

CR Counselors and the College Admissions Process

The college admissions process may seem daunting, and students and parents can easily become overwhelmed and stressed. Parent and student research and input, along with the guidance and assistance of their CR High School Counselor, can make the process navigable, with fewer obstacles, and maybe even enjoyable!

Representatives from Citizens For Education sat down with counselors Cristina Rabayda from CR North, Nicole Ventresca from CR South and Rudy Lamberth, Supervisor of Pupil Services, to get a better understanding of the role CR counselors play in the college admissions process.

The college admissions process actually begins in 9th grade when counselors meet with their assigned freshmen to create an academic plan for the next 3 years. This plan is not set in stone, but does give the student and parent an idea of how their courses will progress. Parents are invited to attend the meeting (by mailed letter), although, unfortunately, less than half the parents come to school to participate in these meetings.

Counselors meet again with their students as sophomores to discuss course selections for junior year. The counselors will also go over PSAT and SAT information. In their English classes, all students are introduced to Naviance, a comprehensive online tool that enables students and parents to navigate the college and career process.

Junior year is a pivotal time. Juniors begin by taking the PSAT in the fall and then move on to take the SAT and/or ACT tests in the winter and/or spring. Counselors encourage the juniors to utilize the Naviance college search function to see which colleges fit the student's scores, GPA, interests, etc. In January/February, counselors meet with students in small groups to discuss the college admissions process. During the 4th marking period of junior year, parents are again invited and encouraged to participate in their child's meeting with his/her counselor. This meeting is an important one, as it will focus on the college admissions process and choosing colleges. Again, the percentage of parents who attend their child's meeting is less than 50%. Parents who are not available during the school day for the 9th and 11th grade meetings are encouraged to contact the counselor to arrange a meeting in the early morning or by phone. All students meet with their counselor, regardless of parent involvement.

Throughout the fall each year, the counseling departments schedule many college representative visitations for interested students. This schedule can be found under the counseling tab at South, and on Naviance at both high schools. If a student has indicated an interest in a particular school, and logged that information in Naviance, they receive an automatic notification when that college representative is coming to their school. Additionally, students can sign up to meet with the representative; at North through Naviance, and at South, through forms in the counseling office. Students who sign up will receive a pass to spend a few minutes talking to these representatives. The counselors are finding that more and more students are taking advantage of this opportunity.

All recommendations, by teachers and counselors, are now electronically transmitted to colleges, as are transcripts. When documentation is sent, date stamps are recorded in Naviance. It is up to students to make sure that all information has been received and recorded by the college. Sometimes it takes the college a couple of weeks to enter the information received from the counselor, so students may need to be a little patient.

Each year the counseling departments jointly sponsor a college fair and a financial aid night. In the hour before the fair, there is a highly informative session featuring a panel of 4-5 college admissions professionals. They give a detailed presentation and are available to answer questions as well. North also runs an NCAA informational night (South is planning to start this next year).

The counseling departments at North and South maintain websites that contain an enormous amount of information. Much of this information pertains to the college admissions process, including detailed responsibility timetables for grades 9-12. By senior year, the student should be well aware of what he/she needs to do and deadlines for getting it done.

Although each CR counselor has responsibility for 270-280 students and counselors wear many hats, the college admissions process accounts for much of their time, especially in the fall. CR counselors use staff development days to visit colleges and universities, or talk to admissions staff via phone, to hear updates on admission policies and desired student profiles. This information is subsequently shared with all the other counselors. Counselors also sit in when college representatives visit their school. If the budget allows, some counselors may be able to attend the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) annual conference, provided it is held close to home. The district only pays for the fees to attend the conference, not airfare or hotel expenses.

Counselors are dedicated to assisting their students through the college process and want to see students get into a college that is a good fit for them. **The counselors at both North and South believe the college admissions process is a partnership between counselor, student and parent**, stating “we are ready to help when needed.” Parents are encouraged, and should not hesitate, to reach out to the counselors. Students are always welcome to contact their counselor at any time during the college process. If the student and parent are proactive and use the resources available to them, the college admissions process need not be a stressful one!

Citizens would like to thank Ms. Rabayda, Ms. Ventresca and Mr. Lamberth for taking time out of their busy schedules to talk to us.