

Last week we were fortunate to host a handful of senior level admissions professionals from around the country. Not only did our students impress our visitors with their genuine and engaging personalities, but I noticed once again that in those hours between the end of school and the start of our evening program, our students were remained. Many going to and from commitments, sitting around a table doing homework, and finding a moment to scarf down some dinner before the program began. It's a wonder just how much Breck students accomplish. These commitments coupled with the lingering winter weather can cause some angst to develop this month.

This is always an exciting time of year for the College Counseling Office as we are working with students at every phase of the college process: sophomores who are stepping timidly into the college sphere with introductory meetings through to seniors, who, for some the process is over, and for others, who are still in the thick of things. Therefore, you will find this to be a longer newsletter; but it is one I trust you will find valuable as you support your child.

Seniors

"The waiting is the hardest part..." I don't often quote musicians in the Newsletter, but I find Tom Petty's words relevant for our seniors. It's not easy to wait, and this is just what many seniors must do right now. The work has been done: the essays written, applications completed and submitted, test scores sent. Though the colleges take the next course of action - making the decision to admit, defer or refuse – there is still work to be done!

- Remember to **check online statuses** to make sure applications are complete. Mid-year reports and transcripts have been completed and submitted. Should you receive notices of something missing, notify the College Counseling Office immediately.
- **Grades still count!** At our next extended meeting with seniors on the 7th, we will share with seniors the story of "The Play" from the '82 Cal-Stanford game wherein Stanford scores in the waning seconds to pull ahead in this heated rivalry. Stanford kicks off, needing only to tackle the ball carrier in order to preserve the victory. After a series of laterals and near tackles, the Cal runner finds himself heading to victory. On the way to the end zone to score the winning touchdown, the ball carrier zigzags his way through the Stanford band that has come onto the field to perform the post-game celebration. Needless to say, the band came on a little too early and the game ended painfully embarrassing for the Stanford Cardinal. Colleges are increasingly asking for the most current grades for students, including spring grades. Seniors are closing in on the homestretch and now it's time to kick it into overdrive. Use this time to further distinguish yourself. In short, don't let the band on the field!
- Though most applications are in, it is important for seniors to keep their college counselor apprised of any **news or updates** as it pertains to the college process.

- On February 7th, we will ask seniors to complete a Naviance survey to verify their college list.
- We remain in contact with colleges to which our students apply throughout the process and February and March are critical. To that end, we ask seniors to begin thinking about the schools to which they've applied and indicate their level of interest; if there is a clear number one school, it is important for us to know.

Though seniors may be waiting for admission decisions, now is the time to complete financial aid forms. This fall, we hosted a financial aid/FAFSA workshop led by Macalester College's Director of Financial Aid, Brian Lindeman. He touched upon many pertinent topics and answered wide-ranging questions.

- **Financial Aid deadlines approach quickly** (some as early as next week), so be sure to stay on top of the paperwork and deadlines. It is wise to submit the required forms well in advance of deadlines. Please contact your college counselor if you have any questions.
- **Net Price Calculators** may be found on every college website. We advise you to use these to get a sense of any potential aid packages.

Admission decisions will begin trickling in over the coming months. **Please notify the College Counseling Office of any decisions you receive.** As you do, please keep in mind that some decisions will require action, whether you are admitted or waitlisted, and you should speak with your college counselor first. Note that enrollment deposits should not be due until May 1. You should only place one deposit. If you have a question about this, please talk to your college counselor.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMS

All students in AP courses will be registered for their respective AP exams. Students who have received College Board accommodations will use them on AP tests as well. If there is an exam for which a student would like to sit and is not in the AP course for that exam needs approval from Mr. Nicholson by February 20. Please speak with Ms. Papillon immediately.

SPECIAL PARENT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 26

For the past six years, we've offered an informal conversation to help provide parents with perspectives on how they may best support their child receive admissions decisions in the month of March, navigate any potential waitlists, planning spring college visits and more. Additionally, we'll offer perspective as your child transitions to college.

Juniors

JUNIOR APPLICATION CASE STUDIES WORKSHOP

Thanks to all who attended our program on January 24th. The admissions leaders from Connecticut College, The University of Minnesota, The University of Wisconsin, and The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) provided a behind-the-scenes look at the admission process. We will use this exercise as a springboard to the work we do this spring and beyond.

SCHEDULING

Juniors should see Ms. Papillon immediately to schedule an appointment with their counselor prior to the March Upper School Conferences. Not only do counselor schedules fill quickly, but the conversation may require follow up conversations with faculty members, department heads and parents. The result should be a template for your conversation with your advisor. The goal of a senior year schedule is to maximize the balance of challenge and success, revealing the breadth and depth of your child's interests and abilities, and to reflect strengths in areas of interest.

COFFEE TALKS

The College Counseling Office will host a series of informal meetings for junior parents at 8:00 AM in the Heritage Room at Anderson Ice Arena throughout the spring semester. Each meeting will address a specific topic. If you are unable to make it, do not worry! These meetings are not intended to replace personal conversations with a college counselor, but rather to provide information about the specific topic. A summary of the conversation will be emailed shortly after each Coffee Talk.

The topic of the next Coffee Talk slated for March 8 is "Developing a Balanced List."

Additional Coffee Talks are currently scheduled for April 26 and May 30. Please watch your email and the College Counseling Newsletter for further details.

PARENT SURVEYS!

There are two parent surveys to complete; we ask that you complete them both in a timely manner and before your meeting with your counselor this spring.

Each parent/guardian should have a personal account to access Naviance. The surveys seek information and insights directly from each parent. Therefore, we ask each parent to use their personalized link to offer his/her insights. Should you wish to work collaboratively, you may work together to complete one parent's survey. If you need help accessing your Naviance account, please contact [Carrie Papillon](#) (information may be found below).

TESTING

At this point, all juniors should have worked with their college counselor to develop a testing plan. Remember, the student registers with the SAT (collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat) and ACT (actstudent.org). Students should take the ACT with Writing. If you have questions about testing or accommodations on standardized testing, please see your college counselor as soon as possible.

Upcoming test dates are (registration deadlines fall about a month prior to the test date, so plan ahead!):

- February 10 ACT test at Breck School
- March 10 SAT only test at Breck School
- April 14 ACT test (offsite)
- May 5 SAT test (offsite)

- June 2 SAT test at Breck School
- June 9 ACT test at Breck School
- July 14 ACT test (offsite)

SPRING BREAK PLANS

Whether you are traveling or staying local, this time may be a good opportunity to visit colleges. At this time, it's important to visit a range of colleges and universities. Your college counselor can help you plan your spring break trip. However, you do not need to travel to accomplish this! There are a lot of great options locally. Plus, the Minnesota Association of College Admissions Counseling (MACAC) is hosting a series of fairs in the latter half of March. Though these MEF Fairs are hosted by other secondary schools, Breck students are invited to attend. To see the list of fairs and the colleges attending, please visit this website: <http://mn-acac.org/mefcalendar>.

MAY PROGRAM can be a great opportunity for our students. This is the first opportunity for Class of 2019 to take advantage of a few choices: pursuing an internship, participating in service, or delving into a special project. Juniors will want to think seriously at how they want to utilize this opportunity. The college counselors are ready to talk.

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NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

Interested in playing Division I or II athletics? Please register with the NCAA Eligibility Center: www.eligibilitycenter.org and be sure to speak with your counselor about the recruiting process.

SUMMER PLANS

Some of the greatest times for growth for high school students are the summers after their sophomore and junior years. We strongly encourage students to plan significant experiences that take them away from their school friends and Breck's academic work and get them in a different atmosphere where they learn about themselves and the world in which they live. There are many wonderful programs out there for students, and our city offers a richness of local experiences. Take a class at a local university or art center, join an archaeological dig, join a local political campaign, or design your own reading list with a Breck faculty member. Think big. Think broad. Find something that will allow you to pursue a passion or something in which you are curious.

Sophomores

COLLEGE COUNSELOR ASSIGNMENTS AND 1ST MEETINGS

College Counselor assignments were sent to families in December. We ask that all sophomores see [Carrie Papillon](#) in the College Counseling Office to schedule an appointment with their college counselor. Counselor schedules are filling up as many sophomores have already done so and juniors will now begin scheduling meetings as well. We ask these first meetings include only the student and counselor as they serve as an opportunity to get to know each other a bit. They also serve as a preliminary discussion on

scheduling and testing and you may want to be a part of these conversations. We ask that your child come to the meeting with some ideas and having had some conversations at home prior to the meeting and to return home with follow up discussions after this meeting. This will allow the counselors to begin forming a relationship with your child and provide an opportunity for your child to try on the responsibility this process requires. Counselors are more than happy to connect with parents. Feel free to email or call or to schedule an appointment through Carrie Papillon. If your family needs to find out their college counselor, please contact [Carrie Papillon](#) in the College office.

GRADE 9-10 STUDENT PARENT COLLEGE COUNSELING MEETING

On Wednesday, January 31, many families joined us for our annual Grades 9-10 Student Parent College Counseling Meeting. Jeff Allen, Vice president for Admissions and Financial Aid at Macalester College, Chris George, St. Olaf's Dean of Admissions, Adam Webster, Senior Associate Dean of Admission at Carleton College and other members of the Breck community joined us for a series of conversations on a variety of topics. It was a great night to learn how artists and athletes can optimize their process and as well as how to finance a college education, how to approach standardized testing, and thoughts on optimizing and personalizing the Breck experience and a chance to ask questions.

Please refer to the invitation sent last week for further information about panels, panelists and programming details.

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A NOTE ON PRACTICE TESTS, PRACTICE TEST RESULTS, & COLLEGE EMAILS

We distributed Practice ACT booklets and scores and PSAT booklets during the January 31 College Forum. If your child was absent or missed this event, they will receive the information when they meet with their college counselor. The scores are informative, but should be reviewed within context. Reviewing these results and possible action items with your college counselor will be beneficial. Our focus is on skills, not scores.

Many sophomores may have noticed an increase in the amount of correspondence – email and snail mail – they are receiving from colleges. Many colleges obtain names and contact information from testing agencies, most likely the College Board (PSAT), who fit broad demographic and score profiles. Colleges do not receive the actual PSAT results.

The correspondence from colleges can be as informative as it is overwhelming. A student need not reply to every email that is sent. A student need not read every letter. Rather, set the items aside to review as a study break or when a student has more time. Just because a school has sent material may not mean the student will be admitted to the institution; likewise, a college to which your child will be admitted may not yet have your child's contact information and has therefore not sent information.

Students should not feel compelled to respond to inquiries or contacts from colleges. If there is a school that piques their interest, they should respond or request more information in order to remain on the college's mailing list. There are many times a student can enter into the communication flow, this happens to be the first time. A student may always request information via a college's website, an email, a campus visit, or other means.

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Freshmen

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Please refer to the invitation sent last week for further information about panels, panelists and programming details.

A NOTE ON PRACTICE TESTS AND PRACTICE TEST RESULTS

We distributed the practice PSAT results and booklets during the January 31 College Forum. If your child was absent or missed this event, we will distribute them during the February 14th advisory. The scores are informative, but should be reviewed within context. Rather than focusing on scores, it is the skills assessed that are most worth reviewing.

SUMMER

With one semester in the rearview mirror, now is the time to reflect and make some goals for the future, both in the classroom and out. Students should continue to develop good study habits, get to know teachers, and step out of their comfort zone to take on a leadership role, try a new activity, and to find other outlets for their talents and interests. As you complete scheduling requests for next year, make summer plans, be mindful that how students spend their time reflects their interests and passions!

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