plan carefully, they can take the same courses to satisfy the IGETC, GE-Breadth, and the associate degree requirements. Generally the IGETC list of courses is smaller than the ones allowed under GE-Breadth or for an associate's degree. So if you are choosing

courses to meet GE requirements, start with the IGETC course list.

It is always important to plan your schedule with the help of a community college counselor or transfer center. It is even more important to do so if you are not sure which university you want to attend and/or what major you want to pursue. Well-meaning advice from friends, teachers, or others could cost you time and money.

If I complete a community college's transfer program, must I do anything else to be accepted by the state university of my choice?

Some universities demand a specific GPA or other requirements from transfer students. If the university or major you have chosen is particularly popular, the requirements are likely to be tougher. Go to the university's website and also speak to your community college counselor.

Where can I find out more?

Talk to your high school and community college counselors. Look for notices of open houses or informational meetings sponsored by the community colleges in your area. Find your local community college on the Internet. For further information, see the following websites:

- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office: www.cccco.edu
- A website where you can apply for financial aid for community college: www.icanaffordcollege.com
- University of California Office of the President: www.ucop.edu and www.ucop.edu/pathways
- California State University system: www.calstate.edu and www.csumentor.edu

In addition, you can download for free three student/parent guides published by EdSource: *A Guide to California's Community Colleges*, *A Guide to CSU Admissions Policies*, and *A Guide to UC Admissions Policies*. For these reports, go to www.edsource.org and click on Publications in the yellow bar.

Are you ready for college?

- ✓ Are you taking college-prep courses?
- ✓ Are you planning to take English and math classes your senior year?
- ✓ Have you talked with your high school counselor or administrator about college?
- ✓ Have you looked for notices of open houses or informational meetings sponsored by local community colleges or gone online to see what they have to offer?
- ✓ Have you visited your local community colleges and made an appointment to see a counselor?
- ✓ If you need financial help, have you talked to the financial aid office at your local community college and visited online www.icanaffordcollege.com?

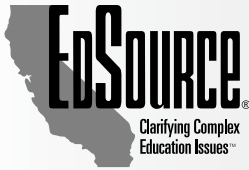


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A Guide to CSU Admissions Policies

The California State University (CSU) system, which has 23 campuses across the state, traditionally accepts the top third of the state's students based on high school grades and admissions test scores.

This guide describes CSU admissions policies generally. For more detailed information, talk to your high school counselor or the administrator in charge of helping students get into college. You can also go to www.csumentor.edu. In addition, see www.californiacolleges.edu for information on all colleges and universities in California.

What high school courses are required?

To meet *minimum* eligibility requirements for CSU, you must pass (with *at least* a C) 15 one-year courses, referred to as the “a–g” college-prep sequence:

- two years of history/social science—one year on the United States and one year on the world;
- four years of English language arts;
- three years of math through at least Algebra II or Integrated Math III;
- two years of laboratory science—one biological and one physical;
- two years of the same foreign language;
- one year of visual/performing arts; and
- one year of an elective from one of the above subjects.

You must take at least seven of these “a–g” courses during your junior and senior years. Your high school counselor will have a list of the courses at your school that meet CSU requirements. Because these are the same courses required by the University of California (UC), most high schools list their approved courses on the UC website:

www.ucop.edu/doorways/list

Some students take some of these courses—such as Algebra I or a foreign language—in middle school and receive high school credit, often by passing a proficiency exam. In addition, if you can demonstrate knowledge that is equivalent to two years of studying a foreign language, you may be able to waive the foreign language requirement.

If your native language is not English and you have not taken three full years of high school English, you must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). See your high school counselor or go to www.ets.org/toefl to find out more. Also check with the CSU campus you are interested in to see what your TOEFL score must be to be admitted.

Which grades count?

For the eligibility formula, the grades you earn in the “a–g” college-prep courses taken during your sophomore and junior years count toward the grade-point average (GPA). The GPA is based on a 4.0 scale (A=4). Add one extra point for each A, B, or C grade earned in up to four approved honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. (For example, an A in an honors course would equal five.) Many campuses will grant college credit for AP or IB courses if you do well on an end-of-course exam.

Is taking the minimum enough?

Just taking the minimum courses required may not be enough to qualify you for the campus or major of your choice. A few highly competitive campuses, such as Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo (SLO), choose students who have taken extra courses in advanced math, foreign language, science, and English. They also look at whether students have participated in extracurricular activities, done community service, held leadership positions, and worked. If students are applying for a particular major, work experience in that major is especially helpful.

Competitive campuses and high-demand majors are referred to as “impacted campuses” or “impacted programs.” To see which campuses and programs are impacted, go to: www.calstate.edu/ar/impactioninfo.shtml

CSU campuses also consider your senior year grades and courses before granting final admittance. Impacted campuses may review your high school freshmen grades as well.

Students with a GPA below 2.0 are generally not admitted to a CSU. At some impacted campuses, the average student has a GPA between 3.5 and 4.0. If you earn a 3.0 GPA, you are considered eligible for CSU no matter how well you did on admissions tests. But being eligible does not always translate into being accepted at your campus of choice. If you are eligible, your qualifications will be weighed against others who are also applying.

What admissions tests are required?

CSU requires students to submit scores on *one* of two tests that include math and English:

- the ACT Assessment; *or*
- the new SAT, which is sometimes referred to as the SAT-R. (The “R” stands for “reasoning.”) It replaces the SAT I.

Most California students choose to take the SAT, which was changed in March 2005. Students in the class of 2006 should take the new SAT, which has 2400 total possible points and is divided into three sections—writing, critical reading, and mathematics. Each count for a third of the exam. The new exam includes a student-written essay and topics from Algebra II (or Integrated Math III).

Most high schools offer students an opportunity to take the exam at school. Some offer preparation courses, or you can go online for sample test questions at www.collegeboard.com. In addition, you can take the new PSAT, which is offered in October of your sophomore and junior years, as a practice test. Books that help you prepare for the SAT or ACT are sold in bookstores and are available in public libraries. Your school library, counseling department, or College/Career Center may also have them. Or go to a free, interactive website at: <http://testprep.cavhs.org>

If you don't do well the first time you take an admissions exam, you can take it again and use the higher score when applying for admission.

How does CSU determine my eligibility?

CSU considers your grades and test scores to determine your eligibility. Higher grades in the college-prep courses can offset lower test scores and vice versa. The eligibility index is at: www.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school

How do I apply to CSU?

Unless there are special circumstances, CSU wants you to apply online. Ask your high school counselor or administrator for help and also go to the CSU website at www.csumentor.edu. You need to send an application to each campus you are interested in attending, but you can use the same application form.

Applying to more than one campus gives you more chances for acceptance at a campus of your choosing. CSU also provides a re-routing option to eligible applicants who are rejected by their campuses of choice to other campuses. CSU designates geographical “service areas” for its campuses. Eligible applicants from high schools in a campus’s service area are guaranteed admission to some program at that campus with one exception: Cal Poly at SLO. Students in that service area who don’t qualify are re-routed to a nearby campus.

Application fees are \$55 per campus. Applications should be submitted during the initial filing period between Oct. 1 and Nov. 30 for admission the next fall. Each year some campuses—particularly impacted ones—only accept applications during the initial filing period. Check www.csumentor.edu/filing_status to see which campuses have limited filing periods for the year you plan to enter.

If the cost of applying is a concern, apply for a fee waiver, which is built in when you apply online.

Do I have to take placement tests?

Once you are accepted to a CSU campus, you will have to take placement tests in English and math (unless your SAT or ACT scores reach a certain level). These placement tests determine which level of courses you are ready for. If the tests show you are not yet ready for college-level work, you will be placed in a remedial class that offers no credit.

At some high schools, you can take an expanded version of the English and math STAR tests taken by juniors each spring. If you test proficient in the enhanced test, CSU considers you ready for college and you do not have to take placement tests. If you don’t test proficient, then you can take steps to improve your skills and knowledge by taking English and math courses offered at your high school or community college during your senior year.

Although all high schools must offer the STAR tests, each high school can decide whether to offer the expanded CSU version. If you are a junior, ask your high school counselor or administrator if it would be appropriate for you to take this expanded version.

There is extra help for some students

Some organizations are aimed at students who are underrepresented in college:

- The California Student Aid Commission, www.csac.ca.gov provides financial aid to low-income students.
- The United Negro College Fund, www.uncf.org, helps African Americans.
- The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) at www.maldef.org aids Latinos. MALDEF also helps recent immigrants understand the requirements of Assembly Bill (AB) 540, which permits undocumented high school graduates to enroll in either CSU or UC and pay the state resident fee. High school counselors or other administrators may also know about AB 540.

What if I can’t afford to go to college?

The average fees in 2003–04 for a CSU campus were \$2,550 plus an additional \$1,195 for books. Other expenses depend on where you live.


There are many ways students can finance a college education, including academic or need-based scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs. If you need help, go to the CSU website, www.csumentor.edu, and click on “Financial Aid.”

Students can also qualify for loans and Pell grants (which don’t have to be repaid) from the federal government. Go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov> for information in both English and Spanish. The “free application for federal student aid” (FAFSA) form can be used to apply for all federal student aid. You can get that form at www.fafsa.ed.gov or call 1-800-4-FED-AID.

Corporations, nonprofit groups, and individuals offer scholarships based on a wide range of criteria. For more information, see FinAid at www.fafsa.org. You can also do a search on the Internet and in your local library and talk to the counselor or the Career/College Center at your high school.

What if I don’t meet CSU’s eligibility requirements?

Each CSU campus also has an Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) for students who are low-income, academically underprepared, or lacking the required high school courses, grades, or tests scores but who have demonstrated the potential for academic success. Go to the website of the CSU you would like to attend and search for its EOP program to see if you can qualify.

Or you can first attend a low-cost public community college (see www.cccco.edu) and then transfer to a CSU or UC (see www.ucop.edu). Two EdSource guides on community colleges can be downloaded for free at www.edsource.org (click on Publications in the yellow bar). 

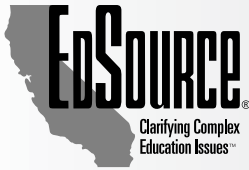


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A Guide to UC Admissions Policies

Each November many of the state's best high school students apply to enter the University of California (UC) system, which has nine undergraduate campuses across the state. The California Master Plan for Higher Education provides that UC accept the top 12.5% of high school graduating seniors statewide who qualify for admission based on an eligibility formula that includes grades in specific courses and admissions test scores.

This student/parent guide describes UC admissions policies generally. For detailed information on what to do to be eligible for admission to UC, students should talk to their high school counselor or the administrator in charge of helping students get into college. You can also go to www.ucop.edu/pathways. In addition, see www.californiacolleges.edu for information on all colleges and universities in California.

Some students who are UC-bound choose to go to a low-cost community college first. UC gives *first priority* to students transferring from a community college. For more information, see EdSource's guides on community colleges at www.edsource.org.

What high school courses does UC require?

To meet *minimum* eligibility requirements, students must pass (with at least a C) 15 one-year courses, referred to as the “a–g” college-prep sequence:

- two years of history/social science—one year on the United States and one year on the world;
- four years of English language arts;
- three years of math through *at least* Algebra II or Integrated Math III (four years recommended);
- two years of laboratory science in two of three disciplines: biology, chemistry, and physics (three years recommended);
- two years of the same foreign language (three years recommended);
- one year of visual/performing arts; and
- one year of an elective from one of the above subjects.

Students must take at least seven of these “a–g” courses during their junior and senior years. Your high school counselor will have a list of your school's courses that meet UC requirements. Most high schools list their approved courses on the web at: www.ucop.edu/doorways/list

Some students take one or more of these courses—such as Algebra I, Geometry, or a foreign language—in middle school and receive high school credit, often by passing a proficiency exam.

The “a–g” college-prep courses are the *minimum* requirement. To be competitive in the UC system, it is good to take as many as four years each of English, math, social science, laboratory science, and foreign language.

UC admissions officers know what courses are available in your high school. They're more impressed by students who are successful in challenging courses than those who take easier courses to boost their grade-point averages.

Which grades count in determining grade-point average for UC eligibility?

For the eligibility formula, *only* the grades a student earns in the “a–g” courses taken during their sophomore and junior years count toward the grade-point average (GPA). The GPA is based on a 4.0 scale (A=4). Add one extra point for each A, B, or C grade from up to four approved honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or transferable college courses. (Thus an A in an honors course would equal five points.) Many campuses will grant college credit for AP or IB courses if you do well on an end-of-course exam.

Beginning in fall 2007, a *minimum* GPA of 3.0 is required to be eligible for UC. (Prior to fall 2007, a GPA of *at least* 2.8 is needed.) For the most competitive campuses, such as UC–Berkeley, UCLA, or UC–San Diego, many students earn GPAs near 4.0 (or higher by taking honors courses).

UC campuses also consider a student's senior year grades and courses before granting final admittance, and all freshmen year “a–g” courses must be completed with a grade of C or higher.

What admissions tests are required?

UC requires either:

- the ACT Assessment plus the new ACT Writing Test; *or*
- the new SAT, which is sometimes referred to as the SAT-R. (The “R” stands for “reasoning.”) It replaces the SAT I.

In addition, students must complete two SAT Subject Tests (formerly called SAT IIs) in two different subject areas: history/social science, literature, Mathematics II, laboratory science, or language other than English. It is best to take the specific Subject Tests as soon as you have finished the high school course in that subject. (A Subject Test is sometimes referred to as an SAT-S.)

For more information on UC's admission testing requirements, see: www.ucop.edu/pathways/ucnotes/march05/newsI.html

The new SAT has 2400 total possible points and is divided into three sections—writing, critical reading, and mathematics—which each count for a third of the exam. It includes a student-written essay and topics from Algebra II (or Integrated Math III).

Most high schools offer the SAT. Some offer preparation courses. You can go online for sample test questions at www.collegeboard.com or, for the ACT, at www.actstudent.org. You can also take the new PSAT, which is offered in October of your sophomore and junior years, as a practice test for the SAT. Books that help you prepare for admissions tests are sold in bookstores and are available in public libraries. Your school library, counseling department, or College/Career Center may also have them. Or go to a free, interactive website at: <http://testprep.cavhs.org>

If you don't do well the first time you take an admissions exam, you can take it again. The university will use the highest scores from a single testing administration. (In other words, you can't use a math score from one test and a reading score from a test taken at a different time.)

How does UC determine my eligibility?

UC has an eligibility index based on “a–g” course grades plus admissions test scores. For the class of 2006, the SAT and Subject Test scores will be weighted equally. The weighting system could change for the class of 2007 after UC officials evaluate how well it worked in 2006. The new UC eligibility index will be available at www.ucop.edu/pathways in late spring 2005.

Once you are accepted to a UC campus, you will have to take placement tests in English and math (unless your SAT or ACT scores reach a certain level). These placement tests determine which level of courses you are ready for. If the tests show you are not yet ready for college-level work, you will be placed in a remedial class that offers no credit.

Are grades and admissions test scores all that matter?

If students meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the index and complete their application (which includes responding to three personal statement questions), they are eligible to enter the UC system; but they are not guaranteed the campus of their choice. Each campus has its own selection criteria, which usually include more than the minimum test and grade requirements.

Some UC campuses are very selective. Your chances for admission to a campus you are interested in increase significantly when you apply to several campuses. Although you use only one application form for the whole system, you must include \$55 per campus. If you have access to the Internet, UC wants you to apply online. If application fees are a concern, apply for a fee waiver, which is built in when you apply online.

If you are eligible but not selected for admission to one of the campuses of your choice, your application may be placed in the UC referral pool where you are given a chance to enroll at another UC campus that has space.

All campus admissions officials rely on a “comprehensive review” process of eligible students that considers academic performance, personal achievements, and passion and growth in specific areas of their life, such as art, music, or science. They look at knowledge of foreign languages, leadership, and community involvement. Special projects, academic accomplishments in light of the student’s life experiences and special circumstances, and the location of the student’s secondary school and home are considered. In addition, individual universities try to accept students with a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and accomplishments.

What you write (in response to the personal statement questions) about who you are and what you have accomplished plays a key role in comprehensive review. You need to take great care in writing your responses and seek feedback from teachers, counselors, and parents before submitting the application.

There is extra help for some students

Some organizations focus on helping students who are underrepresented in college:

- The California Student Aid Commission, www.csac.ca.gov, provides financial aid to low-income students.
- The United Negro College Fund, www.uncf.org, helps African Americans.
- The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), www.maldef.org, aids Latinos. MALDEF also helps recent immigrants understand the requirements of Assembly Bill (AB) 540, which permits undocumented high school graduates to enroll in UC and pay the state resident fee. High school counselors or other administrators may also know about AB 540.

Are there any exceptions to these criteria?

There are two additional paths to UC eligibility:

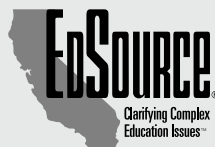
Eligibility in the Local Context: Under this program, the top 4% of students (based on grades) in the graduating class of every high school are eligible for UC if they complete all 15 of the “a–g” college-prep courses with at least a C and take the SAT and two Subject Tests. (By the end of their junior year, they must have successfully completed at least 11 of those courses, including one history/social science, three English, three math, one laboratory science, one foreign language, and two other “a–g” courses.) UC notifies students who appear to be eligible for this program at the beginning of their senior year. Under Eligibility in the Local Context, students are admitted to a specific campus, though not necessarily their campus of choice.

Eligibility by Examination Alone: If students achieve a high enough score on the SAT (or the ACT tests) *plus* two SAT Subject Tests, they are eligible to enter the UC system. Information on requirements for this program will be available in September 2005. (See www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions.)

Students cannot qualify by examination alone if they have completed 12 or more units of transferable coursework at another college after high school, or if they have taken transferable college courses in any subject covered by the SAT Subject Tests.

What if I can’t afford to go to college?

There are many ways students can finance a college education, including academic or need-based scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs. If you need help, go to www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions and click on “Paying for UC.” You can go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov> and www.fafsa.ed.gov or call 1-800-4-FED-AID for help filling out applications for federal aid. Corporations, nonprofit groups, and individuals offer scholarships based on a wide-range of criteria. For more information on financial aid, go to www.fafsa.org. Or do a search yourself on the Internet and in your local library. You can also talk to the counselor or Career/College Center at your high school. ☐



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