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Ideas for gift giving this year:

Zoom or FaceTime with an elderly or sick relative.

Do a favor for your mom or dad (or even a sibling!)

Spend time with a family member doing something they enjoy-you may learn something new about them!

Create an electronic thank you or holiday card for a teacher and let them know how much you appreciate their efforts.

Organize a virtual concert or recital with your friends and perform for your families or local nursing home.

Make someone breakfast in bed.

Do all of the household chores for a day.

Make a holiday card for your mailperson, trash, or recycle team and thank them for their efforts on your behalf.

Helpful Links

For info about SAT I, II, and AP Tests go to:

www.collegeboard.com

For info about ACT test go to:

www.act.org

For info about test optional schools go to:

www.fairtest.org/university/optional

For info about financial aid go to:

Tales from the Other Side: What Our Students Are Experiencing During COVID 19

The winter lull in academic activity brought relief to many of us as we had the opportunity to recharge, slow the pace of work and responsibilities, and prepare for a new, and hopefully, promising year. This month we continue our conversation about COVID 19, by speaking with our students about their experiences. The age ranges of the students who participated ranged from second grade through college, so the experiences have varied widely.

The most common challenge across the developmental lifespan has been that of social isolation. So many of our students miss “hanging out” with their friends, playing sports, going to get meals, and “just being able to spend time doing whatever with [their] friends.” One California high school student voiced a sense of loss with the absence of the ability to be physically present with his peers. “I don’t think any of us appreciated how much we valued each other’s company until we were deprived the chance to be with each other.” Another student in Pennsylvania shared the irony of the situation as she noted, “My parents used to nag me about getting out of the house so I could spend time with my friends in person. I always preferred to hang out on Instagram or FaceTime. Now that I don’t have the option to be with my friends in person, [being able to do so] is the thing I miss the most!” In keeping with the theme of social limitations, a college student cited that one of the biggest challenges was not being able to go out to restaurants. “While it sounds odd, I’ve always enjoyed being able to go out to eat with my family or friends or girlfriend. But now, I am stuck inside of my place having to order out and not being able to get a change of scenery.”

As with the Class of 2020, members of the Class of 2021 have faced many disappointments thus far. One high schooler stated, “The most difficult part of COVID 19 for me would be missing out on all of the things a normal senior would get to do. These past 3 years of high school, I have worked extremely hard and looked forward to being able to have a fun senior year. Not being able to see my friends on

www.FAFSA.ed.gov

www.fastweb.com

www.finaid.org

For college search info go to:

www.collegenavigator.gov

www.collegeprowler.com

To take a virtual tour of college campuses go to:

www.youniversitytv.com

www.youvisit.com

To learn about Colleges That Change Lives go to:

www.ctcl.org

Keeping on Track:

Seniors: Even though those applications are in, you must continue to keep those grades up. Colleges will be asking for mid-year reports as well as end-of-the-year transcripts. Note that your acceptances to college are contingent upon your continued performance in school. Don't forget to make sure you have met all scholarship deadlines and if you haven't already done so, fill out and turn in your CSS Profile and FAFSA forms.

Juniors: Think about the teachers you would like to write letters of recommendation for you. They should know you well and be able to speak to your work ethic and personal and academic growth. By the end of this month, talk with them about their willingness to write a letter of recommendation for you in the fall and ask them what information they need from you in order to write that letter. While spring is usually the time to go visit college campuses, that may not be possible this year. Take advantage of virtual tours on each college's website. Other resources include www.youvisit.com or www.youniversitytv.com. While a virtual tour may not be ideal, it does give you the chance to "travel" quickly from one geographic location to the next with no cost of time or money. Here is an article that highlights the benefits of virtual tours: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2019-07-30/how-to-make-the-most-of-virtual-college-tours>. Keep your activities going-even during the last months of this pandemic. What you accomplish in the face of COVID will impress your prospective colleges.

the weekends, go to football games, have study groups has been really upsetting. I am definitely more appreciative of the little things more than I have ever been."

For some students, the most difficult challenge for has been "perpetual boredom" and the quest to make each day interesting. Students have had to be creative with devising daily structure and identifying activities to do, some of which they might never have considered prior to the pandemic. One college freshman who is learning virtually from home has been involved in several home improvement projects including outdoor uplighting and landscaping. Another high school sophomore has used this time to focus on his physical well-being, scheduling nightly weightlifting and strength-enhancing sessions with his friends via FaceTime. Other students became very curious about the democratic process in the months, weeks, and days leading up to the 2020 election. One student remarked how he had "rediscovered" math games, something he admits came as an act of desperation!

When asked what parents, teachers, and professors could do to support them, the requests varied. Some voiced the need for compassion and understanding and to recognize how difficult this time has been for kids. One middle school student stated the need for parental support, "They can support me during this by just being there when I need help."

Some college students stated their schools did a good job of striking a balance between assigning work and giving them enough time to complete it. Some professors went so far as to grant extensions when students advocated for it. One student said it was important that parents "make us get out of the house for any reason at all." This could include an errand, taking a walk or a bike ride, or just driving through the neighborhood, all with the goal of getting a change of scenery.

A small segment of those surveyed, particularly those in middle school and high school, voiced that they felt teachers were assigning more work than they normally would in pre-pandemic years. Considering the circumstances, students said it would be helpful if teachers would treat this year like a regular year when it came to assignments.

When it comes to hope, many expressed that their greatest source of optimism stems from the promise of a vaccine. The majority of the students we spoke with feel the vaccine is the key to their freedom. "With the vaccine on its way, I can get outta here," said one optimistic high school sophomore. Another California fourth grader smiled as she said, "When I get the shot, I get to see my friends and go back to normal!" In addition to being reunited with friends, students look forward to being able to travel.

TEST UPDATES

ACT: Here is the link for the latest ACT information:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/covid-19.html>

SAT: Here is the link for the latest SAT information:

<https://pages.collegeboard.org/sat-covid-19-updates>

Pay it Forward: Do you know someone who is struggling with the shift to virtual classroom learning?? Send them this newsletter or forward us their contact information. We want to help!

Contact Us

<http://www.Academic-Ally.com>

Hannah@Academic-Ally.com

610 647-3959 ext. 105

The challenges students face are all very real, not unlike those of our teachers and parents. We hope that by engaging each demographic, everyone can come away from this dialogue with compassion and understanding for one another.
