

Headin' for **SUCCESS!**

**SUCCESS!** Learning Center  
*presents*

# THE SPOT

December 1, 2010

No. 31

## **Finding the Right College or University** *US News and World Report Rankings*

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are some 7,000 accredited colleges and universities in the United States. Whew! “How can I find the best school for me?” ask bewildered students—and their parents!

College rankings are one way to sort through all the information and come up with a manageable number of schools to investigate more closely. None of the ranking systems is perfect, but the *US News* website and publications offers a wide variety of useful information.

One important caveat—don’t fall into the trap of looking at only a few very well-known schools. There are thousands of lesser-known schools that equip their graduates with an excellent education and provide plenty of scholarship and career help too. In the end, students’ success in learning and the helpful contacts they make in college will mean far more in their lives than the name on the diploma.

Here in the U.S. we are blessed with one of the strongest collections of top-notch colleges and universities in the world. Taking the time to hunt down the right college for your strengths and interests will pay big dividends in the long run.

See page 3 for a few suggestions to get you started.

## **Low-Cost Writing Workshops and Resources** *For Student Writers*

The San Jose Area Writing Project has local low-cost writing workshops for young writers. Check out the *Super Saturdays* (\$5.00 each), a series for students in grades 5-10 held on the SJSU campus, as well as other programs. Develop your writing skills, try new strategies, and deepen your understanding of what makes quality writing. Information and registration: <http://www.sjawp.org/>

Young Writers Camps include activities for elementary, middle school, and high school students. Check out the California Writes website for information on their various programs: [http://californiawrites.org/Students/students\\_programs.html](http://californiawrites.org/Students/students_programs.html)

Merlyn's Pen and the New Library of Young Adult Writing connect teachers, teens, writers,  
*Continued on Page 2*

## **Success! Learning Center**

*a non-profit educational and tutoring center*

**Tutoring, test preparation, and homework  
assistance for students in grades 3-12**

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## Writing Workshops

(Continued from page 1)

and readers to uncommon works by American teen writers. Become a published teen writer!

Contest for writers in grades 6-12 starts November 1st. <http://www.merlynspen.org/>

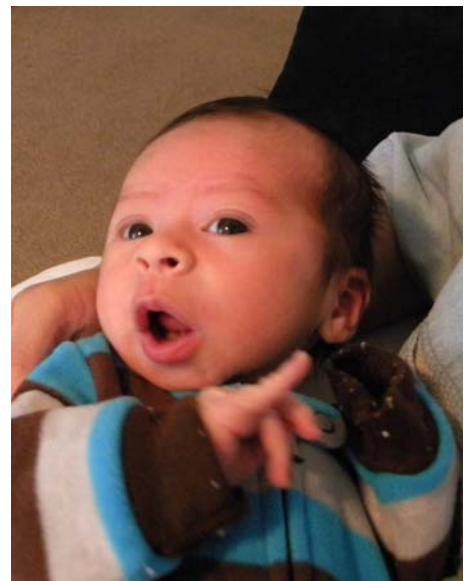
### **Baby Brandon Joins the Gaare Family**

*From the day we arrive on the planet  
And blinking, step into the sun  
There's more to see than can ever be seen  
More to do than can ever be done . . . .*

Happy Birthday to  
Brandon Neofrido Gaare  
October 22, 2010, 6lbs 13oz, 19.25 inches long

Mom (Rowena) and baby are doing fine!

--Mark Gaare (Dad)



## LEARNING CENTER STAFF

Our teaching aides are extremely successful college and high school students who are also skilled instructors. They enjoy sharing their talents and their knowledge.

Siyuan Lu is a junior at San Jose State University. He has just completed his math minor and is now hard at work completing a major in computer science. Jenny Shen, the Elementary Room T.A., is a first year student at Ohlone College where she is taking her general education classes. She plans to transfer to UCLA as a psychology major.

Mark Gaare is a credentialed elementary teacher with experience in language arts, math, social studies, science, and other topics. Students enjoy his active and supportive teaching style. He runs the SLC Elementary Room with creativity and plenty of energy.

Cliveden Chew Haas, M.A., the Learning Center Director, is credentialed to teach academic high school subjects. Originally studying science as a pre-med major, she completed degrees in English Literature, with additional training in English as a Second Language and learning disabilities. Cliveden brings extensive experience in various areas of education and a contagious enthusiasm for learning.

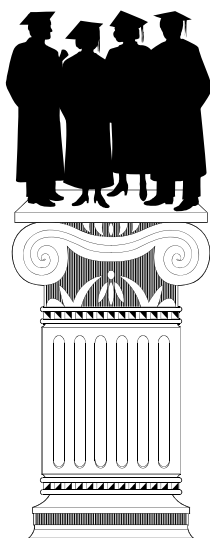
## Using College Rankings To Find the Perfect School

Statistical information from [www.USNews.com](http://www.USNews.com) premium edition.



Thousands of excellent colleges and universities spread across the United States. College rankings can help you find schools that match your strengths as a student, your educational goals, and your sense of self. Use the charts and tables to locate potential schools to check out further through personal visits, websites, and discussion with friends, family, and teachers.

**HS Class:** Where do you stand in your class ranking? Are you in the top 10%? Top 25%? Top 50%? Check your current report card or request a transcript from the counseling office to find your class rank and grade point average. Colleges are generally more accepting of students with lower GPAs who show a definite uptrend (all As and Bs) during sophomore and junior years. Overall, Ds and low Cs in upper division classes don't show readiness for college.



Once you know your class ranking, check out the "Freshmen in top 25% of HS class" and "Freshmen in top 10%" (on the website). If 90% of the university students are in the top quarter of the high school class, and you're in the lower half, you'll be at quite a disadvantage in courses where the majority of students study more efficiently and score higher on tests than you do.

**SAT Percentile:** This range shows you the middle 50% of students; 25% of freshmen will have higher scores and 25% will have lower scores. UCLA has middle SAT scores of 1170-1410. A student scoring 1350 on the SAT can feel comfortable that he or she reads, writes, and reasons at levels comparable with most of the students in class, but a student scoring 1120 may struggle to take notes, research, understand, and learn at the same rate as classmates.

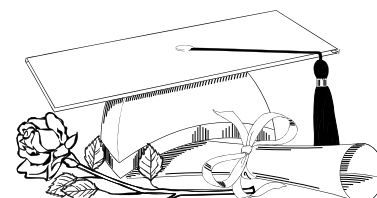
**HS Counselor Score:** This score (available on the website) shows how highly HS counselors rate the school, and they're people who know a good bit about colleges and universities. Some lesser-known schools may suffer.

**Class Size:** These numbers help you understand how many large lecture hall classes you'll be in and how many smaller classes with 10-20 members you can expect. In general, private universities and liberal arts colleges have the smallest classes with the most attention from full-time Ph.D. professors. Public (state) universities hold down their costs with larger classes and a good many graduate student teaching assistants.

**Campus Life:** Lots of solid information on the website, including student comments.

**Tuition and Fees:** Stop! Don't have a heart attack over private school fees. That's what school endowments are for, and most private colleges are extremely generous with their financial aid. Here's the info on Occidental College: Tuition & Fees: \$40,903; Students granted financial aid: 59%; Financial aid package: \$33,612; Average need-based scholarships & grants: \$28,046. Wow! That's CHEAPER than a state school. If you're a good student and your parents are not wealthy, you may find a top liberal arts college the LEAST expensive way to go . . . .

See pages 4-5 for a few examples of colleges/universities to consider.





## California Colleges and Universities to Consider

Success! Learning Center has copies of the *US News* university and college rankings which students and families are welcome to consult. We also maintain an online subscription, so let Mrs. Haas know if you'd like to spend some time checking out the listings. Here are a few suggestions, out of many possibilities, for various types of students (we searched on California schools only). Please remember that private schools generally offer far, far more generous scholarship help than do public universities. Indeed, they may end up costing less than public schools once financial aid is awarded! Information from [www.USNews.com](http://www.USNews.com) premium edition.

For students with GPAs of 3.0 and below, check out:

Costs 2009	Total enrollment	Fall 2009 acceptance rate	Peer assessment score (out of 5)	Average freshman retention rate	6-year graduation rate	SAT/ACT 25th-75th percentile (2009)	Freshmen in top 25% of high school class	Classes with fewer than 20 students (2009)	Classes with 50 or more students (2009)
<b>California State University—Bakersfield (Bakersfield, CA)</b>									
2009-2010 In-state tuition and fees: \$4,383; Out-of-state: \$11,199	8,003	70%	2.5	73.0%	41.3%	780-1020	N/A	29.4%	8.5%
<b>California State University—Dominguez Hills (Carson, CA)</b>									
2009-2010 In-state tuition and fees: \$4,645; Out-of-state: \$13,573	14,477	84%	2.5	63.2%	33.0%	730-930	N/A	20.2%	18.0%
<b>Holy Names University (Oakland, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$28,690	1,135	77%	2.1	70.2%	32.8%	788-971	34%	65.8%	0.0%
<b>Notre Dame de Namur University (Belmont, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$28,590	1,613	79%	2.3	71.5%	55.3%	840-1060	25%	73.2%	0.0%

Don't forget the high-level liberal arts colleges—Mrs. Haas and President Obama both attended this one:

<b>Occidental College (Los Angeles, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$40,903	1,989	43%	3.7	91.8%	85.0%	1200-1380	94%	66.4%	1.0%

Besides San Jose State, students with GPAs of 3.0-3.5 might consider (schools with at least 50% acceptance rate):

Costs 2009	Total enrollment	Fall 2009 acceptance rate	Peer assessment score (out of 5)	Average freshman retention rate	6-year graduation rate	SAT/ACT 25th-75th percentile (2009)	Freshmen in top 25% of high school class	Classes with fewer than 20 students (2009)	Classes with 50 or more students (2009)
<b>California State Polytechnic University—Pomona (Pomona, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 In-state tuition and fees: \$4,551	22,273	61%	3.3	82.2%	50.5%	920-1170	N/A	10.0%	14.3%
<b>Humboldt State University (Arcata, CA)</b>									
2009-2010 In-state tuition and fees: \$5,166;	7,954	84%	2.9	74.8%	42.5%	930-1160	38%	37.5%	11.2%
<b>San Francisco State University (San Francisco, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 In-state tuition and fees: \$5,014	30,469	73%	3.2	76.0%	44.5%	890-1130	N/A	16.0%	25.9%
<b>Santa Clara University (Santa Clara, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$37,368	8,846	59%	3.9	92.8%	85.0%	1120-1340	76%	35.0%	1.9%
<b>Sonoma State University (Rohnert Park, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 In-state tuition and fees: \$5,302	8,547	77%	3.0	75.2%	54.3%	910-1130	N/A	38.7%	7.3%
<b>St. Mary's College of California (Moraga, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$35,430	3,636	79%	3.2	81.0%	64.0%	980-1190	74%	53.0%	0.2%
<b>University of California—Riverside (Riverside, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 In-state tuition and fees: \$11,022	19,439	78%	3.0	85.8%	68.0%	930-1190	100%	39.4%	20.3%
<b>University of San Francisco (San Francisco, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$36,380	9,012	71%	2.8	83.2%	70.0%	1010-1220	61%	49.2%	2.5%
<b>Whittier College (Whittier, CA)</b>									
2010-2011 Tuition and Fees: \$35,442	2,104	72%	2.9	77.5%	61.0%	940-1170	42%	59.2%	0.7%

And lots, lots more!

