

## A Guide to CSU Admissions Policies

California State University (CSU) has 23 campuses across the state. These campuses accept the top third of the state's students based on high school grades and scores on admissions tests. This guide describes CSU admissions policies generally. For more detailed information, talk to your high school counselor or administrator and visit [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu).

### *What high school courses does CSU require?*

To meet *minimum* eligibility requirements, students must pass 15 one-year high school college-prep courses with at least a C grade:

- two years of history/social science;
- four years of English;
- three years of math through at least Algebra II or Integrated Math III;
- two years of laboratory science, including one biological (biology) and one physical (chemistry or physics);
- two years of the same foreign language;
- one year of visual/performing arts (such as dance, drama, music, or drawing); and
- one year of an elective chosen from the University of California (UC) "a–g" list.

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 your school's courses that meet CSU requirements. Most high schools also list their UC/CSU-approved courses at [doorways.ucop.edu/list](http://doorways.ucop.edu/list).

Some students take courses such as Algebra I or a foreign language in middle school and receive high school credit. And if you can demonstrate knowledge that is

equivalent to two years of studying a language other than English, you may be able to waive the foreign language requirement.

If you have not attended for at least three years a high school or postsecondary school where classes are taught primarily in English, you must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). (See [www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl).) Check with CSU campuses to see what your TOEFL score must be to be admitted.

### *Is taking the minimum number of courses enough?*

You will likely need more if the campus or major you are pursuing is competitive. Check with the campus and major department or talk with your high school counselor.

### *How does CSU determine my eligibility?*

Eligibility is based on your grade-point average (GPA) in the "a–g" courses and scores on college admissions tests. Higher grades can offset lower test scores and vice versa. See the index at [www.csumentor.edu/planning/high\\_school/cal\\_residents.asp](http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school/cal_residents.asp).

### *Which grades count in determining GPA?*

The preliminary grade-point average includes grades earned in "a–g" courses taken during your sophomore and junior years. The GPA is based on a 4.0 scale (A=4, B=3, C=2). You may boost your GPA by taking up to eight semesters of UC-approved honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses (add 1 point for each A, B, or C semester grade so that A=5, B=4, C=3). You may also earn college credit for AP or IB courses if you do well on end-of-course exams. CSU also considers your senior year grades and courses before granting final admittance.

Students with a GPA below 2.0 are generally not admitted. If you earn a 3.0 GPA or higher, you typically are guaranteed admission to your local campus regardless of your admissions test scores. But you may need good test scores or a higher GPA to be admitted to some out-of-area campuses.

In 2010–11, eligible local students were not guaranteed admission at two campuses—Cal Poly and San Diego State—because all majors were "impacted." That means they were in high demand and therefore had higher admissions standards, often including a GPA closer to 4.0. That year, two majors—Nursing and Architecture—were impacted on all campuses. For a list of impacted campuses and majors, see [www.calstate.edu/sas/impactioninfo.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/sas/impactioninfo.shtml).

To ensure acceptance, apply to multiple campuses—including your local campus. If your local campus is impacted, make sure you apply to at least one campus that has room for all qualified applicants. Ask your high school counselor which campuses those are.

### *What college entrance tests are required?*

Admissions tests indicate your readiness for college-level work. CSU requires *either*

- the ACT Assessment (English, math, science); or
- the SAT Reasoning Test (English, math, but not science; the writing section score is not considered).

Most California high schools offer the ACT and SAT tests as well as the PSAT—a practice test given in October of your sophomore and junior years. Some high schools also offer preparation courses. In addition, bookstores, public libraries, and your school likely have SAT and ACT preparation guidebooks. You can also find help online for the SAT at [testprep.cavhs.org](http://testprep.cavhs.org). For help with test

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preparation and for information on test fee waivers, go to [www.collegeboard.com/practice](http://www.collegeboard.com/practice) (SAT) and [www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html](http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html) (ACT). In 2010, the ACT test cost \$32 and the SAT cost \$45.

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. You can submit scores from tests taken at different times. CSU uses the best combination of those scores.

### How and when do I apply?

Apply online at [www.csumentor.edu/AdmissionApp/](http://www.csumentor.edu/AdmissionApp/). Applications should be

submitted between Oct. 1 and Nov. 30 for admission the next fall. For some campuses, it is important to file early. Some campuses want admissions test scores from no later than the October test.

With CSU facing state budget cutbacks, more campuses are being forced to limit enrollment, so applying early for fall (rather than winter or spring) is the best strategy. Check [www.csumentor.edu/filing\\_status](http://www.csumentor.edu/filing_status) to see campuses that have limited filing times.

You can send the same application to each campus you are considering. Application fees are \$55 per campus. You can apply for a fee waiver as part of the online application.

### Do I have to take placement tests?

Placement tests determine which level of college courses you can take or if you need to take a no-credit remedial class. You have to take placement tests in English and math unless your SAT, ACT, AP, or Early Assessment Program (EAP) test scores are high enough. CSU will notify you if, when, and where you need to take placement tests.

The EAP, offered to *high school juniors*, is an expanded version of the English and math STAR tests that students take each spring. (Only students taking Algebra II or a higher level of math can take the math EAP.) If you score "exempt," you don't have to take placement tests. If you are not "exempt" in either subject, then you may be able to avoid placement tests by taking specific English or math courses offered at your high school or community college during your senior year.

To participate in the EAP, look for the sections of your STAR tests that are marked by the CSU logo. Be sure to fill in the bubble that indicates you want your EAP results to be released to CSU. For more information and for help in preparing for the EAP, see [www.csusuccess.org/shome](http://www.csusuccess.org/shome).

By summer 2012, CSU will begin implementing an Early Start program, which will include English and math classes that seniors can take before entering CSU if their test scores show they are not college-ready. Check with your local campus.

### What if I don't meet CSU's eligibility requirements?

Some campuses' Educational Opportunity Programs advocate for students who do not meet eligibility standards but have demonstrated the potential for academic success. Go to the website of the campus you would like to attend and search for its EOP program or go to [www.calstate.edu/sas/eop/](http://www.calstate.edu/sas/eop/).

Or you can first attend a low-cost public community college (see [www.cccco.edu/StudentSupport/tabid/925/Default.aspx](http://www.cccco.edu/StudentSupport/tabid/925/Default.aspx)) and then transfer to CSU or UC. See *Community College: A first step to a bachelor's degree* at [www.edsource.org/pub\\_CCfirststep\\_11-09.html](http://www.edsource.org/pub_CCfirststep_11-09.html). 

### What if I can't afford to go to college?

You can finance your education through academic or need-based scholarships and grants (which don't have to be repaid), loans, and work-study programs. Financial aid can help with certain college living expenses as well as fees. If you're not sure you're eligible, apply anyway. In general, it is good to apply well before the deadline, but not before January. All financial information is confidential. For a breakdown of costs by campus and living situation, see [www.calstate.edu/SAS/fa\\_coa.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/SAS/fa_coa.shtml).

**Federal:** Both part-time and full-time students from low-income families may qualify for Pell grants, and most students can qualify for federal loans. Visit [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov) for information in English and Spanish. The deadline to apply is June 30 for the following school year. You must fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), which is available at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). The FAFSA asks for income tax information, but families who have not filed their returns before the financial aid deadline can give estimates and make needed changes later online. Students can also amend their application if a family's financial situation changes—for example, if a parent loses a job.

**State:** Students from low-income families can apply for Cal Grants. For information in English and Spanish, visit the California Student Aid Commission's website ([www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org)). The deadline to apply is March 2 for the following school year. You need a FAFSA and a verified GPA. Make sure your high school submits the verified GPA by March 2.

**CSU:** See [www.csumentor.edu/FinAid](http://www.csumentor.edu/FinAid).

**California Community Colleges:** See [www.icanaffordcollege.com](http://www.icanaffordcollege.com).

#### Organizations supporting students who are under-represented in college:

- The United Negro College Fund at [www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org).
- The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) at [www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org). MALDEF also helps undocumented California high school graduates understand the requirements of Assembly Bill (AB) 540, which permits them to enroll in CSU and pay the less costly state resident fee. High school counselors may also know about AB 540.
- The California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth at [www.chafee.csac.ca.gov](http://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov). Also see the Foster Care Ombudsman website at [www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/college.html](http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/college.html).

**Other:** Corporations, nonprofit groups, the military, and individuals offer scholarships based on a wide range of criteria. See [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org). You can also search the Internet, visit your local library, and talk to your high school counselor or administrator.