

JUNIORS – MAY NEWSLETTER

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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 we go through your child’s junior year:

Spring - Post-Secondary Timeline for juniors

- Begin the college and career exploration process with Naviance
- Begin to talk, as a family, about what your child wants to do after graduating from high school. Although the student makes the ultimate decision about what he/she does after high school, input from parents and guardians is helpful and appreciated.
- Think if your child will take the ACT/SAT – many colleges in the US will be test optional for the class of 2024. For test optional schools, you should only submit test scores if they will help an application, not if they will hurt an application.
- Participate in programming hosted by colleges. Information is posted on the schools’ individual websites. Schools are doing both virtual and in person visitation programs.
- A copy of your child’s transcript has been uploaded into the Portfolio section of Skyward, at the beginning of this school year. 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. An updated final junior transcript will be updated at the end of the junior year.
- All colleges/universities have a Net Price Calculator on their websites (generally on the financial aid page). This is a good resource to help you and your family determine how much you can anticipate paying at each school you’re looking at. Use this tool as a resource to help you determine affordability.
- If you really want to dig into data related to college admissions, retention, financial aid, <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/> is Department of Education website, so the information on the site is gathered from will be the most accurate information available. They also have helpful information about alternatives to college and affordability.

Visiting schools:

If you 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. If your child is totally 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, 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 graduation 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!
- 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 you. 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 they 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.

Digital PSAT and SAT: Beginning October 2023 the PSAT will no longer be offered in a paper version. All students testing will take a digital version of the test. The digital SAT will be offered in Spring 2024. If you want to dig into learn more

about the digital exams, you can find information [here](#). I will host a program in the fall to explain the digital tests and how they will be different from the paper exams.

ACT and SAT testing:

If your child wants to test, go to the testing websites for information about testing and open test sites. (**SAT: www.collegeboard.org and ACT: www.act.org**). A schedule of tests dates is in the class of 2024 Teams (under Post-Secondary Planning, then files). The same list is also on the High School Counseling Center webpage.

For the class of 2024, many colleges in the United States are test optional for both admission and scholarships. Before deciding if your child want to test, check with the schools they are interested in and determine if they need to test. Schools who are test optional are often examining the transcript much closer. For example, if your child is interested in studying business, colleges will look closely at the math classes they took and the grades they earned in those math classes.

--Students on free/reduced lunch are eligible for a fee waiver. See your school counselor or Ms. Sitko

--Every college accepts either the SAT or ACT. There is no preference.

-- If you take the ACT, I do not recommend taking the writing portion of the exam. I do not think it will be necessary for admission. The SAT eliminated the writing portion of their exam.

--Check out this site to see if schools your child is interested in have determined their testing policies

<https://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>.

ACT/SAT Prep:

Students taking ACT and SAT tests should do some sort of preparation prior to taking the tests. There are many resources available for test prep. All students have FREE access to Khan Academy – an online program that partners with College Board (owners of the SAT) to provide test prep to students. <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>. ACT also has online test prep [here](#). These are both fantastic resources.

[Penn State Beaver](#) is offering in- person SAT prep classes.

[3RPrep](#) is located across the street from Old Economy Village, just five miles from Moon. They offer individualized one-on-one tutoring, group classes, and practice proctored exams. If you want a personal study plan and individual attention, these are the guys to see. Visit their website for more information or call 833-773-7522.

[Goldstein Test Prep](#) - Offering both in person and virtual tutoring options for the SAT and ACT. They also do academic tutoring. Call 412-874-7645 or fill out an interest form on their website.

[Eaton Prep](#) is offering classes at the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center for the various tests.

Emails from Post-Secondary Schools:

If your child has not yet, they will be getting inundated with emails from colleges. I have a few suggestions on how to manage the emails.

1. Create an email address just for post-secondary planning. That way, all of the emails they get from colleges won't flood their regular inbox.
2. Create a folder in their email and filter emails from the colleges they think they want to look at later. They can also create a folder of schools that they are interested in, so they don't miss any important messages.
3. Check this email account once a week or every few days. Delete messages they're not interested in. They're going to be overwhelmed with information from colleges and managing the emails is necessary, so they don't miss anything important.

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. That site is updated regularly, so be sure to check back regularly as new scholarships are posted. Many scholarships posted in Naviance are for seniors, but there are some for juniors. 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 scholarships, but there is a lot of money available to students.

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Here are a few scholarships for juniors:

[QuestBridge](#) – full scholarships for students who have shown outstanding academic ability despite financial challenges. There is no minimum GPA or test cut-off, or income.

The [Bryan Cameron Education Foundation](#) has opened up applications to the high-school graduating **Class of 2024** for the **Cameron Impact Scholarship** (merit-based, 4-year, full-tuition). A Cameron Impact Scholar must show evidence of strong academics (3.7 unweighted GPA or higher), leadership, community service, participation in extracurriculars, and a desire to make a positive impact on the world around them.

Early Application Deadline: May 19, 2023

Regular Application Deadline: September 8, 2023

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, and the number of applications reviewed will be limited to 3,000.

[College Board's Opportunity Scholarships](#): If you use College Board for college searches or practicing for the SAT through Khan Academy, you could win scholarship money.

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](#). 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. *This registration does not apply to students attending division III or NAIA schools.*

If you are looking for good college resources, here are two of my favorites:

[Georgia Tech Admission Blog](#) has a lot of great information not specific about Georgia Tech, but about the college search and selection process in general. The blog is insightful, educational, and humorous.

[The College Essay Guy](#) – another great website for assistance in writing college essays, along with general information about the college search/selection process. He is witty and has awesome advice on essays. He charges a fee to review essays, but he also has a lot of free information on his website.

Additional Learning Opportunities:

[Introduction to Athletic Training: An Interactive Workshop for High School Students](#) sponsored by UPMC Sports Medicine. A one-day workshop is offered to students who are interested in a career in athletic training or who wish to enhance the skills they use daily while working under the direction of a certified athletic trainer at your school. The program exposes students to key topics through lecture and hands-on practice of techniques and procedures.

When: Saturday, May 13, from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm Where: Central Catholic High School, Pittsburgh

Cost: \$40.00

Questions: Rob McCabe at mccabere@upmc.edu or 412-432-3724

Ohio University's [Summer Law & Trial Institute](#) is a free program that takes place from **July 10-21, 2023**, and concludes with an in-person mock trial experience.

The first week of the program (July 10-14) is held virtually, and all participants are invited to the Athens campus on July 16 to stay in residence halls for the final week of the program. The program culminates with a mock trial on July 21. Students should [submit the application](#), a high school transcript copy and one letter of recommendation by **June 2, 2023**.