



Common Application Workshop

www.commonapp.org

Steps to Apply:

How it works

1

Create your profile

Your Common App profile is your chance to shine. It's everything you want a college or university to know about you – from your academic coursework to your extracurricular activities.

2

Add colleges to your list

Now you get to decide what's most important to you in a college or university. Search through the characteristics and add colleges that align with them.

3

Gather requirements

Once you've decided where you want to apply, make a checklist of everything required. Each college and university is different, so make sure you stay on top of their application requirements.

4

Submit applications

Be sure to take a moment to celebrate this huge accomplishment! And remember to finish the academic year on a high note, apply for financial aid and prepare for the future.

Gather Materials

Filling out your application takes time. Get a head start by collecting the following information before you begin:

- *A copy of your high school transcript (order through Parchment)
- *A list of your activities, work, and family responsibilities
- *Test scores and dates of your exams (SATs, ACTs, etc.)
- *Parent/Legal Guardian Information
- *Academic Honors and Achievements

Create an account

Choose Registration Type: Select **"First Year Student"** button.

Provide your login credentials.

- Make sure you use an email address you check often. This is the email the Common App and colleges will use to get in touch with you. **DO NOT use your SMUSD email.**

Complete your registration information.

- a. You will include basic information like your name, home address, phone number, and date of birth.
 - b. Be sure to use your legal name as it appears on official school documents and standardized tests. This will make sure colleges can match documents to the correct person.
 - c. At the end, you will adjust your communication preferences and accept the Common App privacy policy.
- Select "Create Account" to complete your account.

Important things to remember when creating your account

- Use your personal email (gmail, yahoo, etc.) NOT your smusd email
- Record your user name and password somewhere safe
- Deadlines vary greatly for admissions and scholarships- check your Dashboard
- You can start Common App and add colleges later. Don't need to know all your choices now
- PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO APPLY TO A RANGE OF SCHOOLS- not just selective schools (Reach, Safety, Target)
- Research average GPA, test scores, admit rates
- Apply to some schools you would like to attend whose average GPA and test scores are lower than yours.

DO NOT APPLY TO A COLLEGE UNLESS YOU WOULD BE HAPPY TO GO THERE.

Each university has different app requirements

- Financial aid application requirements vary with each university (FAFSA/Dream Act and/or CSS Profile)
- Writing Requirements vary per campus (essay, long, short or one-word responses). See your Dashboard
- Letters of Recommendation - number and from whom vary. See your My Colleges tab
- Must complete the FERPA Release Authorization and waive rights to view recommendations (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act = you're granting the right to your school to send information about you to colleges). Colleges don't value letters without waived rights.

Letters of Recommendation

- Select recommenders on My Colleges tab. Provide email address for teacher(s) and counselor (may go to last year's counselor)
- MUST have brag packet completed and MUST ask recommender before providing their email to Common App
- **Counselors will assume you do not want/need a letter if counselor receives Common App email without request from you**
- Must provide brag packet at least 10 school days in advance of deadline (not including vacation, weekends). Brag packet is on "Class of 2021 College and Career Ready" Google Classroom as well as here:
https://sanmarcoshigh.smusd.org/departments/counseling/letter_of_rec-_brag_packet
- All requests for counselor letters of recommendation due before December 1
- Don't forget to waive your right to read letters (FERPA)

Counselor Recommendation

- If you only see your counselor during course selection and do not know him/her well, you may want an alternate letter of recommendation (teacher, administrator, advisor of campus group/special program)
- Common Application is aware that public school counselors have a lot of students. Common Application, therefore, states to the counselor: “Note you may substitute another school official's evaluation in place of one from you personally.”
- If you will substitute another letter for a counselor letter, please let your counselor know right away
- If you have an additional teacher who knows you well, his/her letter will be stronger than a generic counselor letter

Application Decision Options

- **EARLY DECISION** - a **binding** option where applicants receive an admission decision much earlier than others.
 - If admitted through this option, the applicant will **immediately accept that offer** of admission and **withdraw all other applications**. **MAKE SURE YOU CAN AFFORD TO ATTEND REGARDLESS OF AID AMOUNT**
 - * *Students can only apply Early Decision to one college*
 - ** *This is usually the most competitive application pool*
- **EARLY ACTION** - usually a **non-binding** option where applicants receive a decision much earlier than others, but with no obligation to enroll or withdraw applications from other colleges.
- **REGULAR DECISION** - the general deadline for all applications (not including Early Decision or Early Action). The majority of applications are submitted through this option
- **ROLLING ADMISSIONS** - An admission policy of considering each application as soon as all required information has been received (transcripts, test scores, etc.). The colleges usually provide students with admissions decisions fairly quickly with this option.

Fee waiver

- If you click “yes,” be sure to check how it applies to you (free and reduced lunch, SAT/ACT fee waiver, homeless, etc.)
- Also check the box to receive information from “Strive for College.” Non-profit that provides extra aid and college support at no cost to student

Counselor's role

- We will upload a transcript to your application(s)
- We will provide a letter of recommendation if:
 1. *Requested before receipt of counselor email invitation*
 2. *Requested by Dec. 1 and at least 10 regular school days before deadline*
 3. *Completed brag packet is provided at least 10 regular school days before deadline*
- We will provide our school profile
- We will fill out the Secondary School Report
- We will answer your questions and help you
- We will provide a mid-year report by the end of January 2021 (transcript with first term grades)

Filling out coursework

- List in descending order of difficulty (AP courses first, then honors, then college prep)- start by impressing admissions officers
- For second term courses, you MUST notify each school to which you applied if you drop something or change any coursework
- You MUST notify colleges if you earn any Ds or Fs (senior year). You do not want your admission rescinded in June/July
- List courses to match transcript titles

Explanation of SMHS Changes

Please copy and paste the statement below into the additional information section under “Writing” (see example on next slide):

As of Fall 2020, San Marcos High School has moved from a traditional six period model with exclusively year-long classes (taken in two semesters) to a 4x4 model with year-long courses completed in one semester/term.

Transcripts will show courses taken prior to the 20/21 school year earning five (5) credits per class per semester. Courses taken during the 20/21 school year are completed in one semester/term and earn 10 credits.

Additional Information



Community disruptions such as COVID-19 and natural disasters can have deep and long-lasting impacts. If you need it, this space is yours to describe those impacts. Colleges care about the effects on your health and well-being, safety, family circumstances, future plans, and education, including access to reliable technology and quiet study spaces. For more information, check out our [COVID-19 FAQ](#).

Do you wish to share anything on this topic?*

☐ Yes

☒ No

Clear answer

Do you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application?*

☒ Yes

☐ No

Clear answer

You may use the space below to provide any additional information you wish to share. *

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Transcripts

- Counselor will upload initial and mid-year
- Final transcripts must be requested through Parchment online (goes through SMHS registrar, not counselors)

https://sanmarcoshigh.smusd.org/departments/counseling/transcript_request



- Most schools have July 1 deadlines for second semester grades
- If you completed a course outside of SMHS (such as Palomar College), you must have transcripts sent directly from those schools

Updated testing policies for Fall 2021

- Admissions departments continue to monitor testing availability, and are updating their testing policies accordingly. Students should check school websites for the latest information.
- Many colleges going test-optional for Fall 2021 admissions cycle
- Test-optional does not necessarily mean test-blind, and many colleges will still accept SAT/ACT scores (check each admissions website for more info).

Reporting SAT/ACT scores on Common App (please note: different from UC)

Please check each college admissions website for most up-to-date info.
This has been past practice, but is subject to change

- Common App does not ask you to enter all scores, just your best scores for now - “Put best testing foot forward”
- However, eventually you will send all official scores and each school will evaluate differently
- Include future SAT/ACT test dates
- Can enter best scores from each section, even if different test dates

Reporting Subject Tests and AP scores

Please check each admissions website for most up-to-date info. This has been past practice, but is subject to change

- Some advisors recommend not reporting scores lower than 500 on a Subject Test (unless the test is a requirement for admissions)
- 700+ Subject Test scores are common in applications to highly selective universities
- AP Exams: list your highest test scores first (best testing foot forward)
- If you have more exams than space, list in additional information section
- Do not have to report them all on Common App
- List exams you plan to take in May 2021

Honors and Activities (hobbies too, if important to you)

- If you received more than five (5), list most important to you.
- List national or state-level awards first
- Spell out acronyms, especially if unique to school or state. Example: CSF = California Scholarship Federation
- Describe the context of any award that a college may not understand. Example: AP Ambassadors or Excalibur Knights
- Only use universally understood abbreviations. Example: Senior Class Vice President can be listed as “Class VP: 12”
- Only list activities with significance to you. Example: don’t list 9th grade Spanish club if you never went back in grades 10-12.
- Make sure to describe your role and contribution in activity

Essay

- What do you want admissions to know about you apart from your courses, grades and test scores?
- Avoid cliches
- Don't repeat information already listed in application
- Don't make excuses- if there is a failure, own it, take responsibility and say what you learned

Disciplinary History

- Counselors required to report suspensions and expulsions
- You should address it first
- Tell what you learned- that is what colleges will look for
- Be honest, take responsibility, don't blame others, don't complain
- If you can give an example of how you put the lesson to use in life, that helps

You will need this information

- CEEB code: 050883
- Counselor's job title: School Counselor
- Senior class size: 807
- Graduation date: June 09, 2021
- GPA Scale: 4.0
- GPA: weighted
- Class Rank Reporting: None
- Course scheduling system: semester

Counselor Information

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