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College trends to consider for the classes of 2022 and 2023

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; Visit www.doingcollege.com; or Call: 925.385.0562.

www.fairtest.org to see which colleges offer this.) However, submitting a really good score allows admissions one more puzzle piece to consider. Submitting a strong score that compliments your grades and rigor of coursework is an advantage. Deciding what a "really good score" is depends on the college you apply to and a question to bring to your college advisor. Remember, test optional does not mean test blind.

Test blind, where a college does not consider standardized tests in admissions even if submitted, is gaining momentum. Last year 69 institutions were test blind, including the entire UC and CSU systems. UCs and CSUs will again be test blind for the Class of 2022.

AP exam scores will rise in importance. Colleges will now buy names of sophomores and juniors who are taking APs for marketing purposes and some may begin to examine AP scores with greater scrutiny.

Colleges that offer merit aid tend to award money to students who take advantage of the early action and priority dates. Regular decision applicants are often the last in line for merit aid consideration. While most schools will award money without standardized tests, there are still some schools and programs that require them. Be sure to check out each college's policy, since going test optional may help you gain admission but hurt your chances for financial aid.

Applying early action is losing some of its luster. Whereas in the past students were given a significant advantage if they applied early, quite a few schools in 2021 elected to defer students into the regular pool. This may have been due to the surge in applications and thus a temporary phenomenon, or it may be here

Understanding the reality of today's college application process is an important element in managing expectations. For instance, the notion that great grades and test scores will automatically guarantee entry into highly selective colleges no longer holds true. Strong stats certainly open doors, but colleges ranked in the top 25 or even 50 expect much more: a uniqueness, one that distinguishes the student at the national and even international level of accomplishment in some area of the sciences, arts or athletics, as well as a concrete connection to schools' mission, educational program and institutional goals.

Here are some trends worth mentioning, as they will impact your experience applying to colleges this cycle and likely next cycle for the Class of 2023.

More colleges continue to allow self-reported grades and test scores, only requiring an "official" report if you choose to attend. You'll need to be super accurate, otherwise you risk having an acceptance rescinded.

Offering a student admission in the spring instead of the fall is gaining momentum as an enrollment management tool. Some students may even be selected to start on a different campus - perhaps even internationally. Don't let this possibility throw you off course. Your ability to be flexible will create more possibilities. Instead, explore the advantages of taking a break between high school and college. You can plan a hiking excursion, get a job or land an internship that will begin to build your resume before you even start college!

More students will take gap years. Colleges appreciate the maturity and perspective that gap year students bring to campus. Just be sure you have applied and are accepted at a college first and that the college has agreed to defer your admission.

Test Optional is here to stay. With over 1,500 colleges already on board, it is possible to apply to college without ever taking an ACT or SAT. (Visit

www.fairtest.org to see which colleges offer this.) However, submitting a really good score allows admissions one more puzzle piece to consider. Submitting a strong score that compliments your grades and rigor of coursework is an advantage. Deciding what a "really good score" is depends on the college you apply to and a question to bring to your college advisor. Remember, test optional does not mean test blind.

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to stay. In 2022, a significant number of colleges dropped their early action option altogether. In 2021, early decision, though, seemed to give an advantage. Data from top colleges this year showed that in general a larger percent of the applicants were admitted through the binding early decision program.

Applications to top colleges exploded last year, and it is likely this trend will continue. Be sure to not apply to super reach schools that are out of reach for your profile, and balance your list with more target and anchor schools. Here are some current application growth numbers in percentages: Colgate-104%, MIT-66%, Columbia-51%, BC-36%, Tufts-35%, UC Berkeley and UCLA both saw a 28% increase in applications and U of Wisconsin Madison-17%. What do these increases mean? It means the tippy top colleges will remain nearly impossible for most, while the high-end target schools will be reaches for many.

The UCs now routinely deny or waitlist smart, qualified California students. Be sure your college list includes other options. Resist the urge to apply to every UC - you must be a good fit for the UC major you apply to and your activities and essays must reflect as much.

More online interviews will be offered. Some might include a prompt to which a student will give a video response. Work with your advisor on interview skills.

Now that you know some of these trends, seniors will be more well prepared to apply more thoughtfully to colleges this fall and juniors can begin to assemble their college lists with these tips in mind.

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[back](#)

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