

## February 2021

### Save the Date

**Feb 4**

**Virtual Cup of College**  
See Teams Link on Parent  
Portal Newsfeed  
8 a.m.-9 a.m.

**Feb. 11**

**SACAC Online College  
Fair**  
Please check your email for  
details

**March 9**

**College Counseling Meeting  
with Sophomores**  
12:45-1:15 p.m.  
PAC

**March 11**

**Virtual Cup of College**  
See Teams Link on Parent  
Portal Newsfeed  
8 a.m.-9 a.m.

**March 16**

**ACT for Participating  
Sophomores and Juniors**

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St. David's School

# Collegebeat...

An Update from the College Counseling Office

## Applications surge after big-name colleges halt SAT and ACT testing rules by Nick Anderson The Washington Post January 29, 2021

The University of Virginia drew a record 48,000 applications for the next class in Charlottesville – about 15 percent more than the year before.

Freshman applications to the University of California at Berkeley crossed into six figures for the first time, totaling more than 112,000, up 28 percent. Harvard University's total spiked to an all-time high of 57,000. That's up 42 percent.

The sudden explosion in demand for these and other big-name schools is another ripple effect of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic that could reshape college admissions for many years to come. The pandemic has given huge – and in some places, decisive – momentum to a movement to reduce or even eliminate the use of admissions testing at highly competitive colleges and universities. That, in turn, has lured more applicants to the upper tier of the market.

U-Va. and Harvard were among a large bloc of schools that temporarily suspended their requirements for SAT or ACT scores because the public health emergency prevented many college-bound students from taking the exams. Students could choose whether to send scores to these schools under a policy known as “test-optional.”

On Friday, U-Va. President James E. Ryan said the public university will extend its test-optional policy for another two years, covering students who are now sophomores and juniors in high school.

“We believe this is a reasonable and humane response to one pressure that our prospective students are facing as a result of COVID-19,” Ryan said in a statement. “We want students to focus on things they can control: doing their best in school; cultivating their curiosity; contributing to their families, schools, and communities. In a moment where so many things are uncertain, we hope this decision makes the admissions process more accessible and equitable for students who are considering the University of Virginia.”

Harvard said Friday it will be test-optional for one more year – covering those who are now high school juniors – and reiterated that those who do not submit scores “will not be disadvantaged in the application process.”

UC-Berkeley has taken a more radical step. It removed the SAT and ACT from admission decisions, a policy known as “test-free” or “test-blind.” A state court last fall ordered the UC system to apply that policy across all its campuses for this year's applicants. The system's approach to admission testing for coming years is still in some flux, but the UC governing board [voted in the spring to phase out](#) the SAT and ACT.

Olufemi Ogundele, UC-Berkeley's director of undergraduate admissions, said the university also broadened its digital outreach to develop a strong and diverse applicant pool. “We are really proud of that,” he said.

*Continued on page 2.*

### SAT Test Schedule

**Saturday, March 13**

Register by 2/12/21

**Saturday, May 8**

Register by 4/8/21

**Saturday, June 5**

Register by 5/6/21

### ACT Test Schedule

**Tuesday, March 16**

**St. David's will administer ACT to juniors and sophomores**

*\*check your email for details\**

**Saturday, April 17**

Register by 03/12/21

**Saturday, June 12**

Register by 5/7/21

**Saturday, July 17**

Register by 6/18/21

### Special News!

**SAT Subject Tests have been discontinued in the United States, and will be discontinued internationally after June 2021.**

**Additionally, the College Board will no longer offer the SAT with Essay.**

## Applications surge... Continued from page 1

The College Board, which owns the SAT, said it supports “flexibility in admissions during the pandemic.” The rival ACT takes much the same position.

“I think a lot of schools are going to stay test-optional,” said ACT chief executive Janet Godwin. But she said research shows that “higher ed still does see value in scores for a whole bunch of reasons.”

Testing, she said, helps colleges connect with potential applicants and vice versa. She said she worries that many students might miss out on opportunities if they don’t take an admission test. Access and equity, she said, are “the driving force behind everything we do.” About a quarter-million students are registered for the ACT’s next test date on Feb. 6.

Overall, the strength of the student pipeline into higher education during the pandemic appears uneven.

The Common Application, an online portal for hundreds of colleges and universities, reports that about 1 million students applied this year ahead of January deadlines. Application totals fell modestly at public universities with fewer than 10,000 undergraduates and at small private colleges that tend to admit most applicants.

There also was a 2 percent dip in applicants with enough financial need to receive fee waivers, and a 3 percent drop in those who would be among the first in their families to go to college. Jenny Rickard, president and chief executive of the Common App, said she was “very concerned” about those declines.

But the Common App found a surge of applications to schools with national and global reputations. At large public universities, including state flagships, totals rose more than 11 percent. At private schools with more selective admissions, they rose more than 17 percent.

Shifts in admissions testing policy, experts say, played a key role.

“This barrier, i.e. standardized testing, was taken down, and maybe some students put their hats in the ring who otherwise wouldn’t have,” said Eric J. Furda, who recently stepped down after 12 years as dean of admissions at the University of Pennsylvania.

Test-optional policies have helped hundreds of thousands of students this year who struggled to find a time and a place to take the SAT or ACT. But advocates say they also are helping students realize that their courses and grades in high school are what matter most.

Stephanie Sylla, 17, a high school senior from Woodbridge, Va., spent months last year preparing to take the SAT in August. Sylla said she went “hardcore” starting in June, practicing as much as two hours a day, reading test-preparation books, getting the feel of the three-hour exam. She wanted a score to align with her credentials as a student with a strong grade-point average, a transcript full of challenging classes and time spent on extracurricular activities such as debate and varsity volleyball. A daughter of immigrants from the West African nation of Guinea, Sylla said college is vital to her and her family.

Shortly before the test date, she got an email saying her SAT session had been canceled because of the pandemic.

She tried to register for a September session but found nothing available. It sunk in for her that she could forgo testing. Initially skeptical of test-optional policies, she had learned more about the issue from a U-Va. admissions officer who assured Sylla and other classmates that applications would be judged, regardless of whether they submitted a score, on the strength of their entire academic record and other accomplishments and life experiences.

So Sylla has applied, without scores, to U-Va. and a range of other competitive schools.

The test-optional policy, she said, “really changed my perspective on how I look at my achievements.” What she has done in and out of school is enough, she said, to give a picture of her college potential. “It’s really helped build confidence in what I’ve been able to do.”

Some schools, such as Bowdoin College in Maine, have been test-optional for decades, while others joined the movement more recently, including the [University of Chicago in 2018](#).

But the pandemic has accelerated the trend. Many universities launched multiyear experiments with test-optional policies last year or ended testing requirements permanently.

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## Applications surge... *Continued from page 2*

Several ultra-selective schools that had announced one-year pauses in testing requirements are extending those measures. Williams and Amherst colleges, prominent liberal arts schools, will be test-optional for those applying to enter in 2022 and 2023. Columbia and Cornell universities, like Harvard, have suspended testing requirements for the 2022 cycle, and others in the Ivy League appear likely to follow suit.

"All of the challenges that we saw last year still remain," said Logan Powell, dean of admission at Brown University. Powell said Brown's applications under the test-optional process are up 26 percent, with gains across demographic groups including first-generation students.

Cornell said it received 17,000 more applications than the year before, up about a third from the previous year. Jonathan Burdick, the vice provost for enrollment, said applications rose from first-generation, low-income, rural, Black and Hispanic groups. Some of Cornell's programs – in business, agriculture and architecture – are experimenting with test-blind admission.

"We're accumulating great information about how students respond and how to conduct whole-person reviews with either far fewer or no SAT/ACT scores," Burdick wrote in an email. "We expect to put this new knowledge to use as we consider how to continue reducing admission barriers while maintaining highly selective standards over the next couple of years."

This month, Pennsylvania State University added two years to its test-optional policy. What was once a pandemic-driven emergency measure has become, effectively, a longer-term experiment for the public university. Applications to the Penn State flagship campus are way up, said Robert G. Springall, executive director of undergraduate admissions. More than half of the 78,000 applicants did not submit scores.

"We wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to really think and assess how the first test-optional cohort does," Springall said. Two more years, he said, "gives us the opportunity to really do a fair assessment."

Maryland higher-education officials soon will weigh testing policies for coming years. The University of Maryland at College Park reports that applications in this test-optional year surpassed 41,000, up more than 25 percent. Just over half did not send SAT or ACT scores. "We are seeing increases across the spectrum in diverse applicants," said James Massey, U-Md.'s director of undergraduate admissions. "We're happy to have a deeper pool, obviously, as most institutions would be."

## Scholarship Spotlight

### Abbott and Fenner Scholarship

Abbott and Fenner are committed to continuing efforts at helping those who have the desire and ambition to succeed.

The A&F Scholarships are available to all high school juniors and seniors.

To apply for this scholarship you will need to write a 500-1000 word essay on the topic below:

*Describe your educational career and life goals.*

*Explain your plan for achieving these goals.*

*Include your degree/major, why you selected it, and how this degree/major will help you achieve your goals.*

Submissions must be sent via email to [scholarships@abbottandfenner.com](mailto:scholarships@abbottandfenner.com)

Deadline: June 12, 2021

## Colleges that will be test-optional for 2021-22 and beyond

For a list including colleges with long-term test-optional policies, see [fairtest.org](http://fairtest.org)

|                             |                           |                          |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bryn Mawr                   | Oregon State University   | Massachusetts – Amherst, |
| Bucknell                    | UPenn                     | Boston, Lowell           |
| Case Western                | Penn State                | University of Oregon     |
| College of Charleston       | Rhodes                    | University of San Diego  |
| Columbia                    | Skidmore                  | University of Virginia   |
| Cornell                     | Swarthmore                | University of Washington |
| Davidson                    | Tufts                     | William and Mary         |
| (through Fall 2023)         | Tulane                    |                          |
| Harvard (through Fall 2022) | University of Alaska      |                          |
| Harvey Mudd College         | Fairbanks                 |                          |
| Haverford                   | University of Arizona     |                          |
| Middlebury                  | University of California  |                          |
| Northwestern                | system                    |                          |
| Oberlin                     | University of Connecticut |                          |
| Old Dominion University     | University of             |                          |

## Virtual College Fairs—Coming to a Screen Near You!

NACAC Virtual College Fairs          Saturday, February 28, 2021    1:00 –7:00 p.m.

<https://virtualcollegefairs.org/events>

SACAC Virtual College Fair          Thursday, February 11, 2021    5:00 –7:45 p.m.

<https://www.strivescan.com/SACAC/>

USA Gap Year Virtual Fair          Saturday, March 13, 2021    1:00 –4:00 p.m.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/national-usa-gap-year-fair-2021-registration-131825775443?aff=2021GYFEventonGO>

## College Decisions

Louisa Holding

Wake Forest University

Caroline Lilly

University of Tennessee

Sarah Curtis McClatchey

UNC Chapel Hill

Matt Messenger

McDaniel College

Josh Messmore

Northwestern University

Hillary Smith

University of Tennessee

Josh Teague

Duke University

Paxton Williams

UNC Wilmington



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