

UDAAN presents *Pathways*: An Educational Webinar Series



Introducing UDAAN!

Udaan is Sahaita's latest initiative intended to foster an environment of leadership, with youth guiding the youth. Our goal is to build a network of trust and perspective so that students like you can feel supported by your peers.

What is Pathways?

Pathways is an educational webinar series organized by the Sahaita Youth Board. This document covers the content of our first webinar - about navigating high school and preparing for college. Future webinars will touch on topics such as life after high school, traditional versus vocational paths, mentorship, and more. Have any ideas? Contact us at info@sahaita.org

What is Sahaita?

Sahaita is a nonprofit organization committed to educating, supporting and uplifting the underprivileged members of society. We accomplish this through healthcare initiatives, education sponsorships, vocational training and affiliated partner nonprofit organizations. We are a 100% volunteer run organization with teams in the US, Canada, and India.

Who is on the Sahaita Youth Board?

Glad you asked! The Sahaita Youth Board is made up of bright individuals who grew up in California. They are either in high school, college, or starting their careers and therefore provide a valuable perspective compared to that of those who were not educated in the US school systems.

Sahaita Youth Board



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Economics & Political Science at
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Sumeet Ira

Rising Senior at Mission High School



This webinar focuses on making the most out of high school. Each of the 4 years will be its own unique experience. Set some goals and don't forget to have fun! If you aren't sure of your goals, that's completely fine. Now's the time to create some. They will likely change throughout high school and possibly even in college. High school is what you make of it and no one is in charge of your experience except for you. UDAAN's Pathways webinar series were started to help you get through.



You may be someone who already knows what you want to do and are looking for tips to stay on track. You might breeze through high school and do everything to get you to that goal. You might realize down the line that you no longer have interest in what you thought you did - don't feel discouraged! You're not alone. You might otherwise be someone who has no clue where to begin and might not even know when you graduate. The key is to stay actively involved so you can at least rule things out. Pay attention to areas that you DON'T like. No experience is ever wasteful, there's always something to learn. From the overachievers to the lost souls, we are here for you. Remember these 4 years are not just about what classes you take and the grades you get. They are for learning about who you are as a person and what you're capable of. You'll develop habits and social skills that will carry you through the "real world".

There are several things you can do throughout high-school, regardless of what grade you're in. Does your school have required volunteer hours? The minimum requirement is usually set pretty low (i.e. 10/year) but you can challenge yourself to do more. Every volunteer opportunity in or outside school will teach you something in leadership, skill development, social networking, or simply understanding what happens in a particular field. Maybe you already participate in things outside of school, can they create specific tasks for you that count as volunteer experience?

School clubs are a great way to put yourself out there. These can be academic clubs or interest-based clubs. Are there virtual opportunities to get involved? If not, you can write out a plan and propose it to the student leadership. Keep these in mind as we go through each grade, starting with Freshman year!



FRESHMAN YEAR

- ☐ Mandatory classes & electives
- ☐ Create 4-year plan with counselor
- ☐ Set **SMART** goals
- ☐ Build relationships with teachers
- ☐ Join clubs, do extracurricular activities, volunteer



Your school might have specific guidelines mapped out for each year, with some openness for electives. While you get through the mandatory classes, think about which subjects come easier to you. Think about Honors & AP classes that you might want to take in the future. To what extent is the easiness or hardness of a class due to the teacher or your relationship with them?

Talk to a counselor early on to plan out your 4 years and meet with them as needed to further refine your plans. You can discuss turning your hobbies into extracurriculars and explore volunteer opportunities. It's ok for your interest to be piqued by a TV show, movie, or book. Explore it early! Shadow (observe) someone in that field to see what a day-in-the-life looks like and what it takes to get there. If not allowed due to COVID restrictions, schedule a virtual informational interview. Tap into your family circle/community to see what's out there and brainstorm any leadership opportunities in those areas.

Set some **SMART** goals. Adjust as you go through each semester.

- **Specific** – simple, sensible, significant
- **Measurable** – meaningful, motivating
- **Achievable** – agreed, attainable
- **Relevant** – reasonable, realistic, and results-based
- **Time bound** – time sensitive, time/cost limited

Example of a **SMART** goal (source: yourdictionary.com)

- **SMART Goal:** I will find a mentor from my desired profession so I can make sure it's the right job for me and learn to connect with others.
- **Specific:** I will look for local mentor options first, then online options if needed.
- **Measurable:** By the end of this semester, I will start a mentorship relationship.
- **Achievable:** I'm going to reach out to a maximum of 10 potential mentors if needed.
- **Relevant:** Finding a mentor helps me gain self-confidence in reaching out to strangers and further explore if I've chosen the right career path for my personality and skills.
- **Time-Based:** I will spend the month of September exploring mentor options to find a good fit for me. I will reach out to potential mentors in October and have a mentorship locked in by the end of December.



SOPHOMORE YEAR

- ☐ Strategize course load & consider Honors/AP
- ☐ Learn about various fields
- ☐ Narrow down clubs, volunteering, & extracurriculars
 - what do you gain from each?
- ☐ Fine tune **SMART** goals with counselor



Now's the time to be more strategic with your course load. Check out the Honors/AP path for certain areas you're interested in especially if you're looking for a challenge. Passing the AP exam will ensure college credits for those courses, but these are tough commitments that need require dedication.

Beyond subjects you enjoy or don't enjoy, think about how you imagine your future. Can you see yourself in front of a classroom as a teacher or in scrubs as a healthcare provider? Familiarize yourself with options outside of the typical doctor, engineer, lawyer fields. If you enjoy writing, imagine something more niche, like journalism or content creation. Maybe an elective inspired you to give back somehow? A social worker or homeless shelter manager could be a good fit. Given social distancing, you could set up phone/video interviews with people in different fields to get a broad background of their field and personal experience.

It's important to pay attention to your own performance, not only to see how you can improve but to see what's NOT working for you. How do you prioritize? Does your method of notetaking bring about the grades you want? You could write, type, illustrate your notes - figure out what works best for you! Do you like to work/study with groups *virtually* or alone? How do you keep track of your goals/tasks? These methods will still stick with you once you're out of high school. Whether you skip out on college to pursue more creative or vocational, you still have to prioritize and develop your work ethic. Stay in communication with your counselor so you can update your **SMART** goals as your perspectives change. Try to identify any possible obstacles that might interfere with your goals. This way, you can explore resources that will help you overcome them.



JUNIOR YEAR

- ☐ Research inspirational figures & their journeys
- ☐ Research colleges & universities
- ☐ AP classes
- ☐ Check ACT/SAT requirements
- ☐ Check in with your **SMART** goals
- ☐ Reflect on clubs, extracurriculars, volunteering, jobs – how do you stand out?



Do some research! Compile a list of all the fields that interest you and research certain people in the field whom you admire, whether that's someone local or someone well known in the industry. What does it take to get there? Is it a 4-year college degree? Certifications? A graduate degree? How much potential is there financially? What schools/programs are best for these areas? Even social media apps like Instagram and TikTok have a lot of influencers in various fields - you're on those apps anyway, might as well explore!

This is the year to take AP courses if you can manage the workload. Develop your study habits and schedule so you don't fall behind – there will be a lot of reading! At the end of the school year you will take the corresponding AP exam(s); if you pass then these will provide college credits and prove that you can handle the rigor of college. Maintain relationships with your teachers, some colleges require letters of recommendation!

Since COVID hit, most if not all universities have changed their requirements of SAT/ACT testing. Standardized testing was intended to test potential success once admitted to the college, regardless of socioeconomic background. But your scores on these don't define you. Without the SAT/ACT requirements anymore, it is just as important to establish study habits so you can manage how YOU best study, no matter what the topic. This can translate into success with jobs or side projects. Now that there is less emphasis on these exams, how will you stand out from the rest in your applications? This would be a good year to develop something that is uniquely you. Start a local project that gives back, help an organization virtually, document your experiences in a blog, sign up for webinars or online courses, dive deep into a hobby, etc. Just make sure you're on track for graduation and setting a route for college (if that's your goal).



SENIOR YEAR

- ☐ Education after high school -
public or private university?
community college then transfer?

- application requirements
- deadlines
- letters of recommendation

- ☐ General Education (IGETC)
- ☐ Financial Aid



Looking back at the last 3 years you may have entirely different interests and a better understanding of who you are as a person! You've made friends and hopefully networked outside of your regular circle, too. But the work isn't done yet!

Does your school require you to complete a Senior project? If not, would you be willing to start one yourself? It would be a great embellishment when applying to colleges, or simply network building for jobs.

Soon you will make some real decisions. Is college right for you? Do you feel more comfortable starting at a community college so that you can discover your personal and professional interests at a fraction of the cost? Or are you ready to jump into the university system? General education classes (first two years) are the same no matter where you go. Check out programs in your state or in other states and consider where you imagine yourself! Google is your friend – see programs offered, the general vibe/environment of the schools, the geographical location & weather, the cost (in-state & out-of-state), and different ways of obtaining financial aid. Talk to people who go to these schools and learn about their likes/dislikes. Public colleges may be easier to apply to since they share common applications, but private schools may be unique in their application processes. Remain cognizant of application deadlines, we highly recommend utilizing a planner. Staying organized can settle any anxiety during this stressful year. Senioritis is very real and can be distracting, but you need to stay focused!

Many universities require personal statement essays, transcripts, and (for some schools) letters of recommendation. Reflect on the past 3 years and what influenced the young adult you are today! Get these proofread by a few trusted teachers/peers and submit only when you feel it best represents you. When applying you can choose a major or declare yourself “undecided” – don't stress this too much because you can always change your major once you're in college.

Pro-tip: Usually around October, the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) window opens. Do this as early as possibly to maximize your potential for financial aid.



GENERAL EDUCATION [UC & CSU]

- New college/university students are required to satisfy
- Intended to maintain wide array of academic subjects
- For private universities, check specific list

English (4 years)
Math (3 years)
Social Studies (2 years)
Science (2 years)

Foreign Language (2 years)
Visual/Performing Arts (1 yr)
Electives (1 year)



As described by *study.com*, “General education courses are typically designed to teach diverse skills that every person should master in order to lead a productive life, become a knowledgeable citizen, and communicate ideas as a useful member of society, regardless of her chosen course of study. Most colleges and universities require every student to take a certain number of classes that satisfy general education requirements.”

Pro-tip: Doing the “recommended” number of years per subject molds you into a better candidate who went beyond the base requirements. See below for the entire list of requirements/recommendations.



High School Subject Area	State Mandated Requirements* (EC 51225.3) for High School Graduation	UC Requirements for Freshman Admissions	CSU Requirements for Freshman Admissions
English	Three Years	Four years of approved courses	Four years of approved courses
Mathematics	Two years, including Algebra I, beginning in 2003–04. (EC 51224.5)	Three years, including algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra. Four years recommended.	Three years, including algebra, intermediate algebra, and geometry.
Social Studies/Science	Three years of history/social studies, including one year of U.S. history and geography; one year of world history, culture, and geography; one semester of American government and civics, and one semester of economics.	Two years of history/social science, including one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government; and one year of world history, cultures, and geography.	Two years, including one year of U.S. history or U.S. history and government and one year of other approved social science.
Science	Two years, including biological and physical sciences.	Two years with lab required, chosen from biology, chemistry, and physics. Three years recommended.	Two years, including one year of biological and one year of physical science with lab.
Foreign Language	One year of either visual and performing arts, foreign language, or career technical education**.	Two years in same language required. Three years recommended.	Two years in same language required.
Visual and Performing Arts	One year of either visual and performing arts, foreign language, or career technical education**.	One year of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art.	One year of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art.
Physical Education	Two years	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Electives	Not Applicable	One year***	One year***



FINANCIAL AID

- Scholarships
- Grants
- Student Loans - must be paid back
- Federal Work Study



- FAFSA (FAFSA4caster provides an estimate)

SOURCE: "Mapping Your Future"

Applications for Federal Financial Aid usually open in the fall of senior year. Start thinking about Cal Grants, scholarships and student loans. Seek out virtual seminars regarding financial aid. And remember that during college, the FAFSA must be completed each year to continue to receive federal aid every year (you can apply as early as October of your Senior year but check the school/state/federal deadlines.) The earlier you apply, the higher your financial aid potential! If you want a somewhat realistic calculator of college costs with financial aid, visit the [FAFSA4caster](https://fafsa.gov) page on fafsa.gov

Don't underestimate yourself when it comes to scholarships! They are need-based, not grade-based! They may be awarded based on athletic ability, artistic accomplishments, academic achievement, heritage, place of worship, area of study etc. Like a grant, these never need to be paid back. Your counselor may have leads for particular ones or know which sites are trustworthy when searching for them (i.e. scholarships.com). If you are set on a college, research its scholarship.

Pro-tip: Don't ignore the smaller scholarships because even a few hundred dollars can go a long way with books & more.

When you feel you have a strong hold on your course load and your extracurricular activities, consider getting a part-time job during the summer. Not only will you earn some spending cash, you'll get better at prioritizing, time management, budgeting & saving practices, and most importantly - social skills! Once you get to college, Federal Work Study programs allow you to work on-campus (& sometimes off-campus).



Frequently Asked Questions

Whew, that was a ton of information, don't feel overwhelmed – approach high school one step at a time. Stay curious, stay creative, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Seek inspiration from everyone and everything around you and don't be afraid to step into leadership roles. This is a unique time - high school during a global pandemic! Things may change often so stay in-tune with what's happening in your school. Make the extra effort to create healthy relationships with your teachers and counselors because they'll be rooting for your success! If you find someone whose journey truly speaks to you, ask if they can serve as your mentor. And don't hesitate to reach out to any one of us! Below are some frequently asked questions, answered by our Youth Board. [Click here](#) for the video!

What are some of the biggest things that colleges look for in a student?

Colleges ultimately want to see a well-rounded student. If you show that you're passionate about something, set goals accordingly, and pursue those values inside and outside of class – those actions speak louder than your grades. Think about your impact on the people in your community – are you doing something bigger than you?

What should we look forward to in high school & college?

The most important thing is to get out of your comfort zone. Make new friends, even with students older than you. Find things to fill your extra time with and be willing to seek out volunteer opportunities. Look forward to putting yourself out there and taking initiative. If you share a strong interest in something that isn't already established at school, you can start a club!

How can we best prepare for the SAT/ACT outside of a study schedule?

- Consider the different methods of **SAT/ACT books**, such as Kaplan or the official guide via Collegeboard. There's no shame in getting a private tutor if it will help!
- There are endless **online resources** via Khan Academy, Collegeboard, Magoosh, etc. where you can take practice tests at home. Make sure you mimic the true testing environment so you can gauge your performance each time.
- Sign up for a **pre-test** during your Sophomore year to see what you need to focus on for the real exam. Research which schools accept which exams (SAT vs ACT). Check if your school offers the PSAT or if you need to take it elsewhere. Monitor your scores for each section to see what you should work on for the real deal.
- The SAT is vocab-heavy so **read leisure books** outside of school, it'll broaden your personal lexicon. Keep flashcards for words that are new to you.

What are some tips for managing mental health?

- **Counselors** provide a confidential safe place to talk about things outside of school.
- Don't procrastinate! It will affect your **sleep** schedule and therefore your cognitive abilities during the day. This will impact your grades so get your rest.
- **Extracurricular activities** definitely contribute to physical & mental relief. Do something you enjoy, whether that be family dinners, time with friends, hiking, sports, clubs, reading, writing, etc.



How do you figure out which extracurriculars to pursue?

You should have a personal connection to your extracurricular activities. Continue the ones you did in middle school to figure out what you like and don't like. Be honest with yourself, it can take some trial & error! Think about what issues matter to you personally (i.e. Sikh issues if your school isn't very diverse) and if you can form a club to address them. Take advantage of club "rush" weeks where you can sign up for multiple clubs. Don't follow whatever your friends are doing if it doesn't interest you. If there isn't a club that matches your interests, consider gathering friends and starting a new one!

Are Honors & AP classes "worth it"?

Let's be real – Honors & AP classes can be tough but also a challenge worth welcoming if you are willing to commit. You might be surprised at how much you can handle! At the end of the year when you pass the AP exams, you will earn college equivalent credit for these classes and it's a well deserved boost to your GPA! However, don't push yourself to take every Honors/AP classes offered, just because you or parents think you "should". Getting an A in a regular class might look better than a C in an AP class. Something to think about! They are "worth it" in moderation – meaning if the subject actually interests you or can be applied to the area of study you wish to pursue. For example, if you know you want to pursue Marketing in college, don't take AP Bio & AP Chem. If you want to save time in college, see if you can take those classes during the summer after Junior & Senior year.

Your high school might have a dual enrollment program – like the San Joaquin Delta Community College Program for high school students in Mountain House. With setups like this you can earn credit for both high school and college without taking the AP exam, while receiving an Associate's degree alongside your high school diploma. Regarding the teaching style, high school AP teachers will prepare you for the AP exam. College professors teach for your general knowledge of the subject.

Pro-tip: 9th & 10th grades usually offer Honors while AP is offered in 11th-12th. If you want to pursue these classes in a community college instead, it could be a good idea to do so when you would otherwise start the AP course – Junior year!

What is the IB program?

The IB program is an International Baccalaureate Program – a series of Honors classes that have a shared curriculum across IB programs around the world. There are 2 paths in this program: (1) Certificate Programme, where you take IB classes & exams (2) Diploma Programme, which is more complex. You have HL classes (2 years) – such as Biology, English, Spanish & SL classes (1 year) – such as Math, Chemistry, Philosophy. In addition, there are various honors classes. You have to do a CAS project, where you spend a certain number of hours doing "action" that reflects your creativity or community service. This encourages the concept of being well-rounded. All students are required to fulfill a Theory of Knowledge class that helps you understand why we think what we do and what biases influence our opinions. Finally, students must complete an "Extended Essay", or 4000-word independent research paper on a topic of your choosing. All in all, the IB program is rigorous and can prepare you well for college but if you can are dedicated to the course load.



Where can students get help with our courses?

- Teachers – A great place to start is with your teachers. Contact them ahead of time so you can visit either before/after class, in free periods, during lunch, during designated office hours. Teachers like when you ask questions or express your difficulties because it shows that you're taking initiative, paying attention, and want to do well. Each teacher has their own unique teaching styles, which may or may not work well with your learning style and it's your responsibility to create that bridge for yourself. Maintaining this relationship will come in handy if you need letters of recommendation down the line.
- Online resources – Check out sites resources like Khan Academy where you'll find lectures, practice problems, and different ways of approaching topics. If you still need help, don't be afraid to find a tutor. No one's judging! One-on-one time can be more helpful than a classroom setting alone. Given the current social distancing measures, many tutors are still doing sessions online. There are several apps that can help you study for various subjects – the entire world is at our fingertips.

What are some things you wish you knew or had done differently in high school?

- Taking vs not taking community college courses during high school (evenings/weekends/summers)
- Spreading yourself thin with club involvement – join a select few that you are more passionate about spending your time in, rather than surface-level engagement with many
- Pushing yourself too hard! Work at your own pace, don't follow what everyone else is doing. If you have a college in mind, research it and work towards their specific criteria (Freshman/Sophomore year is a good time to explore these). Create a vision board!
- Underestimating what it takes to do well on finals. Don't procrastinate or wait until "Dead Week" to study or else you'll feel overwhelmed and likely perform poorly.

What were your biggest fears in high school and how did you cope/deal with them?

- Getting B grades! You can still get into great schools with B's. We put so much pressure on ourselves as first-generation students going through US school systems, but there are multiple roads that can lead to the same destination. Don't be afraid to ask for help along the way!
- Taking Honors & AP classes! Yes, they might be difficult & overwhelming but that doesn't make them impossible. Honors & AP can be a healthy challenge when taken in moderation. Dedicate time to improving yourself, there are numerous resources to help you.

THANK YOU

for tuning in! Check out our [YouTube video](#) to meet the panel hosts and listen to their perspectives. If you'd like to see something specific covered in future webinars or if you want to get involved with the Sahaita Youth Board/Sahaita Working Committee, contact info@sahaita.org

We'd love your **feedback**! Take a few minutes to fill out our [post-webinar survey](#).

Don't forget to follow us on for updates on our projects!

