

Dear colleagues,

I hope your 2021 is off to a healthy and hopeful start. There's much to celebrate as the first week of February brings National School Counseling Week and Black History Month—we are grateful for all you do, and proud to partner as educators through these observances.

We know many of you are beginning to work with your juniors, guiding them in a college search that may look very different than you or they imagined. And of course your seniors continue to navigate a socially-distanced admissions process that is well underway. I thought I'd drop in with just a few updates that can hopefully support your work through this relentlessly challenging time.

### For juniors...

First thing's first: ***we'll be extending our test-optional policy for first-year applicants through next year's 2021–22 admissions cycle.*** Applicants may submit an SAT or ACT score if they wish, but these scores are not required. With or without test 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' experiences and high school settings. We have updated our [testing FAQs](#) accordingly, and the broad assurances and implications of [my July blog post on testing](#) still hold true, even as some of the specifics grow dated.

Our [digital programming](#) grows and grows! We've curated a range of resources to help your students get to know us, from [traditional information sessions](#) that provide an overview, to [student panels](#) and [roundtables](#), [faculty and administrator Q&As](#), and [local food reviews](#) that carry across the intangibles you'd hope to get on a campus visit. We've also launched a vlog series, "[Applied Learning](#)," where our admissions directors dialogue about different aspects of the college process, and we continue to grow our bank of [live-shot tours](#), including indoor tours of residence halls that will premiere next month. In almost every case, we offer live Q&A with admissions directors and/or current students.

Our on-campus programming remains suspended in light of the pandemic. That said, campus life continues! We were thrilled to see our first- and second-year students move in last month, joining the juniors and seniors in Evanston after a fully remote fall quarter.

### For seniors...

With respect to your seniors in our current applicant pool: our review process is well underway, and we expect to release decisions by the end of March. We'll publicize an exact release date well in advance via social media channels and in Applicant Portals. And when decisions do go live, students will receive an email notifying them of an update in their Applicant Portal.

Sometime this week, we'll send ***our first "missing items" email*** to applicants whose files remain incomplete. A few notes specific to that message:

- We email students only so as not to overload counselor inboxes.
- We know these emails can create anxiety for students and extra work on your end, and we're appreciative for everyone's efforts to complete their applications.

- As we emphasize for students, there is plenty of time to resolve missing items after this first email, and we're happy to work together over the coming weeks to ensure we have everything we need for our review.
- Our message asks that students show patience to counselors and teachers who may be fielding many requests, and encourages them to **submit documents through their Applicant Portal** whenever possible.
- We also understand the pandemic has caused delays with midyear grades in some districts and will gladly accept those as soon as they're available.
- If you need to provide supporting materials—letters, transcripts, score reports, etc.—**please send as attachments to [ug-admission@northwestern.edu](mailto:ug-admission@northwestern.edu) rather than your regional admissions contact**. While we always love to hear from you, our regional folks are immersed in reading season, whereas our dedicated Operations team can quickly process items sent directly to our general email.
- We can scan documents sent via post, too, if that is your preference: 1801 Hinman Ave., Evanston IL, 60208.

Thanks, as always, for your time and partnership. We will be in touch later this spring with further updates for the next admissions cycle. Take care in the meantime.

Warmly,

Liz Kinsley  
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Northwestern University