



434-951-9310

January 2010  
www.tandemfs.org

cgillespie@tandemfs.org

## January 2010

### 1/23 – SAT and SAT Subject Tests

#### Seniors –

- \* Call colleges to verify applications are complete
- \* Complete & submit FAFSA any time after Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>
- \* Continue scholarship search & apply
- \* File any additional college applications

## February 2010

### 2/6 – ACT and ACT plus Writing

### 2/13 – Super Saturday at PVCC, 10am-3pm

#### Juniors –

- \* Begin official college search, meet individually with Catherine and schedule family meeting for March

#### Seniors –

- \* Most college-based financial aid deadlines are this month
- \* Scholarship deadlines for the following:
  - Sam Walton Community Scholarship
  - Jr. Achievement Scholarships (2/1)
  - DAR Scholarships
  - Nat'l Peace Essay Contest (2/1)
  - NFIB Young Entrepreneur (2/10)

## FINANCIAL AID FRUSTRATIONS ? Help is on the Way!!!

### Super Saturday

Piedmont Virginia Community College  
Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
10:00AM – 3:00PM

On Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, Virginia Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (VASFAA) will host Super Saturday at various sites across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Super Saturday is an annual VASFAA event that invites college-bound students to receive **free assistance in completing the FAFSA on-line**, the form required by colleges, universities, and private career schools to qualify for federal grants and loans.

Super Saturday includes a financial aid workshop that explains the federal and state financial aid process, followed by a Q & A period. Sites will also have computers available for attendees to apply for federal aid electronically. This event is open to parents and students of all grade levels, as well as adult students.

The main focus of Super Saturday is to offer one-on-one assistance in completing the FAFSA. Financial aid professionals will be available at each host site. Once students leave the event, they will have initiated the financial aid process for any college they are interested in attending and will have met the priority filing date for most Virginia colleges. The financial aid process can be overwhelming and VASFAA hopes that by offering students Super Saturday - one day of free, expert assistance to accurately complete the FAFSA - we can help hundreds easily begin the process.

A toll-free hotline is available 24/7 to provide information on what you need to

bring with you to Super Saturday to facilitate the completion of the electronic FAFSA. Please dial 1-888-FAFSA-4-U or 1-888-323-7248.

Super Saturday is **open to the general public** and assistance with the FAFSA will be given to new as well as returning college students. VASFAA is a non-profit organization of student financial aid professionals committed to the educational well-being of Virginia's college-bound students. Interested Tandem families should go to Piedmont Virginia Community College on February 13, from 10AM-3PM.

#### Additional Sources of Help:

**FAFSA online:** [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**Federal Student Aid Information Center:** 1-800-4-FED-AID

**For help in completing the FAFSA:**

[http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/completing\\_fafsa/2008\\_2009/index.html](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/completing_fafsa/2008_2009/index.html)

**Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid:**  
[www.finaid.com](http://www.finaid.com)



## WORDS FROM THE WISE: COLLEGE PANEL 2010

Through the Speaker Series on January 6<sup>th</sup>, students in the Upper School heard from recent Tandem alumni about their experience during one of the most significant rites of passage in modern life today – heading off to college.

Alumni who participated on the panel represented a wide variety of institutions and programs – large public universities & small private colleges; theater programs, music programs, engineering programs and more.

When asked by students about their most challenging transition, **Elise Heartwell** (UVA) and **Lisa Huber** (Lynchburg College) both mentioned that they found the social transition of living with roommates harder than the academic one in the classrooms. All of the students chimed in that they felt well prepared for the academic challenges (**Maggie Horan** made a particular point of crediting Emily Morrision with helping her develop strong writing skills), and believed that Tandem's motto of "Freedom with Responsibility" helped them manage the autonomy with which many of their college peers seemed to struggle.

**Maggie Horan** spoke of her experience in the performing arts program at VCU School of Art, which she loves. She advised students not to believe everything they hear about AP classes. "I didn't take AP courses while I was here, and I got into a *great* school." In fact, VCU Art is the #1 public art school in the country! The wisdom of knowing which AP courses to take (if any) comes down to knowing your goals, and making appropriate choices based on those goals and individual capabilities.

**Joe Cady** (James Madison University) and **Seth Glennie-Smith** (Berklee School of Music) both affirmed this suggestion. They also spoke of the value of a gap

year after high school. Joe argued that "although this probably wouldn't work for everyone, the gap year helped me gain focus and motivation to go back to school." Seth used the year to complete an internship with film composer Hans Zimmer (of "Pirates of the Caribbean" fame), which helped him in his application to attend the Berklee School of Music and may lead to a career in the industry after graduation.

**Laura McHenry** (Kenyon College) spoke highly of the experience at her small liberal arts college, "where, when you meet a fabulously interesting human being in the cafeteria on Monday, you know you have a 100% chance of running into them again by Friday." When asked how she selected Kenyon over other college choices, Laura replied, "Kenyon was the only place where, after I left my college visit, it still felt like it could be home."

**Jake Putnam** spoke highly of his experience in the engineering program at Virginia Tech, where he enjoys benefitting from the top-rated cafeteria food in the country (an interesting piece of trivia learned as a result of a very serious question about "the food situation" in college!). Jake spoke of the importance of a strong work ethic when it comes to college work, as there is no one there to make sure that you do it but yourself. All of the panelists offered nods of agreement and shared tips about time management and staying on top of a challenging, yet manageable college workload.

All of the panelists have generously offered to speak to current students further if they want to hear more details about their experiences at particular institutions. We're grateful to all of them for taking time out of their winter breaks to come and speak!



*Tandem alums from the classes of 2006, 2008 and 2009 returned to share insight and advice based on their college experiences.*

**BY THE NUMBERS:  
VIRGINIA PUBLIC COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES\***

Public College or University	Location	Undergrad. Enrollment	% Accepted	SAT Crit. Reading (mid 50%)	SAT Math (mid 50%)	ACT Composite Scores	Tuition, Room & Board
Christopher Newport University	Newport News	4,763	56	540 - 630	550 - 630	22 - 26	\$17,090
College of William & Mary	Williamsburg	5,850	34	630 - 730	620 - 710	27 - 32	\$19,182
George Mason University	Fairfax	18,809	63	500 - 600	520 - 610	22 - 26	\$15,724
James Madison University	Harrisonburg	16,916	65	520 - 620	540 - 630	22 - 26	\$14,934
Longwood	Farmville	4,024	69	490 - 570	480 - 570	21 - 23	\$16,521
Norfolk State University	Norfolk	4,489	65	400 - 470	390 - 470		\$14,224
Old Dominion University	Norfolk	17,330	72	480 - 570	490 - 590	18 - 23	\$14,868
Radford University	Radford	8,155	74	460 - 550	460 - 550	19 - 23	\$13,874
University of Mary Washington	Fredericksburg	4,231	71	550 - 650	540 - 620	24 - 28	\$15,428
University of Virginia	Charlottesville	15,208	37	600 - 710	620 - 730	27 - 32	\$17,962
UVA Wise	Wise	1,964	76	420 - 520	420 - 530	17 - 21	\$14,071
VA Tech	Blacksburg	23,567	65	540 - 630	570 - 670		\$14,429
Virginia Commonwealth	Richmond	22,792	58	490 - 600	480 - 590	19 - 25	\$15,452
Virginia Military Academy	Lexington	1,428	54	510 - 620	530 - 620	21 - 26	\$17,982
Virginia State University	Petersburg	4,489	65	400 - 470	390 - 470		\$14,224

\* Data Source: College Board, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**Juniors: Get a Jump on Standardized Tests!**

All juniors should plan to take either the SAT or the ACT at least once this spring, and many of you might want to take the test twice before the senior year. I strongly recommend the April, May and June test dates, as they allow for greater preparation, and more time to cover relevant math topics in your classes. All students in AP courses should take the respective SAT II subject tests in May. The following are the registration and test dates for the upcoming standardized tests:

ACT ( <a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a> )		SAT ( <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a> )	
REGISTRATION DATE	TEST DATE	REGISTRATION DATE	TEST DATE
March 5	April 10	February 4	March 13
May 7	June 12	March 25	May 1
		April 29	June 5

**PSAT: Next Steps**

PSAT results and test booklets were distributed to all juniors and sophomores prior to the holiday break. One real benefit of taking the PSAT is that the results are broken down by question, making it easy to get a sense of strengths and weaknesses. My College QuickStart™ (found at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) is a personalized tool from the College Board to help address those weaknesses. To make use of the service, you'll need the access code printed on your PSAT/NMSQT paper score report to sign in to the College Board website. If you do not already have a College Board account, you'll be prompted to create one. It typically takes less than two minutes to create your free account. The site provides the following services: **My Online Score Report** – An enhanced score report that allows you to review each test question, your answer, and the correct answer with answer explanations. **My SAT Study Plan** – A customized SAT study plan based on your PSAT/NMSQT test performance, highlighting skills for review and practice. **My College Matches** – A starter list of colleges based on your home state and indicated choice of major. **My Major & Career Matches** – Personalized lists of majors and careers plus access to a personality assessment that suggests other compatible possibilities.

### SOPHOMORES AND FRESHMEN: Making the Most of NOW!

In the quest for the “perfect college,” it’s easy to get caught up in the college admissions frenzy and lose sight of what’s truly important for today: making the most of your high school years. High school is a time to learn more about yourself in a safe environment. During these years, you can try out a variety of extracurricular activities while learning more about the academic subjects that engage your interest. You can follow your passions by choosing advanced classes in subjects that truly interest you, and hone your leadership skills through participation in activities like the student senate, yearbook, sports, theater, community service programs and more.

Rather than choosing activities with an eye to impress college admissions officers, choose things that truly interest you. During the early years of high school, it can be helpful to try out a number of different activities. Through deeper involvement in the one or two activities that really interest you, you have a chance to develop leadership skills *and* a sense of purpose. It’s the depth of involvement rather than the number of activities that truly matters.

High school is the time to discover more about who you are. You’ll make new friends based on common interests, similarities, or differences. You may even find yourself changing groups of friends throughout high school as your interests change.

In trying to find the right balance in high school, it’s important not to overload on classes. Take only as many higher-level classes as you can realistically handle. Although you may receive a bump up in your level of college competitiveness, that “bump” comes at the price of a heavier workload and more hours of study outside of school. Take advanced classes when you are truly interested in the subject matter -- that interest lightens the burden of the extra work required.

High school is also the time to be yourself and to give some time to others. Pursue outside interests by getting involved in your community in things like music, dance, martial arts or service. Make time to give back to others by volunteering your skills in a meaningful way. As with school, choose community activities that matter to you. Find a cause and devote yourself to it.

During these years, learn all you can. Be open to new ideas, concepts, and views, both academically and personally. Read widely. And remember that learning doesn’t end when the school day is over. You’ll learn a lot from summer jobs, friends, volunteer activities, courses, travel, and self-exploration if you simply focus on the moment!



*Pursue extracurricular activities with passion!*



### COUNSELOR’S “2 CENTS” TIP

**Summer Programs** are a great opportunity to make the most of now, and should never be confused with what many perceive as “the curse” of summer school. With offerings as varied as Whale Camp in Canada ([www.whalecamp.com](http://www.whalecamp.com)), Teton Science School at Yellowstone ([www.tetonscience.org](http://www.tetonscience.org)), and the Savannah College of Art and Design (<http://www.scad.edu/summer>) – summer programs are a fabulous way to have fun, develop interests and help a student stand out in the crowd during the college application process. Although some programs are costly, many that are affiliated with colleges and universities offer the opportunity to apply for financial aid. If summer programs are not feasible – you can still make great use of your time by working or volunteering in a field that interests you. **Although what happens in the classroom is the most critical aspect of the college application – colleges are also interested in how you spent your summer vacations!** Research more opportunities at websites like: <http://www.teenink.com/Summer> and [www.enrichmentalley.com](http://www.enrichmentalley.com).