

COVID-19 affects early decision applications for incoming students

Elon is receiving fewer early decision applications during an unusual school year impacted by COVID-19

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The college application process is always stressful, but this year, high school seniors have even more on their minds than normal. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created more variables for students deciding where to go to college, and students that had been thinking about applying early decision to their top-choice college are reconsidering.

Colleges and universities offer three main types of applications — early decision, early action and regular decision. Early action and regular decision applications are typically submitted at the end of October and December respectively, and they do not commit a student to the school.

Early decision is typically submitted by Nov. 1, and is binding. Students can only apply to one school early decision, and if they get into that school, they must go. Although early decision is not technically legally binding, it automatically enrolls a student at their college if they get in.

Elon University offers all three of these options and on average, 393 students apply early decision per year. This year, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a wrench into the college application process. As the pandemic has impacted the economy and workforce, many students have had to reevaluate what schools they can realistically afford, and with closed campuses and locked down travel, many students have not been able to visit colleges.

According to the Vice President



This year Elon University has seen a lower amount of early decision applications at 261 which is down from 372 from last year.

of Undergraduate Admissions Greg Zaiser, Elon received 261 early decision applications this year, compared to 372 applications last year.

Applicants in 2020 are also taking into consideration how the colleges that they're applying to are handling the pandemic. Elon early decision applicant and high school senior Camilla Bondy said she

hopes restrictions will be eased by next year, but the way colleges are handling the pandemic is still important.

"I hope this will be over by the time I get into college, but I did take [how colleges are handling the COVID-19 pandemic] into account just because I want to feel safe in my college environment," Bondy said.

Bondy made the decision to look at Elon

EARLY DECISION APPLICATIONS BY THE NUMBERS

261

early decision applications have been submitted so far this year, compared to the 372 applications last year, according to Vice President of Admissions, Greg Zaiser

after her college counselor recommended it to her in August of this year. Elon's campus was one of only two schools that she visit during the application process in early October. She said visiting the campus was the deciding factor.

"I think it is definitely harder [for applicants], especially if they don't get the chance to visit," Bondy said. "I feel like that's a really big part of where you go. I feel like you have to see it."

Applicants for Fall 2021 have the option of applying to Elon with a test-optional program. In the past, Elon has required SAT or ACT scores in the application process, but due to the pandemic, many high school students were not able to sit for the exams.

Although Bondy was able to take both the SAT and ACT once, she opted to utilize this year's test-optional program.

"I think that colleges should go test-optional because of the situation we are in," Bondy said. "It's not fair to students who haven't gotten the opportunity to take it to have to submit a score."

Although the early decision numbers are lower than in previous years, Zaiser said Elon has already received 14% more early action and regular decision applications — the two non-binding options — than at this point last year.

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