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COURSE PROGRAM ADVISING AND SELECTIVE COLLEGE ADMISSION

Memo to the Faculty

In the past five years, we have seen increased competition for admission to moderately and highly selective liberal arts and science colleges and universities. Course program is being weighed more heavily than ever before. Any help you can provide your advisees in making thoughtful, balanced decisions about their course program is greatly appreciated.

It is clear to us that colleges want students to do the following in high school:

1. Build the broadest and strongest possible foundation
2. Take the most challenging possible courses in their area(s) of strength and interest
3. Address (not avoid) areas of weakness

Below are specific concerns raised over the past few years by colleges. While we are committed to treating every student here as an individual, we need to be watchful for course program decisions at each grade level that will result in doors closing when time comes to apply to college. We do our best to communicate with colleges the rationale for each applicant's course selections and the quality of our curriculum. Some transcripts, however, raise red flags and knock the student down or out in the competition. While it is not our goal that seniors be admitted to every college to which they apply, we are saddened when an appropriate student is devalued simply because of choices in course program.

Note: We will be reviewing every rising senior's course selections in our spring conferences and communicating any concerns to the student, advisor, and family. We do not automatically review the course programs of students in the earlier grades.

RED FLAGS....

No foreign language after grade 10 (even if three years have been completed) -- Especially if expressing an interest in studying the humanities or social sciences in college.

Exemptions must document a language-based disability.

Ending the study of foreign language after the second year.

Exemptions must document a language-based disability.

2+2 is a possibility for students unable to move on to third year in the first language s/he starts

Highly selective colleges want no less than three (preferably four) years of the same language

Starting a new foreign language in the senior year.

The exception is if they are adding a second foreign language to their schedule.

Two history courses (a problem for many public universities, less so for liberal arts colleges)

Three years of history courses should be a minimum.

No analytical courses in grade 11 or 12 (math or science)

No math beyond Algebra 2

No Calculus for capable math students, especially those expressing an interest in STEM fields of study

No Biology for students interested in studying math, science, or technology in college

For the most selective colleges, fewer than three lab sciences and four/five traditional maths

Using an Arts course as a fifth major unless applying to BFA and/or other professional arts/performance programs