

There are more than 60 independent (private) colleges and universities in California alone, and hundreds more across the country. They offer small classes, generally taught by full professors, may guarantee graduation within four years, and often provide a variety of undergraduate research opportunities. Admission is based on each student's promise and talents, rather than a rigid mathematical formula. Although tuition costs are higher than at state supported institutions, merit scholarships and need-based financial aid are readily available. Close to ninety percent of the independent colleges in California award merit aid. Nine out of ten admitted students receive need and/or merit-based aid. A student demonstrating significant financial need may be offered a better aid package by a private than a public institution, due to the availability of private scholarship dollars in the independent sector.

### ADMISSION TO INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Selectivity varies dramatically among private colleges. Admissions decisions are based on the strength of the student's high school program, as recorded on the official high school transcript of courses and grades, and college entrance examination results. Independent colleges in California accept both SAT and ACT (American College Test) scores. Check admissions web pages to determine if a writing test is required. Some independent colleges also require two or three SAT Subject Tests for admission and/or placement purposes. Most independent colleges require that the student submit a "personal statement" (essay) and one or more letters of recommendation, generally from teachers or other school personnel. Activities, leadership, work experience, and community service are all considered during the selection process. Specialized programs may consider additional evidence, such as a portfolio for art, architecture, and graphic design majors, or an audition for dance, drama and music majors. A few private colleges require or encourage applicants to schedule an interview with an admissions officer or local alumni interviewer.

### APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Many independent colleges allow students to apply early in the fall of the senior year. A high school student may apply to only one college offering an **Early Decision** option. If admitted early, that student agrees to withdraw all other college applications and accept the offer of admission. **Early Action** programs are not binding. A student may be allowed to apply to several colleges offering *Early Action* options, but read the fine print on the application carefully - *Restricted* or *Single Choice Early Action* limits a student to one *Early Action* application. Students admitted through an *Early Action* program will be allowed to apply elsewhere and make a final decision by May 1<sup>st</sup>, the National Candidates' Reply Date. Most "early" application programs have deadlines in November or December. Regular application deadlines at independent colleges are generally in December, January or February.

Although some colleges will provide applicants with paper applications, most now encourage students to apply electronically. The **Common Application** is accepted at more than 350 colleges across the country. Apply electronically at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). Supplemental application materials, such as an additional essay or a graded paper, may be required. Electronic applications save time and sometimes money, as the application fee attached to an electronic application may be lower than the fee for a paper application submitted to the same institution.

Obtain applications *early* in the fall of the senior year. Call or e-mail the Office of Admissions, print out or download the application from the college's admissions web page. Request official transcripts from your high school Registrar at least three weeks before application deadlines, and provide recommendation writers with your *Personal Data Form* and college forms three to four weeks before deadlines.

## FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION

Consult the *In-Focus* publication titled **Financial Aid** for detailed information. Independent colleges often have earlier financial aid deadlines than public institutions, so plan to file your **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA) by early February of the senior year. Independent colleges often require one or more supplemental financial aid forms, typically the *College Scholarship Service's Profile* form. The **Profile** form can and should be submitted in the fall of the senior year. Don't forget to submit a **GPA Verification Form** to the *California Student Aid Commission* if you are applying to any college or vocational school in California; this form is required in order to qualify for state-funded tuition assistance (Cal Grants). Family size, income and assets, and the student's grade point average, are considered in the Cal Grant selection process. The **Profile** form, **GPA Verification** form, and **FAFSA Worksheet** are available at your high school *College & Career Center*. The FAFSA and GPA Verification forms must be postmarked between January 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup> of the senior year to ensure consideration for the Cal Grant Program. The FAFSA can be submitted electronically, but there is no electronic option for GPA verification.

### ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

- ✓ Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, [www.aiccu.edu](http://www.aiccu.edu)
- ✓ [www.ucan-network.org](http://www.ucan-network.org), the National Association of Independent Colleges web site
- ✓ College guidebooks, catalogs, CD's, DVD's and Videos that may be checked-out at district *College & Career Centers*
- ✓ [www.CaliforniaColleges.edu](http://www.CaliforniaColleges.edu) offers comprehensive information about and searches for California colleges
- ✓ [www.collegesource.org](http://www.collegesource.org) features college catalogs in complete, original page format
- ✓ **College representatives** who visit district *College & Career Centers* during the months of September, October, and November
- ✓ **Informational events** held by individual colleges or small groups of colleges at local hotels or residences, generally in the fall or in the spring
- ✓ **College Fairs** held locally in the spring (late April/early May)
- ✓ **College home pages on the Internet**; browse Admissions, Visitor Information, Virtual Tours, and Publications
- ✓ Internet sites such as [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), [www.c3apply.org](http://www.c3apply.org), [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com), [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com), [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org), [www.xap.com](http://www.xap.com) and [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com) which provide college searches, financial aid estimators, links to scholarship data bases, etc.
- ✓ [www.ctclonline.com](http://www.ctclonline.com) provides perspectives on "colleges that change lives," most of which are small, private colleges, plus a true/false test that exposes college myths
- ✓ [www.collegiatechoice.com](http://www.collegiatechoice.com) sells videos of campus tours at more than 350 colleges
- ✓ **Tours and Information Sessions** at independent colleges, offered week-days and Saturdays in the spring, summer and fall (find details posted on Admissions or Visitors sections of the College's web site)
- ✓ Blogs, chat rooms, and pages on social networking sites sponsored by colleges and universities
- ✓ [www.catholiccollegesonline.org](http://www.catholiccollegesonline.org)
- ✓ [www.christiancollegementor.com](http://www.christiancollegementor.com)
- ✓ [www.eduinonline.com/eduweb](http://www.eduinonline.com/eduweb) features Historically Black Colleges and their Common Application
- ✓ [www.womenscolleges.org](http://www.womenscolleges.org)