JUNIORS – NOVEMBER 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:

FALL - Post-Secondary Timeline for juniors

- Begin the college and career exploration process with Naviance
- If your child is thinking of testing – do test prep
- If your child took the PSAT, results will be available online (in student's College Board account) between November 4 and 14. After students receive their results, they will have access to Khan Academy and SAT prep
- Free ACT test prep is available at https://academy.act.org/
- Register for the SAT and/or ACT beginning in the winter (February/March)
- An updated copy of your child's transcript has been uploaded into the Portfolio section of Skyward (at the beginning of the 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.

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 also an excellent assessment for general career guidance. It is administered annually to more than one million military applicants, high school, and post-secondary students. The test will be administered on Wednesday, November 13. Register here: https://forms.office.com/r/gtuwLBdYQz The test will also be administered in March 2025.

Scholarships:

All scholarships that come through our office are listed in Naviance. To find the scholarships, log in to your Naviance account, go to 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. Your child 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 scholarships, but there is a lot of money available to students.

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

www.collegecosts.ed.gov

And some good scholarships for juniors:
Hamilton Scholars Award- Recognized high school juniors for their academic, personal, and service achievements. Winners received $500 scholarship, access to annual leadership conferences, scholarship and financial aid assistance, peer mentorship, internship opportunities. Application will be available in December.

Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation – Full ride scholarship that covers tuition, room and board, and expenses for four years of undergraduate study. This award can be used at any accredited college, across the US. This is an intense application. You must read President Coolidge's Autobiography and complete additional reading assignments. Deadline is December 11, 2024.

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 minimum.

Visiting schools:

If you have a chance to visit schools, here what you should 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.

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 2026 Teams (under Post-Secondary Planning, then files). The same list is also on the High School Counseling Center webpage. For the graduating class of 2026, many colleges in the United States are test optional for both admission and scholarships. Before deciding if your child wants to test, check with the schools they are interested in and determine if they need to test. When students apply without test scores, schools 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.

--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.

-- 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.

-Eaton Prep offers SAT prep classes at the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center

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

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.

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/

POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS
Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University is now accepting applications from talented high school juniors for the summer 2025 program. PGSS is an intensive, five-week summer residential program that emphasizes cooperative learning and hands-on laboratory research for high school juniors pursuing careers in science and mathematics. The goal of the program is to encourage Pennsylvania's youth to pursue careers in STEM-related fields. Application deadline is January 31, 2025.

Pittsburgh Teen FBI Academy:
The 2024 Pittsburgh FBI Teen Academy is open to high school juniors and seniors how have any interest in the FBI – not just criminal justice. Due to the vast workforce in the FBI, what they do and how a relationship with the FBI can help their school is encouraged to apply.

Job Opportunity:
Sewickley YMCA is hiring lifeguards. For afterschool, weekends, and evenings. Certification and training provided. For more information call Jeff at 412-741-9622 ext. 147 or jjarvis@sewickleyymca.org