



# Bayport Blue Point UFSD Counseling Center Newsletter February-March 2010 Edition

## District Counselors

### High School

**Susan Mullins Dan Harrington**

**Ronald Bard**

### Middle School

**Heather Woods**

### Elementary

**Matthew Birdsall**

Dear Community,

Hope you all are dealing well with all the snow. Wow!...what a winter.

You will notice this is a combined newsletter to accommodate the shorten month of February. This addition is the first edition that will appear on the [New Bayport Blue-Point Counseling Center Website](#). This means you will be able to receive up-dated information, monthly, in a timely manner through the district's website.

In addition to the Monthly Newsletter being on-line, you will be able to view important information concerning the entire Counseling Program, K-12. Each level of the Counseling program is represented according to Elementary, Middle School and High School so that you will be able to view important announcements related to your child's grade. In addition, you will be able to be proactive by viewing information and resources related to the other schools.

We believe the happenings in the Counseling Program can be best communicated with you knowing that the information exists in one place. We will archive all our announcements and information so that you will able to view it at your convenience. We hope that you will make it a routine to log on. Of course, we will remind you of all important events through our automated phone system. Remember to check your messages.

Traditionally, this time of year we begin to orient our Junior Class to the College Admission Process. If you have other children who have gone on to college, you will remember meeting with your child's counselor in a Junior Planning Conference. At that conference, you were informed on all aspects of the college admission process. Recognizing that the amount of information is overwhelming, coupled with having the community miss work for this 45 minute event, the Counseling Center has regrouped and will now offer a series of evening workshops so parents and students will have the time to better understand this process. Please check the Counseling Center Website, as well as review your phone messages for the date and time of each workshop. If necessary, you may still call and schedule an appointment with your counselor to review confidential and specific information concerning your child. If, for any reason, you miss any part of the series, the entire presentation will be on-line. You can find the PowerPoint at the High School Counseling

Center Website under Parent Resources.

Please be aware that your child is choosing his/her courses for Academic Year 2010-11. Be mindful that all college and universities are looking for each child to take English, Social Studies, Math, Science and LOTE each year they are in school. Be aware that the most important factors in college admission is the rigor of course work throughout high school.

### ***The Counseling Center***

#### **Elementary Counseling News**

We are sure you know by now, that the District has initiated an Elementary Counseling Program. A familiar face, Mr. Matthew Birdsall, is working with the elementary school community by bringing important information to students and parents.

*"We believe that the elementary school experience lays the foundation for all learning by providing basic skills, forming future attitudes, and establishing useful habits. This critical work is undertaken during a time of great developmental change for youth and must address the present and future needs of the "whole" child. Therefore, the elementary school counselor will work with students, school staff, parents, and the community, to ensure all students have safe, healthy, and nurturing environments in which to grow, and have full access to all the tools necessary to improve their quality of life and ultimately attain personal success."*

Mr. Birdsall is assigned to Sylvan Avenue Elementary School on Mondays & Tuesdays, Blue Point Elementary School on Wednesdays, and Academy Street Elementary School on Thursdays & Fridays. No matter the day, he can be reached by dialing any of the three elementary school phone numbers and entering extension 5034. For those who prefer email, contact can be made using [mbirdsall@bbpschools.org](mailto:mbirdsall@bbpschools.org)

#### **Advice From Students Who Have Been Through It**

By [CAREN OSTEN GERSZBERG](#)

As Nicole and I walked down the long, narrow aisle of her high school auditorium one recent evening, she darted to sit with a friend while I went for a seat up close. It was College Night — a chance for all interested students and parents to get the lowdown directly from seven high school seniors — and I didn't want to miss a word.

Dressed in everything from sweatpants to skirts, the seniors dangled their Ugg- and Converse-clad feet over the edge of the wide stage. One by one, they passed a microphone down the line, openly sharing with the audience details of their personal college quests — how many colleges they'd each applied to, how they had come up with their lists, and where they stood in the admissions process. This would be one of the most informative nights of the year for juniors and their parents.

The featured students were relaxed and refreshingly candid, and they didn't all have good news to recount. One early decision (ED) acceptance, an ED rejection and a deferral, and the rest still waiting to hear. As a group, they'd applied to anywhere from two to 12 colleges. And when it came to devising a list, a few consulted their guidance counselors, while others credited their parents or alternative sources.

“My mom read the [Fiske Guide](#) and paper-clipped about 300 schools,” said Luke, who eventually narrowed his list down to seven.

Emma, who applied to four colleges, looked to the book, [“Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You’re Not a Straight-A Student.”](#) for direction. Using it as a guide, she discovered and applied to both [Beloit](#) and [Goucher](#).

A major sports fan, Giancarlo proudly admitted to choosing his colleges based on football rankings, eventually applying to 12, including West Virginia, Marquette and Indiana.

Visiting colleges in person was highly recommended by all of them, despite a few complaints. As Megan recounted that she went on way too many road trips with her mom, the others nodded their heads in agreement.

Davey pointed out that while listening to his dad’s show tunes was grueling, he appreciated having a parent present. “It was helpful to have a voice reminding me to ask the right questions,” he said. “And not let me focus just on attractive women.”

For Emily, spending an overnight at each of her top three choices enabled her to decide that [Wesleyan](#) was the one she would apply to early decision. “I was looking for a certain environment, one with individuality and learning for the sake of learning,” she said. While walking back from a concert at 2 a.m., Emily came across a male student playing his saxophone in the middle of an open field. “That’s when I knew this was the school for me,” she said.

Interviews were also highly recommended by many of the seniors. For Emily, the person-to-person reaction was significant, as she explained that “it felt weird to present yourself on a piece of paper.”

Luke sweated heavily, literally, through a three-and-a-half-hour interview at [Skidmore](#), but he said it greatly opened up his mind to the college. And Emma had written off one college until her interview, when they asked her a particularly creative question (“What Disney princess do you most identify with?”), provoking her to reconsider applying there (The answer, by the way, is Pocahontas).

On a general level, the seniors had these valuable words of wisdom to share with the younger students:

- Remember that there is a school for everyone.
- Start the process early.
- Do not stress about the SAT.
- Put yourself in your application and essays.
- Do not wait until Dec. 31 to file your applications.
- Don’t waste high school just trying to get into college.

Lastly, it seemed that in retrospect, with the process either complete or winding down, the seniors advised the students in the audience to listen to — and be tolerant — of their parents.

Naji, who applied to nine universities (a range including N.Y.U., Boston University, SUNY Stonybrook, U.C.L.A. and Brown), said it was her mother who often brought her back to reality. “She’d ask if I was sure I wanted a school in the middle of nowhere or where it’s really cold, hinting at things but letting me have the freedom to decide,” she said.

The pinnacle of the evening for the older generation sprinkled throughout the auditorium was when Davey told students “not to freak out on your parents, because they love you and

are really just trying to help.” I turned around to look for Nicole. She was sitting five rows behind me, and after a few seconds, she caught my eye, and smiled.

## University of North Carolina Greensboro to Offer 3-Year Degree

By [JACQUES STEINBERG](#)

The [University of North Carolina at Greensboro](#) is announcing today that it will allow “highly motivated students” to graduate in three years, beginning with the freshman class that will be seated this fall.

Specifically, the program will be offered to incoming freshmen who already have at least 12 college credit hours, either through Advanced Placement or community college classes, or other accelerated work. By paring a year off their undergraduate experiences, those students would save an estimated \$8,000, or 22 percent, in tuition, room, board and other fees, compared to their peers in four-year programs.

In a statement, Linda P. Brady, the university chancellor, described the program as “perfect for students who are eager to earn a degree and get on with other life goals.” Among the majors for which the accelerated program will be offered are those in accounting, elementary education, information systems and romance languages.

We’ve occasionally engaged readers of [The Choice](#) on the subject of three-year degrees. [Last October](#), Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee and the former secretary of education, floated the idea in a Newsweek [cover article](#). While Senator Alexander highlighted three-year degree programs at Lipscomb University and Hartwick College, both are private colleges, while Greensboro is public.

## **Film Might Be the New Essay In College Admissions**

### **One University Is Breaking From Tradition and Students Are Responding**

By **JOHN BERMAN and HANNA SIEGEL**

Across the country, college admissions officers are in crunch time, reading through huge stacks of applications, deciding which high school seniors will make the cut. But now, officials at one university aren't just reading, they're watching too.

This year, Tufts University, outside of Boston, became the first college to encourage students to submit one-minute YouTube videos of themselves doing pretty much anything. Could a video about [flying elephants](#) be the ticket to college?

Or a [rap](#)? Something along the lines of "I want an education that stretches my mind, 'cause I'm ready to change mankind."

How about a video delivery of a [bad joke](#)?

Yes, these videos of songs, dances and science projects are part of real-life college applications.

### **A New Kind of Essay**

Amelia Downs from North Carolina brings the ability to -- as she calls it -- do the "[Math Dance](#)"

Conner Buckley from Washington, D.C., shows how he can [multitask](#).

And Emma Bloksberg shows Tufts how she sure can [jump rope](#).

The videos are NOT required, and Tufts says they will be just one piece in the entire application process.

"We're not judging it on the qualities of the production values," says Lee Coffin, dean of admissions at Tufts. "We're not looking for Oscar-winning short films. What we're really hoping to get out of these videos is another part of the puzzles that make up this 17-year-old person."

In fact, he says, "We've seen some awful videos. Some are charming in how awful they are. But we chuckle and move on."

### **Too Much Pressure?**

Some educators worry there are dangers here. Harvard's dean of admissions, William R. Fitzsimmons, said it might favor the rich: "Families with substantial financial resources are in a better position to provide such materials."

And what of the additional pressure on kids?

Laura Chipman from California sent a video with her horse. We asked her if she feels it's just more stress added to the already stressful application process.

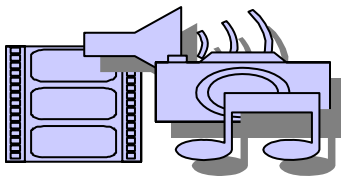
"It was pretty nerve-wracking," she says, "but I thought it was a way to enjoy the application process -- if that was even possible."

What's more, a majority of the videos are on YouTube's Web site for all the world to see.

### **Tufts University Accepts YouTube Videos From Applicants**

But with so many kids on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, Tufts thinks getting to know their digital lives may be a key to getting to know them.

And for applicants, it can be the chance to make a case -- with just the right note.



## **Will You Get Enough Financial Aid? Ask Your College About These 10 Factors**

By [Kim Clark](#)

Fewer than 3 percent of all the colleges in the country promise that they will award enough financial aid to meet the full financial needs of admitted students in 2010.

And even among the small group of comparatively wealthy and generous schools, there are big variations in whose need, and the size of the need, they offer to meet. Most colleges in this group are guaranteeing to meet the needs of only those students who are U.S. citizens and who apply for financial aid before the school's deadline. That means that in some cases, foreign, tardy, and wait-listed students aren't guaranteed full aid packages.

To determine "need," most of these schools require parents to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the College Board's CSS/Financial Aid Profile.

The profile, which is free for low-income applicants but costs all others at least \$25, asks in-depth questions about things like investments and real estate equity. The schools use the financial information to calculate an expected family contribution. Many schools have developed their own formulas for deciding how much of a family's home equity, should be counted on as a resource to help pay for college. A student's "need" for financial aid is calculated by subtracting the EFC from college's total cost of attendance—including room, board, books, travel, and miscellaneous expenses.

Colleges also use different mixes of scholarships, loans, and work-study jobs to meet what they believe to be the students' need. Some colleges give enough grants to allow students to avoid borrowing altogether, for example. But the downturn in the economy has forced a growing number of even the wealthiest schools to increase amount of loans they plan to ask needy students to take.

Because many parents find the college's estimate of their need and [EFCs to be unaffordable](#), some students concerned about the cost of college may find it cheaper to attend schools that are not on the meet-full-needs list but have lower sticker prices. Alternatively, students can also search out colleges that award more merit aid, in the hopes of getting enough grants to reduce their total net cost of college.

Students and parents looking to choose a college likely to award them sufficient grants can ask the college's financial aid office about 10 major factors that help determine just how big their financial aid offer will probably be:

**1. The college's [policy on student loans](#):** Several schools, including [Amherst College](#) in Massachusetts and [Pomona College](#) in Claremont, Calif., provide enough grants and work-study jobs to meet a student's need. Others, such as [Oberlin College](#) in Ohio and [Wesleyan University](#) in Middletown, Conn., say they will provide enough grants so that low-income students don't have to borrow, while others will be expected to take out modest loans. Still others offer aid packages that include federal student loans of up to \$7,500 a year.

**2. The way the college calculates a family's "need":** [Harvard University](#), for example, promises to provide enough grants to make sure families earning less than \$180,000 pay no more than 10 percent of their income. Other schools on this list promise enough aid so that the family generally only has to come up with an expected family contribution that the school calculates based on the family's income and assets.

**3. What the college considers as its "cost":** Legally, a college's total cost of attendance is supposed to include tuition, fees, room, board, books, travel, and reasonable miscellaneous expenses for laundry and other necessities. Some schools keep their "cost" low by providing comparatively small allowances for books or miscellaneous expenses. The College Board surveys colleges every year and estimates that books and supplies cost about \$1,100 last year. The typical "miscellaneous" expense budget ranged from \$1,400 to \$2,000.

**4. The college's expectation for a student contribution:** Many of the schools on this list reduce the student's need, and thus the aid package, by at least \$1,000 (and some by much more), saying that the student is expected to contribute that much each year from summer earnings. A few schools, such as [SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry](#) in Syracuse, N.Y., provide enough aid so that students aren't required to pitch in summer earnings.

**5. How the college counts home equity:** Some colleges, such as [Yale University](#) and [Occidental College](#) in Los Angeles, do sometimes consider the equity parents have in their homes as a resource that should be tapped to help pay for college. Others, such as [Brown University](#) and Harvard, don't consider home equity at all.

**6. How the college considers divorced parents:** Some schools, such as Yale, analyze the incomes of both stepparents and original parents and make their own judgments about which set of parents should be responsible for each student's college costs. Others, such as [Boston College](#), consider the incomes of only the original parents. Colleges that only use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid consider only the custodial parents' income, even if a stepparent has a prenuptial agreement relieving the stepparent of financial responsibility for the child.

**7. The cutoff date for the meet-full-needs promise:** [Reed College](#) in Portland, Ore., and SUNY ESF try to meet the needs of only those students who complete their aid applications on time. Other schools, such as [Adrian College](#) in Michigan, commit to meet the need of only those students admitted during the early or regular admission seasons and may run out of aid by the time they start admitting students off of the wait list. Still others, such as [Princeton University](#), Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., say the timing of the application doesn't affect the aid award.

**8. The aid policy for international students:** A few schools on this list, such as Princeton and [Grinnell College](#) in Iowa, commit to meet the financial needs of noncitizens. Many others, such as Northwestern and Adrian, don't guarantee full aid for international students.

**9. Whether the school also offers merit scholarships:** Some schools on this list, such as [Rice University](#) in Houston and [Washington University in St. Louis](#), offer top students scholarship no matter how rich their parents or what their EFC is. Others, such as [Columbia University](#), do not offer merit scholarships.

**10. The effect of an aid application on chances for admission:** At least [28 colleges](#) have committed to ignore a student's aid application when deciding about admission. But some others on the list do reserve at least some seats for students who can pay full price. Reed says it meets the full need of all admitted students and doesn't consider ability to pay for more than 90 percent of its admission decisions. But the last dozen or so fat envelopes go to students who don't need financial aid.

## **First Lady Launches National Obesity Fight**

First lady Michelle Obama launched a nationwide campaign Tuesday to fight childhood obesity, part of her effort to teach America's children about better nutrition and exercise.

Mrs. Obama said the Let's Move campaign will encourage more physical activity for children, healthier food in schools and more accurate food labeling. Some of her initiatives, such as tax breaks for grocery stores to move into poorly served communities, will require congressional action.

"I would move heaven and earth to give my kids all the chance in the world for them to be at the top of their game in every way, shape and form," Mrs. Obama told USA Today. "Let's Move operates under the principle that every family wants the same thing for their kid. So we're going to figure out how to make it easier for them to get it."

In the Oval Office on Tuesday, President Barack Obama signed a memorandum creating a task force on childhood obesity. Its members, including the secretaries of health, agriculture, education and the interior, must report back within 90 days.

He praised his wife, who attended the signing, for tackling one of "the most urgent health issues facing the country."

"This has enormous promise in improving the health of our children, in giving support to parents to make the kinds of healthy choices that are often very difficult," Obama said.

In an interview with ABC News, Mrs. Obama acknowledged her love of burgers and fries, and ice cream and cake, as do most kids. But she said she wants her daughters and the rest of the nation's children to practice better nutrition and exercise, too.

"We're not talking about a lifestyle that excludes all that," she said. "The question is how do we help people balance that out so that they're not facing life-threatening, preventable illnesses, but they're enjoying their food, they're eating their vegetables, they're doing their running and walking and playing and still have time to get a good, fun meal in every once in a while."

"There's no expert on this planet that says the government telling people what to do really does any good on this issue," Mrs. Obama said. "This is going to require an effort on everyone's part. We have to have a tailored approach on this."

She planned an elaborate announcement Tuesday at the White House. Scheduled to join her in the State Dining Room were Cabinet members, mayors, doctors, media, sports, entertainment and business leaders.

In the ABC interview, Mrs. Obama said she tries every day to instill the same values in her daughters, Malia, 11, and Sasha, 8.

"My kids have to get up and move. They can't sit in front of the TV," she said. "I have them involved in sports ... to compete and to win and to run and to sweat. They have to understand."

**Parents Can Help Boys Become Engaged Readers During the Summer Months**

*Prepared by National Middle School Association*

Some parents believe that as boys enter the young adolescent years (10-15) they become less interested in reading and more excited about other activities. Yet, parents can stimulate their reading interests and build a foundation for reading achievement.

"The key is finding material that interests boys as they mature, and the summer is a great time to do that," urges Sue Swaim, executive director, National Middle School Association (NMSA). "Parents can be powerful teachers during the summer months since they understand their son's interests."

A recent study provides information that can guide parents in helping boys to greater literacy achievement.

"In studying a diverse sample of boys for one year, we found that they pursue literate activities outside of school in interesting and complex ways that adults do not always recognize," said Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, associate professor of English Education, Boise State University. "The condition boys seek in all activities, including reading, is a sense of connection or total engagement with a task or activity."

The study found that reading which appeals to boys includes:

- Electronic texts such as websites
- Visual texts such as graphic novels and comics
- Nonfiction, particularly with weird and wonderful facts
- Mysteries and whodunits where readers know how the stories work

"As we strive to develop reading skills and a love for reading in all students, it's important to find appropriate reading material for them, but material they will enjoy," said Swaim. "Otherwise, reading will become one more unappreciated task in their lives."

Swaim encourages parents to notice what boys like to read and encourage that type of reading. Specific steps parents can take include:

- Make available a variety of materials, including those mentioned above, newspapers, and magazines that connect with their interests. If a boy is involved in baseball, offer him the sports section of the daily newspaper, or bring home one of the many magazines that cover baseball. If he is becoming interested in cars, provide automotive magazines.
- Talk with your sons about the content of their reading in nonjudgmental ways. The study found that boys value conversation as a way to use reading. Once you provide reading material connected to their interests, it will be natural to discuss that information with them. It also gives them opportunities to build their oral communication skills.
- Read with your boys. Young adolescents still value examples set by their parents, and modeling behavior is a very effective way to teach. Set a time when everyone in the family reads together, even if it's just for 10 minutes a day, and focus on material that will interest your boys. Or, read a magazine or book that your son selects along with him and then discuss your impressions.

"It's especially important to encourage boys to read at this age, but reading is important for

- Talk with your sons about the content of their reading in nonjudgmental ways. The study found that boys value conversation as a way to use reading. Once you provide reading material connected to their interests, it will be natural to discuss that information with them. It also gives them opportunities to build their oral communication skills.

"It's especially important to encourage boys to read at this age, but reading is important for all young adolescents," Swaim said. "So, these strategies can also be applied to girls in your family. Summer is a good time to develop reading habits, and parents are the key to making that happen. Don't let your student's education stop during the summer months."

## **Attention Juniors**

The Counseling Center is sponsoring a series of College Planning Workshops to assist you and your family with the College Application Process. The workshops are about 1 hour long and cover each part of the college application process in detail. Early and knowledgeable college planning will reduce stress and ensure your success of getting into *the right college* for you.

*Make an Investment in Your Future*

*Attend the College Planning Workshop Series*

College Planning Workshop  
Series

High School Auditorium

Check the Website under HS Announcements for Date and Times

Session II

No Child Left Untested

By the Numbers/Determining Your Profile

Resources for College Exploration

Session III

The Application Process

The College Essay

Session IV

The College Interview

Preparing Your High School Activity Sheet for College

Wrapping it Up