

August 14, 2020

Hello Class of 2021 and Parents/Guardians:

Greetings from the College Office and from me, Peter Goss, your Director of College and Career Counseling. I know I have had an opportunity to meet and get to know a good number of you, but with the abrupt retreat in remote school last spring, I feel that I missed out on getting to know many of you and on learning what you care about and how you are working to assemble the "Life After GSA" puzzle. So, it is time to get started!

Despite the unsettling and challenging circumstances of our current world, I am hopeful your summer had room for rest, recreation, and re-energizing. The path we are about to walk for this school year will definitely be unfamiliar and at times difficult, but I am excited to help you navigate the parts that lead to whatever comes next.

By way of introduction, before starting at GSA last year, my career has spanned now 32 years of working in small schools, as a high school English teacher for many years, as a soccer and track coach, and for the last ten years as a college guidance director. After spending most of my life in New Mexico (and a bit in California), we arrived in Maine two summers ago. My wife, Christina, and I are residents of Penobscot; my college age son lives in Chicago; and our dog Tara is a big part of life. I am a hobby farmer and cook, so I spend a lot of my free time tending our little farm and working on recipes and food explorations.

I will tell you first and foremost that I see myself as your partner and ally in a very individualized journey, someone with experience and knowledge and advice to share as you navigate what will be a year that will hold the promise and excitement of what comes next in your life. But, even in what we called normal circumstances (or the "before times" as my son refers to the pre-COVID world) there is a lot of anxiety and insecurity around planning and picking a path to follow beyond the GSA map. What that mostly means is we need to be a little more diligent, a little more creative, a little more open to possibilities about how life after GSA will take shape.

While we all want to know how the story ends, I think it is very important to learn a lot along the way, to assess the options that are available, and then make a choice that you feel is best for you. We will figure out together all the "what ifs" and unusual circumstances that frame your process given the circumstances we face. Whether it is college applications, gap years, or going to work after high school, there are a lot of pieces that are a bit different or a lot different for us to assess and navigate.

Another very important part of my approach to helping you is have you take ownership and responsibility of how it plays out. No matter which direction you ultimately take -- college, gap year, work -- being in charge of and responsible for your own life will be key to your success. I will offer you options, give you all the information, write and speak in support of you, get you unstuck when

you are lost or frustrated, help you with forms and processes, but ultimately whether it all comes together for you is up to you.

The best way to start working together is for us to meet individually and you can fill me in on hopes, dreams, worries, and questions. I would encourage you to get in touch to arrange an appointment before school starts. I will be available most days starting now; all you need to do is ask. I would also encourage you to find the email I sent last week and make sure you have taken care of some of those preliminary steps that will help create a strong footing for our year. And, finally, if you have any questions or issues that you need help with at any point, don't be shy about sending me a note.

Thanks for reading and send me an email! p.goss@georgesteve.org

Sincerely,
Mr. Goss