

RADFORD HIGH SCHOOL

GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT – JUNIOR NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 2010

I would first like to introduce myself as the new junior and senior counselor at Radford High School. My name is Mary Madeline Webster and I am a '97 graduate of RHS – go Bobcats! I recently returned to the area after working as a school counselor in the Richmond area for four years. I am so excited to be back and look forward to getting to know the students and their parents. This newsletter serves as my first for juniors this year. I hope to answer some commonly asked questions about what juniors should be doing during this time of the year to plan for life after high school. During a student's senior year I am in the classroom often with college and scholarship information. To help students in their planning I will be meeting with all students individually; however, any student is encouraged to make an appointment with me if he/she has any questions or concerns. Students can also meet with Susy Schumann, our career coach, Tuesday – Thursday, to further assist them with career goals. Parents and students may contact me at 267-3257 or mwebster@rcps.org for additional questions.

Where can I search for college information? Please use the guidance website. Under the heading, "College Anyone?" there is a long list of helpful websites that you can use for the college search process, financial aid information, etc. Two very helpful websites to begin your search are www.collegeboard.com and www.cappex.com. Both of these websites have a college search engine that will help you find schools that match your interests.

Public vs. Private When you look at the price tag on a private college it is considerably more than an in-state public institution; however, don't let this scare you away. Many private schools can offer scholarships that will reduce tuition to about the same price as a public college. If you are interested in the school then apply, and then wait until you receive the award letter (this tells you how much money they will offer to you) before you make any final decisions.

Should I take the SAT or ACT? How many times? If you plan to attend a four year college, you must take either the SAT or ACT. Check with the colleges that you are interested in to find their preference. It is generally recommended that you take either the SAT or ACT twice – once during the spring of your junior year and once during the fall of your senior year. Usually your score will increase the second time you take the test. The best way to prepare for these tests is to practice and be familiar with the format. Go to www.undergradzone.com for a description of each test and how they are different from each other. If you have an IEP or 504 you may qualify for accommodations when taking this test. If this applies to you, please talk with Mrs. Webster. Also, if you think that you may qualify for a fee waiver, please talk to Mrs. Webster before registering.

How do schools get my scores? All colleges/universities need scores sent directly to them from the testing agency. When you take the SAT/ACT, make sure to request that your scores be sent to any college/university that you are interested in applying. Don't worry, if your score isn't as high as you would like it to be, your highest scores will always be counted for admissions purposes.

Do I need to take the SAT or ACT for community colleges? No. Community colleges have their own placement tests that you will take before you enroll in your classes; however, if you transfer to a four year college before you have completed at least two years of community college, you will need SAT/ACT scores. In many transfer programs, if you have completed the two-year transfer courses and have at least a 2.5 GPA, acceptance to a four year college is automatic. There are many Associate and Vocational programs at the community colleges that lead directly to a career. You can speak with Susy Schuman if you have any questions about these programs.

Do I need to take SAT II subject tests? Some colleges do require the SAT II subject tests. Be sure to check with the colleges you are interested in before applying. If you excel in a particular subject area, this could be your time to shine. It is best to take the SAT II Subject Test while you are still enrolled in the class. For example if you are enrolled in Chemistry this year you would want to take the SAT II test near the end of the school year.

When do I start applying to college? You will want to start the application process in the fall of your senior year. You will need to be very aware of deadlines. Some deadlines are as early as November, and some are as late as March. It depends on each college/university.

How important are deadlines? Deadlines are very important. Colleges will not accept applications that are postmarked after the deadline.

To how many colleges should I apply? Apply to at least one college where you are sure to be accepted. This can be a favorite or just a back-up school. Your other choices should be one or two colleges that you really like and at least one that is a "long shot" or "reach school." You never know, you might be accepted.

Where do I get applications? You can still download and print a paper application; however, most schools request that students apply online. If you do not have internet access, please stop by my office and I can print an application for you. You will submit the application to the college yourself, and the guidance office will submit your transcripts and secondary school report form. If you qualified for a fee waiver for the SAT, you will also qualify for a fee waiver for college applications. Please see Mrs. Webster if you think this applies to you.

What will I need when applying to colleges? Transcripts, SAT scores, teacher recommendations, and an essay. Teacher recommendations are not required by all schools, but these can only help you. Many students get one academic reference and one personal reference. This can be a coach or someone else from the community. Essays are also not required by all schools, but if you had a rough year academically, this is the time to explain it.

What is the Common Application? This is an application that is accepted by almost 400 colleges/universities. If at least two schools to which you are applying accept the Common Application, it will save you time if you choose to use it. Go to www.commonapp.org to find out which schools participate.

What is the difference between Early Decision and Early Action? Most college Early Decisions are binding, which means that you agree to attend if you are accepted. Basically it means, "If you accept me, I will definitely come." Usually the deadline is around Nov. 1st and you will be notified of their decision by Dec. 1st. Most Early Action applications are not binding. This is a chance for you to apply early and find out early whether or not you are accepted. Sometimes schools will defer your application to the regular admissions date because they want to see updated semester grades and/or SAT/ACT scores before providing a final decision.

What is On-Site? Radford University and Virginia Tech admissions counselors come to RHS, review student applications, and tell you the same day whether or not you are accepted to their universities. Radford University came very early this year, in October, and VA Tech came in late November. More information will be distributed during your senior year about these programs. On-Site day is a special courtesy offered to area high schools and it is not binding and does not affect applying to other colleges.

What about scholarships? I will give you regular updates on scholarships throughout your senior year on newsletters, announcements, through class meetings, and on the guidance website. The following websites are three of the major scholarship search sites that have proven to be legitimate: www.fastweb.com, www.scholarships.com, www.collegeboard.com. Additional websites can be found on the guidance website under the heading, "College Anyone?" If you think you may qualify for honor scholarships at a particular school you should apply early to the college. Honors forms are usually offered as soon as the college reviews your application, and these slots fill quickly. Many colleges automatically notify you if you qualify based on your application.

What is the FAFSA? FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The form is completed after January 1st, and the earlier it is completed the better. We host a FAFSA Workshop every fall at RHS and more details will come your senior year.

What about athletics? If you are interested in college athletics, all athletes must keep up with NCAA requirements and sign up with the NCAA eligibility center at <https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter>. This is usually done your senior year. Talk with your coaches before signing up.

What do I need to be doing now?

- Search for colleges based on your interest, abilities, and entrance requirements – it is very important that you know the entrance requirements
- Remember, DON'T rule out any school based on cost until next year when you know how much aid they can give you
- Visit campuses and go on tours– try to go when classes are in session
- Make a resume of all of the things you have participated in throughout high school
- Sign up for the SAT or ACT (you can register for stand-by testing if you miss the deadline)
 - SAT
 - May 1: Deadline March 25 (March 12 if applying for accommodations)
 - June 5: Deadline April 29 (April 16 if applying for accommodations)
 - Go to www.collegeboard.com to register
 - ACT
 - April 10: Deadline March 5
 - June 12: Deadline May 7
 - Go to www.actstudent.org to register
- Sign up for classes next year that are challenging, but that you will succeed in
- **Continue to work very hard in your studies – this is a VERY important semester that colleges will emphasize**