

Overview of Career Beginnings

A Program of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education

Career Beginnings' mission is to increase the percentage of Hartford-area students who complete high school and go on to college and fulfilling careers. On average 92% of Career Beginnings graduates enroll in college directly out of high school. Career Beginnings offers various combinations of services at the following high schools: Bulkeley High, Hartford Public High, A.I. Prince Tech, Sport and Medical Sciences Academy, University High School of Science and Engineering and Weaver High School. Services are being phased in at these new partner high schools: Bloomfield High School, Big Picture High School and Pathways to Technology. More than 1,000 Hartford-area students and family members participate in these services annually.

Freshman Year

- **Campus Visits**

Students visit a college campus for an engaging, motivational experience. The visits typically include a tour of the campus, talking with college students of color (from Hartford when possible), attending a lecture or activity and having lunch in the dining hall. Students are chosen by their schools to participate and do not need to be enrolled in Career Beginnings to go on a campus visit.

- **Honor Roll Dinner**

All freshmen who make the honor roll during the first two quarters of the year are invited to attend a celebratory dinner in their honor. Motivational speakers congratulate the students and emphasize the importance of continuing to do well in school and pursuing higher education. Students receive a small gift as well as a certificate of achievement.

- **College Briefings for Parents**

Career Beginnings offers informational sessions for parents of 9th and 10th graders on how to prepare academically and financially for college. The presentation covers course selection with an emphasis on academic rigor as well as an overview of the financial aid process.

- **Workshops**

Freshmen and sophomores attend workshops on topics relating to college and career. Topics include building the college portfolio, essay writing, study skills and time management, test-taking tips and career exploration. Workshops take place after school. The first workshop takes place at the students' own high school with subsequent workshops taking place at local college campuses. Transportation and snacks are provided.

- **One-to-one advising**

Freshmen and sophomores who enroll in Career Beginnings participate in one-to-one advising with Career Beginnings staff on a quarterly basis; more frequently if needed. During the initial one-to-one session the Career Beginnings staff person works with the student to identify short-term and long-term goals and to create an action plan. The student and staff person meet each marking period thereafter to review the student's grades and progress with achieving the goals articulated in the action plan. The action plan is a "living document" that can be amended as agreed upon by the student and Career Beginnings advisor.

Sophomore Year

- **College Briefings for Parents**

Career Beginnings offers informational sessions for parents of 9th and 10th graders on how to prepare academically and financially for college. The presentation covers course selection with an emphasis on academic rigor as well as an overview of the financial aid process.

- **Workshops**

Freshmen and sophomores attend workshops on topics relating to college and career. Topics include the college portfolio, essay writing, study skills and time management, test-taking tips and a career panel. Workshops take place after school, with the first workshop at the students' own high school followed by workshops at local college campuses. Transportation and snacks are provided.

- **One-to-one advising**

Students who enroll in Career Beginnings participate in one-to-one advising with Career Beginnings staff on a quarterly basis; more frequently if needed. During the initial one-to-one session the Career Beginnings staff person works with the student to identify short-term and long-term goals and to create an action plan. The student and staff person meet each marking period thereafter to review the student's grades and progress with achieving the goals articulated in the action plan. The action plan is a "living document" that can be amended as agreed upon by the student and staff member.

Junior Year

- **Workshops**

Junior workshops begin in the spring with five weekly workshops held at a Hartford-area college campus in the early evening. The spring workshops focus on decision-making and goal-setting and culminate with the students signing an "I am going to college" contract. The six weekly summer workshops cover topics including the world-of-work, money management and a college fair. The summer workshops also take place in the early evening at a Hartford-area campus. Transportation and refreshments are provided.

- **One-to-one advising**

High school juniors meet monthly with Career Beginnings staff in the schools. During the one-to-one meetings students and staff review the students' preparation for college, grades, workshop attendance and any other topic the student wishes to address. The CB staff also distributes fee waivers for the SATs during these meetings.

- **Mentoring**

Students who qualify for a mentor (by fully participating in the workshops and one-to-one advising sessions), are invited to "mentee training" followed by mentor/student mixers. At the mixers the students meet all of the mentors and determine with whom they would like to be paired. The Career Beginnings mentors are college-educated professionals who are background-checked and trained and have a minimum of five hours per month to spend with their student. Typical mentor/student activities in the junior year include visiting local colleges, researching colleges online, talking about the future and having fun.

Senior Year

- **Workshops**

Senior workshops take place monthly, usually at a consortium college. The students and their mentors attend the monthly workshops together. The senior workshops are on topics directly related to the college admission process, including the common college application, essay-writing, scholarships and two sessions on financial aid.

- **One-to-one advising**

High school seniors meet twice monthly with Career Beginnings staff in the schools. During the one-to-one meetings students and staff review the students' progress with college applications, grades, workshop attendance, mentoring relationship and any other topics the student wishes to address. The CB staff also distributes fee waivers for the SATs and college applications during these meetings.

- **Mentoring**

In addition to attending the senior workshop, mentors meet once a month with their students at their mutual convenience. These meetings are typically centered on the college-admission process and can include reviewing college application essays, studying for the SATs and visiting local colleges. Mentors provide assistance with the process of applying to college as well as emotional support and encouragement to their students. The mentoring relationship continues through May of the students' senior year at which time Career Beginnings holds its graduation ceremony. Although this ends the formal mentoring relationship through the program, many mentors and students stay in touch through the students' college years and beyond.

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