PARENTS: HELP YOUR CHILD PLAN FOR COLLEGE

Here are some planning tips so you can help your teen prepare for college.

**Academic Achievement.** Sit down with your children to plan a college preparatory program of all the classes they will take in high school. Urge them to take the most challenging classes possible. Remember, the classes they take early on will determine what courses they are qualified to take in 11th/12th grade, including honors and Advance Placement (AP) classes, which are important in preparing for college. This is important because colleges weigh junior/senior classes and grades heavily. English and math are important subjects to do well in every year; they are the foundation to future academic success in high school, college, and career.

**Extracurricular Activities.** Encourage them to participate in meaningful activities in and out of school. Colleges look for commitment and accomplishment outside the classroom. Also, encourage them to seek leadership positions. However, ensure that these activities do not negatively impact their schoolwork.

**College Admission Tests.** In 10th grade, have them take the PLAN assessment and PSAT. Both tests will help them become familiar with the real tests to be taken next year. More importantly, they will help hugely in predicting your child’s performance on these tests, and identify weak areas where improvement is needed. Sit down with the school counselor to discuss strategies for improving weak areas. In 11th grade, prepare them to take the ACT and SAT; watch the registration deadlines. Furthermore, at the end of each academic year, have them take the appropriate AP exams and SAT Subject Tests. Consider paying for private prep courses; it is a valuable and advantageous investment.

**Career Exploration.** Start exploring careers with your child so that courses can be chosen that will serve as prerequisites in college for the major and career they ultimately choose. Frequently take a moment with your child, perhaps go out to dinner, to discuss career goals and plans. Use this time to also discuss their strategy for the school year.

**Summer Planning.** Help them enhance their transcript with an enrichment program or summer school. Summer study, jobs, and volunteer work always looks good to admission officials. Develop a summer reading list that will help them prepare for the next academic year, standardized exams, and college.

**College Applications.** Ensure they complete their college application essays, get their letters of recommendation, and complete their FAFSA application before the deadlines.

**Parental Role.** Your primary role is to provide support and encouragement, and constructive criticism when needed. Aside from that, monitor their academic progress. Keep an open dialogue about how classes are going. Help them establish better study habits. Create a better study environment. If necessary, get them a tutor. This might be a lot of time, money, and effort spent, but it’s the most important part of being a parent—providing for the education of your child.