



WHAT'S IN THE KIT:



THE TAKEAWAY



TIME FOR ACTION



RESOURCES



HELPFUL TERMS



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Toolkit #1

Admissions in the Age of COVID-19

You, along with your parents, are pioneers: the first high school class to navigate the college admissions process during a pandemic. Let's start the journey!



The Takeaway

While it's true that COVID-19 has disrupted some of the norms of college admissions (such as testing, grading, and college visits), the fundamentals of this year's admissions process remain unchanged from previous years.



Stay focused on finding a college or university that is a good fit for you. Choose a school where you feel you will be most successful academically and socially, as well as one that you can afford.



Focus on what you CAN control under current circumstances. **Do your best to engage in learning** at school this semester -- whatever "school" looks like for you right now. **Write a compelling essay** to introduce yourself to the colleges in whatever way makes sense to you. **Stay involved in activities that bring you joy**, even if they do not look like traditional extracurriculars. Remember, the extracurricular itself is a means of expressing your talent; the club or team or activity is not the actual talent!



Many colleges are making **standardized test scores** optional for the Class of 2021 and possibly for future admission cycles, as well. **Optional truly means optional!** Admissions officers around the country have assured us that they are absolutely sincere in this. You will not be penalized for the lack of test scores.



You will have an opportunity to write about the personal impact the pandemic has had on you. Be assured that college admissions offices are well aware that COVID-19 has likely touched your life in both subtle and significant ways. Many schools take a holistic approach to admissions, and they don't want to generate extra stress during an already demanding time. Context counts. Share your situation in your own words.



While we all wish the pandemic had never happened, it has brought some surprising gifts along with it. Specifically, it has given us **the gift of time, which presents an opportunity for you as a high school student to reflect more deeply on who you are and what you want from your college experience.** And given the fact that college visits have gone virtual during COVID, you may find yourself "visiting" more this year than you otherwise might have. There are 4000+ colleges across the country, and you WILL get into one of them!





Time for Action

Ready, set, GO! It's time to start actively working on choosing a school. Over 4000 colleges and universities around the country are waiting to learn more about YOU, and you're in the driver's seat. College Guidance Network is here to help you and your family, every step of the way. Your success is our success, too.



Tap into the multitude of resources available to you on Naviance. Pay special attention to these three: scholarship list, college profiles, lessons on financial planning.



Spend time each week attending online college fairs and taking virtual campus tours. Do you have the opportunity to schedule a virtual interview with an admissions counselor?



Review the essay prompts, and don't forget to check out the college supplements, too. Start thinking about how you want to tell your personal story.



Money matters! Research the costs associated with attending the colleges on your short list, so that you can have an honest conversation as a family about finances and affordability. Be as specific in your planning as you can about how much aid you might need, and how much debt you are willing to take on.



Take care of yourself. Your personal wellbeing and emotional health is at the core of your success, during a pandemic or otherwise. It's 100% OK to make time for adequate sleep and relaxation, socially distant get-togethers with friends, and hanging out with family. You got this!



Resources

Our goal is to empower you with the right resources at the right time. College Guidance Network has carefully curated a list of essential resources for you:

The monitor screen shows a website for 'College Guidance Programming For Families'. The page includes a globe icon, a banner with the text 'Like No Other - We Are Here to Help!', and a call to action to 'Join over 100 schools who have already registered for the fall programming series!'. A large yellow button in the center says 'www.website.com'. A circular info icon is in the top right corner of the monitor frame.

- Upcoming College Guidance Network programs. Our next program will air on Wednesday, September 23. The topic is "Writing Great Essays."
- A comprehensive list and schedule of college fairs, performing and visual arts fairs, and STEM fairs can be found [here](#).
- Listen to Episodes 2 and 3 of *The Search*, an admissions podcast sponsored by Dartmouth College and hosted by Dean Lee Coffin.
- Explore application-related blogs from some of the nation's top schools. These blogs are a useful resource, even if you have no plans on applying to any of these schools.
 - University of Chicago
 - University of Virginia
 - Georgia Tech
 - Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 - Tufts University
- Receive coronavirus-related policy updates from admissions offices around the country.
- Estimate the price of colleges on your list with these high-quality calculators:
 - MyinTuition
 - U.S. Department of Education Net Price Calculator



Helpful Terms



To be a successful college applicant, it helps to know the lingo! This glossary of terms will come in handy while you do your research and communicate with admissions offices.



Coalition Application: a college application platform accepted by over one hundred and thirty schools. You can select from five essay prompts. An application fee is required for each school to which you will apply, but fee waivers are available. Founded in 2015, the Coalition aims to improve the application process, particularly for those students from historically under-represented groups.



Common Application: a college application platform accepted by over eight hundred schools. You can select from seven essay prompts. An application fee is required for each school to which you apply, but fee waivers are available.



Expected Family Contribution (EFC): a number used by your school to calculate the amount of federal student aid you are eligible to receive. Your EFC is not the amount of money your family will have to pay for college, nor is it the amount of federal student aid you will receive. Instead, it is a measure of your family's financial strength and is calculated according to a formula established by law. Your family's taxed and untaxed income, assets, and benefits (such as unemployment or Social Security) are all factored into the formula. Also considered is your family size and the number of family members who will attend college during the year.



FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid: this is a form completed by current and prospective college students in the United States to determine their eligibility for student financial aid. To request a free copy of *Funding Your Education: The Guide to Federal Student Aid*, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).



Fit: This is a broad term, frequently used by counselors and admissions officers, often to describe qualitative aspects of the college search process. Students should aim for the best college fit, considering academic, financial, social, and cultural factors. A school that is a good fit for you often feels right.



Net price: the amount a student pays to attend an institution in a single academic year AFTER subtracting scholarships and grants received. Scholarships and grants are forms of financial aid that a student does not have to pay back. Net price calculators are available on a college or university website and allow prospective students to enter information about themselves to find out what students like them paid to attend the institution in the previous year, after taking grants and scholarship aid into account.



Naviance: a helpful web-based platform providing school counselors, students and families a virtual home base for academic planning, as well as college and career search.



Need-based scholarship: a type of financial gift that doesn't need to be repaid. This award is based on a student's financial situation. You must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as the FAFSA, to determine your family's eligibility. A scholarship might cover the entire cost of your tuition, or it might be a one-time award of a few hundred dollars. Either way, it's worth applying for, because it could help reduce the cost of your education.



Merit-based scholarship: another type of financial gift that doesn't need to be repaid. This award is based on a student's skill or ability. Example: a merit-based scholarship might be awarded because of high grades. You earn this type of scholarship by meeting or exceeding certain standards.



Test-optional: As the word implies, schools with a test-optional policy do not require standardized test scores, such as the SAT or ACT. Many colleges have affirmed that students will be able submit test scores, if available, but they will not be penalized if they do not.



Questbridge: college recruitment and free application platform, connecting the nation's most exceptional students from low-income backgrounds with leading institutions of higher education. QuestBridge finalists generally come from households earning less than \$65,000 a year for a family of four. Through the National College Match on Questbridge, students can apply to and be selected for admission to partner colleges with full, four-year scholarships.





Let's Talk About It



We've made a list of questions you can use to begin a family conversation. Communication is key, so don't skim over this section. You are a team, and the college application process, while predominantly the responsibility of each student, is a collaborative effort. We're all on the same side, right?

PARENTS/GUARDIAN(S) TO THEIR TEEN



How can we/I, as your parent/guardian(s), best support you as you take the lead in this process? How do you see our/my role in helping you find and choose the best college for you? I see myself in a supportive role, but you're taking the lead on this.

- *What role do you want or expect me to take when it comes to things like college campus visits and narrowing down your choices?*
- *When you write your college essay, will you want my input and feedback?*



Let's talk about your stress level. I want to know how you're feeling. Can you rate, on a scale of 1-10, how anxious you are about the college admissions process?



Have you had much interaction with the guidance counselor at school? Do you think you've made a personal connection with him/her? How can I supplement the guidance s/he's giving you?



Let's talk about costs and how we will share the financial responsibility for your college education. That way you can choose a school we can pay for within our budget.



How do you plan to keep track of deadlines and requirements for applying for scholarships and financial aid? What documentation will you need from me?