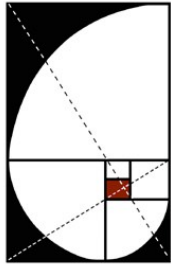


January 2018



THOMAS MACLAREN SCHOOL

COLLEGE COUNSELING NEWSLETTER

Dear parents,

I hope the new year has gotten off to a smooth start for you and your families. Here in the college counseling office, our seniors are busy completing their final applications, reviewing their financial aid award letters, and inching closer to a decision on their colleges of choice. Seniors are completing a 4-week Financial Literacy curriculum this month. Junior College Discussions during tutorial have begun. This month we will talk about college testing as well as how to start a prospective college list. Our sophomores and freshmen began the semester with a resume workshop and an introduction to College vocabulary. Please read on for important information about your child.

Sincerely,

Amy Cooper

College Counselor

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The Pikes Peak Workforce Center Young Adult Job Fair is Coming Up! Meet and speak with employers who want to hire young adults for summer and part-time positions!



NEWS FOR SENIORS

In meeting with our seniors this week, I realized that a certain kind of stress has set in for many of them. In the fall, students were busy completing applications, retaking the ACT or SAT, and ensuring application deadlines were met. While that was a stressful experience, students are now waiting on application decisions and financial aid award letters and are experiencing a general sense of unease about the next steps. *What if I don't get in? What if my family can't afford it?* These are the kinds of questions I hear in my office these days. It is an altogether different kind of stress.

Generally, you can help your child navigate this uncertainty. I advise the following:

- 1) **Ensure all application materials (test scores & financial aid documentation) have been received by colleges.** Sometimes, colleges misplace these items, which might result in a delay or cancellation of the application. Most colleges have an online portal whereby students can check the status of the application. Please follow up with me so that I may send any missing documents.

- 2) **Continue to have open and honest conversations around affordability.** Review financial aid award letters together and help your child understand the implications of taking on student debt. The resources at www.cashcourse.org could help you and your child better understand the ins and outs of student loans and the terms of the loans presented in their award letters.

- 3) **Remind students that they don't need to make rash decisions.** Unless a student has applied and been accepted early decision, students have until May 1st to deposit at their college of choice. Some students feel that they want to make their decisions now to "get it over with." While I understand the desire to close the book on the admission process, we want students to review all of their decisions and award letters before making a final decision.

- 4) **Come see me if you are concerned about your child.** Please don't hesitate to reach out if you are concerned about the admission process or financial aid. I have heard from several families who asked for clarity around better understanding award letters and the process of asking for a second review of the award. Please reach out to me if you are in this position so that I can counsel you on these conversations.

NEWS FOR JUNIORS

TESTING

As a reminder, all juniors will take the SAT at school on Tuesday, April 10th at school. Students who would like to take the optional SAT essay need to register for the essay themselves through their College Board accounts. I have instructed students on how to do this. If your child would like to take the optional SAT essay and needs help adding the essay to their SAT registration, please let me know before February 14th.

How to Begin Researching Colleges

I shared several documents with students this week to help them begin their research. The first is an overview of how to approach the research process and the second provides an example for writing down students' research. All students are encouraged to purchase their own notebook, folder or planner for keeping track of their work in this process. Writing down their findings is a critical component of researching colleges!

The College Process Timeline. This document highlights all college-related tasks for the next 18 months. Please print and stick on the fridge!

Mark Moody's Quick and Dirty College List Builder. This document breaks down how to use a student's GPA and test scores to find schools to which he or she is likely to be accepted. It also describes how to increase your chances of receiving merit-based aid by applying to schools in a different group. Disclaimer: there is much more to college admissions than grades and test scores. This should be used as a resource to get started in researching schools, not a guarantee of whether or not your child will be admitted to a particular school. For this resource, use unweighted GPA. Let me know if you need your child's unweighted GPA, as it differs from what is on our transcripts.

Getting Started. Many students skip an important step in the college research process: introspection. Your child should spend time thinking about what he or she wants from a college experience before diving into research. This document helps guide the introspective process as well as gives a few steps on how to get started on research.

COLLEGE RESOURCES

I shared the following resources with students this week:

FISKE Guide. A Comprehensive, narrative-based review of over 300 colleges. This book is available in my office for use.

Colleges that Change Lives. A review of 40 lesser-known, but wonderful, liberal arts colleges.

College Navigator. A comprehensive government website that lists important admission and financial aid information.

Big Future. A college search engine sponsored by the College Board. A great tool for discovering more colleges to add to the list!

INFORMATION FOR SOPHOMORES & FRESHMEN

All sophomores and freshmen met with me this month to complete a resume workshop. While these students have not yet begun the college process, we do want them to be forward-thinking. In what academic areas are they beginning to show an interest? What extracurricular commitments—sports, music, volunteer opportunities—are they most interested in developing further, and how can they do so? These are the questions we explore at this stage in their high school careers. Creating a resume is an important first step for students, many of whom will apply for their first paid job this coming summer.

As a reminder, all freshmen and sophomores will take the PSAT here at school in April. They are already registered and there is no cost for this test. The purpose of this test is to help students become accustomed to taking a standardized college admission test (although this one is merely a practice experience). I will communicate additional information about the PSAT in upcoming newsletters.

Thank you for reading!