Dear Readers,

As flowers bloom, the sun warms, and the sky clears, the academic school year is easing to an end. For seniors especially, it is a time of thought, reflection, and sentimentalities. This issue is from seniors and alumni and to the underclassmen of Fairfield Prep. Good luck!

AMDG,

Jack O’Connell ’14

Tim Kiernan ’14

Seconds Semester Seniors……………………………………………………………2
Advice from Jack O’Connell…………………………………………………………4
Tim Peterson Speaks ’13……………………………………………………………7
Matt Kiernan ’13 Corresponds………………………………………………………8
Second Semester Seniors

By Tim Kiernan

High school is a very challenging time in the development of people. They sit on the brink of maturity with careless days of childhood innocence behind them and visions of grey adulthood flashing rapidly before their fluttering eyes. Being faced with the challenge of adjusting to the reality of their impending adulthood would be enough, but—to make matters worse—they are also faced with a bevy of problems that are almost exclusive to high school life: getting in with the cool crowd, asking girls to prom, preparing for the SAT, avoiding bullies, applying to colleges, dealing with their changing bodies, and more!

However, fear not high school readers (I know there are a lot of you)! There is light at the end of the tunnel, and the opportunity to bask in that glorious light presents itself right around April 1st of your senior year. With standardized testing, college acceptances, and first semester grades behind them, high school students have an entire two months to sit back and enjoy their last few months of carefree high school living. Many students take this time to do the things they had been putting off for the past four years: skip a class, ask out the girl of their dreams, bomb a test, etc.

While this relaxing break from a rigorous high school career is probably the most rewarding experience in every student’s four years of school, there comes a time when teachers, parents, and even students themselves become concerned with the level of relaxation they are experiencing. This phenomenon is often referred to as “Senioritis” or “The Senior Slump.” To get an idea of how this epidemic is affecting Fairfield Prep, I met up with the Sultan of Slump himself, senior Robert Ranzilla. With several prestigious college acceptances already under his belt, this sovereign slacker has basically been “checked out” since Christmas! In this exclusive Soundings interview, I met up with Robert at Sasco Beach in Southport to get a sneak peek into his daily life as a Second Semester Senior. Enjoy!

Tim: Hey Bobby! How are ya?
Bobby: Fine, Tim. How are you?
T: It's hard to feel anything less than great when I'm sitting here at Sasco Beach on a Friday afternoon! Man, this place is really bumpin’!
B: Unbelievable! It’s a true hidden gem for most of the Fairfield community. Lots of pesky high school kids though, am I right or am I right?!?
T: Hahahah! Oh Robert, you crack me up!
B: Oh Tim, don't flatter me!
T: I'll try Bobby! Anyways, let's cut to the chase! The time has finally come! You are officially a second semester senior! Tell me a little bit about how that feels.
B: Contrary to popular belief, senior year starts out as a pretty stressful time with college decisions looming around the corner. On the other hand though, many teachers have begun to lighten the workload, promoting the "senior slack." Now that the college decision period is coming to an end though, it is time for the fun to really begin!!!
T: I can imagine, Bobby! What kind of stuff does a typical senior like yourself do for fun around this time of year?
B: Now that it is FINALLY starting to warm up a bit, my friends and I like to hang out at this very beach (Sasco) and just admire the beautiful scenery and— even more so—the beautiful girls that meander about!
T: Ah, I see where you're coming from Bobby! Hey look there are some beautiful foxes just around the bend! Gee whiz! This place is great! Now that you've mentioned it Bobby, there has been a question on everyone's mind, and I figured I should just get it out of the way now: Are you officially single?
B: Yes indeed, Tim. The rumors are true. After much deliberation and self-reflection, I decided to open myself up to the dating scene.
T: Just in time for your senior slump! Do you find that having all this extra time on your hands improves your relationships?
B: Oh definitely! At this point in life, I have many, many crushes. My crushes demand my utmost attention, and now—as a senior—I finally have the time for such commitments!
T: Wow Bobby! When I was a senior (back in the stone ages!), I could hardly remember this type of fun! I guess that could just be because I'm getting old!
B: Yes Tim, you are…but very wise as well!
T: Nice save there, Bobby! Hahaha! Anyways, tell me Bobby, I understand there are a lot of concerns on the part of teachers and parents, but are there any drawbacks to this senior slump from a student's perspective?
B: Yes actually. Many kids have aspirations higher than the colleges they have been accepted to and plan to transfer eventually. I have been told that your second semester grades are a factor in that process so just like any part of life, finding the balance between fun and work is paramount!
T: Wise words from a very wise man! Well Bobby, thanks so much for sitting down to talk— whoa! Gee willikers, that was a close one! Hey guys, here's your Frisbee back! Try to keep it on your side of the beach next time! Haha! Just kidding, enjoy your day, boys! Thank you so much, Bobby!
10 Tips For Underclassmen

By Jack O’Connell

As a senior, I find myself very occupied with the thought of going to college. The whole thing is mystifying and unfamiliar--very similar to the impressions I got about four years ago. Going to Prep as an eldest sibling, I really had to learn the ropes. I know Soundings probably isn’t the best platform to do this, but I wish to impart some of the experiential wisdom I have on the youngins of Fairfield Prep. Frankly, there’s so much to talk about, and I can only say so much about so many things, but I’ll do my best to touch on everything. Anyway, here are ten things I wish I heard on my first day of school as a freshman.

1. My first piece of advice is academic because, after all, Fairfield Prep is a school. You’ll never hear someone say, “I wish I got worse grades in high school.” With focus and determination, you can maximize opportunity and feel better about yourself. Never stress yourself out, of course. I’ll say this: I don’t know anyone who studies every night uninterruptedly for two hours and is a disappointment. Working a reasonable amount with focus and drive is fulfilling, provident, and foolproof.

2. As Prep is a college preparatory school, I have advice to offer in regards to college admissions--things I learned later that can only be learned from experience. If you want to go to an elite school, I of course would recommend exerting a lot of your effort into Prep’s toughest classes, but there is much to be done outside the classroom. First of all, it is impossible to underestimate the importance of standardized tests. Your opinion on the value of them is irrelevant, if you think about it. Concentrating an unhealthy and exceptional amount of effort on that is a necessity if you want to go to a really elite school and probably still crucial if you don’t. Fairfield Prep is not Hopkins or Brunswick. A valedictorian here with a perfect GPA at Prep is only guaranteed elite Catholic schools, so why leave the fate of your future up to chance by not working hard on a four-hour test?

3. Another piece of advice that is loosely related to admissions is extracurriculars. Never do anything because it “looks good for college.” Do things you like and care about. Any and every school is more impressed by passion, devotion, and excellence in one area than a mishmash of extracurriculars you don’t like. I mean, think about it. If you are into, for instance, computer programming, it would make more sense to cultivate that interest than to do things you may not be into like Cardinal Key and Spanish Honor Society. Be you is be-you-tiful!

Anyway, enough with the boring stuff--I just think there are certain conventional wisdoms that are ultimately harmful for freshmen to hear.

4. When I first arrived at Prep, I literally had no clue what the school was about. Some of Fairfield Prep’s main tenets/themes are brotherhood, service, athletic dominance, kinship between faculty and students, and attention to the spirit. You’ve heard all of these in some way, shape, or form, but I felt
the need to reiterate because I think it means more coming from a student. The thing to learn from this, basically, is people do care at Prep. At least for me, Prep wasn’t like public school. The vast majority of faculty I’ve met are here out of duty or desire, not obligation. For that reason, although I’ve probably never demonstrated it as well as I should or could have, I respect the faculty a lot as a whole. The faster you realize that, the more you’ll appreciate Prep.

5. Fairfield Prep is (at least right now) the best sports school in the state. The squads put together, from lacrosse to swimming, are second to none. Personally, I played football for three years at Prep. I turned in my pads after junior year, and senior year the team made it to the state championship. People always drop their jaw in disbelief at that and proceed to ask me how much I regret quitting. The fact is, I don’t. The point of high school sports (on an individual, not an institutional) level is to have fun. Winning state championships and goofing around in the wasteland that is JV football are both fun. But I quit because I just wasn’t feeling it, and I’d do it again. Play sports because you truly want to and gain something out of it, not because you want the t-shirt or feel like you just should. Otherwise, go Prep!

6. I wanted to give advice on girls, but I didn’t know what. Freshman year, everyone is kind of on a different level. Some are hanging out with different girls every weekend, while others haven’t seen a female within their age range since middle school. I guess I’d tell myself confidence is of paramount importance. There are two forces that, for the most part, drive female attraction: esteem and comfort. Some guys are liked by girls because girls will feel prettier and better about themselves if fancied. Others are liked by girls because girls genuinely like being around them. The former is largely out of your control. The latter, however, is attainable just by being confident and comfortable in your own skin.

7. The same goes with religion. Some people can’t keep their little freshmen fingers off the bible, and others are steadfast atheists. Any reasonable person shouldn’t really care what your religious views are. I think the best advice I would give to my freshman self is to simply acknowledge the existence of the spirit. Humans are undeniably more pensive and transcendent than any other species on the planet. You are lucky to be at Prep, where special attention is paid to your spirituality. You don’t have to become a monk, but I think contemplating things like your place in the universe, society, and family are never-ending. Why not start now?

8. Regarding the social atmosphere at Prep, I don’t have much to say that isn’t cliche about making friends. Being from Fairfield, I can’t imagine what it’s like going to Prep knowing nobody. I would advise myself to always make plans outside of school--no matter how subpar they are. Shared experiences are the best avenue to friendship. You already share Prep school with 900 kids; it’s a good idea to share a little more with a handful of kids. Patience, however, is an absolutely virtue. Your friends now may not be your friends senior year--and that will probably be for the better. Even if things are cliquey and you feel lonely, friendliness and positivity always win at the end. High school in general gets increasingly inclusive--and just better for the most part--as you get older.
9. Find your niche; be a type. Don’t get me wrong: well-roundedness is very important. Having said that, most excellent, accomplished people in the world have a “thing.” Lebron James can play basketball; Drake can perform; Leo DiCaprio can act; Warren Buffet can invest. Being decent at everything is important, but having a domain in which you work hard, enjoy yourself, and succeed is so important. If you love and are good at sports, go for it; if you’re sharp in the classroom, try to challenge yourself by doing more with your mind than just get good grades; if you love to play an instrument, keep playing; if you’re a ladykiller, stay suave! Having a useful skill goes a long way. Teenage years are for self-actualization--learning who you are. Nourishing some skill is a great way to develop an identity and make friends.

10. My last piece of advice is more of a warning. Be careful with social networking. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve incriminated myself with things I shouldn’t have put on the internet. If you have something risque to say, you probably shouldn’t say it--but if you absolutely have to--vocalize that thought. A common rule of thumb with social networking is: if you wouldn’t want your grandmother to see it, don’t post it. Doing otherwise will inevitably lead to regret.

One Year Later

By Tim Peterson

As I stare out the window into the relatively meaningless darkness of West Virginia on the way home from my first year at Wake Forest, I can't help but think about all the new experiences, friends, and knowledge I have gained. I went into school knowing only a handful of people, but that soon changed. The close quarters of dormitory living allowed for endless friendships to be made, as well as plenty of issues with these same people. Each new day of the year I would meet new people, and I had to figure out which individuals I wanted to spend time with. This is perhaps the biggest adjustment to college life: freedom in all aspects of life. I could choose who I could be friends with, when and what I wanted to learn, what I wanted to do with my free time; the possibilities are endless.

With all of this freedom came responsibility, and this responsibility brought about challenges. Within a single college day, you can spend several hours in class and in the library, a few more hanging out, and several more going out at night. These can include roommate problems, girl issues (yes, girls!!), pulling all-nighters, and losing a loved one away from home. Many challenges have confronted me within one single day, but prior knowledge and preparation from Prep helped me to cope with these to realize they are all part of life. My first year was immensely fun and interesting, with so many different social and intellectual experiences. My advice to incoming freshman is to take it in stride, realize that it's just the beginning and if you slip up it isn't life-changing (at least I hope not), and to have fun in between the work. Most important of all, keep in touch with your classmates, they'll be there for life.
Matt Kiernan ’13 Addresses Prep

Dear Prepsters,

It’s your old pal Matt Kiernan coming back to tell you some things about life after The Prep. I recently started my college experience here at the University of Notre Dame and let me tell you it is no Prep. There was a lot of adjusting right off the bat. I am currently living with a student from San Diego who enjoys playing guitar and watching the Syfy network. Am I against strumming the six-string? Of course not. Am I against the great programs on the Syfy network? Also no! However, would it kill him to bring down the volume while I try to take a nap? I bet it wouldn’t.

My naps are pretty crucial. There is a lot of work to get done in college. Sometimes that work keeps you awake until 4am. Sometimes you think your work will take you until 4am but in reality you finish at 2:30 and the last 5-hour Energy you downed will end up keeping you awake until 4am anyway. It is definitely important to manage your time. Something Prep taught me to do but I lost the skill somewhere between being accepted and arriving at school.

More important than schoolwork is the work you are going to have to do socially. Most of the time when you go off to college you don’t have many buddies going with you. In my case, I was blessed to have five other Prep brothers in my midst here in South Bend, including everyone’s favorite overly nice guy, Pat Connolly, in my own dorm. In retrospect, this probably did more bad than good as I had absolutely no urgency to find new friends. I’m going to go out on a limb and say I have 8 good guy friends here and three are Prep guys. Two went to Regis in New York and one went to Chaminade. As you can see I am really branching out beyond the tri-state area.

Notice in that last sentence how I only mentioned my bros. Now I mention the babes! Let me tell you it’s a different animal. Having class with babes is weird. In my first ever class I was waiting for my buddies Matt Noone and Pat Connolly to get to class to have them sit down next to me. All of a sudden a girl I had met a few days earlier says hello and sits right next to me. Not only am I shaken by the fact that I have to make small talk with a girl, I also have to deal with the fact that one of my bros is going to have to sit alone somewhere else in the room. Even better, being the great buddies they are, when they showed up neither of them decided to sit with me. In the end run it was probably good as I was able to have my first conversation with a girl. Thought I would get that out of the way before college but everyone moves at their own pace I guess.

However, while a lot of things change in college, there is a lot that reminds you of life back at the Prep. Between my J-Lot-esque walks to class every day and amount of professors that look strikingly similar to Mr. Wallace I still feel like a little piece of Prep is with me. I can feel it at the football games while cheering on the Irish and I can feel it in the dining hall when eating the delicious food that is oh so similar to the food prepared by Franck and Viv. So while I miss Prep I still feel like it is with me wherever I go.

AMDG, Matt Kiernan
Land Ho!

By Tyrone Fleurizard

When thinking about my graduating class, what comes to mind is a quote by a transcendentalist who went by the name of George William Curtis: “It is not the ship so much as the skillful sailing that assures the prosperous voyage.”

I strongly believe the quote encompasses our identity as the Class of 2014: the ship is symbolic of Prep, the skillful sailing is symbolic of all of our hard work scholastically over the past four years, and the prosperous voyage symbolizes June 1, 2014. I love this quote because of Curtis’ word choice: skillful sailing and a prosperous voyage. He could have simply wrote sailing and voyage but chose not to because to embark on a prosperous journey you must be skillful and as a class we never uttered the word die when showcasing our unique skillsets on the court, field or stage and were victorious in chanting “…let’s go Fairfield! Fairfield, let’s go!” This quote’s deeper meaning is this: it doesn’t matter that all 219 of us decided to attend a school such as Prep, but what matters is the immense effort put forth to accept that diploma from Father Hanwell on June 1. And I personally believe Hanwell isn’t simply handing us an empty diploma. I firmly believe instead he is handing us the blood, sweat and tears shed over the past four years—handing us back the sleep we lost studying for exams—handing us back four years of dejection and happiness—handing us the key to the new door in our lives.

Now it wasn’t smooth sailing at first nor did we ride P.O.S.H. throughout our four years. Right now we are men but were merely boys four years ago: intricacy takes practice—being skillful takes practice, because before a skill becomes a skill there is failure, and we were all failure prone: the kids from Bridgeport sat with the kids from Bridgeport, the Shelton kids bragged unreservedly about having the only wiffle ball factory and the Fairfield kids, well the Fairfield kids only talked about girls. We let our nuances patch both eyes and cause our ship to go off course. With these differences, it made it hard for one to believe that we would ever get along; well there was one thing we all had in common, we all loved Miracle. And I still, to this day, wonder if we love the movie Miracle or love what it stands for because it embodies who we now are: men from different places, leaving everything behind, come together to achieve one common goal. I would even agree that they interestingly went from strangers to brothers, destined for greatness.

I commend each and every graduate of the Class of 2014 for not allowing any of its brothers and shipmates to walk the social plank into the deep depths of seclusion. Our camaraderie attests to the completion of Prep’s Mission Statement: we have accepted the invitation to deepen our relationship with God, removed the patches of social acceptance in order to fully develop our cultural cognition, and overcame the challenge to become leaders, living men of conscious, compassion and action.

With this being said, Graduates, we’ve finally docked this ship that is Prep and are about to aboard the Yacht that is college. I just hope nobody gets seasick.