

The Hopkins Academy College Counseling Process

By Rick Berger, Director of Guidance

The college counseling process at Hopkins Academy actually begins in the spring of the eighth grade year. I meet with the entire eighth grade for the purpose of transitioning into the high school. At this time, we discuss and explain credits and how they are earned, graduation requirements, and the concept of grade point average (GPA) and how it relates to class rank. I then briefly touch on college entrance requirements, and the need for each student to do the very best that they can.

During the freshman and each subsequent year, all students are exposed to the Career Awareness exploration program. Additionally, I meet with each freshman individually to put together their tentative four-year educational plan, and to discuss the importance of proper scheduling and good grades, to their future plans. I then will meet with the class as a group in the spring to plan schedules for the coming year. Individual scheduling meetings are also held on an as needed basis.

In the early fall of the sophomore year, I will meet with the entire class, as a group to introduce the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude/National Merit Scholastic Qualifying Test). I will discuss the test and who should be taking it, and I will answer any questions that they may have. When the results of the PSAT/NMSQT become available, I will meet with them again to show a brief video, and give a general explanation of the scores. Immediately after this, I will begin individual meetings with all sophomores to discuss the results, and to have further discussion of their future plans. We will also tentatively put together their course schedule for junior year. In the early spring of the tenth grade year, we will have another group meeting for the purpose of finalizing their course schedules. As always, additional individual meetings are held on an as needed basis.

In the early fall of the junior year I will meet with the entire class to do a presentation on the PSAT/NMSQT, and to have preliminary discussions on the college search process. I will also suggest that all college bound juniors make plans to attend the Hampshire County College Fair, and at this time, I will give them the date, time, and location of the Fair. When the scores of the PSAT/NMSQT arrive, I will again meet with the entire group to discuss the scores, and to further discuss the college search process. As always, I will continue to stress the importance of good grades and proper course selection. In the spring of the junior year, I will do a major presentation, which I refer to as the Junior Seminar. The seminar is an in depth look at the college search process, and all that goes along with it. Generally, we will videotape this presentation and make it available to interested parents. At this time, I will begin meeting with each junior individually to check their progress on meeting requirements for graduation, to plan their course schedule for senior year, and to get them started on their individual college search. These meetings will take place prior to spring break, so that students may use the vacation to visit colleges if they wish to. I remain available to them for the remainder of the year to assist with their search and any questions that they might have. I also strongly recommend that all college bound juniors, take the SAT-I, in May or June of this year, and explain to them that Hopkins Academy co-sponsors an SAT preparation program, in conjunction with the Princeton

Review. Finally, we will for the first time, hold our annual College Information Night in the spring, and we will be inviting the parents of ALL college bound students in grades 9-12.

On the first day of senior year, Mrs. Bonneville and I will meet with the entire class to encourage them to continue to do their best, to be aware of and to meet all deadlines, and to continue to follow through on the college process. Beginning with the first full week of school, I will meet with each senior individually, to discuss any changes in their post secondary plans, and their search progress to date. I will also discuss with them the fall dates for SAT-I, and the possible need for SAT-II. Finally, I will explain to them the procedure for obtaining and filing their applications, and I will remind them about the yearly Hampshire County College Fair. I will then continue to meet with individual seniors on an as needed basis to assist them with the refining of their search, and the filing of applications. In November or December of the senior year, we will present for parents, our annual Financial Aid Night, with financial aid officers from the University of Massachusetts presenting the ins and outs of the financial aid process. Finally, I will assist the seniors with the search for scholarships, with the key word being assist. I will expect them to do the brunt of the work, after I point them in the right direction. We will all then sit back and wait for the acceptances to come in, and the final choices to be made, and we will all hope that everyone gets into his or her top choice, and can leave Hopkins Academy fully prepared to enter the world of higher education.