JUNIORS – FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

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Use this link to schedule a meeting

My name is Julie Sitko, and I am the College and Career Counselor. 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.

Here are some things to think about as we go through your child's junior year:

Winter - 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.
• If your child is thinking of testing – do test prep
• Register for the SAT and/or ACT, if your child wants to test
• Participate in programming hosted by colleges. Information is posted on the schools' individual websites.
• 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.
• Schedule a post-secondary planning meeting for you and your child with Ms. Sitko through this link.

Post-Secondary Planning:

This is the time in your child's high school career when we really start thinking about what comes after high school graduation. By the second semester of the junior year, my hope is that most students know if they want to pursue post-secondary education, join the military, or get a job directly after high school. If college is in your child's future, it is time to start thinking about where they want to go and what they want to study. There are going to be several opportunities, throughout the second semester of the junior year, for both guardians and students to utilize the resources we have in place to help you through this process. Here are some things to put on your calendar to help your family through the process:

--Beginning in December and going throughout the spring until the end of April, I will try to meet with each of the juniors, individually, about post-secondary plans. I invite you and your child to schedule that one-on-one meeting with me (otherwise, I will schedule a meeting with students). We will talk about what your child wants to do after high school and create a realistic plan to get your child there. It is imperative that your child attend this meeting, so look at their schedule and pick a time that they can miss a class. You can schedule the meeting here. If you are interested in being a part of the meeting, you will be virtual or we can call you on the phone, and your child will be with me in the building. (Once you schedule a meeting, you'll get an email with a link for a Teams meeting. You'll also get a reminder email 24 hours prior to the meeting. Check your junk/spam folders for the emails with the meeting links). We can also call you on the phone for the meeting. If you would like to be a part of the meeting, please schedule sooner rather than waiting, as I may pull your child for a meeting before you schedule.

College Fair:

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is hosting a national (big) college fair in Pittsburgh on February 7-8, 2024. Juniors are invited to attend during the school day on Thursday, February 8. Permission forms are due to the Counseling Center by Thursday, February 1. Students will leave the building after 2nd period and will return for D lunch. This is free to all juniors. Students with truancy issues and/or not in good academic standing will not be permitted to participate in this field trip. The fair also runs in the evening on Wednesday, February 7. Parents/guardians and students are invited to attend the evening session from 6-8:30 PM. Students are required to pre-register here: https://www.nacacattend.org/24Pittsburgh

College Counseling Series at Moon Area HS: Throughout the spring, I'll be hosting monthly college counseling programs, held virtually, in the evenings. All programs will be recorded and posted the Moon Area Counseling Center website. Here's what's coming up:

Skilled Trades/On-the-Job Training program
Wednesday, March 13, 2024
6:30 PM
Recommended for grades 10-11
More information to come about this program

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 2025 Teams (under Post-Secondary Planning, then files). The same list is also on the High School Counseling Center webpage. Before deciding if your child wants 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 earned in those math classes. If students want to test and safely can, do so.
--Students on free/reduced lunch are eligible for a fee waiver. Have your child see their school counselor or Ms. Sitko
--Every college accepts either the SAT or ACT. There is no preference.
--The SAT eliminated the writing portion of their exam, as well as the subject tests. When registering for the ACT, I do not recommend taking the writing portion of the exam. I do not think it will be necessary for admission.
--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.

ASVAB:
The ASVAB is a multiple-aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military. It is administered annually to more than one million military applicants, high school, and post-secondary students. The test can also be taken by students wanting to know where their abilities lie. The ASVAB is required for any student interested in enlisting in the military.
Students not interested in the military who score a minimum of 31 on the ASVAB can use the assessment as an alternative to the Keystone assessments which is a mandated Pathway for Graduation set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
The test is offered to Moon students, on Wednesday, March 6, free of charge. To register, students must sign up here. Registration runs through March 1. Any questions, stop by the counseling office.

Scholarships:
All scholarships that come through our office are listed in Naviance. To find the scholarships, log in to your Naviance account, 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.goingmerry.com, www.scholarships.com, www.fastweb.com, www.scholarshipamerica.org, www.finaid.org

Here are two good resources for paying for college and understanding financial aid:
www.mysmartborrowing.com
www.collegecosts.ed.gov

Here are a few scholarships for juniors:
Horatio Alger Scholarship – one of the nation's largest need-based college scholarship programs, this scholarship specifically assists high school students who have faced and overcome great obstacles in their young lives. There are national and state scholarships and scholarships specifically for students going into career training programs.

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 Pennsylvania Society is pleased to announce its 2023 Benjamin Franklin Scholar Award. Students must be in their junior year at a Pennsylvania public high school and create original work accurately documented with citations that makes a case for the relevancy (or irrelevancy) of Franklin's words in today's world. The scholarship offers a first-place prize of $6,000, a second-place prize of $4,000, and a third-place prize of $2,000. Essays must be received by The Pennsylvania Society no later than **March 1, 2024.**

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 24, 2024
Regular Application Deadline: September 5, 2024

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. *This registration does not apply to students attending division III or NAIA schools.*

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.

Emails from Post-Secondary Schools:
If you have not yet, you will be getting inundated with emails from colleges. I have a few suggestions on how you can manage the emails.

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

Summer Programs:
PA School for Excellence in Agricultural Studies at Penn State, University of Pittsburgh Health Careers Scholars Academy, Iacocca Global Entrepreneurship Intensive at Lehigh University, Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University, and the **Governor's School for Global and International Studies at Pitt:** These are excellent enrichment opportunities for high achieving current sophomores and juniors. Click on the name of the program for more information. Application and information can be found on individual program websites. All applications are due in mid-February. But don't wait, turn them in ASAP!

Pennsylvania Free Enterprise Week (PFEW) is a one-of-a-kind summer program that offers in-coming high school juniors and seniors a unique and challenging opportunity to see what it is like to run their own business. Participants will make up an "imaginary" management team where they will learn first-hand about the Free Enterprise System. Their task - turn their failing company into a financial success. They will develop their own marketing strategies, design a website and, make all the decisions that are demanded of real-life company executives. This weeklong program is at Lycoming College, in Williamsport and students have the option to choose between four different weeks. PFEW is FREE, although there is a $295 non-refundable registration fee.

Carnegie Mellon is offering several in-person Summer Pre-College Programs in architecture, art, computational biology, design, drama, music, gaming, and game design, and writing and culture. The also offer the following programs at no-cost; computer science, summer academy for math and science, and an artificial intelligence program called AI4ALL.

The Wildlife Leadership Academy enriches Pennsylvania teens and empowers them to become certified conservation ambassadors through a five-day residential summer field school program. Program costs $600 for the week, and scholarships are available.

Duke University offers summer academic opportunities for students. Rising seniors are invited to take classes with Duke Professors, where you can earn college credit. Students also have an option to take personal enrichment courses, with a global perspective, through the Summer Academy.

The Readiness Institute Summer Program through Penn State University is a six-week paid experience for rising high school seniors that helps them become community and future ready. Participants will have the opportunity to establish relationships and rituals, participate in essential skill workshops, complete projects that address real-world problems, and create personalized road maps for future success. After the program concludes, participants will have continued access to support including mentorship, additional learning experiences, and peer networking. Each participant will

receive a stipend of $2,000 and a laptop to use while enrolled in the program. Transportation will be provided as needed. Applications due March 31, 2024.

Hillman Academy is a summer research opportunity for rising juniors and seniors through UPMC. Participants will perform an authentic cancer research project and receive mentorship from university faculty and trainees. Applications are due February 11, 2024.

The Ice-T Project is an initiative of The Citizen Science Lab, Black/African-American High School Youth will learn the computational and experimental techniques required to examine the physiology, biochemistry, and voltage potential of microbial fuel cells (MFC), a living battery made powered by bacteria. Once participants learn the basics they will then build and create their own device powered by these living batteries. More information will be share on the website as it becomes available.

Bucknell Academy Summer Experience (BASE) is a collaborative residential experience where students are invited to explore the value of a liberal arts perspective in making challenging decisions to improve today's world. At BASE, students will experience interdisciplinary study from top tier professors while challenging their thought processes. This year's theme is To Share or Not to Share: How has social media impacted society and what can we learn from it? When: June 23-28, 2024. Who: Rising juniors and seniors in high school are welcome to apply.

The West Point Summer Leader Experience (SLE) provides rising high school seniors with a week-long immersion into the academic, military and social life of a cadet. AT SLE you'll explore West Point from all angles, including the high-tech facilities, team building athletic activities, and realistic military training. You will get a taste of Cadet life throughout the program, which is led by current West Point cadets.

Simcoach Games is accepting applications for its 2024 Summer Apprenticeship in Game Design and Development starting on June 10, 2024 and running through July 19, 2024. They are looking for Summer Apprentices to build game prototypes as employees of Simcoach Games' Game Studio. You will PRACTICE PRODUCING (scheduling, team leader, organizing), STORYTELLING (business, marketing, game design), ART (2d/3d art, animation, concepting, performance), GAME DESIGN (goals, rules design, what content is translated to interactivity within a game framework) and DEVELOPING (coding) as part of a team.

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.
https://pwp.gatech.edu/admission-blog/

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. https://www.collegeessayguy.com/
powered by these living batteries. More information will be share on the website as it becomes available.

Many colleges offer both in person and online summer programs. Check with schools that interest you to see if they offer anything in the summer.