Pathway to Stanford
Proof That College Is Possible

If college is your destination, we have good news. However distant it may seem, whatever obstacles might appear to lie before you, there is a plan that can help you get from here to there.

JUST LISTEN TO THOSE WHO ALREADY WALKED THIS PATH.

Kenna Little
SENIOR
AMERICAN STUDIES
CARMEL, CA

“Growing up in California, Stanford was always my dream school. With its top academics and athletics, I saw it as an exciting environment to learn with true school spirit. My parents did not go to college, but always supported my learning goals. They dreamed of Stanford for me but never expected it. During the application process, I was able to reflect on my high school experiences—what I had learned, how I had grown as a person, what excited me, and what challenged me. Looking back, I would advise myself not to be stressed about the application process, but to see it as an opportunity for honest reflection. It was cool to look back on my journey before I looked forward to the next one.”

Issy Robbins
SENIOR
ART HISTORY
CAMERON, AZ

“I applied to Stanford not expecting to be admitted, and I am so glad I did it. During the application process, I got to reflect on why I wanted to go to college and who and what I was doing it for. I lived in Muwekma Tah-Ruk, the Native-American-themed dorm, in my freshman year, and it definitely helped with my transition to Stanford. It is where I met some of my best friends and mentors and connected with the Stanford Native community. The Native American Cultural Center and its associated clubs and programming have been the backbone of my Stanford experience. I have felt so much love and support throughout the years from this community.”
Aaron Barron  
JUNIOR  
BIOMECHANICAL ENGINEERING  
CONYERS, GA  

“Going through the college application process, I really examined how I spent my time outside of school. A misconception throughout high school is that you have to be overcommitted in every sport or club. I wish I could go back and tell myself that what matters more is focusing on the activities that make you happy and help you make an impact. Once I was at Stanford, I was surprised at how easy it is to get involved on campus. There are so many academic clubs, dance groups, Greek events and opportunities for activism. And every day there are competitions, protests, a cappella performances or community celebrations.”

Anakaren Cervantes  
SENIOR  
HISTORY  
LOS ANGELES, CA  

“I knew that if I got into Stanford, it would be able to offer generous financial aid and a wealth of resources, regardless of what I ended up studying. As a first-generation student, I have also found Stanford to be a really welcoming place. I am very grateful for all of the opportunities that Stanford has given me and for all of the doors that it has opened for me. Stanford made it possible for me to travel the world, do research, gain professional work experience, learn what I love, and meet fantastic people, and I was able to do all of this without ever worrying about money or being ‘good enough.’ This place has provided me with the resources and fostered the confidence I need to succeed no matter what I do or where I go.”

Resources at Stanford

COMMUNITY CENTERS are a great source of support for Stanford students. These include centers to support and celebrate our Asian American, Black, LatinX, Native American and LGBTQ communities— in addition to Stanford women.

THE HAAS CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE offers many opportunities to remain engaged with the community, including summer public service fellowships, alternative spring break trips and a community service work-study program.

UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING AND RESEARCH encompasses many of the University’s academic support services, including academic advising, free tutoring and student research grants.

FIRST GENERATION, LOW INCOME PARTNERSHIP (FLIP) is a student group that offers peer support, discussions and social activities for students with this background.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT, through BEAM (Bridging Education, Ambition & Meaningful Work), can help you write a résumé and cover letter, apply for summer internships and jobs and explore career directions. BEAM also offers alumni mentorship programs.

THE BRIDGE PEER COUNSELING CENTER AND COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES support students through confidential one-on-one counseling appointments.

ADMISSION. STANFORD.EDU/ DIVERSITY
Think college is just a dream? Here’s help to make it real.

PREPARE
Create a four-year plan with your counselor, and meet with her or him each year to monitor your progress and map out your course schedule.

GAIN EXPERIENCE
Make good use of your summers! Apply to summer college prep programs, get a job or volunteer.

EXPLORE
Visit and tour college campuses whenever you can. There are so many types and sizes of colleges—and so many different environments. See what feels most comfortable. Fit is important!

CHALLENGE YOURSELF
Take honors, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. Colleges (especially the most selective ones) will want to see evidence of effort on your transcript.

10TH GRADE
Now that you have high school figured out, start taking advanced courses (if you haven’t already). Ask for academic help when you need it. Get more deeply involved with the extracurriculars you love most.

11TH GRADE
Junior year is a busy one. Keep up your academics, study for standardized tests (such as the ACT or SAT) and create a list of colleges that interest you.

12TH GRADE
All of your hard work comes together in 12th grade. It’s time to start planning for college. Identify your school’s college preparation resources, and figure out how to take advantage of them. Also: Establish good study habits now. The coursework just gets more challenging from here.

9TH GRADE
It’s never too early to start planning for college. Identify your school’s college preparation resources, and figure out how to take advantage of them. Also: Establish good study habits now. The coursework just gets more challenging from here.

INQUIRE – Attend college fairs and ask college representatives about their admission processes and financial aid policies.

TEST – Take the SAT or ACT as early as possible. Remember you can take these tests more than once (and that most colleges only consider your highest score).

WRITE – Start your application essays early so you have plenty of time to revise. Tell a story that reveals something essential about who you are and what you value or believe. Request feedback from teachers and peers. Use spell check!

RESEARCH – Familiarize yourself with the specific application policies and financial aid procedures of the colleges you’re interested in.

ORGANIZE – Make a calendar with college application deadlines, which generally range from November to January. Ask your counselor if you are eligible for an application fee waiver.

RESEARCH – Whenever possible, learn about colleges. Ask your teachers if you can sit in when college admission reps visit your school. See what your options are, and learn what colleges are looking for in applicants.

CONNECT – Consider college access programs that connect you with resources and information to help you with the college search and financial aid processes.

PREPARE – Study for standardized tests (such as the PSAT). Get a review book to help you prepare and research on-line resources and tutorials. Ask your counselor if you are eligible for a test fee waiver.

JOIN – Pursue your interests. Gain experience and expertise doing the things you love most. Colleges look for people who are involved in their communities and have strong extracurricular interests.

EXPAND – Make good use of your summers! Expand your experience and gain new skills.

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ASK – Approach your teachers to request letters of recommendation at least 6 weeks before a deadline.

APPLY FOR AID – In October, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the CSS/Financial Aid Profile to maximize your financial aid award. (Some colleges award aid on a "first come, first served" basis). You should also apply for any state grants. (Pay attention to the deadlines).

How am I going to pay for college?
College can be affordable! All colleges have some form of financial aid, and you may be eligible for financial assistance that will help cover the costs.

Here are some terms you will need to know to apply for financial aid:

How do I get financial aid?
In order to receive financial aid, you will need to fill out financial aid forms each school year. Each college or university has its own formula for determining how much financial aid you will receive. Your family’s income and assets do not change dramatically from year to year, so you can expect to receive a similar financial aid package each year.

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Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – A form that must be submitted annually to help colleges determine eligibility for federal and state financial aid.

College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile) – A form provided by most private institutions to help them determine a student’s financial need. Although there is a fee to submit the form, you may be eligible for a fee waiver.

Need-based aid
An aid that is determined by your family’s financial circumstances. Will you and your spouse have the primary responsibility of paying for college? Financial aid can bridge the gap between the total cost and your ability to pay.

Merit-based aid
An aid that does not consider your family’s financial circumstances and can be based on a number of factors such as grade, test scores or a type of talent.

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Need-blind policy
As a criterion that your family’s ability to pay for college will not affect the college’s admission decision.

Financial aid from sources other than your college, or outside aid, is another way to obtain money for college. Check out Fastweb.com for access to scholarship opportunities!
How can I learn about financial aid?

- Set up a meeting with your school’s guidance or college counselor.
- Call a college’s financial aid office for more information.
- Research different colleges’ financial aid websites.
- When you are ready to apply to college, be sure to work with your parents/guardians to complete the FAFSA and/or CSS Profile forms.

What is Stanford’s Financial Aid Program?

- Stanford expects students and their parents to contribute toward educational costs to the extent that they are able. Stanford’s financial aid program will make up the difference when families are not financially able to cover the costs. Stanford individually evaluates each financial aid application based on several factors, including total annual family income, family size and the number of siblings in college. Stanford will also review any documented special circumstances, such as high medical expenses.
- Stanford will expect no parent contribution toward educational costs for parents with total annual income below $65,000 and typical assets for this income range.
- For parents with total annual income below $125,000 and typical assets for this income range, Stanford will ensure that all tuition charges are covered by need-based scholarship, federal and state grants and/or outside scholarship funds. Stanford financial aid packages do not include loans.
- The student responsibility portion of the package can be met with a combination of sources, including employment during the summer and academic year, scholarships from outside the University (i.e. National Merit Scholarships, Rotary Scholarships, etc.) or a student-requested loan. Students will also be expected to contribute 5 percent of their own savings. For most students, the total student responsibility is approximately $5,000.