

**RADNOR TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT**



**2021-22**

# **REPORT ON COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS AT RADNOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Published June 2022



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Radnor High School Counseling (RHSC) offers a robust array of mental health resources to students and their families, with a dedicated team of counselors to support them. This has been quite beneficial as the community has endeavored to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.**

However, career and college readiness resources have dwindled as the need for mental health support has grown. The complex and time intensive nature of mental health issues puts a significant strain on RHSC's ability to effectively execute job functions not related to mental health, including career counseling. Attempting to mitigate this problem, counselors began using a variety of methods to provide the full array of student support. By building a comprehensive, but onerous, website and using "drop-ins" to student classes, counselors have been able to provide a blanket of basic career and college care.

Unfortunately, the lack of one-on-one attention and expertise has left many students feeling underprepared, seeking outside resources for help, in their senior year. To better meet the needs of students, it is recommended that RHS proceed by adjusting the staffing and structure of the office. Adding two more staff members would create greater opportunities for direct contact with students.

Additionally, dividing the department into two distinct sub-departments, School Counseling and College Counseling, will allow counselors to specialize and provide a higher level of experience and expertise. By making these adjustments, among others, RHSC can create an environment where students can receive expert care in mental health support, academic advising and career and college preparedness. The following report details individual aspects of the current program's strengths and weaknesses in addition to a plan for implementation of structural changes.

# STUDY BACKGROUND

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## History

In May 2016, the Radnor Township School District (RTSD) Curriculum Committee heard a presentation about the School Counseling Services offered at Radnor High School (RHS).

Special focus was paid to the strengths and areas of need regarding college and career planning, Delaware County Technical Schools (DCTS), and NCAA eligibility and recruitment.

Between 2017 and 2018, counselors in RTSD worked to create a K-12 School Counseling Plan as part of Chapter 339. This plan addressed the importance of college and career planning for all students.

In 2021, the RTSD School Board approved a **College and Career Readiness Study** to ensure that Radnor students were properly equipped to pursue their goals post-graduation. A presentation was given at the December 2021 Curriculum Committee meeting highlighting the scope of the work to be completed.

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### Study Goals

To determine the appropriate staffing necessary to meet RTSD students' needs for college and career planning.

To identify potential improvements to RTSD school counseling structure, processes, and supports related to college and career planning.

To identify professional development and training needs for RTSD staff.

### Study Action Steps

Assess current programming for strengths and areas of improvement.

Gather feedback from students and parents

Examine best practices and future trends

Gather information from college admissions departments.

Investigate exemplar public and private high school counseling departments

Determine professional development needs

Examine related student support services



# STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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**William Yarnell:** College and Career Readiness Study Consultant

**Dan Bechtold:** Committee Co-Chair, Director of Secondary Teaching & Learning

**Nicole Ottaviano:** Committee Co-Chair, K-12 School Counseling Coordinator

**Liz Duffy:** RTSD School Board Member and Parent

**Nancy Monahan:** RTSD School Board Member and Parent

**Ryan Buterbaugh:** RHS Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs (*former*)

**JJ Lemon:** RHS School Counseling Department Chair

**Jeannie Semar:** RHS School Counselor

**Clyde Diehl:** Radnor Middle School (RMS) School Counseling Department Chair

**Maureen Ertle:** RHS Special Education Teacher, K-12 Transition Coordinator

**Kathy Pearsall:** RHS English Teacher

**Tom Ryan:** RHS Coach and Teacher

**John Begier:** RHS Coach and Parent

**Jamie Forman:** RHS Parent

**Nicole Aboagye:** RHS A Better Chance Alumna

**Avery Barber:** RHS Class of 2022 and Future Division I Athlete

**Barbara Civitella:** RHS Alumna and Division I Athlete

**Anna Duffy:** RHS Alumna

**Sebastian Kaper-Barcelata:** RHS Class of 2022

**Juan-Pablo Moreland:** RHS Alumnus



# STUDY TIMELINE

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<b>December 14, 2021</b>	Administration presented an overview of the scope of the College and Career Readiness Study at the School Board Curriculum Committee meeting
<b>January 25, 2022</b>	A contract for William Yarnell to serve as a consultant for the College and Career Readiness Study was approved at the School Board Business meeting
<b>February 10, 2022</b>	Staff data collection meeting with consultant to identify and review: how is time spent, definition of roles, events/scope and sequence, technology use, and documents/flow charts
<b>February 17, 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mr. Yarnell met with Radnor High School (RHS) Counselors to discuss the current counseling model at Radnor High School and best practices/models used by other exemplary public and private schools</li><li>▪ The first meeting of the College and Career Readiness Study was held. The committee reviewed the plan and scope of the study, discussed current counseling models, and were provided with an overview of the current state of the college and career readiness program at RHS</li></ul>
<b>February 24, 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ William Yarnell held a meeting with Radnor's mental health specialists (Lakeside counselors, school psychologists, and social worker) and Lauren Raines (Student Assistance Program administrator) to gather information about services provided</li><li>▪ The College and Career Readiness Study Committee met to discuss the creation of parent and student focus groups. The committee prioritized what information they felt would be most important, discussed the communication plan for soliciting participation from various stakeholders</li></ul>
<b>March 3, 2022</b>	RHS counselors met with William Yarnell to discuss electronic tracking systems, junior college planning meetings, and the option of having a career/college class embedded within the school year.
<b>March 10, 2022</b>	Focus group meetings were held with underclassmen at RHS. Mid-day and evening parent focus group sessions were also held. Groups discussed our current timeline for college and career activities, dissemination of information and communication, essay writing, face time with school counselors, and overall preparation for college and career planning.
<b>March 17, 2022</b>	Seniors at RHS participated in focus groups in the RHS Counseling Office.
<b>March 24, 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A meeting was held with the RTSD transition coordinator to gather information about college and career planning for students with Special Education services.</li><li>▪ The College and Career Readiness Committee met to review findings from the parent and student focus groups.</li></ul>

# STUDY TIMELINE

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**March 31, 2022**

- A meeting was held with representatives from the Radnor Committee for Special Education to gather feedback as to the needs and experiences of our Special Education population
- The College and Career Readiness Committee heard from a panel of experts about college/career counseling models, a dedicated college/career preparation course, credentials and experience important for counselors, best practices in the field, and evening/special programming for parents and students related to college and career preparation

**April 7, 2022**

The Radnor High School (RHS) Counselors met with Mr. Yarnell to discuss feedback from the expert panel discussion in context to the current structures and programming at RHS.

**April 21, 2022**

A meeting was held with the RHS counseling staff to discuss options for structural changes and potential timelines should the School Board approve implementation of a new system.

**April 28, 2022**

Aspects of the draft report were shared with the RHS school counselors to enable collection of additional data and feedback.

**May 5, 2022**

Mr. Bechtold, Mrs. Ottaviano and Mr. Yarnell met to review and refine the draft report in preparation for the upcoming meeting of the College and Career Readiness Study Committee.

**May 13, 2022**

Mr. Bechtold, Mrs. Ottaviano and Mr. Yarnell met for a final review of the draft report prior to the committee meeting on May 19

**May 19, 2022**

The Career and College Readiness Committee held their final meeting to review and provide feedback on the Career and College Readiness Study report.

**June 7, 2022**

A presentation was provided to the School Board Curriculum Committee highlighting the findings and recommendations of the Career and College Readiness Study



# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## Student and Parent Meetings/Programs

Currently, Radnor High School Counseling (RHSC) does not require counselors to meet with every student on their rosters individually each year for college or career related advising. They do meet with all students regarding scheduling for courses each year. Students are serviced on an as-needed basis with attention paid to those who seek them out. There are multiple group meetings, in-class programs, and walk-in times created to account for any missed interaction. However, one-on-one meetings with students provide the best experience when possible. Departmental size, responsibilities, and structure make it difficult to achieve this currently.



## RECOMMENDATION

Staff changes to create smaller counselor/student ratios (roughly 240:1 currently) and the requirement of every student receiving a minimum of one individual meeting and one group meeting with their assigned counselor each year, in addition to scheduling. Also, the creation of virtual programming completed prior to meetings can supplement and focus the content and individuality of those meetings. For example, a Schoology module could be created in advance on how to add colleges to the college list in Naviance. When the counselors enter classes or meet with students individually, the conversation is a holistic discussion about the list itself, not strictly an administrative tutorial.





# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## Student and Parent Meetings/Programs

There are multiple evening programs directed towards freshman, junior, and senior parents. There is currently no programming for the parents of sophomores. The freshman program does not occur until mid-January, which is problematic when considering the transition to high school. The junior program consists of several break-out sessions hosted by local college and university admissions officers. While the response to this program has been positive, the break-out format seems to create gaps in knowledge of attendees. The senior program is dedicated to application processing. It covers mostly information on submitting applications, requesting transcripts, and sending test scores. There is also a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion evening program.



## RECOMMENDATION

Each grade should have one parent focused program each year. The lack of a sophomore program is problematic. It creates a lack of continuity of information to families. Opportunities for advising on standardized testing and academics advising are missed and should be addressed. The junior program is beneficial but is far from comprehensive. Creating two separate junior programs is a possible solution. One in the fall semester that provides a comprehensive overview would give parents a foundation of information while also addressing timeliness of the information. A second program can be offered in the spring that follows the current format.

The senior program is beneficial from a processing standpoint, educating parents on the release of integral materials from the school. This format should be continued in some capacity. It ensures that information is released correctly, which is vital. However, it lacks depth of content, specifically regarding Financial Aid. Creating a separate Financial Aid Night that goes beyond simply completing the FAFSA would be highly recommended. More information is provided regarding creating a more substantial Financial Aid program later in the review.

# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## Standardized Testing

RHS currently offers the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT); the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Subjects Tests; and Advanced Placement (AP) exams to students. There are currently no American College Test (ACT) dates provided on-campus. While use of Kahn Academy's SAT Prep Program is encouraged by counselors, there is a lack of knowledge among parents and students regarding its existence. There is also limited content provided to parents and students regarding test optional colleges and universities, which have increased significantly due to Covid-19. Finally, advising on AP scores, their relation to college applications and advice on reporting is limited at best.



## RECOMMENDATION

Incorporating more ACT content into the school's current College and Career Curriculum can create more options for students both academically and financially. Offering the test on-campus is a starting point as it adds validation to the test. In addition, offering an SAT/ACT Practice Test to sophomores and juniors can help students discover which test is best for them before beginning the test preparation process. This service is offered by many testing organizations (such as Kaplan and Princeton Review) for free and can be held on the RHS campus.

Test-optional schools ([www.FairTest.org](http://www.FairTest.org)) are growing in number each year. Advising for students on which schools are test optional can easily be accessed. However, advice on when to and not to send scores is increasingly complicated. One-on-one counselor/student meetings are the only way to adequately address these concerns and are reliant on adequate counselor/student ratios at RHS. Similar questions regarding AP course selection, testing and score reporting are also dependent on this ratio.



# PROGRAM REVIEW

## Career Planning Technology Integration

**RHSC currently uses multiple technology platforms to service students in the college and career process. The programs are used with varying degrees of efficiency.**

### Naviance

This is a multi-use platform that is a tool for students, parents, and counselors. RHSC uses the program primarily for sending transcripts, data collection and basic student college research. The transcript and data collection functions are extremely useful, specifically RHS specific college acceptance data.



## RECOMMENDATION

Naviance could be used for tracking career and college specific meetings with students. Naviance meeting tracking can be shared with students and parents, allowing for greater transparency in the process. Perhaps the greatest unused function is the ability for counselors to search colleges while helping students build their college lists. While RHS is transitioning to Smart Futures for career readiness and Chapter 339 compliance, RHSC should not discontinue the use of the career interest profilers in Naviance. Using these profiles connect directly to colleges that can be added to student lists and can be used to supplement any Smart Futures work.



# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## **Career Planning Technology Integration**

### **Visits from College Admissions Representatives**

Web-based program currently used to schedule college admissions representatives visiting RHS. This program is used predominantly by the office administrative staff. It is the most common platform used by colleges and puts RHS in a good position for visit access.

### **NCAA Clearinghouse**

The official website of the NCAA, where students are directed to complete an academic profile to ensure they meet minimum academic (grades and test scores) requirements of the NCAA. RHSC also updates information on any curriculum changes on an annual basis.

### **College Board**

Organization responsible for offering the PSAT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests. Currently, the site is used primarily for test sign-up and scores reporting. RHSC does not provide any instruction on the use of Khan Academy's test prep program that works in unison with the PSAT and SAT.



## **RECOMMENDATION**

More emphasis placed on the use of Khan Academy's program. Because Khan Academy customizes the program based on individual student scores, the program can be used in conjunction with any additional test preparation. Students should be walked through the program after receiving their initial PSAT results.





# PROGRAM REVIEW

## Career Planning Technology Integration

### Smart Futures

RHS is transitioning to the use of this program to collect articles for Chapter 339 requirements in Pennsylvania. In grades 9-12, there are nine activities that must be completed to meet state requirements. The program is online and allows students to complete activities at home and in school.

There is potential in this program, along with Schoology and Naviance, creating positive counseling outcome using virtual programming. However, more time is needed to understand how it will connect to student outcomes and determine future integration and implementation.

### eSchool

Platform is only used for accessing basic student data. Student names, addresses, schedule, grades, health records, and other personal data is contained within this program. However, RHSC does not use any of its functions for department specific efforts or collect any data themselves.



## RECOMMENDATION

RHSC does not currently track meetings with students beyond personal notes from counselors. eSchool could be used for tracking student meetings and basic interactions. This data, like basic health records and schedules, is very useful when multiple parties (social workers, school psychologists, other counselors) are working with certain students regularly. It also can help identify student needs, while cutting down on students taking advantage of resources to avoid class or other activities.



# PROGRAM REVIEW

## Career Planning Technology Integration

### Schoology Learning Management System

A content and teaching platform not currently used in any significant capacity by RHSC.



## RECOMMENDATION

Schoology could be used in numerous ways to help build a college, career, and mental health curriculum at RHS. Plans had been in the works (via Department Chair) to use Schoology to share basic department programming and communicate with students electronically. However, Schoology could be used more efficiently as a teaching platform for a 9-12 RHSC Virtual Curriculum.

Counselors could, for example, record videos on multiple aspects of the career and colleges process to engage students. Course work and information currently executed as Health Class “drop-ins” and individual meetings could be pushed out to students virtually in advance. This would allow for more focused work and discussion during “drop-ins” and individual student meetings. There is a large resource of currently untapped potential with this program.



# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## Student Guidance

**Regarding college and career placement, RHSC provides advising to students through in class lessons, as needed one-on-one meetings and evening programs. Supplementing these programs is a significant amount of detailed and thorough content on the RHSC website, as well as a printed packet of information similar to the site. While delivering the content in this way does “cover the bases” of what is needed for this process, there is a significant lack in individual attention given to students and their parents.**

## Applications

Counselors use PowerPoint presentations during Health Class “drop-ins” to explain the process of applying to college and the different forms of applications to students. A similar format is used to explain the process to parents in evening programs. Currently, there is no class or other program for assisting the students in filling out the applications and explaining each section of the application itself and its importance.

## College List Building (Academic and Financial)

RHSC does not currently provide support for student college list creation and development beyond student initiated, individual requests. As a result, there is a significant disparity in the level of support students have with this specific function. Additionally, many of the counselors do not feel adequately prepared to provide this kind of advice to students. They feel they lack the content specific knowledge necessary to help students build their lists or simply do not have an interest in this aspect of career counseling.

## College Essay Writing

There is decentralized support regarding college essays provided within some English classes at RHS. The support is teacher dependent and not necessarily rooted in college admission essay practice. There is content provided to students as part of the “drop-ins” to Health classes and evening programs, but they are limited to PowerPoint slides. Aside from specific student requests, counselors do not provide significant one-on-one support for essay writing.

## Letters of Recommendation

The process of selecting individuals to write letters and having the letters uploaded to Naviance is provided to students and parents thoroughly. Counselors collect information from students and write letters for all students on their rosters who have requested them. This is done through brag sheets and other data collecting mechanisms. Counselors also discuss these letters in one-on-one meetings when requested. However, there is limited support to RHSC on best practices in letter writing. Additionally, RHSC does not provide support for teachers, administrators, and coaches on best practices.

# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## Student Guidance

### Resume

There is currently no information provided to students or parents on building a resume for college. It is not addressed in “drop-ins,” evening programs, or covered in web-based materials. This is a significant and noticeably missing component of the curriculum. Also of note is emphasizing the differences between a work resume and a college resume/activity list. Often, students use these interchangeably. This can be problematic because colleges review activities differently than places of work.

### College Contacts

Students can interact with admissions officers from colleges and universities when they visit the RHS campus, as well as through virtual meetings created by RHSC. These visits are scheduled by the counseling support staff and give students dedicated time with colleges.



## RECOMMENDATION

A common theme seems to be that counselors lack the time and resources to adequately provide depth of content to students universally. Measures have been taken to patch together a process that meets basic needs and covers basic content for all students. However, the content provided lacks depth, is not individualized and often there are gaps in knowledge base among counselors.

Dividing the RHSC department into two separate groups (College/Career and Mental Health/Academic) while also adding additional staff members could provide a solution to these problems. Additionally, adding a dedicated class taught by the RHSC staff on college and career placement would significantly improve the depth of content provided. A course could be offered in a variety of ways to meet student needs. However, based on best practices among private and affluent high schools, courses offered as a requirement or as an elective during the school day are much more effective than after school or summer options. There is also significant opportunity to offer this content or supplement classroom content virtually through programs like Schoology.



# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## College Visit Process Both Internal and External

Colleges and universities currently visit RHS on an annual basis. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most of these visits were conducted virtually. Going forward, visits will most likely be a blend of in-person and virtual visits by admissions representatives. Currently, these visits are scheduled through Rep Visits by the administrative support staff. When possible, school counselors attempt to meet with each admissions representative for a few minutes. These meetings are brief, and counselors do not attend most of the meetings or meeting times. Often, counselors must cancel their time with the representatives to attend to other needs that day.

In addition to visits by colleges to RHS, some of the counselors have spent time visiting colleges campuses on behalf of RHS. These visits have been limited in number and are not conducted by all staff members. Several reasons account for a lack of regular visits to campuses, even local ones. Not all counselors in the office are as interested in career and college counseling. They prefer to attend mental health based professional development instead. Tasks on-campus limit counselor ability to leave for off-campus visits. College based events may be timed during off hours, weekends, or summers.



# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## College Visit Process Both Internal and External



### RECOMMENDATION

The process for setting up visits by colleges as it currently stands is sound. Using rep visits is among best practices across the country and the process seems to be easy for students to follow. However, counseling staff members should be attending many, if not all, visits by colleges in some capacity. At the very least, an additional 15-20 minutes should be built into each visit to allow the counselor to have the admissions representative meet with them specifically. Changes to staffing and structure of RHSC would allow for more opportunities for counselors to network with colleges.

Additionally, counselors should be attempting to visit the campuses of several colleges each year, or at the very least attend a local counselor event. Many colleges will band together and go on a tour of the region with a panel of admissions representatives from each school. Counselors for RHS should be attending these events in addition to visiting the colleges themselves. Every year, colleges change and tweak their requirements based on the previous year.

By networking and building relationships with colleges through visits and events, RHS counselors can make sure that RHS students have the most up-to-date information available. The factors inhibiting the ability of counselors to do this is, again, staffing and interest. Changes to the number of counselors and their specific roles will have the largest impact on this function.

# PROGRAM REVIEW

## Athletic Recruitment and NCAA Guidelines

Students and parents are provided with basic content on the athletic recruitment process in “drop-in” classes and evening programs. The information provided is limited to websites and basic requirements.

Counselors do not provide significant advising on different college programs or differences among divisions. There is also little, if any, coordination between coaches and counselors regarding student recruitment, aside from occasional, individual requests.



## RECOMMENDATION

Athletic recruitment can take on a variety of forms. It can be scholarship driven, academic entry or a reliable support system. The variety and selectivity of this group prohibit significant content coverage for many students. Response should be two-fold: First, counselors should be trained in the college athletic recruitment process, through professional organizations and continuing education. Secondly, counselors need to have the resources of time and access to meet student needs individually.





# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## **Scholarship Nomination & Advising, FAFSA & CSS Profile**

RHSC provides a FAFSA application completion night. This evening program walks parents and students through and answers questions regarding the FAFSA application. This program, along with information on the website, College Admissions Packet and other evening events covers most information regarding outside scholarships, grants, and other financial aid options. Limited information, however, is provided on the College Scholarship Services (CSS) Profile. Given the socioeconomic demographics and student college choices of

RHS students, many families will be required to complete this application as well. The CSS Profile is significantly more complex and tied directly to institutional funds and many colleges and universities. Limited information, specifically a link to the application itself, is provided on the RHSC website as well. There is also a one sentence description of the CSS Profile in the College Admissions Packet provided to students from RHSC.

Regarding special scholarship nominations, RHSC does not identify students to named or special scholarships (Morehead-Cain, Jefferson, etc.). Students typically seek out the scholarships themselves and then ask the RHSC department for their consent and help with the applications. Counselors are very helpful in advising students once this occurs but are often limited in knowledge of the scholarships and their administrators. Limited, if any, college list building is done while taking scholarships into consideration as well.





# PROGRAM REVIEW

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## Scholarship Nomination & Advising, FAFSA & CSS Profile



## RECOMMENDATION

While the FAFSA evening program is helpful to parents and students, information regarding the CSS Profile is a necessity. This information could easily be added to all the Financial Aid related programming, websites, and packets. Speakers from college Financial Aid Offices should be added to events with speakers from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA). Providing greater detail on the CSS Profile and explaining its strengths and weaknesses will significantly help families.

RHS Counselors should be identifying students each year for a variety of named scholarships around the country. The quality of students at RHS guarantees there will be several students in each senior class eligible to compete for these scholarships. Some of these scholarships require that nominating schools register with the colleges to nominate students. Others have complex processes that require significant counselor involvement and student preparation. Additionally, all merit-based scholarships offered by colleges should be used to help students select institutions during their list-building process. Often, students may add a college based solely on scholarships but ultimately end up loving it in the end. For RHS counselors to provide this level of service, again staffing and changes in counseling roles would be required. This would allow counselors the time to dedicate to this subject, among others.

# PROGRAM REVIEW

## Career Outcomes and Options Outside of Four-Year College

During counselor “drop-in” classes, counselors teach a lesson on career and college options to juniors. While the program is somewhat limited in depth regarding college admissions, it does address career and training options outside of four-year college. There are several slides dedicated to this topic. RHS also offers a partnership with Delaware County Technical Schools for its students and counselors recommend options for students within this program.



## RECOMMENDATION

RHS has 90% of students currently seeking college placement for their post-secondary plans. Given this statistic, the current resources are not unreasonable.

However, it is noted that there seems to be a trend in the district with more students interested in options other than college each year. As a result, RHSC is encouraged to build relationships with gap-year programming, vocational schools, military branches, trade unions and community colleges to have viable options for these students. In addition to building relationships, it is advised that RHSC create a virtual curriculum for students choosing options other than college. This curriculum could run parallel to the college counseling curriculum. Both options would be available to students when materials are pushed out to them. This would not only provide information and materials to students on non-college options, but also help to limit alienation of those students. In addition, staffing changes mentioned throughout would also have a significant impact on the level and quality of non-college advising. Finally, staffing adjustments would also help with support for students with special needs considering both college and non-college options. This group needs a high level of attention and counselors with the time to research options for students, making connections and vetting possible outcomes. When considering special needs, this goes beyond learning support and encompasses a wide array of unique circumstances. This could mean first-generation college, English Language Learners, Learning Support, and many more diverse needs in an ever-changing student population.

# PROGRAM REVIEW

## Staff Professional Development & Networking

The Counseling staff at RHS are members of professional organizations and attend events when possible.

Their choice of organizations and the events they attend are notable. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) and the Pennsylvania School Counseling Association (PASCA) are the organizations chosen by the department. These two organizations, while necessary and important, do not dedicate as much of their resources towards career and college counseling as some others. Additionally, counselors often do not attend off-campus events due to negative stigma regarding missing days in the office and the lengthy and complex approval process to attend conferences.



## RECOMMENDATION

There must be counselors who are members of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) and the Pennsylvania Association of College Admissions Counselors (PACAC). These organizations are as vital for college and career networking as ASCA and PASCA are for mental health. In addition, the approval process for conferences and other events could be budgeted and approved in advance of the year. This would encourage counselors to take advantage of conferences and other networking opportunities. Finally, encouraging counselors to enroll in post-master's programs dedicated to career and college readiness will also increase skill levels in this subject area.



# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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**Stakeholders were asked to participate in a series of focus groups regarding the college counseling process at RHS.**

## **Parents/Guardians**

### **Timeline Adjustment**

One of the largest takeaways from the parents was that they believed the college process started much too late. Many spoke of feeling as if they were constantly behind. They would like to have more information conveyed to them earlier, before the students, so that they can manage their children better through the process.

### **Personalized Attention**

Parents also would like more one-on-one attention between the counselors and families. Counselors were often difficult to track down and meetings would sometimes be missed or postponed for mental health issues on campus. They acknowledged that this was very important, but also noted that it left them without help when they needed it as well.

### **Expertise of Topic**

There was a consensus that there was a lack of consistency among the counselors regarding college admissions information. In addition, there were several comments noting that there seemed to also be a lack of consistency in relation to actual interest in the topic of college counseling among counselors. The overall feeling was that not all counselors were as interested in this topic as others, and even the ones who were interested did not have the depth of knowledge families wanted.

### **Continuity of Information**

In addition to knowledge of topic, there was also a consensus that information was provided in “fits and spurts” to families. There was not a sense that programming built on itself leading a family through the process. Instead, information was dumped in group and individual meetings. For example, families are often directed to the website or provided a packet of necessary information which is substantial in size and overwhelming.

### **Use of Parent and Alumni Groups**

When asked how they managed their child’s college search, many of the parents referred to using parent and alumni groups on Facebook. As they encountered problems they initially reached out to counselors. However, when they did not get the information they needed for a variety of reasons discussed above, they began posting to these groups. They found the information provided to them by other families was extremely helpful and a missed opportunity that RHSC did not make greater use of these resources.



# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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**Stakeholders were asked to participate in a series of focus groups regarding the college counseling process at RHS.**

## **Students - Seniors**

### **Timeline**

Similar to parents, seniors referenced wanting to start the college process earlier. While they knew that they could not fill out applications or attend certain visit programs early in their high school career, they would have liked to start researching colleges earlier and preparing for standardized testing. While RHSC does provide both options for students at any point via Naviance and programs such as Khan Academy, students were not aware of them until later.

### **Knowledge of Subject**

Students also felt that while the counselors were very compassionate and willing to help, they often lacked specific knowledge regarding individual colleges and their processes. Students gave examples of wanting to know details about benefits of applying Early Action vs. Early Decision at certain colleges. While counselors could provide general information on this subject, they were not always able to provide college specific details to help the students understand.

### **Dedicated Class**

Most students stated that they wanted a class dedicated to applying to college and that they would have signed up for the class if it was offered. There were mixed feelings among students regarding exactly when the class should be offered and if it should be a requirement. However, all of them stated that they would have benefitted from such an offering and hope that RHS would considering offering one in the future.

### **Financial Aid**

Seniors, specifically in the Spring of senior year, were very concerned with financial aid. Some were concerned that they would not be able to attend their college of choice due to cost. Many stated that they did not think of this as much early on, but now wished they had known more about financial aid and given that more consideration when crafting their college lists. They also had many questions about scholarships and other sources of aid.

### **Availability of Counselors**

Students appreciated the time that counselors spent with them and felt the counselors cared about them. However, all of them stated that it was difficult to get individual meetings with counselors when they needed them. They referenced difficulty finding times that counselors could meet with them based on scheduling, as well as meetings canceled due to mental health crises.

# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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**Stakeholders were asked to participate in a series of focus groups regarding the college counseling process at RHS.**

## **Students - Underclassmen**

### **Comments Similar to Seniors**

Underclassmen referenced most of the comments made by seniors in their meetings. There were slight differences in depth of understanding topics like financial aid. However, all the other topics came up during the discussions with similar themes. Below are two notes that came specifically from underclassmen that were not referenced by seniors.

### **Transition to High School/College**

Many of the underclassmen mentioned that they wanted to know more about what classes they should consider and the importance of activities when starting high school. They knew these topics were important for college, but they did not know what they should do about it. They also mentioned test anxiety as a concern.

### **Missing Out**

Underclassmen universally mentioned the idea of missing out or feeling they did not know what to expect next. They wanted a clear timeline on what they should be doing and when. As mentioned earlier, this information is covered on the RHSC website and in materials handed out from the department. However, it is not translating to students in a way that they can process at this time.



# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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**Stakeholders were asked to participate in a series of focus groups regarding the college counseling process at RHS.**

## **Counseling Staff**

### **Crisis Management**

Counselors all stated that a large part of their job consisted of crisis management. They also noted a rise in the number of incidents over the last two years. Dealing with crisis is compounded by the fact that Crisis Assessments require two counselors to process the assessment, which can take several hours. This places a significant load on the department as other counselors need to step in to support daily office function. It also causes problems with students and families when planned meetings or events are missed.

### **Varied Interest**

Not all counselors in the department were interested in college and career counseling. In fact, most felt more comfortable working with mental health and academic circumstances than college and career. For some, it was lack of training on college and career readiness. For others, they became counselors to work in mental health care, not college placement.

### **Roster Size**

While the student rosters of each counselor are comparable or below other public high schools in the region, counselors felt the community demands regarding college and career readiness were difficult to execute with the number of students and responsibilities currently assigned to them.

### **Responsibilities**

Many of the counselors mentioned job expectations that pulled them away from individual student meetings and into larger programmatic interactions. For example, running ESSA programs or prospective student events. These take time away from the one-on-one interactions that the community is saying they would prefer. Also, the role of the counselor in public schools has expanded significantly over the last decade. Specifically, college and career counseling has shifted from counselors being generalists to experts.

### **Burnout**

All of the counselors mentioned feeling burned out over the past two years. Many of the ways in which they address college and career readiness were created to cover as much information as possible in concise meetings and events. This was done to make sure students were given resources while providing counselors the time to deal with other mental health and academic responsibilities. In the end, it is simply too much to handle well, given the intense nature of mental health circumstances overall.



# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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**Stakeholders were asked to participate in a series of focus groups regarding the college counseling process at RHS.**

## **Expert Panel**

### **Department Model**

The panel had a variety of models used in their institutions. Generally, public schools followed a Counseling Generalist model while private schools followed a Counseling Expert model. Public schools had counselors covering both mental health and college counseling, while private schools split those responsibilities between two groups. Also, most private schools had administrative support staff handling multiple aspects of the college process (transcripts, college visits, etc.).

### **College and Career Class**

All panel members either currently have a class dedicated to college and career counseling or would like to have one in their institution. Some of the private schools even offered a counseling department class throughout all four years of high school addressing a variety of topics, with college readiness covered in the junior year. One local public school has a mandatory college and career class for all juniors.

### **Credentials**

Public high schools require counselors to be certified in school counseling. However, they do not have any specific requirements regarding training in college and career counseling beyond their certification. Private high schools required their college counselors to have worked for a college admissions office and/or have specific training in the college admissions process. This creates a significant gap in the knowledge of public-school counselors versus private college counselors regarding college admissions advising.

### **Programming**

Experts from both public and private high schools stated offering a variety of evening programs for families on the college process. Most programming discussed was similar to current offerings at RHS. However, it is important to note that while some schools do outsource presentation to outside individuals or organizations (College Representative, PHEAA, etc.) many have counseling staff members providing the content and expertise.





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & ROLES

## Structure

**Restructuring the department could significantly and positively impact the ability of counselors to service students for mental health concerns, academic advising, and career/college planning. Below is the current structure, a transitional model most schools have adopted and the proposed model.**

### Current

The model that RHSC has been using is the classic **School Counseling Model**. A staff of five counselors are responsible for all aspects of counseling in the school. It is the model that has been used since the advent of school counseling. While it can work well in small institutions, it becomes problematic as student populations grow. Eventually, a triage scenario develops with mental health concerns taking priority over all other student needs.

### Transition

The model currently used by most public high schools concerned with college and career placement is the **Single College Expert Model**. As described in the name, there is a group of school counselors performing all roles for counseling. However, there is one staff member who is an expert in college and career readiness who handles all programming and builds relationships with colleges. While this model certainly is a step forward, it lacks personal attention. The college expert cannot possibly meet with every student. Ultimately, counselors still must meet with their rosters about college and write letters of recommendation. As before, triage scenarios begin to develop.

### Proposed

The model suggested for use by RHSC is a **Private School/Divided Model**. In this model, the labor is divided between School/Mental Health Counselors and College/Career Counselors. The department operates with Co-Department Chairs, one from each division. Each Co-Chair is responsible for directing their counselors while also sharing responsibilities directing the overall department. In addition, it would also be beneficial to have a Freshman Transition Counselor whose sole responsibility is to help first year students create a plan for making the most of their high school experience. With focused roles and responsibilities, the triage affect is limited to each counselor's role and not spanning the gamut of counseling. This model also allows for greater expertise and relationship building between counselors and external constituents.



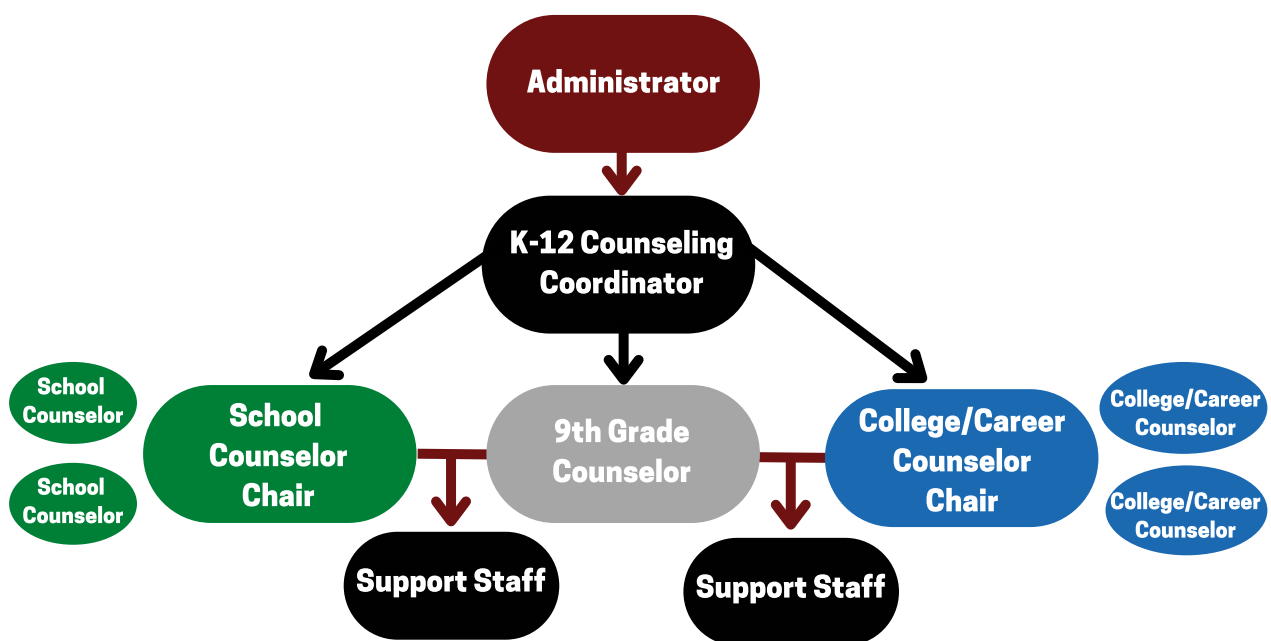
# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & ROLES

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## RHS Counseling Department Flow







# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & ROLES

## Staffing

**An increase of two staff members would cut down on the current workload and allow counselors more time to spend with students individually. Additionally, dividing labor within the department, as described above, would allow counselors to focus on one area of counseling and avoid the triage affect. Listed below are a wide array of responsibilities currently handled by all counselors, now divided up between the three proposed roles.**

**There is also very little diversity within the department, with most counselors Caucasian females. Student feedback in Naviance referenced this lack of diversity, with certain students feeling unrepresented. When hiring new counselors, awareness of gender and ethnicity in relation to school populations should be noted.**

### School Counselor Roles

Consult with outside mental health support, Mental Health curriculum, Failure letters and meetings, IEPs, SAP, MTSS, Schedule Changes, New Student Registration, Non-College Parent Programs, Crisis and Risk Threat Assessment, Work Plans, Safety Plans, Re-entry Meetings, Mental Health counseling groups, Open House, SAIP, Individual Counseling, 504s, actively involved in ASCA and PSCA

### College Counselor Roles

Radnor Scholarship Fund, NCAA Eligibility, Scholarship data tracking and programming, Financial Aid/FAFSA, Junior/Senior Drop-ins and Meetings, College, and Career Parent Programs, Naviance, College Class/Curriculum, Recommendation Letters, College Fair Planning, College Visit Meetings/Visiting Colleges, Senior Exit Survey, ASVAB/CC Placement Testing, Learning Support Career Planning, Vocational School Liaison, actively involved in NACAC and PACAC

### Freshmen Counselor Roles

Freshman FUNdamentals, Mentor Program, Small Group Introductions, 9th grade in-class programming, Middle School course selections and transition meetings

### Shared Roles and Responsibilities

APs, SATs, PSATs, Course Selection, Parent Meetings and Programs. Newsletters, Team Meetings, Departmental Meetings, RHSC PR/Social Media presence, Medical Careers, School Profile, ACT 339 compliance



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & ROLES

## Staffing

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### 9th Graders A-Z

One School Counselor

### 10th, 11th and 12th Graders

A Team of Two Counselors. A Student Will Have the Same Counseling Team for Grades 10-12.

#### Alphabetical Breakdown

School  
Counselor

A-H

College/Career  
Counselor

School  
Counselor

I-Q

College/Career  
Counselor

School  
Counselor

R-Z

College/Career  
Counselor



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & ROLES

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## Data Management

There is no system currently used to track interactions between counselors and students. It is very important that a system to account for every significant meeting a student has with RHSC, individual, academic and college specific, is developed. Currently, this information is only kept in individual counselor files, with no file sharing capabilities. To best meet the needs of students, two separate programs should be used to house student interactions. For Career/College, programs like Naviance and Schoology provide meeting notes sections where counselors can manage student interactions, push responses to students and share notes with parents. Creating a process like this one not only demonstrates counselor attentiveness, but also allows other counselors to step in more easily when a colleague is out. Similarly, tracking student Mental Health interactions in a program like eSchool can limit redundancy of care while also tracking individual student trends.

## Technology

There is no current universal curriculum for all aspects of RHSC. Schoology can be used to create a unified RHSC virtual curriculum that addresses mental health, academic advising, special needs, and college/career counseling. This would work in conjunction with current programming and individual meetings. By creating specialized electronic and virtual content that can be completed in advance of in-person programming, counselors can make better use of time spent with students. With a foundation of technology already in place at RHS, building a virtual infrastructure would be manageable.

## Implementation

In order to successfully implement the program described above, a two-year timeline is suggested. If approved, hiring a seasoned College Counseling Chair should be a priority. Once an individual is selected, they will need time to plan and develop the program and its implementation with the School Counseling Co-Chair. This should be done without a dedicated roster of students. Following the example of the Transitional Model above, the new College Counseling Chair can support the department as an Expert in College Admission while creating a curriculum to be implemented the following year. Hiring a second counselor, who will have a roster and eventually become a College Counselor, is also important. This would allow a complete team to work out all the details of the new program. With proper communication and planning, the Private School/Divided Model can then be implemented in the second year with better results and a smoother transition.





# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**ACT** - American College Test; A standardized test used by numerous colleges and universities in the U.S. for undergraduate admissions.

**AP** - Advanced Placement Exam; A culminating standardized test administered by the College Board as a course end exam. Students enrolled in an Advanced Placement course would take the corresponding exam in May.

**ASCA** - American School Counseling Association; A national professional organization dedicated to supporting and developing the expertise of school counselors.

**ASVAB** - Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery; The ASVAB is a timed, multi-aptitude test, which is given at more than 14,000 schools and Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) nationwide and is developed and maintained by the U.S. Department of Defense.

**Chapter 339** - Chapter 339 of the Pennsylvania School Code mandates that all school districts in the state have a comprehensive, sequential program of school counseling services, which does stress career and future readiness; Kindergarten through Grade 12.

**CSS Profile** - College Scholarship Service Profile; An online application for financial aid (grants and scholarships) hosted by the College Board.

**College Fairs** - Events that bring admissions officers from various colleges and universities to high schools to meet with and answer questions from students and parents.

**DCTS** - Delaware County Technical Schools; The career and technical programs run by the Delaware County Intermediate Unit housed at the Aston and Folcroft campuses, as well as over half a dozen local hospitals.

**FAFSA** - Free Application for Federal Student Aid; A form for prospective and current college students to help determine their eligibility for financial aid.

**IEP** - Individualized Education Plan; A written program developed to provide a student with an identified disability specialized instruction and related services as appropriate, pursuant to Federal and state law.

**Learning Support Career Planning** - Students with IEPs who are 14 years old or older will be provided with a transition plan. A transition plan meeting will be held which can help students move into further education, training, or employment.



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Medical Careers** - Medical Careers is a competitive DCTS program for students interested pursuing a career in the medical field.

**MTSS** - Multi-Tiered System of Supports; A standards-aligned framework for enhancing student academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs.

**NACAC** - National Association for College Admission Counseling; A national organization dedicated to the transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

**Naviance** - A college, career, and life readiness software platform that assists students in planning for post-secondary college or career goals.

**NCAA Clearinghouse (also called the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center)** - For prospective college student-athletes, the NCAA Eligibility Center is the part of the NCAA that will ensure a student meets the minimum academic requirements and are considered an amateur athlete. It does this by reviewing a student's high school transcripts, SAT/ACT test scores and reviewing the answers to the amateurism questionnaire.

**NMSQT** - National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test; A scholarship and recognition program based on student performance on the PSAT administered during a student's junior year.

**PACAC** - Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling; A Pennsylvania based organization dedicated to the transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

**PHEAA** - Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency; An agency that administers state and national level financial aid programs for prospective and active college students in Pennsylvania.

**PSAT** - Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test; A standardized test taken by students across the United States to help prepare them to sit for the SAT.

**PSCA** - Pennsylvania School Counseling Association; A state organization dedicated to supporting the professional growth and development of school counselors.

**Radnor High School Scholarship Fund** - The Radnor High School Scholarship Fund (RHSSF) was created to provide financial aid to deserving graduates of Radnor High School for the furtherance of their post-high school education by means of scholarship grants. nia for test scores and continues to set the standard for public high schools nationally.



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**RHS** - Radnor High School; The only public high school in Radnor Township, Radnor High School has served the community since 1894. The current building was renovated in 1999 and serves nearly 1,160 students from St. Davids, Wayne, Rosemont, Bryn Mawr, Villanova, Ithan, Newtown Square and Radnor. Named a Blue Ribbon School in 1996, Radnor consistently ranks among the highest in Pennsylvania for test scores and continues to set the standard for public high schools nationally.

**RHSC** - Radnor High School Counseling Department

**RTSD** - Radnor Township School District; Radnor Township School District is Radnor Township's only public school system, covering nearly 14 square miles, and has been recognized as one of the finest school districts in the state and nation. RTSD is home to Radnor High School, Radnor Middle School, Ithan Elementary School, Radnor Elementary School, and Wayne Elementary School.

**SAIP** - Student Attendance Improvement Plan; An intervention plan to support students experiencing truancy issues.

**SAP** - Student Assistance Program; A school based program used to support students whereby a team of educators removes barriers and adds supports to address student social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues.

**SAT** - Scholastic Aptitude Test; A standardized test used by numerous colleges and universities in the U.S. for undergraduate admissions.

**Senior Exit Survey** - Survey of the experiences and plans of the graduating seniors from the high school that is administered in June each year prior to commencement.

**Vocational School Liaison** - The Radnor School Counselor who connects the Delaware County Technical School to parents and students.