



## Counselor Newsletter

### The 2019-2020 Admissions Cycle Isn't Over

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on college enrollments is starting to show. Of course, nearly every campus in America shut down, and all instruction moved online. College admission offices had also already responded to cancelled SAT and ACT test dates by announcing they were [going test-optional](#). Yet the long term outlook could only be guessed at amid the flurry of immediate reactions.

Until now, that is. The annual [College Openings Update](#) provided by the National Association for College Admission Counseling has been released for 2020. This survey shows which colleges have openings for next fall after the traditional May 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment deadline for admitted students. Currently, that list has 738 schools, of just about 1,200 NACAC member schools. Last year, [NACAC's list](#) initially had 419 schools, and wound up with 521. 738 is already the largest number of schools on this list in the last 7 years.

The [anecdotal evidence](#) shows some colleges are struggling to make classes, too. Centre College in Kentucky, Furman University in South Carolina, and Franklin & Marshall College and Muhlenberg College, both in Pennsylvania, are actively pursuing new applicants for Fall 2020. Presumably, they are not the only schools doing so, merely the ones who have publicly admitted to it. Tellingly, these schools are recruiting students in close geographical proximity to their campuses who showed interest but did not apply.

The biggest reason for this novel approach to post-May 1<sup>st</sup> admissions is the coronavirus. Many schools announced they were pushing back their enrollment deadline to June 1<sup>st</sup> as soon as schools began closing campuses in March. Yet the May 1<sup>st</sup> deadline was changing before March. In the fall, NACAC got [served a consent decree](#) by the Department of Justice, alleging that specific NACAC guidelines amounted to anti-trust violations. Specifically, the organization's by-laws prohibiting incentivizing early applicants, recruiting past applicants as transfer students, and poaching students after the May 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment deadline were all pointed to as limiting student choice by the DOJ. In response, NACAC's members agreed to eliminate those provisions.

So May 2020 was already going to be a brave new world for admission offices, but now something entirely different is taking place. There has been speculation, [backed up by surveys](#), that students would be uncertain about traveling too far from home in a public health crisis or begin to see the cost of college as prohibitive in a financial crisis. Parsing admitted student interest was also more difficult without in-person admitted student events. Now, the time for speculation is over.

The schools on NACAC's College Openings Update list include almost all types, except for the highly selective. 58% are private, while 42% are public. Large universities and small liberal arts colleges are on the list. They are in almost every state. A pattern might still be visible, as medium-sized schools seem to be disproportionately represented. Schools that were also already in trouble are also more likely to be on the list, and The Chronicle of Higher Education issued a special report in November titled "[The Looming Enrollment Crisis](#)." COVID-19 has simply deepened already existing issues.

There is also firm data that finances have changed for students. [250,000 fewer low-income students](#) have failed to renew their FAFSA for next school year, and overall FAFSA renewals are down 5%. That decline has happened almost entirely since March, indicating that the fallout from the coronavirus will see fewer students, and especially fewer low-income students, decide to attend college. The decision-making process is certainly changing for students looking at college.

All of this is still early returns on the effect of the current situation. NACAC has promised to update the School Openings list through the summer, and June 1<sup>st</sup> could see a change. In a month, plenty of schools could have filled their current openings since students have longer to decide. The most important aspect for students is that colleges are still open for applications and want to hear from current seniors.

The Princeton Review's Editor-in-Chief Rob Franek will be hosting two live Professional Development Webinars for counselors on May 13<sup>th</sup> at 9 am and May 15<sup>th</sup> at 12 pm. These two events will cover the same information, COVID and College Admissions, detailing the changes to college admissions, standardized testing, and higher education in the current crisis. Sign up for the date that works best for you at the following link: <https://bit.ly/RobFranekEvent>

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WEBINAR	DATE	START	END
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<a href="#">Crafting Your College Essays</a>	5/11	2:00 PM	3:30 PM
<a href="#">SAT Strategy Session</a>	5/13	2:00 PM	3:30 PM
<a href="#">Finding Your Dream Colleges</a>	5/18	2:00 PM	3:30 PM
<a href="#">ACT Strategy Session</a>	5/20	2:00 PM	3:30 PM
<a href="#">Crafting Your College Essays</a>	5/22	2:00 PM	3:30 PM
<a href="#">SAT Strategy Session</a>	5/27	2:00 PM	3:30 PM

[SAT, ACT, or Both?](#)

5/29

2:00 PM

3:30 PM

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<a href="#">SAT Private Tutoring</a>	<a href="#">ACT Private Tutoring</a>
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