To Parents of Students in the Class of 2019,

Life at Wesleyan is always busy, but it has felt busier than ever over the past few weeks for the Class of 2019. Sophomores returned to campus in January not only to rather temperamental weather, but also to many decisions about their major, study abroad, summer plans, and housing next year, and students have found this to be at turns both exciting and overwhelming.

Decisions about major declaration have been easy for some and more stressful for others. Committing oneself to two years of in-depth study in a particular subject understandably raises questions for many about life after Wesleyan—jobs, careers, life-long interests, and, for some, their place in a global society. One of the many good things about a liberal arts education is that it educates students to think critically, to question, and to explore their “discomfort” zones. It encourages them to move dialogues forward and to work within a diverse community—perhaps in a job they create themselves or in one not yet invented.

Given this, summer internships, jobs and volunteer work that relate to a possible career are increasingly on our sophomores’ horizons as they begin to understand the importance of exploring interests and building experience. These experiences—including those on campus—provide the opportunity for skill-building, self-knowledge, and increased confidence, as well the chance to meet new people who will both challenge and nurture them. You may want to help your son or daughter identify their skills and those they would like to develop further in order to better understand their strengths and how they may be applied to future endeavors. The Gordon Career Center is a great resource in this regard, as the center features one-on-one appointments, alumni databases, and Handshake, a program that helps students with both internship and job searches.

Many students are considering whether or not to pursue the opportunity to study abroad next semester or their entire junior year. While some students want to remain on campus to take advantage of their limited time at Wesleyan, others are eager to challenge themselves in a new environment. If studying abroad in the junior year has not been a topic of discussion, you might want to raise it within the next few weeks with your student.

If your student is studying abroad in the fall, then this next subject is moot, but if not, you may be hearing about what is near and dear to every student’s heart: where everyone will be living next semester or year. Bids for program housing, which provide students the opportunity to live in theme-based residences, have gone in, and general room selection (GRS), which involves all residential facilities, takes place in early April. The timeline is available here.
Early April also signals the start of course selection for the Fall 2017 semester, when your son or daughter will be a first-semester junior! (It can be hard to believe how fast it all goes!) As juniors, students are finally in an academic home. Besides the intellectual excitement, joining a department provides a good opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with faculty in the major. You should encourage your student to set a goal to get to know one faculty member besides the faculty advisor by the end of next fall semester; this is most easily done by going to professors’ office hours. Our summer session courses, which are smaller than those offered during the academic year, also provide a good opportunity for students to get to know instructors.

Spring break, which runs from March 10 to 26, is a welcomed respite for sophomores from all the decision-making. While some students will be traveling or doing volunteer projects, others will use this opportunity to catch up on course work and sleep, particularly those who were side-tracked by the flu—an especially virulent strain—that hit in this first-half of the semester. The hectic pace of life at Wes continues when classes resume. In addition to housing and fall pre-registration, spring sports kick into gear and there are myriad campus events planned. I regularly post announcements about these, as well as different opportunities, on our class blog.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below, and have a good beginning to your spring. I will write again near the end of the semester.

Sincerely,

Jennifer P. Wood
Dean for the Class of 2019
(860) 685-2758
jpwood@wesleyan.edu
http://www.classof2019.blogs.wesleyan.edu/