
What Now? Bringing Certainty to the Uncertain Role of Standardized Testing during Covid-19

A guided discussion with Libby Udelson



Welcome!

Goals for Today:

- **Clarify** colleges' policies on standardized tests
- **Quell** students' anxiety about the admissions process
- **Create** a plan to move forward with the admissions process
- **Empower** students to take control of their admissions process





Agenda

1. How are we feeling?
2. Catching up
3. The Facts (and my opinion)
4. Concluding Thoughts, Q&A

About Me



Libby Udelson is a longtime ACT/SAT tutor approaching 12 years working with teenagers. She owns and runs Udelson Tutoring, which specializes in test prep and academic tutoring for high schoolers. She is based out of Santa Monica, CA.

Which most reflects how you're feeling right now about college admissions?

About the same as I was feeling before covid

More engaged - I feel like I need to make sure I'm on top of things

More relaxed - Colleges are being more flexible, so I feel less stressed

Detached - I feel like none of it matters anymore



– First things first: big changes since we last saw each other

- All LA schools moved to online learning for the rest of the academic year.
- All SAT test dates through the end of the school year were canceled.
- AP Exams were re-formatted into 45min online, open-note, test-at-home exams.
- The ACT canceled their April exam. Their next exam will be in-person on “June 13 as originally planned”...



Important distinction for today: Fact vs. Speculation



Facts for 2020 ACT/SAT, *as of now*

If public health situation permits:

ACT will hold in-person exams as planned on June 13 and July 18.

College Board will hold in-person SAT exams every month August-December

If schools are still closed:

Unclear what the ACT will do about June/July exams besides just canceling them.

College Board will hold *online, at-home* SAT exams every month August-December

Regardless of the covid situation:

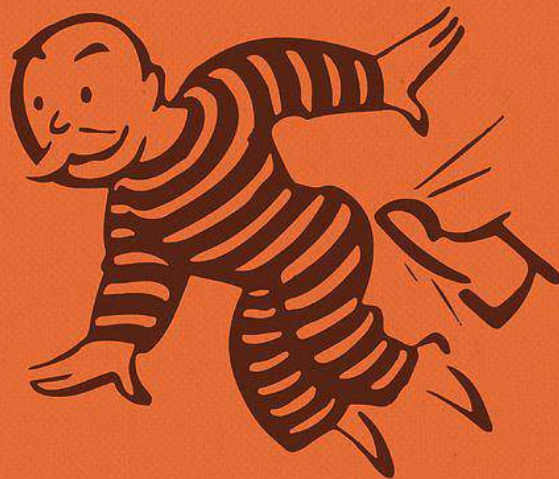
- The ACT will make *online, remote-proctored, test-at-home* exams available in addition to the in-person exams.
**these online exams will be avail "late fall/winter"
- The ACT will move forward with its plan to allow single-section retakes of exams.

Facts for the upcoming admissions cycle, *as of now*

- Many schools have decided to change their policy to test-optional indefinitely.
- Others will be test-optional for the upcoming admissions cycle only, or for a trial period to be re-evaluated in future years.
- Still other schools have not changed their test-policy at all and will expect applicants to submit an SAT or ACT score as usual...*as of now*

Chance

**GET OUT OF
JAIL FREE**



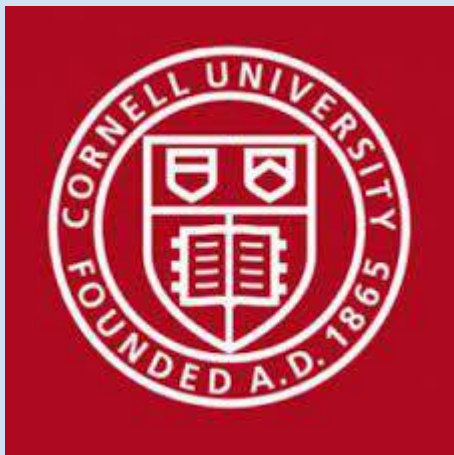
THIS CARD MAY BE KEPT UNTIL NEEDED OR SOLD

“Test-optional” ≠ “test blind”

- It is important to note that “test-optional” does not mean “test blind.”
- “Holistic” process means many factors are put together to tell a story about you
- Not submitting test means one less factor, a less complete picture of you



Case study: Cornell University

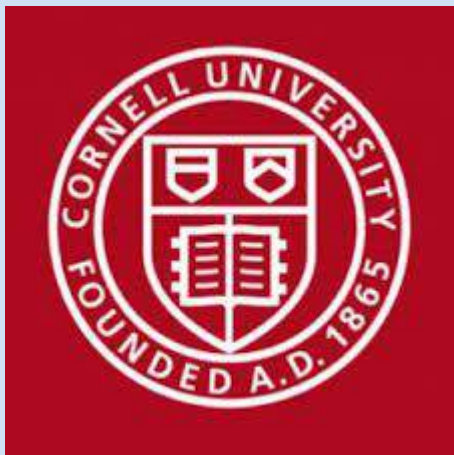


“In Cornell’s review during the 2020-2021 application cycle, results from the ACT or SAT might still be a meaningful differentiator in particular for students who:

- live near or attend a school that will be open, and where testing will be offered, or who live near a testing center that will be offering more testing seats or dates than they did in 2019; and
- have not experienced lost income for one or more of their household providers or other significant new hardships and losses during 2020.

We can’t pre-define in absolute, comprehensive terms what economic or personal disruptions will look like. We don’t plan to require any students to justify their reasons for not submitting test results, though we will hope to partner with applicants and their advocates throughout the reading period in order to understand each applicant’s circumstances.”

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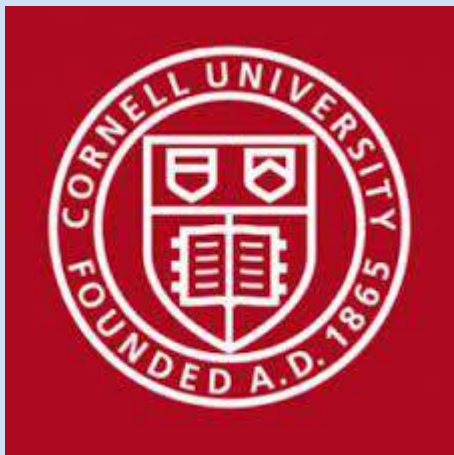


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Case study: Tulane University

“Whether or not an applicant should submit standardized test scores with their application is a decision that should be entirely left up to the applicant. If the applicant feels that their SAT or ACT score accurately reflects their academic aptitude, we welcome them to submit their scores. If an applicant feels that their score does not reflect their academic aptitude, there will be no penalty for this. Keep in mind that, even as we evaluate your application to determine your readiness for Tulane academics, we put equal weight on the components of your application that speak to your interest, passions, and engagements that may or may not be academically-related.”



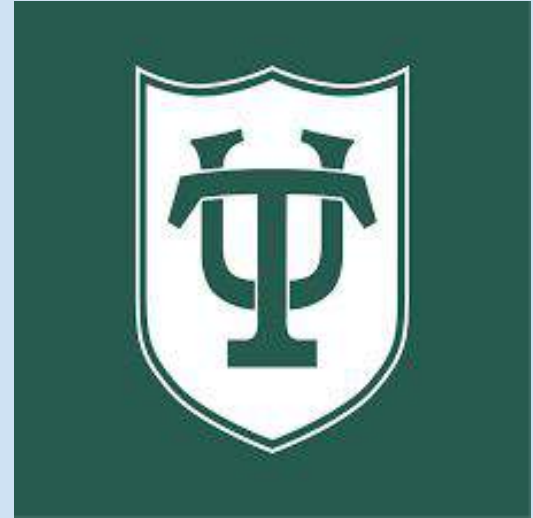
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Case study: the UCs



“Students applying for fall 2021 are not precluded from taking standardized tests (SAT or ACT) and sending scores if they are able. Doing so can support their statewide UC eligibility, application for certain scholarships, and help them fulfill some University graduation requirements. Campuses will adjust their internal processes accordingly to ensure that no student is harmed in admissions selection should they not submit a test score. This modification to the test requirement is not intended as an admissions policy shift but is rather a temporary accommodation driven by the current extraordinary circumstances.”

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— What do all these schools' policies have in common?

On the surface, a lot
...but also, nothing at all



-Moral of the story: business as usual, sorta

Determining next steps will depend on
the same 3 major factors:

1. You

2. The school

3. Your current score situation

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Next steps depend on **you**

- There's a lot of uncertainty right now, and it can be hard to motivate yourself to study for an exam that is not fastened to a particular date or even format.



- Are you up for studying despite that?
- If yes, great! Let's get to work -- at the very least, we should work on your critical reading skills, which are most subject to "brain drain" and are most fundamental to the test.
 - If the answer is yes, **you should probably continue studying.**
- If no, *that is totally okay.*

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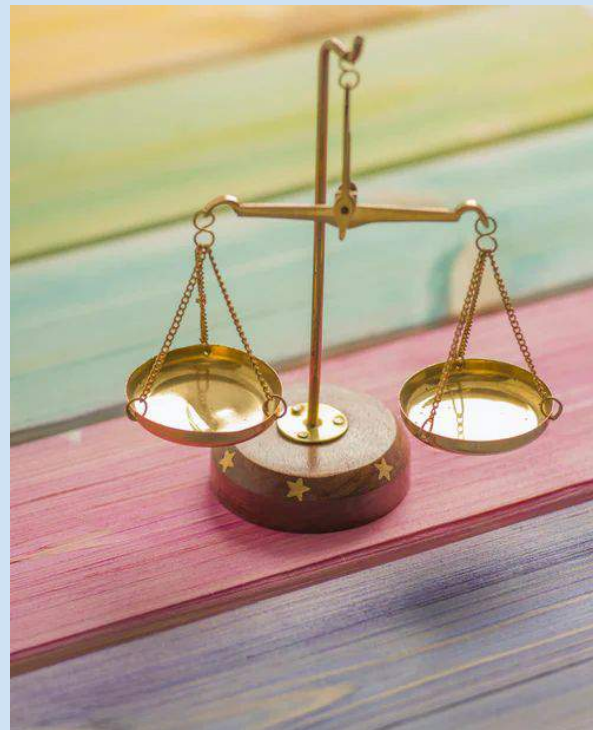
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Next steps depend on the school

- Unfortunately, many schools have not changed their standardized testing policies in the wake of covid-19, and may not do so until the future of stay-at-home becomes more clear
 - Continue to check the websites for these schools, especially if they're of high interest to you
- Fortunately, dozens of schools have already updated their standardized testing policies in the wake of covid-19, so those won't change.
 - For right now, lean into those schools, as they'll provide a sense of certainty as you consider how to move forward.



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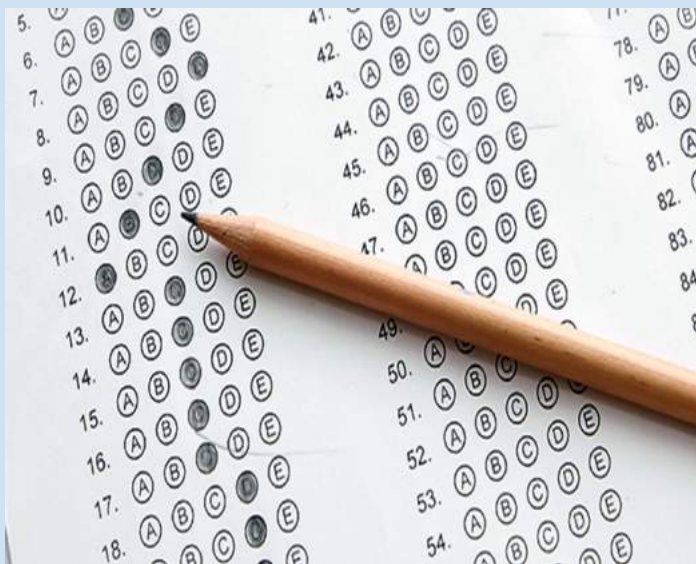
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Next steps depend on **your score situation**

- Some big questions will involve: Do I have an official score? If so, how does it stack up?
- And, going back to the school, what is the school's standardized test policy?
- And, going back to me, am I up for studying more?



When poll is active, respond at **PollEv.com/libbyudelson672**

Text **LIBBYUDELSO672** to **22333** once to join

What are the cons of continuing to study for SAT/ACT? What are the pros?



– Real life lessons with an early start

Wonderful opportunity for students to learn how to face big decisions!

- Collecting data
- Developing self-awareness
- Managing expectations
- Adjusting flexibly
- Trusting themselves, their intuition
- Becoming in charge of their education and their lives



Next steps for everyone, regardless of testing:

- Make a spreadsheet
- Keep researching schools
- Make friends with the admissions officers at your schools



Next steps for everyone, regardless of testing:

- Begin essay brainstorming -- there is no such thing as too early
- Consider summer plans -- make lemons out of lemonade

- What am I supposed to do this summer?
...do what you can.



– What am I supposed to do this summer?

- Write an outstanding essay.
- Channel your time and talent into something that matters.
- Read some thought-provoking books, and sharpen your critical reading skills in the process.
- Pursue knowledge, either by studying for the SAT/ACT or taking an online class
- Be creative and reflect.
- Give yourself a break. You deserve it!

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Remember...



- Good score > no score > not good score
- It will all work out!
- Unexpected or untraditional ≠ bad

... and Give yourself a break. You deserve it! (again)

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Anonymous Q and un-anonymous A! What questions do you have?



Your goodie bag for today:

- Live Google Doc of schools that have decided to adopt a test-optional policy
- Exclusive access to my original hand-drawn flow-chart (or “decision tree”)
- Live Google Doc of suggestions for how to spend your summer, even if you’re still at home

Thank you!