



UNITED WAY OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

TOP 10 THINGS **EVERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SHOULD KNOW**

Practical advice and resources for
community and technical college
students in Los Angeles County





We get it; community college can be confusing.

Here are 10 things to know to make your journey a little easier!

This guide was created for YOU—the first-generation student, the working student, the one who took a break and came back, the student who just graduated from high school, the single mom, the single dad, the one who isn't sure YET what they want to be when they “grow up,” the one who wants to transfer into your dream four-year school. **We see you, and we are so happy you're here.**

We'll let you in on a little secret—the community college system in LA is actually pretty awesome. The county's network of 19 public community colleges provides limitless options to secure a solid education that will give you access to high-paying, upward-mobility jobs. Community college costs less than four-year colleges, has more degree and certificate options, and has stronger connections between what you study and real jobs. On top of that, class sizes are smaller, so the professors and staff really get to know you.

Did you know . . .

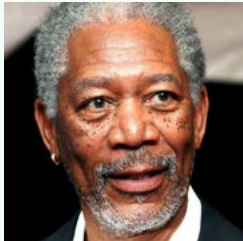
- *1 in 3 students in the U.S.* is enrolled in a community college.
- The California Community Colleges system is the *largest job-training provider in the country*, educating over 2 million people a year.
- On average, a person with a college degree makes *\$1 million more during their lifetime* than someone with no higher education.
- By 2027, *70% of all jobs* will require some form of higher education or training. Getting a degree or certificate can help you compete for these jobs.
- Individuals with more education are *less likely to report conditions* such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, anxiety, and depression.

Community college really has the potential to change your life. It can help you develop a strong academic foundation while you also build the job skills and networks you will carry with you for the rest of your life. This guide was created with the input of real students, community college staff, nonprofit leaders, and government officials from across LA County to help you find the information you need to succeed. We hope these tips are useful, and we can't wait to see the incredible things you'll do!

Purpose of this guide: To provide you with actionable tips and resources that will help you make the most of your time in community college and achieve your education and career goals. At the end, you will be positioned to decide to invest in the investment fund or forgo the opportunity at this time. No matter your decision, you will gain valuable educational insight into what it means to invest, how investing in bonds work and be knowledgeable about where you stand financially.

FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO WENT TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

As a community college student, you are in an exclusive group with people like:



MORGAN FREEMAN

Actor
LACC



STEVE JOBS

Founder, Apple
De Anza College



CARDI B

Rapper
Borough of
Manhattan CC



DOLORES HUERTA

Labor Activist
San Joaquin Delta
College



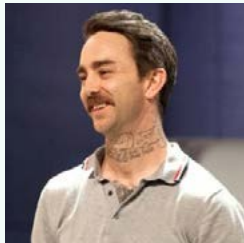
FRANK CRUZ

Founder, Telemundo
ELAC



HALLEE BERRY

Actor
Cuyahoga
Community College



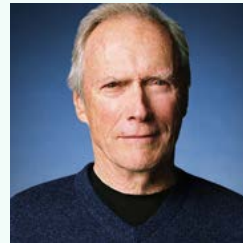
JEFFERY SEBELIA

Fashion Designer
LATTC



ALBERT PUJOLS

Baseball Player
Maple Woods CC



CLINT EASTWOOD

Actor
LACC



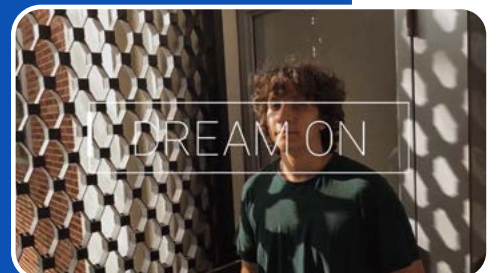
KEVIN HART

Actor / Comedian
Community College
of Philadelphia



STUDENT AND ALUMNI VOICES.

Click to explore student perspectives on the
impact of attending community college



Keep watching: *Roadtrip Nation*—a documentary where three
community college students travel across the country, interviewing
successful past and present community college students along the way.



Tip 01.

Know your rights and communicate what you need!

Your life story is 100% unique, so the things you need to succeed in college are unique too. It's important to know this from the beginning so you can stand up for your rights and ask for what you need. This process is called "self-advocacy."

What is self-advocacy? Self-advocacy is the ability to ask for what you want to meet your needs. Self-advocacy skills can help you face the challenges that occur during your education journey and create the future you want.

STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SELF-ADVOCACY:

1. **Ask for what you need!** The process of asking for what you want can feel weird and scary. But remember that the community college staff and departments are there to serve YOU. Your college has tons of resources for you, so ask for them!
2. **Keep your request simple and straightforward.** If you need a computer, say that. If you need more time to complete your exam because you have ADHD, say that. If you need to change your classes because you have to work, say that. No request is too small, but in order to get help, you have to be clear about exactly what you need.
3. **If you ask and nothing happens, ask AGAIN.** Community colleges have thousands of resources, but they are often spread across many departments, buildings, and people. So if you ask for something and nothing happens, this **DOESN'T MEAN THAT NO ONE CAN HELP YOU**. It means you have to ask another person or ask in a different way. Sometimes you have to ask many people to get to the person who can help.

PRO TIP

Find a **HUMAN** to connect to. We know when you need help, it can seem like no one is there for you. But remember this: there are real people behind every organization and program, and most people are actually nice and would love to help you reach your goals and get you what you need. When you are trying to get a resource or advice, stay persistent and keep going until you are able to connect with a real person who works at the organization.

REMEMBER: Nobody knows what you need better than YOU. Getting what you need is not always easy or fast. Sometimes it takes multiple tries and talking to multiple different people. **Continue to push for what you need and want. You deserve it!**

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

As a community college student in LA, you are legally entitled to many things. Pull out your self-advocacy skills to make sure you get them. Some important rights to know include:

- **The Right to Basic Needs Services (AB 132)** All California Community Colleges are required to have a basic needs center with a coordinator who can help students connect with on- and off-campus resources. These one-stop centers are often the fastest way to get help with things that impact your day-to-day life, like access to food and housing. [Learn more about AB 132.](#)
- **The Right to Equitable Placement (AB 705)** “Equitable placement” means you have the right to enroll directly in transfer-level math and English classes. Your college can’t make you take a remedial math or English course that doesn’t count for credit toward graduation. If you get placed into a remedial class, meet with your counselor to change it. [Learn more about AB 705.](#)
- **The Right to Your Scholarship Money (AB 288)** The law bans scholarship displacement and makes sure that when a student gets a scholarship, the college can’t reduce other financial aid they were going to give. This law helps students afford college and take full advantage of scholarship dollars. [Learn more about AB 288](#) and [how to use it for yourself.](#)
- **Undocumented Students Have the Right to In-State Tuition (AB 540/SB 68)** All students who meet specific criteria—including undocumented students—have the right to pay in-state tuition at California’s public colleges and universities (California community colleges, CSU, and UC). [Learn more about AB 540](#), and [see if you qualify for in-state tuition.](#)
- **Students with Disabilities Have the Right to Accommodations** [Under federal law](#), students with disabilities have the right to receive extra support in college to help them succeed. Support might include a note taker for class, extended time to take tests, access to audio textbooks, and more. If you identify as a student with disabilities, [contact your school’s Disabled Students’ Programs & Services office \(DSPS\)](#) to learn more.
- **Students Who are Parenting, Homeless, Veterans, or Foster Youth Have the Right to Priority Registration (AB 2881-Parenting, AB 801-Homeless, AB194-Foster Youth)** “Priority registration” means you get to sign up for your classes before other students. This increases your chances of getting into classes you need and helps you create a schedule that works for your life and needs. [See a full list of student groups who are entitled to priority registration here.](#)

Want to impact change on your campus?

Check out the Student Senate for California Community College (SSCCC) [Legislative Advocacy Toolkits](#) or apply to become an Ed Trust-West “**FIERCE**” Fellow!



STUDENTS WHO SELF-ADVOCATE.

Read and hear perspectives from college students like you!





Tip 02.

If you can dream it, you can do it—but you need a plan

The key to crushing it in community college is having a clear vision of what success means to you. What do you hope to accomplish during your time here? What are your dreams? Once you have an idea of what you want, you can set clear goals and make an education plan to help you get there. A simple way to figure out what you want to do is to use the following steps: 1) Explore your options, 2) Set goals, 3) Make a plan to reach your goals!

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

Community colleges offer a variety of programs that are aligned to local job opportunities, giving you the skills and knowledge you need to kickstart your career. Take your time to learn about some of the different degree- and industry-pathway options available, and choose a path that feels good for you. Remember, there is no right or wrong path. The important thing is to lean into your interests and find something you love!

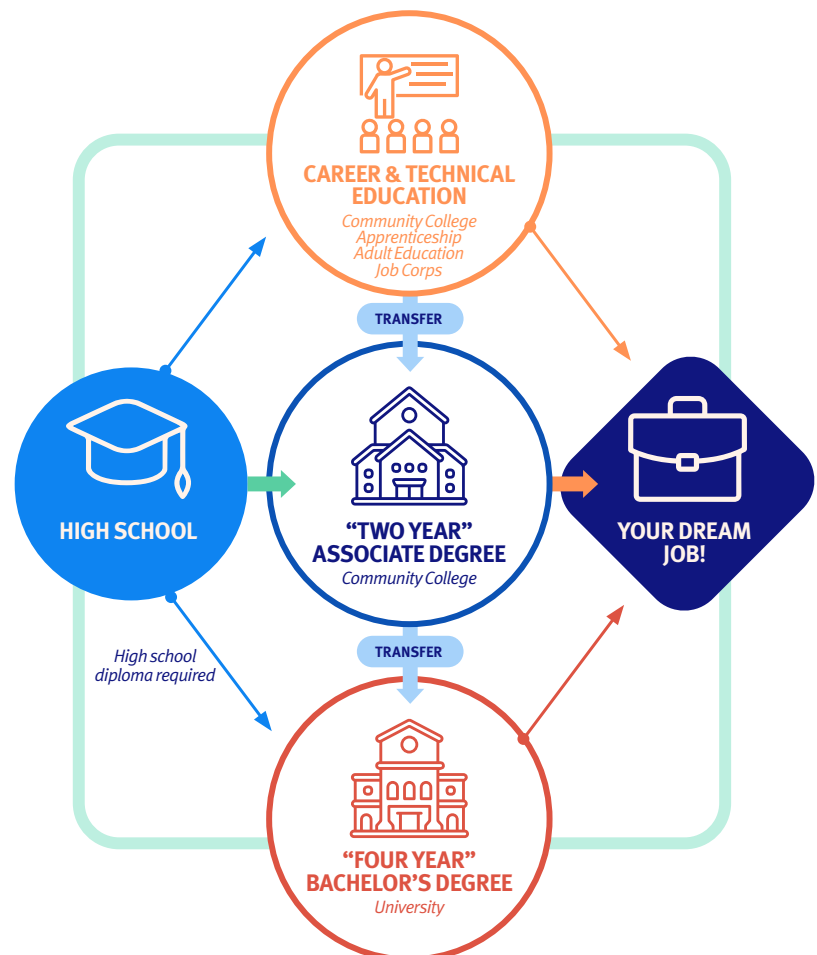
Options you can choose at community college include:

- Complete a single class
- Complete a certificate program
- Complete an associate's degree program
- Complete an apprenticeship program (earn while you learn)
- Transfer to a four-year university and get your bachelor's degree

Enroll in a bachelor's degree program
(*see which community colleges offer this)

PRO TIP

If you are not sure what you want to do, keep your options open by working toward an [Associate Degree for Transfer \(ADT\)](#). ADT sets you up for guaranteed admission into [CSUs](#) and [other four-year schools](#)!



CAREER EXPLORATION RESOURCES:

In addition to learning about the degree options at your school, think about how those degrees connect to real-world careers. Explore different industries, career pathways, and jobs to decide on what you want to pursue. Think about how much those jobs pay so you can set yourself up for future financial success! The following tools can help you learn more:

- [Salary Surfer](#) from the California Community Colleges
- [MyPath](#) from the California Community Colleges
- [Labor Market Information](#) from the California Economic Development Department (EDD)
- [Gladeo for LA](#) from the career exploration platform, Gladeo
- [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- [My Next Move](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor

SET CLEAR GOALS

If you don't know exactly what you want to do yet, that's okay! You do NOT need to know every detail in order to set good goals. Just *choose something* to work toward for the present. Then set another goal after you reach that one. For example, your goal during your first semester at college might be: "I want to figure out whether I want to get a degree in architecture or nursing by the end of the semester." When you get to second semester, you can set another goal based on which path you choose!

PRO TIP

Share your goals with your parents, family, friends, and professors so they can support and celebrate you as you go through your journey!

Setting goals. Goals work best when they are simple and clear. One easy way to set goals is highlighted in this [Youtube video](#). No matter which process you use, **WRITE DOWN** your goal and put it somewhere you can see it everyday.

CREATE AN EDUCATION PLAN

Once you know what your goals are, you need to create an **EDUCATION PLAN** so you can keep moving steadily toward them. **You don't need to figure this out alone.** There are many people who can help you plan your education and career journey. A great place to start is meeting with a **college counselor** who can help you create an education plan that will help you figure out the smaller things you need to do each day, week, month, and semester to help you reach your goals.

An Education Plan is the Map to Your Goals!

Imagine driving your car without knowing where you are going. You would probably go around in circles, wasting a lot of time and energy (and gas!). But if you put a destination into your GPS, you can drive a lot easier and know exactly where you are going. Think of your goals like the destination on your GPS. Your education plan provides step-by-step directions on how to get there.

Everybody's journey is unique, and your path will have some twists and turns along the way. Keep your head up, don't compare yourself to others, and keep moving forward toward YOUR goals. **If you get off track, it's ok!** Take a beat, get recentered, and set some new goals for yourself. It sounds corny, but the biggest lesson is to just keep going and never stop believing in yourself.

PRO TIP

Growth mindset. Community college can be challenging, but you can do anything you set your mind to. Believing in yourself is half the battle, so hype yourself up and block out any negative thoughts!

Keep things fun by using a career quiz!

Quizzes can help you uncover your personal interests and see how they match up with different careers.

Here are 3 of our favorites:

- [I Can Go To College Career Quiz](#)
- [CareerOneStop Interest Assessment](#)
- [O*Net Interest Profiler](#)

Bonus: The websites these quizzes are hosted on have some pretty rad career information, too!



Tip 03.

You don't have to choose between work and school.

Create a schedule that gives you the ultimate blend of school-work-life balance

Community college is cool because it's flexible and allows you to move at your own pace and create a schedule that works for your life. Balancing college classes, working a job (or maybe multiple jobs), and other responsibilities—like taking care of kids or family members—can be exhausting and overwhelming.

Even though it can feel impossible sometimes, balancing school, work, and life can be done with effective time management (the big one!), good habits, and support from your network.

HACKS FOR BALANCING SCHOOL + WORK + LIFE

- **Use a Calendar App** An online calendar can help you keep track of deadlines and assignments. Our favorite is Google Calendar because it's easy to use from either a laptop or a phone. Add all of your classes, work hours, and activities to your calendar so it's easy to see what you have going on each day. Set alerts and reminders so you don't miss important deadlines.
- **Stick to a Schedule** Create a weekly schedule that outlines activities like class time, study time, work, home responsibilities, etc. Don't forget to include time for relaxation and self-care!
- **Don't Procrastinate** Finish assignments early to avoid stress. Here are [eight tips on how](#) to do it.
- **Over-communicate** Let your boss know you are in school, and let your professors know you are working. This will help them support you! For example, your boss might take it easy on you at work if they know you have a big test or final exam coming up.
- **Get Help** If you need additional help with class, get it! There is free academic support, and tutoring is available for most subject areas. There is absolutely no shame in using these resources.
- **Ask for an Extension** If you ever need extra time to get an assignment done, asking your professor for it will usually do the trick. Most of the time, professors are compassionate and will give you an extension. It's not worth it to destroy your mental health trying to get something done.

COMBINING WORK + SCHOOL

One great way to balance school and work is to engage in programs that combine both things.

GET A PAID JOB ON CAMPUS.

Did you know that your campus has work-study programs that can help you get jobs on campus? Getting an on-campus job will make it a lot easier for you to go between work and school. It also has the added benefit of helping you feel more connected to your campus community, which increases your odds of graduating on time!

Learn more about on-campus job opportunities by visiting your campus Career Center.

ENROLL IN AN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM.

There are many apprenticeship programs in LA County that PAY YOU to learn on the job. Apprenticeship programs have expanded in the last decade to include careers in tech, graphic design, logistics, and other fields—in addition to traditional apprenticeships in the skilled trades (plumbing, construction, electrical, etc.).

[Learn more about apprenticeships and search for ones in your area!](#)





Tip 04.

Apply for financial aid even if you don't think you'll get it!

What is financial aid? Financial aid is money received from an outside source, like the government or private lenders, to help pay for college. It can cover costs like school tuition and fees, books, supplies, transportation, and other living expenses. [Learn more about financial aid.](#)

LA community college students have access to many financial aid opportunities that can help pay for education. In fact, millions of dollars of financial aid go unused every year because students don't think they will qualify, so they don't even apply. Break this cycle by getting your financial aid application submitted on time each year. No matter what your financial situation, it's always free to apply, and it's worth it to see what you can get!

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

Fill out the [FAFSA](#) or [California Dream Act Application](#)

- Students who are U.S. citizens should fill out the FAFSA, while undocumented students should use the CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) instead. [Learn more about FAFSA vs. CADAA.](#)
- Submit applications by the **MARCH 2** priority deadline **EACH YEAR**. Applications open as early as October 1 for the following year. If you apply after the deadline, expect to get less aid!
- You have to re-apply for financial aid every year.

Create an account at [WebGrants4Students](#) to manage grants easily. This account lets you manage your Cal Grant, Chafee Grant, and other grants online, view updates, make changes, and submit requests.

Search for private scholarships and submit your applications. Work with your school counselor to research and apply for additional private scholarships.

WHERE TO GET HELP WITH FINANCIAL AID APPLICATIONS

Understanding and applying for financial aid can feel a bit overwhelming at times. Luckily, help is available. Check out these resources:

Go to Your School's Financial Aid Office

Get one-on-one support, including help completing your financial aid applications, navigating the online portals, submitting appeals, requesting a student loan, or any other process related to your financial aid. Find your school's

[Financial Aid Office here.](#) Plus, [check out this video](#) for more tips on how to apply for financial aid.

LA Cash for College Assistance

LA Cash for College is a program that provides workshops and hands-on support to help you complete your financial aid applications. As an added bonus, Cash for College has a scholarship program for anyone who attends their FAFSA workshop events! The program is operated by UNITE-LA and its partners. [Learn more and sign up for a workshop.](#)

SELF-ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY: Financial Aid Appeals

Filing an [appeal](#) is a formal way of letting your school know you want them to reevaluate your financial aid package. You can use apps like [SwiftStudent](#) to write a financial aid appeal letter for free!

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

There are four main types of financial aid. When figuring out what aid to accept, pay attention to what type it is, if you have to pay it back, and where it's coming from. Some organizations act like they have your best interests in mind, but they are just businesses trying to make money off of you! Watch out for high-interest, private loans that can leave you buried in student loan debt.

Grants *Aid that you DO NOT have to repay.*

A grant is free money that is provided to students pursuing a college degree that is usually based on income or financial need. You automatically get considered for most grants when you submit a FAFSA or a CADAA! Remember to double-check because some grants do require an application!

Common grants:

- [Pell Grant](#) for low-income students
- [Chafee Grant](#) for foster youth
- [Cal Grants](#) for low-income students
- [California College Promise Grant \(CCPG\)](#) covers cost of enrollment fees
- [LA College Promise \(LACP\)](#) provides two years of free enrollment to first-time and returning full-time LACCD students regardless of age, income, academic standing, or immigration status. [Apply now](#)

Work-Study Programs *Aid that you earn and DO NOT have to repay.*

You might be allowed to earn a portion of your financial aid award money through part-time work-study jobs that are on campus or in the community. Contact your college's financial aid office to learn more.

Key work-study programs to know:

- Federal Work-Study (FWS)—funded by the federal government
- LAEP—California's version of work study
- Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program—think of this like work-study for undocumented students

Scholarships *Aid that you DO NOT have to repay*

A scholarship is free money that is provided to students pursuing a college degree that is usually based on merit. You can earn scholarships for many different reasons like your grades, athletic ability, race/identity, gender, field of study, etc. To get a scholarship, you usually have to submit a separate application.

Check out scholarship opportunities available through your college foundation!

- [LATTC Foundation / LACC Foundation](#)
- [Foundation for Los Angeles CCs \(District\)](#)
- [Foundation for California CCs \(State\)](#)

Explore Scholarship Opportunities:

- [Life Prep Academy Scholarships page](#)
- [Scholarship America](#)
- [Scholarships for foster youth](#)
- [Scholarships for undocumented students](#)
- [Scholarships for LGBTQ students](#)
- [Scholarships for Black students](#)
- [Scholarships for Hispanic students](#)
- [Scholarships for Asian/AAPI students](#)
- [Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society](#)

Student Loans *Aid that you DO have to repay*

Student loans can be useful for filling financial gaps when scholarships, grants, and other forms of aid fall short. The only downside is that they need to get paid back in full—plus interest! Make sure that you consider every other financial aid opportunity before taking on student loan debt.

Be smart about which loans you choose to take out; look for low-interest federal loans, and try to steer clear of high-interest private loans if possible. **Your future self will thank you!**

Learn more about student loans:

- [The different types of student loans](#), including federal vs. private and subsidized vs. unsubsidized
- [Understanding interest rates](#) across different types of loans



Tip 05.

Don't struggle alone—there are tons of resources to help you with housing, mental health, food, and other basic needs.

If you're short on money or having a hard time making ends meet, you're not alone. We all need a little help sometimes, and that's nothing to be embarrassed about! In fact, 2 out of 3 college students experience financial challenges.

Luckily, your college and community have a wide variety of support programs available for you related to housing, food, school supplies, and other things you might need to succeed. The coolest part? **You are already paying for them.** Your tuition and tax dollars are what make a lot of these programs possible. So get informed and go get your money's worth!

DID YOU KNOW? Every community college in California is required by law to have a **Basic Needs Office** that can help students connect to essential resources. This is a great place to get started if you need support. Check out the campus-specific resource list at the end of this guide for more information about your school's Basic Needs Office and services.

BASIC NEEDS RESOURCE ROUND-UP

HOUSING & RENT

Here are a few programs that offer assistance for community college students facing homelessness or housing insecurity:

- Hope Housing for Students: www.hopehousingforstudents.org or call (626) 999-1856
- The Seed House Project: seedhouseproject.org or call (818) 351-9718
- Jovenes College Success Initiative: jovenesinc.org/college-housing or call (323) 260-8035
- LA Room & Board: larnb.org or email hello@larnb.org
- Trojan Shelter and Bruin Shelter: rent-free shelters created and operated by USC and UCLA students. Any college student (including community college students) can [apply to stay here](#)
- Safe Place for Youth: www.safeplaceforyouth.org or call (310) 902-2283
- Find additional resources through LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) [here](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

Don't ignore your mental health needs! Most community colleges have on-campus health centers or agreements with local health-care providers to make sure all students can get easy access to the things they need to stay healthy, including free or low-cost therapy/mental health services.

- All California community college students have access to free virtual therapy using [Timelycare](#)
- Immigrants Rising has a [Mental Health Connector program](#) for undocumented students
- Find additional resources through the LA County Department of Mental Health [here](#)

FOOD

- Find a food pantry using the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank's [food pantry locator](#)
- Free money for groceries is also available through the [CalFresh](#) program

TRANSPORTATION

- Free Metro rides are available through the [Low Income Fare is Easy \(LIFE\)](#) program
- Metro also offers [GoPass](#) for all LACCD community college students, regardless of income

TEXTBOOKS

- Save money by renting textbooks instead of buying them, using sites like [Chegg.com](#)
- See if your textbooks are available for free at [Open Textbook Library](#) or at your [local public library](#)

LAPTOPS & INTERNET

- CA Connects mobile internet: [shop.collegebuys.org/articles/calconnects_landing.htm](#)
- EveryoneOn: [www.everyoneon.org/find-offers](#)
- FCC Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP): [www.getinternet.gov/apply?ln=RW5nbGlzaA%3D%3D](#)

CHILD CARE

- CA Child Care Resource & Referral Network: [rrnetwork.org/family-services/find-child-care](#)
- My Child Care Plan California: [mychildcareplan.org](#)
- Pathways LA: [pathwaysla.org](#) or call (213) 427-2700
- Crystal Stairs: [crystalstairs.org](#) or call (323) 299-8998

NEED MORE RESOURCES?

Use search directory tools like [One Degree](#) or [211 LA](#) to find additional resources in your community.

TAP INTO PUBLIC BENEFITS! If you are a low-income student, you can access government assistance programs like [CalFresh](#) (food), [Medi-Cal](#) (health care), and [CalWORKs](#) (for families with children). You should never be embarrassed about accepting public assistance. After all, these programs are paid for through YOUR tax dollars; you deserve to use them! ***Use the BenefitsCal.com website to apply for all public benefits from one central place.***

FAMILY OR PERSONAL EMERGENCY? DON'T LET IT IMPACT YOUR GPA!

File an Emergency Withdrawal (EW)

Sometimes things happen in life that are outside of our control, such as a death in the family or some other major event that turns our world upside down. It can be hard to focus on school during these times. Luckily, most community colleges offer an Emergency Withdrawal (EW) option. This lets you withdraw from a class without negatively impacting your GPA for transfer or degree purposes. To use an EW, you usually have to file a petition form. Reach out to an academic counselor for more details on the specific process and forms needed for your school!

Tip 06.

Course selection matters—don't take classes you don't need!

Choosing which courses to sign up for is probably the most important decision you will make as a community college student. Make sure you know how many credits to take, and double- (and triple-) check that every course will transfer or count toward degree requirements like you expect it to. Being thorough and intentional about course selection now will help eliminate headaches and financial strain later on.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING YOUR CLASSES

Meet with a counselor BEFORE signing up! They are experts who have done this before and can help you figure out which classes to take based on your unique education plan.

Pay attention to the number of units Make sure you have the right amount of units to stay on track with your goals and meet financial aid requirements. A full-time student takes around 12 to 15 units each semester. Remember to factor in study time too. One unit = two to three hours of studying.

| UNIT (COURSE) LOAD | LECTURE/ CLASS TIME <small>(instructional time spent in class)</small> | STUDY TIME <small>(e.g. reading, reviewing, notes, writing essays, studying for exams, etc.)</small> | TOTAL ACADEMIC TIME PER WEEK |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 UNIT | 1 hour | 2-3 hours | 3-4 hours |
| 3 UNITS = about 1 CLASS (part-time) | 3 hours | 6-9 hours | 9-12 hours |
| 6 UNITS = about 2 CLASSES (half-time) | 6 hours | 12-18 hours | 18-24 hours |
| 12 UNITS = about 4 CLASSES (full-time) | 12 hours | 24-36 hours | 36-48 hours |
| 15 UNITS = about 5 CLASSES (full-time) | 15 hours | 30-45 hours | 45-60 hours |

NOTE: The table above was adapted from *Tips for Registering for and Succeeding in College Classes* from John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY).

PRO TIP

Unit load impacts financial aid. Students enrolled in fewer than 12 units will receive less money.

Be realistic Think about your overall schedule outside of school. Do you work or have young children to take care of? Be smart about your course schedule so you don't get overextended.

Choose instructors you'll love Use *Rate My Professors* to learn more about your instructors before signing up for a class. Set yourself up for success by choosing instructors whose teaching styles match your learning style.

TIPS FOR GETTING INTO THE CLASSES YOU WANT

Some college classes are difficult to get into. They are either not available on campus or always full. But don't worry! Using self-advocacy and some useful hacks, there is usually a way to get into the classes you need.

Take advantage of priority registration! Priority registration means you get to sign up for classes before other students. This increases your chances of getting the exact class schedule you want. The following groups usually get priority registration:

- Pregnant or parenting students with children under the age of 18
- Foster youth or former foster youth
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Veterans or members of the armed forces
- Students with disabilities
- Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) students

If you fall into one or more of these groups, talk to a counselor to get access to priority registration. It's not usually automatic, so you will need to reach out to make it happen.

Email the professor to ask if they will let you attend class while you wait for an opening. Sometimes spots will open up during the add-drop period, or the professor might add an extra seat just for you!

Take classes online at the California Community Colleges' [California Virtual Campus \(CVC\)](#). The CVC is one of the community college system's best-kept secrets. You can take classes online and have them count for credit toward degree requirements.

Take classes at another community college. Did you know? If a class is not available at your college, you can take classes at another California community college and transfer your credits back to your school. This process is called "course substitution." Make sure to cross-check with a counselor before doing this to make sure the course credit will be accepted by your school.



WHAT ABOUT TRANSFER STUDENTS?

If you're working toward transferring to a University of California (UC) campus, California State University (CSU) campus, or other four-year university, this section is for you!

DID YOU KNOW? *Three out of four* transfer students who apply to UC get in. You got this!

BONUS TIPS if you plan to transfer to a four-year college:

- **Use [Assist.org](https://assist.org)** to understand which classes count for credit at which colleges. Remember, this isn't a replacement for meeting with your counselor; you should do BOTH!
- **Apply one year before you want to start** Apply for transfer admission the fall BEFORE the year you want to actually start going to your new school. For example, if you want to transfer in fall 2025, you must apply by Nov. 30, 2024.
- **Take advantage of guaranteed admission** California community colleges have three guaranteed admission pathways for students who want to transfer to a four-year school. Guaranteed admission means your spot at the school is locked in and waiting for you.



The three pathways are:

Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT)

Transfer to CSU schools or a number of other colleges across the country

[Learn more and apply.](#)

Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG)

Transfer to UC schools.

[Learn more and apply.](#)


NEW!

CSU Transfer Success Pathway

Dual admission program only available to new students entering community college this fall.

[Learn more and apply.](#)

QUICK GUIDE TO TRANSFERRING TO CSU + UC SCHOOLS:

| |  California State University (CSU) |  University of California (UC) |
|---|---|---|
| Which classes do I need to take to transfer? | <i>General Education-Breadth (GE-Breadth) –or– IGETC</i> | <i>Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC)</i> |
| Application Period (for fall transfer) | <i>Applications open: Oct 1</i> <i>Deadline: Nov 30</i> | <i>Applications open: Oct 1</i> <i>Deadline: Nov 30</i> |
| Guaranteed admission available? | <i>Associate Degree for Transfer</i> <i>Transfer Success Pathway</i> | <i>Transfer Admission Guarantee</i> |
| Learn More | <i>www.calstate.edu/attend/transfer</i> | <i>admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/applying-as-a-transfer/</i> |
| Planning Tools | <i>CSU Transfer Planner</i> | <i>Transfer Planning Tools</i> |

SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT Follow these accounts for Advice for Transfer Students.

- TikTok: EdVisorly | College Tips, [@joinedvisorly](#)
- TikTok: Cassidy | College Tips, [@academicqueen](#)
- TikTok: Hannah Shirley, [@hannahshirleyy](#)
- Youtube: Hailey Dollar, [@haileydollargoescollege](#)



Tip 07.

Find YOUR community and get connected on campus.

Relationships matter! Don't just go to class and go home.

Here's the thing that no one tells you about college and life: it's the people that really matter. College isn't just about classes and homework; it's about connecting with cool people who will be your friends, mentors, and support network for life. Think about it this way: 10 years from now, the grade you got on a math test won't matter, but the friend you met in math class may help you get a job that you love. So get out there and find your people!

HOW TO START BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Study on Campus** This is a great place to start if you are shy about talking to new people. Instead of going home right after class, find a quiet place to study, such as the campus library. Spending more time on campus is a simple way to build a stronger sense of connection.
- **Get a Class Buddy** Make a friend in every class! An easy way to do this is to turn to the person sitting next to you and introduce yourself. You and your class buddy can share notes if you ever have to miss a class, study for finals, and keep each other on track to pass the class.
- **Create a Study Group** Bring together a small group of people from your class to study together. Meet at the same time and place every week to keep the momentum going!
- **Find a Gathering Space** Your campus has dedicated spaces where students with shared backgrounds and life experiences can come together. Find spaces that resonate with you and hang out in them to get connected to your community. For example:
 - › Dream centers for undocumented students
 - › Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS) offices for students with disabilities
 - › Gender diversity centers for LGBTQIA+ students
 - › Veterans centers for those who have served in the military

PRO TIP

Find your ANCHOR! There are so many different clubs and programs on campus that it can be kind of overwhelming. We suggest picking ONE club, support program, or other campus opportunity to go deep on. This program and the people in it will act as your anchor on campus and help hold you accountable toward your goals.

- **Join a Club** Clubs are student-led groups related to a specific community or interest.

Joining a club is a great way to explore your passions, meet new friends, and build your resume while having fun. Bonus: clubs look great on your resume when applying for jobs, transferring colleges, or applying for scholarships. Many students get involved in a club and then take on a leadership role like club president.



Don't take our word for it: *Advice from former first lady Michelle Obama on building relationships on campus. Also hear it from a student perspective from TikToker Rey at @commcollegechronicles*



DID YOU KNOW?

The hit TV show "Community" centers around a group of friends that met by creating a Spanish study group? The show takes place at "Greendale Community College," inspired by creator Dan Harmon's experience at Glendale Community College in LA County.

- **Join a Student Support Program** Think of student support programs as leveled-up versions of clubs. These are dedicated programs—organized by your college or nonprofit partners—that provide intensive academic and wrap-around support services to a small group of students. Support programs usually include dedicated counselors and tutoring services, mentorship, grants and scholarships, and other perks like book and meal vouchers. Key support programs at LA community colleges include:

PRO TIP

Start connecting with your future campus, too! If you are planning to transfer, take the time to build connections with alumni from your community college who have transferred successfully. They've been in your shoes and can share tips on how to succeed. Some colleges, like UCLA, have formal transfer clubs you can connect with: *STOMP: UCLA's Student Outreach and Mentor Program that assists transfer students.*

| Program Name | Who is it for? | General Link |
|---|---|--|
|  | Current or former foster youth | www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Extended-Opportunity-Programs-and-Services |
|  | Current or former foster youth who were in out-of-home care at age 13 or over, and younger than 26 at the beginning of the academic school year | nextup.cccco.edu |
|  | LATINO students | www.thepuenteproject.org/community-college-programs |
|  | BLACK students | umojacomunity.org |
| EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services) | LOW-INCOME students | www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Extended-Opportunity-Programs-and-Services |
| TRIO Student Support Services | LOW-INCOME students | www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html |
| Rising Scholars Programs | JUSTICE-INVOLVED students | risingscholarsnetwork.org |

Tip 08.

Go to office hours! Build relationships with trusted adults.

Building relationships with trusted adults like your professors and campus counselors can have a HUGE impact on your future.

One of the easiest ways you can set yourself up for success in college, career, and life is to get to know your professors, counselors, and other adults on campus. These people can provide valuable mentorship and advice on how to navigate college classes, help you find internships and job opportunities, and connect you to support when you need it. Most students don't understand how valuable these relationships can be until it's too late. Give yourself a head start by investing in these relationships now!

GO TO OFFICE HOURS WITH YOUR PROFESSOR

Going to office hours is one of the best life hacks you can use as a student. Every professor has office hours where they sit there waiting for YOU to come in to talk to them. So get in there and introduce yourself! Community college professors are there because they really care about making a difference in the lives of students. Your professors can help you ace tough classes, give you career tips, and write you killer recommendation letters that you might need for job or transfer applications.



Morgan Freeman talks about how his college professor at LACC impacted him. [See video here.](#)

PRO TIP

Don't wait until you are in crisis to meet with your counselor! Schedule a regular appointment each month to check in and give an update.

MEET WITH A COUNSELOR OR ACADEMIC ADVISOR REGULARLY

We get it; making appointments with your college counselor can suck. But we promise it's worth it! Counselors understand what it takes to graduate from college and can help you pick the right classes to make sure you stay on track with your education plan. They will also help you get through the complicated language, confusing policies, and inefficient procedures your college may have so that you can achieve your goals.

Questions to ask your **counselor** during your advising appointment:

1. Can you help me figure out which classes I should be taking? I want to make sure I'm on track to graduate.
2. What kinds of careers can I pursue with a degree in this major?
3. Do you know of any scholarships or ways to get extra cash for college?
4. Are there any cool clubs or internships you'd recommend I look into?
5. What should I be doing to get ready for life after college? Any tips for job hunting or transfer applications?
6. What other campus resources do you suggest I utilize?

Questions to ask your **professor** during office hours:

1. Can you explain this topic in a different way? I'm having trouble understanding.
2. Do you have any additional resources or study tips for this subject?
3. Can you go over my recent quiz/assignment and help me understand my mistakes?
4. Are there any research assistant positions available in your department?
5. What steps can I take now to prepare for potential internships in our field?
6. Are there any student clubs or organizations related to our area of study that you'd recommend joining?

Leveling Up to Mentor Status

Over time, your relationships with your professors, counselors, and other adults you meet along the way (alumni, bosses at work, etc.) will grow and develop. Some of those relationships will become stronger than others, and the adults you have the strongest connections with will level up to become your **MENTORS**.

A MENTOR is an experienced individual who provides you with valuable advice and guidance and has a strong positive influence in your life. Your mentor helps push you outside of your comfort zone and helps to actively connect you to growth opportunities. Explore this [resource from Coursera](#) and [this one from The Muse](#) to learn more about mentorship.



A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you.”

Bob Proctor
Self-help Author and Lecturer

BUILD A NETWORK YOU WILL TAKE WITH YOU AFTER YOU LEAVE COLLEGE

College is a great opportunity to make connections and build up your network of supporters. Your network of people can and will help you in the future!

Benefits of Building Relationships

- Get extra support, advice, and guidance
- Get extra help with class, including extra credit and deadline extensions
- Get connected to the resources you need to address any challenges you face
- Have someone looking out for you and your needs
- Get recommendation letters for jobs and transfer applications
- Find mentors who will connect you to more opportunities

When you’ve got trusted adults in your corner, you’re not just surviving college; you’re thriving and setting yourself up for a brighter future.

So start now! Make a list of the trusted adults or people you think are successful and interesting, and start building relationships with them. If you think you don’t have a social network, build one; don’t be shy. Some people to reach out to may include:

- Current professors and past teachers from high school, from former classes, etc.
- School counselors
- Sports coaches
- Family members and extended family members—don’t leave out your auntie and second cousins
- Neighbors
- Friends’ parents and relatives
- Leader of a recreation center you attended



Tip 09.

Getting your first job in a new field will be hard, but you CAN do it!

So you want to snag a summer internship or get your first job in the field you're studying? Getting your foot in the door can be difficult because employers want workers who have job experience. But how can you gain on-the-job experience without securing a job first? This makes getting your first job an interesting challenge. But guess what? Your persistence is your superpower. The perfect job for you is out there; you just have to work a little harder to get the first opportunity. Luckily you do NOT have to search for a job alone.

STEPS OF THE JOB SEARCH:



PRO TIP

1. Determine the type of job you want.
2. Create a résumé.
3. Conduct a job search using tools like LinkedIn.
4. Apply for jobs.
5. Interview—there might be multiple rounds!
6. Accept or reject the job offer.

Résumé Hack—Use AI to Help You Create a Résumé

Use artificial intelligence (AI) to write your résumé for you. Websites like [MyPerfectResume.com](https://www.mypperfectresume.com) can help you create a professional résumé in just a few minutes. Be sure to edit any written document that you create with AI. Save the résumé as a PDF, and you're ready to start applying for jobs.

For a comprehensive guide on how to apply for a job, including crafting a résumé, writing an impactful cover letter, and acing your interview, check out this great resource from the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative: [Fostering Careers: A Roadmap to Your First Job](#).

GET HELP WITH YOUR JOB SEARCH:

Activate your network. Have you ever heard the sayings, “It’s not only **what** you know but **who**

you know,” and, “Your network is your net worth”? [Research proves](#) that having a social network helps to open doors, which can help you get an internship or a job interview that you would not have gotten otherwise. So reach out to people in your network to let them know the types of jobs you are looking for!

Use your college’s career center. Career counselors and career center staff can help you find opportunities and navigate the job search process. Career centers also host events like résumé workshops and hiring fairs, which can help you level up and make connections. Connect with your campus Career Center by visiting their website, and follow along on social media to stay up to date on events and opportunities.

PRO TIP

Level Up Using LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a popular social media platform focused on professional networking; [72% of recruiters](#) go to LinkedIn when looking to hire new talent. Set up your LinkedIn profile today and start tapping into this valuable resource!

Connect with workforce-development resources in the community. Did you know that there is a whole public system focused on helping people to get good jobs and learn new skills to get better jobs? This system, called the “Workforce Development System,” has dedicated resources and support for job seekers like you. Learn more by visiting a local [WorkSource Center](#) or [America’s Job Center of California \(AJCC\)](#) location.

JOB LEADS: CHECK OUT THESE COOL LOCAL HIRING PROGRAMS IN LA.

Los Angeles City Career Pathways

is a 12-month, 1,000-hour, paid internship program specifically for LACCD students. Participants are placed in city departments to allow students to explore career pathways within the local government.

Learn more and apply: docs.google.com/forms/u/1/d/e/1FAIpQLSfGjKY1Hvrd8OWvRO8QOb625aMylCTYzwUS2dyZLAVedJbx9Q/viewform

Hire LA’s Youth Summer Internship Program

places young adults in jobs with local businesses in LA. Youth are required to work at least 100 hours, and they receive workforce training before they arrive on the first day, including the opportunity to earn a Work Readiness Certificate endorsed by the LA Area Chamber of Commerce and other partners.

Learn more and apply: www.hirelayouth.com

LA County Student Worker Program

provides on-the-job training and experience while encouraging participants to obtain their educational degrees or professional certifications. Students gain experience working in the largest county in the nation while building employment skills, establishing a professional network, and continuing their education.

Learn more and apply: hr.lacounty.gov/student-worker-program

LA County Youth@Work Program

provides youth ages 14 to 24 with a menu of services that offer access to paid work-based learning, work readiness, personal enrichment training, academic and career development, and advanced career services.

Learn more and apply: www.ajcc.lacounty.gov/job-seekers/population-specific-placement-services/youth-work-ages-14-24

SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT Sho Dewan is our fave career coach/influencer and has over 15 million likes on TikTok! Check out Sho’s videos for tips on how to land the job of your dreams: [@workhap](https://www.tiktok.com/@workhap)

Life Experience Counts! Any experience you’ve had in your life—class projects, clubs and student groups, volunteer work in the community, and part-time work—has equipped you with valuable skills that you can apply to other settings. When you are making a career change or starting in a new field, level up your résumé by highlighting your [transferable skills](#).

Tip 10.

Learn how to make money work for you!

Some of the best advice we can give to you as a college student is to learn how money works—how to earn it, how to save it, how to borrow it, and how to invest it. Financial literacy sets you up for success as a community college student and in life after college. Financial literacy includes a ton of topics, so we chose to highlight three important concepts here: (1) taxes, (2) credit, (3) savings and investments.

THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW IT ALL? Take this [financial literacy quiz](#) to see how you stack up.

WHAT ARE TAXES?

Taxes are funds we contribute to the government to support essential public services such as education, health care, libraries, safe streets, and social assistance programs. There are many different types of taxes that fund our

government that we all contribute to:

- When you earn a paycheck, your employer withholds (takes out) taxes from your paycheck.
- You pay sales tax on many items that you buy.
- When you own property, you pay property tax.

Important things to know:

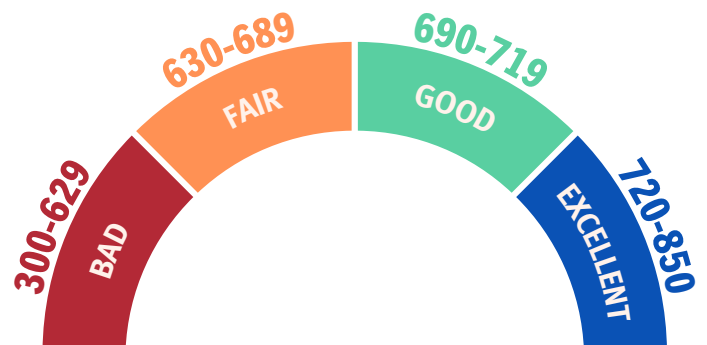
- Working adults must file income taxes by **April 15** each year.
- You will need **employment verification forms** from your job (**W2 or 1099**) to do your taxes.
- Check out these Youtube videos to learn more about how to file your taxes for the first time:
 - › www.youtube.com/watch?v=71vwVX67KNM
 - › www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cox8rLXYAGQ
- There are organizations that provide free tax preparation services:
 - › [Tax Filing & Tax Credits: Informational Resources](#) and [Appointment Roster](#) from John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)
 - › [Cal EITC \(Earned Income Tax Credit\) website](#)

KEEP LEARNING! There's way more to financial literacy than we can cover here! Use these resources to continue learning:

- [Financial Literacy video series from Khan Academy](#)
- Sign up for [CNBC's Money 101 newsletter series](#)
- Check out the "How to Get Rich" series on Netflix to learn more about personal finances and see the experiences of real people

WHAT IS A CREDIT SCORE?

Your **credit score** is a three-digit score between 300 and 850 that estimates how likely you are to repay borrowed money. Your credit score is super important because it directly impacts which resources you have access to in the future. For example, people check your credit score before letting you rent an apartment, and banks check your credit score before giving you a loan. The higher your credit score, the more likely you are to get approved for the things you want!



Building credit can be tricky. If you don't have a credit history, it's hard to get a loan, a credit card, or even an apartment.

What to do if you have no credit history:

- Get a secured card (a card that has more protections that lets you build credit).
- Get credit for paying monthly utility and cell phone bills on time.
- Take out a credit-builder loan.
- Become an authorized user on a family member or friend's card.

Once you have a credit card, practice good habits to grow and keep your credit score up because once it goes down, it's very hard to bring it back up.

- Make small purchases and pay them off quickly.
- Pay your loan and credit card payments **ON TIME**.

Get a free copy of your credit report and see your current credit score at www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action.

Keep learning: [How to Build Credit - NerdWallet](#)

WHAT ARE SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS?

Savings and investments are ways of putting your money aside for later use, which gives that money time to multiply. Savings are essential because life doesn't always go as you plan; you might break your leg and have to pay for crutches, get a flat tire on your car, or need to buy a uniform for work. When you invest your money, you put your money to work making more money while you sit back.

Simple Ways to Save Money (so you can put more toward investments and savings)

- **Set a Budget** Create a budget that covers all expenses from tuition and books to rent and food. Stick to your budget to avoid overspending and unnecessary debt. Use [budget apps](#), [worksheets](#), or [spreadsheets](#) to help streamline the process.
- **Use Student Discounts** Always carry your student ID to take advantage of student discounts. Some examples of discounts include: [Spotify Premium](#) and 50% off [Amazon Prime](#).
- **Cook at Home** Eating out can quickly drain your budget. Cooking at home, packing meals, or buying a college meal plan can save you a lot of money over time.
- **Don't Buy Textbooks** Rent your textbooks or use a digital copy to save on course materials. You can also save money by borrowing books from your local library.

Learn to Make Your Money Grow

Balancing savings and stock market investments can help you grow your net worth over time.

- **Put Your Money in a Bank** Banks have interest-bearing savings accounts that help your money grow over time at a rate of 1% to 2%. So for every \$100 you put in, you make \$1 to \$2.
- **Invest in the Stock Market** Stock market investments have the potential for much higher returns, but they also have higher risk because you could lose your money if there is a stock market crash. Investments in the stock market average around 7% to 10% returns annually. So for every \$100 you put in, you make \$7 to \$10. Investing in index funds like the S&P 500 is usually a safe bet.
- **Invest in a 401(k) Retirement Plan** Some businesses provide their employees with a 401(k) investment account that helps ensure they will have enough savings to retire someday. Each month, you add money to your 401(k), which invests that money into the stock market. Many employers also provide a matching contribution, meaning they'll add money to your 401(k) based on how much you contribute.



Keep exploring to find other resources and opportunities!

Throughout this guide, we have shared tips and resources that you can use to make the most of your time in community college, but there are even MORE out there! Do your research and ask your network about additional programs or resources that might be a good fit for you.

Our Favorite Resources for Further Exploration:

- [I Can Go to College](#) site from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
- [Let's Go to College](#) site from SoCal CAN, or follow them on Instagram [@gotocollegeca](#)
- [California College Pathways](#) site from John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)
- [College Voices](#) series from CNBC provides financial and career advice
- [College Unfiltered Toolkits](#) created for students by students
- [Resources for First-Gen Students](#) from the Center for First-Generation Student Success
- [Resources for Undocumented Students](#) from Immigrants Rising or follow them on Instagram
- [Resources for Foster Youth](#) from John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)
- [Resources for LGBTQIA+ Students](#) from the LA LGBT Center

Resources from UWGLA

The guide was developed by the [United Way of Greater Los Angeles](#), in partnership with students, local community colleges, advocacy organizations, Cause IMPACTS Consulting, and other partners.

United Way's mission is to close the prosperity gap for people in LA County. We have a series of upcoming new programs for community college students. To learn more about these programs, please contact Martha Maciel Serratos at mserratos@uwgla.org.

- FlexFund Grants
- Emergency Flex Fund Program
- Mentorship Program
- Internship Program
- Networking Opportunities

A QUICK LIST OF THE 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW + THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PUT THE TIPS INTO ACTION!

| # | Things to Know | Quick Action to Do TODAY |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Know your rights and communicate what you need! | Read over the list of laws under “Know Your Rights” to build up your understanding. ⁹⁻¹ |
| 2 | If you can dream it, you can do it—but you need a plan! | Take a Career Quiz to learn more about potential pathways you could pursue! |
| 3 | You don’t have to choose between work and school. | Set up a Google Calendar and add in all of your class-assignment deadlines and exam dates for the semester. How-to tutorial |
| 4 | Apply for financial aid even if you don’t think you’ll get it! | Sign up for email alerts from your college foundation. |
| 5 | Don’t struggle alone—there are tons of resources available to help you with housing, mental health, food, and other basic needs. | Visit your campus’s basic needs office or food pantry so you know where it is. |
| 6 | Course selection matters—don’t take classes you don’t need! | Schedule an appointment with a counselor to review your education plan. |
| 7 | Find YOUR community and get connected on campus. | Talk to the person next to you in class and exchange phone numbers (extra credit: share this resource with them!). |
| 8 | Go to office hours, and build relationships with trusted adults. | Say “hi” and chat with one professor after class or during office hours. |
| 9 | Getting your first job in a new field will be hard, but you CAN do it! | Set up your LinkedIn profile and add five contacts to your network. How-to tutorial |
| 10 | Learn how to make money work for you! | Take the Financial Literacy Quiz to see how you stack up! |

CAMPUS SPECIFIC RESOURCE LIST

Throughout this guide, we have mentioned various on-campus resources that might help you on your journey. Here is a quick reference list of these campus resources, all on one page.

- [LATTC List](#)
- [LACC List](#)

Acknowledgements

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Eric Moore—Educate CA

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UNITED WAY OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

1150 S OLIVE STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 9001