

September 2013

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Your child is embarking an important decision making process for their future after high school. The following information about colleges and financial aid is provided to help you assist your student in making these decisions.

California State University (CSU)

To apply for a college within the CSU system, your student will need to go to www.csumentor.edu

The window to apply for a CSU is **October 1, 2013 through November 30, 2013**. We would highly encourage your student to apply by Nov. 21st as there tends to be a large influx of applications the last week of November which may lead to technology related problems.

Testing: Although the SAT/ACT is not required for the CSU system if you have a high school GPA of 3.00 or higher and your student is a California resident, your student should still take the test(s). ***It may be required if your student is applying to an "impacted" program or campus.*** Impacted majors and campuses are those in which the university receives more applications than there is space to accommodate. It is also useful to take either the SAT or ACT as the score may indicate if your student does or does not need to take English and math placement tests after they are admitted and before they enroll at the CSU. Your student needs to take his/her SAT or ACT test by December 2013. *Please note that San Diego State University and California Polytechnic State University require that your student's testing be completed by November.*

ELM/EPT: Once your student is admitted to a CSU, your student will need to take the Entry Level Mathematics Test (ELM) and the English Placement Test (EPT) before they can register for classes unless your student is exempt by means of scores earned on other appropriate tests such as the CSU's Early Assessment Program tests in English and Mathematics, the SAT, or the ACT. Please feel free to contact your counselor or the specific CSU to see if your student qualifies for an exemption. We highly recommend that your student complete ELM/EPT testing by May 2014. ***Your student's admission offer may be rescinded if your student does not complete the placement testing by the deadline set by the specific CSU.*** Please check the website of the CSU your student will be attending to get specific deadlines for placement testing. A website that offers additional information about the ELM/EPT as well as the registration process is: <http://www.ets.org/csu/about>

University of California (UC)

To apply for a college within the UC system, your student will need to go to <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/>

The window to apply for a UC is **November 1, 2013 through November 30, 2013**. I highly encourage your student to apply by Nov. 21st because last year, the UC admissions server crashed due to the volume of applications the last week in November. They **WILL NOT** accept applications after the deadline.

Testing: The UC system requires that your student take the ACT with Writing Test **or** the SAT Reasoning Test. Although the two Subjects Tests are not required for the UC, they are HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Your student needs to complete his/her testing for UC admissions by December 2013.

The Essays

As a part of the application process for the UC system, your student will respond to two essay prompts. Responses to the two essays must be a maximum of 1,000 words. The UC system has stated that their prompts for this year are the same as the ones for last year. Here are the prompts for freshman applicants from last year:

- 1) Describe the world you come from – for example, your family, community, or school. – and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
- 2) Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Essay Tips for Students: Make sure your essays are focused, deliberate, and meaningful. You need to provide concrete examples to support your point. Please do not simply make a list of qualities or accomplishments as that is not persuasive. Make sure you proofread your essays. Please write your essays on a word processing program and save as plain text. Then you can copy and paste it into your application. Your English teacher may be a valuable resource for you.

Essay Tips for Parents: Brainstorm ideas about responses for the essay prompts with your student. Provide support and input to your student as needed for the essays. Help your student proofread their responses.

Entry Level Writing Requirement: All UC admitted students must demonstrate proficiency in writing. Students can demonstrate proficiency by one of the following:

- Score 3 or higher on the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Examination in English (Language or Literature).
- Score 30 or higher on the ACT Combined English/Writing test or 680 or higher on the Writing section of the SAT Reasoning Test.
- Complete with a grade of C or better a transferable college course in English composition worth four quarter or three semester units.
- Achieve a passing score on the UC Analytical Writing Placement Examination, given in the spring every year. If you're admitted to UC, you'll receive detailed information in April about the exam.
- Complete an appropriate English course at UC with a grade of C or better.

Common Application

The Common Application is a not-for-profit organization that serves students by providing an admission application that students may submit to any of their 415 institution members. Some of the colleges that participate in the Common Application are Duke University, Brown University, Harvard College, University of San Francisco, Yale University, Stanford University, etc. For a complete list of schools that use the Common Application, please go to:

<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Members.aspx>

If the college you wish to apply to uses the Common Application, please go to

<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Default.aspx>

You can use the Common Application website to determine the deadlines and required testing for colleges that are participating members.

Please remember that the CSU and UC systems ***DO NOT*** use the Common Application.

California Community Colleges

If your student is planning on attending Yuba Community College in the Fall of 2014, I highly recommend he/she participate in QuickReg during the Spring. Yuba College representatives will come out and speak with students about the QuickReg process. Through the QuickReg process, your student will be able to apply for Yuba College, take the placement exam, and register for classes. Again, the process does not begin until the spring. Please feel free to contact Barbara Forkey at bforkey@yccd.edu if you have any further questions about QuickReg.

Knowing that our student body is coming from other local various areas, I will also be working with other local community colleges to provide students an opportunity to participate in the their registration process.

You can visit <http://www.californiacolleges.edu/california-community-colleges.asp> to get more information about the various community colleges within California.

Independent Colleges or Vocational Schools

The best way to get information about independent colleges or vocational schools is to visit their websites.

Online Resource

One website that I have found very valuable is www.californiacolleges.edu

This website provides great information about the CSU, UC, and independent colleges within our state. It also is a great tool for career exploration for your student.

Early Decision versus Early Action

If your student finds a college that seems like the perfect fit, they may be able to apply early and receive a decision earlier than the usual spring regular admission decision notifications. *Please note that not every college participates in this process.* You are generally notified of the admission decision by December or January. This process may allow your student a better chance at admission to their school of choice and it allows the colleges to view applicants who are willing to commit to attend their college. Generally, if the school allows this early application process they participate in the early decision or early action process. It is important to understand the difference between early decision and early action before your student decides.

Early Decision: Your student cannot apply for an early decision for more than one college. However, your student can apply to other colleges through the regular admission cycle. If your student chooses to participate in early decision, then the decision for admissions is binding. This means that if the college offers your child admission and an adequate financial aid package, your student MUST withdraw all applications to other colleges.

Early Action: Your student cannot apply to more than one college under early action. They can apply to other colleges through regular admissions cycle. However, early action is not binding. If your child is accepted under early action to a college, he/she can still select to go to another school without any sort of penalty.

Financial Aid

Your student can fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) starting on January 1, 2013. Your student must have a valid social security number and use his/her legal name to qualify for financial aid. The FAFSA will require information about your student and you. In order to process your FAFSA online, you and your student will need to create pins. Each pin can be used to sign your FAFSA electronically. *Although you can create the pins when you and your student begin the FAFSA, I highly recommend that you get your pin number in Dec. 2013 so that if there are any errors with you or your student's identification information, you can quickly rectify the situation before the filing period for the FAFSA opens.* You and your student can get a pin number by visiting <http://www.pin.ed.gov/PINWebApp/pinindex.jsp>.

Your student can start filling out the FAFSA on or after Jan 1st at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Our suggestion to you is to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after Jan 1st. Please know that even though you will not have your W-2's by January 1st, you can estimate your income on the FAFSA and then correct it when the exact information is available. Leave yourself plenty of time to fill out the FAFSA. Bring your patience and complete it even if you think you will not qualify for financial aid. Scholarships, loans, and grants may require that you have a completed FAFSA.

Cal Grants

Cal Grant is a financial aid program in California that provides aid to California undergraduates, vocation training students, and those in teacher certification programs. Eligibility for a Cal Grant is determined by the information you and your student provide on the FAFSA. *Your student must file his/her FAFSA by March 2, 2014 to be considered for a Cal Grant for the 2014-2015 school year.* Another component of eligibility for a Cal Grant is a GPA verification from East Nicolaus High School. Our school files GPA verifications electronically and automatically for all seniors with the California Student Aid Commission. You student **DOES NOT** need to complete the GPA verification form his/herself. *Please also make sure that your student's social security number is listed correctly with the school as that is what will be used to report GPA verification*

to the California Student Aid Commission. Please be aware that colleges may have their own deadlines for when your student's FAFSA must be completed. Do not set March 2nd as your deadline for completing the FAFSA. For example, University of Southern California (USC) requires that students must complete their FAFSA by Feb. 2nd. Check the website for your schools of interest for financial aid deadlines and any additional paperwork that may need to be submitted.

Scholarships

Information about scholarships will be posted and updated regularly on the East Nicolaus High School website. Students will also be provided information about scholarships through the bulletin and classroom presentations. Please encourage your student to actively pursue scholarships. Not all scholarships are based on academic performance so please encourage your student to get more information about each scholarship.

Another great resource for scholarships is www.fastweb.com. It is a FREE service to search for scholarships. Please be wary of sites that require payment for scholarship searches! Another great free resource is <http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/> to be a helpful site because it lists many websites that provide FREE information about scholarships.

Please also be aware that scholarships at specific colleges may have their own deadlines. For instance, if you want to apply for a CSU Chico scholarship for the 2014-2015 school year, you must apply by December 15, 2013. I highly encourage you to explore the websites of the colleges that your student is interested in attending to get more information about their requirements and deadlines for scholarships.

Communication:

Please be aware that colleges and financial aid officers will communicate primarily via email so make sure your student has a valid email address. Secondly, please make sure your student's email address is appropriate and professional. Many servers will reject emails that contain profanity or contain inappropriate words. Ensure that your student checks his/her email on a regular basis and responds in a timely and professional manner. Use one email account for college admissions and financial aid so that all the information is in one spot. Please do not change your student's email address midway through the admissions or financial aid process. If your student does not currently have a valid email address or he/she wants to create a new one specifically for college admissions and financial aid, please know that we are available to assist your student in creating a free valid email address through Yahoo and Gmail.

Final thoughts.....

Take some deep breaths and be assured that we will get through this process of college admissions and financial aid together. I know this is a lot of information to absorb but please know that I am here to help you. Don't ever hesitate to contact me. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,

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