

Experiential Learning

What It Is and How It Relates to Liberal Arts Colleges

Many liberal arts colleges have programs to assist students to draw connections between their liberal arts classroom education and a practicum experience. These “experiential” learning programs vary greatly from one school to another, but what they have in common is that the student is using skills they have learned in the classroom in a real life circumstance. This is a win-win situation wherein the student gains practical application of their learned skills and the organization they are involved in reaps the rewards of the students’ knowledge. The most prevalent types of “experiential learning” involve either research opportunities (not just science either!), internship/externship opportunities and study abroad. Most colleges offer some type of program, but here I will highlight some well-known ones.

Within the Coe Plan at Coe College all students are required to engage in a practicum experience such as an internship, study abroad term, or research experience. It is meant to heighten a student’s preparation for life after college. In addition, students must first complete five preparation components to equip them for the practicum experience.

Kalamazoo is known for its “K-plan” which combines rigorous interdisciplinary study with experiential study. The most popular type of experiential study is study abroad. 80% of students study abroad in immersive programs; 75% participate in service learning; 80% of students participate in a career externship (4 or more week job internships). Kalamazoo helps students participate in summer research projects on campus and elsewhere. The net result is graduates have both a strong liberal arts curriculum with multiple experiential applications.

Clark University is noted for its emphasis on student-faculty research. Recent collaborations include “Managing the Rainbow: Issues of Diversity in Business Management”; “Virtual Realities,” on interactive Java programs for “what if” scenarios; and “Exposing Yourself,” on issues of privacy in public health.

More than 90% of Lawrence University students work one-on-one with a faculty member, participating in independent study, research, or co-authoring articles for publication in professional journals.

Virtually all Rhodes College students participate in either a study abroad program or an internship prior to graduation. Recent internships include working with St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, the FBI, the Memphis Zoo, the National Civil Rights Museum, Stax Museum of American Soul Music, the 2008 Beijing Olympic committee, and working in the marketing department at FedEx Paris.



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Whitman College's Parent's Council and Career Center offers an internship fund that provides stipends for 21 students each summer that enables them to participate in non-paying internships. Last summer sophomores and juniors participated in internships in the College's backyard of Walla Walla, Washington, as well as farther in Kenya, Africa.

At Bennington students do a two month internship each year. The school has a variety of internships which they recommend, but students can, and often do, locate their own internships which can be any place in the world. Students have to find their own places to live; however, they often live at home or at parents of other Bennington students throughout the country.

Experiential learning is a wonderful way for students to test out an area of interest, to gain valuable real life experience in a field, to give back to their community with their skills and to deepen their knowledge. If these are experiences you wish to have, dig deeply into information at prospective schools to find out how strong their programs are and what they emphasize. Perhaps you will be the next student to intern at your dream position or volunteer in a third world country while hon-

Article by Judi Paffenbarger, Veritas Preparatory Academy

Student Athletes

Effectively Using Your Summer for Recruitment

If you have made the decision to pursue playing sports at the collegiate level, the summer months offer a great opportunity to get exposure and make preparations for the recruiting process. Between your coach and your college counselor, you have resources available to help steer you through this process. Below, is an outline of some activities that you should be engaging with over the months ahead.

During the summer, focus on getting better at the skills required by your sport as well as overall athleticism. Especially for multi-sport athletes, the summer is the largest duration of time that you have to work on strength, speed and agility and sport-specific skills. For an athlete in a team sport going through this process, you will need to balance your personal athletic ambitions with the goals and objectives of your team. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with going to independent coaches or training on your own, do not neglect your responsibility to your team. It is fun to dream about the next athletic adventure in college, but be sure to enjoy the journey of competing at the high school level.

The academic break over the summer months allows for significant progress on other materials that will aid with the recruiting process. An athletic resume should be developed to include athletic accomplishments, academic profile, and service/leadership endeavors. Show the coach how you would fit in to the team as well as the general student population.

Work on your highlight tape. It should be 5-10 minutes long and include the footage of you performing at your best. Additionally, you can include some footage of workouts that show strength, speed, and athleticism. Don't forget to include pieces of your academic profile (graduation year, GPA, test scores, etc.) The highlight tape can be delivered online via a variety of different ways (YouTube, FaceBook, etc.). The link can be included on your resume. Also, you can send copies via disc or flash drive along with your resume.

As you advance in the recruiting process, schools will often ask to see tapes of entire games. Whole games allow the school to see the positives and negatives to your game. Work with your coach to select a few games that you played your best and have them ready to respond to this request.

The summer is also a time when you need to be focused on getting exposure to college coaches. Camps and clinics give you the opportunity to showcase your talent in front of coaches. Additionally, it allows you to compete against other athletes to gauge how you compare. It is a

great learning process as you determine what level of college athletics your ability lends itself to.

The vast majority of college athletic websites will have the necessary information for you to make personal contact with the coaching staff of a potential school. There will be two main avenues to take. First, many schools will have a recruit form to be filled out. While this will mostly include basic information, it is imperative that you get into whatever database the school is using to target prospects. Also, schools routinely publish the contact information for the coaches. This allows you as a potential recruit to reach out to the coaches directly and introduce yourself. The email can include your grade level, resume and highlight link. At the end of the day, it is essential that you have a plan for how you will use the time over the summer to reach your goal of being a college athlete. Do not let this valuable time slip away without proactively reaching out to coaches, honing your resume and highlight tapes, and preparing for your next season.

Article by Kyle Westerlind, Coach at Glendale Preparatory Academy

Special Thanks to Alison Westerlind, Anthem Preparatory Academy

Juniors: Is it Right for You?

Applying Early Decision

By the fall of your senior year, most of you juniors will have your defined college list and be working with your college counselor to develop an application strategy. One possible strategy is choosing Early Decision, which some colleges offer. When you decide to apply Early Decision, you are signing a binding contract promising that you will attend that particular college if accepted and waive your opportunity to apply early anywhere else. How do you decide if Early Decision is right for you?

Mesa Preparatory Academy had four students select this strategy this year, and recently, I had a chance to debrief them on their college selection and application experience. All four students agreed they chose the Early Decision option because their number one school was far and above their top school on their college list. In order to determine their number one choice in schools, the students stated they completed a very thorough research process, which included visits to their prospective colleges. All four Mesa Prep students stated visiting a number of colleges/universities was critical in determining their number one college choice. Each explained that they had other colleges on their prospective lists that looked “perfect on paper”, but upon visiting those schools, they realized the college was not a fit for them. Conversely, they all described having that gut feeling with their Early Decision college after spending some time on campus, attending a class and talking with current students.

Another factor in the students’ choice to apply Early Decision was they understood it gave them “a leg up” in the admissions review process. The statistics vary on this, but in the colleges that use Early Decision, the vast majority would agree that those students who choose this option do get extra consideration in the admissions review process. Colleges want to accept students who will end up attending. All interviewed Mesa Prep students stated they were confident the Early Decision choice assisted in their acceptances to their number one school.

A very real issue that warrants consideration with Early Decision is the financial piece. When students sign the contract, they are agreeing to attend regardless of the financial circumstances. Students who apply Early Decision receive their financial aid offer at the time of acceptance to the college. Upon notification of the acceptance, the student must immediately withdraw all other applications. Mesa Prep students stated prior to choosing the Early Decision option, they used the Net Price Calculator on the college’s web site to determine their estimated financial aid award (every college has a Net Price Calculator on their website.) This is a critical piece for families to consider as you will not be in a position to compare financial aid awards with other colleges if accepted by your Early Decision college.

Applying Early Decision can be a great competitive advantage for students if they have a number one choice school that is far and above the remainder of their other choices, if families have estimated the financial aid package offered by the college through the Net Price Calculator and if they are willing to commit to that college upon admittance. Know your Great Hearts counselor can guide you every step of the way in determining if the Early Decision choice is right for you!

Article by Mary Hager, Mesa Preparatory Academy

Alumni Spotlight: Jacquelyn Kovarik

While every student will have a unique college experience, Veritas 2013 graduate, Jacquelyn Kovarik, believes that her Great Hearts education “taught [her] how to be a critical thinker, and more specifically, a critical learner.” A double major in Psychology and Hispanics, a debate coach for Columbia Youth for Debate, a member of Columbia BuildOn, an ensemble member for the King Crown Shakespeare Troupe, and a tutor at a Harlem elementary school—amongst other things, but just to give the short list— Jacquelyn has been wearing many hats since she joined the freshman class at Columbia University.

Q. How has the transition been from high school to college?

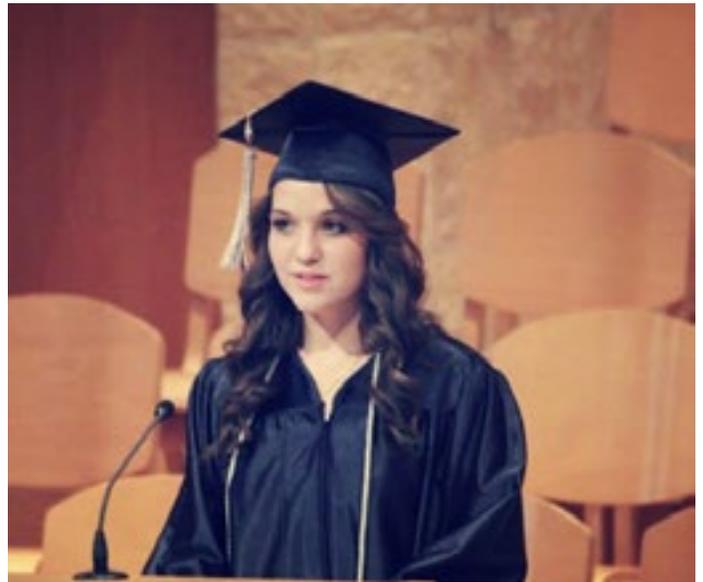
A. It surprises me that I am the first Veritas student to go to Columbia, considering how much the academic mission of the school parallels Great Hearts. The core makes up a 1/3 of our total classes and includes a seminar called Literature Humanities (“Lit Hum”) and a seminar called Contemporary Civilizations (“CC”). It is essentially condensed and accelerated Humane Letters. The first half of CC is an accelerated version of all the philosophy we had to read throughout our years at Veritas, including The Republic, The Ethics, Augustine, Aquinas, Montaigne, Marx, Machiavelli, and more (the second half of the course moves into modern philosophers). It is easy to feel at home when I am in an academic environment in which everyone draws from this common language. Homer jokes are cracked in the dining halls. People call the Times Square subway during rush hour Dante’s missing circle of hell. I feel at home.

Q. What has surprised you as a college student?

A. I am surprised at how much easier life was in high school. I do not mean this in some morose way: I mean, quite literally, life functioned more smoothly in high school. It was nice to have a set regular schedule every day, and I never appreciated that. In college, everything goes crazy. I think this is in part because virtually everything you do is on you: you pick what classes you take, when you take them, and if you even choose to go to them at all. You pick if you are doing any extracurricular activities, jobs, internships, or other obligations. You choose to sleep only three hours. The freedom is surprisingly dangerous. In the wise words of Alexander Hamilton, “the passions of man will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint.” I’m working on forging my own personal constraints.

Q. How did Veritas prepare you for college and beyond?

A. Veritas taught me how to be a critical thinker, and more specifically, a critical learner. I have found that I can keep up with and often exceed my peers in both reading and writing abilities, and I owe this to Veritas. Additionally, Veritas’ course



*Jacquelyn Kovarik
Valedictorian Speech at Veritas Prep Academy, 2013*

load was a good stepping stone to college. College is definitely a lot more work, but I would never be able to handle it had it not been for my foundation at Veritas. I also want to make a shout out to Great Hearts’ language programs. I am in an advanced Spanish seminar as only a first year right now and will most likely be minoring in Spanish, and I owe it all to Veritas.

Apart from academics, Veritas has given me something perhaps even more important. At Veritas, I was given a character in which I pride myself. I am not afraid to stand my ground on moral issues. I am able to discern who I want to be influencing my soul and mind, and who I’d rather not be. I am able to prioritize my desires and keep in mind what is most important to me. I owe all these skills to Veritas: never underestimate the power of growing up among virtuous, loving adults who truly care about you. The effects are astounding.

Q. What advice would you give to prospective college students?

A. Being exposed to so many new people was a bit of a shock to me last semester. Because of the nature of Veritas, you are essentially siblings with your classmates by the time you graduate with them. It was a novel concept to me that I must choose my friends based on who I want to influence me. For a while, I felt a bit alone amidst a sea of friendly acquaintances. However, this feeling did eventually pass, and I found “my niche.” My advice to you is to be prepared to have to find your niche in college, too.

Be open-minded to new experiences and viewpoints, but also do not be ashamed to hold fast to what you believe. Surround yourself with people who you want to be like; never stop holding yourself to a high standard; and never forget where you came from.

Interview by Meaghan Colvin, Veritas Preparatory Academy

Counselor on Campus Quest University - Canada



Kevin Randolph, Chandler Prep, visited Quest University in February. The decade-old university is a modern liberal arts university with a clear and unique academic program, designed to foster a lifetime of learning. What Quest students are centered on is a Question. Quest students learn to be independent problem solvers by collaborating across many disciplines. They engage in hands-on experiential learning and formulate their own Questions, not to be confused with a college major.

On my visit, I met with numerous students. While the diversity of ideas and backgrounds amongst the students is incredible, there were similarities. A successful student at Quest is one who wants to engage in learning for learning's sake. This is a rigorous university with students engaging in group projects, often. Students at Quest also have a global perspective. Studying abroad is not only strong but encouraged—and more than once is common.

Quest's one course-at-a-time model is unique and intense. Students focus on one subject or course for 3½ weeks before moving onto the next one. This allows students to travel and engage in internships or experiential learning more often, without worrying about other courses. All of a student's attention can be focused on one subject at a time.

The beauty of this campus, located just south of Whistler and north of Vancouver, British Columbia is a quick non-stop plane ride from Phoenix, but a world away. With four distinct seasons, lush green surroundings, the Pacific Ocean, and snow-covered mountains, Quest is paradise for those who wish quiet reflection, bustling city life in Vancouver, or outdoor activities like skiing, surfing, and hiking.

Quest is an accredited school with graduates who go on to do impressive programs in graduate school or careers. GPA and tests like the SAT and ACT are considered, but the primary focus is on an 'original piece of work that illustrates your passions and talents' along with an interview. It truly is a school that focuses on each individual.

The price of Quest is extremely reasonable, with Quest accepting the US FAFSA form and offering substantial need and merit based awards.

Cost: US\$27000

Room and Board: US\$9,000

Location: Squamish, British Columbia (near Vancouver)

Application Deadline: December 1 (Early Action); March 1 (Scholarship Deadline)

Application Cost: Free

Web site: www.questu.ca

Article by Kevin Randolph, Chandler Preparatory Academy

Counselor on Campus - Continued

Life at Georgia Inst. of Technology

Situated right in the heart of downtown Atlanta, the 600 acre, tree-lined Georgia Tech campus and institute is one of the oldest and most respected polytechnic universities in the United States. Committed to the development of new technology "Tech" is also considered one of the top research universities in the country. Georgia Tech degree programs (bachelor's, master's and doctoral) are offered through the Institute's six colleges:

College of Architecture

College of Computing

College of Engineering

College of Sciences

Scheller College of Business

Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts

Georgia Tech most definitely provides a mental workout. But interestingly enough, Tech ranks #19 on **The 50 Fittest Colleges in America** by The Active Times. "Life at Tech is a 'work hard, play hard' culture, and while Georgia Tech students are renowned for their work ethic, there are over 450 student organizations and more than 50 Greek organizations that provide continuous fuel for their social lives."

NCAA sports and access to intramural programs have long been an integral part of the Tech tradition. The state-of-the-art campus recreation center is one of the best in the country with many indoor and outdoor playing fields, a huge rock climbing wall, gyms and pools. Atlanta boasts many exciting opportunities and as a student at Georgia Tech, cultural events, fine restaurants and shopping abound. For the adventurous, camping, beaches, lakes and mountains for hiking are only a few hours away.

Notable Alumni include: former President, Jimmy Carter, the CEO's of EarthLink, AT&T, Wal-Mart, American Express and Coca Cola.



For applying freshman, Georgia Tech uses a holistic review when reviewing applications. The review includes considerations of five primary factors.

Factors Considered for Application:

Rigor of Curriculum/GPA
Standardized Test Scores
Extracurricular Involvement
Personal Essays
School Report

Factors that are Optional:

Teacher Recommendations
SAT Subject Tests

Factors Not Considered :

Major
Personal Interview
Class Rank
Other Recommendations

Attention: Are YOU a First Generation Student?

If neither of your parents holds a four year degree, then you are considered a first-generation college student. There are plenty of scholarship opportunities for students and some scholarships are set aside specifically for first-generation college students. Below you will find a list of scholarship resources earmarked for you!

Dorrance Scholarship Programs

www.dorrancescholarship.org

Initial Qualifications: Senior in high school with minimum 3.0 weighted GPA, minimum 1040 SAT or 22 ACT, and admitted to ASU, NAU, or UA

I'm First!

www.imfirst.org

Minimum Eligibility Requirements: current high school senior and attending an I'm First partner college or university (complete list of 180 college partners found on website)

College Parents of America

www.collegeparents.org

Qualifications: open to incoming freshmen in the top half of their high school graduating class

Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation

www.coca-colascholarsfoundation.org

Eligibility Requirements: current high school senior & carrying a minimum 3.0 GPA at the end of their junior year of high school

Other sites to search for scholarships:

www.scholarshipamerica.org

www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search

www.scholarship-page.com

www.collegenet.com

www.scholarships.com

www.myscholly.com

www.cksf.org

www.meritaid.com

There are also some external resources and other scholarship opportunities that you can look into. Students can apply for a variety of local, state, and national scholarships that can be used at any institution the student decides to attend. Essentially, the scholarship is awarded by a company or organization to the student, and follows the student to the institution he or she attends. See below!

It takes time and hard work to search for and identify appropriate scholarships for college bound students. We recommend starting to search throughout high school and setting time aside each month to work on scholarship applications. Be sure to utilize Naviance Family Connection, observe posted information in your college counseling department, and approach your college counselor with questions. Lastly, be sure keep your counselor updated on your progress!

www.finaid.org

help estimate your family's expected family contribution, provides useful calculators, and information on scholarships and loans

www.azgrants.gov

state of Arizona financial aid and grants for Arizona residents

www.needlift.org

scholarship and financial aid information from The American Legion

www.azfoundation.org

statewide philanthropy and partnership of donors and nonprofit organizations providing opportunities for student scholarships

www.arizona.collegeanswer.com

SallieMae's planning for college website

www.petersons.com

will guide you through the education planning process with its personalized resources

Special Programs

The Value of Honors Programs

How important is it? This “honors” experience? Is it worth the extra effort with more essays, possible interviews and retaking standardized tests? In my opinion, it is and it isn’t. Keep in mind two things. First, when you go to a liberal arts college, you are already immersed in this “honors” experience. Small classroom sizes, faculty mentoring and advising, and there rarely is an issue with registration since students can easily graduate in four years, not having to worry about pushing it to five or six because of impacted classrooms or majors. Second, though, if you are planning to attend a large public university with 30,000 plus students, an honors college can make a significant difference in your experience.

Most large public universities do invest in honors programs that vary in degree and quality. For example, there may be a distinct honors college with specific general educational requirements and/or an honors thesis; or, there may be some honors classes within different majors, but not a distinct honors college. To help you evaluate an honors program, take into consideration the following criteria and standards:

Honors Curriculum- about one-third of a student’s classes will be honors, smaller class sizes combined with rigor and strong mentoring, the mode of learning is often tailored to the subject matter rather than a general lecture style, depth, emphasis on research and writing that can be translated to graduate school, core curriculum honors courses

Research Scholarships/Opportunities – since graduate students at large public universities are those who are engaged in research with faculty, honors colleges often have dedicated funds and scholarships to which students can apply

Honors Residence Halls/Programs – leadership and service opportunities, experiential learning/learning and living communities to advance culture of living and inquiry, often includes engaging in outside communities with service

Study-Abroad Programs - study abroad experiences vary greatly; some honors colleges take a whole group of honors students with honors faculty for an extended time to ensure quality of learning

Career Advising – special programs and resources to help honors students obtain internship, get a job or enter graduate school within six months of graduation

Other considerations include honors four and six year graduation rates versus university-wide rates, priority registrations, and take a look at recipients of prestigious scholarships like Rhodes, Marshall, Truman or Goldwater as well as admissions scholarships to the university for honors students. For students who are semi-finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program, there may be substantial scholarships to these public universities as well as direct admittance into the honors programs.

While most honors programs have these same characteristics, there are often important differences in how the university invests in its honors students, so take some time to familiarize yourself with the honors program, and whether or not it’d be a good fit for you. As you research, honors “college” and honors “program” are used interchangeably. Some honors programs for your consideration are the Honors College at University of Alabama, Honors Program at Georgia Institute of Technology, Echols Scholars Program at University of Virginia, Clark Honors College at University of Oregon, UC Davis Honors Challenge. For honors programs at private, but larger, universities, I suggest spending some time familiarizing yourself with Baylor University, which has four different honors programs as well as Rice University Scholars Program and Clemon’s Calhoun Honors College. Jot down entrance requirements, average classroom sizes, honors curriculum and any other distinct facts. *Example: The Prouidian Honors Interdisciplinary Honors Program at University of Redlands allows students to design their own major.*

Remember, if the honors program is the only reason you plan to go to a particular school, think carefully. Depending on the program, about two-thirds of your experience will be outside of honors, so be sure the university itself is a good fit. ASU’s popular Barrett Honors Program begins its presentation very intentionally to remind the prospective student that he or she is an ASU student primarily, and then a Barrett student.

For more information or guidance, there are resources. Specifically, there is a National Collegiate Honors Council (www.nchchonors.org). On their website, they have a list of all the honors programs in the United States. Tips on how to begin and write an honors thesis and more! For a more in depth comparison of honors programs at public universities, read through **A Review of Fifty Public University Honors Program** by John Willingham. Your college counselor might even have a copy of the book for you to check out!

The Value of Summer Programs



Emily Sarbacker
Glendale Preparatory Academy, Class of 2014

These past two summers have both been filled with different programs I sought outside of school. The reason for this is that in my college search, I realized that many colleges are interested to see how you sought new interests and programs on your own time, and one way to do so is through different programs offered yearly throughout the country. As I began to research, I used all sorts of sources, from books to friends to scouring the internet. Many opportunities popped up, and I found myself having to pick and choose which ones to apply for. My mom and college counselor, Mrs. Sanders, advised me not only to find some that fit my current interests, but also to take a chance with some that were outside my comfort zone.

During the summer from sophomore to junior year, I attended a three-week mathematics and computer programming program at the University of Utah. Although confident in my capabilities concerning math, this experience was definitely a step outside my comfort zone. I was unfamiliar with the computer programming element of the course, while many of the other students were very familiar with it. However, I attempted to take on the challenge as a productive experience, and as a result I walked away from the program with a strong feeling of accomplishment. It taught me many things, and I discovered that although computer programming was probably not an area of interest for me to pursue in college, that I could, if I so desired.

This past summer was filled with multiple different programs across the country. I began on Princeton University's campus as a part of a seminar on Christian Moral Ethics through the Witherspoon Institute. For about a week we spent a couple hours each day discussing the different dialogues of Socrates, along with hot button ethical issues facing our world today. This program was well within my comfort zone, as the structure closely resembled that of my Humane Letters class. However, despite this fact, by the end of the program I had learned a great amount that built from my previous education, an experience I valued deeply, as it gave me a glimpse of what is coming when I enter college.

After returning from Princeton, I began an internship at the Boys and Girls Club of Peoria. For seven weeks, I was able to see a nonprofit from all angles, working as an employee while also attending big board meetings and meeting with the leaders of the different clubs. I learned a lot about the world of nonprofits as well as many important lessons on the importance of serving others in your community. At the end of the program, I was flown out to Washington D.C. for a leadership summit with all the other interns, and while I was there I met some of the most incredible teenagers in our country. Many had started their own businesses or nonprofits, and the sky was the limit in terms of their aspirations. The summit left me inspired, knowing that there is always room for improvement that I can enact myself.

The final program I attended was a leadership seminar at Notre Dame, and it brought together everything I had learned so far that summer. We discussed many different ethical issues that are currently facing the world, and worked towards plans that would solve major crises by serving others. We attended many different lectures, had numerous discussions with one another, and by the end, I had a very full picture of everything I had been exposed to throughout the summer. I entered my senior year with a desire to serve others, both within my community and across the world, and I had the confidence that I could accomplish either with the lessons from the summer to guide me along the way.

Article by Emily Sarbacker, Senior
Special Thanks to Dee-Dee Sanders, College Counselor
Glendale Preparatory Academy