

GCS

GRACE
CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL

Students Path to Career and Calling:

An overview of the guidance process at GCS

(Updated August 2021)



For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Eph. 2:10

Everyone on this earth should believe, amid whatever madness or moral failure, that his life and temperament have some object on the earth. Every one on the earth should believe that he has something to give to the world which cannot otherwise be given.

GK Chesterton

NOTE TO PARENTS

It is our prayer that this booklet, along with the comprehensive guidance process that it describes, will aid you as you seek to help your child discern God's will for his or her life. It is perhaps a great irony that a minimum of twelve years of a child's life is spent in formal schooling, yet little of that time is devoted to discovering *how* God would like to use the skills, abilities, and knowledge that are developed during those formative years. In other words, students are often prepared only to view the purpose of their work and education in a very limited fashion. Whether implicitly or explicitly, they're typically taught that the great purpose of work is to provide for one's needs and desires.

The results of this narrow vision for one's life are manifest in the twenty-something culture of today. Sociologists increasingly find that the time period between high school and one's late twenties is characterized by a sense of purposelessness. Coined "emerging adulthood", this age range often finds young people with a heightened focus on the self and a reluctance to embrace adult responsibilities and roles.

A robust view of God's calling for one's life will help one see their vocation as something given them by God rather than something that is meant to simply provide self-fulfillment or gratification. Pushing against the trend of emerging adulthood, our guidance program will provide a compelling vision for work and life, one which places all work in the context of stewardship of God's gifts.

Our decision to devote significant time and resources to this cause is a reflection of our continued commitment to our mission statement. Simply put, this is an area in which we seek to aid Christian parents, in preparing "our young people to know God and to live in obedience to His will for their lives." May our combined efforts as educators and parents be in keeping with God's will for your child's future.

MISSION

The mission of Grace Christian School's Guidance Office is to guide students in discerning how their God-given gifts and interests can be used to further God's work in His world.

PHILOSOPHY

At Grace Christian School, it is our firm belief that God has called every Christian to serve His purposes in the world. Beginning with His initial calling of Abraham, God has always called His people to be a blessing to all nations (Gen. 22:18). In keeping with this biblical concept, we seek to aid our students in discovering the unique skills and interests with which God has gifted them so that they may in turn use those gifts to work for the cause of God's kingdom in this world. Whether in the classroom, boardroom, playroom, drafting room, operating room, athletic field, mission field, factory floor, sales floor, job site, or pulpit, the work of Christ's followers should be redemptive.

There are two types of calling. We believe that God has called all His people to love Him with their whole being and to love their neighbors as themselves. This could be referred to as God's "general calling." A "specific calling" is the arena in which one carries out that love of God and love of one's neighbor. In short, it seeks to answer the question, "Does God want me to be a butcher, banker, or baker?"

Our approach to calling begins with a simple question: How has God made you? Over several years, this question is incrementally examined through conversations with guidance staff, analysis of various tests, opportunities for real-life experiences in various fields, and a look at patterns that often emerge in a student's life.

This approach is very helpful to high school students who often struggle to answer the typical career question: What do you want to be/do? In short, our approach is guided by a belief that God has given His people guidance in how they should serve Him. Finding a student's skills, abilities, and interests can give us clues as to how God might be calling a person. Once these are determined, then a more focused search can begin, one in which gifts are matched with careers or callings that require them.

Finally, it is our belief that parents are the primary counselors and advisors for the student. We view the school's role as simply coming alongside both the student and his or her parents to assist in this important process.

PATH TO CAREER AND CALLING

Following is an overview of the counseling process that begins in the middle school years and continues through the senior year. While there are many steps, the most vital component is a continued reliance on prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Parents can call and schedule a meeting anytime during the year to discuss career, college, or classes.

GRADE 7:

- *February/March:* General meeting with all 7th grade parents to give overview of the guidance process.

GRADE 8:

- *January:* One-on-one meeting between student/parent and guidance counselor to discuss course selection, possible areas of career interest, and success in high school.
- *Spring:* High school orientation for students.
- Spring: sign up for high school classes and electives

Grade 9:

- Students meet with the guidance counselor after the first and third quarters.
- *Fall:* Job Shadowing: shadow in a field of career interest
- *Spring:* Selection of classes for 10th Grade – Parents are encouraged to meet with the guidance counselor.

GRADE 10:

- *Fall* – PSAT Test
- Students meet with the guidance counselor after the second and third quarters.
- *Fall:* Job Shadowing: shadow in a field of career interest, different from 9th grade shadow
- *Spring:* Selection of classes for 11th Grade – Parents can meet with the guidance counselor if needed.

GRADE 11:

- *Fall* – PSAT Test
- *Fall:* Job Shadowing: shadow in a field of career interest, different from 9th and 10th shadow
- The student will meet one-on-one with the guidance counselor twice a year.
- *Junior Guidance and Calling Class:* Class for college and vocational readiness. Students will complete a theology of work study, research careers and colleges, learn about the college application process, search for careers and participate in career, personality, and spiritual gifts tests. Students will create a personal resume.
- *February:* College Night for parents and students - Informative meeting to help parents with the college application process.
- *Spring:*
 - Students are encouraged to register to take the SAT in May or June.
 - Students are encouraged to begin college visits.
 - Mentorships are encouraged for college-bound and vocationally-oriented students for the summer.
 - Selection of classes for 12th grade.

GRADE 12:

- *Early Fall:* One-on-one meeting between student and guidance counselor to discuss college application process, SAT/ACT scores, GPA, and vocational training. Guidance office works closely with seniors throughout the first semester to complete plans for after high school.
- *Fall:*
 - SAT/ACT testing
 - Apply for scholarships
 - Mentorships/Apprenticeships: connect with local businesses to gain practical experience.
 - Job Shadowing: shadow in the career area the student will pursue after high school. The student may need to shadow more often to help in career selection.
 - April/May students will finalize plans, exit interview with the Principal

TIMELINE

The following timeline provides helpful benchmarks for parents. This will help guide parents' thinking about the college and career process as well as giving definite things to *do* each year. Rely on God's guidance throughout this process. An exhaustive version of this list can be found in *The College Handbook* (pgs. 72-77)(distributed to each GCS High School family).

GRADE 9

- Create a four-year high school plan based on your student's goals. Familiarize yourself with the resources offered by the school.
- Start your student thinking about careers. Encourage a tentative career goal.
- Encourage extracurricular activities – part-time job, community service, etc.
- Meet with the guidance counselor.
- Save for college!
- Pursue job shadowing opportunities.

GRADE 10

- Take the PSAT
- Meet with the guidance counselor.
- Attend college and career fairs.
- Students hoping to attend a U.S. military academy should request a precandidate questionnaire and complete it.
- Encourage extracurricular activities – part-time job, community service, etc.
- Tour college campuses.

GRADE 11

FALL

- Participate in Junior Guidance and Calling class with Guidance Counselor.
 - o Create a resume
 - o Discover strengths and weaknesses, personality, and spiritual gifts.
 - o Research careers of interest, and the training needed to enter those careers. Further research into college, vocational school, and other paths after high school.
 - o Complete a Theology of Work study, including reading *Lord, What is My Calling?* by Teasi Cannon.
- Take the PSAT (offered every fall at GCS).
- Create a file to organize your college search, testing, applications, etc.
- Create a goingmerry.com account. With your family, begin to learn about financial aid.

WINTER

- Register for the SAT or ACT at least once in the spring and again next fall.
- Begin searching for financial aid resources.
- Find out if colleges in which you're interested require the SAT subject test.
- Find out what professional certifications or training you may need for your chosen career field.
- Consider the steps necessary for a mentorship during your senior year.

SPRING

- Visit some colleges – public, private, large, small – find out what you like.
- Develop a list of 5-8 colleges that interest you.
- Scan local newspapers/websites to find out what local organizations offer financial aid to graduating seniors.
- Plan and schedule mentorships for next school year.
- Take the SAT (or during summer months)

SUMMER

- Find a full-time or part-time job, participate in a camp, internship, etc.
- Visit colleges. Speak with admissions counselors.
- Update resume.
- Download applications for colleges. Find out their application dates.

GRADE 12

SEPTEMBER

- Narrow your list of colleges.
- Create a master calendar with all deadlines and important dates and information – tests, fees, registrations, applications, other materials, etc.

OCTOBER

- Finalize your college choices
- Prepare any Early Decision, Early Action, or rolling admissions materials.
- Ask teachers, counselor, etc...for letters of recommendation.
- Take SAT again if desired.

NOVEMBER

- Nov. 1-15: Some colleges may require Early Decision applications during this time.
- Complete at least one college application by Thanksgiving.

DECEMBER - Send in applications and essays. Keep copies for yourself.

JANUARY - January 1-15 – final application deadlines for most schools.

JANUARY - MARCH - Stay active in school. Accepting colleges do ask for second-semester grades. Final college deadlines usually are March 1.

APRIL - You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. Visit your college before accepting! Notify your counselor as soon as you've made a choice.

MAY - May 1 – Most colleges require commitments or deposits to be made.

Adapted from College Counseling Sourcebook, 5th edition. 2008. The College Board

GLOSSARY

As you search for God's calling in the area of college and career, you'll encounter some unfamiliar vocabulary. Following is a glossary that will define some of these more commonly-used terms.

Dual enrollment – Dual enrollment classes enable students to simultaneously earn high school and college credit. These classes may be offered onsite at GCS, at a local college, or online. Dual enrollment classes are available to juniors and seniors and are weighted at the high school on a 5.0 scale.

Advanced Placement – Advanced Placement (AP[®]) courses provide students an opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. Classes are offered onsite at GCS or online. Students earn credit by earning a high enough score on the AP[®] exam in the spring. AP classes are available to juniors and seniors and are considered to strengthen a student's college application. Students additionally benefit by receiving a grade weighted on a 5.0 scale.

Online – Online courses, typically offered at GCS through Liberty University Online Academy or Seven Star Academy, allow students the flexibility to take a class that may not fit in their schedule or that may not be offered at GCS. When taken through an approved provider, students may earn high school credit and, in some cases, college credit.

Honors – Honors courses require students to interact with material on a deeper level and to complete assignments of greater difficulty. Assignments are evaluated using higher standards. Honors classes are currently offered in the 9-12 grade. Grades are based on a 4.5 scale.

NACAC Guide – The NACAC *Guide to the College Admissions Process* is a “go-to” resource. It contains information ranging from the application process to important deadlines; from questions for admissions' officers to financial aid guidelines. Students receive this in an electronic pdf format.

SAT –The SAT is a nationally recognized college admission exam that tests knowledge of reading, writing and math. Most students take the SAT during both their junior and senior year of high school. Virtually all colleges and universities use the SAT to make admission decisions.

PSAT - The Preliminary SAT (PSAT), administered at GCS, allows students to experience taking the SAT before it will actually count towards college admissions applications. The PSAT also serves as the qualifying test for National Merit Scholarships.

ACT – The ACT is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. ACT results are accepted by virtually all four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

Career/Personality testing: These tests are designed to assess a student's areas of interest, skill, and personality traits. Through analysis of the results, they can be very helpful in guiding students towards a specific career or educational calling.

Job shadowing – A long-standing program at GCS, through this program a student can “shadow” for a day someone who works in a profession in which he/she has some interest. Through these experiences, many students have discovered their career calling or decided against a career which they had previously considered. Parents and students are strongly encouraged to pursue these opportunities even beyond the school requirement.

Mentorship – The Mentorship program, available to juniors and seniors, allows a student to be mentored by an adult who works in a field in which that student is interested. The student typically spends several hours weekly at the workplace and earns credit. Evaluations are submitted by both the student and the workplace mentor.

Extracurricular activities – Activities such as athletics, leadership, service work, part-time jobs, theatre, community involvement, music, etc...all strengthen a student’s appeal to potential colleges and employers. Many of these opportunities are available through GCS. See *The ‘Extras’ Can Count* article (pgs. 18-19) in *The College Handbook* for more information on the importance of extracurricular involvement.

Freshman Seminar – Covering topics such as time management, test taking, and the guidance process, the Freshman Seminar will prepare freshmen for successful high school careers.

Junior Guidance Class- A one day a week year-long course taught by the guidance counselor. This class is designed to thoughtfully consider God’s calling on their lives. Within the course, students are prepared for life after high school, diving into the different options including college, community college, trade school, military service and entrepreneurship. The students will learn how to write a resume, how to look for jobs, and set goals for the future. Students also complete extensive college and career research. College bound students complete SAT/ACT prep. Planning for mentorships during senior year begins, especially for those who are not college bound.

For Christians to influence the world with the truth of God's Word requires the recovery of the great Reformation doctrine of vocation. Christians are called to God's service not only in church professions but also in every secular calling. The task of restoring truth to the culture depends largely on our laypeople.

To bring back truth, on a practical level, the church must encourage Christians to be not merely consumers of culture but makers of culture. The church needs to cultivate Christian artists, musicians, novelists, filmmakers, journalists, attorneys, teachers, scientists, business executives, and the like, teaching its laypeople the sense in which every secular vocation—including, above all, the callings of husband, wife, and parent—is a sphere of Christian ministry, a way of serving God and neighbor that is grounded in God's truth.

-J. Gresham Machen, founder, Westminster Theological Seminary

“He who does little, but in a state to which God calls him, does more than he who labors much, but in a state which he has thoughtlessly chosen: a cripple limping in the right way is better than a racer out of it.”

– Augustine of Hippo