

**Uncertainty.** We are surrounded by it in your daily lives currently. When can we resume life as we know it? Is my job safe? Are we doing all we can to protect our health? Are my investments going to rebound? People want answers. They want to feel as though they have some control over their future, and many feel as though that is lacking. The same word, **uncertainty**, applies to the college planning process. In the best of times, this process is a complicated one filled with pitfalls that are easy to fall into. In times like these, the levels of complication seem almost unbearable. This is true for all High School students, no matter what grade they are in. What can one do to gain some measure of control and ease the stress? The answer is both education, early planning and hard work. In the words that follow, we will attempt to provide knowledge that hopefully will provide you with the tools to begin to move forward with the college planning process in a constructive way.

One of the first obstacles people became aware of surrounds the SAT and ACT testing. Testing centers were closed and for many high school Juniors that leaves them currently with no SAT or ACT scores to present to the colleges. The March, May and June SATs have been canceled as well as the ACTs. Where can one go for information? Collegeboard.org is a good source of information on the SATs. There is a link at the top of the page which can provide you with the most updated information regarding rescheduling tests, refunds if you paid for a canceled test and more. Act.org is the site for information regarding the ACT tests. There are a lot of rumors about some colleges making these tests optional this year. It is a good idea to keep abreast of these schools. You can go to fairtest.org in order to check for these schools. The situation is fluid so visiting the site often is advised. Juniors who have not taken a test face real issues because without the scores it is difficult to assess whether schools on the list are practical. They may have to apply to colleges and have the scores follow after applying and lists may need to change when scores do come in. In any event, building a good list of 8-10 schools is more important than ever. Planning is more critical than ever. There is a lesson to be learned for those high school students that are Sophomores or Freshman. Plan to study for the test in the summer between your Sophomore and Junior year and take at least one test in the fall of your Junior year.

A key part for many families in the college planning process is college tours. Sometimes it is difficult to visit a college and many times families wait until a student is accepted to go on the tours. This has led to another challenge this year as campuses are close to tours and accepted student days are virtual. Many students have taken virtual tours via the school's website. It may be a good idea to go to a neutral site to take the tours. Two recommendations are collettours.com and [www.youvisit.com](http://www.youvisit.com). If you want to make the tour more interesting, you can purchase an Oculus Rift that allows you to tour via 4d. This challenge provides another lesson for all high school students – go visit the colleges as early as you can. People think it is silly to have freshman or sophomores visit colleges but the more up front planning you can do the better off you will be.

There is a lot of conjecture about the Covid-19 virus coming back in the fall so I want to address a few other items that might be impacted next year. AP face-to-face exams were canceled this year but were replaced by a 45-minute online free-response exam at home. This may occur

next year, so don't hesitate to put AP classes on your list of courses for the upcoming school year.

Financially, be honest with yourselves about your ability to afford some colleges. You can't go bankrupt paying for school and if your plan to pay for school has been negatively impacted, you need to address that either on your own or with a professional. Remember a good plan is not one that will pay for year one or a first semester of your oldest child.

Juniors understand the issues they are facing but it is crucial that parents of freshman and sophomores learn from this and plan early. Go see colleges, build up the resume, prepare to take the SAT and/or ACT early, build that school list and refine it as needed. Solid planning and hard work can make all the difference during this difficult time.