

SENIORS – MARCH 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.
- All transcript requests must be made through Naviance. If your child is not sure how to request transcripts, there are guides in the Class of 2024 Teams page. Go to Post-Secondary Information <Files <Naviance Guides <Requesting transcripts and teacher recommendations.
- 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.
- 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.
- Determine if your schools require any additional financial aid forms and complete those as well as the FAFSA.
- Students should receive all college decisions by mid-March to 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 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, I’m happy to look at it with them. 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.
- 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>

FINANCIAL AID and the FAFSA

The new FAFSA..... In January, the Department of Education announced they will not be forwarding financial aid data to the colleges until 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. Some colleges have changed the deadline to commit (from May 1) to May 15 or June 1. Pay attention to when you have to commit to a school. With different schools having different dates, things might get confusing.

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 cost. 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 could be 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

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 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.

Local (Moon) scholarships are available in Naviance. Look for more information on the Seniors 2024 Teams page and email. These are the Scholarship Search in Naviance (colleges>Scholarships and Money>Scholarship Search), 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.

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.

Lola G. Duff and William H. Duff, II Scholarship Fund – Applicants must be seniors in Allegheny County, going on to pursue a four-year degree. Students must be of the Protestant faith and supply a letter of recommendation from a member of the clergy. Deadline is March 4.

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.

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.

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.

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. 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 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 Opportunities:

[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.