

In the time of COVID-19, colleges refocus their admissions priorities

How will the coronavirus impact application to college? Here are the four major aspects of college admissions that have changed due to the pandemic.

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA, July 29, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the time of COVID-19, colleges refocus their admissions priorities

In response to COVID-19, many [colleges are adjusting their admissions processes](#). The virus has caused schools to close, restricted standardized testing, and made extracurricular activities nearly impossible. For many schools, it no longer makes sense to prioritize grades, test scores, and public service records of a potential applicant. Therefore, many college applicants worry about how to stand out to admissions committees if these key features of the application process are de-prioritized. How will the coronavirus impact application to college? Below are the four major aspects of college admissions that have changed due to the pandemic.

1. High School Grades / Transcripts

The widespread shut-down of schools has been a huge part of the COVID-19 chaos. Even now, many schools and students lack access to the technology necessary for effective online instruction. This makes it difficult not only to teach students but also to evaluate them. Many



COVID-19 is doing more to colleges than emptying classrooms.



Changes to the admissions processes are being directed by the College Board.

schools have adopted pass/fail grades (in place of the traditional letter grades), while others are artificially boosting their students' grades, arguing that distance learning should only "positively influence final grades." Some schools have even eliminated grades altogether.

Colleges recognize that the challenges of distance learning may result in evaluations that do not accurately portray a prospective student's potential. As such, many admissions committees are weighing grades earned during COVID-19 less heavily or

not factoring them into their decisions at all. Some universities, such as those in the UC system, have temporarily suspended the letter grade requirement for spring 2020 courses.



Writing a strong admissions essay is as important as ever.

2. Standardized Tests

COVID-19 has been an immense obstacle to standardized testing. This year's AP exams have been reduced to 45 minutes per subject – as opposed to the original 3 hours – and are to take place online. International Baccalaureate exams have been cancelled for this year's seniors. Perhaps the biggest impact has been the College Board's cancellation of all spring and early summer SAT tests. Although the College Board has announced that weekend SAT administrations will be provided monthly from August through the end of 2020, seats are limited and individual tests may be cancelled or rescheduled, depending on changes in circumstance.

Considering the reduced opportunities to take standardized tests, many colleges – including highly selective ones – have announced that they will be "test-optional" or "test-flexible" for this year's applicants. Schools set to use the test-optional model include Princeton University, Emerson College, and the University of Arizona, among many others.

It should be noted that "test-optional" does not necessarily mean "test-blind." Favorable test scores will more than likely work in an applicant's favor even when applying to universities that are test-optional.

3. Extracurricular Activities

COVID-19 has also made participation in extracurricular activities nearly impossible. With the enforcement of social distancing and the closing of many facilities, students are unable to participate in athletics or complete public service. This has been a source of great concern, especially among students preparing for top-tier universities that emphasize leadership and creativity outside the classroom.

However, according to a statement released by Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and endorsed by more than 300 college deans, "students will not be disadvantaged if they don't participate in extracurricular activities at this time." The statement stresses that admissions committees understand that struggles students are going through and that all activities will be assessed "in the context of the obstacles students are facing."

4. Admissions Essays

Every selective school receives countless applications from highly qualified students. With the current de-prioritization of transcripts, test scores, and extracurriculars, even more applicants meet the basic criteria for consideration. How can students stand out from the thousands of other applicants? One time-tested method is [writing a strong admissions essay](#).

The admissions essay has always been a key component of a college application and the pandemic has not altered its importance. Students should start the essay process early by searching for resources and writing first drafts of their essays. College application essays differ significantly from school papers or reports, so it is all the more important for students to start the drafting process well in advance of application deadlines.

Starting the essay draft early is crucial, not only because of the time needed to outline and draft the essay, but also because authors need plenty of time to make revisions. Admissions officers recommend that students give their essay drafts to several people to read, edit, and offer input on their writing. However, many ESL authors may not personally know a native English speaker, while many others simply wish to elevate their essay and make it as strong as possible. For these students, an [online admissions essay editing service](#) is one solution. Most essay editing companies employ professional admissions editors who are well qualified to edit admissions essays. Such services are surprisingly affordable and can take an essay to the next level. Students should make sure to choose a company that's reputable and employs highly qualified editors.

Despite these changes in priority, admissions officers are still seeking the same kinds of applicants they always have: talented students with intellectual curiosity and strong academic ability who will have a positive impact on the college community. Applicants should consider the totality of their academic record and their contributions in and out of the classroom, and they should curate their applications to best reflect their academic ability and potential.

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