

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

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Welcome back to College Bound Notre Dame's admissions podcast. We're super excited to be here with you for another season. Will be kicking it off with a kind of, all things, application to Notre Dame. I'm Maria Finan. I am a senior assistant director in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and I'm also a Double Domer. I received my bachelor's and master's degrees at Notre Dame in English, and I'm here with my co-host who will introduce himself.

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Yeah. Hey, everyone, this is Zach Klonsinski. Happy to be back for College Bound for another season. I'm an assistant director here in our Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I am a graduate of Notre Dame. Like Maria, I'm a 2017 graduate majoring in history with minors in business, economics, and journalism, originally from Belgrade, Montana. So really excited to be kind of kicking off the season with kind of an update episode, mostly focusing on our academic kind of review of applications and important information that you might want to know about Notre Dame.

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And then also at the end, wrapping up with just some general updates about college applications in general that you might find helpful for you this fall if you're a rising senior or if you're advising a rising senior. So I will now toss it back to Maria to give a really exciting update for here at Notre Dame.

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Yeah, so we're really excited. We just found out that the test optional pilot at Notre Dame has been extended for an additional year. So we have been test-optional for the past two years. We knew we were going to be test-optional for seniors who are applying this year, but we will also be test-optional for students who are current juniors. So we're really excited, just kind of about that news. I think it's been something that we really enjoyed reading in our academic review process and we often kind of get a lot of questions about test-optional, you know, are we really test-optional? What has that looked like now that we have two years of data? We've seen that it's been about 50/50 in terms of students choosing whether or not to apply with a test score.

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So, of course, if you submit your test score, we do look at that. That is part of our review process, but you don't have to submit a test score. And so we'll give a little bit of advice about whether or not you should submit one. But I'll let Zach talk a little bit more about that specifically.

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Yeah. So thanks. I love this question. I understand it's really important and really top of mind. And I always toss it back to students because we at Notre Dame want to see your strongest application. And your strongest application may or may not include a test score. Maybe you weren't even able to take a test. Still, I know there are still some of those kind of backlogs that are affecting students. You may have also just not been properly caffeinated on a Saturday morning. And we also hear that as well. So when thinking about whether or not to submit a test score to Notre Dame, ask yourself these three questions.

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Does it represent your academic ability, your academic potential and your academic record? If the answer to that is yes, great. You feel that that might be something that adds to your strongest application. If you're not sure or the answer is no, then that probably means you feel that that does not add to your strongest application and that your strongest application is one that does not have a test score on it. That's great.

Either way, we want to see your strongest application. So again, does it represent your academic potential, your academic ability, your academic record? So that then, of course, begs the question, Maria, as we are reading applications that may or may not have a test score, how are we really reading for that academic success, especially in applicants who are who have applied test-optional?

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Yeah, I think that's a great question. And for all applicants, whether or not you should submit your test score or you opt not to. The first thing we're going to look at is the rigor. And so I think a big thing to emphasize with our academic review process and of course with our non-academic review process is that everything is taken in context. So we're looking at what is offered at your high school. At some high schools, it's the International Baccalaureate program that's the most rigorous curriculum. Some high schools have advanced placement.

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Others offer dual enrollment or honors curriculum. Some high schools don't even have specific honors curriculum. So we're really looking at what was offered, and our hope is that we'll see you challenging yourself in the context of your high school. We want to see you challenging yourself across different subject areas. So think of your core subject areas, classes, things like math, science, social studies, English, foreign language. Challenge yourself across those different subject areas.

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And then also think about, you know, taking multiple rigorous classes. That being said, we always remind students, you know, just because your high school might offer 30 AP classes does not mean that we expect you to take 30 AP classes. We want you to sleep and be involved in extracurriculars and take care of yourself. We also look at academic performance, so that would be kind of the other piece and we want to see you doing well. So, you know, if you tried to take 30 AP classes, you might not earn the best grades that you possibly could.

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We'll look at things like your grades, your GPA, we'll look at class rank if your high school ranks. We know a lot of high schools don't. And we often kind of get questions about like, what about my weighted GPA versus my unweighted GPA or weighted rank versus unweighted rank. We prefer if we have weighted rank to look at that just because it accounts for the difficulty of your classes. So we think that's a great piece. But we also know that there are plenty of schools, plenty of states that don't provide weighted rank.

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So that's why we're looking at both rigor and, of course, that academic performance piece to see how are you challenging yourself and within the context of that challenge, how are you doing in your specific classes? So that's a little bit of kind of our academic review process, but there are a couple of other reminders that we do want to provide for you as you're working on your application and as you're getting started. So Zach, any good pieces of wisdom or changes or updates that students can keep in mind as they're starting their application process?

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Yeah, absolutely. And I'll start with some general updates. So Notre Dame and many other schools across the country accept multiple applications. At Notre Dame, you can apply through the Coalition Application. You can also apply through Questbridge and you can also apply what was previously known as the Coalition Application that is now called Apply Coalition on Scoir. So when you see that it is another application that you can use to apply to Notre Dame and many other partner schools in a similar

way to the Common Application kind of has a main base application that schools can provide supplements.

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But again, the Coalition Application has now rebranded itself to be called Apply Coalition on Scoir. And we want students to know that if you see something that encourages you to Apply Coalition on scoir, that is a college application and that you're able to fill out. Additionally, all of the applications across the country are keeping the covered question or essentially giving you a space to address how the COVID 19 pandemic affected you. This might be anything from it really impacted your family and potentially you lost a family member to COVID all the way to.

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You were not able to take certain classes because your school had to cut back on the opportunities offered to them or anything like that. Anything that COVID impacted your life with and that you feel is important to present on your college application as important context that will be provided on all those applications as a separate question. So you don't need to write your essays about it. You absolutely can if you would like to. But if there is additional information, you feel that we should really know that COVID question will still continue to be available on the general applications and that you're going to probably be using to apply to most of your colleges.

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Then transitioning just to a couple Notre Dame specific reminders, I want to start with our deadlines. So we have two deadlines here in Notre Dame. One is Restrictive Early Action, the other one is Regular Decision. Restrictive Early Action is November 1st. Regular Decision is January 1st. Restrictive Early Action is not binding. You do not have to apply or you don't have to come to Notre Dame if you apply early and are accepted. You have until May 1st to make that decision just as if your applied Regular Decision. The only piece that we ask is that if you are going to apply ...

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Restrictive Early Action to Notre Dame, we ask that you do not be applying to another school's binding early decision process. It is the binding piece that is key. As long as you are applying, you not applying to a binding institution early, you are absolutely welcome to apply Restrictive Early Action at Notre Dame. We also have a great page on our website that outlines how we treat REA versus RD at Notre Dame. Generally, Spark Notes, we want to see your strongest application whenever you are ready to submit it.

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If you need that extra couple of months, apply Regular Decision. We do not here at Notre Dame, give extra weight to students who apply early. We want to see your strongest application and know that for many reasons that might take until January 1st in your senior year for it to be complete. We also do have our evaluation criteria posted on our website, not only for the academic side, but also the non-academic side, which is episode two. We'll be getting to my best advice. Use your favorite search engine. Simply search. Notre Dame evaluation criteria. If you're on the admissions web page and you're getting to a Notre Dame evaluation criteria, you found the right spot.

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It's all laid out there for you and will be very helpful for you in your process just to keep all these things in mind.

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Awesome. Thanks so much for that, Zach. And as Zach mentioned, we will be diving into our non-academic review process in the next episode. But thank you so much for joining us again for this season of College Bound. We can't wait to talk more about the admissions process with you and help you out as you are applying to Notre Dame this fall.