

September 18, 2020

## Notes from Ojai Valley School

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Dear OVS Families,

Let me tell you about our senior class.

These 20 students exemplify our Portrait of a Graduate. They are resourceful, articulate, creative, kind, highly motivated, ethical, outgoing - and wicked smart. Nearly half the members of this class were just named AP Scholars. Two earned recognition as National AP Scholars and those two, Ethan Gao (L17) and Mark Pindur, were also recognized as semi-finalists for the National Merit Scholarship.

Not surprisingly, the members of the Class of 2021 have their sights set on an impressive list of colleges. Six students plan to apply Early Decision to their first-choice schools, including New York University, Dartmouth and the University of Pennsylvania.

Annually at the start of the school year, College Counselor Fred Alvarez and I meet with the seniors to discuss what lies ahead as they embark on their final year of high school and start submitting their college applications. They have been building toward this moment for years. As freshmen, they created their Naviance accounts. As juniors they were asked to write their first college application essays. Along the way, they focused diligently on maintaining high grades, contributing to their communities through service projects, and rounding out their high school experience through outdoor education, sports and an array of other co-curricular activities, all while maintaining high grades and studying for and taking the PSAT, SAT, ACT and AP exams.

Now comes a global pandemic, which has turned the college selection process on its head.

When my sons, Connor (L11, U15) and Gavin (L13, U17), were looking at universities in the Midwest and Southeast we had the opportunity to visit numerous campuses, see the dormitories and (my favorite) taste the food. It was a key part of the decision-making process in finding the "right fit" schools for them. For the Class of 2021, it's going to be different.

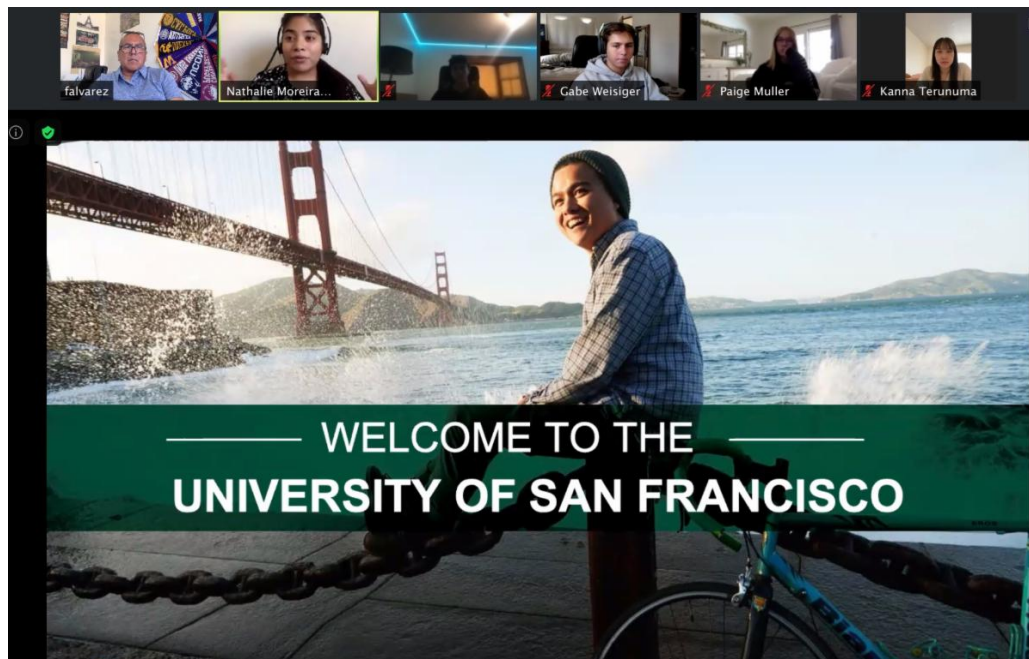
"It's a college admission cycle unlike any we've ever experienced," Mr. Alvarez said recently. "That can bring with it great uncertainty and apprehension. However, from our standpoint, our message to the seniors remains the same: all they can do is prepare and throw their best pitch. And they've spent their years at OVS preparing to do just that."

I'm confident these 20 seniors are capable of adapting to the changing landscape of college admissions. This class is prepared and determined to be the best they can be, and I look forward to sharing more about their accomplishments in the year ahead.

Warm regards,



Craig Floyd,  
Head of School  
Upper Campus



College Counselor Fred Alvarez and several OVS students participated in a Zoom meeting today to learn more about U of SF, the second of a series of virtual college events planned for this fall.

## College Counseling and College Rep Visits

This week OVS hosted the first virtual college admissions visits of the school year. Dozens of college reps typically come to the Upper Campus in the fall to share admissions information about their schools. But now those meetings are being held virtually via video-conferencing due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Juniors and seniors met via Zoom with representatives of the University of San Francisco and San Diego State University. Upcoming visits include UC Santa Cruz, Loyola Marymount University, Chapman University and the American University of Paris - all colleges where OVS graduates have recently earned offers of admission.

College Counselor Fred Alvarez will provide students with links to additional virtual visits and other events provided by individual colleges and college consortiums. "It's not too early to begin your college search," he said, "and to figure out what fits and what doesn't." Stay tuned for more information as we navigate the new landscape of college admissions during COVID.



Our Kindergartners are showing us how to smile underneath those face masks!

**Smile! We Have Our Elementary Waiver!**



On Tuesday we were approved for an elementary waiver from the state and Ventura County Public Health, allowing us to re-open for grades 1-6. Now we need all families in those grades to please fill out this [brief survey](#) regarding your decision about returning to school and our potential learning models. Because accurate numbers and staffing needs are critical to the success of our plan, we are asking families to commit to their learning model through December. We would appreciate a response no later than Monday, September 21. Thank you!

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Ms. Bozek and Ms. Sandoval program a new system that provides rapid test results for COVID-19.

## Meet the New OVS Health Center Staff!

With just days before 1st to 6th grade students return to the Lower Campus, the Health Center staff is working alongside the OVS COVID-19 Task Force to establish strategies and protocols to keep students and staff safe. Health Aide Paloma Sandoval (L02, U06) and former OVS Nurse Tanishia Brown played key roles this summer in helping to write the school's Roadmap to Reopening plan. Two new nurses - Aaron Newlow and Caitlin Bozek - have since joined Ms. Sandoval in the Health Center.

"With a new team, we are able to reflect on what we are doing well and what we need to improve so our Health Center can meet all of your children's needs," said Lower Campus Head of School Laurie Clark. "This couldn't have come at a better time as we face the new medical challenges of COVID-19." [Read more on the OVS website](#)

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In this week's video, Lower Campus Outdoor Education Coordinator Matt Inman recalls an OVS trip to Zion National Park that included Cameron Ridgeway (L99) and her dad, mountaineer Rick Ridgeway.

## Lower Campus Virtual All School

This week, in the [Virtual All School video](#), we heard some solid tech advice from Mr. Mahon and words of inspiration from Mr. Inman as he took us on a tour of the Outdoor Education supply room. Focusing on this 20-year-old photo, Mr. Inman recalled an OVS trip through Zion National Park during which mountaineer Rick Ridgeway, an OVS parent at the time, told the student backpackers about the challenges he and his three climbing partners faced as the first Americans to summit K2, the world's second-highest mountain.

"To me, the story of climbing K2 and facing those challenges and sticking it out...is the perfect example of what we are facing with the COVID virus," Inman said during the All-School, expressing disappointment at the delayed start of the fall Outdoor Education season but optimism about the weeks ahead. "Let's put ourselves in a position to come back and make an attempt on the peak and be successful."