JUNIORS – JUNE NEWSLETTER

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Hello from 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 start thinking 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.

Some REALLY important things to know before going into senior year:

Laptops for summer SAT/ACT testing:

June tests: students who are taking June SAT or ACT tests, should keep their computers (not turn them in) and will turn them into the high school main office or the district office after the test (the week of June 9).
Students taking the August SAT should message me (through email or chat) and let me know they're testing. I will work with the tech department to ensure they can pick up their computers early. Students should message me by August 11.

Final Junior Transcript:

Once grades are finalized, a copy of the final junior transcript will be posted to Skyward, by June 10. Students can print unofficial copies of the transcript or use it as they fill out self-reported academic records for college applications, if students apply to college over the summer (which is NOT mandatory). Transcripts should be available in Skyward for the bulk of the summer. Once the school year starts, another (updated) transcript will be posted to skyward. That transcript will include senior classes.

Requesting transcripts through Naviance:

All official transcripts must be requested through Naviance, however students will not have the ability to request transcripts until we come back to school in the fall. Although some schools encourage you to apply in the summer, they will not give preferential treatment to applications received in the summer (in terms of admission or scholarships). Transcripts will be available to be sent to colleges around mid-September, which is sufficient time for admission and acceptances and for scholarships. I will go into the senior English classes at the beginning of the year and show students how to request transcripts and recommendation letters in Naviance.

Applying to Pitt and Penn State:

These are two of our most popular schools students apply to and attend – and they have some nuances in their application process.

Penn State has an Early Action deadline of November 1. If your child is interested in Penn State – especially the University Park campus, they need to get their completed application in NO LATER than November 1 (but I recommend earlier). I also recommend students indicate in the application that they would do the summer session (especially for students applying to University Park). There are several application options for Penn State – the Common Application, the Coalition Application and Penn State's application. **I recommend using Penn State's application. It's faster and less clunky than the other two applications.** Penn State is test optional.

Pitt operates on a rolling admission process – meaning Pitt will give a decision to students as they apply. With that being said, an unsaid target deadline for Pitt's Pittsburgh campus is the middle of September, but if your GPA is lower than 4.0, then a student should apply in August. Get those apps in early! Pitt also uses three different application types: the Common Application, the Coalition Application and Pitt's application. **I recommend using Pitt's application. It's faster and less clunky than the other two applications.** Pitt is also test optional.

Both PSU and Pitt use something called a Self-Reported Academic Record, meaning the students will input the classes they've taken and the grades they've earned, instead of the high school sending a transcript to these schools. You MUST do this SRAR in order to be considered for admission to either of these schools. They will NOT accept a transcript from the high school. On **September 10**, I'm hosting a SRAR workshop during the school day. Justin, from PSU will be here to

help students complete the SRAR. I strongly encourage all students applying any schools using the self-report records to attend this program. Here are the schools using the self-report records service.
For families who have had children complete the SRAR in the last few years, it's going through some changes this year, and the inputting of courses should be easier and more streamlined for students. I don't have much information but will have the information at the meeting on September 10.

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. Ask what students are doing when they graduate with a degree in X. What type of internships/research are students having while still in college? If your child is 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 your child. This can serve as a guide to schools that will be a good academic fit. Also –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**).
For the 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. 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 they earned in those math classes.
--Students on free/reduced lunch are eligible for a fee waiver. See your school counselor or Ms. Sitko
--Every college accepts either the SAT or ACT. There is no preference.
-- If students take the ACT, I do not recommend taking the writing portion of the exam. I do not think it will be necessary for admission. The SAT eliminated the writing portion of their exam.
--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
3RPrep is offering online test prep
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.

Emails from Post-Secondary Schools:

If your child has not yet, they will be getting inundated with emails from colleges. I have a few suggestions on how to manage the emails.

1. Create an email address just for post-secondary planning. That way, all of the emails they get from colleges won't flood their regular inbox.
2. Create a folder in their email and filter emails from the colleges they think they want to look at later. They can also create a folder of schools that they are interested in, so they don't miss any important messages.
3. Check this email account once a week or every few days. Delete messages they're not interested in. They're going to be overwhelmed with information from colleges and managing the emails is necessary, so they don't miss anything important.

Scholarships:

All scholarships that come through our office are listed in Naviance. To find the scholarships, log in to Naviance, 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. Many scholarships posted in Naviance are for seniors, but there are some for juniors. 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.

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

Have a great summer!