

RADFORD HIGH SCHOOL
GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT – SENIOR NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER, 2009

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 seniors this year. I plan to write these as often as necessary in order to update scholarship information. I have already visited the senior classes this year, and they know that there is a scholarship book that is updated frequently with any opportunities that come my way.

This is such a busy time of year for our seniors! Seniors planning to attend four year colleges should be preparing to apply within the next few months. They should be taking their SAT/ACT either in October or November. Students planning to attend two year colleges need to be deciding if they want to enter a two-year transfer program for a four year college or enter a program for an associate degree or certification in a job field. 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 questions or concerns. Students can also meet with Susy Schuman, our career coach, on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday mornings to further assist them with career goals. Parents and students may contact me at 267-3257 for additional questions.

We will have a senior college night presentation for you and your parents on **Wednesday, October 21st, at 6:00**, to explain where you should be in the process and to answer any additional questions. This will be a joint effort between myself and Susy Schuman. Below you will find answers to frequently asked questions as well as current scholarship opportunities.

Where can I search for 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. Eventually all scholarship opportunities will be listed on the website, but it is currently being updated.

What is the school profile? Radford High School's profile is found on the guidance website. This is something that we attach to student transcripts that gives a description of our school. You will find information about our student population, courses offered, percentage of students attending college, grading scale, school code, etc. You might need this information when applying to colleges or for scholarships.

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 you 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. If you think that you may qualify for a fee waiver in taking these tests, please see Mrs. Webster as soon as possible.

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. You do need to complete an application for community colleges and you will need letters of recommendation and an essay if you apply for the NRCC Foundation Scholarship; 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.

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.

What is the Secondary School Report Form? Some schools require that you print out and have the guidance office complete a Secondary School Report Form, which gives information typically found on the transcript. Please bring this to the guidance office **at least one week before the application deadline** and attach it to your transcript request. We will then complete the information and send it to the college/university.

Do I need to complete a transcript request for every college/university that I apply? Yes, otherwise we do not know that your transcripts need to be sent.

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 within a week whether or not you are accepted to their universities. Radford University came very early this year, on Oct. 2, and VA Tech will be here on Friday, November 20th. In applying to Virginia Tech, students should download and print a copy of the application, complete it, and return it to be by Monday, November 16th. When returning the application students also need to complete a transcript request form (outside of my door) and attach the application fee. The admissions personnel let you know either in person or by letter whether you are admitted, deferred, or denied admission that day. Deferred students will need to submit senior semester grades and/or more SAT/ACT scores and will not receive the final acceptance notice until April. 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.

How do I get teacher recommendations? Some schools require teacher recommendations, where for others it is optional. Always give teachers a list of your activities/accomplishments before asking them to write a recommendation for you – some teachers give you a form to complete. We will maintain a file for your activities in guidance if you provide the list to us. If you are mailing your application separately, include a stamped addressed envelope for the teacher. Sometimes schools request that the guidance office send them transcripts and recommendation letters at the same time – in that case the teacher can give the recommendation letter to me to send to the college/university. Remind the teacher to keep a copy of the recommendation as you will apply to several colleges and you may make future requests.

What about application essays? Requested essays are vitally important at some colleges, whereas for some colleges it is optional. If you had a rough year academically, this is the time to explain it – be honest and be yourself. It is a good idea to ask someone to read your rough draft and then make revisions. Remember to save copies because you may be able to use the same essay in another application. Helpful books and articles are available in the guidance office.

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.

How important are deadlines? Deadlines are very important. Colleges will not accept applications that are postmarked after the deadline. The transcript and post secondary form can arrive after the deadline, but your application and money cannot.

What about scholarships? There are many scholarship opportunities for you. I will give you updates on scholarships that I find through newsletters, announcements, class meetings, and on the guidance website. When you see one that you like, come to the guidance office to get more information, located in the scholarship book. Some scholarships require a lot of work from you, whereas others simply ask that you sign-up and they are a lot like winning the lottery, but someone has to win and it could be you. Some of Radford's best local scholarships will be available later in the school year. 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. Some selective colleges allow for one student to be nominated for a merit scholarship – please see Mrs. Webster if you want to apply for one of these. 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. A FAFSA Workshop will be scheduled at RHS in December to assist parents in completing this form. Even if your parents' tax forms do not qualify you for aid, many colleges require the FAFSA to initiate the scholarship process. Other colleges offer scholarships based on merit, honors, programs of study, and athletics. We have FAFSA forms in the guidance office, so please ask if you need a paper copy. You can also go to fafsa.ed.gov to complete your application for free, NOT fafsa.com (there is a charge).

What about athletics? If you are interested in college athletic, all athletes must keep up with NCAA requirements and sign up with the NCAA clearinghouse at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. Talk with your coaches before signing up.

Remember to come to our senior college night presentation on Wednesday, October 21st at 6:00 in the library. Please r.s.v.p. to the guidance office at 267-3255.

There is a College Night in Virginia workshop Monday, November 9th from 6:30-9:00 at the Roanoke Higher Education Center.

- Free pizza and soda
- College planning tips
- \$500 scholarships available
- Learn how to: launch a successful future with higher education, choose the right college or academic program, find financial aid and make college affordable, search for scholarships and avoid scams

Current Scholarship Opportunities – October

- **Suntrust Off to College Scholarship Sweetstakes:** \$1,000 scholarship to the college of your choice; not based on GPA or financial need; fifteen chances to win – one winner chosen every two weeks from October to May; no specific qualifications – go online to offtocollege.info to register
 - Can begin to register on Sept. 14 and first drawing takes place Oct. 30
- **Harry F. Byrd, Jr. Leadership Award:** \$10,000 award to students who demonstrate academic accomplishments, and who embody excellence of character, leadership, and good citizenship; one winner from each congressional district; must answer 5 essay questions
 - All materials must be submitted to Mrs. Webster by Friday, Oct. 30, 2009
- **Horatio Alger Association Scholarship Program:** High school seniors; must be pursuing a bachelor's degree from a 4 year institution; must demonstrate critical financial need (\$50,000 or less adjusted gross income per family – need parent's tax form from previous year); involvement in co-curricular and community activities; demonstrate integrity and perseverance in overcoming adversity; minimum GPA of 2.0; Go to www.horatioalger.org/scholarships for more information
 - Application deadline is Oct. 30th (you must have one teacher recommendation, transcripts, and certification form at this time)
- **Coca-Cola Scholars:** High school seniors; must have a 3.0 GPA; \$10,000 and \$20,000 awards; go to www.coca-colascholars.org for details
 - Application deadline is Oct. 31st, 2009
- **Ron Brown Scholars Program:** High school seniors; African-American students who excel academically, possess leadership abilities, participate in community service, demonstrate financial need; \$10,000/year for four years; go to www.ronbrown.org for details
 - Application deadline is Nov. 1st and you must have two teacher recommendations at this time
- **Prudential Spirit of Community Award:** Open to middle and high school students; students who have made a difference by volunteering for their communities over the past year; could win \$1,000 and a trip to Washington, D.C. in May
 - Complete applications due November 2nd

- **FIRE Essay Contest:** Write essay (700-1,200 words) about why free speech and 1st Amendment rights are crucial to higher education; must watch two short documentaries at thefire.org/multimedia; \$5,000; can enter online at www.thefire.org/contests
 - Complete applications due November 6th
- **Principal's Leadership Award:** Must be in top 20% of class; must demonstrate leadership ability; go to www.applyists.net and complete the nomination form; Access key is PLA
 - All applications due to guidance by Monday, 11/30 to be postmarked by 12/4
- **AXA Achievement Scholarship:** Must demonstrate ambition and self-drive as evidenced by outstanding achievement in an activity in school, the community, or workplace; \$10,000 or \$25,000 award
 - All applications due 12/15/2009
- **Create a Christmas Card:** Students must be 14 years or older; go to <http://www.gallerycollection.com/christmas-cards-scholarship3.thm>
 - The Contest begins at 12:01:00 a.m. Eastern Time ("ET") March 17, 2009 and ends at 11:59:59 p.m. ET, January 15, 2010
- **Better Business Bureau Student of Integrity:** \$1,000 scholarship to college of your choice; students who exemplify high ethics through leadership, community service, and overall personal integrity; need to have a 3.0 GPA to apply
 - All materials must be submitted no later than Jan. 30, 2010
- **American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship:** All high school students; speech competition; must demonstrate knowledge of the United States Constitution and is applications; district competitions to be completed in January, following the local post contest
- **Lee-Jackson Scholarship Program:** 27 scholarships are available to Virginia high school juniors and seniors submitting outstanding analytical essays on any aspect--positive or negative--of the career, character, or legacy of General Robert E. Lee and/or General "Stonewall" Jackson; must be pursuing a bachelor's degree from a 4 year institution; for more information go to <http://www.lee-jackson.org>
 - Complete application and essay due to guidance on December 18th
- **SAE Engineering Scholarships:** High school seniors; many different scholarships for students enrolling in an engineering program; first complete the qualification process, then you will see the scholarships for which you qualify, then download and complete applications; Go to www.students.sae.org/awdscholar/scholarships/
 - Most SAE Scholarships are due by January 15th (check individual deadlines)
- **Burger King Scholars:** 1,000 awards that can be used for educational expenses, tuition, fees and books during the 1st year of college or post-secondary vocational/technical school; must have a 2.5 GPA or higher; must work part-time for a minimum of 10 hours/week or 40 weeks per year; be actively involved in community service activities; demonstrate financial need; plan to enroll in a **two or four year** school next fall; applications available online Sept. 14-Feb. 1 2010
 - All materials must be submitted no later than Feb. 1, 2010