

Reach High Scholars

P.O. Box 745
Raymond, N.H. 03077

May 1, 2012

Dear Friends of the Reach High Scholars Program:

We would like to bring you up-to-date on some recent developments in the Reach High Scholars Program.

The Program encourages Raymond Middle School and High School students to “reach high” in their pursuit of an education. It supplements the resources which the Raymond School District is in a position to provide. A description of the Program’s major initiatives can be found on its website: www.reachhighscholars.org.

Recent Progress

The RHS Class of 2011 had record-breaking acceptance results at highly-competitive college. Several members of the class had participated in the initiatives of the Reach High Scholars Program during most of their high school years. It has been a pleasure to observe how well they are doing at their colleges (Brown, Dartmouth, Holy Cross, UNH and three at Skidmore). Equally important to our Program is the amount of supportive communicating they do, while at college and when they return to Raymond, with current RHS students.

There was some feeling that the Class of ‘11 was unique in the history of the town and that six of them going to highly competitive colleges was a performance unlikely to ever be repeated. A presentation they made to the School Board last spring concluded with the investor’s warning that “past performance is no guarantee of future results.” The intention was to temper excessively high expectations for succeeding classes. It turns out the Class of ‘12 has done very well.

The Class of 2012

Seven members of the Class of 2012 will be attending top colleges. Nicole Lee will be going to Bennington, Ashley Lord to Dartmouth, Collin Spinney to Hamilton, Charlie Debenedetto to Hobart & William Smith, Shaun Gallagher to Lafayette, Joe Morin to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Abbey Schlangen to Trinity.

Historically it was typical that at most one RHS student per year would attend a top college. Hopefully, these last two years represent a new trend.

This year there were fewer total acceptances at top colleges than in 2011 in part because some of the students were accepted at their first choice colleges in an Early Decision round and withdrew all their other applications.

Student Athletes

The Class of ‘12 has some very talented athletes who also are good students. Recognizing this, we

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spent time with them and their parents reviewing the rules of the NCAA and some sports conferences (Ivy League, New England Small College Athletic Conference, etc.), procedures to be followed and information to send to coaches to stimulate their interest in sponsoring athletes at their respective admission offices.

For a small New Hampshire high school the results have been unusually good. Ashley Lord was recruited by the track coach at Dartmouth, an Ivy League school that competes in Division I. Abbey Schlangen was recruited by the track coach at Trinity (NESCAC), and Joe Morin was recruited by the basketball coach at RPI (Liberty League). The NESCAC and Liberty League play very competitive sports in Division III, sometimes beating Division I teams.

Summer Enrichment Programs

This summer 50 Raymond students will attend enrichment programs provided by top academic institutions. These programs are an important stepping stone to good colleges for RHS students. We are particularly grateful for the support we are receiving from the summer programs of Brown University, Dartmouth College, Phillips Exeter Academy and St. Paul's School.

Sixteen high school students will attend boarding programs of up to five weeks' duration and an additional 34 middle school students and high school freshmen will participate in Raymond Roundtables, a four-week outreach program in Raymond conducted by Phillips Exeter.

Rachel Faust, Amanda Lundergan and Hope Palattella will each attend **Summer@Brown** this summer for one or two-week courses.

Six members of the RHS Class of 2013 (Nicholas Clark, Tayler Dileo, Briana Draper, Kathryn Gray, Steven Mackenzie and Hope Palattella) have been participating in the **Summer Enrichment at Dartmouth (SEAD)** program since their freshman year. They attend Dartmouth for two or three weeks each summer for four years. In addition, during the school year, Dartmouth undergraduate Interns are at RHS full time during three successive periods each of about nine weeks helping the six SEAD students with their academic progress. During their three weeks at Dartmouth this summer, the RHS SEAD students will be taking courses centered on college preparation.

The SEAD program has been expanded in several respects since RHS first became a partner school. SEAD III, the summer after the junior year, is now three weeks rather than two. More importantly, a two week session has been added after the senior year in high school, focused on supporting the program's high school graduates in their last month before leaving for college. In addition, this is the first year in which there have been three successive Dartmouth Interns at RHS (covering most of the school year), giving the SEAD students hands-on help and assisting in promoting early college awareness and other projects involving all RHS students.

We are delighted to have been encouraged by SEAD to apply for another four-year cohort to begin in the summer of 2013, with the possibility to repeat again in 2015.

RHS will have four students at the **Phillips Exeter Academy Summer School** this year. Cameron Corriveau, Maria Harmon, Jessica Robey and Holly Willard will be attending. Virginia Harmon, Emma-Grace Mendenhall and Shaun Spinney will be attending the **Advanced Studies Program at St. Paul's School** this summer. Each of these programs is for five weeks.

Raymond Roundtables, which was started in 2010, has been expanded for this summer to include rising high school sophomores as well as middle school students entering the eighth and ninth grades. Three English and three math courses will be conducted by faculty members from

Phillips Exeter Academy employing their world-renowned “Harkness Method” of teaching. The courses will meet three times per week for four weeks. A total of 34 students will be enrolled with 27 taking English, 25 taking math and 18 taking both subjects.

The Harkness Method is a student-centered seminar style of learning in which the teacher guides and fosters discussion amongst the students who are sitting at a round table. Students learn to take responsibility for their education, to listen to each other and to explore the potential of their academic and intellectual abilities.

Financing

The overall philosophy of the Reach High Scholars Program is that money is not a roadblock to a great education. The best colleges have significant amounts of financial aid, which significantly reduces the necessity for local resources to help needy students attend them. The key is to have the colleges accept a student, which is a competitive, but not insurmountable, process. We direct our resources toward increasing the likelihood of acceptance, helping students get to and pass through the starting gate.

The various initiatives of the Reach High Scholars Program have attendant costs. Many of them are relatively small in amount and manageable locally by revenues from the SAT Boot Camp (http://www.reachhighscholars.org/test_prep.html) and contributions.

Summer enrichment programs are extremely important tools in our assistance to Raymond students. There are hundreds of them in the country of varying degrees of quality. Most all of them are very expensive and few have significant financial aid.

We are fortunate to have established relationships with summer enrichment programs that have need-based aid policies second to none in the country when it comes to generosity. However, each of them has an aid capacity that is finite (and not infinite). To augment their generosity, they encourage communities and school districts to make contributions within their means. We have been clear with each of them that Raymond and its school system have limited financial resources and the best we can do is “pass the bucket and see what falls in” (as we said in our application to the SEAD program).

Commensurate with that position, we have an obligation to try to raise money. We have done so by approaching a limited number of charitable organizations, companies and other philanthropists that have been identified as having strategies consistent with the initiatives of the Reach High Scholars Program. Our normal practice is to approach potential donors only for committed or budgeted expenses to be incurred by a summer enrichment partner on behalf of Raymond students.

In recent years, over \$200,000 of financial assistance has been provided by our four partners for the benefit of our students. To date, we have been fortunate to receive contributions of about 30% of that total, which we have passed on to the partners. Our objective is to raise our contributions to 50% over time. This will only be possible by showing favorable outcomes for our initiatives. The acceptances at top colleges over the past two years bode well in this regard.

Volunteers

The Reach High Scholars Program is a volunteer army and we always need help from parents, faculty and other people interested in our goals. Our initiatives start after the seventh grade and

continue through the high school years. Parents of children going up that ladder are encouraged to become familiar with our activities and objectives, to spread the word throughout the community and to participate. Because once students go off to college their parents deserve a rest, we are constantly in need of new volunteers at the bottom of the ladder.

It is extremely valuable to have parents who can take students (in addition to their own child) on college visits as some students have parents not in a position to do this, primarily because of job commitments. We reimburse expenses for such trips. (And, the parents who do the trips learn a lot about the colleges.)

Mention of parent volunteering should give special credit to the fact that, for the past three years, Debby Harmon and Sue Spinney have conducted our SAT Boot Camp on Saturday mornings in the fall. The resulting improvements in test scores have been important factors in our successes with college admissions. They are wonderful examples of the kind of participation that enables our Program to help Raymond students reach higher. (And, Debbie and Sue are also very good at college touring.)

Reach High Scholars Club

The **Reach High Scholars Club** is an RHS extra-curricular activity **open to all students** and they are encouraged to attend. It is a crossroads of ideas about good colleges. Students gather weekly to encourage and inform each other and discuss experiences in summer enrichment programs, planning of forthcoming college visits, reports on schools recently visited or researched, comparisons of the curricula at various colleges and financial aid policies.

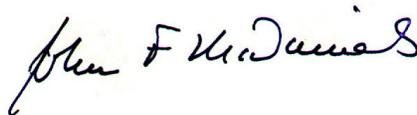
Website

Our website (www.reachhighscholars.org) recently underwent a substantial improvement and is now much more user-friendly. The work was done *pro bono* by a good friend of the Reach High Scholars Program with some help from a professional website designer.

The website is a valuable tool for students, parents and anyone needing help in navigating the college admission process. It will be constantly updated and is currently in need of good pictures of Raymond students involved in our various activities. Please send them in digital form to Ms. Doyle (d.doyle@sau33.com) or to me (jmcdaniels@mcdaniels.com).

Hopefully, this will give some sense of the overall effort in which so many of you have participated and generously supported. We look forward to keeping you posted and maintaining your enthusiasm for helping Raymond students.

With best regards,



John F. McDaniels

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