

COURSE SELECTION ISSUES FOR COLLEGE-BOUND FRESHMEN *from the NHS College & Career Center*

The changes resulting from the alignment of UC and CSU subject requirements have finally been fully phased in, although there are some subtle differences in how these requirements are interpreted by the two systems, and a few ongoing areas of confusion. The California State University system and the University of California both require a full-year course in the visual or performing arts (VPA). Please do not confuse the Mt. Diablo Unified School District graduation requirement of one year of **foreign language or fine art** with college admission requirements. Qualifying VPA courses at NHS include full year courses in studio art, ceramics, photo, drama, film, dance or music (plus the ROP Video Production and Art and Animation courses, which are open to 16 year olds). NHS courses that **do not** satisfy the UC/CSU VPA requirement include aerobics, commercial art, speech, or foreign language. UC and CSU both require a minimum of two years of the same Foreign Language. C's or better in 7th and 8th grade French or Spanish count to meet the first year of this requirement. UC recommends completing a third year of the same language, and the Cal State campuses that require students to be proficient in a foreign language in order to qualify for the bachelor's degree also recommend completing a third year during high school.

DO FRESHMEN GRADES COUNT?

The University of California and California State University campuses, with one notable exception, do not use freshmen grades to compute the grade point average used to qualify students for admission. The exception is Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo, which computes a college prep grade point average that includes freshmen grades in college preparatory classes, and which carries significant weight in its admission formula. However, both systems and all campuses require that **all** college preparatory classes taken to meet the **subject requirements** for admission be completed with grades of C or better. First semester D grades do not need to be replaced if the course is highly sequential, and a C or better is earned the second semester: mathematics or foreign language. However, a first semester grade of D earned in math or foreign language during the Sophomore or Junior year that has not been replaced will be included in the GPA calculated by college admissions offices, and in the GPA calculated to qualify students for the state financial aid program (Cal Grants). Grades can be replaced at high school summer sessions, or by re-enrolling in the class as a Sophomore, space permitting. Both UC and CSU use an academic grade point calculation for admission. Only grades earned in courses that appear on the University of California approved course list (<https://doorways.ucop.edu/list/>), or in a college-level course, can be used to qualify students for admission. Enrollment in community college courses must be approved by the academic department and Northgate administration.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SUMMER AND FALL

Freshmen who are enrolled in Geometry this year may want to take the PSAT, a practice version of the SAT, on October 17, 2009. I anticipate that Northgate will also offer PLAN, which is the practice version of the ACT (American College Test). Current Freshmen enrolled in Algebra I should consider this alternative. The PLAN test includes math questions designed for students who have not yet completed geometry, and also provides an occupational interest inventory. PLAN will be administered in October or early November. Recent changes to the SAT have made the ACT an increasingly popular alternative.

Freshmen who will not be old enough to work this summer may want to consider one of the many enrichment programs offered in the Bay Area. One of my parent volunteers compiles a *Summer Opportunities Bulletin* which is e-mailed to parents, February through May, and posted on the College & Career Center page of the Northgate PFC web site. My volunteer updates the list once or twice a month, as new information is received. A search at www.petersons.com/summerop/code/ssector.asp will yield additional options.

Please feel free to call (ext. 3525) or e-mail me (brandsp@mdusd.k12.ca.us) with your individual questions. I can often provide a more thoughtful and comprehensive answer via e-mail.

Patricia Brands, College Counselor