

# Counseling Courier

MVHS Counseling Department

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## Understanding your MVHS GPAs

Inside this issue:

One of the questions counselors hear often from students is, "What's my GPA?" This is a great question on so many levels. By the time they graduate from MVHS as seniors, students will have six different GPAs, and that can be a little confusing. Let's take a look at the different GPAs and what each represents. Ultimately, there are three primary GPA categories: Academic 9-12, Academic 10-12, and Total 9-12.

The academic GPAs include every class a student takes with the exception of PE, Marching Band, Rally, and all sports. Academic classes are denoted with a "p" on students' transcripts. The total GPA includes everything – yes, that means PE, Marching Band, Rally, and all sports. Those GPA categories are further divided into weighted and non-weighted. Weighted GPAs include the extra

grade point that students earn in an AP or Honors course. To illustrate, a student who earns an A in Bio Honors receives 5 grade points in comparison to a student who earns an A in Biology and receives 4 grade points; those Weighted GPAs are ones where it's possible for the GPA to climb above a 4.0.

So how do we use all these GPAs? That's another great question. For seniors, the Academic 10-12 GPA is a close approximation of a student's UC GPA, as the UC uses only those classes taken in grades 10 and 11 toward their GPA calculation. The Academic 9-12 GPA is used within the Common Application, which includes most private colleges and universities, as well

as many public ones (e.g. – University of Michigan, University of Virginia). The Total Non-Weighted 9-12 GPA is one of the components used to determine a student's athletic eligibility; student-athletes must have at least a 2.0 GPA in this category to participate on a MVHS sports team.

Counselors will review transcripts with students and their families during individual counseling appointments, and the GPA question is one that we're always happy to address. In the meantime, we hope this information provides a better sense of what the various GPAs represent and how they are used at MVHS and beyond.

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## Junior FYI

It is often said that junior year is the most difficult, but with some planning, it can be a lot easier. Currently, we are meeting with each junior for you individual appointments and hope to address and answer concerns or questions you may have. Here are some important highlights that counselors and juniors will discuss in their individual appointments this fall.

### Transcripts

- Courses in which students earned D's or F's should be re-taken in order to meet college eligibility .
- Check to see if there are any errors on your transcript. For example, please check for any course taken outside of MVHS. If you want them to appear on your high school transcript you must have the outside grades sent to MVHS.

### SAT

- Juniors start taking the SAT and/or ACT in their junior year, spring semester.
- The SAT or ACT are required by almost all four-year colleges.
- SAT Subject tests are required for certain majors within the UC and by some selective universities.
- If you take the math test, be sure it is Math level 2
- Please check individual college preference.

**Register for the SAT through collegeboard.com; for the ACT at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)**

### College Visits

- Continue college research, visit colleges and use the College and Career Center.
- Take advantage of free test prep books, college/career options and college Representative visits.

### Organize

- Start thinking about your plans after high school. Consider trying one of the personality or career inventories in Naviance for suggestions about college majors.
- Make a college or career binder with all deadlines and college requirements.

### Take Action!

## Volunteer

By now, you have probably heard your counselor say that it is important to get involved in extracurricular activities. Some of you have joined a club, a sports team, or perhaps you are working somewhere after school. If you haven't found something that piques your interest, below you will find some helpful information on great volunteering opportunities.

**Graham Middle School** needs volunteers from 6:00 pm-8:00 pm to assist with their Tuesday tutoring program. Volunteers will be working in a classroom with teachers to ensure students are well supported.

**NetGain** is looking for volunteers to help with their after school tennis program through November 15th. No training is required!

\*These volunteer opportunities and more can be found on the new college and career center bulletin! <https://sites.google.com/mvla.net/ccv/volunteer>

Be sure to check out our Volunteer Guide on the CCC Google site to find out about many other local volunteering opportunities.





# Legislation New

New legislation (Senate Bill 412) has rolled out for the California State University. Starting this Fall, the California Promise will be available for all eligible Freshmen at participating CSUs. The California Promise is an initiative to improve the 4-year graduation rate at 11 CSUs and 2-year graduation rate for transfers at 17 CSUs. This legislation comes as a response to research demonstrating the importance of students entering the work force in a timely manner and the burden of paying further tuition. CSUs have spent this past year hiring dozens of new college advisers to make this program possible. On the CSU application, CalState Apply, students can select whether they would like to participate in the program. Participation in the program is not required.

### Participating CSUs for 4-year Graduation:

- Bakersfield
- Chico
- Dominguez Hills
- Fresno
- Fullerton
- Humboldt
- Long Beach
- Pomona
- Sacramento
- San Bernardino
- San Jose

### Who is Eligible?

- Incoming freshmen
- All incoming transfers with an Associate Degree for Transfer relevant to their admitted major
- For all participants - you must be a California resident for purposes of in-state tuition eligibility (this includes AB540 students)

### What are the requirements?

- Successfully complete 30 units towards your degree every academic year (this can include Winter and Summer session).
- Maintain good academic standing, a GPA of 2.0 or above.
- Complete a California Promise advising workshop and associated workshop requirements every semester.
- Register for classes during your assigned California Promise priority registration window (within the first 24 hours of your registration appointment) and pay fees by the required deadlines.
- Take required classes when they are offered, regardless of scheduling time.

### What are the benefits of the Program?

- Advising specific to graduating in four years for frosh; two years for transfers
- Early registration time (Example: Juniors in the California Promise Program are assigned registration times before other juniors.)
- On time completion of your degree.

Information from: ([https://www2.calstate.edu/apply/freshman/getting\\_into\\_the\\_csu/Pages/the-california-promise-program.aspx](https://www2.calstate.edu/apply/freshman/getting_into_the_csu/Pages/the-california-promise-program.aspx))



## **Scholarship Highlights**

**The Elks National Foundation Scholarship** is worth \$1,000-\$12,500. The scholarship is open to any high school senior who is a U.S. citizen. Applicants will be judged on scholarship, leadership, and financial need. This scholarship is due November 27th.



**The Sixt Scholars Program** is worth \$5,000. The scholarship is open to graduating high school seniors in the U.S. who plan to enroll in a full time 2- or 4-year university and who have a 3.7 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Other factors, such as need and extracurricular activities will be taken into consideration. The deadline to apply is November 27th

**AXA Achievement Scholarship** is valued at \$2,500, \$10,000, or \$25,000. Applicants will be reviewed for ambition, self drive as evidenced by outstanding achievement in school, community, or work related activities. This is a merit based scholarship due December 15th.

**The ABODO Scholarship** is worth \$500. To enter, students need to write about what they are bringing from their hometown to college and why it's important.

\*All of these scholarship opportunities and more can be found on the new college and career center bulletin!  
<https://sites.google.com/mvla.net/ccs/scholarships>

## **Senior Highlights:**

-The UC application opened for submission on November 1. Your plan for Thanksgiving should be a turkey, so don't delay on completing it and submitting it. Submission deadline is November 30.

-The CSU application is currently open for submission. Many CSUs use rolling admissions, so get those applications submitted soon. Submission deadline is November 30.

-If you're applying Early Action or Early Decision, deadlines are generally November 1 or November 15. If you know you won't be ready to put your best foot forward by then, consider applying Regular Decision instead. That leaves you more time to put together a great application.

-Don't forget to send your test scores! Remember that SAT and ACT results need to be submitted directly from the testing agency. Log on to your ACT or College Board account and send those scores as soon as they're available.

-Have you thanked your teacher recommenders? Thanksgiving is a great time to send them a nice note telling them you appreciate their efforts on your behalf. Don't forget to update them when you get good news from colleges so they can celebrate with you.

-FAFSA is open for submission. While the deadline is not until March, we encourage you to apply early. Visit [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov) to apply.

-Applying to private or some out-of-state public schools and looking for financial aid? The CSS Profile may be required. Visit <https://profileonline.collegeboard.org/prf/PXRemotePartInstitutionServlet/PXRemotePartInstitutionServlet.sr> to see if the CSS is required by your colleges and universities.

## **FINANCIAL AID: What is the FAFSA and the CSS/ Financial Aid Profile?**

If you are a high school senior planning to enroll in college next summer or fall and are looking for ways to cover your college expenses please continue reading.

### **FAFSA**

What is it? FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is an online application located at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Most colleges require this form to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). EFC is basically a number that represents what your parents should be able to contribute towards your college education and is calculated using your family's taxed and untaxed income, assets, family size and the number of family members who will attend college during the year. Colleges use the EFC to determine students' federal financial aid eligibility. Even if your family does not qualify for federal grants, you may be eligible for Work Study (flexible job on or off campus) and Federal Loans that have favorable terms.

When to apply? Students should apply between October 1 and March 2, however students and their parents can go to the web-

site and print a worksheet for planning purposes, as well as to create a FSA ID. The FSA ID is used to electronically sign documents including the FAFSA. Both students and parents will create an FSA ID. Visit [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov) to get started.

### **CSS Profile**

The CSS Profile is an online application for nonfederal financial aid for many private schools. It requires a fee, and is generally a more elaborate application as compared to the FAFSA. Students must have a College Board account in order to apply. To view a list of schools that require the CSS Profile please visit or apply go to <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>

### **Merit Scholarships**

In addition to need-based financial aid that's available by submitting the FAFSA and, for some universities, the CSS Profile, there's also a great deal of merit-based aid available for our students.

One of the best places to search for merit-based scholarships is in Naviance. Ms. Tabuchi, our College and Career Center Coordi-

nator, maintains a lengthy list of local, state, and national scholarships for which our students may apply.

While there are some merit scholarships that require high GPAs, there are also ones for students who've been active in their community through volunteerism, have participated in activities such as sports or music, or come from a particular cultural background. Some merit-based scholarships also invite students to use their creative talents to respond to a prompt. There truly are opportunities for motivated students to win merit scholarships.

We encourage students to look through the scholarship list in Naviance, which is located in the College section. Please contact your counselor or Ms. Yazdani in the CCC with questions.



## **Cal Grants and GPA Verification**

As California high school students, you are entitled to receive grants from the state to help cover college tuition. If you file the FAFSA, meet requirements, and submit your GPA verification to the California Student Aid Commission, you will be entitled to this free grant money.

Each year, the GPA Verification form is uploaded electronically by our College and Career Center.

## SAT vs ACT: Which one is right for you?

By now, some of you have taken the PSAT twice and some have taken the Pre ACT. If you were able to do both, we hope that you were able to get a better sense of how each tests differs and which one you would prefer to take. During the spring semester, you will sign up to take either the ACT or SAT or maybe even both. Regardless of which one you choose, you will need to take one if you are planning on going to a university after high school. For those of you who have not had the chance to take both, we hope this table might help you decide between the two: The ACT or SAT.

If you are still having difficulty deciding which exam is right for you, The Princeton Review has a quiz to help you decided which exam you should take. Here is the link: <http://www.princetonreview.com/college/should-i-take-the-act-or-sat-quiz>

	SAT	ACT
<b>Time</b>	3 Hours; add 50 minutes for optional essay	2 hours and 55 minutes; add 40 minutes for the optional essay
<b>Sections</b>	3 sections: the 3 <sup>rd</sup> is the optional essay -Reading and Writing -Reading: 65 minutes -Writing and Language: 35 minutes -Math: 80 minutes -Optional Essay: 50 minutes	5 sections: the 5 <sup>th</sup> is the optional essay -Math: 60 minutes -Reading Test: 35 minutes -Science: 35 minutes -English: 45 minutes -Optional Essay: 40 minutes
<b>Reading Passages</b>	5	4
<b>Science Section</b>	No	Yes
<b>Math Concepts</b>	Arithmetic, Algebra 1 & 2, Geometry and Trigonometry	
<b>Calculator</b>	Can use on certain sections of the math portion	Can use on ALL math questions
<b>Essay</b>	Optional	Optional
<b>Penalties for guessing</b>	No	No
<b>Scoring</b>	Total Score range from 400-1600	Total Scores range from 1-36
<b>Cost</b>	\$45.00 \$57.00 with Writing	\$42.50 \$58.50 with Writing
<b>Registration website</b>	<a href="https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat?navId=gh-sat">https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat?navId=gh-sat</a>	<a href="http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration-information.html">http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration-information.html</a>

## **Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions**

While grades, strength of curriculum and test scores are still the major factors in making admission decisions, a fair amount of attention has turned to what exactly is considered meaningful extracurricular engagement. Recently, *Turning the Tide*, a report out of the Harvard Graduate School of Education took a close look at the current state of college admissions and how those practices impact student choices regarding extracurricular experiences. In short, the report concluded that universities should revise their application processes to more “accurately and meaningfully assess” a candidate’s contributions to their school or community. Based on feedback from a number of former and current college admission deans, higher education leaders and school counselors across the country, several recommendations were made to promote clear guidelines for more ethical and authentic community engagement, while helping reduce undue pressure to succeed. Below is a brief summary of these recommendations.

**#1 Meaningful, Sustained Community Service** - Simply stated, students should consider community service activities that are at least year long, provide opportunities for self-reflection and above all, speak to their individual interests. Bottom line, what is the likelihood that the experience will generate ethical and emotional awareness?

**#2 Collective Action that Takes on Community Challenges** - While individuals can make an impact, it is through the power of the group that communities are able to come together for the greater good. Students get to practice valuable leadership skills while working with diverse communities.

**#3 Authentic, Meaningful Experiences with Diversity** - When it comes to solving challenging community problems, students should “do with” rather than “do for” in order to avoid patronizing them. Students should be encouraged to get to know and learn from their peers in school as well outside of school.

**#4 Contributions to One’s Family** - Colleges should account for students who have family obligations, such as caring for younger sibling, or who are employed for the purpose of providing financial assistance. Some colleges have made it possible to document these obligations on their application.

**#5 Assessing Students’ Daily Awareness of and Contributions to Others** - Colleges should give more weight to a person’s day to day conduct and sense of obligation to others and community than what service is performed.

**#6 Prioritizing Quality-Not Quantity-of Activities** - Students should not feel pressure to report more than two or three “substantive” extracurricular activities. Colleges should send a clear message that quality is much more important than quantity.

**#7 Awareness of Overloading on AP Courses** - Students feel significant pressure to take the most rigorous courses offered to them, across all disciplines. Admission offices should send a clear message that this strategy is not as valuable as sustained achievement in a few select academic areas.

**#8 Discouraging “Overcoaching”** - Colleges can play a vital role in advising students to avoid “overcoaching” so that their true authentic voice is reflected on their application. An application that is too polished may raise some questions, and could negatively impact an applicant’s chances of being admitted.

**#9 Options for Reducing Test Pressure** - Colleges could be more transparent in explaining how test scores actually count in the admission process, while advocating that students do not take a test more than twice. Expanding test optional policies could also play a major role in helping reduce the undue burden many students feel around college admission test preparation.

**#10 Expanding Students' Thinking about "Good" Colleges** - College admissions and high school counselors should challenge the idea that only a limited number of colleges are worthy of attention and that graduating from only those colleges will lead to a successful career path. Ultimately, the overall fit and feel of the campus rather than where it falls on the college rankings is what matters most.

These recommendations have wide reaching implications for how college admission officers evaluate students, how the college application is designed, and more broadly, how colleges market themselves to students. Some colleges, including some "highly selective" ones have taken modest steps to modify their practices. Similarly, we continue to evaluate our work as counseling practitioners to provide students, along with their families, the assistance and support needed to make sensible decisions about their goals and aspirations.

To access the full report go to: [http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/files/gse-mcc/files/turning\\_the\\_tide\\_final\\_high\\_res.pdf?m=1457556827](http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/files/gse-mcc/files/turning_the_tide_final_high_res.pdf?m=1457556827)

## Mark your Calendars!

11/22—24	Thanksgiving Holiday Break
12/4-12/8	Spartan Pause Week
12/13	Final Exams for periods 2,6, & 7
12/14	Final Exams for periods 0, 1, & 5
12/15	Final Exams for periods 3 & 4

## Preparing for the end of 1st Semester

As the semester comes to an end, there are many things to keep track of and many things to do. Here are some helpful tips that will help you end your semester on a positive note.

1. Submit any missing assignments
2. Revise any tests, quizzes or essays that you can for additional points
3. At some point before the Thanksgiving break, please be sure to check in with your teacher about what you can expect on the final exams. Free response? Multiple choice? Will there be a study guide?
4. If there is an 'optional' study guide, think of it as mandatory. Oftentimes the study guides give you a good indication of what will be on the real final.
5. Ask your teacher if there will be review sessions outside of class time and mark them in your calendar
6. As you begin to study for final exams, think about how you study best.
  - Alone? Find a quiet place to study that is free from distraction
  - With a group? Find classmates to study with and reserve a room in the Tutorial Center for a study session
7. Leave your cell phone off or on airplane mode; better yet, hand it over to your parents for a few hours so that you can study more effectively.