

DeBakey HSHP PTO - Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2019

Location: DeBakey Conference Room

Meeting began at 8:06 a.m.

Principal's Report – Principal Perry provided updates regarding the following items in her “State of the School Report”:

- DeBakey was recently rated #23 out of 500 STEM high schools ranked by Newsweek magazine. Stay tuned for press conference to be held later this month.
- 2nd grading cycle ended Friday, November 8; students will receive report cards for 2nd cycle this Friday, November 15. Parents are also encouraged to use GradeSpeed to monitor your child's progress
- “Thank You” to the PTO for sponsoring after school Basketball and Volleyball! The practice/game schedule may have to be adjusted, but the teams are doing well.
- “Viper Hour” begins in November. The purpose is to provide flexibility for students who will benefit from additional study time. There are tutorials, which are mandatory for any DeBakey student with a failing grade during previous, 2nd, grading cycle. Viper Hour also intended to allow students additional times to work on projects as well as participate in clubs and organizations.
- Tutorials – Students are assigned mid-day tutorials based on previous cycle grades and on request. Teachers are available for tutorials Monday – Thursday, mornings (before school) and afternoons (after school) in addition to Viper Hour.

Important Dates - Principal Perry highlighted the following upcoming events:

- **Thursday, November 14**, 7 – 9 p.m. – Baylor College of Medicine 9th grade Open House. Invitations were distributed to students last week. While Freshmen (And their parents) are main targets, the event is open to all students interested in Pre-Med. Lots of useful information is shared along with a tour of Baylor College of Medicine. Reservations are required!! Please see invitation on the school website. Discounted (\$5) Parking will be available in Garage #6, next door to Baylor COM.
- **Friday, November 15** – 11th grade field trip to NASA
- **Friday, November 15** – Picture Re-takes!!
- **Thursday, November 21** – 8th grade Open House will be held from 6 – 7:30 p.m. Please note the date change due to earlier HISD application deadline this year.
- **Friday, November 22** – Student Talent Show. Parents, please arrive by 1:45 – Talent Show starts at 2 p.m.
- **Friday, December 13** - 3rd Grading cycle end! Please be mindful that the 3rd cycle is extremely short – two weeks before and after Thanksgiving. 3rd cycle Progress Reports will be distributed the first week of December.
- **November 25-28** – School will be closed for Thanksgiving Holidays.

Principal Perry answered questions regarding enrollment, course selection (AP/Pre AP track) and test retakes. Reminder to parents – please check GradeSpeed and email your student’s teacher if grades have not been posted.

President’s Report – Communications Coordinator, Andrea Simon, thanked the Fall Festival Committee for a very successful event! Special thanks to Daniella for coordinating.

9th Grade Liaison Report – Nichole Ake reported on several successful recent events, including College Night and Boys/Girls Volleyball and Basketball. Volunteers are still needed to assist with upcoming events. Please contact Nichole to volunteer. There are six meets; teams have played two games so far. Parent assistance always appreciated for snacks and water. Upcoming events: Science Symposium will be held Friday, February 14, 2020. It will be held at DeBaKey from 8:30 – Noon. Committee will be sending out invitations soon with a goal of approximately 40 STEM-based speakers. Please contact Nichole with suggested speakers.

Uniforms – Paul Ake continues to sell school uniforms (and related items) most Wednesdays during lunchtime, just outside flexroom.

Guest Speaker – Vy Van Topic: College Planning Talk

Vy Van, graduate of a top tier school in London, and Masters from Stanford University, gave a most informative presentation on how to prepare for the college application process, particularly at top tier universities. Among the many nuggets he shared was the following:

- Start early! 10th grade, particularly during summer breaks, is the best time to **research** schools, both public and private. Consider what best suits the student – e.g. large v. small classroom settings; being mindful of differences between public and private universities. **Campus visits** are also helpful in getting a feel for what suits your learning needs and what types of programs are available.
- When thinking about applying for college, *“Target at least 3!”* Mr. Van suggests you consider three types of schools: **Safety School** (one(s) for which you know your grades and scores qualify); **Match School** (one(s) for which your grades and test scores meet the school’s acceptance requirement; and **Reach School** (generally top tier/top programs/Ivy league).

Priority Deadlines: UT Austin 11/1; UH 11/15 vs. Regular Decision deadline: UT 12/1; UH 6/7

Common App vs. Apply TX – Three Key Differences:

1. Apply TX requires more essays
2. Common App deadlines are later (January – March for regular decision)
3. Apply TX essays determine internal (i.e. school specific) scholarships

General Tips: When responding to essays, choose topics that overlap for both Common App and Apply TX. Also, prepare generic/primary essays that can be used both for admission as well as scholarships.

What are colleges looking for in a student?

1. Excellent academic profile: Consists of rigorous classes (Honors, PreAP); High **GPA**; High **Class Rank**; High **SAT Scores**. Van recommends SAT prep courses not later than sophomore year as “practice, practice, practice” is the key to the best SAT score. Mr. Van emphasized these numbers as they matter a lot! He also stated the applications process is holistic, but defining characteristics can be difficult to establish amongst a vast pool of qualified candidates.
2. Excellence in/passion regarding one or two things ONLY – better to demonstrate passion concerning a few things than to simply list multiple groups and activities that lack demonstrated depth of experience.
3. Demonstrate through essay and college applications – multiple drafts of your essays should be reviewed by multiple people (ex. Teachers, coaches, parents, students who have previously been accepted to top tier schools, etc.).
4. Leadership skills – Volunteering is important, but not simply for the hours! Students need to find an area about which they are passionate, become involved and be prepared to demonstrate “What makes you stand out?” (Mr. Van provided an example of a student, passionate about the game of chess, who teaches younger students on a weekly basis.)

Letters of Recommendation – *Favorable* Teacher recommendations are a great resource! Critical that students build relationships (particularly with AP and STEM instructors). Some “Do’s and Don’ts”:

DO

Ask in Advance
Give reminders
Choose someone you know will be your champion
Send them your resume/let them know your approach
Make sure they’re actually good at writing letters
Thank them profusely

DO NOT

Ask at the last minute
Pester
Remind them at the last minute
Assume they actually like you
Be ungrateful

GPA/Test Scores –That said, always be aware of application deadlines.

Following his very comprehensive presentation about researching and applying to college, Mr. Van urged parents to consider registering students for one of the weekend SAT preparation courses offered at Van Houston Academy. For more information, he can be contacted at vanhoustonacademy@gmail.com. You can also check the DeBakey website for additional information regarding Van Houston Academy.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.
Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Barnett, PTO Secretary