

SENIORS – FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Julie Sitko, College and Career Counselor
jsitko@moonarea.net
412-264-9440, ext. 2038

Hello 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 we go through your child’s senior year:

WINTER - Post-Secondary Timeline for seniors

- A copy of your child’s most recent transcript (including first semester grades) was uploaded into the Portfolio section of Skyward recently. 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.
- Transcripts were updated with grades at the end of the first semester for seniors. Credits are earned when a class is complete. The GPA will only update after the completion of a class, either a semester or full year course.
- All college applications should be completed and submitted. Check on the school’s websites, to ensure the applications are complete and they are not missing anything from.
- In the winter/spring, colleges will have accepted student programs. Attend those for the schools where students have been accepted and are interested. These are helpful programs with great information about desired program of study. These might be in person or virtual - check with the schools.
- Students will be getting college acceptances through the next several months, as well as 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 you have specific questions about financial aid a financial aid award, contact the financial aid offices at the colleges. If you need general help understanding your financial aid award letter, let me know. I’m happy to read and interpret what is a grant/a loan/out-of-pocket expense. If you have specific questions about financial aid, contact the financial aid offices at the colleges.
- Complete and file the FAFSA. The FAFSA will be based on your family’s 2022 taxes.
- College is all about fit. What fits what you’re looking for in academics? Social life? Distance from home? Affordability?
- It’s still 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>

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 Search. The scholarships we get in the counseling center are listed on the ‘scholarship search’ page. 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.

Mrs. Marciniak will be making the **local (Moon) scholarships** available soon. Look for more information on the Seniors 2024 Teams page and your email. These will all be in the Scholarship List in Naviance (colleges<Scholarships and Money>Scholarship Search>Local & Regional Scholarships), with a * before the name of the scholarship (*Moon Education Association Scholarship). You MUST follow the posted directions when completing these scholarships. Applications turned in without following the instructions will not be accepted. Continue to look at Naviance for new scholarship opportunities.

The Hermine Solt Student Scholarship which is a \$500 scholarship for a Pennsylvania High School senior who is pursuing higher education in a business-related field (office technology, accounting, secretarial, business education (including business education teaching), business management, etc.). Complete details including criteria, guidelines, and scholarship application can be found at PAEOP’s website, <https://www.paeop.com/site/Default.aspx?PageID=71>

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](#).

FINANCIAL AID and the FAFSA

The new FAFSA..... On January 30, the Department of Education announced they will not be forwarding financial aid data to the colleges until early/mid-March. What does that mean for students waiting for financial aid? It's going to be delayed. Once the data is sent to colleges, the colleges need at least two weeks to do things on their end to be ready to send out your financial aid awards. With that, financial aid awards might not be sent to students until late March/early April. As of now, students are still to commit to a college by May 1. Pay attention, there is hope that May 1 date might be pushed back.

Additionally, students will **not** be able to make corrections to their FAFSA until sometime in March.

Understanding some students have already decided where they are attending, I urge you to wait to make that decision until you know the cost of attendance of each school. Students and families should know how much it is going to cost to attend the school and be prepared to pay the tuition. Yes, that is going to be delayed this year, but I don't want students and families to get into a situation where they cannot afford a college or take out massive amounts of loan. A college education is one of the largest (monetary) purchases a person will make. Do your homework. Understand the costs and don't rush into a decision.

The hope is that the colleges will communicate with you when they anticipate sending aid letters.

Here are two good resources for paying for college and understanding financial aid:

www.mysmartborrowing.com

www.collegecosts.ed.gov

And here are some good websites for scholarship searches:

www.goingmerry.com

www.scholarships.com

www.fastweb.com

www.scholarshipamerica.org

www.finaid.org

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 1, free of charge. [To register, students must sign up here.](#) Registration runs through February 24. Any questions, stop by the counseling office.

Check Your Email and your college portals!

Colleges communicate with you through email or through the online admissions portal that was created when you applied for admission. You have to check your email and your portals. If you don't, you might be missing out on important information from the colleges, regarding your admission status or scholarships.

Completing Applications:

In September, your child may have been excited about applying for a school and now that it's February, they're not as excited about the school. Maybe they even applied, but haven't sent transcripts or board scores because they decided they don't want to go to that school. If your child is no longer interested in a school, please have them send a quick email to the school, or call them and let them know. If your child doesn't tell a school they're no longer interested, they will think your child is still interested in their school and may continue contacting your child to remind them to turn in the missing application materials. Additionally, if your child has been accepted to a school and decided to attend another school, please let all schools where they applied know – again, they like to know this information and it's nice to let them know where you are in your application journey.

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.*

Summer Opportunities:

[Magee-Womens Research Institute \(MWRI\) 2023 Summer Internship Program for High School Students](#). This program provides current high school juniors and seniors with the opportunity to participate in basic science or clinical research projects with the goal of interesting students in biomedical research as a potential career. During the 4-week program (160 total hours) each student will have the opportunity to work on their own research project under the guidance of an investigator and their staff at MWRI or Magee-Womens Hospital. In addition, students will attend informal Lunch & Learn sessions, during which investigators will discuss biomedical science as a career from their personal perspectives and journeys in the field. At the end of the program, students present their research findings via a PowerPoint presentation to other participants as well as to the MWRI faculty and staff at the annual High School Internship Presentation Day. **Deadline is February 8.**

[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.

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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. If your child hasn't tested, they can still gain eligibility without test scores. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they are taking the appropriate classes to qualify for NCAA Eligibility. A list of NCAA approved courses are on page 6 of the Program of Studies. *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 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!

--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.

CCAC Open House!

CCAC Allegheny Campus on Tuesday, February 6 from 3:30pm to 6:30pm. Registration is not required, but you can register [here](#) to get additional information.