

JUNIORS – MAY 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:

Spring - Post-Secondary Timeline for juniors

- Begin to talk, as a family, about what your child wants to do after graduating from high school. Although the student makes the ultimate decision about what they want to do after high school, input from parents and guardians is helpful and appreciated.
- Register for the SAT and/or ACT, if your child wants to test
- If your child is thinking of testing – do test prep
- Participate in programming hosted by colleges. Information is posted on the schools’ individual websites. Schools are doing both virtual and in person visitation programs.
- A copy of your child’s transcript has been uploaded into the Portfolio section of Skyward, at the beginning of this school year. 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. An updated copy of the transcript will be posted in Skyward at the end of this year.
- All colleges/universities have a Net Price Calculator on their websites (generally on the financial aid page). This is an excellent resource to help you and your family determine how much you can anticipate paying at each school you’re looking at. Use this tool as a resource to help you determine affordability.
- If you really want to dig into data related to college admissions, retention, financial aid, <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/> is Department of Education website, so the information on the site is gathered from will be the most accurate information available. They also have helpful information about alternatives to college and affordability.

Visiting schools:

If you 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, 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 graduation 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. 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.

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. Before deciding if your child wants to test, check with the schools they are interested in and determine if they need to test. Schools who are test optional 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. If students want to test and safely can, do so.

--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.

--The SAT eliminated the writing portion of their exam, as well as the subject tests. 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

[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.

[Eaton Prep](#) is offering classes at the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center for the various tests.

Post Secondary and Summer Events in the area:

[Southwest Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center \(AHEC\) 2025 Summer Health Career Academy](#)

This program is open to students who are interested in learning more about various careers in healthcare. Over the course of 5 days this July, students will have the opportunity to hear from leaders in various health care professions and participate in hands-on simulations. The Academy is hosted at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

A confirmation email will be sent once the application is received. **Applications are due by May, 2025.** If you have any questions, please reach out to HCA@SouthwestAHEC.org.

[UPMC Sports Medicine Student Aide Workshop:](#)

Saturday, May 17 from 8:00-4:00

Lemieux Sports Complex

This is for high school students interested in a career in athletic training. Students will be exposed to elements of our key topics through lecture, demonstration, and presentations. The main topics will cover the role of an athletic trainer in multiple settings, anatomy and evaluation, concussion, therapeutic exercise, and career opportunities.

Topics include:

- Career exploration
- Therapeutic exercise
- Modalities
- Anatomy and evaluation
- Concussions
- Spine boarding & equipment removal
- Medical terminology
- Taping and bracing

Students must register here: [Student Athletic Trainers' Workshop | Southwest Pa. \(upmc.com\)](#)

There are only 40 spots for this program and there is a cost of \$40.00/student.

[Phipps EcoLeader Academy](#): A free seven-week course at Phipps Conservatory for motivated high school students to explore key topics in environmental science—like ecosystems, climate change, policy, and sustainability—while building skills in communication, collaboration, and public speaking. Held one afternoon a week (Wednesday or Thursday, 12:30–4:30), the program also offers a participation stipend.

[Simcoach Games](#) is accepting applications for its 2025 Summer Apprenticeship in Game Design and Development starting on June 9 and running through July 18. 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.

[CCAC Skilled Trades Academy](#): CCAC is seeking high school students ages 14 to 18 with an interest in pursuing a trades career to participate in the Skilled Trades Academy. The program will take place at CCAC's West Hills Center and consists of five courses:

- June 11 - Electrical
- June 12 - Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning
- June 17 – Commercial Driver's License (truck driving)
- June 25 - Welding
- June 26 – Automotive

All sessions are from 9AM – 1PM. Lunch will be provided. This is a FREE program!

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.

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 list' page. That site is updated regularly, so be sure to check back regularly as new scholarships are posted. Many scholarships posted in Naviance are for seniors, but there are some for juniors. My favorite scholarship search sites are: www.goingmerry.com, www.scholarships.com, www.fastweb.com, www.scholarshipamerica.org, www.finaid.org

Here are two good resources for paying for college and understanding financial aid:

www.mysmartborrowing.com

www.collegecosts.ed.gov

Here are a few scholarships for juniors:

[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.

The [Bryan Cameron Education Foundation](#) has opened up applications to the high-school graduating **Class of 2026** for the **Cameron Impact Scholarship** (merit-based, 4-year, full-tuition). A Cameron Impact Scholar must show evidence of strong academics (3.7 unweighted GPA or higher), leadership, community service, participation in extracurriculars, and a desire to make a positive impact on the world around them.

Early Application Deadline: May 21, 2025

Regular Application Deadline: September 3, 2025

[College Board's Opportunity Scholarships](#): If you use College Board for college searches or practicing for the SAT through Khan Academy, you could win scholarship money.

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](#). 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. *This registration does not apply to students attending division III or NAIA schools.*

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.

[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.