May 2018

Dear Parents of Juniors,

We are writing as we complete final preparations for this year’s Ninth Annual Conference on American Priorities, which is the interdisciplinary end-of-year culminating project for all Marin Academy juniors.

Drawing on deep research that students have done in the full range of their junior year coursework, juniors form teams to identify key priorities for the United States to undertake, crafting a slate of proposed bills, with budgets, to advance to a UN-style assembly run by Professor Chris O’Sullivan, the 2009–2010 Brizendine Visiting Scholar and an expert on the United Nations.

As reflected in the planner, culminating experiences begin on Thursday, May 24. Juniors will be engaged each day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., except on the last day of school, Thursday, May 31, when the day will end at 12:15 p.m. with a free all-school barbeque. Breakfast and lunch will be available in the school cafeteria during the project. Buses will run on the regular schedule during the culminating projects, except on Thursday, May 31, when buses will depart at 1:15 p.m.

Please know that participation in this culminating project is mandatory; this End-of-the-Year Project is a graduation requirement. Students will be assessed on a Credit/Non-Credit basis, and this information will appear on both a student’s transcript and final report card of the year. They will also be given feedback on the ways in which they have engaged in the work, both in and out of the classroom. Please avoid scheduling doctor, dentist, or other appointments during this time; not only do we see this as a valuable experience for each student, but the collaborative nature of this project is dependent on all students being able to rely on each other. Students should expect approximately one hour’s worth of homework each night.

Parents, family friends, and special guests are invited to the General Assembly, which will take place in the Performing Arts Center on the following schedule:

Session #1: Wednesday, May 30 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Session #2: Wednesday, May 30 from 1:20 to 3:00 p.m.
Session #3: Thursday, May 31 from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m.

The Conference has been a great success for the last eight years, drawing together not only the in-depth research that juniors do for their research papers in different subjects, but also the skills they have built in English, mathematics, history, science, language, and the arts. Further, the project both hones and tests students’ ability to think critically, to collaborate and negotiate with peers, to formulate and revise one’s arguments, to marshal evidence to support one’s perspectives, to listen carefully, and to present one’s
ideas in written and oral form. It is also a great way to bring the class together and an important first step toward the senior retreat that launches these students’ final year at MA. We look forward to a wonderful project together with the Class of 2019.

Sincerely,

KaTrina Wentzel, Academic Dean
Derek Anderson, J O’Malley, and Kevin Rees: 11th Grade EOY Coordinators