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## COVID-19 has some college students taking a gap year

Christine Pitawanich 1 day ago



Some college students are getting ready to head back to school in the middle of a pandemic, but others have decided to skip classes this year even though they got in.

Luke Gladen-Kolarsky is one of the students who has decided to take a gap year. He just graduated this spring from Lincoln High School in Portland. He said he's known since middle school that he wanted to attend college to pursue music.

"I'd kind of been taking the most rigorous classes," said Gladen-Kolarsky.

He spent a lot of his time in high school preparing to get into college.

"I used to make my life entirely about extracurriculars before COVID hit," he said. "I've always known having a lot of extracurriculars is a plus when applying for colleges."

He applied to about nine colleges and got in at one of his top choices.

"I am going to go to The New School in Manhattan," Gladen-Kolarsky said with a huge smile. "It's exciting."

But that excitement was short lived because of COVID-19.

"Manhattan is so central. For a while it was like the epicenter of where the virus was and things were so bad there," he said. "I knew that New York would probably not be the best place to be this coming fall."

He also realized he wouldn't be getting the same college social experience, and tuition



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started, I found out that online

his school year. It was a

disappointing decision for him.

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Julia Surtshin, the independent college counselor and certified educational planner who founded **College Ahead**, said Gladen-Kolarsky isn't the only student making that decision.

"Some schools are reporting that up to 20% of their incoming freshman for this year have opted to take a deferral," Surtshin said, "basically a gap year."

With some students deciding to defer this year, one concern is the potential for fewer spots in the fall of 2021 for now-rising seniors, since that's when the students who deferred this fall will go back to school.

Meantime, Gladen-Kolarsky said most of his friends are not deferring, but are staying closer to home.

"When you defer, there's kind of this feeling of being left behind because everyone else is starting school in the fall," he said.

So for the next year, Gladen-Kolarsky will keep himself occupied.

"I've applied for a bunch of jobs. So I'm going to work full time," he said, and "basically, financially and mentally preparing for going back to school,"

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In addition, he said he's been working on putting enough songs together for an album. It's been a dream of his for a while.

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EDUCATION · Published August 18

# Startups eye college-aged students taking gap year during coronavirus pandemic

The companies include Postmates and venture firm Contrary Capital



By [Jeanette Settembre](#) | [FOXBusiness](#)

## Colleges welcoming students back to campus amid coronavirus pandemic

Iona College president Dr. Seamus Carey discusses how his college has reopened safely after being one of the first universities to close its doors when the pandemic broke out.

[Startups](#) are recruiting would-be [college](#) students taking a year off during the [coronavirus](#) pandemic with more schools going virtual only.

Some freshman-aged students who won't be able to take college courses inside a classroom, catch a football game or partake in Greek life and parties this fall as a result of COVID-19 are taking time off to look for internships and paid work instead, research suggests. So some Silicon Valley-based companies are taking advantage of the influx of potential new hires.

Startups are catering to college-aged students considering taking a gap year during the coronavirus pandemic. (Photo by Matthew Hatcher/Getty Images)

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Venture firm Contrary Capital, which has [raised money](#) from [Tesla](#) and Reddit, is offering up \$100,000 to five teams of entrepreneurs who take a year off from school to start [a company](#), [Bloomberg reported](#).

Other companies, like food-delivery service Postmates, will consider letting its summer interns on its robot-delivery team continue working through the school year should they choose to take the gap year, while web security startup Lumos will shell out close to \$80,000 for four-fulltime college-aged students to work on projects during the school year, according to Bloomberg

It's an attractive and perhaps even lucrative option for many students who may not think it's worth shelling out thousands of dollars per semester to be learning via Zoom and forgoing the actual college experience.

Indeed, in May, 16% of high school seniors said they would take a gap year, according to a survey by higher education market research firm [Art & Science Group](#). And colleges and universities across the country continue to grapple with how to safely open to students amid recent outbreaks.

### **CORONAVIRUS CLUSTER FORCES UNC TO CANCEL IN-PERSON CLASSES**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which had resumed in-person classes, reported COVID-19 cases in its student housing including dorms, a private apartment complex [and in a fraternity](#). Now, classes have been moved to online-only, the university [announced on Monday](#).

### **CORONAVIRUS PUSHES COLLEGES TO THEIR BREAKING POINT**

And other colleges like Penn State University are even giving students [agreements to sign](#) saying they acknowledge the dangers and risks of COVID-19 ahead of returning to class, which some have called [liability waivers](#).

The pandemic could put some colleges and universities past their financial breaking point. Schools may see a 15% decline in enrollment next fall and a whopping \$45 billion plunge in revenue from room and board and tuition, according to the American Council on Education as [reported by the Wall Street Journal](#).

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NEWS

# College freshmen opting for gap year as COVID-19 changes fall 2020 semesters

By RINA TORCHINSKY

THE MORNING CALL

AUG 16, 2020 AT 7:00 AM





With many universities opting for online instruction — and some without tuition deductions — some students are considering a gap year. (Kzenon/Getty Images/iStockphoto)

Isaac Toub was in eighth grade when he first considered taking a gap year before college. At the end of middle school, he felt like it would be a good way to get out of school for a year. But today, as he prepares to start traveling — with money he earned from juggling delivery jobs this summer — it's become something much bigger.

“It's kind of like an opportunity to do whatever you want, take a year, and settle into yourself,” the 18-year-old said. “You can do a lot in a gap year.”



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Initially, the Cheltenham, Montgomery County, resident planned to travel the world before starting school at Drexel University. He envisioned three months in Europe, ringing in the New Year in Amsterdam before stops in Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. He planned to meet a friend in Madrid before traveling to Israel for four months.

But as the coronavirus pandemic wreaks havoc across continents, his plans are up in the air. And starting college right now won't provide the "authentic experience" he's looking for in his first year.

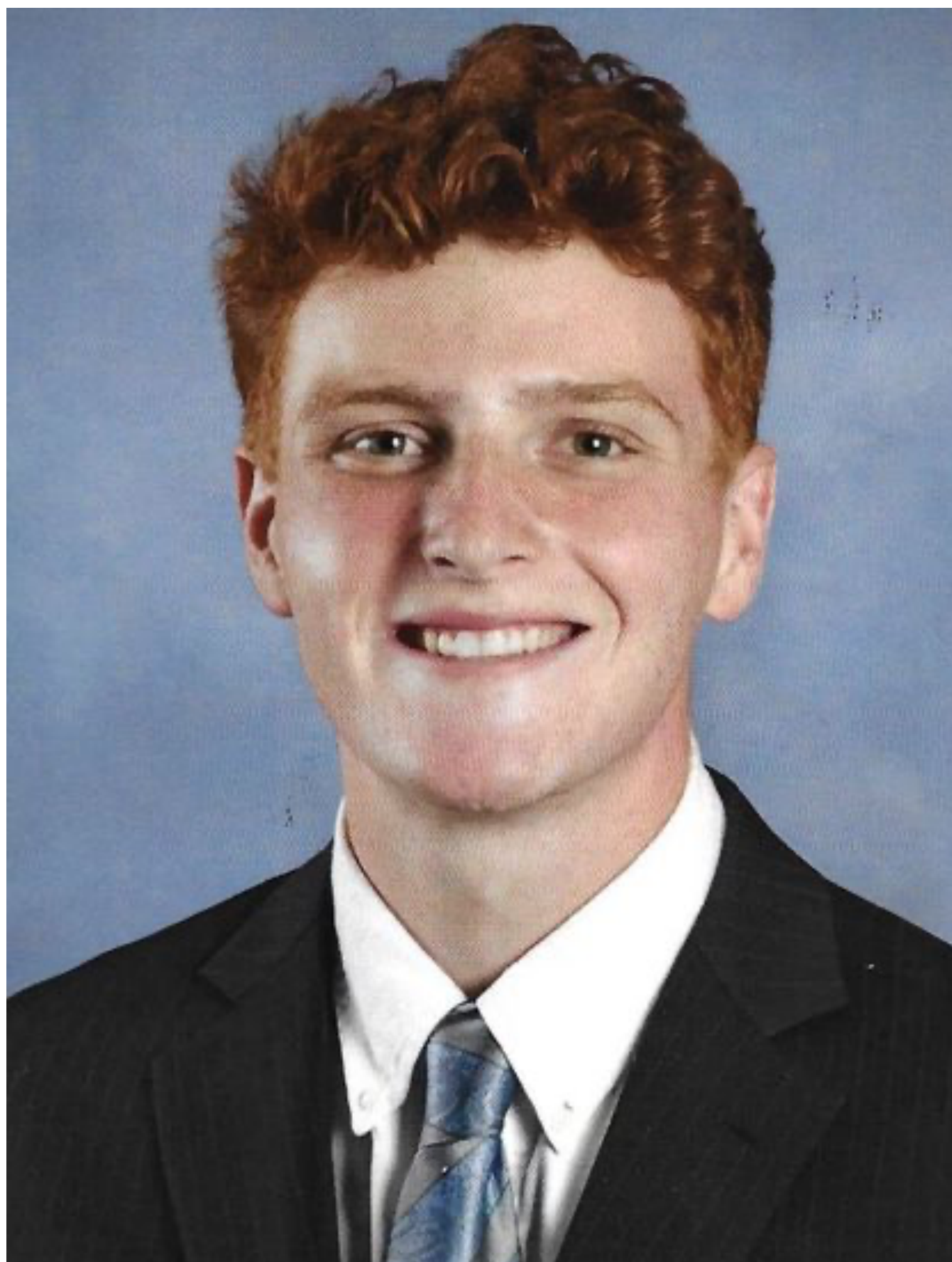
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“The way we see it is some country will let us in,” Toub said. “I think entering college with another year of experience of life is definitely beneficial.”

With many universities opting for online instruction this year — some without tuition reductions — some students are considering a gap year, or community college courses before they start at a four-year institution. For some, the online environment lacks the spirit and social scene of the anticipated first-year experience.



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According to a May survey from the American Council on Education and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, [about 10% of students](#) are unsure of their plans for the semester. And on the local level, some schools are seeing more students opting for gap years.

At Lehigh University, 30 students are opting to defer admission, compared with 16 the year before, according to Dan Warner, vice provost for admissions and financial aid. At Moravian College, three students expressed interest in a gap year, spokesperson Mike Corr said.

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“It’s weird that more people aren’t doing it,” said Asher Powers, 19, who is



spending a second year in Israel before starting at Muhlenberg University.  
“This would be the perfect time.”



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(COURTESY OF ASHER POWERS)

Powers is among 14 students deferring admission before heading to Muhlenberg in fall 2021, according to spokesperson Kristine Todaro. Last year, 15 students took a gap year.

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Powers, 19, who grew up in New York, initially opted to study in Israel after graduating high school as a “transfer period” before starting college.

He was impressed with the way his program eased into the online environment, and fondly recalls the moment when they inched back to in-person learning. Now, he’s ready for a second year in the program, which will offer a different course of study than the first, he said.

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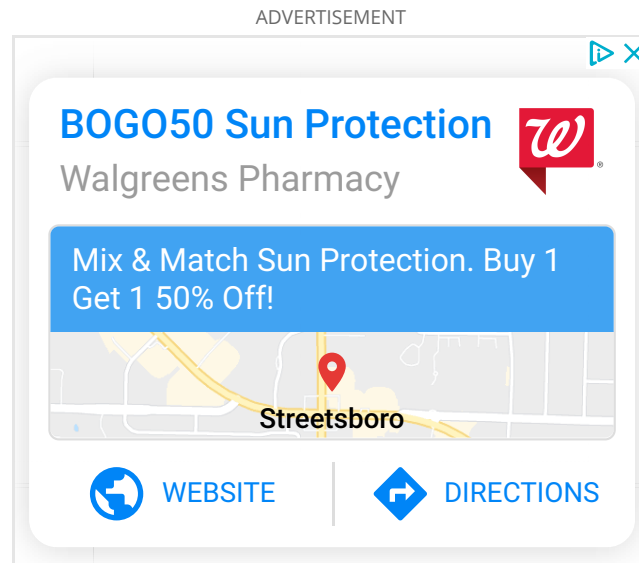
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Powers also thinks staying abroad is a safe option, since Israel was very strict about the shutdown during the first wave of the coronavirus, he said. He planned to fly home to family in the United States in July, but decided against it, afraid he wouldn’t be able to get back.

“America is not in its second wave, yet. America hasn’t finished its first,” he said. “And that’s frightening to me.”

Rina Duggan, a college and career counselor at Allen High School in Allentown, said taking a gap year isn’t common among her students, but many are waiting until the last second to register for college, given the confusion and uncertainty.

“There’s tremendous uncertainty about what an undergraduate will be able to experience — not just this semester, but beyond that,” said Jack Silva, assistant superintendent in Bethlehem Area School District.



Duggan said that some students considered an online university, or a local community college, where classes could be more affordable.





At Northampton Community College, applications have increased according to Sedgwick Harris, vice president of student affairs and enrollment. Fall semester applications are up nearly 5% from the same time last year, he said. Enrollment in the late summer session, which started July 6, surged over 20% more than last year.

Harris said that the school anticipates “very strong enrollment” in August, thanks to local students choosing Northampton as a “cost-effective” and “short term” option.

Recently, Harris said, more than 100 students went to enrollment centers in Bethlehem and Monroe County, where they extended hours to meet the demands of those interested in taking fall classes.

Abby Brody, a self-described “gap year enthusiast” and expert, launched Mind the Gap, a semester designed to teach skills to prepare people for the workforce. While the program is small, Brody is expecting a jump in the spring.

Mind the Gap’s first cohort will start in September entirely online, she said, even though she initially planned an in-person program ahead of the pandemic. The cohort isn’t limited to incoming freshmen, she said.

“This is not a time to graduate into the workforce,” she said. “Whatever you can do to distance yourself from the 2021 spring graduation class, I think, is in your best interest.”

Brody also emphasized the financial side of college amid COVID-19. In the case of schools operating under a hybrid model, students are paying to sit in their dorm room taking online classes, she said.

“This is not a return on investment,” she said. “Your education and your educational experience is worth more.”

Instead, she said, students could spend a year on a road trip with friends. Students can get a lot out of travel, spending time outside of their comfort zones and finding themselves, she said. Gap years don't have to be expensive, she added.

For Toub, it feels right to take a gap year now. He doesn't know if he feels ready to go to college now — but he could if he had to, he said. And he's also not sure when he'll have another chance to travel abroad.

"I don't know if there's any other age where I could just say, 'OK, I'm going to live somewhere rent-free for eight months and work and save so that I can go and travel and do whatever I want in any other country for six to eight months,' " he said. "I don't think that opportunity really comes around after this."

*Morning Call reporter Jacqueline Palochko contributed to this report.*

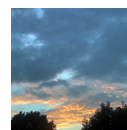
*Morning Call reporter Rina Torchinsky can be reached at [240-630-4252](tel:240-630-4252) or at [rtorchinsky@mcall.com](mailto:rtorchinsky@mcall.com).*

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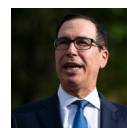
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