

SENIORS – APRIL NEWSLETTER

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Hello from the Counseling Center at Moon Area High School. My name is Julie Sitko and I am the College and Career Counselor. This is the time to think about life after high school. My role is to advise and support students and families in the college search and to help identify “best fit” colleges and universities, and to assist students in realizing their post-secondary goals. This monthly newsletter will keep you on track for post-secondary planning. Please reach out to me with any questions or concerns

Here are some things to think about as you go through your child’s senior year:

SPRING - Post-Secondary Timeline for seniors

- College applications should be completed and submitted. Have your children check their portal on the school’s websites, to ensure their applications are complete.
- A copy of your child’s most recent transcript (including first semester grades) was uploaded into the Portfolio section of Skyward. I encourage you to look over the transcript and save a copy for your records. If there are any questions or concerns about the transcript, please reach out to your child’s school counselor. A final copy of the transcript will be uploaded to Skyward about two weeks after graduation. I highly recommend printing/saving a copy of the final transcript.
- Colleges will be hosting accepted student programs. Attend those for the schools your child is interested in. You’ll get additional information about your desired program of studies. If you can get on the college campuses, this is a great opportunity to see the schools before your child makes a decision.
- Students should receive all college decisions by early April and will also be getting financial aid award letters. Be sure to look at financial aid awards prior to picking a college. This is huge investment – do your homework, do your research, and make an informed decision. If your child has specific questions about a financial aid award, contact the financial aid offices at the colleges. If you need general help understanding your child’s financial aid award letter, let me know. Be sure you and your child understand what is a loan, a scholarship, a grant, and how much money they’ll be paying out of pocket.
 - Students have until May 1 to decide where they’re going to school. Encourage them to take their time. Weigh options. Ask questions. This is a big decision – make it wisely and be informed.
- Complete and file the FAFSA. The FAFSA will be based on your family’s 2021 taxes.
- College is all about fit. What fits what you’re looking for in academics? Social life? Distance from home? Affordability?
- It’s a requirement for male students, when they reach the age of 18, register for the Selective Service. More information can be found here: <http://www.sss.gov>
- When a student decides what school they’ll be attending, a final transcript will need to be sent to that school, after graduation. I’ll let the students know, in May how we do that. Nothing needs to be done now.

Students should check their email and college portals!

Colleges communicate with students through email or through the online admissions portal that was created when they applied for admission. They have to check email and portals. If they don’t, they might be missing out on important information from the colleges, regarding admission status or scholarships. For example, if a student applies to Pitt through the Common Application; after they submit the application, they get an email from Pitt, telling them to complete the SRAR. If they miss out on the email, their application is incomplete and will not be read.

Visiting schools:

If you and your child have a chance to visit schools, here are things to think about when you’re on campus:
--Talk to people in the department of anticipated study. Ask what students are doing when they graduate with a degree in X. What type of internships/research are students having while still in college? If your child is undecided, talk to the schools about what they do to help pick a major. Colleges have robust career centers and advising programs which help students pick a major, find internships and eventually jobs and graduate schools.

--Ask what is the four-year graduation rate? Colleges report a six-year graduation rate, due to financial aid. Ask about the four-year rate-- schools should try to get students in and out in four years -- make sure the school is going to help your child make the best use of their time and get the classes needed to get out in time.

--Ask what is the retention rate for returning sophomores? This number can tell you a lot about what schools are doing to make students happy and keep them enrolled. If a number is low, ask why students are leaving -- what's going on? If the number is high, it's safe to assume students are generally happy and the college is doing a good job of educating students and keeping them happy.

--College is not just about getting a degree. It's about so much more. Is your child going to be challenged at each school? Are they going to have to put in more effort than they ever have? That's a good thing!

Transcripts for Scholarships: Most transcripts for scholarships can be unofficial transcripts. Check with the organization granting the scholarship. Your child can find their unofficial transcript in the portfolio section of Skyward. If they checked with the organization offering a scholarship and they absolutely require an official transcript, please have your child fill out [this form](#).

Scholarships:

All scholarships that come through our office are listed in Naviance. To find the scholarships, log in to Naviance, go to the colleges>scholarships and money>Scholarship list. The scholarships we get in the counseling center are listed on the 'scholarship list' page. We are getting new scholarships daily, so students should continue looking at the Naviance site for new opportunities. That site is updated regularly, so be sure to check back regularly as new scholarships are posted. You should be checking this site regularly. My favorite scholarship search sites are: www.fastweb.com, www.goingmerry.com, and www.pittsburghfoundation.org/scholarship_search#hs. The last site is local (Pittsburgh) scholarships. You do have to search through the site, but there is a lot of money available to students.

[National Catholic College Admission Association \(NCCAA\)](#) will award 16 \$1000 scholarships to students going to member Catholic colleges. Check out this [list](#) of member Catholic colleges. The deadline is April 1.

[The Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#) is proud to offer students who are Hispanic/Latino or of Hispanic/Latino descent scholarships. Deadline is April 30.

[PSCA \(Pennsylvania School Counseling Association\) Scholarship](#) -- One scholarship for \$1000.00. Students must submit a one page essay on a School Counselor who has made a difference in your academic, career, and/or social-emotional development. Deadline April 1, 2023.

NCAA:

If your child is an athlete considering playing sports at a division I or II school, make sure to visit the NCAA Eligibility Center website www.eligibilitycenter.org. Student athletes need to submit an official high school transcript (requested through Naviance) and official test scores, if they are available. These scores must be sent directly from ACT or College Board. NCAA will not accept test scores from the high school transcript. If students haven't had an opportunity to test, they can still gain eligibility without test scores. More information can be found [here](#). *This registration does not apply to students attending division III or NAIA schools.*

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If you and your child have a chance to visit schools, here are things to think about when you're on campus:

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--College is not just about getting a degree. It's about so much more. Is your child going to be challenged at each school? Are they going to have to put in more effort than they ever have? That's a good thing!

--Learn the middle 50% SAT/ACT scores and GPA of admitted students at the schools that interest you. This can serve as a guide to schools that will be a good academic fit for your child. Also – remember if board scores are lower than the middle 50%, but the GPA fits in the middle 50%, in most cases, students do not need to submit test scores, if those scores could potentially hurt an application. Keep in mind, with most schools being test optional, the students who are submitting test scores generally have higher scores, so the middle 50% are going to be skewed to the higher end.

Summer Jobs:

[Sewickley YMCA](#) is looking for summer camp counselors, swim coaches, and lifeguards.

Financial Aid Programs:

Paying for College and Options for Balances **4/4 Tuesday @Noon; 4/20 Thursday @6:30pm**

This one-hour webinar is for students and families that are starting to plan or are in the thick of decisions with May 1st, National College Decision Day, right around the corner. Affording the costs is one topic that is on everyone's mind. This presentation by PHEAA's Daniel Wray and Linda Pacewicz of the PA Forward Private Student Loan Program will review the types of Aid available, what needs to be done to check for eligibility, and provide tips on the options for covering the balances and making affordable decisions. Don't miss it!

Financial Aid and Planning Q&A with PHEAA_ **4/6 Thursday @6:30pm; 4/18 Tuesday @Noon**

Articles related to funding a higher education are in the news almost every day, and it can lead even the most knowledgeable of us into information overload. Have you ever wanted to simply ask a few specific questions, yet couldn't find anyone to ask? Maybe you have questions about planning for college, finding the right school, applying for scholarships, applying for federal and state aid, understanding offer letters, completing loan applications, comparing federal loans to private loans, repaying/refinancing loans after graduation, etc. Join Linda Pacewicz and Daniel Wray of PHEAA for a wide open one-hour Q&A session. Ask your questions to "Everyone" in the chat or privately to the presenters. Hope to see you there!

[REGISTER HERE](#) or at <https://www.pheaa.org/virtual>