

Resources:

- [ACCEPT: Colleges who have moved May 1 deadlines](#)
- [NACAC: College Admission Update](#)
- [NACAC: Secondary School Update](#)
- [Map: COVID-19 School Closures](#)
- [NACAC COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
- [Waybetter Marketing Recommendations for Colleges and Universities](#)

How can colleges and universities support school counselors through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Communicating in quick/short informational outlines in regards to changing dates, webinars, virtual tours etc. would be very helpful. I get a lot of emails from colleges every day and it seems like they are trying to get out a lot of information and honestly it is just too much. So, something that is quick and short but to the point would be helpful.

Tom Woodford, College Counselor
Hilliard City Schools
Hilliard, OH

I'm dreading the end of the year "we need your final transcript today!" emails. I know they are most likely auto-generated and as such, maybe work with your systems to revise the message? We'll need patience when the year "ends" as I imagine we have no idea what our transcripts will look like and when they will be available.

Kathi Moody Department Head of Guidance and School Counseling
Lynnfield High School
Lynnfield, Massachusetts

All the online communication is going well. However, some students need that personal phone call; in recent years some colleges and universities have done less of this. Right now, I think it would be very helpful if high school counselors could reach out to colleges and ask them to make phone or Zoom appointments with certain students. This would be for those that really need someone to talk with about their decision.

Sharon Koenings, Head of School
Brookfield Academy
Brookfield, WI

I feel like most districts are still figuring out how to work with students and get their own work done. They've never had to work from home, so in the case of Columbus City, they are trying to get technology in the hands of students, because many of them don't have it.

If the school is close to a school district, offer families use of their wi-fi. Maybe in a parking lot or a building where users can spread out.

Provide applicant status lists to the counselors – they could help the admissions office with reminders. In the case of our student population, we are very nervous about helping our students complete verification.

As colleges are making new policy decisions, create a newsletter of updates. Also include links to national policies or updates. There are so many resources being shared through NCAN or NACAC list serves, it would be nice if someone could put them in one place and categorize them.

If they helpful tools on how to help students transition from a classroom setting to a remote location, that would be good. Students are overwhelmed.

This is a time for the character of the university to really shine. Find ways to connect with students. Reassure them. Be flexible – will you consider waiving deposits or reducing the amount? Don't wait for someone to ask, just figure it out now.

Is there something fun they can do for counselors – like a playlist or meditation moment or favorite recipes or video a walk around campus or something fun for young children to do.

Kim Ebbrecht, Senior Director of Programming
I Know I Can
Columbus, OH

For now, everyone is just getting used to online learning. Our kids were given the week off and start classes Monday. Time is needed.

Pushing May 1 to June 1 is probably just a good move, even if students gather no more information during May than they already have when making decisions.

Try to get around any missing pieces of an application, anytime a college makes something easier for a student, it then becomes easier for the counselor.

NOTE: Some things will simply have to be done and cannot be ignored. Just be patient and tactful, and it will all work out.

Chris Reeves, Professional School Counselor
Beechwood HS
Fort Mitchell, KY

I'm terrified at the financial ramifications of this for students' families and would love help understanding how financial aid offices are going to be able to adjust packages (if at all) to meet student need that may look very different from what the FAFSA reported a few months ago.

Barrie Moorman, Alumni College Success Counselor
E.L. Hayes Public Charter School
Washington D.C.

I'd simply say, please be available as I am sure I will be calling admission reps regularly over the next few weeks.

Jeff Stahlman, College Counselor
St. Charles Preparatory School
Bexley, OH

This may seem insignificant but our juniors are really freaking out. I know the colleges primary focus is on the seniors (and rightfully so) but our juniors feel lost. Two SAT dates cancelled, no college visits. I know there will be more programming for them coming out this summer. The best thing they could do now is go test optional or say they will not consider any subject test scores. Subject tests are popular in my area. I know MIT just dropped them (thank you!!) The words "recommend" and "considers" and "optional" all mean required to my kids. Colleges, please be very clear.

Alisha Couch, Director of College Counseling
National Cathedral School
Washington D.C.

I'm using Zoom and Google Classroom to connect with my juniors and seniors right now to walk them through the steps and talk about the stress they're all feeling. It would be nice if I had some more concrete info from some schools about how they plan to handle the whole thing in terms of test score reporting requirements. Seniors are now starting to wonder if they'll really even be going in the fall to their first dorm room. I feel for them all.

Hannah Johnson, College Access Coordinator
Boothbay Region High School
Boothbay Harbor, ME

Continue to offer counselor chats/webinars! It is helpful to hear directly from the universities on what is going on so we can share with our students.

Nicole Ush

Be brave!

Consider test optional and/or test flexible (if you have scores, great. If you don't, it won't be a factor) **for this upcoming admission cycle**. Gather and analyze the data to inform future policy decisions. For now, a stressor for juniors is what is going to happen with SAT and ACT testing availability. Don't even get me started on APs!

Consider taking Columbia University's lead. Here is an excerpt from a recent email from Columbia sent to college counselors:

"Please be assured that Columbia Undergraduate Admissions fully supports the pedagogical and administrative decisions your school may make in order to assist your community through this crisis. For example, pass/fail marks or alternative grading methods in lieu of letter or numerical grades will be accommodated in our review of final transcripts. We all have plenty of obstacles to navigate in the months ahead, and submitting paperwork for your college-bound students should be the least of your concerns.

Furthermore, as we consider younger students, we understand that disruptions may significantly alter the trajectory of their extracurricular, athletic and other pursuits. Students might not have access to summer programs or other enrichment experiences. Their college applications will likely look different than they have in the past. We remain committed to our holistic and contextual review process that considers the individual circumstances that shape each applicant's journey."

Outreach and support of this nature enable high schools to consider options, such as changing grading this semester/term to Pass/Fail for all students, with confidence that students will not be unfairly disadvantaged in the admission review process.

Michelle Rasich, Director of College Counseling
Rowland Hall
Salt Lake City, UT

The most concerning challenges are:

- Option for P/F for students this year and how that plays in evaluation
- Standardized test opportunities and lack thereof. More schools should indicate quickly whether they would be willing to go test optional for next year. Yale says no, but many other (that are not Ivy and Ivy-Like) have begun to indicate as much
- Colleges clearly examining and explaining the above and their strategy for application review next year

We are all kind of guessing at this point. I know the colleges are in the same boat BUT the less info kids/parents have (from colleges) the more anxious they become in a process where colleges very much ramp up the anxiety for kids (putting out their school profiles with impossible numbers to hit while, at the same time, saying we have a holistic review process).

Joe Runge, Director of College Counseling
Carrollwood Day School
Tampa, FL

The unknown is the most difficult piece for everyone involved in this crisis. Seniors are already losing irreplaceable memories, milestones, and events, so I want to make sure that I have the tools to help support them through their final step of graduating and matriculating to college in the fall. Relieving anxiety and stress for students is my number one priority at this time.

Colleges can help by making sure they are clear on their policies and procedures related to final course grades, decision dates, testing policies, and final transcripts. Colleges can help the most by clearly adding their most up-to-date information to the NACAC College Admission Status Update Documents, so that all information can be easily accessible through one place. This is like the "College Information Bible" for students and counselors right now.

For Juniors, there is an entirely different set of concerns, and typically during this time, much of my focus is on Juniors, but right now my primary focus is on Seniors. This is another way Juniors are being disadvantaged in this process. We will have to sort all of this out for the Fall.

Either way, what has "always been done" has to change, and we hope the colleges can balance their standards and quality measures with the right amount of accommodation and leniency needed to keep students college bound.

Megan Petronsky, College Placement Counselor
Orange High School
Pepper Pike, OH

The most important thing for those of us on the counseling side will be messaging and contact, with transparency about everything as the goal. We will live with the decisions, as we live with some of the admissions decisions that we disagree with or that seem irrational in a subjective process, but knowing what we are dealing with will help us guide students. Right now it is all a big unknown - how long, how severe, how will our own communities fare (will we lose members of families, faculty, or students themselves), but when we can all come out and hug each other again I have faith that the colleges will do what is right. In the immediate future they are grappling with what their yield will look like: will parents allow their children to go away, will families still have enough financial resources to make college affordable, how long past June 1 might this all go on? They are building platforms and experiences to personalize remote yield events just as we (lucky enough to be able to) are attempting instruction in virtual classrooms (where would we be without technology??), and counselors should encourage juniors to explore as much as they can

For me, the Common App system will allow me to manage most of the final transcripts, and Parchment has offered free accounts to help facilitate the process as well. I will help my students navigate the realities with the information I have, and reach out to our representatives for the information I don't have. We will get through this because we want to and because we have to.

Jane Mathias, Director of Guidance
Nardin Academy
Buffalo, NY

Things that are helpful -- communicating with PARENTS of applicants via e-mail about how families can "visit", talk to financial aid, etc. would help counselors a bunch. Kids are not reading e-mail, so if colleges have the parent contact info from Common App, please use it. Kids are being overwhelmed with online stuff just to complete school year. Use college's social media channels (where kids will see it) to let them know that they are open to taking adjusted grades -- many high schools are reporting that they will be Pass/Fail for second semester. If they are moving to June 1 versus May 1, let that be known.

One thing that has been overwhelming as a counselor is the sheer number of e-mails we are getting, each college letting us know of on-line yield events for students (we assume colleges are closed and that your college will have these).

IF colleges want to send info to counselors, send bullets like this:

- This is our Candidate Reply Date (now June 1, or still May 1)
- Here is our testing policy for Class of 2021 (we're now Test Optional, but only for a year or status quo)
- We will give credit for the AP exams administered in 2020 and/or we will accept Pass/Fail grades if your school moves to that
- Here is your regional rep, and here is his/her direct contact info if you have questions

Jen Fitzpatrick, Associate Director of College Counseling
Columbus Academy
Gahanna, OH

As a school counselor I'd like to know how to put my junior parents and students at ease. How will colleges review applications next round. Kids are worried about testing issues especially in light of the shift to students applying earlier. What is your sense as you take stock of college admission folks? My seniors are all set having escaped the impact of the virus. We are using Zoom for distance learning and our teachers have adjusted to the method. We are on a revised schedule beginning next week.

Peggy Rovins, Director of College Counseling
Community School of Naples
Naples, FL
