**Wednesday, April 8, 2020**

**College Advice for Juniors**

*by Patrick O'Connor, Ph.D.*

Last week, we provided a list of college ideas and updates to share with this year’s seniors. This week, we turn our attention to this year’s juniors. Not all of these will apply to all students, but here’s the list:

**AP Testing**Schools that offer AP classes already know this year’s test has gotten a haircut. The 3 hour, multi-part test goes to a 45 -minute session of free response questions only, and it’s all online, done in the comfort and safety of home.

The big question here is if colleges will still accept the same scores for the same level of college placement or credit, and the answer is: it depends on the college. Students should find the AP page of the college’s website to check. More important, students should ask themselves if a mid-range score on a shortened AP test really tells them they’re ready for a more advanced class in college—or will they be so busy doing homework, it would make more sense taking the intro class.

**SAT and ACT Testing**Yes, this was covered last week, but there are new issues to consider here. With April and May testing cancelled, juniors are looking to June to fulfill their testing needs. It’s possible June testing will go by the boards as well, leaving July and August in the summer testing calendar—and those seats are always hard to come by. SAT and ACT are trying to open more test centers for the summer, so keep an eye on the registration pages for more test center options.

Meanwhile, the list of test optional colleges for next year (and in many cases, next year only) has grown significantly. The [latest version is here](http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/ACT-SATWaiversfor2020Admissions.pdf), but even if your college isn’t on that list, call them if it looks like your testing plans aren’t going to come true. They may have other options for you.

**Pass/Fail Grades for This Year**High schools across the country are discussing the idea of making all classes Pass/Fail, since students won’t have a chance to catch up on work they’ve missed, or fully improve on a slow start to the term. As a rule, colleges understand this, especially since many colleges are doing the exact same thing. As long as the college knows your high school went to all Pass/Fail grades, they’re going to do all they can to work with you. Make sure you work with your school counselor to let the colleges know.

The one tricky area here is NCAA eligibility. Right now, the NCAA gives all Pass/Fail classes the lowest passing grade possible—and that’s usually a D. Since that’s going to mess up the eligibility of many athletes, high schools are urging the NCAA to come up with a new set of guidelines, which is allegedly in the making. Again, stay tuned.

**Athletic Recruitment**With the NCAA extending eligibility for an extra year to spring athletes already in college, it’s going to be interesting to see what happens with recruiting patterns in those sports. This might be the time to reach out to the coaches of the colleges that interest you and find out.

**Admissions and Deferral for This Year’s Seniors**Some colleges are thinking a number of this year’s seniors will be holding off on college for a year, asking the schools that have admitted them to hold them a spot for next year. This happens all the time, but if it happens much more this year, that means some colleges get harder to gain admission next year. This is something colleges won’t likely know about until fall, so make a note and ask them then.

**Early Application Programs**There’s also some question if colleges offering Early Action and Early Decision programs are going to offer them again, or perhaps move their deadlines closer to December or January. Since Early programs really help a college predict enrollment, it’s unlikely a college will do away with their Early programs completely, but stranger things have happened. Again, keeping an eye on the admissions page of the college website—and checking for updates—is the way to go here.