

Many of you may have planned college visits over spring break to help you make a final decision on where to attend college next fall. With a growing number of campus closures due to COVID-19, many colleges are encouraging students to take advantage of virtual tours, while others are extending the deadline to accept offers of admission. So what can you do now?

The best practice in this time of uncertainty and rapidly shifting circumstances is to reach out to college admissions offices directly. Email your admissions counselor at each school you are considering to ask about their “new normal” for admissions decisions, acceptance notifications, financial aid, and housing. If you don’t have the contact information for the admissions office at your school, you can probably find what you are looking for by visiting the college’s website and navigating to the admissions page. Look for a banner or pop-up notice about the college’s response to COVID-19 for admitted or prospective students. You can also use [this list](#) compiled by Cappex for information on specific college responses to COVID-19.

Many colleges are extending the Decision Day deadline from May 1 to June 1, but not all schools are doing so. The group, Admission Counselors Cultivating Equity and Peace Today (ACCEPT), has begun to crowdsource a [Google doc](#) to track which schools are changing their deadlines. Still, it is very important that you check for updates if you have not received email notifications from colleges directly. Remember to check applicant portals as well as your IWA or personal email accounts for information from colleges.

While virtual tours might not be able to replace an in-person campus visit, they are a great substitute and can help you in making your final decision for where to attend college. Explore other resources such as college social media accounts and admissions forums online. I will be sending out a future newsletter with tips on how to make your final college decision. One of the biggest factors for that decision is likely financial aid; unfortunately, that is the area with the most uncertainty in the wake of COVID-19. Colleges are focused on how campus closures affect the financial aid status of current students first and foremost. This means that awarding financial aid packages for future students will likely be delayed. Check out this helpful post from [US News and World Report](#) for more information.

These may not be ideal circumstances for choosing a college, but you are all resourceful individuals! This is an opportunity to employ those research and critical thinking skills that you have been developing throughout high school. Get creative, think outside the box, and try to make the best of the situation. How colleges are handling their response to this crisis might help you to make your decision for where to attend next year.

Think of this as an opportunity to maintain a sense of normalcy in your daily life. This is the time of year seniors all over the country are deciding where to attend college next fall, and not much has really changed about that. Try to keep calm and carry on-- and remember to wash your hands!