

Gunn PTSA's Parent Checklist for College Applications

Last Updated: 9/13/18

This checklist is a guide for parents to track the college application process. More details are found in the school's "Junior Handbook" viewable from the [counseling website](#) which is updated February.

There are four traditional pathways to colleges:

- 1) Community College: Foothill and De Anza will visit Gunn in the spring semester, but there are many others nearby with unique offerings.
- 2) California State Universities (CSU): Opens Oct 1. Only takes submissions beginning November, and closes Nov 30 midnight of senior year.
- 3) University of California (UCs): Opens Aug 1 and closes Nov 30 midnight of senior year.
- 4) Private Colleges/Universities and other State Universities: The Common Application opens Aug 1; closing dates vary by school. Some flagship Public Universities and out-of-country colleges are also using the Common App. Colleges that do not use the Common App will have their own application process.

Junior Year Fall Semester:

- Aug-Oct sign into Naviance (view as a student) and become familiar with the tool. Begin to talk to your student about post-high school plans. Students can use Naviance to start a "Colleges I am thinking about" list.
- Starting Sept/Oct look for an invitation from the College and Career Center (C&CC) to schedule an individual meeting with the counselor. Parents may opt out; students must attend. Over 450 students must be scheduled. Appointments occur from Sept-March.
- Schedule of college representative visits to Gunn can be found through Naviance ("colleges" tab). Students should check often and sign up. They will need to ask their teacher to be excused from class. Juniors can sign up for five college rep visits. Help your junior decide. Some will fill and close. Colleges also often do presentations individually or at college fairs in the Bay Area.
- Plan with students the SAT/SAT 2/ACT/AP testing timeline. Check college sites for testing requirements. Most students take the tests in spring. Sign up early to get a testing site close by. (Subject tests are best taken when a course is completed - some prior to junior year.)
- October: Students will be automatically signed up for PSAT by Gunn, and the test is taken on campus during school hours.
- The "Palo Alto College Fair" occurs in October alternating between Gunn/Paly. Encourage your student to attend.
- Plan college visits with students. Visit nearby colleges during three day weekends and far away colleges during spring break. Visit when colleges are in session; not in the summer.

Junior Year Spring Semester:

- Look for the current year "Junior Handbook" to become available. It is updated every February.
- Plan jr/sr summer with your student. Check Naviance under "colleges"/"enrichment programs" for summer opportunities. Attend summer opportunities fair at Gunn usually held in January.

- ❑ Two academic recommendations are required for most private college applications. If teacher letters of recommendation are required, students should touch base with the teachers at the end of junior year to understand their availability to write recommendation letters and follow the teacher's directions.
- ❑ Most students take the SAT or ACT in the spring or early in senior year. Once test results are received, C&CC will help students to input their data into Naviance. You can look with your student on Naviance to see what GPA and test scores were provided by previous Gunn students entering into specific colleges in prior years.
- ❑ Check with your student that they meet graduation requirements. Recheck the transcript for accuracy; be sure that all coursework needed to graduate is accounted for in the senior schedule.
- ❑ Students who are certain they are taking the community college path are not required to submit letters of recommendation nor SAT/ACT test scores. It is recommended, however, that they still go through the process of creating a college list and visiting colleges to become aware of future transfer requirements.

Junior/Senior Summer:

- ❑ The student should begin to finalize the "Colleges I am thinking about" list in Naviance. (20 max.)
- ❑ Students can start working on college essays. Essay prompts are published in late spring.
- ❑ UCs and Common Application become available on August 1.
- ❑ The Common Application has a grid with deadlines for regular, "early action" and "early decision." College sites have more details; create a spreadsheet to keep track.
- ❑ Student and parents should complete the "recommendation request form" (brag sheet) on Naviance to request a recommendation from their counselor and teachers. Click on the "about me" tab and then the "recommendation request form" and fill out the information.
- ❑ Understand the Gunn deadlines by looking at "College Application Checklist" (CAC) on the Gunn website. The deadline for the student to submit this form to the Gunn registrar could be well ahead of the actual application deadline.

Senior Year Fall Semester:

- ❑ September: Seniors attend senior assembly which will give more details regarding college applications. Seniors meet with their guidance counselor (with priority for those applying Early Decision/Early Action). For earlier appointments, students should email their counselor. They need to contact teachers to complete the recommendations and submit the CAC to the registrar.
- ❑ "Early Action" and "Early Decision": If this applies to your student, ask them to set up a meeting with their guidance counselor early, contact teachers early and submit the CAC early as well.
- ❑ Students should complete SAT/ACT this semester if they have not already done so. Check college sites for testing requirements, and note their latest test date you can take as a Senior. UCs allow the December test, but most others want completion earlier.
- ❑ Check that the student requests the testing institution to send scores to all the colleges requiring this data at least 2 weeks before the application deadline. Keep a hard copy of test result and keep a copy of a receipt of test score request

- ❑ October: “PSAT Day for Juniors” offers many different options for Seniors, including college visits, Career Day panels/Q&A, oral interviews and more.
- ❑ Schedule of college representative visits to Gunn can be found through Naviance. Seniors should check often and sign up for up to ten college rep visits. Some will fill and close. Colleges also often do presentations individually or at college “fairs” in the bay area; Connecting to colleges via reps, fairs and onsite visits is called “demonstrated interest”; this is important during senior year for favorite schools.
- ❑ CSU’s application usually opens on October 1. It is called Cal State Apply. The submission period is November 1 - 30.
- ❑ Once an application is underway, ask the student to check on college portal weekly to see if the college indicates missing any parts of the application and respond promptly.
- ❑ Deadlines for college applications vary by college. Use a spreadsheet to keep track.
- ❑ Look at scholarship opportunities (need or merit-based) with your student. Naviance has a list.
- ❑ Many private colleges may require or offer an oral interview. Check college websites for requirements.

Senior Year Spring Semester:

- ❑ Foothill and De Anza will visit and register students at Gunn. The student applying to community college may initiate the process by creating an OpenCCC account, registering for the Math/English placement tests, and registering for an orientation.
- ❑ Financial aid application process starts Fall of senior year. The “FAFSA” becomes available on October 1 for parents to complete. Private schools may require CCS profile. (See Junior Handbook for details on deadlines and links).
- ❑ When students are applying to schools with online applications where counselors submit student school reports, and recommendations, counselors will also upload and send the transcripts. For schools that do not require counselors to submit a student school report, students send the transcripts to those schools through Parchment. UC and CSU require students to self-report their grades (and submit a transcript with enrollment).
- ❑ Students will begin receiving letters of admission in the early spring unless they have applied Early Action or Early Decision. Look at the list of schools that accepted your student and try to narrow to 3 or 4, then notify places not chosen to release your seat to another student. Plan a trip to colleges during Spring Break or “Accepted Students Day” to visit classes, the department you (may/will) major in, get a closer look and make a final decision.
- ❑ Students may meet with a counselor at Guidance Office or College and Career Center to discuss final choice, waitlist options, gap year and financial aid as needed. May 1 is the deadline for college acceptance and to send a deposit.
- ❑ Waitlist: See Mrs. Kirsch to discuss how to go beyond the standard reply of “I want to remain on the list”. If a student did an oral interview, reconnect with that person. New and compelling information can be sent to the college site. However, it is NOT frequent that one makes it off the waitlist. If you do, notify Mr. Lang that you’ve sent a deposit and he will update our list. The NY league sends out its last letter June 30th (other schools can contact you later).
- ❑ Cornell and Georgia Tech are admitting some students as sophomores. Many schools are increasingly offering their seats to transfer students.
- ❑ It is strongly recommended that students interested in a Gap Year apply to colleges in their senior year and then notify their school that the intent to defer.