Virtual Tools for an Alternative Approach:

College & Post-CHS Planning Guide

Questions? Email Ms. Sleight- ksleight@chatham-nj.org
The conversation surrounding College Admissions and the current climate as the result of COVID-19 has been an all encompassing and continual conversation being held by admission professionals across the world.

How are Colleges Responding?
Colleges continue to release varying information about their specific process and guidelines for the upcoming admission cycle. These conversations have been keeping in mind student perspectives, focusing on empathetic and understanding approaches.

- Colleges are regularly reviewing their guidelines for admission for the class of 2021. It is predicted there will be better guidance in the early summer.
- Many colleges have announced that they will be test optional for the class of 2021 and in some circumstances, future classes.
- Colleges will continue to read applications in the context of the student’s life and circumstances, so communication from applicants is key.

Meanwhile, your high school may have been closed or shifted online for some period of time, and you’re wondering if colleges like Cornell will understand how that closure is challenging. Will we recognize how the “normal” process of high school and preparing for college is exceptionally difficult right now? We will.

Jonathan Burdick
Vice Provost for Enrollment

I want to assure you that Case Western Reserve will not penalize any student who, because of COVID-19-related measures, is unable to attend school in-person, and/or have access to other educational and co-curricular opportunities. We will work with your school counselor to resolve any questions that arise about grades or exams.

Robert McCollough
Dean of Undergraduate Admission

I want to reassure all future college applicants that a community’s response to the outbreak—and students’ personal circumstances associated with it—will not negatively affect a student’s chances of admission to Yale.

Jeremiah Quinlan
Dean of Undergraduate Admission & Financial Aid

We hope this guide tailored to the unique situations we are in will help with your search process.

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Test Optional:

➔ Given the changing landscape, many colleges have decided to become Test Optional for the upcoming Application Cycle (2020-2021). You can access a list of those schools here: https://www.fairtest.org/colleges-and-universities-temporarily-waiving-acts

➔ A large number of schools have been and remain to be test optional: https://www.fairtest.org/university/optional

-We do recommend students try taking at least one exam, in case they want to apply to a school that is not test optional-

“They [Test Scores] don’t matter as much as you probably think they do. High-stakes standardized test scores have always been a point of contention for many of us in admissions. These scores don’t provide as much value as your high school transcript, and they have a problematic correlation with family income, sex, and race and ethnicity. Admissions offices never “need” a test score to make a sound admission decision. Now more than ever, schools are stepping away from this antiquated metric. Well over 1,000 schools had test-optional admissions policies before the covid-19 pandemic.”

- Andrew B. Palumbo, Dean of Admissions & Financial Aid- Worcester Polytechnic Institute

At Home Standardized Testing:
Both the CollegeBoard (SAT) and ACT have discussed offering online and at home testing opportunities in the event that regular testing cannot resume. These options are currently being developed and more information will be shared as becomes available.

SAT:

- In response to the cancellations, the CB will be hosting weekend SAT administrations every month (beginning in August) until the end of the calendar year (December).
- All other students in the class of 2021 who don't have SAT scores will have early access to register for the August, September, and October administrations.
- Registration for the 2020-21 SAT administrations will open the week of May 26

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<th>2020–2021 SAT Administration Dates</th>
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<td>August 29, 2020</td>
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<td><em>New</em>- September 26, 2020</td>
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<td>October 3, 2020</td>
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ACT:

- In addition to the 3 planned Fall test dates, ACT will offer an at home remote proctoring option for the ACT test in late Fall/Early Winter 2020.
- National Test Dates for 2020-2021 will not open for registration until July 2020.

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<th>2020–2021 ACT Administration Dates</th>
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<td>September 12, 2020</td>
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<td>October 24, 2020</td>
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Testing Tips:

- It’s good to be prepared, but give yourself a bit of a break with preparing for standardized testing. There is a good chance that you won’t be able to test for a few months now, so don’t over do it on the prep when you might not be testing soon!
- Can’t decide what test to take? Take one sample SAT and one sample ACT. Whichever score is higher—that is the test you should prepare for and take.
- While there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding testing administration, it is recommended to still sign up for test dates as if they are going to take place. The reason being that later testing dates will likely grow in popularity, potentially limiting your ability to register. The CollegeBoard and ACT have been providing full refunds for students for cancelled administrations.

Testing Resources

Test Optional:
- Updated Test Optional Schools
  https://www.fairtest.org/colleges-and-universities-temporarily-waiving-acts

SAT:
- CHS SAT Updates Website
- CollegeBoard (SAT) updates: https://pages.collegeboard.org/sat-covid-19-updates
- SAT Practice
  - CollegeBoard Prep
  - Khan Academy Prep

ACT:
- CHS ACT Updates Website
- ACT Press Releases: http://leadershipblog.act.org/search/label/ACT%20Updates
- ACT Practice
  - ACT Prep
Getting to Know Campuses - from a Distance

Tips for Getting to Know a College without Visiting Campus:

➔ Take a virtual “campus tour” on the college’s website.
➔ Check out the Schools Social Media Sites (Instagram in particular!)
➔ Sign up for email updates from a college you’re interested in to stay informed about upcoming events.
➔ Use Naviance to understand information about popular majors, read student testimonials, understand the true cost of college, and more.
➔ Connect with CHS Alum (see below) or use a professional networking site like Linkedin to connect.
➔ Find out if an admissions officer from a college of interest is available to connect with you in a virtual chat or phone conversation.

Virtual Tours

- Campus Reel - (Authentic tours from current students!) https://www.campusreel.org/
- Youvisit - https://www.youvisit.com/collegesearch
- Campus Tours - https://www.campustours.com/
- E Campus Tours - http://www.ecampustours.com/

*See the end of the packet for Virtual Tour Recommended Steps*

Want to speak with CHS Alum to hear about their College experience?

Some of our recent CHS Alum have agreed to be an Alumni Ambassador! What this is essentially is a listing of previous CHS students who are happy to chat with our current students about their college experiences.

If you are interested in connecting please reach out to them via the listed email.

See the listing: Alumni Ambassador Listing

➔ A friendly reminder that these students are still in school themselves so please respect their time and willingness to help out. :)

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Too often, the Financial Aid conversation is had last in the college process when it REALLY should be the first thing you talk about. As growing adults you are ready to have adult conversations about finances and the college process. Ask them about paying for college, and potential available financials.

Has your family’s financial situation changed because of COVID-19? If so, that’s ok, you aren’t the only one. The response “we’ll make it work” isn’t appropriate in these circumstances - get involved and be informed. Tell them you care about them, and want to be a partner in this.

--We know how tough these topics can be. Want to talk about it? Reach out to your counselor!--

How to Prepare for a Financial Conversation:
https://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/talking-to-your-parents-about-paying-for-college
• Do research on financial aid and budgeting prior to the conversation
• Construct clear expectations for both your personal and family contribution, maybe by including some hard numbers or grade requirements
• Ask about staying on utility and insurance plans, especially if it has a family discount
• Determine amounts of spending money per month/semester, should it be provided
• Create a mock budget that summarizes your discussion and update it when other sources of income (like scholarships or a new job) become available. This budget will be a good resource during college years.
• Remember to keep applying for scholarships to keep costs down!

Financial Wellness during Covid-19: This Article goes into many specifics, including info about the CARE (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act. https://www.raise.me/blog/students/financial-wellness-during-covid-19/

Financial Aid Resources:
➔ Financial Aid 101 Handout
➔ Scholarship Listing Handout *Check out RaiseMe for a great scholarship platform!
➔ Paying for College- CFB: https://www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/
➔ MyIntuition: https://myintuition.org/ - The "precursor" to Net Price Calculator
➔ HESAA (Higher Education Student Assistance Authority): https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/Default.aspx
➔ Form Your Future: http://formyourfuture.org/
➔ Board of Ed Financial Scores: https://studentaid.gov/data-center/school/composite-scores

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Good News! Despite all of the differences these days- there really isn’t anything different you should do during these processes!

The Essay:

A Disclaimer: COVID and The Essay- We anticipate many students will want to write about the impact of this virus. That’s understandable- we are living in profound and never before seen circumstances. Each of us have incredibly different experiences with this- so if you do choose to write about this please emphasize how it is specific to you, the applicant. A reminder, that Admission Counselors across the world will likely read very similar sounding COVID-19 essays- make it unique to you! This by no means is a “warning” that you should not write about this- if it has shaped who you are (as it already has and will continue to have a permanent impact on all of us) go for it. The whole point of the Essay is supposed to make you stand out-telling a story about who you are. Just be sure before you dive into this as a topic to check yourself on if this subject really covers just that- you.

There are a lot of things changing... know what hasn’t changed?

The Common Application Prompts!

View the prompts here: https://www.commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts

Letters of Recommendation:

JUNIORS: As a reminder, continue to be asking 2 teachers to write a Letter of Recommendation for you. Since we can’t ask in person (that is always preferred!) feel free to video chat or email. You should be checking to see if they would need any additional information to help them write your letter. If a teacher is not able to write a letter, please respect their decision and look to ask another teacher. Your counselor or Ms. Sleight can help you discuss other LOR options.

*Your counselor will be writing a LOR for you automatically, you do not need to request one.

Juniors, things to do to help your counselor:

-Student Brag Sheet filled out by the student
  -Naviance- About Me Section
-Letter of Rec Questionnaire- filled out by the Parent or Guardian
  -Document on Naviance- in Document Resources

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We acknowledge that while attending a traditional 4 year college is a common path students at CHS take, the following information is being shared for students that are interested in alternative options.

**County/ 2 Year College**
A great option for those not ready for a “traditional” college experience right out of HS.

- 49% of all BA degree earners in 2016 had been enrolled in community college (Student Clearinghouse)
- 71% of CC students pay $1,000 or less a year.

**Gap Year**
A deliberate period of time typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness. **Popular activities on a gap year include:**

- Volunteering
- Working
- Interning
- Traveling

**Resources:**
- Gap Year Programs [Google Doc]

**Vocational/Trade School**
A practical alternative to traditional degrees. Votech is hands-on & focused on building specific skills.

**Resources:**
- Trade School [Google Doc]

**Joining the Military**
Serving the country is an admirable & big decision! Do your research & talk to others about the choice. Your contact is usually 4 years of active & 4 years inactive duty. Military Branches: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy.

**Resources:**
- US Government Site: [https://www.usa.gov/join-military](https://www.usa.gov/join-military)
- Today's Military: [https://www.todaysmilitary.com](https://www.todaysmilitary.com)

**Joining the Workforce**
If you are interested in joining the workforce right out of high school it is good to look in the local community. Oftentimes students who choose this path are currently employed, have future employment, or looking to learn from a mentor. This often takes the form of an apprenticeship.

**Resources:**
- Apprenticeship Finder: [https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-finder](https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-finder)

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Additional Resources

Above all else, please remember the School Counseling Department is here for you!
For additional information, please check out some of the resources below

❖ Slow Down! Take some time for yourself: Chatham Virtual R&R Room
❖ Tips for Distance Learning- Need some tips for Distance Learning? Click here!
❖ Chatham School Counseling Website- https://www.chatham-nj.org/channel/1181
❖ CHS Counseling News and Announcements page for general counseling updates.

*Virtual Tour Recommended Steps:

Start → Go to the college’s website. Click on Undergraduate Admissions and/or Visit Us.

Step 1: If they have one- sign up for a Virtual Information Session to learn about academic programs, student life, admission and financial aid. These sessions are usually presented by an Admissions Staff member with a current student.

Step 2: Take a Virtual Tour. Many schools have different and specific types of tours based on interests, etc... They will likely ask for your information- fill that out! You can use interactive maps and videos to learn more about a campus.

Step 3: Take a look at the Academics Page. If you have major(s) in mind take a look at the courses that make up a major. You can usually find this by searching for the “Course Catalog”. Not all majors are created the same!

Step 4: Explore Student Life. Look at Housing/Res Life, Dining, Athletics, Clubs, Government, Diversity, etc... Look for everything and anything that interests you!

Step 5: Investigate Support Services. Learn about the services it provides to help its students succeed. Academic support can include disability specific help, tutoring, writing assistance and more. Other support includes things like help with the financial aid process, counseling and career-planning services.

Step 6: Look at Application Requirements. Use Naviance Scattergrams and other data to help manage your expectations and categorize the school as either likely, target or reach. Some may even be “lottery!” schools

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