

## CHMS PTO General Meeting Minutes April 10, 2019

Meeting was called to order.

### Presidents' Report (Lisa Romberger & Theresa Gannon)

- The February 13<sup>th</sup> PTO General Meeting minutes were approved.
- The PTO presidents attended the April Presidents Meeting and shared several items.
  - 2019-2020 Registration is now open. Emails have been sent out. There are three steps. People need to register for the district, you need to add extra district fees (i.e. yearbook, graduation gown, PE uniform, etc), and the you need to register for the PTO.
  - Summer Learning registration is also open through May 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - Opioid NARCAN use Training at HMS on April 13.
  - The next Community Speaker Series is on April 17. It is a documentary called Angst, followed by Q & A with Dr. John Duffy.
  - The Walk the Walk event is at The Community House on April 28.
  - The Stuff the Squad event (supporting the HCS Family Services) will take place at CHMS before school on May 7.
  - The HMS parking garage is in the second round of arbitration.

### Dr. Brown's Report

- The IAR testing (new PARCC) is finishing up today (Wednesday). CHMS logistically changed some things up this time and it is going well.
- MAP testing will be at the end of the month. Eighth graders will take the MAP on April 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> (the Monday and Tuesday before their DC trip). The sixth and seventh graders will take the MAP test later in the week, on Thursday and Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- There will an upcoming Red Cross Blood Drive in the middle of May, organized by a student. An email will be going out with detailed information.
- The ENCORE selection process will begin soon for the rising seventh and eighth graders. Course descriptions will be sent home to parents. Teachers will lead a presentation for the students, describing the available ENCORES, including two new options: a coding class (within applied tech) and an intro to guitar course.

### Treasurer Report

The P&L, for the period ended March 31, was shared at the meeting. Julie shared that most of our revenue has come in. We still will be receiving some income from our dedication bricks, spirit wear and vending machines. We also will need to pay out for two more Eagle Café spirit lunches. Overall, we have raised more than was projected because of our Turnabout fundraiser and individual PTO donations.

Julie shared that we have a projected cash balance (as of 6/30/2019) of \$62,848. We will take out \$35,000 for our Savings Reserve and \$4,558 for our Angel Fund, which rolls over every year. This leaves \$23,289 in Total Unrestricted Cash.

Julie also handed out our 2019/2020 Proposed PTO Budget. We will vote on this budget at the May 8<sup>th</sup> General PTO Meeting. This proposed budget is very similar to this year's budget. Two changes are that we will have more revenue with spirit lunches, because we are adding more lunches next year, and we are reflecting the fact that we earn more with our school kits than was previously budgeted.

## Fundraising & Activities

- CHMS PTO registration is now open. It is the only way to purchase the school supplies kits.
- School Supply Kit sale is now open through May 6 (and can be found in the CHMS PTO registration).
- Jill Conley and Kathie Cihlar presented the new 2019-2010 PTO Executive Board slate, which will be voted on at our May 8<sup>th</sup> General PTO meeting. The new board slate includes: Jill Conley and Kathie Cihlar (Co-Presidents), Jenny Driscoll and Michele Schubkegel (Co-Vice Presidents), Stephanie Stern (Treasurer), Jennifer Buffardi (Assistant Treasurer), Jennifer Coffey (Vice President of Communications), and Courtney Stach (Secretary).
- Lisa Romberger shared the PTO Long Range Spending Proposal for our excess funds raised this year. There was consensus among all PTO members to approve the proposed \$25,085 spend. The money will be used toward:
  - Bike Racks (approximately \$1,400) – due to the reduced bus routes, more students are riding their bikes to school. Our current bike racks are rusty and do not hold enough bikes. We will purchase three racks (holding 18 bikes each) immediately and see if that is enough to meet the demand. If we see that we need another bike rack, we will have the money set aside. We will look for an alternative site for the fourth bike rack.
  - Remodeling of the First Floor Teacher Workroom (approximately \$7,054) – Last year, both the second floor and third floor teacher workrooms were remodeled and the teachers are loving the new spaces. They are meeting more with one another formally and informally in these workrooms. The first floor teacher workroom is often the first look that many community members have of our school, as we host some smaller community events in there. CHMS never opened with a staff lounge. The current furniture was used and donated from a teacher. The updated lounge will allow for better seating and movement within the space. It will also be more functional.
  - Flexible Seating (approximately \$16,568) – Some seventh grade students presented on the importance of flexible seating a prior meetings. HMS has a lot of flexible seating (including the high top tables that we voted to purchase) and love them. Students often gravitate to these options within the classroom. Eighteen teachers are wanting ball chairs and rocking/gaming chairs in their classrooms. Three LA teachers (one from each grade) will be trying out the high top tables and will provide feedback to the PTO to see if more tables would be beneficial in the future. We may be able to get a discount when we buy in bulk, so the amount that we need to spend may go down.

Other projects that were considered but are not being funded at this time include: kindness garden or quotes/decals around the school, continuation of rebranding efforts (office area, cafeteria, stairwells), science equipment, sound panel for cafeteria.

- The Feeding Children Worldwide service project will take place at CHMS on April 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Our annual Brick Sale is on now through May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Stuff the Squad service event is Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. All D181 families are asked to donate food/dry goods to the Hinsdale Food Pantry. The Clarendon Hills Police Department will have a squad car here to pick up donations before school. More details to come in future PTO newsletter.
- Administrative Professionals Day is April 24<sup>th</sup>. Principal's Day is May 1<sup>st</sup> and National Nurses Day is May 6<sup>th</sup>. Think about writing a letter to those who you interact with to show your appreciation.
- Annual Staff Appreciation Week is May 6-10. The committee is planning that week now.
- Eighth grade graduation is June 7<sup>th</sup> at Hinsdale Central High School (no school for 8<sup>th</sup> graders that day).

## Endless Appreciation

- Mistie Lucht and Allyson Russo for co-chairing this year's Pizza Wars on March 13<sup>th</sup>. The event was a tremendous success.
- Elaine Gilman and Amy McCurry for coordinating the Feeding Children Worldwide service project on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

- Marie Strimaitis and Ashley Rasmussen (MRC Director) for coordinating our upcoming Summer Reading Program and Book Fair.
- Julie Boruff for partnering with our teachers and preparing the grade level school supply kit lists and quotes for 2019-2020.
- Julie Boruff for coordinating our online PTO registration site for next year.

**Speaker: Kevin Krebs, Partners for Achievement: The Top 10 Things Middle School Parents Should Know About Planning for College**

**1. Reviewing the Current College Landscape**

- Larger Student Population: From U.S. high schools and foreign countries
  - When we were applying to college, there were 1.3 million people applying from the US. Now there are 2.6 million US students applying to college plus 1 million international students (who pay full tuition and are in great demand at colleges for this reason)
- Competitive Admissions: Decreasing acceptance percentages at selective schools
  - Due to the increase in the number of applicants for the same number of spots in college, plus the ease in applying to multiple schools via the Common Application, there is a decrease in acceptance percentages at many schools. This leads to students applying to more colleges, which leads to even less acceptances. This is a perpetual cycle.
- Enrollment Challenges: Fewer students at small private/mid-size public universities
  - There are over 3,000 colleges in the United States. Some colleges don't have as much marketing dollars but are still really good colleges. These colleges have fewer students applying, have higher acceptance rates and will often have scholarship money to hand out.
- Increasing Cost & Debt: College costs and student loan debt have risen dramatically
  - As an example, Fordham will be \$85,000 per year in four years.

**2. Defining the "4 Fits of a S.A.F.E. College List"**

- **S**ocial Fit: Size & location, activities & interests, support services
  - Look at how big and how far away a student wants to go. How do they feel about huge lecture halls, TAs, Greek life?
- **A**cademic Fit: Major, selectivity, rigor, GPA, ACT/SAT
  - What does the student want to study? Can he/she get in?
  - It's ok to have a balance of honors and on-level classes for "normal" colleges. Ask your child, "What's the highest level of class that he/she can get an A in without too much stress." Over half of colleges look at unweighted grades and only look at grades in CORE classes.
  - Standardized tests matter.
- **F**inancial Fit: Family budget, need-based aid, merit aid, private scholarships
  - Families need to understand the true cost of a college (sticker price vs. actual price). Some colleges have an inflated cost of attendance that no one actually pays. Instead, these colleges give out a lot of merit scholarships so that students feel good about getting a "deal". Families also need to understand need-based aid qualifications and how to access merit scholarships (many of which go unused).
- **E**mployment: Career services, internships, job placement rates

- Students need to make sure that a college is worth the investment. What is the college's career placement within the major?

### **3. Understanding High School Academics**

- Class Selection: Review requirements of each college and know your child's limits
  - Some colleges require different high school courses for admissions (i.e. 2 years of world languages vs. 4 years)
  - Balance the requirements of the colleges with what you know of your student when selecting high school courses.
  - Understand that decisions in class selection are important. If you want to be an engineer, you need to take higher levels of math and related electives.
- Rigor: Dual credit, Advanced Placement, honors, regular classes
  - You need to think about your child's interests, ability, and goal for selectivity of college when selecting rigor of high school classes. Again, think of the highest rigor that your child can get an A in without dealing with too much stress. Cs in AP classes do not help your child get into college. Select higher level of classes in the subjects that your child finds most interesting.
- GPA: Weighted vs. unweighted grade point average; you must know the difference
  - Half of colleges use an unweighted GPA, so actual grades matter. Only most selective colleges also require the highest rigor as well as the high grades.

### **4. Creating a Strong Resume**

- Involvement: Sports, clubs, music, student government, service, employment
  - A strong resume is the third most important component, outside of grades and testing
  - Middle school and freshman year, students should be encouraged to try many different activities to figure out what they like/have interest in.
- Impact: Admissions officers want students who have made a lasting impression
  - It's more important to make an impact on the school and/or community in one or a couple of activities instead of being a jack of all trades (dabbling in many different activities).
- Stand Out Factor: Take initiative and seek leadership opportunities
  - Focus on 3-4 related activities where you take initiative and a true leadership position (fewer/deeper)

### **5. Preparing for Standardized Tests**

- PSAT: PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, PSAT junior year, National Merit Scholars
  - Some people start preparing for the SAT/PSAT their sophomore year because whether or not a student becomes a National Merit Scholar often is a difference between one or two correct questions.
- Advanced Placement: Take after completion of courses; may receive college credit
  - Different colleges accept a different number of AP credits from the same student. An example is one student who got accepted to both UNC and U of I. UNC accepted 20 credit hours and U of I accepted 32 credit hours, from the same AP test scores. The student, if attending U of I, could complete her undergrad degree in three years, saving a lot of money.
- ACT vs. SAT: All colleges accept both, understand the differences, create a personal testing calendar and prep plan, superscore vs. test optional schools

- Illinois used to take the ACT but now takes the SAT. Both tests are accepted at all colleges.
- The ACT and SAT are very different tests. The SAT is half math. Recommended to take practice test of both the ACT and the SAT at the end of your sophomore year to figure out which test you score higher on and then focus your test prep on that test during the summer between sophomore and junior years. If you are equally strong on both tests, then focus on the SAT because it will help you with the PSAT in junior year.
- Some colleges allow for a “superscore,” which is combining the best subset score from all of a student’s test dates to figure out the highest composite score. Know which colleges allow for this. Taking the test multiple times helps with this.
- Some colleges are “test optional”, which means that if a student has great grades and a great resume then the college will not ask for the student’s test scores. You can find a list of these schools at fairtest.org.
- SAT Subject Tests: Required/recommended for selective admissions
  - Some colleges want to evaluate students on subject matter expertise.

## 6. College Costs Realities

- Cost of Attendance: Tuition, room and board, books, fees, transportation
  - Look at all costs per year and then multiply that by four years. Don’t forget other types of expenses. For example, flights and hotel rooms add up if the college is far away.
- Sticker Price vs. “Discounted Rate”: Actual price is now less than 52% (see Financial Fit above)
- Aid Eligibility: 1/3 of families pay full price; 2/3 of families receive aid

## 7. Need-Based Financial Aid

- FAFSA & CSS Profile: Financial aid forms used to determine Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and aid potential; FAFSA required for government loans
  - Understand the process used to see if families are eligible for need-based scholarships and loans.
- EFC: Determined by income, assets, number of kids in college and other factors
  - Cost of tuition minus EFC = need (eligibility)
- Financial Aid Eligibility: Can differ dramatically depending on EFC and school list
  - Some schools are able to make up the difference between the cost of attendance minus EFC with need-based scholarship (that don’t need to be paid back). Other schools cannot and families need to take out loans to cover the difference.

## 8. Merit Aid & Private Scholarship Opportunities

- Merit Aid: Varies greatly by school; preferential packaging to top students
  - Merit aid is dependent on tests and grades. Not all schools give merit aid.
- Examples: Every point on GPA and ACT/SAT can impact amount of money received
- Private Scholarships: \$2.9 billion unclaimed annually; Sources include school/district, community organizations, family sources, corporations and search sites.
  - Searching for private scholarships can take a lot of effort and there is not immediate gratification; however, if a student puts in the time, he/she often can secure some scholarship money. An example was shared where a student spent 14 hours searching and applying for scholarships and received \$7,000. Students need to think about how much money that is per hour spent.

## 9. College Applications & Essays

- Application Forms: Common App (700+), Coalition App (100+), school specific apps
  - 75-80% of colleges accept the Common App
- Application Options: Rolling Admission, Regular Admission, Early Action, Restrictive Early Action, Early Decision, Early Decision II
  - Know the difference between the application options. Some choices are binding, others are not. Some options have a higher percentage of accepted students than the general admission option.
  - Figure out an application strategy and make a timeline with deadlines.
- Essays: Common App, Coalition App, school specific supplemental essays, honors colleges, housing, scholarships, etc.
  - Many colleges that use the Common App have several supplemental essays required. Focus on four things when writing essays: 1) Make sure to answer the prompts, 2) Showcase strengths / Make sure that the reader would be able to answer who this student is, 3) Make the essay interesting, and 4) Be authentic; sound like it's written by a 17-year old

## 10. Timelines, Best Practices, Requirements & Deadlines

- Start Early: Assess PFA's 4 fits (S.A.F.E), get involved, begin college research
  - Engage in well-meaning conversations as a family, discussing these important topics.
- Demonstrated Interest: Show schools you care, visit campus, build key relationships (teachers, counselors, admissions reps, professors, etc.)
  - Colleges track how much interest a student has shown in their institution. Make sure that student visits campus (goes on an official tour, sits in on a class, talks to a department head and the school's area representative). Write follow up thank you letters to everyone that students meet with. Open up emails sent from colleges of interest (colleges track this) and click the links. Follow the college's social media accounts. Interview on campus. Colleges want a high "yield rate", which is a high percentage of accepted students choosing to attend their colleges. This helps in their college rankings. When students demonstrate a high interest, colleges are more likely to believe that they will choose their college if accepted. Great article on this in *Wall Street Journal* entitled "Demonstrated Interests"
- Requirements & Deadlines: Course selection, summer programs, teacher recommendations, applications and essays, financial aid forms, scholarships
  - Map out a plan of "To Dos" for each year in high school, divided up by "semester 1", "semester 2" and "summer"

### Additional Information from Q & A

- It's never too early to register with the college and do an official tour (even 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades). The college will start a file on your child and just keep adding to that file.
- You need to think about the financial commitment of a school (cost of attendance) before deciding to go Early Decision, as this is a binding agreement. If you back out at one school, that school often shares that information with other schools.
- Partners for Achievement (see information below) offers complimentary consultations. Many families come in during the students' freshman or sophomore years; however, some come in as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

- 529 Plans are great if you have a very high net worth; however, they can work against families that are middle class because they count as assets.
- There is a trend toward more colleges becoming a test-optional school. Some of this is altruistic, wanting to level the playing field for students who can't afford test prep. At the same time, many of these colleges receive more applications, which then makes them look more selective. Standardized testing is still important because you often cannot receive scholarship money without the standardized test scores.
- Kids shouldn't just "check the box" with activities. They should try many different activities to see what they like and, equally as important, to see what they do not like. Once they get older, they can start to focus in on the areas that they are most passionate about.
- As long as kids are intellectually curious and passionate, they will find a college that is right for them.

**For additional information or to schedule a free college planning consultation  
for your family please contact Kevin Krebs at Partners for Achievement**

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