

Happy New Year!

At the start of each semester comes a wave of activity and this is true for college counseling. Please take a moment to review the section(s) of this newsletter that pertains to you and your family and feel free to read the entirety to gain a sense of our messaging to each grade level. Additionally, we are excited to welcome John Powell to our January programming events as he prepares to join our office for much of 2nd semester. Likewise, we are excited to welcome back Dr. Graham, who will serve as a counselor for a group of select 10th graders.

Seniors

“Waiting is the Hardest Part.” Many of us enjoyed this Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers tune in the early ‘80s and now our seniors are feeling the truth in these lyrics. As hard as our seniors have worked to get to this point, the next few months can feel like an eternity. There’s nothing left to be completed: all the essays have been written, the standardized tests taken, the applications submitted. However, now is the time to revisit the college list once more as the last round of deadlines is approaching. *Seniors should keep in conversation with their counselor* as we are in communication with colleges to which our students have applied and welcome any news students may have to share. An award won or recognition received, an update that a college is now clearly a top choice, or some other tidbit could prove helpful in conversations with our colleagues at the colleges to which our students apply.

We ask that you take a few moments to review the checklist below with your child.

- Check the status of all applications. Confirm the colleges in Naviance once more. Be proactive in checking your application status at each college to which you have applied. It is a good idea to check the admission offices’ websites or portals about one week after the due date to make sure they have received every aspect of your application and that your file is complete. Some colleges send notices about missing information, and some do not; it is important for you to check the status of your own file. Please let us know if something is missing. Often colleges contact the student regarding missing documents, not the College Counseling Office.
- First semester grades (Mid-Year Report) will be sent shortly. The College Counseling Office will begin submitting your first semester transcript to all of the colleges to which you are applying when grades become available. We DO NOT need college-specific forms.
- Complete financial aid applications immediately. Be sure to follow directions for each specific college closely and submit by the published deadlines. If you have questions, please speak with your counselor as soon as possible. Any delay in submitting financial aid applications can impact the aid allocated.

Now is also a good time to look at scholarships; many students will visit www.finaid.org, www.fastweb.com, or College Board's [Big Future](#) to search for scholarship opportunities. There are also scholarships listed in Naviance.

- Please let us know as soon as you hear any admission decision. We want to be able to offer our support and our congratulations. College decisions will arrive in fits and starts with a vast majority arriving in March.
- Speaking of decisions, if you were deferred from an early application school, check in with your counselor. There may be an opportunity for you to connect with the college once more, provide updates, and strengthen your position.
- You will pay only one enrollment deposit, but some colleges may allow for a refundable housing deposit. Read the fine print. If you were admitted to a large public university, you may have received a "request for housing" application form. If you are not sure you want to attend the university, you still may want to register for housing since on campus housing may be tight. Confirm with the housing office or the admissions office that the deposit is refundable.
- March mid-semester grades can still matter. Final grades definitely do. It's true, colleges may hold off on making a decision about you until receiving mid-semester grades in March. And all colleges review final transcripts. Every effort on your part to perform as strongly as possible may help colleges make a positive decision. The news is the number of applications keeps going up and acceptance rates continue dropping. Don't jeopardize your chances! Rather, use this as an opportunity to strengthen your application by putting up your best grades.
- NCAA athletes should verify their materials are completed and can confirm with Ms. Papillon that the final transcript will be submitted when available in June. Students who are expecting to compete at the Division I or II level need to be sure that they are registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center at www.eligibilitycenter.org.
- AP Exams are approaching! Every student currently enrolled in an AP course is already registered for that exam. AP exam dates are May 4-8 and May 11-15.

Juniors

Now that the New Year is upon us, the college process will begin accelerating rather quickly for many students. The first conversations between students and counselors will center on crafting initial college lists based upon feedback, and insights from the fall college rep visits, MISP Fair and any campus visits as well as plans for possible spring break travels, standardized testing plan and course scheduling.

Later in the semester, typically after spring break, we expect one family meeting to make sure parents, student and counselor are on the same page heading into the summer with a general sense of priorities for the process and ideas for a balanced college list. There is a lot that will happen between now and summer. The process requires active communication; parents are welcome to communicate via the phone or email or to schedule an appointment. Please contact [Carrie Papillon](#) to schedule a time.

GRADE 11 PARENT AND STUDENT COLLEGE MEETING – JANUARY 8, 6:30 PM. All juniors and parents are expected to attend! This one-hour long program will cover what you need

to know for the second semester, an interactive exercise for parent and student, and expectations. Parents and students will meet with their assigned college counselor in the designated location.

Mr. Nicholson: Chapel

Ms. O'Connell: Upper School Dining Room

Ms. Pabst & Mr. Powell: Upper School Library

JUNIOR APPLICATION WORKSHOP – APRIL 1, 6:30PM. Mark your calendars! This evening is one of our most popular events. You will receive a behind-the-scenes admissions committee experience led by deans and directors from across the country. As part of the evening, you will be asked to participate as an admissions committee member for a fictional college and render decisions for fictional applicants. The admissions leaders will lead you and other parents through a committee experience, answer questions as they arise, and provide insightful context. The applications will be posted online for parents in March and juniors will participate in a workshop prior to spring break. We strongly advise parents to read through the applications prior to the evening in order to get the most from the conversations with the deans. We will send another reminder as the date approaches.

SAT AND ACT TEST DATES AND REGISTRATION DEADLINES ARE APPROACHING.

Now is the time to register. Please remember that you are responsible for registering for the tests you plan to take. The counselors will revisit the testing plan at their first individual counselor meeting this semester. Students should schedule an appointment through Ms. Papillon.

- ACT Registration deadline for the February 8 test is January 10. This test will be held at Breck School. If you miss the deadline, you may register late for an additional fee and may not receive your preferred testing site. The ACT offers standby testing for those who miss the late registration deadline. The last three ACT test dates for this school year are April 4, June 13 and July 18; Breck will be a test site for the June 13 date.
- SAT test dates are March 14, May 2 and June 6. Deadline for the March SAT is February 14. Breck will be a test site in June. For registration deadlines and to register go to www.collegeboard.org.

SAT AND ACT TEST PREP OPTIONS: There are many different ways to prepare, both free and at cost. The best approach is to develop a long-term plan using a combination of coursework and practice tests. The key ingredient to improving results is the use of practice tests.

- Self-preparation through a book or online. Both the SAT and ACT websites offer services through [ACT Academy](#) and the SAT's collaboration with [Khan Academy](#).
- One-on-one tutoring.
- Test preparation course.
- Combination of the above.

As you notice, doing nothing is not advisable.

PRACTICE TEST RESULTS. Practice test books and Practice ACT results were distributed by advisors to students in November. The College Board released scores electronically in December. If you did not receive an email from the College Board, please see Ms. Papillon.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

- Schedule a student/counselor meeting before Spring Break. Counselors expect to meet with juniors to build an initial college list, possible spring break travels, standardized testing and course scheduling.
- Each junior should visit the College Counseling Office and speak with Ms. Papillon to make an appointment with her/his counselor. As we approach conference weekend, counselor schedules fill quickly; please allow a week or two lead time.
- Application Workshop for Students & Parents on April 1. This is our most highly anticipated program of the process. Deans and directors of admission from national colleges will be on hand to lead admissions committees comprised of you, the students and parents!
- Spring Semester Coffee Talks. The College Counseling Office will host a series of informal conversations focused on specific topics. Please watch your email for these opportunities!
- Parent/Student/Counselor meetings should take place after spring break and before the end of June. This will be a time for everyone to get on the same page before summer break. Parents should contact Carrie Papillon (carrie.papillon@breckschool.org; 763-381-8258) to schedule a meeting.
- AP Exams. Every student currently enrolled in an AP course is already registered for that exam. AP exam dates are May 4-8 and May 11-15.
- Application and Interview workshops. On Friday, June 5th, we will host our Common Application workshop for the Class of 2021. All juniors are expected to attend the 9AM-12PM workshop. The following week we will host interview workshops in preparation for potential summer interview.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- *I'm Going to College – Not you!* Edited by Jennifer Delahunty. ISBN 978-0-312-60729-6
- *Colleges that Change Lives*, by Loren Pope. ISBN 0-14-023951-0
- *Fifty College Admissions Directors Speak to Parents*, by Sandra F. McGowan and Sarah M. McGinty. ISBN 0-15-601595-1
- *College Admissions: A Crash Course for Panicked Parents*, by Sally Rubenstone and Sidonia Dalby. ISBN 0-02-861931-5
- *The College Admissions Mystique*, by Bill Mayher. ISBN 0-374-52513-7

Sophomores

Every sophomore should have received their counselor assignment last month. Should you have not received your counselor assignment, please contact the Carrie Papillon in the College Counseling Office. Developing a relationship is an essential step in creating a successful college process. Juniors should plan to meet with their college counselor the first time without parents.

REMEMBER THE GRADE 9 & 10 COLLEGE NIGHT ON JANUARY 29. This will be a full evening and we expect all sophomores and parents to attend. Topics will include athletics,

financing a college education, visiting colleges, standardized testing and the college process moving forward. A schedule of the event is forthcoming.

- Students will receive their practice SAT and ACT results this evening as well as information to help process the scores.

SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH YOUR COUNSELOR BEFORE SPRING BREAK. One of the goals of beginning these meetings during 10th grade is to assure the process is student-centered. At this meeting, the counselor will ask questions to learn more about the student, to answer questions, develop a standardized testing plan, and talk course scheduling. These meetings should take place before conferences in the beginning of March. As we approach conference weekend, counselor schedules fill quickly; please allow a week or two lead time.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE DOING NOW, IN THE MIDDLE OF SOPHOMORE YEAR, TO PLAN FOR THE COLLEGE PROCESS? There are several very important considerations in the middle of sophomore year for students.

- Where am I academically at Breck? Where do I want to be in two years? At the end of first semester senior year? Course planning is an essential piece of sophomore year. It is important students have an appropriate balance of challenge and mastery in their classes, and they understand the credentials they are building over the course of high school.
- Sophomore counselor meetings. Counselors plan to meet with every sophomore student one-on-one to discuss how to best achieve their individual goals. These meetings should take place before course registration. Sophomores are responsible for making an appointment by coming to the college office and speaking with Ms. Papillon.
- In what ways am I participating in the life of the school? Breck is a relatively small high school, and it is important that each student contribute through involvement in activities, sports and service work. Take an assessment about your involvement and make plans for future leadership and activities.
- What am I going to do in the summer? Some of the greatest growth for high school students is the summers after their sophomore and junior years. We strongly encourage students to plan significant experiences that take them away from their school friends and Breck's academic work and put them in a different atmosphere where they learn about themselves and the world around them. Such experiences include formal programs, finding ways to contribute locally, or one of the best teachers of all, a job! Successful experiences in the past have been taking classes at a local university, speaking Spanish while making tortillas at *The Mercado* on Lake Street, joining an archaeological dig, joining a local political campaign, or designing your own reading list with a teacher at Breck

AP EXAMS

Every student currently enrolled in an AP course is already registered for that exam. AP exam dates are May 4-9 and May 11-15.

FRESHMEN

With a semester fully under your belt, it is time to reflect on the first semester. What went well? What are areas of improvement? Are the subjects or activities that you would like to learn more

about? While the college process is still years away, such questions and reflections can allow you to take steps that can put you on a path towards success. It is important to end the year on a high note; with the slate wiped clean in classes and opportunities for involvement presenting themselves anew this semester, make the commitment to do your best!

STUDENT/PARENT COLLEGE NIGHT FOR GRADES 9 & 10 ON JANUARY 29 AT 6:30 IN THE CHAPEL. We will then run concurrent breakout sessions from which you may elect to attend. Topics will include athletics, financing a college education, visiting colleges, standardized testing and the college process moving forward. A schedule of the event is forthcoming. Families should make plans on attending this event!

COURSE SCHEDULING. Now is the time to think about your interests. What courses/subjects are most compelling? In what areas do you excel? Are you interested in pursuing an AP course? If this is the case, talk to your teacher(s) in the discipline(s), your advisor, and the department chair.

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO THINK ABOUT SUMMER! Yes, this is a time to rest and to take a break from school. However, it's also a time to explore interests! The best way for a college to know what a child is actually interested in is to assess how the student has spent his/her time.

Jonathan Nicholson
Director of College Counseling
763-381-8248
jonathan.nicholson@breckschool.org

Andrea O'Connell
Associate Director of College
Counseling
763-381-8138
andrea.oconnell@breckschool.org

Elizabeth Pabst
Associate Director of College
Counseling
763-381-127
elizabeth.pabst@breckschool.org

Carrie Papillon
College Counseling Assistant
763-381-8258
carrie.papillon@breckschool.org