

Common College Application Questions asked by Seniors

1. Do I have to use Common App/Naviance for college applications?

Our school uses Naviance to send transcripts and other documents, so you will need to access Naviance through Clever and request transcripts and LORs. Students can choose to use Common App or colleges'/universities' own applications. If a school does not accept Naviance documents, you will need to ask the admissions office for an alternative way to have them sent (email, mail). Naviance also allows you to do a career interest profiler, "Super Match" to research and narrow down your college search, and it provides other great tools like a brag sheet and resume builder.

2. What is the benefit of Common App?

It is a "common application" for colleges where you put your information in one place and then personalize each application based on what the college/university wants. You can research schools, then shorten your college list. You can also look at deadlines for college applications and other important college information. Create your account using a personal, professional-sounding email so you can have access after graduation.

3. When colleges ask for GPA, do you use weighted or unweighted? What is the difference?

The larger GPA on your transcript is typically your weighted GPA, and the smaller GPA is unweighted. Honors classes are weighted heavier than college prep, and dual enrollment classes have the heaviest weighting. Our school reports the weighted GPA, but colleges/universities will also see your unweighted GPA on your transcript that is sent by you and/or your counselor. South Carolina colleges/universities understand South Carolina's weighted GPA scale, and out of state colleges/universities also understand weighted scales that are unique to each state. Weighted GPAs ultimately help celebrate your college-level successes.

4. What scales are the weighted and unweighted GPAs on?

The weighted GPA is on a 6.0 scale (a perfect 6.0 would require all AP/college classes all four years of high school and 100s in every class – not quite realistic). The unweighted GPA is on a 4.0 scale.

5. Are Oceanside class ranks weighted?

Oceanside class ranks are weighted.

6. Do I need letters of recommendation / written evaluations from my teachers and counselor?

Each college/university is different. Some will require LORs, and some do not want to read them. It is important to research each college's requirements.

7. When/how do I ask teachers for letters of recommendation?

You are welcome to ask your teachers early, which gives them time to prepare the LOR. Ask teachers in person or by email and see if they say yes but wait until senior year starts to request the LOR through Naviance (unless a teacher prefers to complete LORs in the Summer). Google "how to request LORs in Naviance" for detailed instructions.

8. When do I request the official transcript in Naviance?

Request transcripts using Naviance after you have applied to colleges but not during the summer. Requesting transcripts too early means the college/university gets the transcript before you are ready to submit your application. Colleges/universities may reject a transcript that is sent too early because they have no application on file. You may request one transcript at a time based on when you submit each application or request all transcripts at the same time if you are sending all your applications during a similar timeframe. Google "how to request transcripts in Naviance" for detailed instructions.

Your school counselor will be sending your official, initial transcript to colleges/universities, usually in Naviance. You will need to request a midyear transcript if your college/university requires it. You will also need to request your final transcript just before graduation – for the college/university you have chosen to attend.

You will also need to request your unofficial transcript via the Oceanside google form (under student life on the website) so you will have the information necessary for each application.

9. When do I request my Trident transcript?

Some colleges/universities may want your initial Trident transcript when reviewing your college application (you will have to ask the admissions counselor at each college), but others may only want the final transcript after graduation if you choose to attend that school. The importance is to get your college credits transferred to your new school. Your college-level classes are included on your official Oceanside high school transcript that colleges/universities will receive during the application process, but this document does not facilitate the transmittal of credits to your future college. You will request your Trident transcript directly through Trident – check out TTC’s website, D2L, or contact Trident.

10. If my colleges/universities of choice are test optional, do I submit my SAT/ACT score?

Ultimately, this is a conversation to have with the admissions counselor for each college/university. Schools will still look at SAT/ACT scores that are submitted, but students will not be penalized *if* they can show why they could not complete the test before the admissions deadline. This is a “gray area” with a lot of “ifs,” and colleges/universities are continually updating their application processes, requirements, and decision making due to COVID.

11. Do I need a resume?

A resume is another step in helping you stand out from the crowd, celebrate your achievements in one short, concise document, and apply for jobs and internships. This is a great time to start one that you can build on over the years, as you will need one when you enter the world of work.

12. Should I do early action, early decision, priority deadline, etc.?

This is a personal/family decision and one that should be well researched. Knowing the definitions/descriptions of these is vital. Early decision likely will be “binding” and you will have to commit to the college/university no matter how much/little money they offer. Early action likely will get you in the running with the first pool of applicants. Rolling decision typically means the college/university looks at applications as they arrive, not all at one time. Knowing these deadlines and meeting them/preparing in advance is also extremely important.

13. Should I apply to honors colleges?

Check out the requirements. Check out the extra obligations and benefits. Talk to older students who have gone this route. Research your career field and path and see if an honors college benefits you for graduate/doctorate/medical school admissions, etc.

14. How can I pay for school?

FAFSA – the federal financial aid that can include grant money, needs based funding, or loans that must be repaid (know the opening date and get it done early by having everything you need ahead of time, i.e. tax information);

School-based scholarships – what each college/university has to offer for academics, honors students, etc.;

Athletic scholarships – for select athletes;

State scholarships – in South Carolina, it is lottery money for which students must qualify at different levels;

Independent scholarships – these take time, commitment, and dedication and can be started via google searches, the Oceanside website, etc.

15. I am an athlete. Do I have to become eligible to play in college through NCAA?

If you do not make yourself eligible, you will not be able to play a sport in college for certain divisions/schools. It is best to make your account at eligibilitycenter.org if there is any chance you want to play a sport in college.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? CHECK OUT THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR PAGES AND THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEAR CHECKLISTS/TIMELINES. ALSO, SEE THE “HOW TO” HANDOUTS ON THESE PAGES.