

Oak Grove School College Handbook

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Helpful Web Sites for the College Admissions Process

Oak Grove School
www.oakgroveschool.org

University of California (UC)
admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/apply-online/index.html

California State University (Cal State)
www.csumentor.edu/admissionapp/undergrad_apply.asp

Common Application (Common App)
www.commonapp.org

California Private Schools
www.aiccu.edu

Colleges That Change Lives
www.ctcl.org

SAT
SAT
sat.collegeboard.org

ACT
www.actstudent.org

College Board
www.collegeboard.org

FAFSA
www.fafsa.ed.gov

U.S. Dept. of Education
www.ed.gov/finaid.html

CSS Profile
profileonline.collegeboard.org

Dear Oak Grove Students and Families,

I am excited and honored to work with you as you move through the college application and decision process. This handbook will guide you as you finalize your college list and begin applying to colleges and universities. We will use advisory time in the second semester of your junior year and the first semester of your senior year for college advising. Please read this handbook carefully and refer to it often.

Your senior year will pass quickly and before you know it, you will be giving your graduation speech and receiving your Oak Grove diploma. Stay ahead of your deadlines so that you will have time to enjoy your senior year. Careful planning, good time management and attention to detail will keep your stress levels down. Remember: all of your college applications, essays, letters of rec, etc. need to be done by mid-December, in anticipation of leaving for the India trip!

I am here to help you, as are the Head of School, the Registrar and all of your teachers.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Thompson
College Advisor

Many thanks to Eileen Huber and Villanova Preparatory School for sharing the VPS college counseling handbook in 2009 and allowing Oak Grove School to modify it as appropriate over the years. Their generosity is greatly appreciated.

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Senior Year Timetable

August/September

- Finalize your college list with your parents and share it with the College Advisor at Oak Grove. Revise your plan if necessary.
- Decide if you will apply Early Decision or Early Action anywhere. This will determine your deadlines.
- Register for the SAT and/or Subject Tests and/or ACT if you are taking or retaking any of these exams, paying close attention to deadlines if applying Early Decision or Early Action anywhere.
- Take the ACT if you are signed up for it.
- Work on your Common App, UC and other college essays and supplements.
- Continue filling out the Common App.
- Fill out your “brag sheet” and begin asking teachers for letters of recommendation. Always give teachers and the Head of School at least two weeks to write your letter.
- Plan auditions, interviews, portfolio reviews, etc. if needed.
- Confirm that your transcripts contain no errors and that Oak Grove has official copies from other schools you may have attended.

October

- Take the SAT or Subject Tests and/or the ACT if you are signed up.
- College Retreat (same Wednesday as the PSAT) - develop a plan for how you will best use your time at school this day.
- Finish your Common App essays. Ask an adult to proofread them.
- Finish your UC essays. Ask an adult to proofread them.
- Submit any applications that have October due dates (Early Action or Early Decision). Ask an adult to look them over before hitting “submit”.
- Confirm your teachers are writing letters of rec and be sure they know your deadlines. Give them, and the Head of School, copies of your brag sheet. Give them at least two weeks’ notice.
- **PARENTS:** FAFSA (financial aid application) available Oct. 1st. Have your previous year’s taxes on hand. Check CSS Profile deadlines for schools on your student’s list.

BREATHE

November

- UC and CSU applications may be submitted this month (Nov. 1st - Nov. 30th). Ask an adult to look them over before hitting “submit”.
- Submit any applications that have November due dates (Early Action or Early Decision). Ask an adult to

look them over before hitting “submit”.

- Take the SAT or Subject Tests and/or the ACT if you are signed up.
- Confirm that your letters of rec have been submitted by teachers and Head of School.

December

- Dec. 1st - all letters of rec should have been requested by this date.
- Dec. 1st - any transcript errors should have been noted by this date and communicated to the HS Registrar.
- Take the SAT or Subject Tests if you still need to.
- Submit any applications that still need to be submitted, prior to going to India! Ideally, everything is submitted prior to final exams. Ask an adult to look them over before hitting “submit”.
- Work on your VCCF scholarship application, if applicable, prior to leaving for India.

BREATHE

January/February

- Check your email regularly for any messages from schools and follow up promptly.
- Work on the Rotary Club scholarship, if applicable.
- Find other scholarships that you want to apply for.
- Make sure your FAFSA and Cal Grant applications (if applicable) have been submitted.

March/April

- March 2nd - deadline for FAFSA and Cal Grant applications.
- Review your acceptances and make your decision. Share this information with the college advisor.
- Find other scholarships that you want to apply for.

May

- May 1st is the universal deadline to let all of your schools know your final decision.
- Submit a transcript request to have official copies of your final transcripts sent to your chosen school.

June - Confirm that final transcripts will be sent to the school you have chosen to attend.

CELEBRATE!

Evaluating Colleges

There are several characteristic of a college that students should evaluate to determine if that college could be the right fit for them. They include:

- ⤴ **The Student Population** – enrollment, retention, and diversity
- ⤴ **Demographics** – location and setting
- ⤴ **The Type of College** – public or private, religious affiliation, liberal arts, science and engineering, fine arts, etc.
- ⤴ **Academic Environment** – the faculty, student/faculty relationships, academic demands, career preparation, technology on campus
- ⤴ **Curriculum** – academic offerings, required courses, special study programs
- ⤴ **Campus Life** – student types, the community, housing options, campus activities
- ⤴ **Cost and Financial Aid** – the total cost of attending the college, family resources, awards, on and off work opportunities, average student indebtedness upon graduation

Decision Making: Selection of College

- ⤴ Give careful consideration to all of the available resources.
- ⤴ Think long and hard about what you want college life to be.
- ⤴ Think about what will be best for you. Don't select a college or university because everyone else is going there.
- ⤴ Choose those schools that are within your budget and that best fit your personal needs.
- ⤴ Be honest with yourself. In the long run, you will be happiest if you apply to schools where you honestly feel that you will be comfortable academically and socially.

What Are Colleges Looking For?

Colleges are looking for students who are the best match both academically and personally for their institution. There are six components of the application, but different schools place different levels of importance on them. They are:

1. **High School Transcript** – Colleges consider the entire grade point average (GPA) as well as trends from freshman to senior year. They look at the courses you took as well as the courses offered by your school. They will know that Oak Grove offers honors in lieu of AP, for example.
2. **Standardized Test Scores** – These include the SAT and Subject Tests, and/or the ACT. Together with the high school transcript, they help to establish the student's competitiveness for a particular college. Some schools, however, are "test optional", meaning they do not require any standardized test scores be submitted.
3. **School Recommendations** – Recommendations are comprehensive in nature as they refer not only to the student's academic strengths, but also who the student is as a person and how he/she has developed his/her gifts in and out of the classroom. Recommendations come from both teachers and the Head of School at Oak Grove. UC schools, other than Berkeley, do not accept letters of recommendation.
4. **Extracurricular Activities** – Depth of involvement and commitment to a club, sport, job, or other activity are the kinds of qualities that all colleges desire in an applicant. Oak Grove students tend to have four years of sports, 25+ hours a year of community service, Student Council and other extracurricular activities to report.
5. **Student Essay** – Essays are used to assess a student's writing ability, spelling, and vocabulary skills, as well as to provide a "window into the student's soul." The essay is the one part of the application that you control completely, and it is the one place where you can give a "voice" to your application. You will have time in your first semester of Senior English to get feedback on your college essays. This is built into Oak Grove's curriculum.
6. **Additional Factors** – Other circumstances can be addressed through a personal statement, which includes factors that affected the student academically or socially. This could be changing schools, an illness or death in the family, a diagnosed learning difference, and so forth.

Sites for Research

College Board: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search

Colleges That Change Lives: ctcl.org/category/college-search/

Common App: www.commonapp.org/explore-colleges

Helpful Books

Fiske Guide to Colleges, by Edward Fiske

College That Change Lives: 40 Schools that Will Change the Way You Think about Colleges, by Loren Pope

College Match: A Blueprint for Choosing the Best School for You, by Steven Antonoff

Oak Grove's College Counseling Resources Online

http://oakgroveschool.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=148&Itemid=317

http://oakgroveschool.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=640&Itemid=565

Should I Retake the SAT and/or ACT?

From: Jay Brody, <http://collegeapps.about.com/>

For many students, it makes sense to retake the SAT (or its counterpart, the ACT). After all, most colleges explicitly say that they'll look at your best score--in some cases, they'll even take your best score in each *section*.

If you've already taken the SAT or ACT and are trying to decide whether to retake the test, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- ♣ How many times have you taken the test already? SAT scores all get reported to colleges, and three times is generally recognized as the limit before admissions officers might start asking questions. On the ACT, you can report only the scores you want.
- ♣ What will be different this time? If you're planning to take the test for just the second time, odds are decent that you'll do better. After that, you need to ask yourself why you think you'll get a higher score after several attempts.
- ♣ Have you conquered a problem of anxiety or nerves? Have you been studying or getting tutored?
- ♣ Do you have time to prepare? Test scores are important, but so are grades. The last couple of years of high school are also very stressful. If you're going to sacrifice school work to prepare for the SAT or ACT, you should be confident that you're going to improve your score.
- ♣ What do your target colleges want? If you've already got the score you need, you can stop taking the test. If you don't, you should probably try again. But be mindful of application deadlines, and that at schools with rolling admissions you want to have your application (including test scores) complete as early as possible.

Visiting Colleges

There is no substitute for seeing a college in person. The best time to visit a college campus is when school is in session. In this way, you can see the college “in action.” However, if it is not possible to visit when school is in session, visits at other times are still highly recommended.

Campus visits usually include three components:

1. The Group Information Session
2. The Campus Tour
3. The Personal Interview

Set up the visit by doing the following:

1. Contact the college’s admissions office at least two weeks prior to the date that you want to visit.
2. Prepare for the college visit by researching the college, having a list of questions available, and by bringing an unofficial copy of your transcript and school profile.

- ^ When visiting several colleges, limit your visits to two, possibly three, colleges per day. At the end of each visit, jot down notes while the impressions are still clear in your mind. Use the College Visit Memory Tickler. It can also be helpful to take a few pictures of each campus.
- ^ Don’t judge a college by one student, one tour guide, or one faculty member. Remember that a single person cannot represent the entire school.
- ^ Don’t let the weather affect your judgment. Try to picture the campus during all four seasons, not just on a beautiful sunny spring day.
- ^ Observe the general neatness of the campus, student attire, friendliness of students, security, and faculty presence.
- ^ Visit the library, laboratories, music facilities, art studios, dance studios, computer facilities, dorms, dining halls and anything else you want to see.
- ^ ASK questions! ASK questions! ASK questions!
- ^ After the visit, write a short thank-you note to anyone you met with on campus. (Ask for their business card before you leave).

College Visit Memory Tickler

College/University Name: _____ Date of Visit: _____

- Information Session (Given by _____)
- Tour
- Interview (Given by/Time _____)
- Signed in at the Admission Office
- Met with coach, professor, art/music director _____
- Thank you notes sent

Initial Reaction Rating (10 = my most favorite school) _____

Questions to follow-up on:

Impressions about academic life (majors offered, class sizes, workload, core requirements, research opportunities, accessibility of faculty)

Campus life (facilities, dining options, athletics, study abroad options, choral, band, acting, social life, diversity, Greek system)

Reasons why I can/cannot see myself here

Interview notes

Application Programs

By the time you return for your senior year, your “three-tiered list” should be narrowed down considerably, with no more than 3-4 schools in each tier (reach, likely and safety). Choosing those schools is all about finding a good “fit” - take into consideration what you're looking for in a school (size, location, majors, extracurriculars, etc.) as well as how your grades, SAT/ACT scores, etc. compare to their typical admitted student. Within the first few weeks back at school, you should meet with the College Advisor to discuss the decisions you made over the summer, and you should begin thinking about other aspects of the college application process. One thing you will need to finalize early in your senior year is whether you will be applying through an early application process.

Regular Admission Programs

Regular Decision is the application process in which a student submits an application by a set date and receives a decision, generally in late March/early April.

Rolling Admission is the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are completed and notifies the student when the decision is made. The period of time can be as short as 4-6 weeks and as long as 12-14 weeks.

Early Admission Programs

These are two programs that allow a student to apply early to the college (typically in early November) and then receive notification of the admission decision in advance of regular notification. Colleges can use the early programs to admit, defer, or deny admission to a student. If a student is deferred from an early program, their application will be reviewed again during the regular admission cycle. If a student is denied, their application will not receive any further review. A student denied can not reapply for consideration during the regular admission cycle.

Students should be extremely thoughtful and careful in applying early and should have thoroughly researched colleges before applying through these early programs. In general, if a student chooses to apply early, they need to have a strong academic record through six semesters (11th grade) and need to have completed all college entrance testing with scores in a competitive range for the college they are considering. Grades from the first semester of the senior year will not be included in EA and ED decisions by colleges/universities.

Early Action (EA) offers students the option to apply early to a college and find out their decision in mid-December. Students who are admitted through Early Admission programs still have until May 1 of the senior year to accept the offer of admission from the college. This can be a great option for Oak Grove students, as you need to finish your applications by early December anyway (unlike students at other schools, who do not have an India trip to work around).

Early Decision (ED) is similar to Early Action except that if a student is admitted through an ED program, the student is *required* to attend the college. This is a binding agreement. Students may apply to only one college through an ED program. If a student is admitted ED then he/she must withdraw all other pending applications to other colleges. Colleges with ED admission programs will require the student, parents, and the college counselor to sign an agreement that outlines the binding nature of Early Decision admission.

Restricted Early Action (Single Choice Early Action) programs limit an applicant to applying to ONLY ONE college through an early program. However, unlike Early Decision, Restricted Early Action is not binding, and the student has until May 1 of the senior year to accept the offer of admission from the college. The student, parent, and college counselor must sign an agreement that outlines the limited application process in Restricted Early Action.

The College Essay

TIPS TO HELP YOU

- ▲ Be sure to address the question or prompt
- ▲ Vary your vocabulary
- ▲ Be revealing
- ▲ Show, don't tell
- ▲ Start strong and finish strong
- ▲ Get a second opinion; have someone else read your essay
- ▲ Proofread your essay
- ▲ Be yourself; avoid cliches
- ▲ Get to the point

Teachers at Oak Grove give a great deal of support to our students in the college essay writing, both in and out of class, as part of the English 4 fall curriculum. You will receive plenty of feedback and guidance at school. Many private schools will ask you for supplements (additional, sometimes shorter essays) as part of their applications, so manage your time well and avoid procrastination.

Personal Essay Questions from the Common Application (www.commonapp.org):

PERSONAL ESSAY

This personal statement helps us become acquainted with you in ways different from courses, grades, test scores, and other objective data. It will demonstrate your ability to organize thoughts and express yourself. We are looking for an essay that will help us know you better as a person and as a student. Please write an essay (250 words minimum, 650 words maximum) on one of the options listed below.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

Personal Insight Questions from the University of California (UC) Application

(<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/freshman/index.html>):

The personal insight questions are about getting to know you better — your life experience, interests, ambitions and inspirations. Think of it as your interview with the admissions office. Be open. Be reflective. Find your individual voice and express it. While this section of the application is just one part we consider when making our admission decision, it helps provide context for the rest of your application.

Directions

- You will have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to only 4 of the 8 questions.
- Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.
- Which questions you choose to answer is entirely up to you: But you should select questions that are most relevant to your experience and that best reflect your individual circumstances.

Keep in mind

All questions are equal: All are given equal consideration in the application review process, which means there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.

There is no right or wrong way to answer these questions: It's about getting to know your personality, background, interests and achievements in your own unique voice.

Questions & guidance

Remember, the personal questions are just that — personal. Which means you should use our guidance for each question just as a suggestion in case you need help. The important thing is expressing who are you, what matters to you and what you want to share with UC.

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.

Things to consider: A leadership role can mean more than just a title. It can mean being a mentor to others, acting as the person in charge of a specific task, or a taking lead role in organizing an event or project. Think about your accomplishments and what you learned from the experience. What were your responsibilities? Did you lead a team? How did your experience change your perspective on leading others? Did you help to resolve an important dispute at your school, church in your community or an organization? And your leadership role doesn't necessarily have to be limited to school activities. For example, do you help out or take care of your family?

2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

Things to consider: What does creativity mean to you? Do you have a creative skill that is important to you? What have you been able to do with that skill? If you used creativity to solve a problem, what was your solution? What are the steps you took to solve the problem? How does your creativity influence your decisions inside or outside the classroom? Does your creativity relate to your major or a future career?

3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

Things to consider: If there's a talent or skill that you're proud of, this is the time to share it. You don't

necessarily have to be recognized or have received awards for your talent (although if you did and you want to talk about, feel free to do so). Why is this talent or skill meaningful to you? Does the talent come naturally or have you worked hard to develop this skill or talent? Does your talent or skill allow you opportunities in or outside the classroom? If so, what are they and how do they fit into your schedule?

4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

Things to consider: An educational opportunity can be anything that has added value to your educational experience and better prepared you for college. For example, participation in an honors or academic enrichment program, or enrollment in an academy that's geared toward an occupation or a major, or taking advanced courses that interest you — just to name a few. If you choose to write about educational barriers you've faced, how did you overcome or strived to overcome them? What personal characteristics or skills did you call on to overcome this challenge? How did overcoming this barrier help shape who are you today?

5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

Things to consider: A challenge could be personal, or something you have faced in your community or school. Why was the challenge significant to you? This is a good opportunity to talk about any obstacles you've faced and what you've learned from the experience. Did you have support from someone else or did you handle it alone? If you're currently working your way through a challenge, what are you doing now, and does that affect different aspects of your life? For example, ask yourself, "How has my life changed at home, at my school, with my friends, or with my family?"

6. Describe your favorite academic subject and explain how it has influenced you.

Things to consider: Discuss how your interest in the subject developed and describe any experience you have had inside and outside the classroom — such as volunteer work, summer programs, participation in student organizations and/or activities — and what you have gained from your involvement. Has your interest in the subject influenced you in choosing a major and/or career? Have you been able to pursue coursework at a higher level in this subject (honors, AP, IB, college or university work)?

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

Things to consider: Think of community as a term that can encompass a group, team or a place — like your high school, hometown, or home. You can define community as you see fit, just make sure you talk about your role in that community. Was there a problem that you wanted to fix in your community? Why were you inspired to act? What did you learn from your effort? How did your actions benefit others, the wider

community or both? Did you work alone or with others to initiate change in your community?

8. What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?

Things to consider: Don't be afraid to brag a little. Even if you don't think you're unique, you are — remember, there's only one of you in the world. From your point of view, what do you feel makes you belong on one of UC's campuses? When looking at your life, what does a stranger need to understand in order to know you? What have you not shared with us that will highlight a skill, talent, challenge, or opportunity that you think will help us know you better? We're not necessarily looking for what makes you unique compared to others, but what makes you, YOU.

Application Procedures

Student Responsibilities

1. The student is responsible to submit these items to each college via the Common App or other online application portal (as applicable):
 - a. The College Application which includes essays and/or personal statements, application fees, and high school resume (optional)
 - b. Official test scores (SAT, ACT, SAT subject tests, TOEFL) – Official test scores must be sent directly from the testing service. Please check the requirements from each college.
 - c. A handwritten thank you note (not an email) to anyone in the Admissions office who has helped you, given you a tour, or interviewed you (optional, but strongly recommended).
2. The student must submit the following items to the high school office:
 - a. Transcript Request Form, with your portion completed and signed
 - b. Cal Grant HPA verification form (if applicable)
3. The student must submit the following items to all teachers writing letters of recommendation as well as the Head of School:
 - a. Deadlines for each college
 - b. Brag sheet

Oak Grove Responsibilities

1. Oak Grove will send these items to each college:
 - a. The Secondary School Report form and the counselor's letter of recommendation (the Head of School does this)
 - b. The Teacher Evaluation Forms and teachers' letters of recommendation (teachers do this)
 - c. Official Oak Grove School Transcripts and courtesy copies of transcripts from other schools attended (Registrar does this)
 - d. Oak Grove School Profile (Head of School does this)
2. At the completion of the first semester, the following items will be submitted to all schools that require them:
 - a. The mid-year report
 - b. The mid-year transcript
3. After graduation, the following item will be mailed to the ONE college to which the student has committed to attending by submitting their required deposit:
 - a. The Final High School Transcript

Requesting Teacher and Counselor Recommendations

A very important aspect of the college application process is the letters of recommendation that will be submitted to colleges on your behalf. Most colleges will require that you submit two letters of recommendation from teachers and one letter of recommendation/evaluation from your college counselor. **At Oak Grove, the Head of School will write the counselor letter.** The information that is provided in these recommendation letters will give colleges a picture of who you are both inside and outside the classroom. Note: UC and Cal State schools do not require letters or recommendation. Beginning in the Fall of 2015, however, UC Berkeley began accepting two letters of recommendation from teachers.

The teachers you ask to write your letters of recommendation will be writing about your academic ability in the classroom as well as your character. You may ask any teacher who has instructed you, although junior and senior teachers will have the most current knowledge of your performance.

It is important to ask the teacher in person and follow up your request in writing as detailed below. When asking your teachers to write these letters, it is best to word your request something like this, "Russ, do you feel that you would be able to write me a favorable letter of recommendation for college?" If they say yes, give them a copy of your brag sheet as soon as possible and submit their email address on the Common App site (other other portals as applicable).

Remember that your teachers are very busy, so you must give them your request for letters of recommendation at least 2-3 weeks in advance of the application deadline. Writing articulate, thoughtful recommendations that truly capture how wonderful you are will take time...*give them plenty of it.*

Student "Brag Sheet" for College Recommendations

A "brag sheet" can be helpful to those writing letters of recommendation on your behalf. Fill this out and email or give a copy of it to each person who will be writing a letter for you. If there is something in particular that you would like someone to write about in their letter, indicate that on this form. If a question does not apply to you, just say N/A.

1. Are there any factors related to your grades of which you would like colleges to be aware?

2. Are there any factors about admission test scores that you would like addressed?

3. Are there any circumstances in your life that might have had a negative impact on your academic performance?

4. What are your proudest accomplishments — academic and/or personal?

5. List five adjectives that describe something about you as a person.

6. What extracurricular activity has been the most meaningful to you? Why?

7. What job experience has been especially meaningful? Why?

8. What travel experience has been especially meaningful? Why?

9. Give some examples of times you have shown leadership and/or personal growth.

Please feel free to use additional paper if you'd like, and modify this form as needed.

College Application Checklist

- Do you know the deadline for submitting the application? **Read all application instructions carefully!**
- Have you kept copies of all the forms, applications and letters you've sent?
- Has your official high school transcript been sent?
- Have you given your teachers and college counselor your brag sheet and deadlines – at least 2-3 weeks in advance? Have they completed and sent them?
- Have you had your ACT and/or SAT scores sent to each college? Have you sent your SAT Subject Test scores if required?
- Have you checked to be sure you answered all of the questions on the application form?
- Have you checked and re-checked grammar and spelling?
- Have you asked an adult to proofread all of your work?
- Have you signed your application and paid the application fee, if one is required?
- Do you plan to apply for financial aid? If so, have you completed and sent the proper forms (the FAFSA, CSS Profile, Cal Grant forms, private scholarship forms and/or the college's own form)?
- Have you had an interview (if required or suggested)?
- Have you had an audition (if required or suggested)?
- Have you put together and submitted a portfolio and/or CD or DVD (may be required for visual or performing arts programs)?
- Have you checked the admission materials to see whether the college requires any further action?

Financial Aid

Attending college can be a very expensive investment. The cost of tuition, room and board, books, and other expenses can be over \$40,000 at many private colleges. Public colleges and universities in the state of California are generally less. However, do not rule out a college because you or your parents think it is not affordable. The best way to find out if you are eligible for financial assistance is to apply for it. Many private schools have financial aid available. Some schools are committed to meeting 100% of student need, and you can read more about that here: www.thecollegesolution.com/list-of-colleges-that-meet-100-of-financial-need/

Need Based Assistance

Need-based financial aid is money awarded to students on the basis of demonstrated financial need. In order to be considered for need based financial aid, you must submit an application.

All schools require that students submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**). The forms can be found on the internet at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Information submitted is based on the prior year's tax information and is used to determine your financial need. The FAFSA can be submitted no earlier than October 1st of your senior year and submitted no later than March 2nd.

Many schools will require that you submit an additional form. This may be their own financial aid form and/or they may also ask you to complete the CSS Financial Aid Profile. The **CSS Profile** is available on line at www.collegeboard.com. The Profile can be submitted in the early fall of your senior year. Check school deadlines carefully if applying Early Action or Early Decision, as the CSS Profile could be due at the same time.

Once the required forms are submitted, a Student Aid Report with the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is sent to the universities you have identified. You will also receive a copy of it. This information is used by the colleges to put together a financial aid package which usually includes a combination of grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study. The EFC remains the same, regardless of which college you chose to attend.

For example, if your family's EFC is calculated at \$15,000, and two of the schools you are considering cost \$20,000 and \$40,000 respectively, your aid packages will be different.

College A		College B	
\$20,000	cost of attendance (COA)	\$40,000	cost of attendance (COA)
\$15,000	EFC	\$15,000	EFC
\$ 5,000	financial need	\$25,000	financial need

Cal Grants

California residents who are eligible for need-based financial aid (based on submission of the FAFSA) may be eligible for a Cal Grant award. These are state funded monetary grants given to students to help pay for college expenses. The awards do not have to be paid back. To be considered for a Cal Grant, you must file GPA Verification Form with the California Student Aid Commission no later than March 2nd. Forms are available online at the California Student Aid Commission, www.csac.ca.gov.

Merit Aid

Money that is awarded for achievement – academic, artistic, athletic, etc. – is called merit aid. Scholarships are available to applicants who meet specific criteria; financial need has no bearing on a student receiving a scholarship. Scholarships come in two basic forms: Institutional and Independent. This is money that does *not* need to be paid back.

Institutional Scholarships consist of funds that belong to colleges and universities and are only granted to their students. The criteria range from academic accomplishment to identifying yourself as part of an alumni or other group. Often completion of an institution's application places you in the running for all institutional scholarships. Sometimes, an institution requires an additional essay. Information on institutional scholarships is clearly stated in a college's application booklet. Most often the FAFSA is required. Many Oak Grove students over the years have received generous merit scholarships from Colleges That Change Lives (www.ctcl.org) schools.

Independent Scholarships come from public organizations or private companies that provide money available to college students. Criteria to win a scholarship and the monetary award are wide-ranging. There are many search engines to help you research independent scholarships. FastWeb (www.fastweb.com) provides a comprehensive data base of independent scholarships. The Ventura County Community Foundation (www.vccf.org) offers several scholarships to Ventura county students. One of the Ojai Rotary clubs offers scholarships to students living in the Ojai Valley. Information about these and other independent scholarships is available in the College Counseling Office.

Scholarship Resources

www.fafsa.ed.gov	Access the Free Application for Federal Student Aid on-line
www.fastweb.com	Scholarship search engine
www.vccf.org	Ventura County Community Foundation (Ventura County scholarships)
www.absolutelyscholarships.com	Scholarship search engine
www.cappex.com	College and scholarship search
www.collegeparents.org	Association to help parents prepare and put their children through college easily and economically.
www.collegesavings.org	Information on College Tuition Savings Programs
www.college-scholarships.com	College and scholarship searches
www.csac.ca.gov	California State Aid Commission (Cal Grant)
www.finaid.com	Financial Aid and Scholarship resource
www.salliemae.com	Scholarship search and financial aid info
www.scholarships.com	Scholarship search engine
www.studentaid.ed.gov	Resource for federal student aid and college planning

Points to Ponder--How to Avoid a Scholarship Scam

- ⤴ If you must pay money to get money, it might be a scam.
- ⤴ If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- ⤴ Spend the time, not the money.
- ⤴ Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships.
- ⤴ Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship.
- ⤴ If you're suspicious of an offer, it's usually with good reason



FINANCIAL AID REMINDERS

Find out what forms are required for each college/university to which you will be applying.

Meet financial aid deadlines.

Keep copies of all materials you submit.

Try to file your income tax in January.

Don't wait for an acceptance letter before applying for financial aid.

Find out how scholarships from outside sources will be handled.

Student's Rights and Responsibilities in the College Admission Process

When You Apply to Colleges and Universities, You Have Rights

Before You Apply:

- You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial costs, aid opportunities, practices and packaging policies, and housing policies.
- If you consider applying under an early admission plan, you have the right to complete information from the college about its process and policies.
- You have the right to be free from high-pressure sales tactics.

When You Are Offered Admission:

- You have the right to wait until May 1 to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid.
- Colleges that request commitments to offers of admissions and/or financial assistance prior to May 1 must clearly offer you the opportunity to request (in writing) an extension until May 1. They must grant you this extension and your request may not jeopardize your status for admission and/or financial aid.
- Candidates admitted under early decision programs are a recognized exception to the May 1 deadline.

If You Are Placed on a Wait/Alternate List:

- The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait list, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing.
- Colleges may require neither a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition of remaining on a wait list.
- Colleges are expected to notify you of the resolution of your wait list status by August 1 at the latest.

When You Apply to Colleges and Universities, You Have Responsibilities

Before You Apply:

- You have a responsibility to research, and to understand and comply with the policies and procedures of each college or university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure you understand the policies of each college or university regarding deposits you may be required to make before you enroll.

As You Apply:

- You must complete all material required for application and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.
- You should seek the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application period. Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.
- It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.

After You Receive Your Admission Decision:

- You must notify each college or university that accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college you wish to attend, but no later than May 1. It is understood that May 1 will be the postmark date.
- **You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one college or university.** The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a college or university and are later admitted to that institution. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify a college or university at which you previously indicated your intention to enroll.
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and universities and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.

Transcript Request Form

This form can be found at the High School Registrar's office. Please allow at least 24-48 hours to process.



Transcript Request

Student's Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Please send an: Official Unofficial copy of my transcript to:

School Name: _____
School Address: _____

I have provided:

- Stamped, Addressed Envelope(s) *(required)*
- Secondary School Report
- Mid-Year Report
- Common App (1 copy)

Note: All Common App schools should be submitted with one Transcript Request and one copy of the Common App. List school names and provide an envelope for each.

Please include with my Official Transcript:

- Letter of Recommendation Secondary School Report
- Other: _____

For Office Use:

Date Completed:

Initial:

Notes:

Deadline: _____ Signature: _____