



College Counseling Handbook

2025-2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 1

BEST IMMEDIATE ONLINE RESOURCES:..... 3

% 2026: IMPORTANT DATES, 2025-2026..... 3

SENIOR CHECKLIST 2025-2026..... 5

COLLEGE RESEARCH INFORMATION..... 7

BUILDING YOUR COLLEGE LIST..... 9

COLLEGE VISITS..... 10

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND QUESTIONS..... 11

APPLICATION INFORMATION..... 12

DEADLINES AND APPLICATION PLANS..... 14

TESTING INFORMATION..... 15

FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION..... 16

BEFORE YOU APPLY: SCOIR..... 19

PARTS OF THE APPLICATION..... 20

EXPECTATIONS..... 22

ADMISSIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS..... 23



INTRODUCTION

Aloha!

Welcome to the College Counseling process at La Pietra – Hawai'i School for Girls. We know that planning for college can be both intimidating and challenging but also hopefully exciting, and we are eager to partner with parents and students in this wonderful process.

In this College Counseling Handbook, you will find a variety of information that will help to explain the college admissions process and its various components. Through our college advisory program for grades 9-12, in the spring semester, students receive lessons and guidance on making the most of their high school career, getting involved in school and the community, thinking about course selection, an exploration of colleges and majors, and guidance through the college-applications process, aligning with our mission to help young women lead a life of purpose.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email, call, or schedule appointments with me. I look forward to working with you throughout this school year!

Kindly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheyne Nomura". The script is fluid and cursive.

Cheyne Nomura
College Counselor & Registrar
La Pietra – Hawai'i School for Girls



BEST IMMEDIATE ONLINE RESOURCES:

I am happy to guide you through this college-application process, notably through Senior Seminar and the individual appointments that are scheduled. However, if you need some resources while exploring this process on your own time, here are some great websites to use:

[NACAC: National Association for College Admission Counseling](#)

[College Board](#)

[FAFSA](#)

[Tests and the rest, The College Admissions Industry Podcast](#)

Sallie Mae: [Website](#) / [YouTube](#) / [Webinars](#) / [NITRO: Financial Aid Resources](#)

% 2026: IMPORTANT DATES, 2025-2026:

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

*Via Senior Seminar:

- Attend sessions with visiting college admissions representatives.
- Kindly, professionally begin to request 1-2 teachers to write letters of recommendation for you.
 - *Give them at least 2 weeks' notice, but the sooner the better!
 - Provide these teachers with a copy of your resume in order to assist them with writing your recommendation.
- Create accounts for:
 - [Common App](#)
 - [Scoir](#)
- Start building your College List via your [Scoir](#) account.
- Begin to draft your college essays, with guidance provided in Senior Seminar.
 - Prompts for the graded assignment will come from those of the [Common App](#).
- SAT Registration (highly encouraged):
 - **August 8:** Deadline to [register for August 23 SAT](#)
 - **August 29:** Deadline to [register for September 13 SAT](#)
 - **September 19:** Deadline to [register for October 4 SAT](#)
 - **Any of these dates are recommended if applying to Early [Decision or Early Action](#) deadlines.

OCTOBER:

- **October 1:** [FAFSA](#) 2026-2027 projected to open.
- **October 1:** [College Scholarship Service \(CSS\) Profile forms](#) opens.
 - [Click here to view list of participating CSS institutions and programs](#)
 - [CSS Profile Resource](#)
- **October 4:** Deadline to take the SAT if you are applying for Early Action/Decision
- **October 24:** Deadline to [register for November 8 SAT](#)

- **By October 17:** Kindly follow up with your LOR writers about the November deadline.

NOVEMBER:

- *Deadline for Early Action and Early Decision applications—be sure to know the school-specific deadlines.
- **November 21:** Deadline to [register for December 6 SAT](#)

DECEMBER:

- **December 6:** Final date to take SAT for Fall 2026 admissions.
- Typically when colleges will request that a copy of your official transcript be sent to them if you applied via Early Action/Decision.
- Make sure the final list of colleges you've chosen to apply to are indicated in your Scoir account in order to ensure transmission of supporting materials.
- Retake SAT or SAT Subject Tests if necessary. This is your last chance to take them for UC consideration.
- **Winter Break:** Finalize Regular Decision applications.

JANUARY-MARCH:

- **January:** Regular Decision applications dues—be sure to know the school-specific deadlines.
- Now that you've submitted all of your application materials, there is typically a lull in the process. That said, during this time, you should...
 - Continue to keep your grades up!
 - You're not out of the woods yet—colleges will still want to see your semester 2 grades.
 - Apply for [scholarships](#)
 - You may need letters of recommendation for these, too, so ask, again, your teachers at least 2 weeks in advance to submit them for you.
 - If able, schedule visits with the schools you've applied to.
 - Getting a feel for the schools in-person and meeting the various faculty and staff should help you to narrow down your decision.
 - Write thank-you letters to the teachers who wrote recommendation letters for you.

APRIL:

- Take deep breaths and prepare to receive notification letters from the colleges you've applied to.
- Please inform Mr. Nomura of all of the colleges you applied to, whether you were accepted or not, and the scholarships/grants they offered to you.
- Have your parents/guardians update the FAFSA/CSS forms, if they haven't already.

MAY:

- **May 1:** Decision Day!

SENIOR CHECKLIST 2025-2026

August-September:

- ☐ Update your list of colleges to 6-10 schools. Be sure to add schools to your Common App and Scoir accounts.
- ☐ Decide if you will be applying to Early Decision, Early Action, or Regular Decision deadlines and update this information in Scoir.
- ☐ Check your email!
- ☐ Register for fall SAT and/or ACT test dates and make sure to register early! (www.collegeboard.com for SAT and www.actstudent.org for ACT).
- ☐ College visits with admissions representatives during Senior Seminar.
- ☐ Start requesting letters of recommendation from teachers. Be sure to ask your teachers for some time to go over your resume and to let them know the schools you are applying for and their deadlines. After your meeting, officially request your letters of recommendation from your teachers in Scoir .
- ☐ Estimate your [financial aid needs](#).
- ☐ Register with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center if you are an athlete planning to continue playing a sport in college (ncaaclearinghouse.net).

October:

- ☐ October 1: [FAFSAApplication](#) opens
- ☐ *Early October*: Deadline to submit Early Decision contract through Common App (instructions [here](#)).
- ☐ October 14: College Fair field trip at the Hawaii Convention Center.
- ☐ Complete the College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile forms if required by colleges.
- ☐ Begin your applications, monitor your progress, and check in with your counselor often. Be aware of college entrance requirements to complete them as well as essay requirements, deadlines, fees, etc.
- ☐ Register for November or December SAT/ACT. (www.collegeboard.com for SAT or www.actstudent.org for ACT). Please note that you are responsible for making sure your official SAT or ACT score reports are directly sent from those organizations to the colleges you are applying to.
- ☐ Update your Scoir account in order to ensure transcripts are sent from La Pietra directly to the colleges you are applying to. It is your responsibility to make sure you have everything updated in Scoir before your applications are due.
- ☐ Submit your FAFSA and CSS Profile (if required by colleges) to meet colleges' financial aid deadlines.
- ☐ Request letters of recommendation to teachers via Scoir after having asked them *in-person*.

November/December:

- ☐ Complete the financial aid (FAFSA) application.
- ☐ Continue working on applications.
- ☐ Keep a copy of everything you send to the colleges.
- ☐ **November 30th is normally the deadline for all UC/Cal State applications.** Do not miss this!
- ☐ Some deadlines may occur during La Pietra's winter break. Be aware of those deadlines and request

all materials before December 1st.

- ☐ Remember 'initial transcripts' are sent to all of the colleges you've applied to—your grades count! If your college requires a hard copy mailed out, [submit your transcript request](#) by December 1st.

January/February:

- ☐ Follow up to submit any needed documentation for financial aid/scholarships.
- ☐ Continue working on applications. Submit completed applications (Regular Decision).
- ☐ Look up scholarship opportunities online.
- ☐ Ask your college counselor any questions you might have or meet with your counselor.

March:

- ☐ Spring Break!
- ☐ College Admission Decision Season: Mid-March to April 1

April:

- ☐ Complete research on colleges you are admitted to for the decision-making process. Find a place that will best help support you in completing your academic and personal goals. Consult with your family!

May:

- ☐ May 1 is National College Decision Day! Submit your enrollment deposit to notify the college you will be attending there in the fall. Please do not double-deposit.
- ☐ Work hard and finish your studies the best you can! Colleges review final transcripts and may rescind an admissions offer if there is an unreasonable drop in academics.
- ☐ Submit information to your counselor on where to send your final transcript. Please note that La Pietra will only send one final transcript.
- ☐ Take AP exams and send scores to the college you plan to attend.
- ☐ Make sure all fees are paid on time to ensure the release of your final transcript.
- ☐ Send in a housing deposit, register for classes/placement tests and sign up for the college's orientation session.
- ☐ Thank all who have helped you with the process. We are all so proud of you!
- ☐ Graduation!

COLLEGE RESEARCH INFORMATION

CHOOSING THE BEST FIT FOR YOU!

As you research and review the many colleges in the United States and abroad, here are a few of the common considerations students look at as they figure out which school they would like to apply to. As you decide which of these is most important to you, keep in mind that the college you add to your list should help you to realize your goals academically and personally.

1. SETTING AND LOCATION

Where is the college located—West coast, east coast, etc.? Is it an urban, rural or suburban campus? Is it primarily a residential or commuter campus? How accessible is the college—for instance, how close is the nearest airport? Is the college in a city, close to a major city, or far away from one? How easy is it to get around campus—on foot? by bike? Do you need a car? How convenient is the public transportation system? Is the school co-ed or single gender?

2. SIZE

How big is the college, and what are its distinctive features? You're used to a close-knit academic setting with plenty of individual attention. How do you feel about classes with 200-500 people? Or larger classes? As size is relative to each person, keep in mind what you are looking for in a college.

3. PROGRAM AND PHILOSOPHY

Is it a college or university? Colleges offer primarily a liberal arts curriculum, while universities are made up of different colleges and graduate schools and will offer a variety of majors that might not exist at a smaller college. What kind of majors and minors does it offer? Are you able to do a double major? What is the study abroad program like?

4. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND EXPECTATIONS

How difficult or challenging are the courses? Do you want to be active in class discussions? What is the workload? What type of student body/learning environment exists on campus? How are students able to choose their classes? Are certain students given priority for certain majors?

5. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL LIFE

What types of activities, sports, and other opportunities are popular with the student body at this school? Can you play sports at the level you want? What do students do on the weekends? Are there fraternities and sororities? Are students conservative, moderate, liberal, etc.? What is the tone of the college and do you feel like you would be a good fit? What kind of student resource programs does the school have?

6. COST

Cost will vary widely institution to institution (public/private, in-state and out-of-state). How much financial aid and/or scholarships will you need to afford an education at this institution? Though, you should not immediately eliminate a college option based on presented cost, as you may very well qualify for financial aid and scholarships.

7. COLLEGE MATCH

Have you matched yourself as a student with the college's stated admissions requirements? Does your GPA approximately match the average GPA of the college's current freshman class? Do your SAT/ACT scores fall within the range of the top 75% of its current freshman class? Note: If your answer is "yes" to both these questions, there is a good chance that your personal academic profile will match the one for which the college is looking.

7. STUDENT RETENTION RATES

This is the percentage of students that continue on at the college after completing their first year. The higher the retention rate, the better. If it's a percentage less than 70%, that means students are leaving the school for various reasons, common ones being unable to meet tuition payments, homesickness, and/or the school is not what they thought it would be. This is not commonly published information, so you may need to reach out to admissions offices for this figure.

8. SUCCESS RATES

This is the percentage of students that graduate, find a job right away, or continue their education after 4 years. A school with an 80% or higher success rate is a strong number. This is commonly advertised information, and if it's not, that would be a red flag, and you should email admissions offices to obtain their success rate percentage.

8. OTHER

There may be other criteria that will be important to you as you complete your research. For current information on these requirements, check the college guidebooks and college catalogs in libraries, bookstores, and our offices.

Several good guidebooks are:

- *Four-Year Colleges 2020 (Peterson's Four Year Colleges)*
- *The College Handbook (College Board) 2020*
- *The Fiske Guide to Colleges 2020*
- *The Best 380 Colleges (Princeton Review) 2020*
- *Colleges That Change Lives*
- *Loren Page Complete Book of Colleges 2020 (Princeton Review)*

BUILDING YOUR COLLEGE LIST

Continue to think, read, and research so you can narrow your choices. As you build your list of ‘safety’, ‘target’, and ‘reach’ schools (keep on reading for more info on this), make sure to avoid applying to a school that you would not gladly attend. Remember to keep the following factors in mind (along with what you determine to be important):

- Pros/cons of each school
- Percentage of applicants accepted
- Enrollment size of the college/university
- Location and distance from home
- Academic program of your intended major
- Freshman class profile
- Application fee and deadlines
- Athletics, student life, housing options
- Costs and financial aid information
- General impression of tone, academics, students, admission

We recommend 2-3 carefully considered and subsequently selected schools in the safety, target, reach, and safety categories for a total of 6 to 10 schools. Your list should include places where you’ll be happy to study at, no matter the category.

- **Target schools:** A target school is one where your academic records fall within or are above the school’s range for the average freshman from last year’s class. You think you have a strong chance of admission, but there is a chance you may be denied.
- **Safety schools:** A safety school is one in which your academic records (GPA, SAT/ACT scores, class rank, etc.) are stronger than the school’s range for the average freshman. It’s also a great idea to include financial safety schools on your list as well. You can find the school’s range of academic stats for last year’s class on their Admissions page. You and your college counselor feel you will almost certainly be admitted. An example of a safety school would be a community college.
- **Reach schools:** A reach school is a school where your academic record falls below the school’s range for the average freshmen from last year’s class, but you feel you might have a chance at acceptance.

A mix of these categories will ensure that you have a college list that includes back-up options while also allowing you to pursue your ambitious goals. More in-depth information and explanations of these categories can be found online as well.

Here is one recommended site:

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/dream-match-safety-schools>.

COLLEGE VISITS

Representatives of colleges and universities from across the country visit La Pietra, mainly in the fall. The meetings are a great way to find out about schools, either as a substitute for visiting those schools personally, or as a first step in determining whether or not you will visit them.

College representatives have the latest information about their schools to share with you. These college representatives are often the ones reading applications. It is not unusual for a representative to become a personal contact at many points in the application process.

College visits will be scheduled primarily during Senior Seminar class periods. If a visit is scheduled outside of Senior Seminar, permission from your teacher must be obtained at least 2 days in advance of a college visit if you will miss class time to attend. Please note that should you miss any portion of class time, you are expected to contact your teacher to make up any missed assignments, tests, and content. We want to make sure your grades remain strong! The schedule of college visits is posted in the College Counseling section of the La Pietra website and on the Senior Seminar bulletin board.

Here are some recommendations for getting the most out of your college visits:

1. Do a little research on your college to see what questions pop up or if you would like clarification from the college rep on anything.
2. Make sure to write out your questions and keep all your college visits (and all other senior counseling materials) in one place—a binder, notebook, etc. Don't forget to take notes!
3. Make sure to introduce yourself and ask great questions! First impressions are important and many times, the college representative is also the one reading your application. Also, once you have asked a question, make sure to maintain eye contact and pay attention to the answer!
4. Make sure to follow up with a "thank you" email after the visit. ☺

*Visiting college campuses is also a great way to get a feel for the school's personality, resources, and campus. If you're not able to travel to the school, many colleges offer virtual tours. This information is usually located on the college's admissions page.

In general, the most efficient way to obtain application forms, catalogs, and other college materials is to request them online. Application forms and other college materials will also be available during college visits. Feel free to ask!

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND QUESTIONS

The Honolulu National College Fair also occurs during October as well as a smaller one in the spring. We will inform you when these fairs take place and encourage you to visit the fair to speak with representatives and gather information. It's also a great opportunity to introduce yourself to various admissions counselors, especially if the particular college or university does not visit La Pietra in the fall. We encourage you to ask great questions and ask for materials for your research process.

Here are some questions to think about and ask:

- What's most distinctive about this college/university?
- What are considered the strongest departments? Most popular majors?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college's advising system?
- Is the emphasis for professors on teaching or research (or a mix of both)?
- What is the college doing to address issues of diversity? Safety? Academics?
- What are the study abroad and internship opportunities offered at your school?
- What is the typical course load for freshmen?
- Describe the study body in terms of diversity, social values, and attitudes?
- What kind of person would not be a good fit?
- What is student housing like? What is the housing requirement at your school?
- What student organizations and activities are offered on campus?
- To what extent are admissions 'need blind' with regard to a family's financial situation? To what extent do you meet full demonstrated need?
- What is the freshman retention rate? Success rates? Job placement or graduate school placement?

APPLICATION INFORMATION

College applications can be overwhelming as there are usually various requirements, different deadlines, and other moving pieces to the puzzle. Here are the general requirements for college applications, but make sure to check out your colleges' various admissions pages for the most up-to-date information. Generally, applications include the following:

1. College application

- Is it the school's actual application or can you apply through Common App (or another system)? Does the college require a paper or online format?

2. Application fees

- Generally, they can range from free up to \$80 or more. Sometimes you can request/get a fee waiver by attending an admissions visit or event, meeting certain economic criteria, or talking to your college counselor for Common App application. Applications will not be processed until application fees are paid (generally, these are paid online).

3. Transcripts/Schedule of classes

- Colleges will require the most up-to-date official transcripts directly from La Pietra. We will either send official copies via mail, Scoir, or by uploading directly online through Common App. This depends on the college's preferences and systems.
 - Test scores (AP, SAT, and ACT) will not be posted on official transcripts. Students are expected to send out their own test scores through their Collegeboard.org or act.org account.
- Please note that La Pietra sends a transcript generally at the start of the application process (initial transcript) to all being-applied-to schools as well as after the completion of semester 1 (midyear transcript), and after graduation (final transcript) to the student's committed college.
- Seniors should not be changing classes in the middle of the year, as this affects the reports being sent to schools.

4. Test scores

- Colleges may require either the ACT or SAT test scores. More information about which schools are and are not test-optional can be [found here](#). These score reports must be sent directly from the testing agency's host website. Score ordering information can be found here directly on the College Board or ACT website.
- We recommend that you send score reports a few weeks in advance to allow the colleges to receive the score report and file it correctly. Make sure to check your application status to make sure your colleges receive your scores!

5. Essays

- Many schools will request one essay and sometimes supplemental responses. You will have to check each college's site for their writing requirements.

- If you are applying through the Common App, you will be required to submit one of the Common App essays. *There will be a unit in Senior Seminar on how to write a college essay based on the Common App prompts.* If you would like additional help with your essays beyond the lessons and feedback provided, you may check in and request for help. Please make sure to plan ahead of the deadline so that there is ample time for you to write your essays and for Mr. Nomura to review; you should ask at least 2 weeks prior to the due date.

6. Letters of Recommendation

- Many times a college will require letters of recommendation (usually two) from your college counselor as well as teachers or other members of the community. Please check your college's site for more details.
- Once you've discovered who needs to write your letter of recommendation, you must ask your teacher or other community members, in person, to see if it's possible for them to write your letter.
- You should ask at least two individuals, depending on your colleges' admission requirements, and have a few back-up ideas for writers in case a teacher is unable to write the letter.
- Make sure to give your recommenders ample time to write your letter of recommendation (**at least 3 weeks or longer**). Don't forget to give them your resume as well!
 - It should be a teacher who knows you well, has seen you in the classroom in your sophomore or junior year, and has witnessed your growth/success in their classroom.
 - Set up time to speak with your teacher about writing you a letter of recommendation. Make sure you come prepared so your teacher and you can discuss the specifics of the letter and figure out the timeline.
 - Make sure you give them a copy of your resume and any other helpful information. More info is helpful in this situation!
 - Finally, be sure to give your letter of recommendation writer a thank-you card, as it takes time and effort to write each student a letter. ☺

7. Extracurricular Activities

Most colleges want to know what you have been up to during your high-school career. There is usually a section where you will need to write in what activities, clubs, volunteering, awards, etc. you have earned or done during the past few years, and these don't *only* need to have been affiliated with La Pietra. For example, are you a Girls Scout? Do you tutor on your own time? Do you help to coach a sport? If so, include these!

IMPORTANT: When applying electronically, be sure to let Mr. Nomura know the colleges to which you have applied, and when, so your transcript and other supporting materials may be sent to them, and we have a record for your files. Please also let him know about your individual acceptances and rejections for schools and scholarships.

DEADLINES AND APPLICATION PLANS

Colleges have varying due dates for receipt of applications. The University of California system, for example, accepts applications only in the month of November. Most other deadlines are November 1 to March 1, but you must check specific colleges' due dates.

Below are the types of Application Deadlines:

- **Early Decision:** Some universities allow students to apply as early as November (deadlines will vary from college to college) so that they will hear back at an early date. With Early Decision, students can apply to multiple colleges but only apply to one school as an Early Decision application. Parents, students, and the college counselor will need to verify that there is only one Early Decision application and sign off on a form. If you are accepted, you will be required to commit. Once accepted by the college you applied Early Decision to, you must rescind your applications at the other schools.
- Generally, it is recommended to apply Early Decision only if you know this is your first choice, that you will go if you are admitted, and you surpass the academic records of last year's average freshman as the Early Decision applicant pool will be competitive. You are also wholly responsible for the final cost of attendance, even if the school does not offer you enough to offset your budget. If this is not the case, it is NOT recommended that you apply Early Decision.
 - **Common App Early Decision Agreements in Naviance:** *Three parties need to sign the Common App Early Decision Agreement (EDA): The student, parent, and counselor. The student and parent will do their parts using the Common App, and the counselor will complete his or her part in eDocs on the Send tab. The counselor does not need to wait for the parent to sign the EDA using the Common App.*
- **Early Action:** For Early Action deadlines, students will typically apply by November and will hear back between December and January. Early Action applications do not require students to attend if they are accepted. You can apply to as many schools as you would like under the Early Action plan. Besides hearing back earlier from institutions (and being able to compare financial aid/scholarship packages), many schools' scholarship deadlines coincide with or around the Early Action deadlines (please check college websites for particular deadlines).
- **Rolling Admissions:** Spots for rolling admissions institutions are on a first-come, first-serve basis as long as the application requirements are met and there are still spots remaining. There is usually a priority deadline so it is highly recommended to meet it to allow the best chance for admission and bigger financial aid packages. Once the Rolling Admissions deadline has passed, it can be difficult to secure an acceptance due to numbers.

If you have any questions on which deadline you should be applying for, please contact Mr. Nomura.

TESTING INFORMATION

As stated in the College Applications section, many colleges have become [test-optional](#) regarding the SAT and ACT. La Pietra recommends that students take their first SAT and/or ACT in the spring or summer of their junior year. This allows students time to take a second testing administration in early fall (October-December) of their senior year, especially since scholarship opportunities may require it. (Even if not, it may be good to include your SAT scores on the resumes you submit.) Check the dates for SAT and/or ACT testing and register/pay fees online. Most schools throughout the country will accept either the SAT or the ACT. You'll need to check the admission requirements of the colleges you're thinking about to see if they also require SAT Subject tests. Assuming they do, you'll want to take the SAT Subject Test(s) in October, November, or December if you did not take the tests earlier.

*It is recommended to register and take the SAT or ACT earlier in your academic career to make college admissions deadlines and to allow time for possible retests. Please make sure to double-check your colleges' testing requirements to make sure you meet them and send them in on time.

Recommended Testing Timeline:

Junior Year:

- Fall (usually October): La Pietra will administer the PSAT for all enrolled students.
- February/March: [Register](#) for the SAT or ACT to take in March, May, or June 2026.
 - **These spring tests will be administered digitally.
- Summer: If you opted not to take the SAT in the spring or were not happy with your scores, use this time to study for the SAT or enroll in a preparation course.

Senior Year:

- (Re)Take the SAT in October, November, or December.

SAT/SAT II

The SAT tests critical reading, math, and writing with an optional essay. The Subject Tests test knowledge in particular academic subjects. See sat.collegeboard.org for more information.

La Pietra's School Code: **120036**

To find more information on testing with accommodations, please [click here](#).

- Please note accommodation requests take time, so it is recommended to contact your counselor at least 2-3 months in advance of the registration deadline to get the necessary paperwork done and submitted.

To find more information on ordering/sending test scores to colleges, please check out this link:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores/sending-scores/how-to-send>

FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION

College costs can be very intimidating when families start comparing costs. Some resources that can help with overall costs are financial aid and scholarships.

FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid may be available, but you must apply for aid in order to be considered for financial aid. Parents/Guardians will need to fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and, for some colleges, the CSS Profile, which we will receive in the fall, administered by the College Scholarship Service for a fee.

What financial aid can I receive with the FAFSA®?

Fill out the FAFSA® to access federal financial aid like Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grants. The FAFSA® may, depending on qualifications, also give you access to a variety of loans, such as subsidized loans, unsubsidized loans, PLUS Loans, and Perkins Loans. The FAFSA will be available in October 2025, and families will be able to use their tax information from the previous years.

‘Better FAFSA®’

The current Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) is the standard, most commonly used source of applying for financial aid, which colleges use to assess financial aid eligibility. The FAFSA® form is an application that students and families need to complete to apply for federal student aid, such as federal grants, work-study funds, and loans. Completing and submitting the FAFSA® form is free, and it gives students access to the largest source of financial aid to help pay for higher education. Below are changes that were made to the FAFSA® beginning in December 2023:

- 120 to 36 questions.
 - There won't be any questions about housing plans (dorms, off-campus, etc.)
 - In one of these questions, instead of inputting all tax information, you can authorize, with the mere checking of a box, for the IRS to pull your tax data.
 - **If parents are married but file separately, both parents will need to create accounts and check the box - dual authorization.
 - **No changes for divorced parents—the Better FAFSA® will use the financial- and tax information from the parent, who holds more than 50% of time living with the child; the other parent will not need to complete the Better FAFSA® nor authorize tax data to be pulled by the IRS.
- The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) was replaced with the [Student Aid Index \(SAI\)](#):
 - “Financial aid administrators (FAAs) subtract the SAI from each student’s cost of attendance to determine their need for federal student financial assistance offered by the U.S. Department of Education (the Department).”

- This is expected to be a more accurate reading on what families can contribute to their student's college expenses every year based on information input into the FAFSA, as opposed to the EFC, which often provides an inaccurate estimate, and is a good change, because the indicated EFC is what colleges/the government thinks/expects you to pay, even if you cannot meet that number. Thus, colleges will be able to use the SAI amount to determine which families are in most need of aid/assistance.
- You may use Net Price Calculators on colleges' websites, but this number would be an estimate.

The **College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile** and **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)** are two tools that students can use to receive financial aid for college. The major difference is that the FAFSA® provides federal grants, loans, and other types of government assistance, and the CSS Profile is an application that universities use to gauge how much non-federal financial aid you need.

What financial aid can I receive with the CSS Profile?

Colleges and universities that accept [CSS Profiles](#) use the forms to calculate institutional aid. The institutional aid available varies from school to school but usually includes scholarships, grants, and work-study programs. Universities may use the CSS Profile to determine how much help you need from state grants, loans, scholarships, work-study funds, and tuition assistance. Each school has its own CSS Profile deadline, but [many of them fall between January 1 and March 31](#).

- ***Both the FAFSA and the CSS Profile may be filed online. It is strongly advised, however, that you download forms to use as worksheets before completing the on-line applications.*
- **You should only file the CSS Profile if required by the institution you are applying to.*

As a reminder, parents/guardians and students please make sure your FAFSA®/CSS Profile is filed before their deadlines and that you check your email for any important updates as financial aid is an important matter between various college Financial Aid Offices and families.

NEED-BASED AID

Individual colleges determine financial aid packages based upon the information provided by you on several forms: Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), the College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile, and the college's own institutional forms. These forms will help the financial aid office determine the estimated family contribution (EFC) to the student's educational costs.

GRANTS

Grants are funds that do not have to be repaid. Grants are usually awarded on the basis of need alone and can come from a variety of sources: Pell Grants (federal money), state grants (usually available only to students attending college in their home state), and grant money from the college's own resources.

LOANS

Loans must be repaid, generally after you have graduated or left school, and usually have lower interest rates than commercial loans. The amount of these federal student loans are capped to ensure that students are not overburdened with debt when they leave school. There are also federal loans available to parents/guardians if their child is enrolled in school at least half-time and makes satisfactory academic progress.

Parents/guardians may borrow up to the difference between the cost of education and other financial aid awarded. The loan, which is not based on a family's income, has a variable interest rate and repayment begins immediately.

WORK STUDY

A College Work Study Program involves earning money as payment for a job, usually one arranged for you by the college. Students normally work up to ten hours a week in an on-campus job selected by the student. The money comes to the student in the form of a paycheck and is to be used toward college tuition.

MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Unlike the National Merit program and competitive scholarships sponsored by businesses and community service organizations, "no-need" awards are generally awarded by an institution specifically for use at that institution based on an admitted student's academic record and extracurricular activities. These merit scholarships are renewable for four years, as long as the student maintains a minimum cumulative GPA set by the college. Should you fall below that, you risk your merit scholarship being revoked.

OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS

Some great areas to find scholarships are through online search websites, college scholarship pages, and books in your College Counseling Office and in libraries/bookstores. Many scholarship deadlines will be posted for spring of your senior year but there are a few with fall deadlines so keep on the lookout for that! Information on scholarships can be found online or through other local organizations such as churches, banks, places of employment. We highly encourage you to research scholarships online throughout the year as there are many resources that are available online. Mr. Nomura will regularly update the Scoirportal with scholarship information.

As most college admissions applications will be completed by the end of fall, students should be concentrating their efforts on looking for and filling out scholarship applications in the fall and especially the spring. Mr. Nomura can help with scholarship applications by looking them over and/or reviewing essays, but students are responsible for looking through the scholarship information and going through the submission process. Just remember: a few hours of work can pay off big in the scholarships arena!

Some recommended websites:

- www.fastweb.com
- goingmerry.com
- www.Hawaiicommunityfoundation.org

BEFORE YOU APPLY: SCOIR

1. Waive your right (given under FERPA) to read/have access to your counselor- and teacher LORs.

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), students have a right to see their academic file, which includes letters of recommendations. Colleges ask you to (and would prefer you to) waive this right in order to keep recommendations confidential. Students must choose whether to waive their right to read their recommendations or not.

- After you have logged into Common App (www.commonapp.org), go to the “College Search” tab, then add 1 college you are sure you are going to apply to. (You can use the “search” option to help you with this- BE SURE TO CLICK “ADD” Click the box to authorize La Pietra to release your high school transcript to all colleges to which you are applying.
- **TO SIGN FERPA WAIVER in Common APP:** Go to “My Colleges” tab and then “Recommenders and FERPA”. Under “FERPA Release Authorization” read release authorization and click appropriate check-boxes.

The image shows two screenshots of the Common App interface. The top screenshot is the 'My Colleges' tab, specifically the 'FERPA Release Authorization' section. It contains information about the release authorization process, a link to 'Manage Recommenders', and a 'Help Center' search bar. The bottom screenshot is the 'Release Authorization' form itself, which has a progress bar with '1 Instructions' and '2 Form'. The form includes a checkbox for authorizing schools to release records, a section for selecting waiver options (waive or do not waive the right to review recommendations), and a statement of understanding that selections cannot be changed. At the bottom, there are fields for a signature and a date (07/01/2013).

Dashboard My Colleges Common App College Search

NGU Undergraduate Program

Questions

Assign Recommenders

Submission - Common App

Writing Supplement

Submission - Writing Supplement

Manage Recommenders

Help Center

Search help

FERPA Release Authorization

You must complete the release authorization process, which will allow transcripts and recommendations to be submitted on your behalf through Naviance eDocs. [release authorization](#)

Counselor

Your school is using Naviance eDocs for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. If your counselor wishes to submit forms via mail, you can download printable forms that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply.

Offline Forms

[School Report](#) [Optional Report](#) [Mid Year Report](#) [Final Report](#)

Teacher

Release Authorization

1 Instructions 2 Form

☒ I authorize every school that I have attended to release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also authorize employees at these colleges to confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.

Please select one:

☐ I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

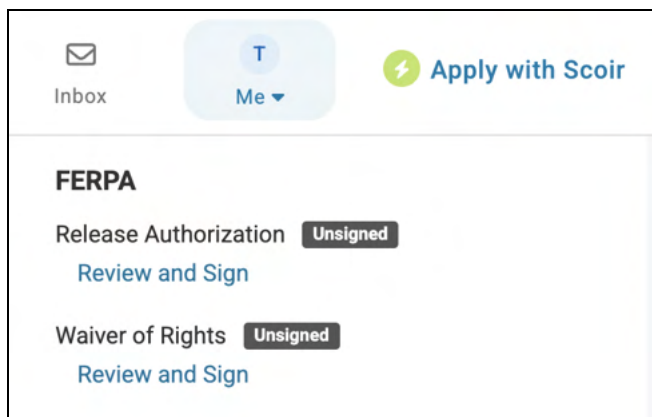
☐ I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

☐ I understand that my decision pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my **selections on this page cannot be changed once I invite a recommender.**

Signature Date 07/01/2013

2. You will also need to complete this in Scoir:

- Go to your profile tab at the top right, then complete both the FERPA Release Authorization and Waiver of Rights.



PARTS OF THE APPLICATION

Submitted by Student:

☐ The Application Form

You are responsible for completing an application form and submitting it by the college-set deadline. Many schools accept The Common Application, and these are be important components:

1. Personal and educational data: Name, address, phone number, email, citizenship and residency information, high schools you have attended, college credits you have earned, parental information, senior year schedule, and standardized test scores.
2. Honors and awards
3. Extracurricular, personal, and volunteer activities
4. Employment, internships, and summer activities. (Some colleges allow you to submit a résumé to supplement the activity section of their application.)
5. Essays: Both short-answer (supplemental responses) and a longer personal essay are sometimes required.
6. Disciplinary information
7. Application fee: Many colleges will accept fee waivers which can be obtained from your counselor.
8. For certain majors, students might be required to audition or be asked to submit a portfolio of artistic work.

☐ Standardized Test Scores- SAT/ACT/AP

Testing agencies will send your scores to the colleges that you request via your College Board account.

☐ All Financial Aid Documentation- FAFSA, CSS

FAFSA opens in October 2025.

Submitted by Counselor/School

☐ **Official Transcript**

Your transcript is a record of all your high school courses, grades, and credits. This is normally sent directly from your high school to the college.

☐ **School Profile**

This is a critical document attached to all applications, which provides an overview of the school, our grading scale, and classes offered.

☐ **Counselor Recommendation Form**

Your college counselor will also write a letter of recommendation for you as well as any other relevant support documentation to further contextualize your application.

☐ **Mid-Year Report Form**

If required, it will be submitted by your high school. This report will usually be sent after semester 1 grades have been finalized.

☐ **Teacher Recommendation Form** *(once uploaded by teacher)*

The teacher is responsible for uploading their letter of recommendation to Scoir. However, you are responsible for asking a teacher to complete it and giving that teacher all the necessary information. Look over the form and imagine what one of your teachers would say about you. Colleges want to hear from teachers who know you well and can share examples of your work ethic, inquisitive nature, and motivation to learn.

EXPECTATIONS

- Mr. Nomura is a great resource during the college admissions and scholarships process. If you have any questions or just want to chat, please reach out via email to schedule an appointment. While there are occasional check-ins, emails, and in-person appointments, it is your responsibility as the applicant to keep checking in with Mr. Nomura and to be aware of deadlines!
- Please monitor and check your email! Colleges, Scholarships/Financial Aid Offices, and your College Counselor will usually reach out via email so you want to keep checking your inbox to make sure you don't miss anything!
- Scholarship information will be posted online or emailed, so students please keep checking your email. As not every scholarship will apply to everyone, please read through to check if they apply to you and to submit appropriate applications (remember to give your letters of recommendation writers enough time to write, edit, and send their letters to these organizations).
- Keep your resume accurate and up to date. Information from this will be provided to your letter of recommendation writers and will be put on your application.
- If you are submitting electronic applications, you will need to keep your Scoir account updated.
- We recommend that you keep a copy (hard copy or e-copy) of all applications you send as well as keep your receipts for all test scores sent out to your schools.
- For teacher/counselor recommendations, give the forms or send the electronic invitation to your teachers at least 4 weeks in advance of the due date (recommended by mid-September). All recommendations will go directly to the colleges or are turned into Mr. Nomura, who will send them out in 1 packet to make sure nothing gets lost.
- If you would like any help with your essays, the activities portion outside of the unit covered in Senior Seminar, or you would like to request assistance with reviewing additional college/scholarship essays, talk with Mr. Nomura in person. Please avoid only sending an email as he should be given at least one week's notice.
- Make sure your ACT/SAT scores are sent directly from the College Board or the ACT organization to your schools! This is the student's responsibility to send.
- If you have any early January deadlines and need Mr. Nomura's assistance, or if he needs to submit something for you, contact him no later than the **last day of semester 1: December 19, 2025**.
- We know the college admissions process can be stressful, with many requirements and hard work but keep working hard! We know that you will be successful this year with a consistent work ethic, patience, and diligence!

****Please note that the information in this handbook is subject to change based on modifications made by the government/various organizations in relation to all matters associated with applying for college.****

ADMISSIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Many colleges and universities will ask for similar information, but please be aware of the specific requirements of the schools to which you are applying. Visiting or talking with the school in person can help clarify any confusion.

APPLICATION PROCESS

What are the differences between Early Action (EA), Early Decision (ED) and Regular Decision processes?

Early Decision (ED) applications are binding — a student who is accepted as an ED applicant must attend the college. Early Action (EA) applications are non-binding — students receive an early response to their application but do not have to commit to the college until the normal reply date of May 1. Applying EA can help students reduce stress about the process, gain more time when making a final decision, and signal to their schools that the student is committed and excited about that institution. Regular Decision students apply by the normal deadline.

What does Rolling Admissions mean?

This is a policy in which applicants are invited to submit their applications to the university within a large window of time. The school reviews and continues to admit students until they have met their class enrollment goals.

TESTING/TRANSCRIPTS

What standardized tests are required for admission? Do schools prefer which one I take?

Many schools will require applicants to submit the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT with Writing. However, some schools have become 'test-optional', which means they look at the application holistically to come to a decision on admission. Ask whether SAT II Subject Tests are required or optional. Most schools will indicate if there is any preference, but schools also want you to do your best in whichever one you prefer. Try practice tests in both to see which one is best for you.

I scored better in Math when I took the SAT Reasoning in June than when I just took it this fall. Do you take the best score from each section regardless of test date?

Yes. This is called 'superscoring', where schools will take your best score from each test and disregard the others.

Do I need to request an official Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Score Report? Does School XYZ accept AP or IB credit?

Some schools may require AP or IB scores for admission, or to give credit for the equivalent college coursework. You will want to check if AP/IB scores are accepted for credit by emailing the admissions office of the college.

What is the difference between weighted and unweighted high school coursework?

In a *weighted* grading system, AP and Honors classes are given extra points so that a student is rewarded for higher level coursework. In an *unweighted* grading system, all courses are measured equally, and only the grade received is factored into the Grade Point Average (GPA). Schools may look at one or the other, or recalculate to get their own GPA, based on academic classes or college-level coursework.

Do colleges like to see more AP and Honors classes or higher grades in lower level classes?

Ideally, schools want to see you succeeding in whatever coursework you are taking. However, schools will consider your grade trend (*how your grades progress from year to year*), look for increasing levels of difficulty in classes into senior year, and your overall GPA when reviewing transcripts. We want to see you well prepared!

ESSAYS/RECOMMENDATIONS

What should I write about, and what do schools look for in an essay?

The essay should tell the school about you as a person beyond your transcripts or activities and make you “stand out from the crowd”. Think about what qualities or talents you have, and the story you are trying to tell about yourself to the admissions committee. Make sure the grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct.

How strict are the word limits on the essays?

Most schools will not be too strict about the essay length, but will expect you to abide by guidelines as closely as possible. If you go over by a *couple* words, it is usually not an issue. However, if using the Common App essay, you should do your best to stay within the 650 word limit.

Whom should I ask for a letter of recommendation? May I send additional recommendations?

Check with the school about requirements for academic versus personal or professional recommendations. Consider asking the teacher who knows you best, and one that can give insight into who you are as a student. Schools look for the quality of the letters and how well people know you, not the recommenders’ titles. If you’d like to submit an additional recommendation, it can add dimension to your application but limit the number to the school’s recommended limit.

ACTIVITIES

What are some of the types of activities that most students include in their applications?

Some activities include school clubs, sports, music, summer programs, youth groups, community service and hobbies, or passions. You can include anything you deem relevant on the activities list if you think it will let the school get to know you better. Keep this in mind: *What makes you stand out?*

I participated in XYZ in seventh through ninth grades. How should I put this on my Extracurricular Activities list?

Be sure to let schools know what any acronyms mean! You may arrange your activities chronologically, by activity type or any way that makes sense to you. Also, limit the activities you list to those in which you participated in high school.

I wasn’t able to participate in a lot of activities because I spend most of my time working after school. Does that go on my Extracurricular Activities list?

Part-time or full-time work and volunteering should be included, as well as working on a family farm or caring for siblings. We want to hear the details about your jobs, including when (the months and years) you worked.

What kinds of awards should I put in my application?

Please include any regional, state or national awards, or commendations you have received. Published or acclaimed works are also important to mention.

COMMON ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

AA / AFA / AS / AAS / AGE: Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Fine Arts (AFA), Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), Associate in General Education (AGE) are two-year degrees granted by a community or two-year college.

ACT: The ACT is a college entrance exam covering English, math, reading and science reasoning.

AP: Advanced Placement courses are high school courses that focus on a particular subject. Students may receive credit or receive a higher placement within college courses.

BA / BS / BFA: A bachelor's degree, also called a baccalaureate or undergraduate degree. The Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) differ in requirements.

CEEB Code: A standardized ID number that is assigned to a high school, college, or university. CEEB codes are issued by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

CLEP: College Level Examination Program offers college credit for independent study or life experience.

COA: The Total Cost of Attendance to attend an institution, including tuition, fees, room, board, books, & other expenses.

EA: Early Action Application Process – non-binding agreement, provides students flexibility to attend if admitted, and to find out sooner.

ED: Early Decision Application Process – binding agreement that the student will attend that school if admitted.

EFC: Expected Family Contribution – Data provided on the FAFSA (see below) used to calculate a family's ability to pay for college expenses

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid – go to <https://fafsa.ed.gov/> to apply. Usually used by schools to provide a financial package of grants and loans.

GED: General Equivalency Diploma – A certificate students receive if they pass a high school equivalency test, which acts as an alternative to a high school diploma.

GPA: Grade Point Average - grades students earn in high school and college are assigned points (ex. A=4, B=3, etc.), and additional points may be given for advanced courses (weighted average). A student's GPA is the sum of all earned points divided by the # of courses taken.

IB: International Baccalaureate courses are high school courses that focus on a holistic approach to a particular subject. Students may receive credit or receive a higher placement within college courses.

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association – partially funds most athletic scholarships and schools participate in athletic conferences and divisions (or levels) between schools.

PSAT/NMSQT: Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test – measures verbal reasoning, critical reading, writing and math skills. Familiarizes students to questions asked on the SAT – taken in sophomore or junior year.

SAT: The SAT Reasoning Test measures critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills that are considered vital to academic success in college and beyond.

SAT Subject Tests: SAT Subject Tests measure knowledge in specific subject areas.

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language – a proficiency exam used in international admissions.