

JUNIORS – DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

Julie Sitko, College and Career Counselor

jsitko@moonarea.net

412-264-9440, ext. 2038

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.

FALL - Post-Secondary Timeline for juniors

- Begin the college and career exploration process with Naviance
- If your child took the PSAT, results are available online. More information on how to access the results are in the net page of this newsletter.
- Free ACT test prep is available at <https://academy.act.org/>
- Register for the SAT and/or ACT beginning in the winter (February/March)
- If your child is thinking of testing – do test prep
- Participate in programming hosted by colleges. Information is posted on the schools’ individual websites.
- 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.

Post-Secondary Planning:

This is the time in your child’s high school career that 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:

--Students will be getting help in post-secondary planning, during the school day. Next week, I will be going into junior English classes with an introduction to Naviance and general information about post-secondary planning.

--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. If you would like to be included in the meeting, please schedule a meeting [here](#). 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. 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. I will start meeting with students the week of December 11.

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is hosting a national (big) college fair in Pittsburgh on January 28-29, 2025. Juniors are invited to attend during the school day on Wednesday, January 29. Beginning January 7, students can sign up to attend the fair. Permission forms will be in the Counseling Center. Students will leave the building after homeroom and will be back for a later 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 Tuesday, January 28. 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/25Pittsburgh>

College Counseling Series at Moon Area HS: Throughout the spring, I'll be post-secondary 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:

Post-Secondary Education Planning Night

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

6:30 PM

Recommended for grades 10-11

This is a program for parents and guardians to understand the basics of post-secondary planning. Join college counselors from Moon and Pine Richland High Schools along with guest speaker, Jennifer Winge, Vice President for Enrollment at Allegheny College, as they share helpful tips for a successful launch to your college search process. This will be a general presentation for all students who are thinking about attending a four – year college. Registration information will be available in January.

PSAT:

Students who took the PSAT/NMSQT in October, the results are available.

There are a few ways to get your child's scores. If they provided a phone number when they tested, they should have received a text saying the scores are available and should be able to get their scores from the link in the text.

--If they did not provide a phone number, but have a college board account, they can log into their college board account and should see their scores. If their scores are not in their account, they might not have been matched. The good news – students can match their PSAT scores to their college board account with the matching tool.

--If your child does not have a college board account, they can create one, then match their account to the PSAT scores so they can see their scores.

--If your child is going to create a college board account, PLEASE be sure to write down the email address and password they use when they create the account. Also make a note of the security phrase. It is outrageously difficult to get into a locked college board account, so please keep track of all account information. Also – do not use their school email. Use a personal email address.

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 2025 Teams (under Post-Secondary Planning, then files). The same list is also on the High School Counseling Center webpage. For the graduating class of 2025, 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](#).

-[Penn State Beaver](#) is offering in person SAT prep classes, starting January 18

-[Eaton Prep](#) offers SAT prep classes at the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center

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.

[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.

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 useful 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/>

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. They also offer the following programs at no-cost; computer science, summer academy for math and science, and an artificial intelligence program called AI4ALL. For more information about any of these programs, you should attend an [information session](#).

[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.

Eisenman Materials Camp <https://www.asmfoundation.org/students/materials-camps/eisenman/>
Highly motivated inquisitive learners with math and science aptitude. Camp utilizing hands on learning principles and applied math and science. Apply here: Application deadline March 31, 2025. Program July 13-18, 2025 at ASM International Headquarters (20 miles east of Cleveland). Accommodations are included.

Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season