

RAVENS CROFT COLLEGE COUNSELING

A Collaborative
Journey to College
Preparedness

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TWO THINGS IMMEDIATELY DISTINGUISH the amber-paneled offices of the Ravenscroft College Counseling Department from others of its kind. First is the open-door policy, made evident by the steady stream of students dropping by. Second is that students are genuinely encouraged to do just that.

“RAVENS CROFT IS UNIQUE in our approach to college preparedness,” program co-director Bill Pruden said. “We not only want to know who our students are, we want to know who they want to be.”

An Individualized Path to Success

Staffed by three full-time counselors — Pruden, Lia Prugh and Sean Kennedy — with more than 50 years of combined expertise, the department assists students in all phases of the college journey. The comprehensive program complements Ravenscroft’s Lead From Here initiative as each Raven charts an individualized path, developing the insights and tools to take ownership of decisions about their futures.

“The confidence that our students gain through identifying their own strengths and interests carries with

them into their college experience, and they are able to self-advocate, be adaptive and continue honing their problem-solving skills,” said Prugh.



AKSHAY LULLA '18 confers with Bill Pruden, one of three college counselors working with Upper School students

Guiding students on that path to self-discovery is where these counselors excel. Counseling assistant Millie Florio, who has been with the department for almost 14 years, knows firsthand the personalized attention each student receives. “Students come here every day to discuss anything and everything — their essays, their plans, their fears. What makes Ravenscroft so special is that our counselors really get to know our students,” Florio said.

Tools of the Trade

Sensitivity to the needs, interests and goals of every Raven is at the forefront of Ravenscroft’s philosophy, and to this end the college counseling department employs an impressive array of tools. There are advisory programs, enrichment opportunities, one-to-one assistance, application support and opportunities for self-reflection and discovery every step of the way.

“It’s an incremental process,” Kennedy explained. “We provide the options; students provide the need and direction. As our students become more and more focused, so does our program and the support we offer.”

Also supporting students in this discovery is Naviance, a comprehensive software application that assists students in aligning their strengths and interests to long-term goals. Naviance gives students access to self-assessments, testing dates and deadlines, and insights into the college admission process, all meant to uncover and refine academic aims.

Even more support was introduced this past year. “Senior Boot Camps,” offered during select community times, teach students the nuts and bolts of college preparation, such as navigating Naviance, requesting teacher recommendations, obtaining transcripts, understanding the Common Application and more — helping alleviate the stresses that can burden students during their senior year.

Relationships Matter

With such a broad range of tools at each student’s disposal, however, it may be a more basic approach that has the greatest impact: building meaningful relationships. Fundamental to Ravenscroft’s philosophy is fostering collaborative experiences for students and families while nurturing individual potential.

Senior Dean of Students Kat Belk has seen its benefits.

“One of the best things Ravenscroft does is foster relationships,” Belk said. “There’s not a single senior who walks across the stage who doesn’t have an adult in the building who knows them well.”

And this support extends beyond the classroom. In her monthly dean’s newsletter, Belk shares information and reminders with parents of seniors — as she put it, “like a mom, but for college” — but she also addresses the emotional roller coaster of college acceptance.



Lia Prugh, co-director of college counseling, meets with students in her office

“Students get upset and need someone to talk to about their frustrations,” she said. “They have concerns like ‘I don’t know where I want to go’ and ‘What do I do now?’ There’s absolutely an emotional component to college acceptance that needs to be addressed.”



The Advantages of Choice

Another advantage for the Ravenscroft student is choice. Counselors attend numerous regional and national events to enhance their understanding of what’s out there. Their staying abreast of current admission trends, policies and data ultimately benefits students, but, equally as important, it establishes relationships with universities both locally and abroad.

“There are instances when only one student in 10 years went to a particular school,” Pruden pointed out. “But we have a relationship with them and [know] that one school is the right fit for that one student.”

Knowing those “right fits” can be a real advantage, even for students with clear goals.

As Taylor Patel ’16 recalled, “My parents are in the hospitality industry, so I already knew what I wanted to do. But Ravenscroft helped me focus. Mr. Kennedy ... opened my eyes to the options I had.”

Now a sophomore at Boston University majoring in hospitality administration, Patel appreciates the support she received from her counselor. “Mr. Kennedy advocated for me. He showed me how to set myself apart. I wouldn’t be where I am today without the support and guidance of Ravenscroft,” she said.

She’s not alone in her praise. A survey sent to members of the Class of 2017 asked if “the college acceptances my child has to choose from provided him/her with an option(s) that is (are) the right fit for his/her education after Ravenscroft.” An impressive 96.8 percent of students and 93.2 percent of parents either strongly agreed or agreed.

Ultimately, that’s what Ravens receive from the counseling office — confidence that their college path has been uniquely tailored for them alone. After all, they’re the ones who will be taking it. *R*