

GUIDELINES

INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Counseling and Guidance Offices, Acalanes Union High School District.
Acalanes, Campolindo, Del Oro, Las Lomas, Miramonte

CALIFORNIA INDEPENDENT COLLEGE CAMPUSES

There are hundreds of independent colleges and universities with a wide range of characteristics that make them attractive to students. Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Dartmouth are prestigious eastern colleges with highly selective admissions. Cal Tech, Harvey Mudd and MIT offer outstanding science and engineering programs. Smith, Wellesley, Scripps and Mills limit their enrollment to women. Westmont, Whitworth and Wheaton have a Christian emphasis on their campuses. Stanford, Pomona, USC, Occidental and UOP are some of the more than 60 independent colleges in California. In searching for an independent college, you should first decide on the college characteristics that are important to you and then begin checking on the individual campuses. A website that may help in exploring colleges in California is www.californiacolleges.edu. Good luck with your plans for an independent college.

CALIFORNIA INDEPENDENT COLLEGES



COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS

Since independent colleges vary a great deal, here are some questions that you may want to ask yourself concerning independent college characteristics.

1. Is the location of the college important?
2. Do you want to stay in California or travel back east?
3. Should the campus be in a "big city" or in a rural surrounding?
4. Do you want a "coed" student body or a women's or men's college?
5. Should there be 1000 or 10,000 or 15,000 undergraduate students?
6. Are there special majors in art or engineering or drama or English?
7. Does the college have a facility to find summer jobs in your career area?
8. What kind of financial aid is available to help pay the college costs?
9. Is the college highly selective or available to most applicants?
10. What happens to the graduates of the college?

HOW DO INDEPENDENT COLLEGES MAKE ADMISSIONS DECISIONS?

Private colleges vary in terms of selectivity with some having highly selective admissions and other having a relatively open admissions program. The key factors involved in admissions decisions are . . .

1. High School Courses – A strong program of college preparatory courses is recommended from the freshman through the senior year. You are encouraged to take Advanced Placement (AP) courses.
2. Grades — Colleges look carefully at the grades in academic subjects.
3. College Entrance Exams – The SAT-I, SAT-II, and ACT Tests are used by most independent colleges.
4. Letters of Recommendation – Most independent colleges require letters of recommendation from teachers and other persons who know you well.
5. Other Factors – Leadership, athletics, music, art, drama, journalism, yearbook, alumni family, community activities may also be used in making admissions decisions.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

A few highly selective colleges have a personal interview as part of their selection process. Realizing that many students live far away, the colleges often provide an applicant the opportunity to talk with an alumni interviewer who lives in the local community. If your college requires an interview, then a college representative will contact you.

CALENDAR

Few colleges will have the academic calendar that you have grown accustomed to in high school, so you should check the college catalog carefully to see when your college will be in session. Noted below are three calendars used by many colleges around the country.

- "Early Semester":** The fall semester begins in August and ends before winter vacation, while the spring semester begins in January and ends in May.
- Quarter System:** The school year is divided into "three" parts with the fall term from late September to December, the winter term from January to March, and the spring term from April to June.
- 4 - 1 - 4 Calendar:** The fall term lasts for four months from September to December, the January term lasts only one month with students concentrating on one course, and the spring term extends for four months from February to May.

COSTS

Independent colleges are more expensive than public colleges because the cost of tuition is paid by the student rather than being supported by public tax dollars. You should consider the cost carefully and apply for financial aid if there is a need in your family. Information regarding current costs can be found in *The Guide, California Independent Colleges and Universities* publication, located in the College/Career Center.

You should be aware of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that is required by colleges if you apply for financial aid. Some colleges may also require additional financial aid forms. Check the college information carefully to know what forms you will need to complete and when these forms need to be mailed.

ESSAY

Many independent colleges require an essay as part of the application and have members of the admissions committee read your composition. Be sure to read the instructions carefully before you begin writing and then allow yourself enough time to write a careful and thoughtful essay.

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES

Many college representatives visit high schools each year to talk with interested students. While some of these persons are from public colleges, most of the representatives are from independent colleges located in all parts of the country. These meetings are a good opportunity for students to find out information and ask questions in a small group setting. The College/Career Center organizes these visits and announces the time and sign-up procedure. Noted below are some of the public and independent colleges who sent representatives to local high schools in recent years.

Amherst	Lewis and Clark	University of Pacific
Boston University	Menlo College	University of Pennsylvania
Brandeis	Mills	University of Portland
Brown	Notre Dame	UC Berkeley
CSU Hayward	Oregon State University	UC Davis
Chapman University	Pepperdine	UC Irvine
Claremont McKenna College	Pomona	UC Santa Barbara
Columbia	Princeton	UC Santa Cruz
Cornell	Reed	USC
Dartmouth	Scripps	Westmont
Duke	Seattle University	Whitman
Evergreen State College	St. Mary's College	Whittier
Fresno Pacific College	Tufts	Whitworth
Grinnell College	Trinity College	Williams
Harvard	University of Colorado	Willamette
Harvey Mudd College	University of Denver	Woodbury
Humboldt State University	University of Oregon	Yale

STUDENT REQUEST TO COLLEGES

If you are interested in contacting a college for information about the academic program, admissions requirements, and financial aid opportunities, you are encouraged to use the college website. Some of the items noted below may be helpful to you.

1. Use **CORRECT NAME** (Do not use your "nick" name). Be sure to use your complete name on all correspondence with a college (Example - John Paul Winters).
2. Use **CORRECT ADDRESS**. The College/Career Center has the addresses of colleges and universities throughout the United States. Be sure to include your own correct address on your request.
3. State **WHEN** you intend to begin college. In most cases this will be in the fall following high school graduation.
4. State that you will be a **FIRSTYEAR STUDENT**. Different applications are sometimes used for transfer students from other colleges.
5. **COLLEGE CATALOG**. A college may ask you to pay for a college catalog and will usually notify you concerning how you may buy one. Many college catalogs are available in the College/Career Center for student use.
6. **FINANCIAL AID**. Some colleges have separate applications that are used to apply for scholarships, loans and financial aid.

APPLICATIONS

Many students use the paper application that is mailed to them by the college, or you may want to apply online. The Common Application is available in paper and on the internet (www.commonapp.org) with the student completing just one application that can be mailed or sent to all the colleges. Other online applications are now being used by most campuses and you should contact the college directly for more information.

WHEN DO YOU FIND OUT

Students are understandably anxious to hear about whether a college will accept them. The usual notification methods are:

- April – the highly selective colleges usually notify a candidate in mid-April and ask for the candidate's reply by May 1st.
- Rolling admissions – you are notified about two or three weeks after your application is mailed to the college.
- Early Indication – some colleges will give you an idea of your chances in the fall before the official decisions are made in the spring.
- Early Action – a few colleges ask you to apply by November 15th or earlier, notify you of admissions status and give you until May 1st to decide.
- Early Decision – a few colleges ask you to apply by November 15th or earlier, but you must agree to enter the college if offered admission in December.

HOUSING

Some colleges provide housing for all new students, while other colleges have limited housing arrangements. You should read the information from your college carefully, so you will know about the housing opportunities at your campus and what procedure to follow in order to apply for first year housing.

RECOMMENDED READING

The best publication concerning California Independent Colleges is "The Guide...for Students, Parents, Counselors...California Independent Colleges and Universities" which is available in your high school College/Career Center or online. This publication is edited annually and contains a description of over 75 fully accredited colleges in California. The California independent colleges themselves produce this publication through their professional organization...

Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU)
1100 Eleventh Street, Suite 10
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 446- 7626 FAX: (916) 446-7948
www.aiccumentor.org

CHECKLIST FOR SENIORS

This checklist is designed to help seniors realize what must be done in order to apply for admission to an independent college or university.

- _____ 1. Consider carefully what you are looking for in a college, because independent colleges vary considerably in terms of size, location, selectivity, cost, majors and housing arrangements.
- _____ 2. Write directly to the college that interests you for an application, since applications are not available in the Counseling Office or College/Career Center.
- _____ 3. Mail in your application prior to deadline.
- _____ 4. Ask your Registrar in the Counseling Office to mail your seventh (7th) semester transcript.
- _____ 5. Be sure your scores from the SAT-I, SAT-II, and ACT Tests are sent to your college by the testing company.
- _____ 6. Most independent colleges require letters of recommendation, so talk with faculty members about writing a recommendation for you. Complete Letter of Recommendation Guidelines available in the Counseling Office and College/Career Center.
- _____ 7. Check the costs of attending college for you may want to apply for financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other forms required by your college.
- _____ 8. Check on housing arrangements for some colleges provide housing for all students while others have limited housing.
- _____ 9. You should hear from your college about admissions by at least mid-April or possibly sooner.
- _____ 10. You must let the college know by May 1st if you plan to attend.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

1. REQUEST INFORMATION. Independent colleges are very prompt in answering requests from interested students.
2. COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES. Each year many independent college representatives visit your high school. Listen for announcements and sign up to attend meetings in the College/Career Center.
3. CONTACT YOUR COUNSELOR. You are encouraged to talk with your counselor who can help you learn more about independent colleges.
4. COLLEGE PLANNING AWARENESS NIGHT. College Planning Awareness Nights, designed to give parents information about college planning, are scheduled throughout the year. The format and date will vary at each high school.
5. COLLEGE FAIR. A College Fair will be held at St. Mary's College on Saturday, April 30, 2005. Over 150 colleges will be at the College Fair, so students and parents may talk with representatives from many California and out-of-state independent colleges.
6. CAMPUS VISIT. Independent colleges welcome campus visitors, so both students and parents are encouraged to visit college campuses and talk with admissions offices and college students.
7. FOLLOW-UP STUDY. Each high school has a follow-up study that shows where last year's graduates are going to college. You are encouraged to contact the graduates who are attending independent colleges that interest you. Ask in the Counseling Office or College/Career Center for a copy of the Follow-Up Study.
8. VIDEOS. Some colleges produce videos to give high school students an idea of campus life. You are encouraged to view these videos in the College/Career Center to find out more about the independent colleges that interest you.
9. COLLEGE/CAREER CENTER. Check in the College/Career Center at your high school for independent college catalogs, videos and other informative references.