

## College Admissions Webinar Questions & Answers

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### Panelists:

Christi Hopkins, Vice President for Enrollment Management – McPherson College

[hopkinsc@mcperson.edu](mailto:hopkinsc@mcperson.edu)

Bobby Gandu, Assistant Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management & Director of Undergraduate Admissions – Wichita State University

[bobby.gandu@wichita.edu](mailto:bobby.gandu@wichita.edu)

Kindle Holderby, Director of Admissions – Emporia State University

[kholderb@emporia.edu](mailto:kholderb@emporia.edu)

Jon Armstrong, Director of Admissions – Fort Hays State University

[jdarmstrong@fhsu.edu](mailto:jdarmstrong@fhsu.edu)

Lisa Pinamonti Kress, Assistant Provost/Director of Admissions – University of Kansas

[lpkress@ku.edu](mailto:lpkress@ku.edu)

Scott Donaldson, Director of Admissions – Pittsburg State University

[scottdonaldson@pittstate.edu](mailto:scottdonaldson@pittstate.edu)

Molly McGaughey, Director of Admissions – Kansas State University

[mollymc@k-state.edu](mailto:mollymc@k-state.edu)

Jenny Hurtt, Director of Admissions – Colby Community College

[jenny.hurtt@colbycc.edu](mailto:jenny.hurtt@colbycc.edu)

Jennifer Callis, Vice President of Student Services – Salina Area Technical College

[jennifer.callis@salinatech.edu](mailto:jennifer.callis@salinatech.edu)

Joe Tinsley, Director of Admissions – Washburn University

[joseph.tinsley@washburn.edu](mailto:joseph.tinsley@washburn.edu)

### Questions & Answers:

**Q. What advice do you have for students who may be reconsidering their initial post-secondary plans due to COVID-19?**

**A.** This is certainly an unprecedented time for all students. Be assured that the colleges and universities will be patient with them as they make their decisions and work their way through that process. Students should trust the college search plan that they've already accomplished. They have invested a lot of time and energy into their college search. They should try not to let the fear of the unknown overcome them.

If students are thinking about taking some time off, taking a gap year, there is nothing wrong with doing that, but they do need to think about what they may be giving up. They are giving up an opportunity to go to college with their classmates and to get started on their collegiate career, whether that may be online or on campus and in-person. The fear of deferring admission for a year is that there is always the chance that the student won't go. Students should also consider that if they take a gap year, they may lose some of their initial scholarships, but this will depend upon each college or university. Bottom line,

there is a lot we don't know right now, and schools are considering all different scenarios but with the students' best interests in mind.

Making a quick decision to change your mind may not be the best decision in a couple of months down the road so just stick with the plan at the moment and give it a couple more weeks to see if things become clearer. Students and their families should stay in close touch with their admissions representatives to make sure that they're letting them know what their school's plans are. Open and honest communication is paramount as the colleges can help with these important decisions.

**Q. What are various institutions planning for New Student Orientation and what will fall enrollment look like for incoming freshmen who typically would have enrolled during New Student Orientation? Where will students receive information on these matters?**

**A.** The colleges and universities represented by this panel all indicated that they were going to have online enrollment/orientation for the fall semester for their students. They are all communicating with the students and parents about the schedule and dates. McPherson College stated that they are having weekly modules that focus on different themes, such as student life, registration, athletics, etc. The schools expressed that in many ways the virtual experience is even more personalized because it is a more hands-on approach with faculty working one-on-one with the parents and students, rather than the larger group setting that a typical New Student Orientation would have been. The key word at this time is flexibility; everyone knows that this will need to be a time that being flexible is critical.

**Q. If face-to-face courses are not offered at the student's selected institution in the fall and the student is not interested in online courses, what suggestions do you have for them regarding enrollment and sticking with their original planned institution?**

**A.** Many institutions have been delivering higher education online well before COVID-19. They have experience. It is not the ideal situation, nor one that students or the institutions wanted, but they should look at this as a short-term scenario. There is a concern that if a student sits out a semester or a year, they will lose the benefit and ability to network with their classmates to start to develop relationships with people at their college. Students should really challenge themselves and rethink their attitude about not beginning classes this fall if they are only offered online. Being flexible is a growth opportunity. Consider also that instructors, who haven't previously taught classes online, were asked to put their courses online this spring in a short period of time. The amount of discussion going on amongst faculty and best practices that they're all sharing with each other, have provided enormous lessons learned about the best ways to deliver their courses. Students in the fall will benefit from all the hard work that's happening right now across the institutions. Colleges and universities are also working together with their peers to ask, how are you handling this and what are you doing next, and how are you collaborating with departments that have taught courses online for years. It is amazing how resilient postsecondary institutions can be.

**Q. For current college students near me, who have now shifted to being home and not on campus, they feel what they miss most are the tutoring and success options that were available to them. What advice do you have for these students?**

**A.** That is very understandable. For some students it has been a huge struggle to shift to online learning. Colleges and universities realize that they must be able to provide more support to some of their students. As a result, many have increased their academic support systems and are getting this

information out to the students that this is available to them. The students just need to be willing to take advantage of that and reach out. The more support that an institution can offer a student, the better that is for their students.

**Q. Many scholarship funds are not awarded until students officially enroll. Some students are concerned about some (if not all) institutions not holding face-to-face classes in the fall and would like to wait to enroll until more information regarding the status of classes is available. What advice do you have for students and families who are relying on these scholarship funds but are concerned about the uncertainties of course delivery?**

**A.** For all admitted students and parents, just hold tight. Many colleges and universities do not know quite yet what the fall will look like though they are certainly hoping to be back on campus. That is certainly the goal. The answer to this question is going to be different at every college and university; there isn't a blanket answer about what those scholarships are going to look like. If the institutions move online, the questions regarding scholarships will be addressed at the time that announcement is made. Students should keep in touch with their schools regarding what the school's policy will be.

**Q. Will schools have any potential scholarship opportunities for those students who originally planned to go to school out-of-state, but now for financial reasons are considering an in-state school?**

**A.** That is a very good question because one of the critical things about this virus is the effect on family circumstances with the possibility of unemployment and significant disruption in their current financial situation. Some schools will still have scholarship funding available, as their foundations have identified additional funding to try to help students and their families mitigate this reality that is going to come with concerns about being able to fund their education. The best thing to do is to contact the financial aid office at the school that the student is wanting to attend to find out what their options might be.

**Q. Have there been any changes to admissions or scholarships for students who may not have an ACT score due to COVID-19?**

**A.** Fort Hays State University has temporarily changed their admissions criteria because of the testing centers being closed. They are using the GPA for admissions, if they do not have an ACT score on file. The University of Kansas requires a test score and GPA for admission. However, when the April ACT was cancelled students contacted them about what to do. The students were asked if they had never taken the ACT and if they hadn't, they are making admissions decisions based on their GPA. They will place a hold on the student until they have a test score. At some point, the students will have to take the test if they go to the University of Kansas. This is just something that is being done during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Although this question may be focused on current seniors, there is also a concern for the junior class as many have traditionally taken the ACT during the summer so that they have an opportunity to retake the test to improve their score, if they so desire. Hopefully with some of the test-at-home options that are coming, and more dates being offered, juniors will have the opportunity to test as many times as they would like as they rise into their senior year. McPherson College noted that they are giving some consideration to test optional for juniors.

**Q. Have any schools considered a late fall start such as September or October?**

**A.** For the Regents four-year institutions there are a certain number of days that students must be in class. This has certainly been discussed but it would not be an ideal plan to have a later start for the fall because at the other end you would bump against the holidays and into January. The ideal plan would be to just continue with the academic calendar as it is.

**Q. Do you all as admissions representatives recommend that high school students take some form of an online class before they graduate? Not only in the case of a COVID-19 situation, if it were to happen again, but just to be prepared for online delivery at postsecondary institutions?**

**A.** Students do get a lot of interaction online because some of their high school classes end up being online, or through Zoom format, and it does make an easier transition for them. Using different platforms like Odysseyware, that is often available at the high school level, is a good way to start transitioning and utilizing time management skills to prepare for online courses. Many institutions offer their general education courses online, so it is an opportunity for the students to test out online learning. Later, when things are back to more normal operations, perhaps it might work out better for a student to enroll in an online class so having that experience in high school will be advantageous to them. However, it really depends on the student and their level of motivation because online learning is a whole different level of motivation. Some students will excel in online courses, while others will find them very difficult since they require a lot of self-motivation and discipline.

**Q. Do you have any advice for students who might be having trouble engaging in taking online courses?**

**A.** One piece of advice might be to set up a one-on-one instruction time or meeting with the student's faculty members. That way there is at least the start of some relationship development. Some students have taken their own initiative and started Zoom study groups, and when they "hit the wall" they invite the professor into the group. Many professors have been quite flattered to be asked to be a part of the group. In a way, online learning isn't a lot different from in person learning. The same advice goes – you show up and be a participant in your education. You will get out of it what you put into it. The advice for faculty is the engagement is different, and they must make a concentrated effort to engage their students.

**Q. If a student takes a gap year will they still be eligible for the scholarships that they were originally awarded?**

**A.** This may vary by institution. In many cases, the students will continue their eligibility. However, if they take courses during that year at another institution and transfer those courses back, they will be considered a transfer student and are no longer eligible to receive freshman scholarships. That is the typical scenario. The COVID-19 pandemic may change these policies so students would want to check with the school's student financial aid office.

**Q. Are there still scholarship opportunities available currently for students?**

**A.** Most schools have extended their scholarship deadlines and have added additional scholarship funding because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students should check individual school's websites for updated information.

**Q. If a student is just below a cut-off score for the next level of scholarships and were planning to re-take the June ACT test, what happens if they no longer have that option?**

**A.** Many of the schools have made some adjustments to their requirements and are awarding based on GPA. However, the best advice would be to contact the financial aid office at the school to find out what their policy would be on this issue.