

ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

February 2004

TACKLING THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

by Bob Blair

As both a parent and a teacher of the twelfth grade, I certainly have been amazed to see the college admissions process in action. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were trying to start a high school, and here we are just a few months away from having our first graduating class. God has certainly blessed us along the way in making this all possible!

As your children grow, and you begin to think about the whole college "thing," there are probably many questions swirling about your heads. They were swirling about ours, too! In this space, there are two main questions that I'd like to address that many of you probably share. First, "How will colleges look upon Rockbridge? Isn't Rockbridge unproven?" And secondly, "How can a family best prepare?"

The first question is a natural concern for anyone in a new school. I have to admit that initially I had to keep reminding myself that God's plans and purposes for my son cannot be thwarted, and we certainly shouldn't fear the college admissions process. That said, with lots of prayer we tried to get an early start on the process to know just where we stood. It didn't take long to realize that all of my concerns were completely empty.



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OUTSTANDING FACULTY FOR A REASON

It turns out that God's plans and purposes included an incredibly strong Rockbridge education that colleges are desperately seeking.

As an example of this, based upon discussions with admissions directors at five major universities, I learned that most schools require extra SAT-2 tests for students from non-accredited high schools. I saw their written policies. In spite of this, all of the schools that we dealt with waived these extra test require-

ments. They trusted Rockbridge. They trusted our reporting process, our transcript, our school profile, and our report cards. Much of this is due to Mr. McKenna. He's not new to this college process. His experience and his efforts over the last several years to refine and polish the materials the school sends to colleges help to give the colleges confidence in us. Most importantly, however, the essays the students write speak volumes to prospective colleges that Rockbridge students are well prepared. But that's not by accident. God has brought together the classical Christian education process, the dedicated and supportive families, and the outstanding faculty for a reason—to produce Godly young men and women.

Last spring, the students in the Maryland Distinguished Scholar program were invited to the University of Maryland for a presentation and open house. There were speakers and tours. I observed an enormous room filled with thousands of very bright students. They heard speech after speech about their future and the importance of college, and the many fine attributes of the University of Maryland. The final speaker, a professor of English, lectured on the importance of college, and the importance of diversity. He

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TACKLING THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS...*continued*

talked about how vitally important it is to embrace diversity... because we must all come to the realization that there is no one truth(!) I saw a really amazing thing that day. I spied a sea of people mesmerized by this man. And in that sea of people, I saw two Rockbridge students (Josh and Gavin) reading right through his rhetoric. Noting each fallacy. It struck me that most of those students were not really prepared for college. They were not prepared to challenge professors like that. I know that at least two in that audience were prepared.

Another fact that I have learned through this process is that colleges are suspicious of high school GPAs. To emphasize this point, consider that the average Honor Student in the Fall 2003 freshman class at the University of Maryland had a 4.28 high school GPA. Let me remind you that that is on a 4.00 scale. Well, Admission Directors furrow their brows too when they see those numbers. As a result, the numbers have become meaningless. A student's grades are still very important. They do want to know what grades have been earned, and what kind of courses taken, but the rampant grade inflation we see all about us in the government schools is not something to be concerned about.

Aside from grades, I've noticed that most schools are also very interested to see if you've pursued your interests with passion. Supplemental courses, summer camps, science fair projects. Are your extracurricular choices consistent with your stated objective? Think about that as you start to fill up your summer calendar. Probably the ultimate answer to the question "How will colleges look upon Rockbridge?" is that, so far, not one senior has been rejected by any school to which he has applied.

Of the three that have received acceptances, they've each gotten into the school at the top of their wish list—both Christian colleges and public universities. That doesn't mean we'll never have a student rejected, but I am certain that all of the current 12th grade students will be accepted into fine schools, because they're all excellent students.

The second question that needs to be addressed, "How can a family best



prepare?" may be a little harder to attack. I say that because I don't think that this is a process that you suddenly engage in at the beginning of the senior year. You need to start early. Pray! Attend the College Night at Rockbridge, it's not just for seniors. In addition, with our children we've encouraged discussion since they were little about what college is like: The good and the bad. Our experiences, neighbors' experiences, family, etc., are all great things to discuss. On our family vacations we would often check out colleges in the area that might be of interest someday. This was a casual process, not an obsession. Now that we're in the peak of college shopping, however, it doesn't seem to be a strange or foreign conversation.

While many families start by exploring the various Christian colleges, in our case Gavin's focus on aeronautical engineering led us in another direction, as there aren't any Christian colleges that offer that major. In some ways, it simplified the process because there are only about a half a dozen aero schools on the East coast and another two dozen throughout the rest of the country. Gavin applied to six schools and has been accepted at the three that have responded. Georgia Tech (ranked 2nd in the nation), Purdue (5th), and Penn State (9th). He visited Purdue and Penn State in December and will be visiting Georgia Tech in February. From there, financial aid offers are finalized in early April and offer acceptance must be made by May 1st. We'll let you know...

When I think back to my own experience (a long time ago), the engineering program that I entered closed admissions to engineering in November of my senior year in high school. Now I know that most schools don't operate that way, but that experience drove us to make sure that Gavin's applications were turned in as early as possible. I would suggest having a draft completed (for each school) by the end of the summer before the senior year. If you finalize your applications by the end of October, you'll be ready to meet the early decision deadlines for most schools. This will also free your time to revisit campuses and to focus upon scholarship applications, as appropriate, throughout the senior year.

It's an exciting process. It's exciting to see our children growing up. It's exciting to see Rockbridge growing up and bearing fruit too, with God's grace.

Rockbridge Support Team (RST)

A BLESSING TO FACULTY
AND STAFF

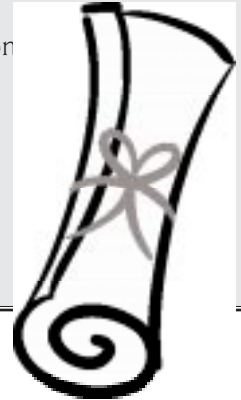
Dear Rockbridge Families,
We are richly blessed each day at Rockbridge in being privileged to work with godly families such as yours. The Lord has blessed our school with gifted teachers and staff, and He has blessed us with gifted parents who are faithful in training up their children for His Kingdom. The gifts that you offer us in encouragement, prayer, and faithful service are inexpressibly appreciated. We are humbled by your generosity. The gifts you give to us through the Rockbridge Support Team at Christmas not only bless us but also minister God's grace to us in a tangible way. Thank you from all of us at Rockbridge Academy.

Incident Weather?

What should you do in case of snow or severe weather? Turn your radio dial to either WRBS (FM 95.1) or WBAL (AM1090). Rockbridge Academy announces all early dismissals or school closings on both of these radio stations. You may also check our website at www.rockbridge.org or call the school office. We will leave a message on our answering machine to indicate whether or not we will close. As always, we respect your decision to do whatever you feel is necessary for your family.

IT'S OFFICIAL!

*R*ockbridge Academy received accreditation through the Association of Classical and Christian Schools. The official certificate will be presented to us at the Annual Association of Classical and Christian Schools Conference in Atlanta, Georgia this June.



FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

*V*olunteer positions needed: Publicity Manager (in charge of publicity). In addition, volunteers are still needed to help with almost every aspect of the play. Please contact Cheryl Heemstra (410-431-5255) if you'd like to be a part of this production.

We are also looking for the following items (for loan): "peasantry" articles, such as: milk cans, sheep skins, crates for chickens, wooden stools, milk pails, a dairy cart, butter churn, a bed with a backboard, and an antique Singer sewing machine w/table.

Performance dates:

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday,
March 11—13, 2004.

Times: 7:30 p.m. (March 11 & 12);
2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. (March 13)

Location: Chesapeake Arts Center,
Brooklyn Park.

Cost: \$12 Adults / \$10 Students
& Seniors

***Ticket Sales begin
February 11, 2004.***

Open House

*R*ockbridge Academy will be hosting an Evening Open House on February 6th at 7:00 p.m. We offer a K-12 program. Prospective parents are invited to browse the curriculum, meet board members and staff, and listen to a brief lecture on classical and Christian education. Parents may contact the school at (410) 923-1171.

ROCKBRIDGE BASKETBALL

*O*ur school's first full basketball season continues to be one of laying a solid foundation that will be built upon for years to come. Competition and character have come face to face as our boys' and girls' middle school teams have taken to the courts with great ambition. Both teams have matured remarkably in the application of strategy to game situations. Check out the game schedules and come out to cheer on your teams.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- FEB 6Evening Open House at 7:00 p.m.
- FEB 11Ticket Sales Begin for "Fiddler on the Roof"
- FEB 16.....SCHOOL CLOSED
- FEB 20Academic Warning Day
- FEB 27Science Fair
- MAR 3-5SCHOOL CLOSED
- MAR 11 & 12“Fiddler on the Roof” Performance at the
Chesapeake Arts Center (CAC) at 7:30 p.m
- MAR 13“Fiddler on the Roof” Performance at the CAC
Matinee begins at 2 p.m./Evening performance at 7:00 p.m

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

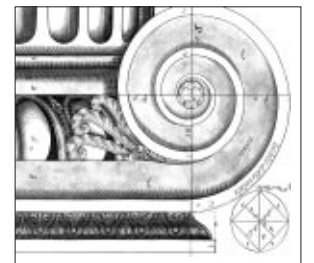
THE WHOLE AIM OF PRACTICAL POLITICS IS TO KEEP THE POPULACE ALARMED (AND HENCE CLAMOROUS TO BE LED TO SAFETY) BY MENACING IT WITH AN ENDLESS SERIES OF HOBGOBLINS, ALL OF THEM IMAGINARY.

—*H.L. Mencken*

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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ROCKBRIDGE ACADEMY



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