

JUNIORS – JANUARY 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.

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
- 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. 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. When you schedule a meeting, you’ll receive an email with a link for the meeting. You will also get an email 24 hours before the scheduled meeting with another link for the meeting.

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. Students will sign up for the fair by getting permission slips 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

ONLINE

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. Here is the registration link:

https://allegheny.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LcD4-JMZQkKg9-33h5vzzA

Going Digital - Everything You Need to Know About the Digital SAT and Digital ACT

Monday, February 10

6:30 PM

ONLINE

Registration: Please register by 6PM on Monday, February 10 via the link below:

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR](#)

Please join Goldstein Test Prep founder Mike Goldstein to discuss and make sense of the recent changes in admissions testing. Topics will include: • All things digital SAT, including the shorter format, adaptive testing, logistics of taking the test, and what we know from the first cycle of digital testing • How adaptive scoring will mean different tests for different students • The new format of the combined reading/writing sections with one paragraph per question • The College Board's Bluebook App and the digital test taking tools created to assist students • Major changes coming to the ACT this spring including the option for digital and paper testing and an optional science section • The continued evolution of test optional admissions policies and how to determine where to send test scores • Decisions by schools such as Yale, Dartmouth, the University of Texas, Purdue, and others to require test scores of all applicants and what it means for admissions rates, average scores, and diversity goals.

The program will include an extensive Q&A session in which participants can type questions and have them answered in real time during the presentation. Feel free to email any questions in advance to mike.goldstein@goldsteintestprep.com.

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.

-- 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

--Students on free/reduced lunch are eligible for a fee waiver. Have your child see Ms. Sitko

--Every college accepts either the SAT or ACT. There is no preference.

<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

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.

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:

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 February 28, 2025.

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.

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.

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.

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/>

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. Apply 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.

[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.

[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 16, 2025.

[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.

[Magee-Womens Research Institute \(MWRI\) 2025 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 7.**

[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.

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.