

# YOUR COLLEGE CONNECTION



The Roadmap to Admissions Success

## April 2025

### Juniors—

Tour colleges.  
Prepare for AP Exams  
SAT registration- April 18th for  
May 3rd test

### Seniors—

Final letters of  
acceptance should arrive by  
the beginning of April

Compare financial aid  
packages and consider  
college funding options.  
Notify colleges that you will  
not attend.  
Thank those who wrote letters  
of recommendation.

## May 2025

### May 1st—

Common reply  
deadline for college  
enrollment.

### May 9th—

ACT registration for  
June 14th test.

### May 22nd—

SAT registration for June 7th test

AP and IB Exams.

## Making Final College Choices

Deciding which college to attend can be one of the toughest decisions for high school seniors. With so many options, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and unsure. If you're struggling to make your final decision, here are some tips to help you sort through your choices.

Choosing a college is a big decision, but stressing out won't help. Take a deep breath and remember that you have time. The decision deadline is May 1, so there's no need to rush. Sometimes, taking a break from the decision-making process to relax or do something fun can help clear your mind. If you're feeling pressure from parents or friends, tell them you need more time to decide.

Before comparing colleges, it's important to start with yourself. Reflect on what you want in your college experience. Make a list of qualities that matter most to you—think about academics, campus culture, size, cost, location, and more. It's also helpful to consider less tangible things such as the social atmosphere and overall "feel" of the campus. Once you've written your list, rank the factors based on their importance to you. This step helps you get clear on your priorities before diving into comparing schools.

While it's tempting to compare colleges right away, it's best to evaluate each school on its own first. Look at each school's strengths and weaknesses based on your prioritized factors. If you don't have enough information about a particular school, take time to research further. Visit the campus if possible, check out the website again, and talk to current students, faculty, or admissions staff.

Don't forget to trust your gut feelings about each school—your intuition can play an important role in making the right decision.

After evaluating the schools, you'll probably realize that some just aren't a good fit for you. It's okay to let those go. Remember, you can only attend one college, so don't feel bad about eliminating options. It's also a good time to let go of schools that no longer work out, whether that's because you didn't get in, didn't get enough financial aid, or circumstances have changed. It can be hard to let go of schools you were once excited about, but try to focus on the great options that are still available to you.

Still torn between a few schools? Try comparing them in pairs. Create a chart with the schools along the top and the qualities you want down the side. For each pair, mark which school better matches each characteristic. This method will help you make a more objective decision by comparing each school based on what's most important to you. Once you finish, you'll have a clearer idea of which school stands out as the best fit.

There's no such thing as the perfect college. It's easy to feel like you need to be 100% sure that your choice will guarantee happiness and success, but that's simply not the case. Your college experience will be shaped by how you approach it, not just by the name of the school you choose. Once you've made your decision, move forward confidently, knowing you've made a thoughtful choice and that this next chapter will be an exciting one.

## Careers for AI Majors

### Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies

*AI Ethics Consultant*

*Digital Media Strategist*

*Computational Linguist*

### Business & Industry Applications

*AI-Driven Market Analyst*

*Financial AI Analyst*

*AI-Powered Supply Chain Manager*

### STEM & Engineering

*AI Research Scientist*

*Autonomous Systems Engineer*

*AI Cybersecurity Specialist*

### Medicine & Gaming

*AI Healthcare Specialist*

*AI Game Designer*

*Biomedical AI Engineer*

## Focus on Majors: Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the world, changing how we work, learn, and make decisions. Universities are responding by updating courses and programs to prepare students for careers in an AI-driven future. While some worry about AI's impact on jobs, ethics, and education, colleges are embracing it as both a tool and a subject of study.

Students who understand, analyze, and apply AI across different fields will have a significant advantage in the job market. AI is no longer confined to computer science; it's essential in business, media, medicine, and the arts. Those who grasp AI's potential and limitations will be positioned to lead industries increasingly reliant on technology, data-driven decision-making, and automation.

AI isn't just for tech students. Small colleges, even those without specific majors in AI or engineering, incorporate AI into philosophy, ethics, and media studies, helping students critically examine its role in society. For example, at Pomona College, Bowdoin College, and Wesleyan University, students explore AI ethics, bias in machine learning, algorithmic decision-making, and AI's influence on democracy and privacy. These courses encourage discussions on responsibility in AI development and policy.

Courses at Brown University examine AI through modern culture and media, where students analyze AI-generated content like deepfake videos and AI-written articles. Swarthmore College courses link AI to cognitive science, studying how machine learning mimics human decision-making. Meanwhile, the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Arizona programs incorporate AI into digital humanities and computational linguistics, offering hands-on work in natural language processing and AI-assisted creative writing. These programs highlight AI's broader impact on communication, culture, and society.

As AI becomes integral to business, universities are training students to apply AI-driven strategies in finance, marketing,

and supply chain management. USC's Marshall School of Business offers an AI for Business program, where students learn predictive analytics, customer insights, and automated decision-making. Case studies explore AI's role in optimizing digital marketing and logistics. At the Wharton School, students use AI-powered analytics for market forecasting and financial risk assessment. Similarly, the University of Texas at Dallas integrates AI into business analytics, offering hands-on experience with AI-driven customer insights, fraud detection, and automation tools used by major corporations. These programs showcase AI's transformative impact on business and the growing demand for AI-savvy professionals.

For students drawn to AI's technical side, universities are at the forefront of AI research in robotics, deep learning, and autonomous systems. While institutions such as MIT, Carnegie Mellon, and Stanford continue pushing AI innovation, AI-focused education is expanding.

Georgia Tech offers an AI minor available to all disciplines, ensuring that business, humanities, and science majors gain AI literacy. The University of Michigan and UC Berkeley provide AI tracks in computer science, covering reinforcement learning, generative AI, and AI-driven cybersecurity. Oregon State University and Cal Poly SLO emphasize industry collaboration, partnering with companies to solve real-world AI challenges in automation and software development. These programs make advanced AI education more accessible and emphasize practical applications.

AI is shaping industries beyond STEM, particularly healthcare and gaming. The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) offers a Dual Degree in Medicine and AI, training future doctors to integrate AI into diagnostics, personalized treatment, and robotic-assisted surgeries. AI-powered tools, such as machine learning models for radiology and AI-driven drug discovery, are revolutionizing medical care and research.

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# College Admissions Strategies

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## Financial Matters: Asking for More Merit Aid



Your teen has just received their college acceptance letters, and one of those schools is their first-choice college—exciting news! But then, the reality sets in: the merit aid awarded is lower than expected, and now that “favorite college” feels like it may be financially out of reach. What do you do next?

The good news is that it’s possible to ask for a higher scholarship award through a merit-based appeal. While merit aid is not given based on financial need, many colleges will review requests for more aid, particularly if there are new or updated circumstances that weren’t part of the original application.

Before doing anything, review the college’s merit-based appeal process on its website. Look for information on deadlines and required documentation. It is also important to find the name of the office or person to whom you should address your

appeal. Students should write a concise letter that is kept to one page.

Make sure you understand the requirements for submitting an appeal and any deadlines involved. In a merit-based appeal, your teen will need to write a letter to the admissions office. Here are the key components to include:

Start by expressing genuine excitement and gratitude for being accepted to the college. This shows that your teen values the opportunity and is thankful for the initial offer.

If any academic or extracurricular developments have occurred since the original application, this is the time to mention them. Whether it’s a higher GPA, new awards, leadership roles, significant achievements, or if there have been any extenuating circumstances that weren’t in the initial application, it should be explained in this letter. These updates can strengthen the case for why your teen deserves more merit aid.

Your teen should also emphasize why this particular school is the best fit for their academic and professional goals. Highlight specific programs, faculty, or resources at the school that align with their aspirations.

Make it clear that while this college is their preferred choice, the cost of attendance is a major factor in their

decision-making process. It’s essential to be transparent but polite in expressing the financial challenge the current aid package presents. This should never come across as demanding but rather as a way to provide context for the request.

After your teen sends the letter, it’s important to follow up with a polite email or phone call to ensure the admissions office has received the appeal. This will also provide an opportunity to answer any questions or provide additional information if necessary.

It’s important to have realistic expectations. Some colleges may only be able to offer an additional \$2,000 to \$5,000 in merit aid, if any. While this can help reduce the gap, it may not fully cover the difference between what was awarded and what your family can afford.

If the financial package still makes the college unaffordable, it may be necessary to reconsider other options, including colleges with more generous financial aid or scholarships.

By helping your teen write a thoughtful and respectful merit-based appeal letter, you’re also giving them an important life lesson in advocating for themselves in a professional setting. It’s a chance to demonstrate maturity and clear communication while navigating a situation that many students face as they head into college.

## Focus on Majors: AI (continued from page 2)

AI is also transforming gaming. At UC Santa Cruz, the Games and Playable Media program explores AI-driven storytelling and dynamic gameplay. AI is used in procedural content generation, allowing game environments to evolve based on player behavior, and in designing intelligent non-player characters (NPCs) that adapt and respond more realistically. These programs highlight AI’s growing influence in creative and interactive fields.

As AI reshapes industries, universities are preparing students to navigate this evolving landscape. By integrating AI education across disciplines, colleges are not just teaching technical skills but also encouraging critical thinking about AI’s ethical and societal impact. Whether students engage with AI through liberal arts, business, or technical studies, they will have opportunities to apply this technology in meaningful ways.

For high school students planning their futures, AI literacy is becoming essential, opening doors across a wide range of careers, some of which don’t even exist today. As universities expand AI-related programs, students will have more opportunities than ever to explore how AI can shape their professional paths, regardless of their chosen field.



## Understanding Letters of Recommendation

The application requirements for most colleges in the US include a letter of recommendation from the student's high school guidance counselor and often one or two of their classroom teachers. These letters provide colleges with insight into who you are beyond your grades and test scores. Typically, there are two main types of recommendations you'll need:

Colleges often ask for letters from teachers who have taught you in core subjects such as English, math, science, social studies, or a world language, preferably during your junior or senior year. The teacher you ask should be someone who knows your academic strengths well and can speak about your potential for success in college courses.

A letter from your school counselor gives colleges a sense of your role within the school community. Many counselors are busy and may not know every student personally, and colleges understand this. However, some colleges require letters of recommendation from the counselor as they value the counselor's perspective on your academic journey and personal character.

Teachers are busy professionals, and writing a recommendation is a favor they're doing for you. Here's how you can make their job easier:

High schools, colleges, and individual teachers may have specific guidelines for recommendations. Before asking for a letter, make sure you're clear on the requirements and deadlines for both your school and each college.

Pick teachers who can write a personal and thoughtful recommendation. A teacher who knows you well and can speak to your work ethic and character will provide a strong letter.

Request recommendations well in advance—ideally, at the beginning of your senior year or even before the end of junior year. Waiting until fall can be risky, as teachers and counselors will be overwhelmed with requests by then, and they may not have enough time to write a letter for you.

Provide your recommenders with at least a month's notice before the application deadline. Writing a great recommendation letter takes time, and the earlier you ask, the better.

Never demand a letter. Instead, politely ask, "Would you be willing to write a positive letter of recommendation for me?" If someone declines, don't take it personally. Thank them and move on to another teacher.

Many schools ask students to complete a questionnaire or "brag sheet" to help recommenders write a more detailed letter. Be thorough and turn it in early, giving your writers plenty of time to review your achievements.

Lastly, once your letters are complete, take the time to thank your recommenders. Also, keep them updated on your college admissions results. They'll appreciate hearing about the outcome of your applications!



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