

## FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

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Welcome back to College Bound Notre Dame admissions podcast. We're super excited to welcome you back for another season, talking all about the admissions process and applying to Notre Dame. My name is Maria Finan and I'm an assistant director in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions here on our Western team, and this season I'm excited to introduce my new co-host back, so I'll pass it over to Zach to introduce himself.

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Hey, Maria. Thanks for having me this year and now we're really excited to bring you another great season. Hi, everyone. My name is Zach Klonsinski. I'm an assistant director as well in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I am on the central regional team. Starting about my fourth term here in the office, as well as a 2017 Notre Dame graduate. If my voice sounds somewhat familiar, it's because I was the first ever guest on the College Bound podcast, so it's very exciting to now have a more recurring role and be with you here today, Maria.

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So in our first episode of this season, we're kind of going to have an amalgamation of topics, all of them pretty relevant, especially at this time. And with the world being as it is, still, we can talk a little bit about COVID, how to present it on your application. We're going to talk about test optional at Notre Dame. Basically, are we still test optional? How do you present test optional? How do you think through Test optional? And then we'll also give you a rundown of our deadlines. And as you're thinking about which deadlines you'd like to apply to.

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That's a really important question to be asking. So let's get it rolling, Maria.

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Yeah, Zach, and if you wouldn't mind, can you kick us off just talking a little bit about COVID and how to present that in an application?

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Yeah, so on the COVID impact section of the Common App and the Coalition Application, we really want to make sure that we are understanding if there's anything important that impacted your family. This could be unfortunately losing a family member and we hope all of you and your loved ones are healthy and doing well and finding joy at this time. It could also be that your family was otherwise impacted, either through serious illness or losing a job, or any other extended effects. So you can really make sure that if we need to know anything in that section, you can share it there.

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But also, was there any activity or were there any activities at school that you were not able to do? Maybe you were, you know, not able to do some sort of events for the clubs that you were a part of or anything like that that that can be important for us to see there. But just as importantly and probably more importantly, it's also focus on what you were able to do instead. Don't just say I wasn't able to do this and wasn't able to do this, but really think about what what did COVID bring me instead, what other doors opened for me that wouldn't have otherwise. And so really think about that and share that with us.

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If you feel it's necessary, this COVID impact section is completely optional. You do not have to fill it out, but it is space for you to share that with us. If you do need more room for anything, the Common App and the Coalition Application do have an additional information section now where you can expound further on anything you feel needs to be in your application. In terms of Questbridge application, there's not necessarily a specific COVID section. However, there are lots of other opportunities, like an additional information section, like family information, like household information that if something from COVID applies to one of those sections, you can absolutely put it there.

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And we absolutely want to make sure that we're understanding, you know, your application in the context of how you and your family experience COVID in the last two years or so.

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I have a quick follow up question for you, Zach. Do you recommend that students include things about COVID, like in their main personal statement?

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You can if you feel that it needs to be there, however, you absolutely do not have to. I think that is completely up to you. I think there are lots of other opportunities for you to share kind of what COVID or what the impact of COVID was on your life that it certainly doesn't need to be in your personal statement. You are you and your person are much bigger than than the impact of COVID and what it's been on you as well. So really, it can be it does not need to be. And truly, there are lots of other opportunities to talk about it in other places on whatever application you use to apply to Notre Dame.

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Yeah. And I would kind of echo that to say that we probably would prefer you don't use your personal statement to talk about COVID partially because that's really how we're getting to know you. And that's kind of our big goal from your personal statement is to have a sense of who you are as a person, what you're passionate about and what you would be like in college.

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Yeah, so, Maria, let's jump to now to our second section, which is on the idea of test optional and I'll let you kind of explain, is Notre Dame still test optional? What does that look like at Notre Dame and how should students be thinking about that when they're making, compiling and creating their application to the University?

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Definitely. So we were test optional for the first time this past year, which was really exciting for us, and we will be test optional for at least the next two years. So if you're currently a junior or senior in high school, we will be test optional. I think one of the most common questions that Zach and I and the other admissions counselor get is, are you really test

optional? Is it really an option to submit a test? Yes, it is genuinely optional. You get to make the decision whether or not you apply with the test.

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I know that another question we get asked a lot is how many students apply without test last year. And the answer is about 50 percent. So about half the applications we received last year didn't submit a test score. Of course, with that, the follow up question is also usually what percentage of students were admitted last year without a test, and over a third of students were admitted last year without a test. So if you're thinking about should I submit my test score, I think the best thing to do is ask yourself, does the score reflect your academic ability, your academic potential, your classroom performance? Do you feel like your test score is going to add to your application? If the answer to that question is yes, go ahead and submit it.

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If you don't have a test score or you don't feel like your test score supports those things, you don't have to submit it. We really want you to feel empowered to make the decision that's right for you. I think people always want like a a number from us of like, what score should I submit? We don't have a score to share with you. If you're looking for advice, though, your high school counselor could be a great person to ask. If you'd like a little bit of feedback on that question, yeah.

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And then one last follow up question on this, Maria, I know there can be a variety of reasons why a student does not submit a test score. It could be that, you know, they did not get a score that they thought, as you said, match their academic ability or academic potential and can also be that they just weren't able to take an exam. Does this matter when when they're thinking about whether to submit a test score, it's an undertaking.

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No. So why you don't have a test score? Does it matter to us whether it was because you don't feel that score represents the academic potential or you haven't been able to access testing? We know that there is still difficulty still difficulty accessing testing right now. The number one thing to ask yourself when it comes time to take a test is can I do so safely?

Your health and safety are the most important thing. So do not endanger yourself to take a test when it is truly an optional choice and an optional piece of your application.

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There's also nowhere on our application where we're going to ask you, why did you not submit a test score or anything like that? So it certainly does not matter to us make the decision that is going to be best for your application and putting your best application forward. And we're really excited to see those applications this year.

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Yeah, Zach. And speaking of applications, we've got deadlines coming up. So would you mind kicking us off and talking about the first deadline that students can apply to Notre Dame this year?

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Yeah. So we have two deadlines. One is called Restrictive Early Action, the other is Regular Decision. A Restrictive Early Action deadline is November 1st. It is non-binding. You still have until May 1st if you're admitted to accept our offer of admission, just as if you'd applied regular decision. The piece that it is restrictive about Restrictive Early Action is that if you're going to apply Restrictive Early Action to Notre Dame, we ask that you do not apply REA if you're applying to another institution's binding early decision program, there may be some other names out there for it.

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But the key is we do not want you to apply early to Notre Dame if you are applying to another binding early program at another institution. We spent a lot of time working on applications, reading them, really trying to get to know our students, and then if we find out that we spent all that time on a student, we admitted them and then they got accepted to a binding institution. Notre Dame never really had a chance, and that was a lot of time and effort we could have put on another application. So we just asked that again, if you are going to apply to a binding early decision somewhere else, you just wait to apply Regular Decision at Notre Dame.

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You can still apply to other schools early at Notre Dame. We're not single choice Restrictive Early Action. We just want to know that you are not applying to another binding program. So, Maria, what's what's Regular Decision then?

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Yeah, so Regular Decision, that's our January 1st deadline, and that's a great option for students who are considering Early Decision somewhere else. So by Regular Decision, you would have heard from your early decision school about whether or not you've been accepted. We see more of our students in our applicant pool applying during Regular Decision than we do in early. So it's usually about a third of students apply in early and about two thirds apply in regular. And I think like one of the big questions is which deadline should I apply for?

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So Zach, would you offer maybe a little bit of advice as students are making that decision?

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Yeah, and this is why I say Notre Dame is a highly selective institution. It is difficult to get in and that is easily the worst part of Maria and I's jobs. However, that also means that we want to see your best application. When you're thinking about which deadline should you apply for, think about am I ready to submit my best application in October of my senior year? If the answer is yes, great, submit it. If the answer is no for any reason, whether it's working on essays, whether you've got some extracurricular activities coming up that you want us to know about any reason at all, that you feel you can make your application better for regular decision,

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go ahead and wait those extra couple of months. If it's October 31st and you're trying to rewrite essays, trying to make sure another letter of recommendation is taken care of, trying to make sure that your activity section is right, that's probably a great sign you're not ready to let go of your application. You can benefit from those extra couple of months just to make sure that you feel you're submitting your best application to Notre Dame. So with that,

said Maria, how much of the class is admitted in REA versus Regular? That's another question we get all the time.

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Yeah, and it's a great one, and it does vary a little bit from year to year. So traditionally, we hover around forty five percent of the class comes from early. Last year, we were closer to about forty nine percent. Last year was an interesting year. We got more applications than we've ever received and also had a larger early pool than we've seen. We obviously cannot predict what this year is going to look like. So really up to you kind of when you apply and again, when you feel you can submit the strongest application, but that do you want to kind of maybe put an asterisk on our Restrictive Early Action admit rate?

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Yeah, and so people always look at that right and you say, well, it's obviously easier to get in than if you're almost half the class last year came from Restrictive Early Action. And that's that's not really true because REA applicants, by definition, they are typically stronger applications. On average, they are the ones who are ready to submit their application in October of their senior year. That's why they're applying early so that they can find out earlier. It's so, it's, it's always this idea of, yes, we we do see more of our class, maybe by percentage, will come from REA,

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but it's not because we're admitting less qualified candidates in REA, it's just there's a higher percentage of highly qualified candidates in our REA pool. So with that said, kind of our last question, I think for the day, is it easier or harder to get in during one deadline or the other, Maria?

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No. So I think Zach kind of did a nice job qualifying this. We often see again our more confident applicants in early. We also see some incredibly strong applicants in regular. Some of those students who maybe weren't ready to submit for one reason or another. Maybe they applied early decision somewhere else. We're excited to have an opportunity to convince those students why they should come to Notre Dame, but we're reading for the

same things in both deadlines. We always aim to admit 50 percent or more of the class in Regular Decision, knowing that many of you just need a little more time.

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So it's not easier or harder to get in one deadline or the other. The math looks a little bit different between those two deadlines, but as I explained, it's because a third of applicants apply early and two thirds apply in regular. So we really want to emphasize do what's right for you. Submit testing if you feel it adds to your application. Don't submit testing if you can't access it or it doesn't. Apply early if you feel ready. Don't apply early if you don't feel ready. There's a lot of aspect of choice in this process and knowing yourself and when you can submit the best application.

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Thanks for tuning in today. Zach and I are so excited that you're joining us for another season on college bound. Next episode, we're going to be debunking admissions myths. Some of those are general, and some of those are Notre Dame specific. So be sure to tune in to the next episode as we talk to you through some of the most persistent admissions myths that we see. Thanks so much.