



Sturgis Charter Public School
An International Baccalaureate World School



Starting the College Process in an Uncertain World

April 2020

Dear Juniors,

We want to assure you that a disrupted and somewhat nontraditional Junior spring is not going to take away all of your prior hard work and planning about college. We get how frustrated/discouraged/angry/anxious (etc.) that you are feeling right now, and those are all very real and understandable emotions. Now everything feels like it has been turned upside down. Please know that your parents, your counselors, your teachers, and all those people that work on college campuses are having those same emotions. Here's an article that touches upon many feelings about the processes you all are going through. It is worth the read! [Virtually Possible: Locking Down The College Search In A Global Pandemic](#)

The school counselors have tried to anticipate some of your questions and concerns, and we offer some guidance below. Feel free to reach out to us and let us know how we can help. Everything is very uncertain right now, so we can't guarantee we will have the answers, but we are happy to help you find resources and get started on your college search. We are in this together. Let us know how we can help.

Sending positive vibes and well wishes to you all,

The School Counseling Team

East Counselors: Mr. Bonavita, Mrs. Hempel, and Ms. Cullinan/Mrs. Lombardozzi

West Counselors: Mrs. Ryley, Mr. Sydow, Ms. Murphy and Mrs. May

What does this all mean for college applications next year?

1. ***I planned to take the SAT in May, but it was cancelled. What does that mean for my college applications next year and what should I do now?*** If you had planned to take the SAT or ACT this spring, you probably already know that the April ACT and the May SAT were both cancelled. Both testing companies were offering free registration changes so that you could move your registration to the June dates (June 6 for the SAT and June 13 for the ACT). We expect the College Board to make a decision about whether they will cancel the June SAT by mid-April. In the meantime, if you were planning to take the SAT or ACT this spring, get registered for the June test date just in case. Here are some other things to keep in mind:
 - a. In response to SAT and ACT cancellations, many colleges have already gone test-optional (at least temporarily) for the class of 2021 and beyond. That means that you

- will not be required to submit a test score with your admissions application. Check individual college's websites to find updates and institution specific details.
- b. Registration for August and beyond test dates are not yet available. Please be prepared to take the ACT and/or SAT in August, September or later.
 - c. Here is an article that shows how COVID 19 is changing some entry requirements:
[Coronavirus Drives Colleges to Test Optional](#)
 - d. We recommend that you spend time now doing test prep online (Khan Academy for SAT). If you only get a chance to take the SAT or ACT once this fall, you want to be prepared and do your best.
2. ***What will my transcript look like and could that affect my college admissions offers?*** As of the first week of April, we are not yet sure how final grades will be calculated or how final transcripts will look. The main thing to keep in mind is that you are not unique in this situation. Almost every other high school in this country has been affected by COVID-19, and everyone's transcripts may look different. You are not unique in this regard. The colleges know this and understand. What you can do is stay in touch with your teachers and follow through on what they ask you to do academically.
 3. ***With school being closed, I am not able to participate in athletics, music groups, and other extracurricular activities. Will this affect how my admissions applications are viewed by colleges?*** Like the question about your transcript, it is important to remember that you are not alone. Almost every other high school student in this country is being affected. No one is playing sports or acting in school plays or organizing club meetings and activities. We promise, colleges get it! If you are looking for ways to fill your time, check out [this article](#) with ideas.
 4. ***With college campuses closed, how do I learn more about a college and make my college application list?*** Much as before, you should be researching colleges using all the tools available to you (college search tools, individual college websites and social media, talking with your school counselor, and emailing college admissions counselors). What's not available currently are on-campus visits and interviews. The good news is that colleges have been revising and improving their websites and virtual tours. Some are even offering virtual information sessions. Here is a link to many [College Virtual Tours](#) all in one place. If that is overwhelming, it should be easy to find them on individual college websites.

What should I be doing now?

I am feeling very discouraged, confused, and/or overwhelmed about my college search process. Where do I start and what should I be doing? Review the suggestions below for important steps you can be working on now that will make your college applications stronger next year.

1. ***How will my counselor write a recommendation if we haven't had time to meet this spring?*** Counselors have met with many of you already and will plan to follow up either in May or June or when we get back to school in September. In the meantime, make sure your school counselor has information and details that will help them write a great counselor recommendation. One important way you can do this is to take a few moments to log into the Class of 2021 Counseling Google Classroom and complete your Student Self-Reflection Sheet and have your parents/guardians complete the Guardian Brag Sheet.
 - a. West's [Student Self-Reflection Form](#)

- b. East's [Student Self-Reflection Form](#)
 - c. West's [Guardian Brag Sheet](#)
 - d. East's [Guardian Brag Sheet](#)
2. **Where do I start a college search?** Use college search tools like [Big Future](#) or [College Navigator](#) to start constructing a list of colleges that interest you.
3. **How do I get more information about a college?** Visit their website and take some virtual tours and attend virtual information sessions. Make notes of things that interest you. Email the admissions office if you have questions about a program or an admissions policy.
4. **How do I keep track of all of this information I'm getting from the colleges I'm researching?** Create a spreadsheet (or some other system) to keep track of your research. As we get closer to application time, you will be able to add application requirements and deadlines for both admissions and financial aid. Having a system to keep track of all of these details is vitally important.
5. **Will there be more college search information available?** We are in the process of planning some virtual group meetings to discuss the college search and application process. Plan to attend your school counselor's virtual group college admissions information sessions. Counselors will be sending invitations through Google Calendar.
6. **Should I be thinking about which teacher can write my recommendation?** Yes! This is a great time to ask a teacher if they will be able to write you a letter of recommendation for college. Remember it's best to ask a teacher in an aligned field to that of the major you will be pursuing. Completing this [form](#) for that teacher will help them write a more detailed and personal recommendation (some teachers will require it).
7. **How can I connect with my school counselor?** Check in with your school counselor with questions. Counselors are available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am-1pm. You should have received an email from your counselor with a link to their google form. Feel free to email them if you need them to resend it.
8. **What about the SAT/ACT?** As we indicated earlier, many colleges will be “test optional” and will not require students to submit test scores with their admissions application. We encourage you to spend some time preparing for either the SAT or the ACT so that if you have less opportunities to take it, you will be better prepared to do your best.
9. **Should I start my college essay?** It would be a great idea to take some time now to start thinking about your college essay. There are lots of [examples and information](#) out there to get you started. Take a look at the [essay prompts](#). A word of caution though, please avoid writing about your COVID-19 experience. We can almost guarantee that college admissions counselors will be reading LOTS of essays on this topic. If you are looking for your essay to stand out, this will not do it. Unless you have had some sort of VERY unique experience or can put a truly original spin on it, our recommendation is to avoid writing about your experience with COVID-19.