

COVID-19 FAQs for Class of 2020

1. What do we do if our financial situation has changed since we applied for financial aid?

The [FAFSA form](#) remains open until June 30, 2020. Any student or family who has not yet completed a FAFSA may still do so until that time, but at this stage it is unlikely that significant financial aid will be available from your colleges.

If you have already completed the FAFSA, we encourage you to contact college financial aid offices directly to begin an appeals process and request review of your financial aid application. Financial aid administrators are afforded a degree of professional judgement under the law for state and federal aid, as well as for institutional aid, and can work with students and families whose incomes have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The more specific you can be about how much aid you realistically need to now afford enrollment at each institution will help your appeals process. You can either request a specific amount of increased aid or give a range that would make attendance feasible. Be prepared to share documentation of your changed financial situation.

For any other questions related to the COVID-19 outbreak and federal financial aid, visit the [Federal Student Aid Office webpage](#).

2. How do I choose my college considering the current circumstances?

In addition to talking with us, consider the kind of communication you are currently receiving from your colleges. How supported do you feel? How clear and consistent is the communication? How flexible and accommodating have they been in light of our current challenges? Ask yourself whether the style and substance of the communication you are receiving matters to you as you select your college.

3. Can I have until after May 1 to make my final college choice?

Colleges can sometimes be flexible with their enrollment deposit deadline, but only in certain circumstances. If you are hoping to hear good news from a Waitlist college, you are still expected to choose a college that has admitted you by their enrollment deadline--this is not grounds to request an extension. If you need more time to consider a financial aid appeal or other COVID-19 circumstance that prevents you from committing by their deadline, you should contact your college directly to request an extension.

Some colleges have already announced that they have extended their enrollment deposit deadline for all admitted students. The National Association for College Admission Counseling has created a [tool](#) that is tracking which schools have granted extensions, but you should ultimately check directly with each college to confirm their deadlines.

Remember, ***you may only confirm enrollment at one college***. If you are admitted from a Waitlist, you must first withdraw enrollment from your chosen college and confirm enrollment at your new college.

4. Should I defer my enrollment to Fall 2021?

Each of you, in conversation with your family will need to make your own decision about enrollment for this fall. In general, we do not recommend that seniors defer enrollment if you were not already planning to take a gap year. While distance learning may continue into this fall and beyond, there will be

meaning and purpose in beginning college this fall with your class, as planned. Colleges will be dedicating resources and time to developing programs and plans to accommodate their entering first-year students as well as their current students--summer allows professors and program directors to consider adjustments to calendars, community-building, and learning opportunities. As a first-year student, you will be part of a new community that is experiencing this altered beginning to college together; you will be able to start creating your network of mentors and peers; you will be able to continue structured learning; you will go through this unexpected journey with others who are sharing in your trepidation, hope, and desire to make the best of these new circumstances.

Deferring enrollment could be the right choice for some, but consider that if shelter in place continues through this fall and winter, significant travel will be impossible and you will likely still need to be at home. While we believe there are many wonderful outcomes for students who opt to take a gap year during regular circumstances, the main drawback that we hear from alums every year is the loneliness and isolation that they feel during their year off. Most alums make the best of this by travelling with friends, finding volunteer or paid work through businesses and non-profit organizations, and taking community college classes (when allowed). With the current financial crisis, paid work will be difficult to find for those on a gap year, internships and service work will likely need to be remote, and any academic experiences will remain online.

Some questions you should consider as you make your decision:

- If I'm going to be home, would I rather be part of my new college community or would I rather be home without school for another semester or year?
- How motivated will I be to manage my own time and engagement in the world if I am sheltered at home?
- How do I plan to build and maintain community without the structure of a school?
- How do I feel about deferring not only my undergraduate schooling, but also my professional career for a semester or year?

As you consider your choice, consider that the college admission world is also considering the overall higher education landscape. Knowing that most colleges' budgets are tuition-driven, large numbers of students requesting to defer this year will negatively affect the financial health of all colleges. Frankly, we will not be surprised if colleges begin to limit the number of gap year requests they will approve in order to ensure they are able to enroll a full class this fall--and leave space for the Class of 2021 when they head to college next year.

The world has changed. There are unknowns and risks in any decision that you make this year and in the future. We encourage you to weigh the options, consider the pros and cons that you can identify at this time, and make the decision that is right for you.

5. Will my college be in session this fall?

Every college will make their own decisions about when and how to reopen based on state and local guidance. Some schools are shifting calendars and preparing for the possibility of distance learning or a hybrid distance/in-person model in the fall. We are learning more each day, but we urge you to engage with the information your colleges have provided to you so far and contact your colleges directly to understand more about their evolving plans and when/if they plan to make decisions about how fall courses and programming will be delivered.

6. How will the COVID-19 pandemic affect Waitlists this year?

Understandably, college admission offices have felt uncertain about how accepted students will make decisions regarding accepting enrollments in light of the pandemic. We have seen much more waitlist activity than is typical this time of year, and we anticipate this trend to continue.

8. Where can I find more information?

Your college's admission officers are the best resources right now. We will certainly let you know if we receive any more specific advice or information in the future, but in the meantime we have gathered a few additional articles that we believe provide helpful perspectives:

[Impact of COVID-19 on College Admission and Testing](#) - From Compass Prep

[How Will the Pandemic Change Higher Education](#) - Chronicle of Higher Education (may need to link PDF because this is only accessible via Premium account)

[After Coronavirus, Colleges Worry: Will Students Come Back?](#) - New York Times

[Coping in the Time of Corona](#) - Tulane University Admissions Blog

[Live Updates: Latest News on Coronavirus and Higher Education](#) - Inside Higher Ed

[NCAA COVID-19](#) - updates from the NCAA

<https://www.guidestar.org/> - Access nonprofit tax documents for colleges and universities to see what kind of endowment debt they are carrying. Please note that it may take some financial digging to understand the data well.