

Your College Essay is More Important than Ever

by Kelly Onanian



I am so proud of our young adults who have persevered through these tumultuous and unprecedented times due to COVID-19. I have heard the frustration (and sometimes funny stories) about being cooped up with siblings and parents, having to share computers to get schoolwork done – kids feeling ZOOMED out! Who ever thought that would be a thing?

As this “virtual” school year comes to a close and some districts remain uncertain of how they will proceed next year, there is one thing that IS CERTAIN: your college essay is MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER! I can’t think of a better time than the present for juniors and seniors to start crafting it out.

Several colleges and universities are easing SAT requirements in response to COVID-19 (some even going so far as to not require them) making the essay the most integral part of college admission decisions. Now don’t get me wrong. The SAT and ACT AREN’T GOING AWAY; but for right now, in some cases, they are taking an unprecedented back seat to the essay. If you want your essay to stand out amongst the stack of



essays flooding the desks of admission offices, you’d better get busy because you will need to be ANYTHING BUT BORING.

“The cookie cutter stuff is what makes me bang my head against my desk,” said John

Ferguson, Admissions Counselor at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. “Nine times out

of ten, an essay doesn’t do much for me because I read a thousand essays and they’re not much different from anyone else’s. Sometimes I wonder... did you or your English teacher write it?”

Ferguson has loads of great advice (which I will share with you during our writing sessions) that most students might never think of. For instance, he suggests, “Get to know your college admissions counselor, address [your essay] to them and make it relatable to them because that’s who is going to be reading your essay. For example, I read an applicant’s essay about their mother who had breast cancer,” Ferguson said, “and that’s relatable to me because I’ve been involved in non-profits for cancer. I like to hear about people’s struggles, failures, and successes. I don’t think a lot of people know who their admission counselor is. Get to know them, be real with them because they’re real people.”

So how do you get to really know an admissions counselor? We can discuss more of that as well, but until then, start thinking about what will make YOU stand out. There is definitely something.

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“Why College Essays are More Important During COVID-19,” Lynn O’Shaughnessy, The College Solution, July 29.2020

<https://www.thecollegesolution.com/why-college-essays-are-more-important-during-covid-19/>