



## Adapting to Distance Learning for College Counselors **What's Worked For Us**

**Connect:** One-on-one talks have always been the centerpiece of our program and method of offering support, so we've made individual conversations a priority—now via videoconference. We're staying on track with our philosophy and keeping isolation at bay!

**Chat:** Our communication platform has a chat function, which is useful for quick check-ins and questions from students, while keeping the space safe and appropriate.

**Calendar:** Scheduling websites like calendly make it easy for students to know when and how to reach us, saving time and hassle on email. Build out your meeting hours carefully to preserve unblocked and prep time.

**Structure and buffer:** Working outside our home time zone, we've stretched to meet families where they are, but also protect ourselves. Even in the same time zone, working online from home can lead to an endless work day. Structure and planned breaks help.

**Keep the long view:** We've persisted with our office vision—and even if things snap back to normal quickly, we've planned as if this will be the mode for a while. Continuing to develop and apply our method grounded in identity and enduring skills helps our morale!

**All-school communication:** Families across grade levels worry about the impact of distance learning on college admission; we've relied on relationships within college admissions to collect reassurances and updates, and we communicate frequently to put the community at ease.

**Centralize info:** We've created a COVID-19-oriented College Counseling Hub on our website to address long term and short-term concerns.

**Mix messages:** We've been bold with technology, experimenting with small ways to enhance our impact. We learned early that a mix of short video messages (4 minutes is ideal), paired with bulleted highlights with translation, works for our community.

**Keep it simple:** It's easy to overload students and overcomplicate your work with new digital tools. Use your learning management system, existing counseling platform, your school's video conferencing method, and straightforward messaging.

**Office Hours:** For FAQs, timely student lessons (how to do research, how to request recommendation letters), we've liked Focused Office Hours with advertised topics.

**Teamwork:** So that everyone is on point, in touch, and working together to support kids, we've stayed connected with colleagues, and try to keep our meetings light-hearted. It feels good!

**Keep your perspective:** We've worked on staying flexible during this global situation which now involves 776 million students in 100 countries; conversations with colleges and testing agencies have been evolving for weeks, and they will continue as the situation expands.

**Exercise your power:** Our conversations have impacted policy and procedure for major testing agencies and for universities. Advocate and inform. It matters.

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