



How To Get To College

A Guide to Preparing for the California State University



You Can Make It Happen!

Preparing for college is a journey with a great reward at the end: a college degree. A college degree can help you reach your dreams. How do you get there? The first thing to know is that you can make it happen if you are willing to prepare yourself for college. It's best to start early but it's never too late to start getting serious about school. What does it take? The lists for each grade level below explain what you need to do now to prepare for college. You can also find information on our websites: visit www.calstate.edu to learn about the CSU and its 23 outstanding campuses; or www.csumentor.edu for specific information about admissions, including how to apply to a CSU campus. You can also contact the CSU admissions division at (562) 951-4726 for more information.

Get An Early Start:

It's never too soon to start thinking about college; in fact there are things students and families can do in middle school to start planning.

6th Grade

Students:

- Meet with the school counselor and tell the counselor that your goal is to attend college. Select classes that will help you prepare for college. Develop good study habits and shoot for As and Bs in all your classes.

Families:

- Help your kids with homework, but encourage them to develop independent and critical thinking skills through reading, writing, solving problems and asking questions.

7th Grade

Students:

- Visit the school counselor in the fall and ask the counselor to help you select classes that will prepare you for college.
- Take English and mathematics, such as pre-algebra. Try to earn As and Bs and put extra effort into English and math.

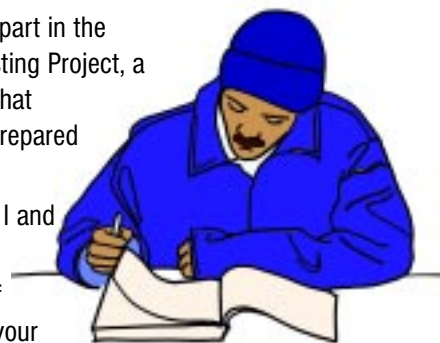
Families:

- Ask the school counselor if your child is reading and doing math at grade level.
- Start saving for college. Why? Even a few dollars a week will impress upon your children the importance of making a commitment to get a college education. Help your kids find ways to earn money (like babysitting, yard work, odd jobs) so they can start saving part of their earnings for college. Consider opening a college savings account at ScholarShare (www.scholarshare.com).

8th Grade

Students:

- Find out if the school takes part in the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project, a readiness assessment test that determines if students are prepared to take Algebra.
- Take pre-algebra or Algebra I and a foreign language course.
- Shoot for As and Bs in all of your classes. Doing well in your course work will improve your chances of getting into college (and the college of your choice).
- Stay focused on your classes and on your homework. Keeping up with your homework will help you master the study skills you need to be successful in high school and college.
- Sign up to take the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) in September of the 8th or 9th grade. This test will help you gauge where you're doing well and where you need to improve.
- Ask your counselor about taking EXPLORE, an online assessment testing program offered by American College Testing (ACT). EXPLORE is coordinated and administered by the school. The program helps students focus on academic achievement, educational plans and career possibilities. See www.act.org/explore for more information.



Families:

- Meet with the school counselor and/or teachers to see how your student is doing in his or her classes.
- Visit college campuses. Talk to neighbors, relatives or friends with students in college to learn about their experiences.
- Attend college information programs at the middle school. Representatives from different schools will share information on programs, scholarships and financial aid.
- Talk to your kids about the importance of studying hard and getting good grades to prepare for high school and college.

What Classes Should I Take in High School?

(9th through 12th Grades)

Everyone who wants to enter the California State University as a freshman must take these classes. Beginning in fall 2003, the California State University and the University of California will have the same college preparatory pattern. (Shoot for As and Bs in your courses, but earn at least a C grade. Remember, you need to have a 3.0 overall GPA.)

- **English:** 4 years of college preparatory English composition and literature (take one each year).
- **Math:** 3 years (4 years is recommended), including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or higher mathematics (take one each year).
- **History and Social Science:** 2 years, including 1 year of U.S. history (or 1 semester of U.S. history and 1 semester of civics or American government) and 1 year of social science.
- **Laboratory Science:** 2 years, including 1 biological science and 1 physical science.
- **Language (other than English):** 2 years of the same language (American Sign Language is applicable).
- **Visual and Performing Arts:** 1 year of dance, drama or theater, music, or visual art.
- **College Preparatory Elective:** 1 more year of any college preparatory subject.

These classes total 15 units (a unit equals one year or two semesters). You will need to plan to take four of these classes almost every year you are in high school.

Why Are These Courses Important?

Reading, writing, math and science form the foundation upon which to build your knowledge and expand your mind. It's important to master these courses in middle school and high school as they will give you the tools you need to succeed in college and beyond:

Reading: Reading—literature, fiction and non-fiction—and lots of it helps improve vocabulary, verbal skills and writing ability.

Writing: Expressing yourself well is important in every field of endeavor. Learn good research and writing techniques. Get feedback and give yourself plenty of time to rewrite and edit your writing assignments to do the best job possible.

Computing: In today's technological world, having an understanding of math and science is a must. Progressing from basic math to algebra to geometry, calculus and trigonometry will give you the tools to open your mind to new ways of thinking and problem solving.

What Grades Do I Need?

The CSU takes the top third of California high school graduates (and community college transfer students who have 56 or more transfer credits). If your GPA (grade point average) in the college prep courses taken in 10th through 12th grades is 3.0 and above, you are automatically eligible. If your GPA is between 2.0 and 3.0, your eligibility also depends on how well you do on the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT (American College Testing) college entrance tests. See your counselor or log on to www.csumentor.edu for more information.

Note: *Chico, Long Beach, San Diego and San Luis Obispo require higher GPAs and test scores for admission. The ACT or SAT must be taken by the October test date. See www.csumentor.edu for more information.*

How Will I Pay for College?

Good news: The CSU has one of the lowest fees in the nation for a four-year public university—approximately \$2,500 a year! In addition, you, like almost half of the CSU's students, may qualify for financial aid. If you earn good grades in high school and meet financial need requirements, you are guaranteed a Cal Grant—free money for college. File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and have your high school provide your GPA to the California State Student Aid Commission by March 2. Visit www.csumentor.edu to find out more about financial aid at the CSU. Visit www.csac.ca.gov to learn more about Cal Grants and file a FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Need Help?

Click on www.calstate.edu for information about the CSU's 23 campuses. For information on financial aid and admission, including how to apply to a CSU campus, visit www.csumentor.edu. The CSUMentor website features:

- Admission information, including how to apply to a CSU campus online
- Virtual tours of each campus
- Financial aid information
- Answers to commonly asked questions
- A student planner for each grade level
- And more!





THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of the Chancellor • 401 Golden Shore • Long Beach, CA 90802-4210