

Editors Column

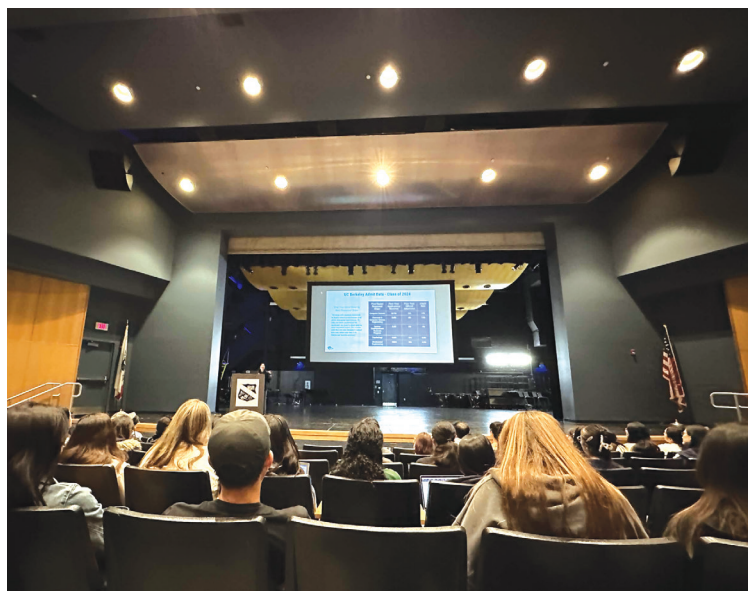
Early Steps Towards Completing College Applications



Yejoon Choi
Grade 11
Northwood High School

With the school season wrapping up, many excited students anxiously await the ecstatic summer vacations, weeks of unbothered sleep schedules, and, for some, the summer camps and work that had been set aside for this occasion. However, among these colorful summer plans, one grave concern rains down over the student body: college applications. Often considered one of the last challenges that many students face before graduation and the end goal of high school for some, college applications, more specifically, their essays, are infamously feared by many students unfamiliar to its inquisitions.

However, there is more to college applications than the notorious essay questions. Choices of what colleges provide the best education for you, which best fit your current financial status, and which colleges have the highest chance for your acceptance, all should dictate your college decisions, and by deciding what colleges to apply to as early as possible, you can figure out the college application essays that are specifically required for each university faster. By creating a college list for these purposes, you will be able



One of the many ways to overcome the puzzling and challenging college applications includes attending Writers Workshops that can be found hosted by many high schools around the end of the school year. [Source: Author, Yejoon Choi]

to create more tangible options to choose from as well, solidifying the specialties of each college you have picked and decided on.

Next, a crucial step towards preparing for college applications involves asking teachers for letters of recommendation the school year before your actual

applications. Beyond the obvious that letters of recommendation are often incredibly important and valued by admissions officers for many colleges, asking teachers for their letters of rec are crucial for a variety of reasons. First, by contacting them earlier, you have the chance of taking priority over other students who ask for letters

of recommendation later on. Secondly, giving teachers ample time and notice for letters of recommendation can also be beneficial in helping them hone their letters with a long deadline. Additionally, many teachers may ask for your college list when asked for a letter of recommendation; hence, it is very important to have completed and decided upon your colleges beforehand.

Lastly, taking advantage of school resources and programs that provide insight into how to write essays and other preparations that can be done for applications should not be missed. Examples of these can be college workshops, or even visits from colleges to your school that will allow you to understand and better know what the college's curriculum and contents will be. Finally, it would be beneficial to acquaint yourself with staff like counselors in schools to best prepare yourself for the college experience.

Although college applications can be a foreign and difficult challenge for many, I hope that you may find greater ease in this future-defining venture.

Student Reporter

The Summer Version of Me



Linda Li
Grade 11
Crean Lutheran High School

Before turning 15, I had always longed for summer—the sentiments that sprang from this time of year were encouragement and guides to happiness. However, I would not assume this experience to be universal, because now that I am approaching adulthood, I have come to view my childhood innocence as immaturity and naivety. Though I hate to acknowledge it, winter has become my favorite season, and for the 15-year-old me, summer feels distant.

Since birth, I have always associated summer with freedom, joy, and energy. The small moments I once took for granted—walking into a convenience store and getting a vanilla-and-chocolate mixed-flavor ice cream shaped like a snowman—became valuable and irreplaceable. I can still clearly remember how zealous and content I was after taking the first bite of that ice cream and enjoying how the flavors mingled together as if they were dancing on my tongue. After all these years in high school, whenever I went back home, I earnestly searched for that same ice cream, but I never succeeded because I was later



She did not know everything about the world yet, but she knew how to serve with joy and believe in herself steadfastly. [Source: Author, Linda Li]

informed that the convenience store had been replaced by a fitness center. Frankly, I knew deep down that I would fail, but my stubbornness led me to hold onto the last bit of hope that I could somehow find it again.

Luckily for me, on a nor-

mal day in July 2024, my mom brought back a surprise. I was immensely delighted when I found out that she had accidentally bought the ice cream I had longed for. I meticulously opened the package as if it would be tainted by my hands, and that exact same snowman emerged. After examining it, taking a picture, and posting it on social media, I finally took a bite. The flavor was delicious as expected, but I realized that something still lingered in my heart. A sense of disbelief and disappointment crept into me and consumed me, and I became determined to try it again. I devoured the ice cream like a lion finally reaching its prey after days of starvation, yet that strange feeling remained.

Looking back on this experience, which made no sense to me at the time, I may now have an answer for it—I had lost my bold and authentic childhood self. It was as beautiful and delicate as the crystal-ball music-box ballerina that I broke the week after my fifteenth birthday. Throughout these high school years, I have had the tendency to neglect my inner thoughts while

focusing on others' opinions. I constantly dread becoming an outcast by revealing who I truly am, so I attempt to disguise myself as someone who fits more easily into a certain group. I trained myself to tolerate notions I would rather reject, to the point that I eventually found myself miserable. As a 17-year-old, it becomes evident that the question worth asking is who I truly am, although time and reflection are necessary before arriving at a definite answer.

Whether on social media or in real life, I have been hearing the phrase "time flies" more often these days. Naturally, this leads to long moments of reminiscing about childhood and a desire to go back in time. Just like me, most of us have lost the child who pursued distant aspirations with courage, who held onto the conviction that we deserved recognition, and who possessed the "superpower" to express ourselves as freely as who we were born to be. We were all once magicians, and no matter what we ultimately become, that magic will bring us strength. I know this because I fell in love with summer again.

Student Reporter

Graduating Uni High: The Most "Uni" Ending



Irene Kim
Grade 11
University Laboratory High School

In the third week of May, University Laboratory High School (Uni High) class of 2026 celebrated their final days of high school. Seniors finished off their last year with unique Uni High traditions, leaving their final marks on the walls of the school by participating in the senior handprint tradition and attending a graduation ceremony, also with a Uni High twist.

Uni High is a small school with approximately 65 students per grade (8 through 12), adding up to around 325 for the entire student body. Because of its small size, Uni High celebrates a tradition where the graduating class leaves handprints on the school building before they embark upon their next adventure. A week before graduation, the seniors go on ladders holding small plates ("palettes") of paint against the walls of Uni High. Students personalize their handprints by carefully designing it with colors and elements they feel represent themselves or their time at Uni High. Students also have the freedom to choose where to place their handprint, so it's common to put handprints next to friends and coordinate themes.



A graduating student paints their handprint on the wall of Uni High, marking the end of their five-year high school journey. [Source: Cali Cooper]

On their last day of school, the graduating class celebrated by wearing Uni High alum shirts. For the final bell, they also gathered at the senior alcove, popping confetti to celebrate their last high school dismissal. Students cried

and hugged one another, concluding the final day of their five years at Uni High.

Even the graduation ceremony was Uni High-style, and shoutouts to graduates created

a full-circle moment. Music for the class to walk in and out of the ceremony was nominated and voted on by the grade. Not only that, student speeches, which are typically done by the class valedictorian and salutatorian, are also chosen through a class vote, because Uni High does not have class rankings.

The Uni High graduation ceremony also had a special musical feature this year. Class of 2026 student Sandaru Devmal had composed a music piece with choral and orchestral parts. The class singers and musicians performed the piece under Devmal's conducting. The special feature exemplified Uni High's value of celebrating student work and collaboration, even to the last day.

Throughout their final week of high school, the class of 2026 celebrated their graduation with various unique school traditions, concluding their time at Uni High. Their last days were decorated with the most "Uni" of Uni High's long-withheld values, exemplifying the school's support for student freedom, collaboration, passion, and journey beyond.

Editors Column

OCSA's Murals: Dedicated Creations on Campus



Ava Je
Grade 8
Orange County School
of the Arts

Being an art school, the Orange County School of the Arts' campus is filled with vibrant colors and arts of all forms. From sculptures to painted masterpieces, the whole area is creatively decorated by students, staff, family, friends, and more.

However, above all, the school murals remain, by far, one of the most eye-catching features. Displayed in various places throughout the school, they are lovingly created by Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA) students from different graduating classes. They can be seen on the walls near the grass field, the center of the school, and on every single one of the seven floors of the school building.

Each mural is of a different design, celebrating the school and the many forms of art taught, including instrumental music, dance, and visual arts. Examples include the school's name written in bold colors, detailed underwater landscapes, and piano keys. They reflect the creativity and skill of all OCSA students, all while making the campus more unique. Moreover, since these murals have been



The giant mural at the center of the Orange County School of the Arts, painted by graduating students, reflects the school's creativity and dedication. [Source: Author, Ava Je]

painted by different graduating students, each has its own special style and message to share that can be appreciated by students for years to come.

Next, one of the biggest and most creative murals can be found at the center of the school,

painted on the Media and Arts Center building. Although it is still being created with collaboration from both students and professionals, it is already one of the most admired pieces of all. It displays objects such as butterflies, dancers, flowers, and a hummingbird, which are all painted

in bold and vibrant colors. These represent various topics, such as personal growth, passion, joy, and resilience. One student commented on it, saying, "I think it is coming along really well, and I think it showcases the OCSA spirit very well. It displays all of the different styles of art that we do here in a very creative way. Overall, I think the wall looks so much prettier than it did before."

Not only does the mural brighten up the school campus, but it is a fun experience for the graduating students making the piece. Having the opportunity to work on a long-lasting piece of art, such as OCSA's murals, is an opportunity that not many students get and is something they can look back on in the future and be proud of. Overall, these paintings represent more than just the arts education offered at the school. They show the passion behind the work created with much dedication, student growth, and imagination. Whether it be passersby on the street, visiting alumni, or current students, it serves as a visual reminder of the commitment behind all the work and OCSA's strong, welcoming community.

Student Reporter

The Memories From Prom Night



Jisu Wi
Grade 9
New Covenant Academy

My school, the New Covenant Academy, recently held its prom. It was held from 6 to 10 pm at DeBell Golf Club in Burbank, California. This year's theme was Enchanted Forest. Many students dressed according to the theme, and the venue was also decorated in a similar manner to set the mood. I wore a dark green dress to give the vibe of green that is found in the forest.

The New Covenant Academy School's prom operates in a unique way, different from most other schools. Here, all grades from 9th to 12th are invited. As a small school, including the lower classes, allows the student body to become closer and makes the price of the event more manageable.

When students initially arrive, they must go through the check-in process, which is run by multiple members of the student council. Once they are checked in, they are free to look around, explore the venue, and greet friends. There was a decorated backdrop that they could take advantage of for pictures to commemorate



Along with a dance floor and raffles, the photo booth helped students create lasting memories at prom. [Source: Author, Jisu Wi]

the event. Then, everyone sat at the table with their friends for the president of the school to release them one by one to get food. The menu consisted of pasta, chicken, grilled vegetables, and salads with a variety of drinks and cookies as dessert.

Following dinner, the dance floor and the photo booth were opened. Everyone could take photos and dance to the music on the dance floor as they

wanted. During this time, additional dessert was handed out: vanilla and mango ice cream with numerous toppings, including caramel sauce, chocolate syrup, cherries, and whipped cream. The ice cream was extremely refreshing and provided students with a short break from dancing. Following this, students voted for prom royalty. After counting the votes, the selected prom king and queen danced to the music while others cheered

from the side.

To conclude the event, a raffle was conducted. This is typically what most people look forward to. Student council members picked a raffle ticket from a box full of tickets that had everyone's name on them. The prize started as a small one, 10-dollar gift cards and cute squishy mellores. Next was a water bottle and Legos. Finally, the grand prize was extra credit from specific classes. When all the raffles were wrapped up, prizes were distributed. Anyone who did not win a prize was given a mini volleyball.

As a freshman, this was my first prom. It was a really fun experience that allowed me to step away from my stressful academics and enjoy myself. Additionally, wearing a beautiful dress instead of the uniform that I wore daily to school made the night feel more special and exciting. Overall, the prom allowed me to make good memories captured by photos, surrounded by everyone who made my school year fun.

Student Reporter

The Rise of Streaming Culture



Yale Lee
Grade 9
Science Academy
STEM Magnet

Ever since the worldwide pandemic, the rise and influence of streaming services, such as Netflix and Spotify, have dictated how people consume media in the modern era. Instead of going to the theaters to watch the newest movie, audiences can now choose what to watch from a catalog of television shows and movies from the comfort of their homes. Likewise, physical media such as CDs and vinyls have been replaced by streaming services, which allow users to access millions of songs with a single tap on their phone. These rifts in the industry marked the death of the era of traditional media while bringing the rise of a new digital era of the entertainment industry.

Films were traditionally distributed by distribution companies that opened the movies into thousands of theaters nationwide on a weekly basis. This method is used to draw in hundreds of audience members to the theaters every week to watch the newest film. However, with the rise of subscription services, movie theaters are seeing a significant decrease in ticket sales and audi-



Examples of physical media are still prevalent, even with the threat of digital subscription services [Source: Author, Yale Lee]

ence viewings. This causes many movies to go straight to streaming after their theatrical run, or rather be released to streaming only, threatening the profit-making for mid-budget, original films and small theater chains.

In addition to threatening indie films and small theaters, original films and business of small theaters, the growth of these platforms allows large corporations to monopolize the industry

by increasing subscription fees and pumping out high volumes of content with low-quality storytelling. Many subscription services have increased their fees substantially, with the average person spending over 60 dollars solely on these charges. Also, many shows produced and released by these companies are either new seasons of an already popular show or cliché shows with minimal storytelling.

However, these streaming services aren't completely harmful to the industry, as they serve as the main entry points for audiences to watch films that are unavailable in theaters. Services such as the Criterion Channel or MUBI offer a collection of carefully curated classics, independent, and international films not available on major streaming services. These sites help preserve film culture and expose viewers to a wider net of media and artistic works. Therefore, although the streaming platforms pose challenges and threats to the traditional media industry, they also offer benefits that continue to shape the future of entertainment.