

Juniors and Junior Parents,

Greetings from the School Counseling Department! We hope this letter answers some common questions juniors and their parents have. Please take full advantage of our school counseling website as we provide a lot of information for parents and students. The website is located at <https://bentonschoolcounseling.wordpress.com/>.

All students will need to complete a placement exam prior to enrollment at a 2 or 4 year college. ACT tests are taken by students intending to attend a 4 year college, and AccuPlacer tests are taken by students intending to enroll at a 2 year college. The ACT ideally is taken in either April or June of a student's junior year, and it is ok to take this test more than once. We recommend the April or June test date so that a student can get as far into the high school curriculum as possible prior to the test date, but it is ok to test earlier in the year if there are scheduling difficulties. The AccuPlacer test should be taken prior to enrollment at a 2 year college during 2nd semester of senior year, and is used in order to place a student into classes at the chosen college. If you are undecided between a 2-year or 4-year college, we recommend you take the ACT.

The college search process should be in high gear during the junior year. It is important for students to research colleges they would like to attend in order to begin "narrowing" the list of potential schools. We encourage students and parents to visit college websites and to speak with college representatives about their offerings. Counselors can provide general information about most colleges; however, specific questions should be addressed to an admissions counselor at the specific college you have a question about. College Fairs are a great opportunity to speak with representatives and to gather more information. College representatives also visit Benton Community High School during 5th Hour, and we encourage students to meet with representatives of colleges they are interested in. Colleges visiting Benton Community are listed on the calendar of events link via the school counseling webpage.

We encourage students and parents to utilize two websites for college and career planning. The 1st website is <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/> where students can complete career inventories and find colleges that match those careers. The second website is Iowa specific, and can be found by googling "Iowa Career Coach." We also provide a career and college organizer for every student and spend time in this site to keep career and college plans updated. Students, please share with your parents your Naviance information. Naviance is located on student chromebooks. Students need to click on the 9 dots on the top right hand side of the screen, and then scroll down until the purple NA symbol is located. Contact Mr. Cretin or Mrs. Nesbitt with questions or concerns related to Naviance.

The college search process can be intimidating. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself, Mrs. Nesbitt, or Mrs. Bear. If you are still early in the search process, then we encourage you to use the following website: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>. The "Big Future" website is comprehensive in it's ability to search for a school based on potential major as well as location. It is important to go to a college that offers the

degree field that you are considering as a possible career. Don't go to a college that doesn't have your potential major. I have seen students indicate to me that they want to be a "Lab Tech" which requires a 2-year degree, but then they are planning to attend a 4-year college. Another college search site that students have said is helpful is <https://www.collegeraptor.com/>.

If you are undecided on a career possibility, then we encourage you to use the following website: <https://www.mynextmove.org/>. Students can search by keyword, browse careers by interest area, and complete an inventory that offers job possibilities. A website that is specific to Iowa can also be utilized by googling "Iowa Career Coach."

As you are searching for potential college options, pay attention to the tuition costs, but don't allow the price of attendance to be your final deciding factor until you have gone thru the Financial Aid process. It is important to make connections with the financial aid offices at the college that you might attend to see what options they provide to make college more affordable. I do know that some colleges will have a higher advertised cost of attendance, but sometimes the actual cost of attendance is much less once scholarships and financial aid are accounted for. Once you have made your final selections of schools of interest, then see what options they provide for financial help. Pay attention to the amount of student loans and make smart decisions in regards to loans. Unfortunately, Iowa students have traditionally had a high amount of student loans and we need to reduce that number.

Once you do know what colleges you are interested in attending, you then need to complete an application to that institution. Most of the time, applications are completed online. It is important to remember that all questions are for the student to answer. A common mistake is to put down a parent birthday or address in place of the students. You will need to know your cumulative GPA, class rank, and class size. You will also need to submit a transcript to the college that you apply to. Anytime you need a transcript, email Mrs. Bear at rbear@benton.k12.ia.us. Finally, it is important for you to work with the Admissions Counselors at the college that you plan to attend in order to get additional questions answered. We can provide general information, but will often refer you to Admissions.

Please let us know when you need our help as we are happy to serve!

We look forward to a great class of 2024, and please contact Mr. Cretin at 228-8701 x353 or acretin@benton.k12.ia.us with any questions or concerns.

Mr. Cretin, Mrs. Nesbitt, and Mrs. Bear