

# Soquel High School College Handbook

The Soquel counseling office will educate and assist students in the process of applying for college, but in the end students need to take control of the process. This handbook is set up as a resource for students and parents to become educated in this process. The counseling department will guide, counsel, recommend, refer, suggest, and inform students about college applications. Decisions about where to apply and what to write about in their essays must, in the end, be the students'. Students are responsible for submitting applications on time, signing up for tests on time, asking teachers for recommendations, acquiring applications and filling out forms. The counseling department does not do these things for Soquel students—nor should the parents. In the End, students who are happiest about the college process are those who understand their abilities and needs best and who are, therefore, able to find schools that match those abilities and needs. These students have researched their lists well, asked tough questions, and, as a result, have found good matches, schools they truly embrace.

For the first time, Students are going to be asked to think carefully about their futures and then decide where they would like to continue their educational journey. This planning period is a time for self-reflection and understanding their interests, motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. The motto “Know Thyself” applies powerfully to this process. The more effort they place into this process, the more able they will be to decide where they want to be for the next four years.

To a very large degree, the student’s admission to college depends not on what they will do as a senior but on everything they have done in the last sixteen or seventeen years. But their attitude, energy, and efficiency during the next year will make a big difference, and knowing what they want and why they want it will give them the enthusiasm and direction to make the business of applying to college an adventure rather than an ordeal. It is a senior’s mission to organize and present himself/herself to each institution so they can appreciate and value the student’s achievements and potential contributions.

## Choosing a College

Choosing where to apply cannot be reduced to a series of either/or questions, but the usual list of considerations is still a good place to begin. Big or small? Public or private? East or West? Liberal Arts or pre-professional? Traditional or non-traditional? Ask as many questions as possible; any factor important to the student is worth plugging into the equation. Before examining colleges, the student must determine how he/she learns most effectively, what kind of curriculum will best suit their needs and goals, and what kind of environment will be most congenial, both academically and personally.

In choosing where to apply, one must eventually face the toughest question of all: will the college choose you? Assessing one's record, strengths, and weaknesses, and examining the college's reputation and statistics will give the student some idea. Knowing who a college has admitted or denied in the past can also give some clue, but it's dangerous to generalize too much from past decisions.. The admissions landscape is changing so rapidly that even academic profiles of students admitted five years ago are often out of date.

To that end, students should include realistic options on their lists. Naturally, these should be institution that the student would happily attend. These schools should be researched as carefully and thoughtfully as the most selective colleges on their list. The key is to cover all bases.

In assembling a list, students should balance the schools based on selectivity as determined by the academic statistics of accepted students. A preliminary list should consist of 15 colleges spread evenly between three ranges:

**Reach/High risk:** schools for which the student's academic profile is below that of the average accepted student or which have acceptance rates below 10%.

**Likelies:** schools for which the student's academic profile is roughly that of the average accepted student.

**Anchor/Low risk:** schools for which the student's academic profile is above that of the average accepted student.

## **Getting Started:**

Students should make this handbook the first entry in a personal college application file. The file should also include the following:

1. Notes on the various colleges they are considering
2. A record of colleges to which they will apply, along with their appropriate deadlines
3. A record of tests taken, date test was taken and to which colleges they have sent score reports
4. A record of Secondary School Reports they have turned in to the College Counseling Office
5. A record of interview appointments
6. A record of which teachers they have asked to write recommendations and when they gave them their recommendation requests.
7. Copies of the applications and essays they have completed and returned
8. A record of all correspondence between the student and the colleges
9. A record of application id's, web portals, and passwords.

# College Counseling Calendar

## Freshman Year:

The college application process begins freshman year of high school. For students who are interested in applying to a 4 year university or college, they will have to carefully plan the courses they will signing up for in their sophomore to senior years and to make sure they are taking the necessary courses for college admission requirements. Students should look carefully at the CSU/UC A-G requirements as well as private university requirements. They also need to consider community service and extra-curricular activities options available to them.

Overview of Criteria for Admissions:

### CSU

- A-G Requirements
- Rigorous Course of Study
- Strong GPA
- Standardized Tests

### UC Additional Requirements

- Personal Essay
- Subject Tests (2)
- Community Service
- Extra-curricular Activities (get involved in clubs or leadership)

### Privates Additional Requirements

- Letters of Recommendation
- Personal Essay
- Personal Interview
- Legacy
- Grade Trends
- Special Circumstances

## Sophomore Year:

During September

- Register for the PSAT in October (taken only once a year)
- Become active in a club, sport, drama or music, a community service organization or student leadership. Get involved

## **Things to consider:**

### **Evaluating Community College Pro's & Con's:**

#### Pros

- Good for students who want to save money
- Where the student's academics are not strong enough for admittance into 4 year college straight out of high school
- Community college offerings are often more diverse and specialized, and include many CTE options not available at 4 year colleges
- Provides better chance of admission into more competitive colleges, as a transfer student
- Just so you know, employers rarely ask where you went for your first two years of college
- Older adults are mixed with younger students
- More diversity of student class composition

#### Cons

- Students may not take community college seriously - treat it like a fifth year of high school
- Students often put their jobs before their classes
- Older adults are mixed with younger students. Some students feel disconnected
- No dorm and Fraternity or Sorority experience
- Loss of connectedness through transition to 4 year college

## **Junior Year:**

### **During spring:**

- begin to develop preliminary list of colleges
- plan and take appropriate standardized tests
- meet with the college counselor to discuss colleges and test planning
- visit colleges
- save graded papers to submit to colleges if required
- check out High School Transcript to verify there are no errors or missing information and give to the registrar to correct.
- perform well in classes
- apply for summer programs and classes

**During March:**

- take the March SAT Reasoning Test
- register for the April ACT if planned (check deadline )
- meet with the college counselor to review preliminary college list.
- register for the May SAT if planned (check deadline)
- this is a good time to take appropriate SAT Subject Tests/SAT II Test Options: Must be from 2 different areas (Practice at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com))  
English - Literature - History - U.S. History - World History - Mathematics - Science- Biology E/M - Chemistry – Physics – Languages (Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Spanish and English Language Proficiency)

**During April:**

- take the ACT April, if planned
- register for the June SAT (check deadline) [This is a good time to take appropriate SAT Subject Tests]
- register for the June ACT (check deadline)

**During May:**

- take SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests as planned with counselor
- take AP Tests, if appropriate
- register for the June SAT (check deadline) [This is a good time to take appropriate SAT Subject Tests]
- register for the June ACT (check deadline)
- meet with the college counselor to revise preliminary college list
- make sure any additional transcripts have been given to the Registrar

**During summer:**

- narrow list of college choices
- research, contact, and visit colleges
- request information from colleges
- develop drafts of college essays and “why I want to attend college Z”
- research scholarships ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) and [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com))
- make your summers count. Work, volunteer, take a summer class. Although Soquel High School does not require community service hours for graduation, colleges look for community service hours in evaluating applications.
- read the newspaper and summer books
- decide which standardized tests you need to take or retake and register as appropriate
- register for September ACT

## Senior Year:

### Let the fun Begin! Things to know:

#### When to apply & when to find out:

CSU: Oct. 1 – Nov. 30; notification varies but by March 31

UC: Nov. 1 – Nov. 30; notification March 1-31

Cabrillo: May (Running Start)

Private Colleges – Dec. to Feb.; notification March/April

Early Decision (binding) – to one school only that is your absolute #1 choice; obligated to commit and attend if accepted & financial package is reasonable; must withdraw other regular admission applications; notified in December

Early Action (non-binding)- early notification but can still compare admission & financial packages and commit in the spring

Single Choice Early Action – can only choose 1 college, but can delay commitment till spring when all regular admission colleges have made offers  
*Commitment due May 1*

#### Request Letters of Recommendation:

- When necessary, request them early, two to three weeks before application deadline
- Remember poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on the part of your counselor
- One option might be to request letters in the Spring of your Junior year and avoid the Senior rush in Fall
- Ask teachers who know you the best and with whom you hopefully did well in their class
- The general rule is that no more than two letters are required for any application
- Get to know your counselor well, visit often so that they can represent you in the best possible light.
- Counselors also nominate students for scholarship opportunities
- The better your counselor knows you, the better informed they are about your achievements and can make appropriate scholarship referrals

**During September:**

- narrow list of college choices
- talk to the college counselor if applying for Early Decision or Early Action
- submit transcript and SSR requests for EA/ED applications.
- register for October SAT
- register for November SAT
- register for October ACT
- meet with college representatives
- request teacher recommendations

**During October:**

- make a firm list of colleges to which you intend to apply
- discuss final application plans with the College Counselor
- finalize University of California and CSU choices and prepare the applications and essays
- file your CSU applications
- by Oct. 1, submit your application for November 1 Early Action or Early Decision deadlines
- submit transcript and SSR requests for applications due December 1-9 **NO LATER THAN October 22**
- submit transcript and SSR requests for applications due December 10-Jan 12 **NO LATER THAN October 29**
- register for October ACT
- register for November SAT
- register for December SAT
- register for December ACT

**During November:**

- file your UC and/or CSU application
- receive all applications
- send official test scores from testing agencies to colleges on your list
- pick up FAFSA and CSS Profile forms from the Counseling Office if you will be applying for financial aid
- file CSS Profile if applying ED
- register for December SAT
- register for December ACT
- submit transcript and SSR requests for applications due January 12-January 31 **NO LATER THAN November 16**

**During December:**

- finish all applications due in January; do not wait until 12/21 to submit
- take or register for any final standardized tests that you need
- if you have been admitted Early Decision, follow the instructions from the college including withdrawing applications from other colleges

- submit transcript and SSR requests for all remaining applications **NO LATER THAN December 3**
- send official test scores from testing agencies to colleges on your list.

**During January:**

- finish all applications due in February
- submit FAFSA and CSS Profile if applying for financial aid
- check whether colleges need additional financial aid forms
- complete income tax forms
- submit Cal Grant GPA Verification form
- keep working in your classes
- submit art portfolios, if appropriate
- apply for privately sponsored scholarships

**During February:**

- complete all final applications
- review your Student Aid Report (SAR) if you have submitted FAFSA; make any corrections and resend
- apply for privately sponsored scholarships

**During March:**

- receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) if you have submitted FAFSA
- receive admissions decisions
- apply for privately sponsored scholarships
- stay focused!

**During April:**

- receive any remaining admissions decisions
- compare financial aid packages
- make any final college visits
- decide which college you will attend

**During May:**

- send in your deposit and intent to register
- contact schools about wait lists if necessary
- take AP Exams
- excel on final exams
- **GRADUATE**

**Congratulations! Today is our day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and away! You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go...Your mountain is waiting. .. So get on your way! - Dr. Seuss**