

Dear colleagues,

It's June! This has been a challenging year for all of us—I hope you've nonetheless stayed connected with sources of joy and wonder in your work. And I hope you have plans for some serious self-care this summer.

We are completing an admissions cycle that was unlike any other, yet also familiar in so many ways. The pandemic upended high school experiences, precipitated change in testing policies, and blazed new avenues for access in our digital programming. As was the case for so many selective colleges, these and other forces resulted in our largest, most diverse applicant pool to date. We reviewed almost 48,000 applications from over 9,000 secondary schools around the world.

Through it all, **our process remained grounded in a holistic approach coupled with a commitment to college access.** Our longstanding practice of reviewing a global pool of applicants in the context of their own high school and community settings served us well as everyone's context shifted drastically this year, and our applicants were as outstanding and inspiring as ever.

As always, we will share data about our incoming class in the fall after students have started classes. In the meantime, I'm happy to share that our incoming first-year class, just over 2,000 students, is looking terrific. We have had some waitlist activity but at this time don't anticipate too much more. We will be thrilled to welcome the Class of 2025 and our new transfer students on campus in September for a residential experience that is as fully in-person as possible. We learned last month that [Northwestern will require students to be vaccinated](#), with information about seeking exceptions soon to come. To date, over 75% of our students are partially or fully vaccinated.

Looking ahead to some nuts and bolts for next year, our **Early Decision deadline will be Monday, November 1, and our Regular Decision deadline will be Monday, January 3.** (We understand a weekday deadline relieves you and your students of considerable stress as last-minute questions arise.) We'll remain [test-optional for first-year applicants](#) applying in academic year 2021–22. As with this past cycle, applicants may submit an SAT or ACT score if they wish, but these scores are not required. There have been no decisions made about our 2022–23 testing policy to date, but we will communicate those as early as we're able. With or without scores, we will continue to evaluate applicants' academic and intellectual fit for Northwestern as we always have: through a holistic assessment of grades, course rigor, recommendations, academic honors or awards, personal essays, and other information specific to students' own experiences and high school setting. And we remain committed to a [financial aid program](#) that meets full demonstrated need with loan-free aid packages for all admitted students.

Last June, Northwestern outlined 10 broad commitments to advance racial justice and bolster safety, equity, and inclusion on campus. The following are several important actions taken this past year, and you can view the [full set of commitments here](#).

- Northwestern hired [Dr. Robin Means Coleman](#) as Chief Diversity Officer; as a vice president and associate provost with faculty appointments across communication studies, radio/tv/film, and African American studies, Dr. Coleman has a presence among senior leadership, on our faculty, and in our classrooms.

- This spring, the University is completing a [renovation to the Black House](#), a critical space for Black students on our Evanston campus.
- Administration will expand diversity and antiracism training programs for all faculty, staff, and students following training for senior leaders in fall 2020.
- A newly established [community safety advisory board](#) will consider many dimensions of campus safety, including an [external review of NU's dept. of safety and security](#), including NUPD operations. The external review was completed and released this past March.

Turning back to the college process: we look forward to being back on campus more and more in the coming months. As University plans and policies solidify, **we are exploring options for on-campus tours beginning in July** and will share details as soon as we're able. In the meantime, students are welcome to explore campus on their own and should [visit our website](#) for campus safety policies and self-guided tour resources.

That said, the need to innovate in a digital recruitment space resulted in a proliferation of substantive, accessible programming for your students. We have connected more prospective students with more members of our campus community through live digital opportunities. We have created videos of campus spaces that wouldn't normally be on a campus tour. These new avenues for college access are a significant silver lining of the pandemic, and we're committed to extending them into the new normal once we're past this thing. **You can find our digital program schedule on our website**, and the majority of our events are archived on our [YouTube channel](#).

Finally, we understand that even as vaccines proliferate and things ease back into some semblance of normal, high school records and college applications will reflect the challenges of this pandemic for years to come. **Your students have lost so much, but I offer this thought about an unprecedented strength they wield in applying to college:** As I stressed in my [letter to counselors last May](#), the application process is as much if not more so about conveying what kind of college student you might be as it is about demonstrating a successful high school record. It's an imaginative process, and the most compelling applications draw admission readers into that forward-looking perspective. Of course, this demands considerable self-reflection for students as they ask: How will I bring my talents, ideas, questions, curiosity, and compassion to bear in a new setting? Today's students had a head start in confronting these big questions, as the pandemic entirely reshaped their high school experiences. In other words, your students had a test run navigating transition that we arguably haven't seen the likes of in our applicant pool before—and though we didn't always have all the usual metrics by which to assess their readiness to thrive on our campus, we had new and enormously insightful information to draw on. We will harness the same insights going forward.

Plenty of questions linger over fall travel, and as we all gain clarity later this summer, we'd love to connect to learn about your plans for college visits next school year. **Please reference our [regional contacts page](#) to find your school's regional team and primary point of contact.** For now, good luck wrapping up this difficult school year and have a restful summer.

Warmly,



Liz Kinsley, PhD
Director of Undergraduate Admission