

APPLYING TO PRIVATE COLLEGES & REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



CLASS OF
2027

Presented by the
IHS Counseling Department

PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES



Public Universities

Part of a state "system". Funding comes from state government, leading to lower tuition for residents. Usually larger campuses with higher student-to-faculty ratios.



Private Universities

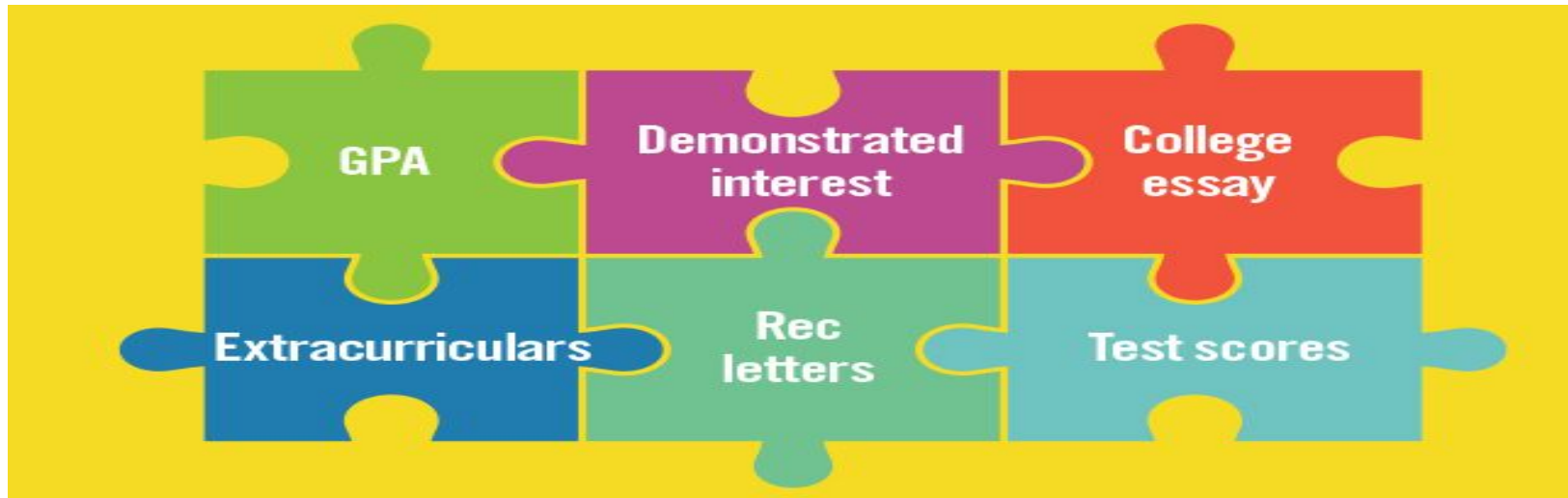
Independent from state control. Funding relies on tuition and endowments. Offers greater diversity in mission, from liberal arts to faith-based.

WHY CONSIDER PRIVATE COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES?



- Private colleges usually offer more **scholarships and financial aid**.
- Smaller class sizes and unique academic programs
- More personalized academic support
- Explore private California colleges and universities - [AICCU College Dashboard](#)

WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR IN APPLICATIONS



- GPA and balanced course rigor - **colleges value improvement and persistence**
- Extracurricular activities, leadership, service
- Essays and personal statements - **authenticity, growth, resilience, your voice**
- Letters of recommendation
- Demonstrated interest

APPLYING TO PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



Visit School Websites

Each school has unique admissions requirements.



Read Thoroughly

Review application(s) with close attention to detail.



Admission Plans

Understand timelines: Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, and Rolling Admissions.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Regular Decision

Standard deadline for colleges.

Rolling

Considers each application as soon as all required information has been received.

Early Action

Non-binding – Receive decision earlier, but no requirement to attend.

Restrictive Early Action

Non-binding; however, cannot apply EA/ED to other colleges.

Early Decision

Binding decision – if admitted, you must attend the college.

** Please check individual college websites to clarify their application deadline policies.*

BUILDING YOUR COLLEGE LIST

Safety Schools

Colleges where your academic profile significantly exceeds the average. Acceptance probability is 70% or higher.

Target Schools

Your GPA and test scores closely match the average profile of admitted students. Aim for a balanced selection here.

Reach Schools

Highly selective institutions or schools where your stats are on the lower end of the average. Acceptance is unlikely for most.

Refinement Steps

- Research fit: cost, location, & majors
- Discuss options with parents
- Be able to explain why you are applying

The "Healthy" Mix

Don't over-apply to schools you don't intend to attend. A balanced list usually contains 2-3 Safeties, 3-4 Targets, and 2-3 Reach schools to ensure a variety of positive outcomes.

Learn how to build your college list.

There are so many different kinds of colleges to choose from. And there's a lot to consider. You might be wondering how to choose the right college. It's an important decision. But you can research and create a list of colleges that interest you. Use the College Search Tool to learn about different colleges. [Learn more about college](#) before making a decision.

Click the links below to learn how to create your college list.

- [Get started.](#)
- [Questions to ask yourself.](#)
- [Get to know the campus.](#)
- [Include safety, reach, and match colleges.](#)

Get started.

You can learn about admissions requirements, cost of attendance, degrees and majors, sports offerings, and more. Use the [College Search Tool](#) to find colleges that interest you.

Follow these steps.

1. Go to the [College Search Tool](#). Search by keyword or use a filter to focus on what's important to you. You can filter by field of study, degree options, campus size, and more.
 - Use the **California College Type** filter for a specific kind of California college. Learn more about [college applications](#) for each kind of college.
 - Use the **Specialty Schools** filter to search for:
 - Women's Only
 - Men's Only
 - Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution
 - Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institution
 - Hispanic-Serving Institution
 - Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)
 - Tribal Colleges
2. Click the heart icon to favorite colleges that interest you. This saves them to your **College List in My Plan**.

[Return to the top.](#)

Questions to ask yourself.

Make sure to ask the right questions while building your college list. That way, you'll only apply to colleges that meet your needs. Here are some questions to ask yourself.

<p>Geneva College Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania - Suburban</p>	<p>👤 1,149 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 23,152/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>100% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>George Washington University Washington, District of Columbia - City</p>	<p>👤 11,387 Medium</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 48,756/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>44% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Georgetown University Washington, District of Columbia - City</p>	<p>👤 7,968 Medium</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 42,012/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>13% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Georgian Court University Lakewood, New Jersey - City</p>	<p>👤 1,478 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 27,038/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>71% Accept. Rate</p>
<p><u>Gettysburg College</u> Gettysburg, Pennsylvania - Town</p>	<p>👤 2,216 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 37,289/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>48% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Glasgow Caledonian New York College New York, New York - City</p>	<p>👤 -- --</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ -- Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>-- Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Goldey-Beacom College Wilmington, Delaware - Suburban</p>	<p>👤 702 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 19,219/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>77% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Goucher College Baltimore, Maryland - City</p>	<p>👤 964 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 28,091/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>73% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Gratz College Melrose Park, Pennsylvania - Suburban</p>	<p>👤 221 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 20,633/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>100% Accept. Rate</p>
<p>Grove City College Grove City, Pennsylvania - Town</p>	<p>👤 2,365 Small</p>	<p>Private 4-year</p>	<p>\$ 26,288/year Avg. Net Price</p>	<p>73% Accept. Rate</p>

INTRODUCING THE COMMON APP



What is Common App?

A powerful platform used by over 900 private and out-of-state colleges to streamline the admission process. It allows you to apply to multiple institutions using a single application.

Key Benefits

- One central dashboard to manage deadlines
- Standardized profile and education sections
- Integrated recommender system for letters
- Access to financial aid and scholarship resources

Search

For counselors and teachers ▾ For colleges and universities ▾



FIND COLLEGES

About ▾

Plan for college ▾

Apply to college ▾

Pay for college ▾

Sign in

Create an account

Your future starts here

Apply to college for the first time or transfer to complete your degree. Navigate your entire college application journey with Common App.

Start your application

COMMON APPLICATION

Your Part

- Create an Account
- Complete Application
- Invite Your Recommenders
- Review Transcript

Parts You Will Need Assistance With

- Letters of Recommendation (Counselor and/or Teacher) and School Report

COMPLETE APPLICATION

My Common Application

- Profile
- Personal Information**
- Address
- Contact Details
- Demographics
- Language
- Geography and Nationality
- Common App Fee Waiver

- Family
- Education
- Testing
- Activities
- Writing
- Courses & Grades
 - 0 college(s) require

My Common Application | Profile

Personal Information

In progress Preview

Legal first/given name*

Would you like to share a different first name that people call you?
 Yes
 No
Clear answer

Middle name

Last/family/surname*

Suffix

Do you have any materials under a former legal name?*

Yes
 No

For example, a maiden name.
Clear answer

Date of birth*

Date uses "month day, year" format (e.g. August 1, 2002)

Continue

EDUCATION

Education

[Video Tutorials](#)[Preview](#)

Current or Most Recent Secondary/High School ▼

Other Secondary/High Schools ▼

Colleges & Universities ▲

If you have ever taken coursework at a college or university, please indicate the number of colleges.*

1 ▼

College 1*

*Irvine Valley College
5500 Irvine Center Dr
Irvine, CA 92618-0300
USA*

*2-year or community college
CEEB Code : 3356*

 [Change](#)

 [Remove](#)

FERPA

Release of Authorization: FERPA form must be completed in order for us to communicate and/or submit information on your behalf to colleges.

The screenshot displays the Common App user interface. At the top left is the 'common app' logo. A navigation bar contains tabs for 'Dashboard', 'My Colleges', 'Common App', 'College Search', and 'Financial Aid Resources'. The 'My Colleges' tab is active, showing a sidebar with 'Chapman University' selected. The main content area is titled 'Recommendors & FERPA' and features a warning icon and the heading 'FERPA Release Authorization'. Below this, a message states: 'Before you can invite your counselor, teachers, recommenders, parents, or advisors, you must complete the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) release authorization process.' A link for 'Learn more about FERPA' is provided, along with a prominent blue button labeled 'Complete Release Authorization'.

INVITE RECOMMENDERS (AFTER ASKING “IN PERSON”)



Welcome
CAID 2
cheryl!

Dashboard My Colleges Common App College Search Financial Aid Resources

My Colleges

Chapman University

College Information

Application

Questions

Recommendations and FERPA

Review and Submit - Common App

Recommendations & FERPA

✓ FERPA Release Authorization
[View Details](#)

Invite Recommenders

Recommenders are people who will submit forms and information to colleges on your behalf. Check out our [video about recommenders](#).

[Invite Recommenders](#)

⚠ Counselor

You must invite a school Counselor who will complete the School Report and other forms for you.

[Invite Counselor](#)

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- Private colleges generally require **recommendations** from your counselor and 1 - 2 teachers.
- You are responsible for determining the letters and forms that are required by reading the application thoroughly. If a letter of recommendation is not required, your counselor will not provide one.
- Identify recommendation decisions and questions on Common Application for each college you are applying to prior to your counselor appointment in the fall.

COMMON APPLICATION TESTING TERMS

College Testing Policies

Colleges use different terms for testing requirements. Common policy descriptions include:

Always required: Standardized test scores are a mandatory part of the application.

Sometimes required: Scores are required for certain parts of the application (e.g., specific majors or scholarships).

Never required: Scores are never a required part of the application.

Flexible: Colleges accept alternatives like graded papers or other types of tests (AP, IB).

Standardized Tests in Common App

College Admission Tests:

- ACT
- SAT

Subject Tests:

- SAT Subject Tests
- AP Subject Tests
- IB Subject Tests

English Proficiency Tests:

- Duolingo English Test
- IELTS / TOEFL
- PTE Academic

Remember: Standardized tests are ignored if they are not required. Check each college's specific requirements.

ACTIVITIES SECTION

How it works

First, you'll select your activity type. If your activity type isn't listed, you can choose "other club/activity" from the dropdown menu. You can give more details in the position/leadership and activity description fields.

Next, you'll briefly describe the activity and your position. You have limited space in these fields, so you may need to abbreviate words and simplify your grammar.

Characters allowed:

- 50 characters – Position/Leadership description
- 100 characters – Organization name
- 150 characters – Activity details, honors won, and accomplishments

Example activity descriptions

Original

For two years I volunteered at my local animal shelter. I helped out where needed, but mainly walked dogs and monitored the front desk. Last year I was asked to take on more responsibility and have been volunteering as the receptionist during the weekends. (256 characters)

Edited

Volunteer at local animal shelter walking dogs and running front desk. Given more responsibility last year and now volunteer as receptionist. (141 characters)

The edited version fits the character limit and still gives the important details. The time spent on the activity has been taken out, because that information is reported elsewhere in the section.

For each activity you'll provide the hours spent per week on the activity, and then the weeks spent per year. If you can't remember the exact details, like the time spent on an activity, it's alright to give your best guess.

For more information, visit our Solution Center at appsupport.commonapp.org

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- **Common App** application opens on **August 1, 2026**.
- **Early Decision** applications are usually due between **October 15 - November 15, 2026**.
- Start being intentional about building a **balanced college list** by using tools like CCGI - **look for “best fit” over “prestige”**
- **Visit colleges - in person, virtual visits/tours**
- Start asking 1 - 2 teachers if they would write your **letter of recommendation**.
- Begin working on your **college essays, etc.**
- Create an activity resume or brag sheet - **extracurricular activities, volunteer work, leadership opportunities, research papers, etc.**

MANAGING STRESS WHILE APPLYING TO COLLEGE

- Start the application process early and stay organized.
- Establish a consistent **sleep routine**.
- Eat **balanced meals and stay physically active**.
- **Do not compare yourself** to others in your class.
- Ask for **help from your counselor** when you need it.
- Maintain a positive and respectful **social media** presence.
- Never allow a college admissions decision to define your worth and determine your future. **You will be a success.**