

DE COLLEGIO

SPECIAL WINTER PREVIEW EDITION

March 2017

WHAT IS DE COLLEGIO?

De Collegio is a college guidance newsletter that will come out at the beginning of each month in the summer before senior year. It will help you to keep track of colleges visiting Solebury and the general area, where you should be each month in the college search process and more.

I created *De Collegio* – whose name means “About College” – when I began my previous college counseling position at Devon Prep. I hope that you find it helpful!

STAYING ON COURSE

The winter trimester has come to a close, and with it we wrapped up our series of college guidance classes. While occasionally we had some students who chose to volunteer to work for Bill Christy instead of go to class, the classes for the most part were well-attended and vibrant. We had some great conversations about the college search, application and decision-making process and it seems as if this class as a whole seems invested in the process.

You will find the course syllabus on our college counseling web page, which is listed at the end of this newsletter along with other contact information for me.

Our first class was simply an overview of everything that was to come and

discussion of my own experiences. Some highlights of the course include:

PUT IT IN WRITING

Also in our first class we looked at examples of good and not so good essays and talked about what the elements of successful essays are. This included a review of two actual essays that were submitted to Davidson College in North Carolina and some stories about successful and not so successful essays that I encountered in admissions.

As part of their college questionnaire, students were required to write an essay (using prompts from the Common Application). I am in the process of reviewing these over the current break. Anytime a student wishes me to review their essay and provide feedback, I will be happy to do so.

I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND WHAT I'M SEARCHIN' FOR

In our second class, we went onto two online search engines and found information about different colleges. While there are several search engines out there, we focused on www.collegeboard.org. I also introduced the students to some of the features of [Naviance](#), including its college searches. We also talked about the different types of colleges (everything from research universities to trade schools) and selecting a major.

TESTING 1, 2, 3

In our second class, we also talked about how colleges use standardized testing, the differences and similarities between the ACT (www.actstudent.org) and SAT (www.collegeboard.org), and we went through the registration process to sign up for these exams. We discussed the recent changes to both exams and what they mean to the students.

Since colleges consider the highest scores only, and students tend to improve their scores the second time around, I recommend that students take the tests 2-3 times. *I highly encourage students to take the SAT or the ACT at least once in junior year to provide a baseline to help in your college searches.* There also may be options if the students aren't satisfied with their test scores (e.g. our SAT Prep class or considering test-optional schools as listed at www.fairtest.org).

APPLY YOURSELF

In our third class, we talked about how/when to apply to colleges. Every student gasped when I said that I've had seniors apply to as many as 46 schools. I hope that they remember that reaction and choose a reasonable number (3-10) of colleges to which to apply. I encouraged students to apply early (get started on essays and filling out applications over the summer!) and talked about Early Decision, Early Action and other application types. We then filled out a mock Common Application (www.commonapp.org) and discussed the new Coalition application, so they know what is expected of them. The Common Application is accepted by over 600 colleges across the country.

The questionnaire that I gave them (which was due on Feb. 20) is like a college application on steroids, so if they can fill out my questionnaire then they can fill out any college application. And I will gladly look over any applications before students submit them. I encourage students to apply online, and if they want me to review their applications, they should either provide me with their username and password (preferable) or print it out for me. *I will not make changes or submit the application,* but I will provide feedback on how it could improve.

I also showed the students how to request transcripts through [Naviance](#); without such a transcript request, I cannot send transcripts anywhere for the students.

ROAD TRIP!

In our fourth class, we talked about campus visits. Visiting colleges is *extremely* important. While you can get a sense of size, location and majors on a search engine, campus visits are really the best way to determine atmosphere and non-academic fit. So it is best to visit when college classes are in session but our classes are not, so that you don't miss class and you can get a sense of campus atmosphere. While visiting on weekends or the summer is okay, it doesn't give the same sense. If you do need to miss class, there is a form on our web site to fill out.

I suggested that this current break would be an ideal time to visit colleges!

ONE ON ONE

Also in our fourth class, we talked about interviews. The interview is a chance for students to learn more about the college and for them to learn more about the student. It is very rarely an evaluative part of the process, but it can help show how interested students are, which in borderline cases can help tip the scales in a students' favor.

We did a mock interview where I played the world's worst interviewee and students critiqued my behavior and responses. By doing so, I hope that they may be aware some of the small habits (which I completely exaggerated) that they have that might not reflect well on them.

MAY I RECOMMEND...

Also in our fourth class, we discussed the recommendation letter. I will be writing letters of recommendation for every senior, based on teacher comments, the questionnaires, our individual meetings and my observations of them outside the classroom.

Students will also be expected to identify at least two teachers before the end of the school year and ask them for letters of recommendation. They should also follow up with an e-mail highlighting some of their accomplishments. Students should provide stamped, addressed envelopes to the teachers at least three weeks before they are due in admissions.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

In our final class, we talked about the many factors that could go into a college decision. The most important is

strong grades in a strong curriculum. It's important that students keep pushing themselves and getting better grades, and continuing to do so in senior year. But we also talked about other factors such as activities, interest shown in the school, demographics, special interest cases, etc.

After we talked about everything that goes into an admission decision, each of the classes looked at the same seven mock student profiles I created. They were allowed to accept three and waitlist one, but had to reject the other three. These profiles are available on our web page. We looked at the "students" individually and then within the context of the group. Students had some very passionate and thoughtful discussions and had the chance to fight for their candidates. *None of the seven classes completely agreed on what to do for every student (and none agreed with the aggregate decision!), and no candidate received the same decision from every class.* College admission is not an exact science!

I think that it gave them some good insight, on a much smaller scale, into what admissions offices have to go through each year. They told me how hard it was to make a decision on these seven, so I hope that they appreciate what it must be like for an admissions office to handle *thousands!*

In case you were curious, here are the decisions for each "student" we reviewed:

Student A: Acc. 2, Rej. 4, Waitlist 1
Student B: Acc. 3, Rej. 4, Waitlist 0
Student C: Acc. 6, Rej. 1, Waitlist 0
Student D: Acc. 3, Rej. 1, Waitlist 3
Student E: Acc. 1, Rej. 4, Waitlist 2

Student F: Acc. 0, Rej. 6, Waitlist 1
Student G: Acc. 6, Rej. 1, Waitlist 0

So if we were to compile all of these decisions, we accepted students C,D and G; denied students A,E and F; and waitlisted student B (a combination that was different from previous years).

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE

In addition to the college classes, I require every junior to meet with me individually before the end of junior year. This way we can set forth a plan of action and talk about specific information about each student that we could not do in a group setting. Parents are certainly welcome to meet with me either together with their children or separately.

ON THE TOWN

Besides going out to visit colleges, many times colleges will be visiting both Solebury and the general area and giving presentations.

We host about 90 colleges on campus each year, and I will be happy to reach out to specific colleges to see if they can visit, if I sense the interest from our students in our individual meetings.

I will also be going out to visit colleges both in counselor information sessions as well as tours of colleges. I just returned from visits to Millersville and Villanova Universities, and plan to visit more colleges this spring.

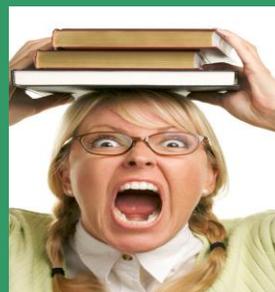
FAIR ENOUGH

Along these lines, I am pleased to once again partner with George School to host our second annual college fair, which will be at George School this year on April 17th and 18th. I am requiring all juniors to attend one of these two nights.

THE LAST WORD

Each of my newsletters will end with a sentence or a short paragraph to wrap everything up.

I think that your college journey is off to a great start with this class. Take advantage of the time off from classes and build a solid foundation with the SAT, recommendation requests, essays and applications *before* senior year, so that you can focus on keeping up your grades and enjoying senior year. I don't want you to end up looking like this:



I will be around most of the summer to help make the process easier for you.

-Tim

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www.solebury.org/academics/college-counseling/index.aspx