



Parents of Juniors,

I hope this letter finds you and your family doing well and staying healthy.

As your student's College Placement Counselor, I want to assure you that I am here to help you and your student throughout the college search, application, and decision process. However, I also want you know that the landscape of college admission is changing daily right now in response to COVID-19. I am doing my very best to stay informed about the changes occurring at institutions your student may be considering. For example, some institutions have already announced that they are implementing a test-optional admission model for current juniors while others have not made that change at this time. Test-optional means that an ACT or SAT score is not a mandatory component in a student's application for admission. While a test-optional approach may be necessary for some members of our student body, my recommendation for each student may be unique if future ACT and SAT dates remain available. I would encourage every student to have a conversation with me about their choice in this matter.

The test-optional announcement is just one change that is happening. Virtual campus tours have been widely available for some time at most universities, but now they are the only method currently available to "visit" a campus. Admission counselors are offering group or individual virtual meetings and continue to be a phone call or email away. I have always been the liaison between admission counselors and the community of Metro Christian Academy and that has not changed. Please let me know how I may be able to serve you.

Last week I sent an email to all current senior parents addressing the new financial reality that some members of our community may be facing after cuts in pay, furlough, or layoffs, and how that may be addressed in the college admission process. I want to tell you the same thing that I told them with some edits to be accurate for you: If you or a member of your household have been negatively impacted financially by this pandemic, please be aware that universities have processes in place to analyze your revised financial need based on hardship. This would certainly qualify, for example, if there has been a reduction in pay, furlough, or lay off. However, prior to that conversation, you must complete the 2021-2022 FAFSA (it will be available to complete October 1, 2020) and the university must receive that information electronically (it can take 2-10 days for transmission). The 2021-2022 FAFSA will be based on your 2019 tax information, but that is the baseline information they will need. I worked in financial aid at two different universities for many years and am happy to provide insight if you may need it, but every university has the professional judgment to approach these circumstances in their own way. I have had these tough conversations many times so I am certainly equipped but can only get you to a point where you will need to continue the conversation with the financial aid office at the university your student plans to attend in August 2021.

For the last several years I have distributed a version of the document I have attached to this email. I make updates every year to include additional information I would like to know about your student to better assist them and you throughout their senior year. I require this packet to be completed and submitted to me prior to my completion of any recommendation letters for your student. You will find that the majority of the packet is for your student to complete and is quite simple, but you will also find there is a questionnaire for you. I want to assure you that I read each and every answer I receive. It allows me to have an understanding of expectations, financial reality, and even something as simple as what your student hopes to get out of their college experience. Every student's journey is different, and I have found that this packet is worthwhile for all of us. Ideally, I will receive all of these completed packets before mid-May, but if that is not a reasonable expectation for you or your student, just know that I will need it to be submitted prior to the rush of recommendation requests I will receive in August.

And finally, if your student plans to enroll in my college application class that I offer through Camp Patriot each summer (Ready, Set, Apply), please rest assured that I intend to offer that class virtually if we are unable to meet in person. I hope and pray that we will not have to complete it virtually, but I have every intention of making that class work this summer regardless of what social distancing may look like come June or July.

Please let me know if I may answer any questions or do anything to help you or your student as we finish up this semester together.

Warm regards,

Megan Zorch
College Placement Counselor
Metro Christian Academy