

College Newsletter

News and tips for high school students and parents

Advisor's Note

As we enter the final quarter of our school's third year, students tell me they now "know what to expect" and many are pleased to see their grades climbing due to better habits and an increasing love for their studies. The high school hums with worthwhile conversations, and often those conversations turn to the future. Our 9th graders are in their "Foundational Year" as they rise to meet the challenges of the high school curriculum and begin musing about their own passions and hopes. Our 10th graders are well into their "Learning Year" — a year that should be marked by a strong academic performance, commitment to a narrowing number of extracurricular activities, and deeper research into particular colleges and areas of study. While students are busy doing these things, we continue to diligently lay the groundwork for our growing high school and college advising program, and we are excited to update you on our progress in these pages. Keep reading to find out about important activities and how to embrace a measured approach to college research in the second article of Dr. Moore's insightful College Search Series: "An Open and Honest Family Conversation".

Information and Announcements

- **Ms. Marcellino is currently meeting with all 10th graders during 8th period study halls.** In each meeting, students receive an updated curriculum map with next year's required courses and electives and a document outlining their responsibilities and the school's commitments by grade year. They also come away with short-term and long-term homework based on a conversation about their (1) resumé, (2) college research, (3) upcoming testing, and (4) summer plans. 10th grade meetings will take place through March, and 9th grade meetings will begin after Spring Break. Please ask your student about this conversation in order to begin one of your own!
- **Students should sign up for an individual College Board account [here](#).** This account gives students access to SAT, AP, and PSAT scores, test registration, and college planning resources. After 9th and 10th graders receive their PSAT



Have a conversation with your child about any geographical or financial considerations.

Help them investigate summer opportunities to enhance their skills and CV.

Our school CEEB code is 110304.

Direct any and all college-related queries to [Ms. Marcellino](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

The University of Georgia is the first state-chartered university in America. In 1785, the General Assembly chartered the university after setting aside 40,000 acres, and the official document begins with these lofty, and familiar, words: “As it is the distinguishing happiness of free governments that civil Order should be the Result of choice and not necessity, and the common wishes of the People become the Laws of the Land, their public prosperity and even existence very much depends upon suitably forming the minds and morals of their Citizens . . .”.

scores back (Testing took place Wednesday, March 15.), they should register for Khan Academy’s free personalized practice tests. Parents may sign up to receive College Board emails as well.

- **As more extracurricular activities become available to high school students and more students take the initiative to begin clubs themselves, remind students to be choosy.** Keep in mind, when colleges take note of applicants’ extracurricular activities, they have four ideals in mind: (1) Intellectual curiosity, (2) Leadership, (3) Longevity/Progress, (4) and Service. High schoolers with busy schedules should seek to devote themselves to 3-4 activities that seem worthwhile, enjoyable, and interesting.
- **As summer nears, help students investigate ways to use their leisure time well.** Of course, summer is an opportunity for rest and refreshment, but it is also an opportunity for students to enhance their skills and resumé by participating in camps and programs or finding employment. Click [here](#) to see our suggestions.

Just Ahead . . .

We are excited to implement a college planning and tracking tool, Naviance, to be used by students, college advisors, and parents in the 2017-2018 school year. Naviance allows students to research colleges and scholarships, assess how their achievement aligns with particular schools, track their application submission process, and share information with their college advisor. You will learn more about this invaluable tool as we get it up and running over the summer.

We plan to publish our school profile just after Spring Break. As they recruit students and read applications, college admissions officers seek out school profiles in order to better understand the history, philosophy, offerings, demographics, and potential of a high school and its students. We will post this important document on our website and distribute it to colleges in an effort to educate institutions about our unique mission and structure.

An Open and Honest Family Conversation

Part 2 of a College Search Series by Dr. Moore

Choosing a college ought to be considered the first sovereign decision that a young person makes (with the help of parents) in his or her life. All other decisions up to that point* have usually been local, taken from only a few options, and most likely not life-changing. Choosing a college, however, could take a person to several thousand different places, could determine what one's work will be in life, will affect one's understanding and shape one's view of the world and his place in it. One's choice of a college could even determine whom one marries. With all these important matters riding on it—and with the pressure placed on young folks these days about choosing the right college—much of it coming from the colleges and the billion-dollar college-prep industry but some of it also coming from home—applying for and choosing a college can create a great deal of Angst in a young person's mind and make what should be an adventure become more of a labyrinth and a burden.

Let us concentrate on the part of the pressure and Angst that could come from home. My hope is for our families to have a different experience. I would like them to have an open and honest conversation about the various colleges the children might attend, the advantages and disadvantages of each choice, guided by the ultimate goal of determining which institution is most likely to teach students to lead informed, productive, and happy lives *and* figuring out which college is best suited to the student's interests, talents, and character. My hope is to avoid the all-too-common, "Dad and Mom, I'd like to go to X College." "But, son, you know we've always wanted you to go to Y." Standoff. End of discussion.

This conversation should take place in the summer after the sophomore year, when students and parents have a little time. The key to the conversation, I think, derives from a Greek dictum joined by the logical offspring of a Greek dictum, namely, *Know thyself* and *Know thy child*. There are many kinds of parents and children out there, so we cannot look at every case under a microscope at present, but let us divide our world into two distinct categories, the ambitious and the unambitious. Each personality type has its own set of virtues and vices. The object is to magnify the virtues and control the vices in order to have a good conversation between parents and child.

The virtue of the ambitious child is to swing for the fences or shoot for the stars: that is, consider nothing beyond his or her reach including the most selective and demanding colleges in the country. The vice of the ambitious child is, in shooting for the stars, to apply only to the most selective colleges, based more on reputation than any knowledge of the colleges themselves, and to consider himself or (more likely) herself a failure if not admitted to a college that has a seven percent acceptance rate and costs a mint in tuition.

The virtue of ambitious parents is to want the best for their children. The vice of those parents is sometimes to pressure their child into applying for and attending a college *they want* rather than what best suits their child.

The virtue of the unambitious parent is not to get caught up in the panic over college admission these days. The vice of the unambitious parent is to think either the college right down the road or the one he or she attended or the one "we can afford" (without looking into college financing, grants, scholarships, and the like) is good enough

* I certainly would not underestimate the effects of coming to a school of the caliber of Atlanta Classical, but that typically is a parent's decision rather than a child's.

for our kid because it was good enough for us—an attitude that could prevent the student from going to a college much better suited to his mind and talents, one the family *could* afford.

The virtue of the unambitious student . . . well, there really is no virtue in that student. The vice of the unambitious student is that of choosing a college based on the football team, on where a current sweetheart will attend, or on a college's reputation for being a party school, dude. Here are the realities mitigating against those proclivities. A person can root for any team he wants to, and even if the team is a powerhouse, that is really no reflection on him unless he is going to be offered an athletic scholarship. The break-up rate for high-school sweethearts in the first year of college is about 95%. And, with regard to the party-school phenomenon, I quote Dean Wormer, "Fat, drunk, and stupid is no way to go through life, son" (especially not on your parents' dime). Though different in some ways, the effect of the vices—whether ambitious or unambitious—of both parent and child is to predetermine the outcome before any real college search has begun.

So how do we magnify our virtues and overcome our vices in the great college search? We do exactly what we do in class every day: a homework assignment followed up by a civil conversation. Here is the assignment. The student and the parents should consider and research three categories of college that will lead to an initial slate of three different colleges to discuss for each party. The three categories are: 1) close-to-home/safe bet; 2) not-so-close-to-home/compelling mission; and 3) swinging for the fences. Another way to look at these categories is, 1) very likely to get into; 2) less likely to get into but worth a shot; 3) very selective, but, Is it all it is cracked up to be? The research should lead the parents and child (working separately) to learn enough about each college to present and discuss it. Here are some study questions to help things along. (Yes, this is a *homework* assignment, so there is work.)

1) What is the original mission of the college?

SPRING BREAK TIPS

As some of you plan to incorporate college visits into your vacation plans, consider making these visits more than a quick campus tour:

1. Ask questions and take notes. Do some digging to understand the school's culture, reputation, and student body.
2. Attend a class. Try to sit in on a course that you would be interested in taking, and see whether inquiry and truth are valued in the classroom.
3. Speak with students and faculty members, particularly those associated with a field of study or honors program that interests you. Get an idea of the faculty's philosophy and the types of students attracted to it.

- 2) What is it most known for now? Has it stood by its original mission?
- 3) Does the college have a strong core curriculum in the liberal arts and brag about that curriculum?
- 4) Do the professors teach undergraduates starting with freshmen in small classes, or is that mostly done by graduate students or in a large lecture setting?
- 5) What percentage of undergraduates go on to graduate school within five years? (This is a good indicator of how other universities regard this institution.)
- 6) What is the intellectual, and to some extent political, life outside of the classes? For example, who have been the recent

speakers on campus, and how have they been received?

- 7) What are the titles of the classes the professors teach to majors in that discipline? Would you want to take those classes? What are the titles of the books, articles, and public lectures the professors have written or given? Would you want to read those books or articles or attend those lectures? (Lectures of college professors can increasingly be found on-line.)
- 8) Does this college appear on the various lists of Top Ten or Twenty Party Schools? (Parents, you need to know this.)
- 9) If it is a large university or one not particularly known for academic rigor, does it have a reputable honors program designed to attract the most ambitious students?
- 10) If you had to characterize this college or university in one to three words, what would that word or those words be?

This homework assignment could take a week or two. Once both the parents and the student are ready, there should be a week devoted to civil, open, honest presentation and discussion. Here are the rules that should govern that discussion.

- 1) Choose a quiet setting and a good time. If the dinner table is too noisy due to your other children (as can happen), then after dinner might be better. I would urge having this conversation without using technology.
- 2) The student should go first by presenting a different college each day, showing what he or she knows and likes about the college, as well as certain drawbacks.
- 3) The parents should ask questions but not in a way that sways one way or another.
- 4) Each college should be given its different day. Therefore, the questions should not be comparative, along the lines of, "Yes, but is this college as affordable as X" or "But this college is not nearly as prestigious as Y." Let each college be discussed on its own merits rather than decisions being made a year before the student applies.

- 5) After the child has had three days, it is the parents' turn. The child should listen with interest even if he thinks he knows what his parents are going to say. To use one of George Washington's Rules of Civility, "Shake not the head, Feet, or Legs; roll not the Eyes; lift not one eyebrow higher than the other; wry not the mouth, and bedew no man's face with your Spittle, by approaching too near him when you Speak." Well, at least the "roll not the eyes" part.
- 6) If the parents are going to tout their own alma mater(s) — and there is nothing wrong with that — they should consider the profound question of Janet Jackson: "What have you done for me lately?" (See the video for a blast from the past). That is, parents must realize that the culture and even the quality of universities has changed, in some cases radically, over the last twenty years. Parents should know about those changes.
- 7) In general, parents should research and learn about these colleges as much as they expect their children to do. Knowing someone who went there is not the same as knowing the professors, the classes, the campus culture, and so on.
- 8) After the student has presented three colleges and the parents three, they should take a day of rest. The following week (or perhaps after an intervening week that allows for research of the other's candidates) the student might address what he or she has found out about the parent choices and vice versa.
- 9) Just because both student and parents "agree" on the close-to-home college does not lead to "We agree, done deal." If the college is right down the street, that is not so much a matter of deliberate choice as it being a "no-brainer" of a starting point. There may turn out to be a better in-state or close-to-home choice that more deliberation would "bring to the table."
- 10) Rather than casting a critical comment, both parents and student should end by stating what he or she likes most in the other's choice on that particular day.

This discussion is not the conclusion of the college search. It is only the beginning. What we should have after this month or so of deliberate research and discussion is not necessarily *the choice* but five or six colleges that are most likely pretty different from each other. Those differences

should propel further research and contemplation —this time mainly by the student—to figure out the answer to life-changing and life-ennobling questions: What do I want to learn in college? Which college will bring out the best in me? What kind of man or woman do I want to become?