

California State University (CSU)

This presentation describes the CSU system and provides a profile of each CSU to help you select a campus. To be taken directly to each CSU website, place your cursor over the CSU in blue print, click and hold down the control button while clicking your mouse. Throughout the presentation click on the blue print to access more information.

About the CSU System

The CSU system is one of the largest, most diverse, and affordable systems in the country. There are 23 California State University campuses that offer undergraduate education:

- [CSU Bakersfield](#)
- [CSU Channel Islands](#)
- [CSU Chico](#)
- [CSU Dominguez Hills](#)
- [CSU East Bay](#)
- [CSU Fresno](#)
- [CSU Fullerton](#)
- [Humboldt State University](#)
- [CSU Long Beach](#)
- [CSU Los Angeles](#)
- [Cal Maritime Academy](#)
- [CSU Monterey Bay](#)
- [CSU Northridge](#)
- [Cal Poly Pomona](#)
- [CSU Sacramento](#)
- [CSU San Bernardino](#)
- [San Diego State University](#)
- [San Francisco State University](#)
- [San Jose State University](#)
- [Cal Poly San Luis Obispo](#)
- [CSU San Marcos](#)
- [Sonoma State University](#)
- [CSU Stanislaus](#)



The CSUs are spread [across the state of California](#), from San Diego in the south to Humboldt in the north. They vary tremendously in size. **Cal Maritime has the smallest enrollment with 1,070 students, and CSU Northridge has the largest with 41,548.**

Three of the CSU schools have a particular focus. Cal Maritime is a maritime academy, which is a school focused on teaching skills that can be put to use on the ocean or in industries related to the ocean. It's the only degree-granting maritime academy on the west coast.

The Cal Poly schools (San Luis Obispo and Pomona) are polytechnic colleges that specialize in science and engineering. However, they do offer majors in the humanities and social sciences. The rest of the CSUs don't have a particular focus, but business is one of the most popular majors at the majority of the campuses.

Many of the CSU campuses have a high percentage of commuter and non-traditional students. Commuter students live off campus, often with their families, and non-traditional students have taken more than a year off in between high school and college, or they go to school part time. Common complaints from students at schools with a large percentage of commuters are that there's not much school spirit, and it can be hard to make friends for students who live off-campus.

The CSU schools try to make higher education accessible and accommodate the needs of their students. Keep in mind that some CSU schools and majors within CSU schools are [impacted](#) while others are not. If a college is not impacted, that means that all those that meet the minimum admission requirements are admitted. **If a school or major is impacted, you have to exceed the minimum eligibility index to gain admission.** Here is more information on [impaction](#).

As a whole, the CSU schools are less selective and competitive than the UC schools.

All of the CSUs are California [public](#) colleges, which have earned a reputation for offering their students access to higher education at an affordable price. The tuition fee for all 23 campuses for the 2015-2016 academic year is \$5,472 for undergraduate students.

On top of this fee, students who aren't California residents must also pay nonresident tuition, which is currently \$372 per semester unit or \$248 per quarter unit. For students who plan on graduating in 4 years, that equates to about \$11,550 annually. Therefore, non-resident tuition is about \$16,632 for the 2015-2016 academic year. **Many of the CSU schools are composed almost entirely of California residents.**

Comparatively, tuition for the 2015-2016 academic year at [University of California schools](#) is \$12,240 for California residents and \$36,264 for nonresidents. Tuition at Santa Clara University, a private college in California, is \$45,300 for this year.

Comparing the CSUs by the Numbers

This table compares the total enrollments (undergraduate and graduate students), and acceptance rates for each of the CSU campuses. Take a look at the table to get an idea of **the size and selectivity of each CSU institution.** [CSU colleges don't consider SAT Writing or ACT Writing scores](#) when determining admission eligibility.

School	Total Enrollment	Acceptance Rate
CSU Bakersfield	8,371	62%
CSU Channel Islands	6,100	53%
CSU Chico	16,356	67%
CSU Dominguez Hills	14,670	80%

CSU East Bay	14,526	68%
CSU Fresno	21,981	60%
CSU Fullerton	38,325	48%
Humboldt State U.	8,485	76%
CSU Long Beach	36,279	35%
CSU Los Angeles	27,000	62%
Cal Maritime	1,070	63%
CSU Monterey Bay	5,609	45%
CSU Northridge	41,548	61%
Cal Poly Pomona	22,501	53%
CSU Sacramento	29,349	71%
CSU San Bernardino	18,952	55%
San Diego State	33,483	37%
San Francisco State	30,500	60%
San Jose State	29,076	64%
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo	20,186	35%
CSU San Marcos	11,094	67%
Sonoma State University	9,200	90%
CSU Stanislaus	8,882	74%

Ranking of CSU Schools

In terms of selectivity and reputation, there is not much distinction between many of the CSUs. San Diego State and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo probably have the best academic reputations of all of the CSUs. They also have considerably lower acceptance rates than the rest of the CSUs.

Remember that [college rankings](#) are not a perfect science, and while you can use rankings to inform your decisions and get a general idea of how schools are viewed, you should try to find the college that's best for you.

Profiles of Each CSU

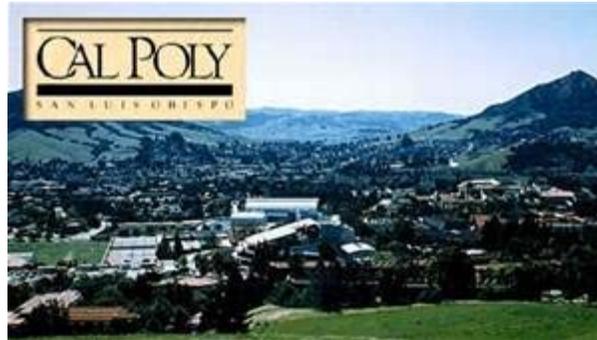
Many of the Cal State colleges are very similar. The biggest differences between most of the schools are related to their locations, sizes, and percentage of commuter students.

Here are brief profiles of each school so you can gain a better understanding of its location and what makes it unique compared to the other CSUs. Included are the most popular majors, graduation rate, and the percentage of first-year students who live on campus. If less than 60% of first-year students live on campus, it's definitely a commuter school. A few of the campuses didn't provide housing information, but those schools can be considered commuter schools, too.

Additionally, student reviews are included for each college from [Niche](#), a website that provides reviews, rankings, and statistics about neighborhoods and schools.

CSUs are listed by their [US News](#) rankings. *US News* incorporates many factors into its rankings including academic reputation, selectivity, graduation rate, freshman retention rate, and the financial resources of the institution.

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo



San Luis Obispo is located between Los Angeles and San Francisco on the Central Coast. It has a population of about 45,000. It's a very nice, quiet area. Cal Poly San Luis Obispo has far fewer commuter students than other Cal State schools. That gives the school more of a community feel on campus and students have a more traditional college experience. Also, Cal Poly SLO also has one of the [best undergraduate architecture programs in the country](#).

- **Total enrollment:** 20,186
- **Majors with the highest enrollment:** business administration, mechanical engineering, biological sciences
- **Graduation rate:** 78% graduate within 6 years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 98%

Student Reviews

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo is a wonderful campus! The smaller class sizes are wonderful. The "Learn by Doing" motto is true! Being able to start having hands-on experiences since Day One. I love exploring the campus, the land around it, and going into Downtown San Luis Obispo.

Cal Poly is an amazing school that feels homey while still having a good size student body. The campus is easy to traverse in a couple minutes yet doesn't feel small. They have amazing programs for agriculture, engineering, business, and architecture majors.

There is so much to do in San Luis Obispo, with different beaches so close and the hills for hiking. In addition, all the teachers are supportive and very knowledgeable.



San Diego State University

San Diego is California's second largest city. It has a population of about 1.3 million. The city is known for its beaches and idyllic climate. It's a couple of hours south of LA, and it's near the Mexican border. San Diego State offers students the opportunity to take advantage of the benefits of going to school in an urban environment. The San Diego Zoo is pretty cool, too.

- **Total enrollment:** 33,483
- **Most popular majors:** psychology, criminal justice, management
- **Graduation rate:** 67% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in campus housing:** 69%

Student Reviews

I've had the opportunity to participate in activities that have made me grow as a person, such as research labs, tutoring, and college athletics. This school offers so many different possibilities in terms of experience and career, and it's a very accepting school of people from all different backgrounds.

SDSU offers incredible opportunities to students! The opportunity to study at one of the best public schools in the nation, the opportunity to get involved on campus, the opportunity to develop leadership skills, the opportunity to network with incredibly successful alumni, and of course the opportunity to enjoy one of America's most beautiful cities!

The campus is beautiful and if you like the sound of year-round sunshine and beaches SDSU is the place for you. The school had reasonable tuition and rent in the area, along with wonderful sporting teams and entertainment.



Cal Poly Pomona

Pomona is located about 45 minutes east of Los Angeles. Its population is about 150,000. The city is home to the Pomona Fairplex. Pomona offers students a diverse, urban environment outside of a big city.

- **Total enrollment:** 22,501
- **Most popular majors:** management/human resources, hospitality management, civil engineering
- **Student-faculty ratio:** 28:1
- **Graduation rate:** 57% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in campus housing:** 45%

Student Reviews

Cal Poly Pomona is quite welcoming and diverse. It definitely made a statement to ensure that diversity was something to be embraced.

Wish there was more school spirit and football team.

I love my school. Cal Poly Pomona specializes in engineering, and I am majoring in Industrial Engineering. I came from a small high school, and being that Cal Poly Pomona is smaller in size compared to some other California universities, this school was the perfect transition for me. The campus is beautiful, the people are kind, and I have been able to take several awesome engineering courses so far. One of my favorite experiences was when I took an engineering course by the name of "Engineering, Society, and You", or EGR 100. Within the laboratory portion of this course, I was able to build a mini rose float with my class. Every year, Cal Poly Pomona creates a float made of natural materials for the Rose Parade. Within my lab, I was able to help build a miniature version of last year's float. If I could choose a college to attend all over again, I would not change a thing.



CSU Long Beach

Long Beach is located on the Pacific Coast in Los Angeles County. It's about 20 miles south of downtown Los Angeles. Long Beach is in between Los Angeles and Orange County. There are about 470,000 residents in Long Beach. Also, it's a very diverse city, and that's reflected in the demographics at CSU Long Beach.

- **Total enrollment:** 36,279
- **Most popular majors:** business/marketing
- **Student-faculty ratio:** 22:1
- **First-year students living in campus housing:** 36%

Student Reviews

My school is extremely diverse, which I think makes it unique, and full of friendly, approachable students. Although if I could do it all over again, I wish I could have chosen a college that would feel more like a college experience, as many students at my school commutes and there virtually no fun campus life.

The location of the college is really amazing, right next to the beach. The college has a very welcoming environment, in which you feel the freedom to learn and grow as a person.



CSU Fullerton

Fullerton is located in northern Orange County, about 45 minutes south of Los Angeles. The population is roughly 140,000. Fullerton is pretty close to Disneyland. It has more of a suburban feel. Students tend to feel like they have to join clubs and get involved on campus to make friends and have a more enjoyable college experience.

- **Total enrollment:** 38,325
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, psychology, kinesiology

- **Graduation rate:** 56% graduate within 6 years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 31%

Student Reviews

The campus is small and very close to downtown Fullerton and Disneyland. The campus is old, but slowly are adding modern improvements to the campus. The campus is good and is close to a lot of places a student might go such as parks, restaurants, mall, or movies.

I am really happy that I chose the college I am attending now. It is a huge commuter school. I think my experience thus far would be different if I actually lived on campus or in the off campus apartments. I feel as though I would be more involved and really help me explore what else is out there. The campus is very pretty and has many art statues and productions around campus. One thing I would change about my school is the parking. It being a commuter school, they need more parking options, and to lower the parking pass price.



San Jose State

San Jose is the third largest city in California by population. Only Los Angeles and San Diego are larger. It has about 1 million residents. San Jose is located in the San Francisco Bay Area and is known as the capital of Silicon Valley. Many high-tech industries and start-ups are in or near San Jose.

- **Total enrollment:** 29,076
- **Most popular majors:** Art and Design, Business Administration/Management, Business Administration/Marketing
- **Graduation Rate:** 51% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 56%

Student Reviews

SJSU is a super diverse campus. However, it is very impacted making trying to get into classes almost impossible.

San Jose State University is located in a great location. It is walking distance to many popular places in Downtown, and it is located in the Silicon Valley where there are always job opportunities. There are also plenty of extracurricular activities available, on and off campus.

Obtaining an internship and career at SJSU is amazing, because we are in the heart of Silicon Valley and only 45 minutes from SF, there is a lot of opportunity here because employers want to hire us.



CSU Chico

Chico is about an hour and a half north of Sacramento and 3 and a half hours from San Francisco. It's one of the few Cal State campus locations that can be considered a college town. There's not much going in on Chico unrelated to the college. The population in Chico is about 90,000. It's close to the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

- **Most popular majors:** business administration, psychology, liberal studies
- **Total enrollment:** 16,356
- **Graduation rate:** 57% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 62%

Student Reviews

I love everything about the school! The lovely college town, the beautiful campus, the professors and advisors in my major, the facilities available to students, and how could I not mention the large variety of outdoor activities right on our doorstep! Love love love Chico State. Best decision ever!

Such a true college town atmosphere! It has been great getting a fresh start away from my home town

Partying is an integral part of the Chico way of life. The entire community surrounding the campus comes to life on the weekend; you can walk from street to street and always find a house party that'll welcome you in.



Sonoma State

Sonoma State is located in Rohnert Park, which is a city in Sonoma County. Rohnert Park is about 50 miles north of San Francisco and its population is about 42,000. Also, Sonoma State is near wine country, where a ton of premium wine is produced. Rohnert Park isn't the most exciting area, but it's peaceful and close to more vibrant cities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

- **Total enrollment:** 9,200
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, psychology, liberal studies
- **Graduation rate:** 54% graduate within six years
- **First-year students who live in college housing:** 90%

Student Reviews

There isn't much to do outside of classes or in the area so it is necessary to join clubs or get involved on campus in order to enjoy your time. Registration for classes is very competitive and could set you back if you are in an impacted major. I have enjoyed going to school here, but there are definitely things that could make the school much better.

Sonoma state is a great school, in a beautiful area. It's about an hour from San Francisco, and an hour from the beach. The dorms at Sonoma state are more like mini apartments, they are much nicer than any of the dorms on other campuses. The only reason why I would choose a different school is to have a football team and be able to experience that college life.



Cal Maritime Academy

Cal Maritime is located in Vallejo. Vallejo is in between San Francisco and Sacramento on the northeastern shore of San Pablo Bay. Its population is about 120,000. Vallejo is a very diverse area. Cal Maritime doesn't have many academic offerings, but it's a great option if you're interested in one of its programs.

- **Most popular majors:** marine transportation, mechanical engineering, business administration

- **Student-faculty ratio:** 14:1
- **First-year students who live on campus:** 90%

Student Reviews

Vallejo has a reputation of being dangerous but it is a close drive to go to Berkeley, San Francisco, or Davis to hang out.

This school focuses solely on the Engineering, Marine Transportation, and Business Departments. Each one of these programs has been skillfully developed and is taught by experienced professors to deliver a stunningly successful learning environment.

The diversity for majors is pretty small. Generally people come here already knowing what they intend to major in. This is fantastic if you know what you want to do with your education at age 18. Crippling if you don't.



CSU Fresno

Fresno is the largest city in the Central Valley of California. It's in between Los Angeles and San Francisco. There are about 500,000 people in Fresno, but the area is still associated with agriculture and many of the surrounding cities are heavily involved in agricultural production. Even though Fresno State is a commuter school, it does offer big-time college sports, and there's more school spirit there than at some of the other Cal State schools.

- **Total enrollment:** 21,981
- **Most popular majors:** business, criminology, psychology
- **Graduation rate:** 52% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 17%

Student Reviews

I honestly love California State University, Fresno. Not only are the educational and sports aspects of the college amazing, but the unity and school spirit are more than I could have asked for. The people I have met and friendships I have formed will last a lifetime. I would choose this school again in a heartbeat. Bulldog born, bulldog bred!

It is a good school with a lot of resources available to students. However, there are many things that can be improved to make student life easier and better such as more food options on campus, better transportation systems including bikes. Also, I do not feel safe. At all. As a Criminology major, classes get filled up so fast and many are only offered at night which leaves me to worry about walking in the dark, something I shouldn't be fearful of in my own campus.



CSU Stanislaus

CSU Stanislaus is located in Turlock in Stanislaus County. Turlock is about two hours southeast of San Francisco, and it's about two hours west of Yosemite. Its population is about 71,000. It offers a small town feel and the smaller student body at CSU Stanislaus gives it more of a community feel.

- **Total enrollment:** 8,882
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, liberal studies, psychology
- **Graduation rate:** 54% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 28%

Student Reviews

I wouldn't choose any other school than CSU Stan. Most of the professors will do anything to see their students succeed and that is something very important. In addition, I enjoy our beautiful campus it just makes me feel happy and relax every time I have to walk between classes.

People may wonder where in the world is Turlock CA but this small town is pretty and when you find a store they are mainly together.



Humboldt State

Humboldt State is located in Arcata in Humboldt County adjacent to the Humboldt Bay. Arcata is about 280 miles north of San Francisco. Like Chico, it's also a college town. Arcata's population is about 18,000. Humboldt State is known for its beautiful natural environment, and its students have a reputation for being a tad on the hippie side.

- **Total enrollment:** 8,485
- **Most popular majors:** biology, psychology, business administration
- **Graduation rate:** 44% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 88%

Student Reviews

There is no other place I would rather be getting my education than at Humboldt State University. The general atmosphere of the school is pleasant and welcoming. The towering redwood trees surrounding the school inspire a sense of wonder and appreciation for natural beauty that to the same degree I have not felt before. Inside the classrooms the professors are experts in their various fields and are, from what I have experienced, professional and deeply invested in the progression and education of each individual student. Not once have I felt that my professor is simply there for a paycheck. Also, as a science major, there is nothing comparable to being able to study diverse fungi, plants, or wildlife in class and then walk five minutes into the Community Redwood Forest on campus to see those same organisms living and functioning in their natural habitats. That is an experience I think is somewhat unique to Humboldt State University.



CSU Los Angeles

Cal State LA is located in the eastern part of Los Angeles facing the San Gabriel Mountains. Cal State LA is 5 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. Los Angeles is the most populous city in California and the second largest in the US. Its population is almost 4 million. Like many of the other Cal States, Cal State LA is known for its diversity.

- **Total enrollment:** 27,000
- **Most popular majors:** sociology, criminal justice, business administration-management
- **Graduation rate:** 41% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 12%

Student Reviews

I love Cal State LA, the professors are very friendly and are always willing to help out their students. The atmosphere is great, there is a variety of different cultures. The only complaint I have is that the parking is horrible but, overall I could not ask for a better college experience.

It is not as easy to get the classes that are needed for my intended major. The guidance is not really there to help figure out which classes are needed in order to get my BA.



CSU Monterey Bay

CSU Monterey Bay is located in the city of Seaside in Monterey County. The college is actually on an old military base. Seaside is about 2 hours south of San Francisco and an hour south of Santa Cruz. The population is about 34,000. It's only a couple of miles east of Monterey, which is an upscale coastal city that features the famous Monterey Bay Aquarium.

- **Total enrollment:** 5,609
- **Graduation rate:** 45% graduate within 6 years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 81%

Student Reviews

California State University Monterey Bay is an amazing school focused on sustainability, marine life and biology. Although I am not a biology major, I am very proud of the ways my college has focused on being Eco-friendly and doing its part in helping the environment.

It's a small, but growing college so a lot of attention is given to students. There are so many opportunities as well for all students such as scholarships, research projects, jobs, etc. There is also an outstanding amount of care from advisors if you begin to slip and they walk you through everything and do their best at assisting you in any way.

This school is definitely not for everyone. My experience has had good parts and bad parts. My biggest tip would be to get involved on campus or in a club. And, bring a car if you can. The parking pass is kinda high in price but life will be so much better with a car.



CSU Sacramento

Sacramento is the capital of California. It's about 2 hours northeast of San Francisco. Its population is roughly 485,000. Sacramento is an extremely diverse city. The CSU Sacramento campus has a reputation for being very scenic.

- **Total enrollment:** 29,349
- **Most popular majors:** criminal justice, liberal studies
- **Graduation rate:** 44% graduate within six years

- **First-year students living in college housing:** 28%

Student Reviews

It's a pretty good school. It is pretty impacted though. It's hard to get into classes so it takes a while to graduate.

The campus is beautiful, the area can get very warm but with over 3,000 trees around, there's plenty of shade. Only downside to having so many trees is allergy season, it get to me every time but I still love the area. The people and staff are friendly and very helpful, it is very easy to find a good and cheap place to eat in the area. There are a variety of different programs and degrees available, plus there are great advisers to help with where to go and what to do. I can't wait to start school again in the fall!



San Francisco State

San Francisco is a densely populated city on the northern end of the San Francisco Peninsula. It's known for its cool summers, hills, diversity, progressive politics and the Golden Gate Bridge. Its population is about 854,000. San Francisco is about a 6 hour drive from Los Angeles. The rich San Francisco culture permeates the San Francisco State campus.

- **Total enrollment:** 30,500
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, psychology, communication studies
- **Graduation rate:** 50% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 49%

Student Reviews

I love the location of my school, the weather and the professors. I would just like to see a larger athletics program because right now the sports on campus aren't very popular.

I love the diversity I see on campus and in my classrooms, I'm meeting people from all over the U.S. Also since the school is very close to the city there are many volunteer and job opportunities. The school is very accepting and open to all people and I find that safe and comforting.

I think San Francisco State is a great university. It has one of the best Spanish programs in California. My favorite part about SF State is that it is in "The City." You will always have something to do. San Francisco is so rich in culture and SFSU reflects that. The school has such a big international population that you have the chance to make friends with students from all over the world. I would recommend San Francisco State University to any student looking for a school in California.

If you want more of a party-ish school or a school with a lot of school spirit, it's not here. Most people are commuting so they go straight home after classes. I'm not really a party person but I want the option of going instead of trying to hunt down parties that are off campus (all parties are basically off-campus).



CSU San Bernardino

San Bernardino is about 1-2 hours east of Los Angeles, depending on the traffic. There's usually traffic. The city of San Bernardino has a population of about 215,000. San Bernardino is often considered to be a diverse, blue-collar city. Unfortunately, San Bernardino is [one of the poorest cities in the US](#). At CSU San Bernardino, because it's a commuter school, there isn't much of an on-campus community.

- **Total enrollment:** 18,952
- **Most popular majors:** psychology, pre-nursing, biology
- **Graduation rate:** 43% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 17%

Student Reviews

It's a commuter school so there really isn't much to do on campus but there are events here and there you can look forward to.

California State University of San Bernardino is an amazing campus with extraordinary professors that want to see their students excel. My time so far at this school has been remarkable and given the opportunity, I'd choose this school over and over again. The staff and students are all friendly and helpful in making sure that every single person is succeeding. I couldn't be happier with my school, and my decision to become a San Bernardino Coyote! Go Yotes!

There is no sense of community on this campus, even at the campus housing level. It is a commuter school that does not place much emphasis on building a community of proud students. Students treat attending school as a chore and avoid housing or staying on campus in general. A possible factor is the low socio-economic status of the area.



CSU Northridge

Northridge is in the San Fernando Valley of the greater Los Angeles area. Northridge has a population of about 27,000. It offers a suburban environment. I grew up about 30 minutes from Northridge, and I remember some kids in elementary school having their birthday parties at a roller skating place in Northridge called Skateland. That's a random piece of nostalgia, so it's probably not helpful. The CSUN campus is large and its student body is diverse.

- **Total enrollment:** 41,548
- **Most popular majors:** psychology, kinesiology, sociology
- **Graduation rate:** 47% graduate within 6 years
- **Student-faculty ratio:** 24:1

Student Reviews

I like coming here however it is lacking school spirit. We need a football team, also registering is terrible because there are not enough professors to accommodate all the students.

My school is unique for its diversity and for the wonderful people that attend as well as the wonderful people that are there to help the students succeed. It is a wonderful school with full of professionals that have had experience in the field they are teaching. And not to forget the University Student Union is always having events for its students such as noon concerts or craft corner, at CSUN we have the right amount of education and fun.

I feel as though this is a great school. I have had a few great classes, and have had the opportunity to interact with some outstanding professors. Getting the classes you need becomes a challenge, and there are too many students for my liking.



CSU Bakersfield

Bakersfield is about 110 miles north of Los Angeles and south of Fresno. It's a hub for agriculture and oil production. I've been to Bakersfield a few times. Even though it's about an hour and a half from LA, it's a completely different environment. I've met people with southern

accents who are Bakersfield natives, and there happens to be a big annual [rodeo](#) in Bakersfield. CSU Bakersfield has a Division I athletic program and the team name is the Roadrunners.

- **Total enrollment:** 8,371
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, liberal studies, psychology
- **Graduation rate:** 41% graduate within 6 years

Student Reviews

California State University of Bakersfield (CSUB) is a wonderful university to attend. It is between a small and medium sized campus that students will have enough to explore for a while. The staff and students at this university are very kind and more than willing to help. One of my favorite experiences is fairly recent. I have joined Computer Science as an introductory course and I fell in love with the class. I learned how to program in the language C++ and the professor encouraged students to pursue a Computer Science degree because of the many wonderful things programming and coding involve. How it is everywhere around us. I would definitely choose this school again because of all the support the students receive.



CSU Channel Islands

CSU Channel Islands is located in Camarillo, which is between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. Camarillo offers a [suburban](#) environment, and it has a population of about 65,000 people. CSU Channel Islands is the newest CSU campus. It opened in 2002. Also, CSU Channel Islands is close to beaches and the very popular Camarillo outlet stores.

- **Total enrollment:** 6,100
- **Graduation rate:** 51% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 61%

Student Reviews

It's a small, beautiful campus in a quiet area.

I love the location of my school, it pushes the students to focus on their academics because there aren't many attractions close to the school. It's very relaxing, we have the beach really close which i think is an advantage of this Cal State, a lot of the Cal states don't have beautiful beaches like we do. The staff and faculty are amazing people, they want you to graduate and they show it, there's a lot of help you can find if you need it which is great!



CSU San Marcos

San Marcos is a city in the northern part of San Diego County. It has a population of about 93,000. It's about 35 minutes north of the city of San Diego.

- **Total enrollment:** 11,094
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, psychology, nursing
- **Graduation rate:** 47% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 78%

Student Reviews

Cal State San Marcos is a really relaxing school it's easy to stay focused on your work as well as enjoy your college experience. The city itself is nature filled mountains and hiking spots everywhere and a beautiful place to live in let alone study and train in. It's exciting to be able to go to such a beautiful school in a great small city with huge adventures.



CSU Dominguez Hills

CSU Dominguez Hills is located in Carson. Carson is in the South Bay region of the greater Los Angeles area. It's 13 miles south of downtown Los Angeles and has a population of roughly 93,000. Carson is another extremely diverse California city. There is a high percentage of non-traditional students at CSU Dominguez Hills.

- **Total enrollment:** 14,670
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, psychology, criminal justice administration
- **Graduation rate:** 33% graduate within six years
- **First-year students living in college housing:** 18%

Student Reviews

I love this school. It still has a community college feel while getting university level classes. There really isn't much partying or any nightlife but that works for me.

The teachers really take time with their students. I wish the campus had more updated classrooms and buildings, but that doesn't affect the teachers or students. The application and acceptance process is quick and simple, compared to other schools. Everyone I've had contact with via the phone/email is extremely friendly and helpful. My favorite part about Cal State Dominguez Hills is the availability of classes. I got the exact schedule I wanted, with the teacher I wanted. In class, it's not crammed with as many students as possible, which allows the teacher to really teach their students. Overall, the school is great and I would recommend applying here to other prospective students.



CSU East Bay

CSU East Bay is located in Hayward. Hayward is in the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area. It's about 20 minutes south of Oakland and about 45 minutes east of San Francisco. Hayward has a population of about 154,000. It's extremely diverse, and that's reflected in the student body at CSU East Bay.

- **Total enrollment:** 14,526
- **Most popular majors:** business administration, health sciences, psychology
- **Graduation rate:** 37% graduate within six years

Student Reviews

I'm happy with my school choice. My school is extremely diverse and it makes the school very unique. You get the chance to meet a lot of different people from a lot of different lifestyles and cultures. My school also has an amazing campus life, they have a lot of great events going on. But the thing I love the most about my school is the view, East Bay is on the top of a hill and overlooks the San Francisco Bay. So it looks amazing all day long especially during the sunsets. I've enjoyed my time at East Bay so far and plan on finishing my degree there.

How Do You Decide Which CSU Schools To Apply to?

One benefit of applying to Cal States is that you can apply to multiple campuses at the same time. If you apply online, your information will be saved so you don't have to reenter it for each school you apply to. Furthermore, **there's no application essay**. It's rather easy to apply; however, **you shouldn't apply to schools you have no desire to attend**. Also, unless you qualify for a fee waiver, which is only available to California residents, there is an application fee of \$55 for each campus you apply to.

Look at the list of schools you're applying to. **Make sure you have at least a couple of [safety schools](#)**. To consider a college a safety school, you should have at least an 80% chance of gaining admission. To determine your odds of admission for a particular college, you can google the name of the school and "prepscholar admission requirements." On the school's profile, you can use the admissions calculator that will help you roughly determine your chances of getting accepted to that college.

Many students apply to CSUs as safety schools. To see if you meet minimum eligibility requirements for CSUs, determine your [eligibility index](#). Remember that you should exceed the minimum requirements for impacted campuses and majors. ***Please note some of this information is geared towards high school student transfers however can be used for community college transfers as well.**

Next, eliminate the schools you know you don't want to attend. **[Research each of the campuses and consider what's important to you in a college](#)**. Factor in the school's size and location. Furthermore, determine which schools have the majors and programs that interest you.

If you're applying to any Cal States, **I recommend applying to one to five CSUs**. Some people apply to only one CSU because it's their safety school, there's only one CSU that interests them, or they want to go to a specific CSU and they can be confident that they'll get in. Others apply to more campuses because they want to go to a CSU and they're still weighing their options. Or they apply to a couple of the more selective CSUs and some of the less selective.

How Do You Decide Which CSU To Attend?

Choose which CSU to attend the same way you would go about [choosing](#) any college. Consider which factors are most important to you in a college. Look at the school's website and use [college finders](#), [search websites](#), [guidebooks](#), and [ranking lists](#) to help you in the college selection process. **You can also use [CSU Mentor](#) to learn more about each of the CSU campuses.**

Generally, **most students pick which CSU to attend based on its location, size, or selectivity**. For the majority of students who attend CSUs, location seems to be the biggest priority. Many students choose to attend the CSU that's closest to home. They're able to save money by living at home, or they can easily go home, if need be. Others prefer to experience life in a new environment.

I would always encourage my students to at least consider a school that's further away. Sometimes students have to live at home due to financial or family situations, but I think it's

preferable to live on campus and not return home on a daily basis. You'll have more fun, become more independent, and be able to participate in more on-campus extracurricular activities.

Ideally, **you should go to the college where you'll feel the most comfortable and be most excited to learn.** There are CSUs by beaches and mountains. There are CSUs in [rural, urban, and suburban environments](#). There are CSUs in Northern California, Central California, and Southern California.

The next biggest priority seems to be the size of the student body. In the CSU system, there are very [big schools](#) like CSU Northridge, CSU Long Beach, and CSU Fullerton; there are medium-sized schools like Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, CSU Chico, and CSU Dominguez Hills; there are smaller schools like Humboldt State, CSU Monterey Bay, and CSU Stanislaus. Some students prefer the individualized attention and community feel of a smaller school while others enjoy the diversity of options for classes, programs, and activities that you'll find at bigger schools.

Also, selectivity and academic reputation are important considerations for some students. Most of the Cal States do not vary much in terms of selectivity or reputation because they're all connected, but there are differences. Cal Poly SLO is generally viewed as the top CSU, but it is a polytechnic school and may not be the best place for you if you're interested in the humanities or social sciences. Refer to the rankings and acceptance rates to get an idea of the selectivity of the different CSUs.

Also, **keep in mind that different CSUs have different majors and programs.** For example, because Sonoma State is located near wine country, it's also home to the [Wine Business Institute](#), where you can earn a wine business management certificate. If you're interested in a specific major or program, or if you want to compare the majors offered at the different CSUs, I recommend using CSU Mentor or a college finder like [Big Future](#) to quickly and easily compare the different colleges and get a complete list of the available majors.

Finally, finances can play a role in your college decision. While tuition costs are the same for each CSU, you may get more financial aid at one of the campuses. Or, you may save money by living at home. Furthermore, the cost of living of the area of the school may be a factor. San Jose and San Diego are pricey areas. Especially if you're living off-campus, it's significantly cheaper to live in Turlock, Chico, or Fresno.

What's Next?

If you're trying to find selective schools that you have a good shot of getting into, check out this post on [target schools](#).

If you're not sure you want to attend college in California, I recommend learning more about [where in the country you should go to college](#).

Finally, if you find the diversity of the CSUs appealing, read this article about [the most diverse colleges in the country](#).