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**Lisa Orden Zarin**  
*College Bound St. Louis*

**Laura Winter**  
*Project Manager*  
(314) 952-6561  
[laura@stlouisgraduates.org](mailto:laura@stlouisgraduates.org)

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For more information contact:  
Laura Winter, (314) 952-6561

## **New Center Will Help Students Go from High School to College *Free counseling available this summer in the Delmar Loop***

St. Louis, MO – Making the transition from high school to college can be daunting, particularly if you are the first in your family to pursue a degree or have significant financial hurdles to overcome to make continuing your education possible. That’s why St. Louis Graduates is opening this summer the St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center where students can get answers and help with the process.

St. Louis area students can visit the free St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center if they are recent high school graduates and:

- Need assistance figuring out financial aid, where to live and how to get to college,
- Are having trouble accessing the college online enrollment and course registration system, or
- Need help completing necessary paperwork.

At the Center, students will be able to meet with a team of experienced professionals, including a mix of high school guidance counselors, nonprofit college access professionals, higher education transition staff and financial aid advisors.

Participating counselors include representatives of College Summit, Missouri College Advising Corps, St. Louis Community College, The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis, and Wyman Center as well as individual counselors from several area high schools, nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions.

“We want to make sure that all students who are enrolled in college for the fall have the information, encouragement and guidance they need to make it to campus. We launched the Center because we believe there are potentially thousands of students who don’t make it to campus, despite their best intentions,” said **Jane Donahue**, Vice President of the Deaconess Foundation and Co-chair of St. Louis Graduates.

The St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center will tailor its counseling to students who recently graduated from high school, have plans in place to continue their education, and have questions over the summer and aren’t quite sure where to turn. The Center is designed to work primarily with low-income and/or first-generation college-going students. All services are offered free of charge.

“Having an acceptance letter or financial aid award letter can give the mistaken impression that all a student needs to do is show up on campus in the fall,” notes **Faith Sandler**, Executive Director of The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis and Co-chair of St. Louis Graduates. “The St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center will help students through the steps they need to take to ensure their financial aid is in place, they are enrolled in classes, and they are ready to go in August.”

The St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center will be open June 1<sup>st</sup> through August 18<sup>th</sup> in a “pop up” retail storefront in the Delmar Loop at 618 N. Skinker Blvd. in space donated by Washington University in St. Louis. The Center will be open seven days a week from 12 Noon to 5 p.m. Students will be encouraged to come into the Center, but assistance will also be available via phone and e-mail.

### **The problem of “summer melt”**

While there are many efforts underway to improve the college access and degree completion efforts of low-income students, one aspect that has eluded policymakers and those who work with students is the phenomenon known as “summer melt.” High school students who at graduation intend to enroll in college somehow do not arrive on campus in the fall. The reasons are many and individual, but include late realization that their financial aid package is insufficient to meet their need, incomplete paperwork, missed deadlines, or a lack of support from family and friends.

During senior year, high school guidance counselors help keep students on track by answering questions and prompting students to meet deadlines. Unfortunately, most high school counselors are off duty in the summer and postsecondary institutions that are so strong in admitting students do not always have the team in place to reach out to students in the summer before they actually arrive on campus.

Nationally, an estimated 10% of students who intend to enroll in college for the first time in the fall do not do so. A St. Louis Graduates survey of local counselors found they are concerned that as many as one-third of their students – students who have been accepted to college – are at risk for summer melt. That’s what inspired the idea for a collaborative, community-wide approach to addressing the issue in St. Louis.

Research indicates that providing college-intending high school graduates with additional support during the summer months has a positive impact on fall enrollment. In one randomized controlled study involving students in two urban districts, just two to three hours of additional support during the summer led to up to an eight percentage point increase in on-time enrollment. Perhaps more importantly, students who met with advisors during the summer months were 5% more likely to be continuously enrolled in the fall and spring semesters; and more continuously enrolled students are more likely to graduate.

### **Putting research to practice in St. Louis**

At the St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center, experienced counselors will meet one-on-one with students to review a checklist of common challenges, help students

develop an action plan to address them, and refer students to resources that meet their needs.

Counselors at the St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center will use a system developed by College Bound, a St. Louis-based college access/success program that works intensely with students from the end of their freshman year in high school through college graduation. College Bound developed an online tool for ensuring common challenges are addressed each step of the way, including the critical transition point between high school and college. Use of the system will ensure all students receive the complete scope of help they need, including assistance with admissions, financial aid, housing, and transportation.

### **A team effort**

The St. Louis Graduates High School to College Center is made possible because of support from Citi, College Bound, Daughters of Charity Foundation of St. Louis, Deaconess Foundation, Incarnate Word Foundation, Monsanto Company, The James T. Pettus Jr. Foundation, The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis, Regional Business Council, and Washington University in St. Louis.

### **About St. Louis Graduates**

St. Louis Graduates is a collaborative network of youth-serving college access provider organizations, K-12 education, higher education, philanthropic funders and businesses focused on increasing degree attainment among low-income and first-generation students in the St. Louis region. The vision is that ALL students in the metro area will have access to the resources necessary to complete a postsecondary degree. St. Louis Graduates' goal is for 50% of adults in the region to have a postsecondary degree by 2020. St. Louis Graduates supports this goal through collaboration, service coordination, professional development, communications and advocacy.



Free college counseling for graduating high school seniors

618 N. Skinker Blvd. in the Delmar Loop

Open daily 12Noon to 5 p.m., June 1 through August 18

Phone: (314) 932-6956

E-mail: [info@stlouisgraduates.org](mailto:info@stlouisgraduates.org)

[www.StLouisGraduates.org](http://www.StLouisGraduates.org)

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