

# The Right College for You

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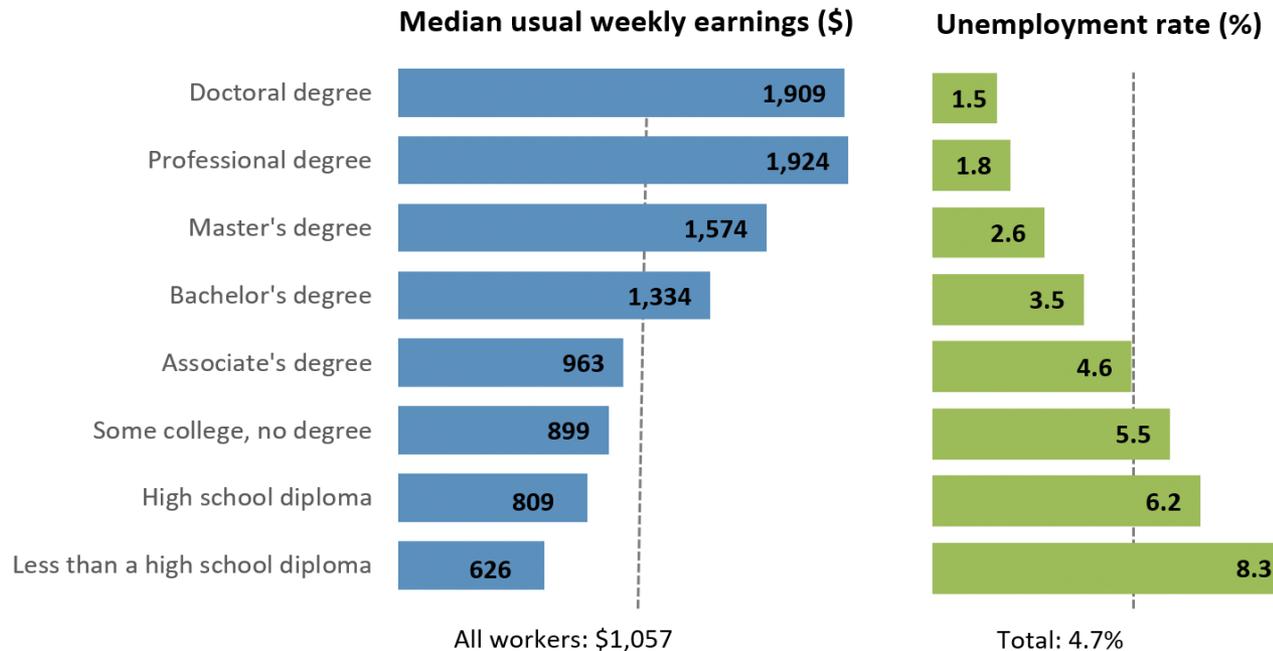
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# Education: the Big Payoff

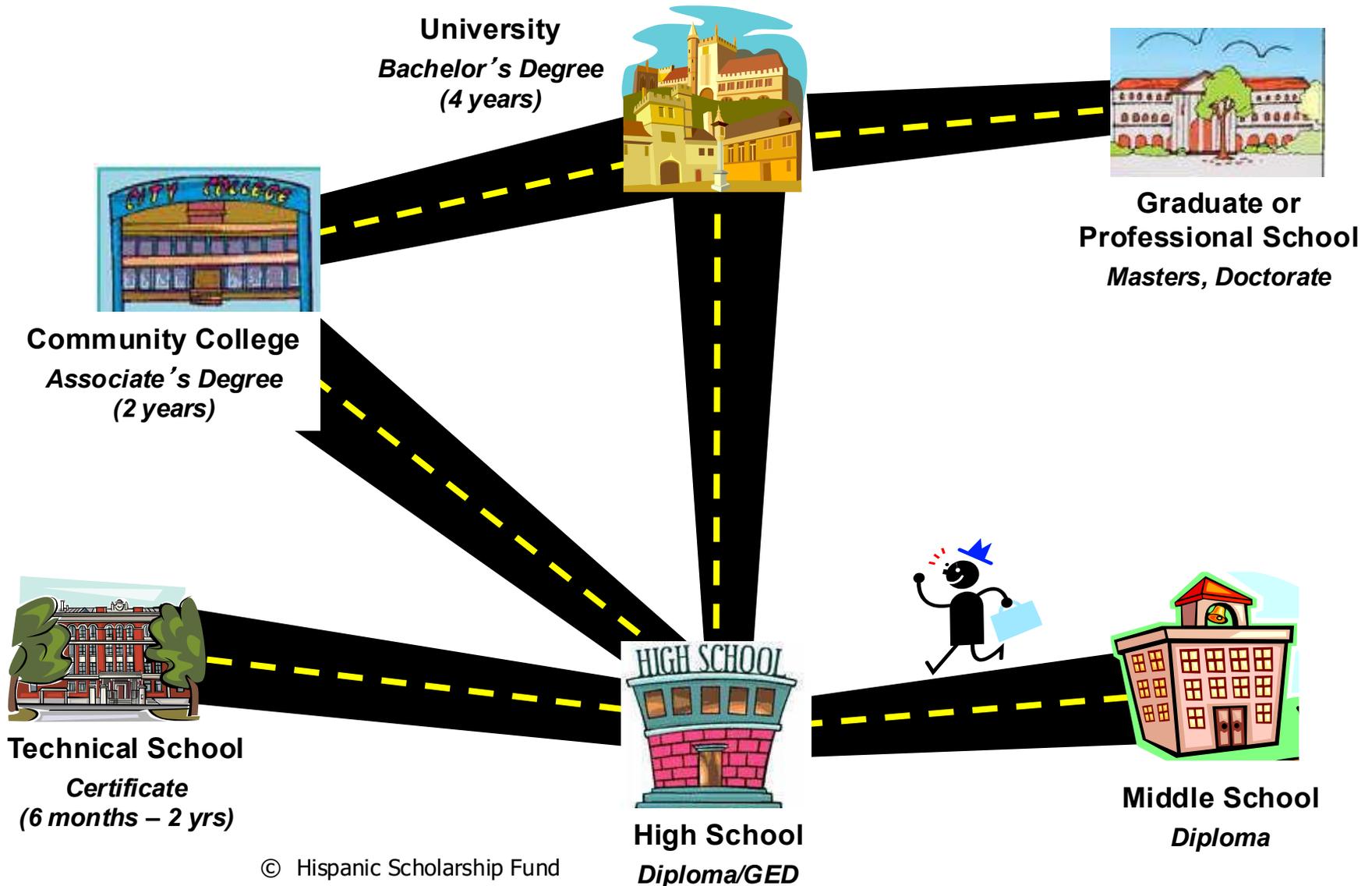
**Average income each year: < high school \$32,500, high school grad \$42,000, 2 yr college \$50,000, 4 yrs college \$69,400, masters \$81,800, > masters \$99,000**

## Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

# What Happens after High School?



# Types of Colleges

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- Vocational/technical
- Community colleges (junior colleges)
- California State University (CSU)
- University of California (UC)
- Private colleges/universities

California is surrounded by some of the best colleges/universities in the world!

# Types of Degrees

- **AA** Associate of Arts (2 years of college)
- **BA** Bachelor of Arts (4 years of college)
- **BS** Bachelor of Science (4 years of college)
- **MA** Masters of Art (usually 2 more years after undergraduate college)
- **Ph.D.** (usually 4+ years after undergraduate college)
- **Ed.D.** (doctorate in education, usually 4+ years after undergraduate college)
- **Professional** (4++ years after undergraduate college, prepares you to work in a certain profession)
  - M.D. Medicine
  - DDS Dentistry
  - JD Law
  - Many others

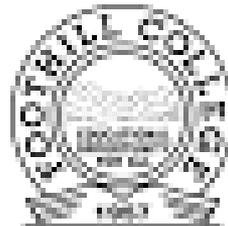
# California's System of Higher Education

System	#	Degrees	Admissions
California Community Colleges (junior colleges)	116	2-year Associate of Arts (AA) degrees	Open admission
California State University (CSU)	23	4-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS), some graduate degrees including Master's degrees (MA) and PhD	Admits top 33% of California high school graduating class
University of California (UC)	10	4-year BA and BS degrees, graduate degrees including PhD and professional degrees such as medicine (MD), law (JD), and veterinary science (DVM)	Admits top 9% of California's high school graduating class

# Community Colleges (AA)

(e.g., De Anza College, Foothill College, College of San Mateo, West Hills Lemoore, Fresno City)

- 2-year programs
- Can complete first 2 years of coursework (lower-division courses), then transfer to a 4-year college to complete last 2 years (upper-division courses)
- Open enrollment
- Tuition less expensive—about \$1,000 a year fees
- Smaller classes
- No BA or BS awarded
- Gateway to 4-year colleges



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# Vocational/Technical Colleges

(e.g., Fresno City College, UEI College)

- Provide specialized training (medical assisting, paralegal, accounting)
- Program length varies
- Receive a certificate, diploma or AA
- Some award a BA or BS
- Most privately owned—check costs, accreditation, graduation rates, job placements
- **Community colleges may offer similar programs at a much lower cost than 4-year colleges!**

# California State Universities

(e.g., Cal Poly, San Diego State, Cal State East Bay, San Jose, San Francisco, Monterey Bay, Sacramento, Fresno, Long Beach)

- 4-year programs – BA, BS
- Many different subjects and majors
- Some offer masters and doctoral degrees
- Students may live on campus but many commute
- **The largest, most diverse, and one of the most affordable university systems in the country**



SACRAMENTO STATE



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# University of California

(e.g., U.C. Davis, Berkeley, Santa Cruz, UCLA, Santa Barbara, San Diego, Riverside, Merced)

- 4-year programs – BA, BS
- Many different subjects and majors
- Research based, MA & PhD degrees
- Most students live on or off campus in rentals
- **Among all US public colleges, half of the UCs rank in the top 10** (with Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego ranking among the highest)



# UC acceptance rates—they vary!

## Freshman Acceptance Rate. Fall, 2025

Your essays are really important, along with your grades

UC Rankings	US News Ranking	Location	Acceptance Rate	GPA Range	SAT Range	ACT range
<a href="#">UC Irvine</a>	5 (36)	Irvine	28.7%	3.96-4.26	1280-1510	27-34
<a href="#">UC San Diego</a>	4 (34)	La Jolla	28.4%	4.07-4.29	1310-1520	29-34
<a href="#">UC Berkeley</a>	2 (22)	Berkeley	11.4%	4.12-4.30	1320-1540	29-35
<a href="#">UCLA</a>	1 (20)	Los Angeles	9.4%	4.19-4.32	1350-1550	31-35
<a href="#">UC Davis</a>	6 (38)	Davis	44.6%	3.95-4.25	1230-1490	26-33
<a href="#">UC Merced</a>	8 (93)	Merced	95.0%	3.39-4.00	980-1260	18-27
<a href="#">UC Riverside</a>	7 (83)	Riverside	87.4%	3.7-4.13	1110-1380	21-31
<a href="#">UC Santa Barbara</a>	3 (28)	Santa Barbara	38.3%	4.10-4.29	1290-1510	28-34
<a href="#">UC Santa Cruz</a>	9 (103)	Santa Cruz	72.9%	3.81-4.20	1170-1440	24-32

Acceptance rates vary so choose broadly:

**UCLA 9.4%**

**Berkeley 11.4%**

**Santa Cruz 72.9%**

**Merced 95.0%**

# New Admissions Standards, University of California Campuses, 2025

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- Goal: ensure enrollment for all qualified California high school graduates.
- No longer consider SAT or ACT test scores (test-blind).
- Effective fall 2022, the Statewide Index offers top 9% percent of California high school graduates a guaranteed space at a UC campus, if space is available.
- Top 9% based on your A-G course totals and your UC GPA, minimum grades 3.0

# Private Colleges

(e.g., U. of Santa Clara, USC, Stanford, Harvard, Yale, San Francisco U, San Diego U, Loma Linda)

- 4-year programs – BA, BS and graduate degrees.
- Receive no direct subsidy from state where school is located.
- Can be exclusive; admission may be difficult.
- Often smaller enrollment and smaller classes.
- May have particular academic focus (e.g., liberal or fine arts).
- Tuition may be 9-10 x higher than at public institutions.
- **Often have good financial aid for high achieving students, low-income students, and student athletes—apply to a few if you are good student.**
- Academic standards vary greatly—from prestigious to “cautionary.”



# 2-Year College First or 4-Year College?

## Some considerations:

### A 2-year college allows you to:

- Save money, stay close to home, possibly work, get good grades and transfer into a good UC or 4-year college that you might not have been accepted to right after high school.
- BUT, chances of graduating with a 4-year degree are lower for some students. Some students get “derailed” by earning money at a job or making college a second priority.

### A 4-year college allows you to:

- Be in one place for 4 years, have more sustained experiences with other students and activities.

**Think carefully about which option fits you best**

# Imagine Yourself at College

It's never too early to:

- Learn about colleges that interest you
- Participate in college access programs
- Attend college fairs



**Visit local colleges—see if you like the “feel” of the campus, visit a classroom, talk to students, meet the professors!**

# What is the Right College for You?

- Entrance requirements?
- Classes/majors?
- Cost? Financial aid?
- Small, medium or large?
- Urban, rural?
- Ethnic diversity?
- Distance from home?
- Campus activities/support?
- Graduation rates?
- Job internships/placements?



# Learn More about Colleges from Others

Ask about family, friend's, teacher's, older student's college experiences:

- How did you decide on the college you attended?
- What was your major and why did you choose it?
- What activities did you participate in?
- Describe your typical day.
- What was the most challenging about your freshman year?
- What would you have done differently?



# A-G: California's UC and CSU Admissions Requirements

You must complete 15 year-long A-G courses in high school— at least 11 of them by the end of your junior year. You also may meet them by completing college courses or taking exams that verify your competency.

A: History - 2 yrs required

B: English - 4 yrs required

C: Math – 3 yrs required (4 recommended)

D: Science – 2 yrs required (3 yrs recommended)

E: Language other than English – 2 yrs required

F: Visual/Performing Art – 1 yr required

G: College Prep Elective – 1 yr required

Note: UC requires a GPA of 3.0+) and CSU requires 2.5+ and there are some other key differences.

# Grade Point Average for CSU's and UC's

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## California State Universities (CSU)

Require a minimum of a 2.5 GPA or higher,  
but will consider students with  
GPAs of 2.0 - 2.49

## University of California (UC) campuses

Require a minimum of a 3.0 GPA or higher  
to apply

# How Many Colleges Should You Apply To?

## Dream, Good Match, Failsafe

Select about 6+ colleges, each having a different level of difficulty



# Your Self Portrait

## What Colleges May Ask You to Submit

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- Your Profile
  - GPA
  - Class rank
  - Test Scores
  - Honors, AP, Dual enrollment
  - Core Classes
- Your Strengths & Interests
  - Academics
  - Extracurricular Activities
  - Personal Qualities
  - Perspectives
- College Application
  - Basic Information Form
  - High School Transcript
  - Test scores (sometimes)
  - Letters of Recommendation
  - Essay(s)
  - Interview (if applicable)
  - Audition/Portfolio (if applicable)

# A Strong College Essay

- Reflects your life experiences, achievements, and personal characteristics that relate to your commitment to higher education.
- Shows depth of your interests/accomplishments
- Tells a cohesive story—every sentence should contribute to your essay
- **Distinguishes you from others--is this is a story only you can tell?**
- Shows your enthusiasm and passion and commitment--be professional and non-judgmental.
- Explains how you will contribute to the specific college.
- Uses appropriate and active-voice verbs.
- Answers essay question clearly. Answers all parts of the question.
- Has no typos or grammatical errors.
- Has gone through many drafts and gotten feedback.

# Never under-estimate the power of the written word in reflecting your life experience



# How much does college cost?

## (tuition, housing, food, books, fees)

The amount estimated for all costs you will pay for during an academic year for California residents—higher for out-of state):

- Fees
- Housing, food
- Living expenses

Total cost for a UC, about \$43,000-\$45,000 on-campus and \$35,000-\$40,000 off-campus a year. Costs vary by UC given housing costs, etc.

Tuition for private universities like Stanford and Harvard, \$56,000-96,000 a year BUT you may get a full scholarship!

# How Do I Pay for College?

## Types of Financial Aid

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- 1. Your own money or family's money**
- 2. Grants:** Cal grant, don't pay back, apply for via FAFSA. Good for community, State, UC and some tech colleges.
- 3. Work-study:** provided via FAFSA, gives you a part-time job, often on campus. Maximum \$4,000 year. Don't pay back. Taxable.
- 4. Scholarships:** apply and win from many sources. Don't pay back (free money! Can often use for anything, sometimes renewable).
- 5. Loans:** Your college determines the loan type(s), if any, and the actual loan amount you are eligible to receive each academic year. You must pay back over time after college.

# UC Application Fees/Fee Waivers

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You can apply to as many UC campuses as you like with just one application. Each UC you apply to receives your same application.

**It costs \$80 to apply to each UC you select unless you have a fee waiver**

To get a fee waiver, fill out the family income and family size questions in the “Your household” section of FASA.

To be eligible for a fee waiver, you must be:

An undergraduate student, a California resident for more than one year, a U.S. citizen or eligible for AB540 benefits (for undocumented students, who attended hs in California 3+ years, and received a hs diploma).

**With a fee waiver, you can apply to up to four UC schools for free.**

# A Note about Loans and Debt

## Debt = money you pay back over time

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Take out as few student loans as possible!

Try to graduate from a 4-year college with less than \$40,000 in loans if you can. You may still have graduate school to pay for.

- If you have a debt of \$20,000 to \$40,000 at the end of 4 years, you usually have 20 years to pay it off, about \$222/month. You begin paying it off after college.
- Question: What if college tuition is \$50,000 a year and the college offers you a scholarship for \$20,000 that you don't have to pay back? Is this a good deal? Hint: you still owe \$30,000 a year or \$120,000 in 4 years.

# Reasons Students Drop Out

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- Unprepared for higher level academics
- Educational burnout (demanding classes, amount of homework)
- School poor fit for interests, skills, or desired major
- Too much fun, too many extracurricular activities
- Financial problems/not enough financial assistance
- Demands of job, desire for extra money
- Homesick, feeling like don't fit in
- Lack of family or college support and resources
- Personal or family issues (personal stress, relationship ends, family illness)

# How to Succeed in College

- People may tell you that college is not for you or that you may not succeed
- Choose the right college, seek out their resources (tutoring centers, resources for low income and/or students of color, financial aid assistance)
- Talk with your professors and let them know if you need help
- Be organized and stay ahead in your work!
- You are smart—if you have been a good student in high school you will do fine in the right college!

# Believe in Yourself !



“When I was growing up, I worked  
in the fields with my mother.

I didn't know anything about colleges.

I had never heard of Stanford.”

**Jesús Rodríguez, M.D.**, high school, 1989

Accepted to and graduated from Stanford and then  
University of Washington for Medical School

**Now a Family Practice physician, Clovis, CA**

I'm originally from Mexico, grew up in Madera, and  
returned to the Central Valley after medical school  
and training to provide quality medical care to all of  
my patients.

# Resources for college

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This website gives simple tips on test taking, preparing a college timeline, creating a resume, and learning about a career. See tab on academic toolbox, tip sheets

<http://accesstoachievement.org/>

This website is part of the College Board website--search for colleges based on your preferences (size, location, majors, sports, etc.), look at career options, learn how to finance college, and more.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

This website includes information on what types of aid there are, who qualifies, and how to get aid.

<http://studentaid.gov>

# Resources for UC Prompts PIQ's Personal Insight Questions

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## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA 2025-2026 ESSAY PROMPT GUIDE

**[HTTPS://WWW.COLLEGEESAYADVISORS.COM/SUPPLEMENTAL-  
ESSAY/UNIVERSITY-OF-CALIFORNIA-ESSAY-PROMPT-GUIDE/](https://www.collegeessayadvisors.com/supplemental-essay/university-of-california-essay-prompt-guide/)**

This is a great link as it has many suggestions and hints about how to answer the prompts!

# CSU and UC Timeline Links

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These two links give you application dates and deadlines for the CSU's and UC's. You can get tips for answering personal insight questions for the UC's, take virtual tours of CSU campuses, and get information about majors and transfers and more!

CSU's

<https://www.calstate.edu/apply/Pages/application-dates-deadlines.aspx>

UC's

<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/applying-as-a-transfer/dates-and-deadlines.html>