

**PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE MEETING.
OFFICIAL MINUTES WILL BE POSTED ONCE APPROVED BY
THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP AT THE NEXT MEETING.**

**MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PTSA
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - FEBRUARY 20, 2008**

The meeting was called to order by President Andrea Shosfy at 7:06 p.m.

Approve Minutes: The minutes of the January 16, 2008, General Membership Meeting were presented. A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and approved without corrections.

Treasurer's Report: Copies of the current budget were distributed reflecting our remaining cash balance is \$43,037.37.

Principal's Report: AP Clinton Bales shared recent MPHS outstanding accomplishments with the members. Out of 300 Intel Science Award semi-finalists nationally, 2 are from our school: Alexander Li and Yunxin (Joy) Jiao. In addition, Alexander Li has been named a Sunshine State Scholars finalist. There are 10 finalists for the entire state and Alexander is one of the 3 finalists representing Region VI (Miami Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties). MPHS was also recognized as a winner for the 2007-2008 Siemens Award for Advanced Placement. A Siemens representative will visit us to present the award and the \$1,000 prize. Our students competed in the JETS (Junior Engineering Technical Society) contest and placed in the runner-up category. Ours is the only school in Miami Dade County to receive such an honor.

For the 8th consecutive year, we captured the district's Envirothon competition at Volunteer Park in Broward County. Our teams placed 1st (Miranda Marracinni, William Clayman, Alexander Li, Jolie Shosfy, and Lucy Li) and 2nd (Brett Hallen, Giselle Rodriguez, Alexandra Rigl, Nikki Rigl, and Chelsea Cosner). The teams were coached by our outstanding Science Department Chair, Ms. Pam Shlachtman. As always, if you have any questions about the school, contact Mr. Weiner by e-mail. He is sorry he was unable to attend tonight as he had a previous engagement.

Old Business:

Special Projects: President Shosfy explained that the Principal, ESSAC, and the PTSA pooled their funds and were able to successfully meet every teacher and staff request. She thanked Jennifer Wollmann for all her hard work on the committee.

School Entrance – Trophy Cases: Thanks also go to Pat Bucciero for coordinating the revitalization of the school entrance and trophy cases with new lighting, painting, etc. The area looks great.

New Business:

Nominating Committee: The slate for next year's Nominating Committee was presented. It included Claudia Glasson, Lynne Schaefer, Sandra West, Mary Steele, and Randi Trazenfeld. Cheri Ball made a motion to approve the committee slate. The motion was seconded and all voted in favor.

Parent Volunteers needed for Media Center: Dian Adjaham, Media Specialist, needs volunteers on March 26th and April 23rd to read student essays on books they have read.

Announcements/Calendar Events:

March 6th-8th Ellen Genet said the Drama Department will be presenting 2 evening performances and a matinee performance of "Guys and Dolls." Tickets are \$10.

March 9th The Sixth Annual Taste of Pinecrest will be held at Pinecrest Gardens. Proceeds benefit all the public schools in the area. Volunteers are needed

March 15th If you enjoy gardening, please volunteer to beautify the school property by participating in the Plant the Pride event.

March 15th-16th Rebecca Foreman spoke on behalf of the American Cancer Society Relay for Life to be held at Baptist Hospital. Student volunteers can earn community service hours. Brochures are available if you want more information.

March 28th Nancy Lawther invited everyone to support the Second Annual PSH Golf Classic to benefit all MPSH sports programs to be held at the Miccosukee Golf & Country Club. Sponsorships and foursomes are needed, as well as donations for the silent auction and volunteers to help out. Contact Dana Pearson at 305-978-3101.

College Night/"Ask the Experts" College Panel: CAP Advisor Sally Coords welcomed parents and students who came tonight to learn more about the busy and confusing college application process. She hopes our panel will be able to clarify it for you and you will understand it from the perspective of the college admissions officer.

Bonnie Hanneman, Counselors Department Chair, said students should begin laying the groundwork to have a strong college resume and records. Students are in the process of registering for classes for next year and counselors will be meeting with the students on certain days next month. On the back of the Agenda is a list of the 2009 graduation requirements. It is important that seniors don't slack off and continue to take challenging classes. Classes shouldn't be taken just to get an easy "A."

If child makes a "D" in a subject area, we recommend that they take the class again and see their counselor about it (forgiveness). Anything after 8th grade counts towards the community service requirement so it is important to keep records. The minimum GPA for graduation is 2.0. Our highest in the current graduating class is 7.6. It is obtained by taking honors classes, AP classes, or FIU/Miami Dade dual enrollment classes. Some classes in the Florida Virtual School also boost your GPA. There are many options to help create a better, well rounded curriculum for our students.

Ms. Coords added that SAT and/or ACT test scores are a large part of the college package. Students must make sure that they give themselves enough time to take the SAT more than once. Deadlines are getting earlier and earlier so you need to be "ready to go" early next year. Now is the time to have the "college talk" as to what you can afford in a college and finances. Ask your child what they are looking for in a college, large vs. small, and start putting your list together over the summer. The panel members were introduced.

Valerie Rios, Florida International University: This is her first time at MPHS. She is the Assistant Director of Admissions. Normally, Admission Counselor Edward Ramcharran would be here as he is MPHS's college liaison. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, FIU is one of the 100 best public colleges in the country. In 2002, its law school was established and accredited. The football program started in 2002 and the Hospitality & Tourism Management School has a campus in China. There is also a FIU School of Architecture in Italy and we've just received preliminary approval for a medical school. This year, we will complete the first phase of construction of an on-campus football stadium. It should be completed by the fall of 2009 and will accommodate 45,000 people. We are planning to enroll the first class of medical students in fall 2009 and will be partnering with Mt. Sinai and Miami Children's Hospitals.

Our admission process is very simple. Their preferred deadline is December 1st and we need your official high school transcript and SAT and ACT scores. About 24,000

applications are expected this year and admission is much more competitive than before. Applications received after the preferred deadline are considered on a space available basis. The scholarship deadline is February 15th based on a GPA of 3.5, 1150 on the SAT, and 25 on the ACT (minimums for a scholarship). Take a look at their website for updated information, application status, etc. For questions, contact Edward Ramcharran, Admissions Counselor.

Elizabeth Costello, University of Central Florida: She is very excited about the planned medical school at UCF. They have broken ground on the new medical campus including a facility for medical research, study, and care. There will be a VA hospital and children's hospital and other research facilities. Also at UCF is Burnett Honors College which is like a small liberal arts college within a larger college. Basically, 1700 students are in an accelerated program in any major. Leadership and community service is very important to UCF. Burnett is a small program that freshman can apply for. Look at their website to learn more.

UCF understands it can be difficult to move away from home and students make a huge adjustment that first year. We are the 6th largest college in the nation with 48,000 students. We have programs for new students to educate them on where to go, health center services, links program, seminars, etc. This allows them to get out of their shells and interact within the college community. UCF seems like it has been under construction forever. A new stadium opened this year on campus which will seat 10,000. There is an arena for basketball games. They try to shrink the campus so kids aren't overwhelmed by the size of the college.

She feels applying early is key. Enrollment at all 11 state universities this year is limited. The competition is going up. UCF received 24,000 applications this past year. We are on rolling admission. Apply this summer for summer 2009. It is a simple process and they prefer that you apply online as early as possible (September through November your senior year is the optimum time to apply).

Ed Gillis, University of Miami: The bad news is that it has never been harder to get into college as it is right now and it won't get better. An increasing number of kids graduate high school now, but most colleges are not trying to get larger. So you have more kids applying and more competition. You need to pay attention to your grades and study hard. The level of competition will only increase. Grades are the most important factor in the admission decisions the colleges make. UM has benefited from the growing number of students. The freshman class is about 2,000 students per year; but, this year, we had almost 22,000 applicants for those 2,000 spaces.

They are now accepting students for next fall. The average SAT score is over 1300 and about 75% rank in the top 10% of their high school. These are very, very solid high school students. UM is very expensive at about \$42,000 for tuition and room and board. We are committed to having local students come to UM. Two major sources of money are available from UM. One is need based financial aid. The second source would be academic scholarships. Fifty percent of the incoming freshman received academic scholarships ranging from 25% to 100%. You also have Bright Futures, FRAGs (Florida Resident Access Grant), other grants, etc. You should go through the admission process and then the financial aid process. You need to decide whether it makes sense to send your child here. President Donna Shalala is incredible. UM has just raised 4.1 billion dollars in a very short period of time. She has taken UM to a better place very quickly from the time she joined UM in 2001. It really is great to be a Miami Hurricane.

Question and Answer Period:

Do your admission officers read the essays or farm them out to contract readers?

FIU: No essay is required; but, if she receives a portfolio with an essay, she reads it.

UCF: They don't require a personal statement but highly recommended it. That is where you can set yourself apart. The personal statement is when you tell us how you'll be a good fit in our community and gives us a sample of the quality of your writing. It is what makes you different or special. Essays are not farmed out.

UM: We require an essay and they are all read. Every part of the application is important to UM.

All panel members agreed that the college's first consideration is grades and SAT scores are considered second. Essays, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities are important, but your main focus should be on your grades and the SAT.

How do colleges view a "D" or a "F" in a course that has been replaced by the student retaking it?

UM: A "D" or a "F" is a bad thing. We don't care if you take it again.

UCF: We agree. We recalculate the GPAs. We will give grade forgiveness if it is the exact same class; but, we still see it. Grade trends are critical - starting out solid in 9th grade then going down will not help.

FIU: We operate at the same level. Students need to keep their momentum, not decline.

Does a student need to take math in their senior year if they have finished all math requirements?

FIU: We encourage 12th grade math because we consider it a challenge. Even if it is not required, we do encourage math the senior year.

UM: It is all about where you want to go to college and how you position yourself to get there. Take the most challenging program you can handle each year including your senior year. You remove yourself from the applicant pool if you haven't challenged yourself.

UCF: If your major is math or science related, you must take math in 12th grade.

Are there a maximum number of schools recommended for application?

Ms. Coords said now from 20 to 22 applications are being sent out when it used to be 7 or so. Kids think they are using a safe, shotgun approach.

UM: You should be able to narrow it down to 6 or 7 schools.

UCF: Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Don't just apply to your dream school. It may not work out. The student will put themselves in a very bad position.

FIU: From April to June, when students visit a school, they come back and say, "I want to stay in Miami, rather than Boston." You need a couple "dream schools," a couple "safety schools," and a couple "back up schools." It is better to have some options at the end, rather than none.

How do you decide who gets a scholarship?

FIU: We automatically consider it upon admission based on 3.5 weighted GPA minimum, 1150 SAT score, and/or 25 ACT score minimum. No separate applications are needed.

UCF: They do not have a separate application, but automatically considered it upon admission.

UM: When a student is admitted, they are then considered for an award automatically.

What percentage of colleges will look at all 3 SAT sections by 2010?

UM: They don't know. A fair number are starting to look at that now, but the vast majority are not. Most are waiting 5 or 6 years to see if it might help them make better decisions. Colleges want data to back it up.

Are scholarships given based on merit or financial need only?

UM: We have 2 different types of monies that the college can give out. Merit is academic. If you want to apply for need based money, you have a separate form to complete. If you are making a need based application, it is critically important that you apply on time. You cannot wait to apply for financial aid until your child gets admitted. You must pay attention to both admission and financial aid deadlines.

What is more important - 4 AP classes or playing a varsity-class sport?

UM: Grades are much more important than extra curricular activities, but some big sport schools make exceptions to bring in students with special talents. Ninety-nine percent, however, get in based upon academics.

How do schools recalculate the GPA?

UCF: They look at English, math, science, foreign language, and social studies classes. They take all the grades in those courses, giving weight to AP, IB, or honors courses. Dual enrollment can be considered. You will need 18 units in specific classes and, if you take an extra math or science class, that is added in, too.

UM: We do not recalculate GPAs because our students are applying from all over the country and world. UM does look at school profile: How many honors courses, APs, etc., so they can make a good decision based upon what is presented.

If a student application is rejected, is there a grievance/apellate process for it to be reconsidered?

UM: Like anything in life, you can ask us to take a look at that decision. In 99% of the cases, they are not going to change the decision. It only changes if we have missed something and made a mistake. Schools are so competitive and families are looking for different areas of access. We don't enjoy saying "no" and we know kids want to really come to our institution. We are not saying "no" forever. Go else where for a year, do well, get some strong grades, and come back in as a sophomore as a transfer student. A lot of times we have to say "no" because we just don't have the room even if kids would do well academically.

UCF: We have a committee that kids can use to reconsider an admission denial. Every student has the right to it, but it is rare that a denial is overturned. Right now, 28 community colleges are working with the 11 public state colleges. If you get an associate degree, you come in as a transfer student.

FIU: If you apply by the December 1st deadline, you get a "yes" or deferred (test scores not competitive enough), or wait listed. For example, if your GPA fell below FIU's 3.0 minimum, you can send new test scores and grades. You are given a great opportunity to be reconsidered for readmission. They also have a joint admission program, i.e. guaranteed admission upon obtaining an associate degree from a community college.

Parents who had more questions were invited to stay after the meeting and talk with the panel members and the school counselors.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Roxy Lancella, Recording Secretary

PHSPTSA 02 20 08