`Looking Ahead`

Having returned, hopefully, from a relaxing and enjoyable Thanksgiving holiday we have much to look forward to as winter break and the new year approach.

The Student Services Staff has dedicated much time and effort in support of seniors as they make final choices as to which college to apply. Our staff appreciates the care and concern of parents and teachers who have worked with us through the college application process for the class of 2011. Our teachers are to be commended for the selfless giving of their personal time to write the Teacher College Recommendations requested by colleges.

We in DSS have truly benefited from the TJHSST spirit of community. The PTSA, volunteers and school staff members stepped forward to help in preparing for our celebration to recognize our National Merit Semifinalists and our Academic Letter winners.

Our counseling staff, in addition to processing thousands of college applications and managing quite a number of course schedule changes, has also worked with ninth grade teachers in helping one of our largest incoming freshman classes to make the transition from middle school to high school. By now our ninth graders should feel right at home at TJ.

Additionally, a warm “thank you” is due parents. Without their support, Thomas Jefferson High School would not be what it is – an exceptional and supportive environment in which our students learn and mature. That being said, our students’ learning does not stop when the school day ends at 3:50 pm each day. No, our students report to their athletic practices, play rehearsals, or other extracurricular commitments, after which they begin the long commute home where they begin to assimilate some of the lessons they learned in the classroom, on the field and in the community.

TJ is truly an exceptional school. The faculty and staff, students, parents, and others that give of their time and wholeheartedly support the mission of our school make TJ the best that it can be. To all of you, a sincere “Thank you”!

On behalf of the entire Student Services staff, we warmly wish you and your family a joyous and relaxing winter break and holiday season!

Sincerely,

Brandon Kosatka
Director of Student Services

PLEASE NOTE:

• Wednesday, December 22, 2010, is an early dismissal day: 10:50 a.m.

• The winter holiday begins on December 22, 2010 and school resumes on January 3, 2011.

COURSE REGISTRATION FOR THE 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR

Plans have been made for registering students for next year’s courses. Listed below is a schedule for parent and student programs, as well as academic advising with students:

Feb.–Mar. Academic Advising for students
Feb. 11 Curriculum Fair for students (8th pd, A/B Block)
Feb. 17 Freshman/Sophomore Parent Curriculum Night
Upcoming Events

RESEARCH/MENTORSHIP EVENING PROGRAM

November 30, 2010
7:30 p.m. in the School Cafeteria

On the evening of Tuesday, November 30th at 7:30 pm in the TJHSST Cafeteria there was an information meeting for the parents of all eleventh graders. This event is designed give an overview of lab and mentorship options as well as information about the selection process. Several TJHSST staff members will be at the meeting to give you an overview of the application process. This program is very similar to the 11th grade meetings for students which will take place during eighth period on Monday, December 7th. The agenda for the meeting will be as follows:

1) An overview of the thirteen Senior Technology Research Laboratories
2) The application process timeline
3) The application is located on the FCPS BlackBoard.

FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE PARENT CURRICULUM NIGHT

February 17, 2011 7:30 p.m.
Counselors and curriculum specialists will share information about course offerings, content, and requirements. This is an important meeting as together we guide our students in their future academic development. So don’t miss it! The schedule is as follows:

7:30 – 8:00 p.m. Parents of freshmen meet with counselors and parents of sophomores meet with curriculum specialists.
8:05 – 8:35 p.m. Parents of sophomores meet with counselors and parents of freshmen meet with curriculum specialists.

Meeting locations will be posted in the Front Lobby and the Auditorium Lobby. Parents of juniors are welcome to come and talk with any of the curriculum specialists, but please be mindful that counselors will only be available for freshman and sophomore parents.

GRADING AND REPORTING

Dec. 17: Students receive second quarter interims from teachers
Feb: 4 Second quarter grades mailed home
Mar.11: Students receive third quarter interims from teachers.
Apr. 8: Third quarter grades mailed home
May 20:Students receive fourth quarter interims from teachers

SAT Score-Reporting Policy

For the SAT Subject Tests, students choose which individual test scores are sent to colleges. For the SAT Reasoning, students have the option of selecting and sending only one SAT score by test date. This means that students who have taken the SAT two or more times may select one test date for colleges to review. Here is an example: a student who has taken the SAT on the March 2011 and the May 2011 test dates may request that only the test score from the May 2011 SAT be reported to colleges. If this option is utilized, scores from an entire SAT test date will be sent. Students may not pick and choose sections from different test administrations and send this new combined score to colleges. This means the College Board will not permit students to select the Critical Reading test score from their March 2011 test date and the Mathematics and Writing test scores from their May 2011 test to be sent as a new combined score. This policy is only advantageous for students who perform much better in all sections of the SAT during one sitting or test date. However, this is often not the case for the majority of TJ students who typically perform better on one or two sections during their second time taking the SAT. For these students, the best option is to have all SAT test dates scores sent to the colleges, because it permits colleges to review all of the SAT score information and select the student’s best scores from each section. This score-reporting feature is optional and if students do not select to use it, all scores will be sent automatically.

SENIOR STUFF

The first quarter of senior year is over and the end of the first semester is quickly approaching. Please encourage your senior, as we counselors have, to complete college applications and essays early. This will permit time for reviewing and editing as necessary. Counselors, teachers, peers, and yes, you parents, are wonderful resources to proofread college essays. This process should not be rushed through and seniors should put forth their best effort in order to accurately convey their goals and accomplishments, as well as share on a personal level with the college admissions officers. By completing this process now before winter break, seniors will have time to enjoy the break with family and friends. Academics are still very important. By mid-February, semester grades and a recomputed 7th semester GPA will be sent automatically to all the colleges to which students have requested transcripts. Please note: The mid-year report will include a first semester grade and the student’s newly recalculated seventh semester cumulative GPA. Individual first and second quarter grades are not sent. We do not need any Common App mid-year or final year report forms, as we will automatically send mid-year reports to all colleges your student has applied to. Final year report forms are automatically sent to the school your student has chosen to attend.

“Senior Slump,” also known as “Senioritis”
The second semester of senior year has substantial but often underutilized potential for improving student preparation to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. Many of our students assume they have “earned” the right to slack off and take it easy. While we do appreciate the need for students to relax and breathe after an arduous first semester, performing well in their classes is still important! A significant drop in performance in any class could prompt an inquiry from colleges as to why this occurred, leaving the student with the task of explaining this decline. Students need to be reminded that all college acceptances are conditional upon successful completion of senior year. Successful completion implies that the students’ GPAs will remain constant and not drop drastically.

Some of our students may even decide to drop demanding and difficult courses during the second semester of their senior year. When this occurs, counselors insist that each student send a letter to the colleges indicating that they have dropped or changed their course load. The colleges expect an explanation for the change. Colleges can and will rescind acceptances based on changes in courses and grade point average. It happens every year. Please continue to urge your student to work hard and contact your student’s counselor if there is any consideration being given to changing courses. Remember: College admission officers may contact your student’s counselor at any time to inquire about grades or current performance. When this happens, counselors will provide this information.

### Ethical Concerns

It is imperative that our seniors realize that any disciplinary action that results in a suspension or recommendation for expulsion must be reported to the colleges to which they have applied. This means any senior who has received discipline that involves suspension is required to send letters all the colleges to which he/she has applied in order to report the action, as well as explain the situation and his/her behavior. It is important to everyone within our school community that the highest standards of conduct are followed, and that there is the awareness of the possible serious consequences for behaviors that are unethical and/or illegal.

#### Early Decision

Students who have been accepted to college under the early decision plan must notify any other school to which they have applied that they are withdrawing their application for admission. A postcard to the admission office indicating withdrawal is all that is necessary. Students should notify any school to which a transcript or recommendation has been sent. Although many admission offices claim that they will only process completed applications, it is a common courtesy to inform a college of an early decision acceptance even if only a transcript or recommendation has been sent. This notification is a requirement of the early decision process and opens up admission seats for other applicants.

### Junior Journey

January marks the beginning of a new year and the beginning of our juniors’ journey into the world of the college selection and application process. The counselors at Thomas Jefferson are excited to offer programs they have planned to help our students and parents become knowledgeable and familiar about the college admissions process. Our college programs include the following:

#### Junior College “Kick off” Meeting for students

These mandatory sessions will be held on January 5 and January 7 during A&B blocks. Students need only sign-up for one session but must be available for BOTH blocks. These crucial meeting enables counselors to help students formulate pertinent questions, know where and how to access information about college, set priorities, and ultimately, identify schools which are potentially perfect matches. Without question, every TJ grad has the academic foundation to become a successful college student!

#### College Admissions Orientation for Parents

Counselors will introduce the college admissions process to parents on Thursday, January 13 at, as well as explain their role and that of the student in this important process. Although the basics of college admissions are similar from year to year, counselors will include current trends and data specific to TJ students. This is a don’t-miss opportunity for parents to not only learn about the college admissions process, but also ask questions and get more familiar with their student’s counselor. Communication between parents and students during the college exploration phase is essential, and this meeting is one of the most important of the four years at TJ.

#### TJ Grads College Panel

On December 17 during 8th period, counselors have invited TJ graduates who are currently college freshmen to participate on a panel. This is an annual tradition, and a refreshing way to learn about the realities of college life. The panelists will represent different institutions, and offer varying viewpoints and experiences. Our TJ alumni are sure to have good tips for our juniors, who are just embarking on their college admissions journeys. All juniors and seniors are encouraged to sign-up for this enjoyable session.
In mid-April, the Student Services Department will host an evening panel discussion with Directors of Admission from a variety of colleges and universities. We plan to invite directors from an Ivy League school, a liberal arts institution, a technical institution, and a Virginia State school. We will announce the date as soon as all panelists are confirmed. This is a chance to gain perspective from the professionals who make decisions every day about which students to accept. This is an evening not to be missed!

**Junior Interviews**

Counselors will also be hosting “junior interviews” with each of their juniors and welcome parental attendance at these individualized meetings. Junior interviews are a great opportunity to begin the conversation about what a student is looking for in a college. Counselors will review test scores, GPA, and activities and begin the formulation of a “list” of schools. They are a perfect time to get all your questions answered as we begin the process in earnest. Juniors are concentrating on their rigorous courses, developing leadership opportunities, participating in extracurricular activities and preparing for college (not to mention finishing WebAssigns in physics). It is a year that combines present challenges and dreams for the future. We are privileged to be your student’s partner as they explore their future educational options and continue on their “junior journey.” We are delighted to share this chapter in students’ lives!

**What Are Colleges Looking For?**

**Grade Point Average (GPA) and Difficulty of Courses**

The GPA is the single best predictor of success in college. This is a measure of a student’s scholastic achievement. For the 2011 graduates, the highest GPA is approximately 4.521 and the lowest GPA is approximately 3.392. The Thomas Jefferson School Profile details and explains TJ’s unique courses and ensures that all colleges are aware of the high standards at our school. The rigor of high school courses is a very important factor in the college admissions process. Our School Profile is part of the college packet that Student Services sends with every college application.

**SAT/ACT and SAT Subject Tests**

Standardized test scores are also a very important consideration, and most of our students score very well on these exams. While we recognize what a busy year this is for juniors, it is important to plan the dates they will take their standardized tests. Please check the exam schedules on the College Board website at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and/or the ACT website at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). While high SAT scores may enhance opportunities for acceptance, a perfect score does not ensure admission. This year 125 seniors at TJ were recognized as National Merit Semi-Finalists based on their PSAT score. Juniors will receive their PSAT scores mid-December in the mail, but the announcement identifying those who are National Merit Semi-Finalists will not occur until September 2011.

In comparing the SAT and ACT, one may not know that the SAT lasts 3 hours and 45 minutes, while the ACT lasts 2 hours and 55 minutes (unless students elect to take the additional 30 minute writing portion). The ACT was once utilized only by mid-western colleges, but now colleges across the country accept ACT scores. In fact, the director of admission of Harvard University said recently, “Either is fine with us, and we don’t have a feeling that either favors students with any particular profile.” While the ACT is more curriculum-based, with portions on verbal skills, mathematics (including trigonometry) science and social studies, the SAT concentrates more on general reasoning and problem solving skills. In fact, last year, the *Washington Post* had an article titled, “ACT or SAT? More Students Answering ‘All of the Above!’” Rest assured that our students typically perform extremely well on either test!

As a general guideline, SAT Subject Tests should be taken in May as students are studying for the AP exams or in June right after the AP exams. Students are the best judge of which timeframe would work best for them and their particular study habits. However, it is suggested that any student who has just completed pre-calculus should take the SAT Subject Test for Mathematics Level 2. We strongly encourage you and your student to research which tests are required by those colleges which your student is interested in applying.

**Activities**

In the college admissions process, and especially for the most competitive universities, the difference between students is often gleaned through accomplishments that occur beyond the classroom walls. College admissions officers are happy to hear about students’ achievements in the research lab, on the athletic field, and in positions of leadership, as well as contests won on a regional, national, and/or international level. Extracurricular activities are reflections of the students’ passions and dedication to topics beyond the day-to-day coursework. Intellectual curiosity, talent, and even personal courage will determine the extent of a student’s success and involvement in an extracurricular commitment. Extracurricular activities that are pursued with great enthusiasm, dedication, and creativity can make a difference in the student’s life, as well as in the final admissions decision. Colleges place greater emphasis on depth and breadth of a student’s commitment to a few extracurricular activities than on membership in a long list of clubs. On December 15 and 17 during both A&B blocks, there will be two different information sessions about special summer...
**The College Essay**

The college essay can be a window into the personality, accomplishments, and/or passions of a student. Some students find it beneficial to begin brainstorming and writing essays over the summer. This provides them with an opportunity to spend quality time reviewing the college application and essay questions without the pressure of school. Additionally, college essay writing is an important component of the senior English curriculum. Furthermore, every October the Student Services Department hosts its annual 8th period program on college essay writing. Teachers, counselors, peers, and parents are wonderful resources for editing the college essay.

**Campus Visits**

For colleges and universities, visits to the school are indicators of interest in their institution. They are also invaluable in helping to sort out which colleges you like best. Be sure to check with the college admissions offices or websites to find out when information sessions and tours will be available. Keep in mind that college will be home to your student for four years, and just as you would not purchase a home without seeing it in person, you should visit the college in person, if possible, before your student applies. It is extremely important to obtain a firsthand sense of campus life, academic rigor, and social compatibility in order to ensure the right “fit” for your student. Additionally, many colleges offer weekend or summer programs. We hope that you will plan visits during this school year when there is no pressure to make a decision, as well as find the trips to be leisurely and enjoyable. In fact, teacher work days, spring break, long holiday weekends, and even summertime, are ideal times to visit colleges.

**Recommendations**

Teacher recommendation letters for admission are required by most colleges and universities. Juniors should begin now to think about which teachers they will ask and inform those teachers well in advance of the college deadline. Students may also choose to include supplemental recommendations from a coach, employer/mentor, or activity sponsor. In the spring, counselors will ask parents and students to complete the “College Planning Packet” that offers insight into the student’s goals and accomplishments, as well as other pertinent information important for writing an accurate letter of recommendation. The input provided in the college essay writing is an important component of the senior English curriculum. Furthermore, every October the Student Services Department hosts its annual 8th period program on college essay writing. Teachers, counselors, peers, and parents are wonderful resources for editing the college essay.

**The College Interview**

Although not all colleges offer interviews, it provides an opportunity for the college admissions office to gain additional information about the student. Typically college websites have a link to elect a college interview and sometimes colleges will even contact the student for an interview after his/her application has been received. Most college interviews are conducted by college alumni who live within the Washington, DC area. The interview is an opportunity for the students to share their enthusiasm about the college, as well as their passions and experiences and accomplishments inside and outside of TJ. Students should dress appropriately for the interview in order to present a good first impression. A good interview flows like a good conversation and it transpires naturally. Each fall, the Student Services Department offers a variety of programs related to the interview process. Stay tuned for the fall for such opportunities. Furthermore, counselors are always willing and able to conduct mock interviews with students.

**Specially for Sophomores**

It will soon be time to start thinking about courses for the coming year and summer opportunities. This being the case, you are encouraged to begin the dialogue now with your sophomore student about junior year courses. Most juniors take one or two electives for their senior year research/technology lab, the capstone research experience for TJ students.

**Curriculum Night is scheduled for Thursday, February 17, 2011.** During this evening, counselors and curriculum specialists from each department will present an overview of course options and graduation requirements. Teachers representing the various departments will be available to answer specific and general questions about the courses available in their disciplines. Of supreme importance when selecting junior courses is balance! We want our students to find a balance between challenging classes that they enjoy and activities they love – and still have time for a full night’s sleep! Overloading class schedules can be very detrimental. It is rare, even at TJ, for students to perform at their peak while taking more than 3 or 4 AP classes. Students who enroll in too many AP courses can end up stressed and unhealthy. The counseling staff is very knowledgeable about the various courses and time management and we are always happy to talk with you and your student about any concerns regarding this topic. Additionally, as was true for this school year, there will likely be very little opportunity to switch courses or change your mind...
Once courses have been selected and we are outside the “window” of opportunity to change courses. This deadline for course changes will be advertised in a number of ways. Please be aware of deadlines and conduct careful and thoughtful planning and research before making final decisions for next year’s courses.

Last but definitely not least, it is time to begin thinking about summer opportunities. And there are way too many to list in this article! TJ students may take advantage of a wide array of opportunities and should plan to attend sessions about summer opportunities, scheduled for December 15th and 17th during 8th period (both A and B blocks) in the College and Career Center. Staff members will be presenting information regarding science-related summer programs and prospects. There will be another session in the spring, but before you know it, summer will soon be here so begin thinking about and planning for summer now!

**Freshmen Focus**

Now that we are well into second quarter, it is evident that most of our freshmen students have adjusted, both socially and academically, to our TJ community. However, some will continue to need support, guidance, and patience as they learn to develop more effective organizational and study skills, as well as deal with the new challenges of an academically rigorous high school. The leap from middle school to high school requires that many students change the way they study, complete assignments, and even interact with their peers. Additionally, many may have to ask for help for the very first time.

The following are some strategies that have proven helpful for many 9th graders:

- The first step is always for the student to speak to the teacher about what he/she can do differently to improve their grade. The teacher is the expert in their class and can often give specific tips that will make a big difference. Also, this helps to build rapport with the teacher and shows that the student is really making an effort.

- 8th period is a wonderful opportunity for connecting with a teacher in order to get tutoring, ask questions, re-take tests or quizzes if applicable, or even just get homework done. If your student is having trouble with a subject, please encourage him/her to go to 8th period tutoring at least once a week until things are going more smoothly. Typically there is a session every block during the week for just about every subject.

- Should 8th period prove to be not enough, consider finding a peer tutor through the National Honor Society. Students can send an email to tutors@tjnhs.org to make a request. They will then be paired with an upperclassman who will earn community service hours for tutoring.

- If your student has tried these things and is still not successful, please feel free to contact your student’s counselor or the teacher directly. However, please include the counselor on all email contact with teachers. A conference may be in order.

**Additional tips:**

- Encourage your student to ask friends/classmates for help. They may be able to help with concepts your student does not understand and vice versa.

- Have your student get involved! There are so many wonderful clubs and activities that there is bound to be something they will enjoy. Being part of the TJ community will make the experience here much richer.

- Eliminate distractions and time wasters. Students who spend hours on Facebook, My Space, AIM, video games, surfing the internet, watching TV, etc. when they should be doing homework lose valuable sleep time.

- Encourage your student to start doing something everyday for themselves. This can be reading a book for fun, watching a funny TV show, listening to relaxing music, taking a bubble bath, going for a run, etc. If they don’t get in the habit of doing this now, they run the risk of becoming burned out as their workload gets more challenging. Teach them to take care of themselves now!

While most students’ grades were very good, first quarter report cards may have caused some shock and concern for you and your student. If this is the case for you, please do not hesitate to contact your student’s counselor to discuss strategies to improve the grades. Occasionally a conference may be in order. Please keep in mind that to best accommodate teacher schedules, we generally hold conferences at 8:00 am Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday.

As always, the Department of Student Services is here to help you and your student navigate their way through TJ. Counselors have invited 9th graders to lunch and participated in IBET field trips. Some have even hosted IBET Open Houses. These events help us to get to know you and your student better, which then allows us to serve you better. Please encourage your student to visit his/her counselor, if they have not already, to start building that important relationship. After all, counselors are the one constant in your student’s four years at TJ.

**Leadership Program: Camp Rising Sun** is an 8-week, fully funded international summer program for talented students 14 and older. If your student is interested be sure he or she attends the information session scheduled for Friday, Dec. 3 during B block. The program is free and highly competitive. The camp is scheduled from June 25-August 13.
Affording college is a huge responsibility, both for parents and students. Discussions may focus around the financial aspects of attending college, as well as the academic “fit” of a school. Families may even discuss the possibility that loans and financial burdens become the student’s responsibility after graduation. Better understanding your family’s financial situation and how it affects eligibility for aid is an essential component of the college decision-making process.

February is traditionally Financial Aid Awareness Month and it is a good time to assess your family’s ability to manage the additional expense of college. Many seniors and their parents are now completing the FAFSA form (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and/or the CSS PROFILE form. Colleges and universities use these forms to determine a student’s financial need at their institution. After receiving the FAFSA information from the Department of Education, the financial aid offices at the prospective colleges determine the expected family contribution. If a student is determined to be eligible, they will receive an award letter detailing their financial need. It will list the types of aid offered for the academic year for which the student has applied. The letter usually arrives during April and the document is identified as the Financial Aid Award package.

Student Aid Report known as SAR from the federal government. If a student has not received the SAR four to six weeks after completing the FAFSA, they should check the FAFSA website at www.fafsa.ed.gov. If your FAFSA was completed online, you will receive your SAR online. You may even want to follow-up with the financial aid office at each prospective college just to make sure that it has received all the necessary paperwork. As with all college application and financial materials, it is essential to keep copies of all submitted documents for your records.

Financial Aid News

According to Careers and Colleges, Fall 2010, The Insider’s Guide to Financial Aid:

What questions should a student ask about a university’s financial aid program?

- Does the school meet 100% of demonstrated financial need or do they supplement with need-based loans and/or work study?
- If a school meets full demonstrated financial need, how do they do it?
- How does the school determine if a student has demonstrated financial need?
- What exactly is a school looking for when determining demonstrated financial need?

What does it mean for a college to be “need-blind” or “need aware?”

Need blind means the institution does not look at a family’s financial situation or ability to pay when deciding if the student will be admitted. Once a student is accepted, the school will create a financial aid package. When a school says it’s need-blind and meets 100% of demonstrated need; that means the institution not only ignores a family’s ability to pay during the admission process, but if the student is accepted, the university will provide a financial aid package that equals the dollar amount of the student’s demonstrated need. But the family is still responsible for paying their Estimated Family Contribution (known as the EFC).

What are some unique new financial aid programs various universities have launched?

Over the last three to five years, a lot of institutions have reevaluated their financial aid programs and offerings to make sure highly qualified students of all income levels have the opportunity to go to college. Some schools have a student pay a certain percentage of tuition based on his or her family’s level of income. Other schools may give a student grants, instead of need-based loans, depending on family income. Some schools focus on a student’s Estimated Family Contribution (EFC), trying to minimize the family’s EFC on the front end to lower the total cost of attendance.

Comparing Financial Aid Letters

Students receive financial aid award letters after college acceptances are mailed. Various financial aid options may be offered. It is suggested that you keep in mind the following information before your student makes a final college decision:

- Carefully read the award letter. Letters from different schools will most likely have their figures and costs in different formats. Compare award letters in order to see how each offer measure up. Don’t be afraid to ask if outside scholarships will affect your aid.
- Compare loan offers. Interest rates, how the interest compounds, repayment terms, and cancellation provisions can vary widely from loan to loan.
- Look beyond the sticker price – the school with the lowest cost of attendance may not be the most affordable. The amount and the type of aid offered will influence affordability. Don’t accept an offer just because it has the lowest unmet need. If the aid package offers scholarships, grants, and work-study instead of loans, you may save more money by
applying an offer with a higher unmet need.

- Compare affordability of aid offers over time and ask if your financial aid package will change over time. In fact, the aid package made available to you in your senior year of college may look very different from the one you were offered freshman year.

Scholarship Scams: What You Need to Know

Seminars and consultants often charge fees for services and information regarding scholarship resources that you can obtain for free. Paying a fee to a financial aid service in order to help you apply for aid may be an unnecessary expense. The claims of “we will help you complete complicated forms” or “we will find different ways to report your assets and obtain more aid” can lead to more problems than it is worth. In fact, reporting certain financial information accurately is against the law.

Many families receive invitations to attend financial aid seminars which promise “free financial aid advice” if you attend a seminar. They may even guarantee scholarships if you provide a credit card number to sign up for the service. If you are contacted and offered an award for which you never service. If you are contacted and asked you to pay a fee. An official sounding name of an organization or endorsement does not automatically mean legitimacy. If you use a financial aid consultant, consider his/her qualifications carefully. Find a consultant who has previously worked as a financial aid administrator, CPA, or CFP.

If you suspect a scam..... Save all of the forms and/or paperwork received from the suspect company and keep copies of detailed written information about the offer, as well as any correspondence and/or emails. Immediately contact your credit card company if you feel that your account has been compromised. Fraud can be reported to any of the following organizations:

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams
1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357)

Better Business Bureau (BBB)
www.bbb.org
1-703-276-0100

National Fraud Information Center (NFIC)
www.fraud.org

Financial Aid 101

Before a college or university will consider need-based financial aid, one must first file a FAFSA form (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Distributed by the federal government, this form requires financial information from the projected 2010 tax filing and determines whether your family qualifies for federal and/or state financial assistance. Once this determination is made, the college is free to examine whether or not the student qualifies for aid from the college itself. FAFSA paper copies will no longer be sent to schools. Instead students may request up to 3 copies by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID or visiting www.edpubs.org. However, the form cannot be filed until January 1, 2011. A .pdf of the FAFSA can downloaded after January 9, 2011 at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov. If possible, you should file as soon as possible after January 1 in order to obtain possible financial aid from the college. Please check with the college’s financial aid office or its website for its definitive deadline for filing the FAFSA form. Many deadlines are February 1, but, once again, check with each college for its specific deadline. There is no charge for completing the FAFSA and you can mail-in your form, but the easiest way to complete it is online. The federal government strongly encourages families to file online. Families can file online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. FAFSA on the web includes worksheets, online assistance, detailed instructions, and internal audits that help prevent errors. You will need a PIN (personal identification number) to electronically sign your online FAFSA form. Before you begin to complete your FAFSA online, you will need to visit www.pin.ed.gov and apply for a PIN. If you are a dependent student, both you and your parents should apply for separate PINs so you can electronically sign the FAFSA.

A FAFSA form must be re-filed every year a student is applying for financial aid in college. A renewal FAFSA has preprinted much of the data from the previous year’s FAFSA form, so only the current tax information needs to be updated. If you need more information about federal student aid, visit www.studentaid.ed.gov, which has information on everything from college preparation to student loan repayment. A student guide is also available on the same website for parents and students to learn more about federal student aid programs.

The federal government uses the data on the FAFSA to calculate your EFC (expected family contribution). Each college will use the information to determine a student’s financial need, as well as how much federal aid they may receive. Additionally, most colleges use this data to calculate out how much financial aid they will give a student from their own funds. Soon after a FAFSA is submitted, the student will receive a SAR (student aid report). This reports the information on the FAFSA and provides a student with their EFC. Check it over as soon as possible and, if necessary, update the information with the family’s latest tax return information.

The College Scholarship Service (CSS) distributes and processes the PROFILE form that is required by many private, as well as some public, colleges in addition to the FAFSA form. PROFILE is a program of the College Board. Many college and scholarship programs use the information collected on the PROFILE to help them award non-federal student aid funds. Students may register and complete the PROFILE online at http://profileonline.collegeboard.com. The PROFILE can be filed online before January 1, which helps colleges
get a head start on estimating financial aid packages. Only the colleges listed on the PROFILE registration guide require a PROFILE form to be completed. Check the website listed above to see if your college requires the form. It is important to check the college website for filing deadlines for all required financial aid forms.

In addition, some colleges require families to complete an institutional aid form specific for that college. As stated previously, carefully check the specific requirements for each college and be aware of what forms and deadline dates are necessary for college financial aid.

**Other useful financial aid websites are:**
- Finaid: The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid at www.finaid.org
- Department of Education at www.ed.gov
- FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov
- FindTuition at www.findtuition.com
- The College Board at www.collegeboard.com

A parent program titled *Money for College* was held at TJ on Tuesday, November 30th at 7:30 pm. in the auditorium. Our guest speaker was Joe Re, author of several books on financial aid, and the Executive Vice President of Octameron Associates. He discussed financial aid, loans and provided an overview of the financial aid process.

### Scholarship Information

Have you or your student checked the College and Career Center’s scholarship listings lately? The Center maintains over 400 merit-based and financial need scholarships in a scholarship database. You can access the listing online at www.tjhsst.edu/supportingtj/careercenter/scholar.htm. Scholarships are listed in two categories: general scholarships (listed alphabetically by deadline date) and college specific scholarships (listed alphabetically by college name).

Furthermore, Fairfax County Public Schools has an excellent searchable scholarship database. The database lists all available scholarships for Fairfax County high school students. The scholarship data base can be found on Family Connection or Blackboard.

Seniors might also consider applying for a ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) Scholarship. The ROTC program provides an opportunity to attend a civilian college while studying military leadership as a part of a total undergraduate program. One to four year scholarships are available with an obligation for military service after graduation. The program pays for tuition within limits, books, and fees, as well as provides a monthly allowance. The program is highly competitive and applications are available during the spring of the student’s junior year. Applications are also available upon request from college ROTC units or on the following websites:

- Army ROTC: www.goarmy.com/rotc/
- Air Force ROTC: www.afrotc.com

The College and Career Centers of TJ, Lake Braddock, Robinson, West Springfield, and South County High Schools will sponsor a Military Night on March 24, 2011. The event will take place at Robinson Secondary School at 7:00 pm in the Davala Hall. Representatives from all five service academies and ROTC programs will attend and present their programs. In addition, a representative from Congressman Connelly’s office will discuss congressional military appointments to the academies. All interested students and parents are welcome to attend.

### Odds ’N Ends

**Helpful Websites:**
- To explore careers and colleges: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html
- To register for SAT and/or SAT Subject Test exams: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/scores/sending.html
- To obtain official SAT I and SAT Subject Test exam scores: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/scores/sending.html
- To obtain official AP exam score reports: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/exgrd_rep.html

**Requesting AP Exam Scores:** The AP Program does not offer an online score reporting service. There are basic guidelines for requesting an AP Grade Report be sent to one or more colleges. These guidelines also can be found at the web page listed above. There is a fee to send your exam scores to a college. Requests generally take five days to process from the date they are received and order to see if the Center is being used by a class, outside speaker, or visitors. Because of its size, the room is often used for special events and not always available for drop-in use. The Center is open for student use before school, between classes, during lunch, 8th period, and immediately after school. Mrs. Kobick can be reached at 703-750-8377 or by email at lbkobick@fcps.edu in order to schedule an appointment.
cost $15 per college. Rush reports cost $25 per college and are processed within two working days after the request is received. Please be advised that an AP Grade Report request cannot be cancelled once AP Services processes your credit card number.
Scores can not be faxed or emailed. AP Exam Score Reports are cumulative and include grades for all AP exams a student has ever taken.

### Information needed to process a request:

1. Full name at the time of testing
2. AP number (if known)
3. Dates the exams were taken
4. Names of the exams taken
5. Current, permanent address
6. Daytime phone number
7. Social security number
8. Date of birth
9. Name of the school where the test was taken
10. Name of the recipient college and the city in which it is located
11. Payment (checks should be made payable to AP Exams)

* A confirmation of the AP Exam Score Report will be mailed to the student.

### To make a request:

1. Complete the Transcript Request Form from your AP Exam Score Report and send it along with payment to: AP Exams, P.O. Box 6671, Princeton, NJ 08541-6671 OR
2. Mail a letter and payment stating your request to AP Exams, P.O. Box 6671, Princeton, NJ 08541-6671 OR
3. Call (609) 771-7300 or toll free (888) 225-5427 Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. ET and pay with a credit card OR
4. Send a fax with a credit card number and expiration date to (609) 530-0482 OR
5. Send an email with a credit card number and expiration date to apexams@info.collegeboard.org

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### FAMILY CONNECTION – ANOTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCE

Family Connection is a program available to students and their parents through Blackboard. It enables students and parents to conduct college searches, as well as to look up specific college data in the form of scatter grams in order to compare a student’s GPA and SAT scores to other TJ applicants. These scatter grams enable one to see which TJ applicants were accepted or not at a particular college and view data concerning their GPA and SAT scores. In addition, students are encouraged to complete an inventory titled “Do What You Are,” designed to promote self-awareness, as well as learning styles inventory. Furthermore, Family Connections enables students to be notified about college representative visits at TJ by utilizing the “visit schedule” link.

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### Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests

Non-writing Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests will be administered to students in grades 9th through 12th from Monday, January 3 through Friday, January 7. These mid-year SOL tests are only for students who will complete a course that has an SOL test by the end of the fall semester or who need to take a SOL test for graduation requirements, i.e. students who have entered FCPS from a private school or out-of-state.

SOL tests will be administered in the morning and afternoon in various computer systems labs throughout the building. If you have questions, please call or email Adam Wong, our assessment coach, at 703-714-8372 or adam.wong@fcps.edu.

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### CALENDAR

**Nov. 29** Parent Program: Research Lab/Mentorship Night at 7:30 pm, in the cafeteria

**Nov. 30** Money for College program at 7:30 pm in the auditorium.

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### TJHSST CEEB

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