



OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

Your child's four years at Hillsdale are flying by, and you may be wondering right along with your student: **What comes next? How do we navigate the MANY options that are out there post-high school? Well, never fear: Laura Burtness, Hillsdale's College, Career, and Financial Aid Advisor, is here to help!**

Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your role at Hillsdale High School?

Sure! As Hillsdale's College, Career, and Financial Aid Advisor, I work with all students on their after-Hillsdale plans AND how to pay for them. I've been in education my entire professional career, first as an English teacher at the high school and community college levels, with a brief slide over to middle school math and a few years' hiatus to join AmeriCorps and live in North Carolina and Georgia. I was teaching upper-division English here at Hillsdale and this position opened up. I've been at Hillsdale for about seventeen years, and this position for about seven. I live with my family on the Coastsides.

What would you like parents to know about what's available for students at the Career Center?

We have [a very robust website](#) and [Instagram account](#). On the website, we maintain information about All Things College, Career, and Financial Aid, including information about job and volunteering opportunities, two- and four-year college admissions and applications, and careers in Craft/Trades, the military, and more.

We also host Thank You Thursdays, in which HHS community members can drop by to pick up a notecard (thank you, [PTSO!](#)) and write a note of gratitude to anyone.

We host Application Celebrations in which we ask anyone who has **applied** to anything -- a job, college, to vote, for a driver's license -- to ring a bell in celebration and acknowledgement and then get a treat. We want to celebrate everyone's **attempts** to move forward, not just the results.



We host a monthly Career Speaker Series in which adults from the community become panelists and talk with students about their careers.

Lastly, we are also a general “hang out” place for students on campus...a place to use the computers, do a puzzle, color in our coloring books, and have lunch with friends at our round tables. Our part-time career coordinator, Ms. Cassio, also has a space in this office and meets with students to talk about jobs, programs, and more. We are a small office, but we are mighty!

What would you like to share with the parents of seniors as they finish out the first semester?

I sometimes read an author named Kelly Corrigan. Recently, I was re-listening to a seven-minute interview with her about an essay she wrote about applying to colleges (from a parent perspective). She calls the application process a “dumpster fire”, albeit one that fosters a LOT of growth: this is often the first time students have thought about finances, or reflected on their life with those big application questions. She brought up a lot of great issues, and I encourage anyone who might be interested to read her short essay, or listen to the interview.

One of my takeaways is that we as adults need to be joyous around our students’ **attempts** at forward movement. I speak only for myself here: I can forget to stop and appreciate the growth that is happening all around me. For example, during our Open College Application Office Hours this semester, I watched as students gathered together to talk about their writing, their UC PIQs and various supplemental writings. This was real-life, high stakes writing and it was such a delight to watch them support each other and dig into their lives and how to write about their interests, values and dreams.

All 12th graders -- regardless of their path -- are doing some big thinking these days and it can be uncomfortable but it’s also AMAZING!

As adults, we know that life is not linear and few of us had everything figured out when we were 18 years old. Celebrating students’ movement forward and asking questions about that forward movement -- whether that be about college, military, or career -- is worth sitting down, listening closely, and quietly praising their questioning with a “You are doing good work right here.”

What is the one piece of advice that you would like to impart to Hillsdale parents?

I spoke with my colleagues in the Counseling Department, and they collaborated on these thoughts.

9th grade parents should know that this grade is all about navigating the transition. It’s okay if academic performance isn’t the top priority so long as your student is adjusting to managing assignments, attending classes regularly, and connecting socially -- all signs they are on the right track! Encourage exploration based on their values and interests.

10th grade parents should know that this is a terrific year of high school. Focus on reminding your student to live in the moment, give it 100% effort, reflect on their experiences, and generally enjoy it. Planning too far ahead can create unnecessary anxiety.

Another tip is to allow and push your students to become more independent. Have them follow up on their needs/requests. Have them complete their own paperwork. It's time for them to step up a little bit as they approach adulthood.

11th grade parents should know that this year can be a challenging transition: new House, new advisor, sometimes a tougher course load, more responsibilities outside of class, AND thinking about life after Hillsdale. Set some time aside to check in with how they're managing their workload and being intentional about taking care of themselves and growing their soft skills in different activities. Support their interests and spend a little more time listening than talking. Identify which are your visions for your students and which are their visions for themselves.

What resources are available at the Career Center for students who would like to start a career right after high school?

We support students with their job search and maintain a list of jobs for students over 18. The Career Coordinators have put together a phenomenal spreadsheet that lists career interests and which community college or apprenticeship program in the Bay Area has that program. Our Career Speaker Series introduces all students to a variety of careers, including Craft/Trades, business, hospitality, technology, the medical world, and more. We always make sure the panelists discuss their educational pathway. As I mentioned, we maintain a robust website with much information regarding Craft/Trades and collaborate with Advisors to introduce students to the wide range of options after Hillsdale. Ms. Cassio is available to support students with job applications, practice interview skills and more.

Do the gifts Hillsdale parents make to the Hillsdale High School Foundation Fund impact the Career Center?

Yes! The Foundation is vital to the College and Career Center's work. Along with the PTSO, they support the Career Speaker Series with their outreach and support our students financially, too. You might be surprised to know that many of our students would like to apply to a four-year college but don't have the financial resources to pay for the applications (applying to most four-year colleges costs up to \$90 per application!). The Foundation supports those students by giving me the budget to pay for some students' application fees. This ensures that finances aren't a barrier to higher education.

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