**Concerns and Questions about Applying for College, Class of 2018**

Below is a partial compilation of questions that students have about applying for colleges. Answers are based upon some research and my own perspectives. This document is at the top of our Moodle class page to access hyperlinks.

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| Issue/Question | Some Possible Ways to Address Question |  |
| 1. What should be my major? | When choosing among possible career path, other things being equal, do the most challenging program possible first  That is, aim high! In other words, if you are debating between a career that is relatively easy to go into and one that requires extreme blood, sweat and tears do the tough one first, when you have the energy of youth and few responsibilities:  For good overviews on job growth, requirements, etc., see government Occupational Outlook Handbook, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/> |  |
| 1. Where do I apply for college loans, grants and scholarships? | Apply for federal financial aid, <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>  You will be eligible for Cal grants through FAFSA but see, <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=48>  for more info, especially if you are a Dreamer Kid.  Above is based primarily on income of family.  Then colleges will also award money based not just on other factors, including merit. Go to financial aid website of prospective colleges for more info. |  |
| 1. Where should I apply to college? | Apply to two or three reach schools, three to five match schools, and two or three safety schools, plus community colleges. Consider private schools (because with scholarships may match public cost, see Cal Lutheran, for example). See also public schools in other states that are member of Western Undergraduate Exchange (discounted tuition) See: <http://www.wiche.edu/wue>  Investigate community colleges honors programs (not just AVC), you can go to any community college.  Then in the spring, you have many choices.  Another site comparing schools: <https://www.collegeatlas.org>  (please note, your range and number may vary depending upon your major, etc) |  |
| 1. Are you in the top 9% of your high school class? | If so, you are accepted into one of the UCs (not necessarily the one you want) through the Eligibility in Local Context program. “Top 9% of each high school offered a place in UC” For more info see: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/freshman/california-residents/local-path/> |  |
| 1. Help for college application fees??!! | If you qualify for SAT waiver, you also qualify for four college application fee waivers. You can also call up private schools and ask for waivers. Sometimes you will get postcards waiving your fee, if you apply to a college (check out the college against data, it may not be a good choice)  <https://blog.prepscholar.com/college-application-fee-waiver> |  |
| 1. Test scores: what is the relative weight of test scores and GPA for getting into college? | Both matter—depends on school. For some schools, GPA is high enough, standardized test scores aren’t important, for competitive schools, both are important.  At noncompetitive Cal State schools, non-impacted majors: <https://www2.calstate.edu/apply/eligibility-index>  Really only need a 3.0 gpa (unweighted)  For UC interquartile range for standardized scores, see <https://www.thoughtco.com/sat-scores-for-university-of-california-campuses-788665> |  |
| 1. What are the chances of getting into a good school based on my high school career? | Look at statistical data for each college. Who is accepted with what GPAs, etc?  See [Cappex.com](https://www.cappex.com/) |  |
| 1. How much grant money do you get if you are low income? | It can be a full ride, but usually a mixture of grants, work-study, loans.  See <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/> |  |
| 1. If going to a community college, can you transfer in time;what are requirements for transferring? | Best thing to do is to talk to a community college counselor about plan and major. If focused, can do so quickly, within two years. Here is the official transfer website: <http://www.assist.org/web-assist/welcome.html>  Be careful, make sure everything leads to transfer. Especially, don’t go to a private school whose credits CSU or UC won’t accept. |  |
| 1. Need help with personal essays | Find some online guides/books, start writing drafts, sharing with friends, teaches, family, revise, revise…revise…  See: for UC : <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/freshman/index.html> |  |
| 1. How long does it take to get a PhD? | Generally, three to five years to get a BA/BS  MA/MS: one to two years  PhD, another four to six years  Many people, first go to work in a field and then return for PhD. |  |
| 1. Evaluating the quality of schools | In general, go to the best school, where you will excel. Use various guides such as: <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges> |  |
| 1. What if I don’t have any, or hardly any extracurriculars? (We can’t all be Gandhi.) | First of all, look at everything you do – you might have them, without realizing it. Here’s a good link: <https://blog.prepscholar.com/no-extracurricular-activities-what-you-should-do>  Secondly, just be straightforward about it, in your app, and explain your choice. Maybe you needed to focus on academics more, because that is your great joy!!! |  |
| 1. Am I ready for a four-year college or should I go to a community college? | You might just want to defer this question, by applying to many colleges and then you can decide next spring. Often, financial aid is the crucial issue. However, family obligations may matter, and sometimes, people just may not be quite ready to leave the nest….and need more maturing before moving out. My advice is to keep your options open by applying to some four-year colleges. |  |
| 1. Help with applying with scholarships? | Here you really have to be an entrepreneur. I would camp out in the career center and get as many applications as possible. Unless you actually get a full-ride, all the private scholarships you receive will save thousands, but still not be enough. You will have to rely on grants (gifts) from the colleges, and a variety of loans. Work-study (you work for the school) will also be needed. For a good website for scholarships see: <https://www.fastweb.com/> Reality for most is—a mixed picture of loans/grants/scholarships. |  |
| 1. Beware of private for-profit colleges. | Taking your hard-earned money and making a profit may be all a college is good for. Beware of for-profit colleges that offer you lots of loans and a degree that is worthless. Research the lawsuits against Art Institutes. See  <http://www.collegeaffordabilityguide.org/online-colleges-sanctioned-by-government-organizations/> |  |
| 1. Beware of online programs. | Some are good, but would you hire someone who received their training while just sitting in front of a computer? Some online classes are helpful as part of a general program, but employers are often skeptical of online degrees.  See: <https://www.collegexpress.com/articles-and-advice/majors-and-academics/blog/pros-and-cons-online-college-education/> |  |
| 1. Beware of colleges using you for your athletic abilities and not providing a good education. | You may be promised an athletic scholarship, but be sure the school is right for you academically. Look at the gap between what they promise and what you will have to pay. Compare this amount to what you would be paying at other schools, private and public. Look at the rating of the college. |  |
| 1. What is it with all these rankings? Does it matter where you go? | Yes, it matters. Go the best school where you will excel. A degree from a well-respected school opens more doors for interviews, graduate school acceptance, etc. The rankings are based on many factors, and some of it are the intangibles of name recognition etc. For data see: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/05/does-it-matter-where-you-go-to-college/257227/>  However, many rankings can be manipulated. See:  <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/opinion/sunday/why-college-rankings-are-a-joke.html>  So if choosing between UC San Diego, and UC Santa Barbara, not so important, other factors may matter, but between Cal State X (except SLO) and UC… try to go to UC if you can swing it. |  |
| 1. Don’t specialize too early. | Tunnelvision is a great motivator in high school.  You love dogs. You want to be a veterinarian. You study biology with puppy-like intensity! Life is good.  However, in college, build a general foundation that will allow you to pursue many possible majors and possible graduate school degrees. A college degree is preferable to a trade school degree. A college degree in biology will open graduate science and med programs. If you find a major with “studies” after it, such as environmental studies, gender studies, etc, make it a minor….not a major.  See your major advisor in college for advice. Early. Talk to peer advisors in college, RAs in the dorms, etc.  Making A’s in college: <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2009/08/19/15-secrets-of-getting-good-grades-in-college> |  |
| 1. Should I declare a major when I apply to a college or go undecided? | This is a hard one to answer, and may be a situation that is best answered on a college by college basis. If you are genuinely undecided then obviously this makes sense. However, if you have a plan, and everything else in your application is pointing toward a particular major, then it makes sense to put in a major choice. Sometimes a major will be impacted, but you will have a back-up choice of still being accepted to the college. Again, research this on a school by school basis. See, for example, UCSB webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukWxxjdppGk&feature=youtu.be>  See: <https://www.noodle.com/articles/pros-and-cons-of-declaring-a-major-on-your-college-app>  See: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/files/freshman-admission-matrix.pdf>  Site shows that choice of major not a factor with a few exceptions (Berkeley, engineering)  For Cal State schools, impacted programs may be a problem:  It may be wise to apply to schools whose major you want is not impacted: <https://www2.calstate.edu/attend/impaction-at-the-csu>  Look at chart by major and also chart showing which colleges service AV students. |  |
| 1. Then there is *Early Decision* vs. *Early Action*? | Early decision is binding, early action is not. Certainly, can make sense if you fell in love with one school, to go for early decision or early action. Sometimes if you aren’t accepted, your application is then put into the larger pool.  These issues are usually for students applying to some of the top private schools. UC/Cal State don’t have these programs (although schools may send acceptances very early sometimes).  Consider: <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/early-action-vs-early-decision> |  |