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 postsecondary 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 2023 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

Check Your Email and your college portals!

Colleges communicate with through email and 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. For example, if you apply to Pitt through the Common Application; after you submit your application, you get an email from Pitt, telling you to complete the SRAR. If you miss out on the email, your application is incomplete and will not be read.

Completing Applications:

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

FINANCIAL AID AWARENESS

THE FAFSA is up and running! **Before you can actually work on the FAFSA, both the student and a parent need to create a FSA ID.** The FSA ID is the username/password you will use to log into the FAFSA. This is also your legal signature. You will use the same FSA ID each year and if as a parent, you have other dependents in college, your FSA ID is the same for all dependents. To create the FSA ID, you will need your social security number, email address or a phone number. Once you create the FSA ID, it will take a few days for you to be able to access the FAFSA. https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch

To create your StudentAid.gov account, visit www.studentaid.gov/fsa-id. We recommend completing this as soon as possible! For additional guidance, please visit: https://studentaid.gov/resources/prepare-for-college/creating-youraccount

When students are creating an FSA ID, they should NOT use their Moon email address. They should use a personal email as this will be the credentials they use throughout college and they will not have access to their Moon email account after they graduate.

You can also complete a Net Price Calculator – found on the financial aid page of every college in the US. This online tool will give families and idea of the cost of education – it is not exact, but an estimate.

Here are some virtual and in person opportunities to fill out the FAFSA:

In-Person FAFSA Completion Workshop
Robert Morris University – UPMC Events Center
Tuesday, February 4th
4:30-6:45 PM
Click here to register: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2DWVPPS

In-Person FAFSA Completion Workshop
Jewish Community Center (JQQ) of Greater Pittsburgh – 5738 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15217 **Monday, February 10th**
6:00-7:30 PM
Click here to register: https://jccpgh.formstack.com/forms/fafsa_night

Virtual FAFSA Completion Workshop
Event with take place virtually via Microsoft Teams
Wednesday, February 19th
5:00-7:00 PM
Click here to register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pheaa-statewide-virtual-fafsa-completion-workshop-registration1107265955279?aff=oddtdtcreator

Transcripts for Scholarships: Most transcripts for scholarships can be unofficial transcripts. Check with the organization granting the scholarship. You can find your unofficial transcript in the portfolio section of Skyward (transcripts in Skyward will be updated with semester grades about a week after reports are distributed). If you checked with the organization offering a scholarship and they absolutely require an official transcript, contact Ms. Monyak at mmonyak@moonarea.net.

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.

There are approximately 25 local scholarships in Naviance for Moon students! These are all in the Scholarship List in Naviance (colleges<Scholarships and Money>Scholarship Search>Local & Regional Scholarships), with a ***** before the name of the scholarship (*MASD 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.

Scholarships:

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
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 list. The scholarships we get in the counseling center are listed on the 'scholarship list' page. That site is updated regularly, so be sure to check back regularly as new scholarships are posted.

The Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling (PACAC) sponsors a scholarship for PA high school seniors. This is a short application with three short answer questions. Students must have a 3.0 GPA to qualify. Deadline is **February 3, 2025.** There are four scholarships – one worth $1500 and three scholarships worth $1000. It's a quick and easy scholarship application – apply!

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

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) 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.**