1-2015

Complete Issue

Christopher W. Tremblay, Ed.D
Western Michigan University, ctrembla@uwsuper.edu

Patrick J. O'Connor PhD
Oakland Community College, collegeisyours@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jca

Part of the Accessibility Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons

Journal *of* College Access

JCA

About the Journal

JCA   An Overview

The *Journal of College Access* (JCA) focuses on the current trends, research, practices, and development of all types of programs, policies, and activities related to the access of and success in postsecondary education. Issues of college aspiration, qualification, application, enrollment, and persistence are the primary emphases.

The Journal was co-founded by Dr. Patrick O'Connor and Dr. Christopher Tremblay. O'Connor is Associate Dean for College Counseling at Kingswood Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and is a board member for the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN). Tremblay is Associate Provost for Enrollment Management at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan and is an active member of the College and Career Action Network in Kalamazoo and MCAN.

MICHIGAN
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

JCA is affiliated with the Michigan College Access Network, a statewide non-profit organization with a mission to increase college readiness, participation, and completion in Michigan, particularly among low-income students, first-generation college going students, and students of color.

Launched in March 2014, JCA is a part of Western Michigan University's ScholarWorks, a digital showcase of research, scholarly and creative output.

JCA

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We accept submissions year round.

scholarworks.wmich.edu/jca

Table of Contents

The Inaugural Issue

JCA

Karen D. Arnold (Boston College), Alexandra Chewning (uAspire), Benjamin Castleman (University of Virginia),
Lindsay C. Page (University of Pittsburgh)

Rachelle Pérusse (University of Connecticut), Timothy A. Poynton (University of Massachusetts Boston), Jennifer L. Parzych
(Mercy College), Gary E. Goodnough (Plymouth State University)

Amy L. Cook (University of Massachusetts Boston), Laura A. Hayden (University of Massachusetts Boston),
Felicia Wilczenski (University of Massachusetts Boston), Timothy A. Poynton (University of Massachusetts Boston)

Introduction by the Co-Editors

JCA

Authored by
Dr. Patrick O'Connor
Dr. Christopher W. Tremblay

Launching a new academic journal, especially one focused on college access, is a dream come true! This inaugural issue features three different scholarly pieces – one on college and career readiness counseling training, one on students with intellectual disabilities, and one on summer support – all critical topics in the field of college access. We are also excited to provide some guest perspectives from the President and CEO of the Lumina Foundation and showcase the voice of expert Mandy Savitz-Romer, Ph.D. of Harvard University.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Advisor and Student Experiences of Summer Support for College-Intending, Low-Income High School Graduates

This piece provides important insights into "summer melt," the phenomenon that occurs when college-bound high school graduates do not follow through on the summer activities needed to attend college in the fall. New programs suggest there are ways to reduce summer melt; this article offers excellent insights into their efficacy.

The Importance and Implementation of Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling in School Counselor Education Programs

Many advocates of college access work with the eight-part framework established by the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA), but are counselor educators familiar with it—and how much value do they place on each component? This study begins to address this important question, and the implications for pre-service counselor training.

Increasing Access to Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

College access is often limited to the construct of expanding opportunities to low-income students and students of color. This article identifies efforts to broaden college access to students who were once considered beyond the reach of college opportunities based on intellectual disability, a vital dimension of the college access movement that is often overlooked.

JCA

Foreword

Authored by
Brandy Johnson, Executive Director of the
Michigan College Access Network

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Journal of College Access*. I am thrilled to see this publication take off, and know great things are in store for its future.

The Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) is an organization that strives to increase the college readiness, participation and completion rates in our state. College access is one of the most important issues that faces our state today, as college truly is no longer a luxury but indeed a necessity. Our knowledge-based economy requires more from our students than just a high school diploma. Leaders from across all sectors and from communities all across the country must commit to work to make sure that all students – regardless of their race, background, or socio-economic status – have access to postsecondary education.

This journal spearheads a multifaceted approach to foster a college-going culture. As the college access movement continues to build, we will look to the new ideas, prominent research and scholarship provided by the *Journal of College Access* for guidance. Articles and columns written by some of the most prominent academics in the field of postsecondary access can help to disseminate vital information and influence policymakers at the local, state and national levels. Their messages help educate policymakers and practitioners about the critical role we must play to support students in their pursuit of higher education.

We look forward to the questions posed, theses formed and discussions generated by this publication as we increase momentum and work in tandem with this exciting and innovative research initiative.

MCAN's goal is to increase the percentage of Michigan residents with high-quality degrees or credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. We believe academic publications like this are a step in the right direction to making that goal a reality.

Advisor and Student Experiences of Summer Support for College-Intending, Low-Income High School Graduates

Authored by
Karen D. Arnold (Boston College), Alexandra Chewning (uAspire), Benjamin Castleman (University of Virginia), Lindsay C. Page (University of Pittsburgh)

ABSTRACT

Summer melt occurs when students who have been accepted to college and intend to enroll fail to matriculate in college in the fall semester after high school. A high rate of summer melt contributes to the lower postsecondary attainment rates of low-income students, in particular. This article presents qualitative findings from two interventions intended to reduce summer melt among low-income, urban high school graduates who had been accepted to college and indicated their intention to enroll. Results from student and counselor surveys, interviews, and focus groups point to a web of personal and contextual factors that collectively influence students' college preparation behaviors and provide insight into the areas of summer supports from which students like these can benefit. The data fit an ecological perspective, in which personal, institutional, societal, and temporal factors interact to affect students' behaviors and outcomes. A model of summer intervention shows that obstacles in completing college financing and informational tasks can lead college-intending students to re-open the question of where or whether to attend college in the fall after high school graduation. Given the pressure of concerns about how to actualize their offer of admission, students rarely engage in the anticipatory socialization activities that might help them make optimal transitions into college.

Problem and Theoretical Framework

Pronounced differences in college entrance by family income constitute a persistent driver of social inequality (Obama, 2009; Perna & Jones, 2013). By age 25, only 29% of U.S. youth from the lowest income quartile have entered higher education, compared with 80% of their peers from the highest income quartile (Aud et al., 2013; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Summer melt contributes significantly to this socioeconomic divide by reducing the rates of initial college enrollment among low-income students. We use the term "summer melt" to refer to the phenomenon of college-intending students failing to transition immediately to college, even after being accepted and choosing where to enroll. The overall national rate of summer melt across all socioeconomic groups is 10% (Castleman & Page, 2014a). Across a variety of contexts, college-intending, low-income students fall victim to summer melt at rates higher than the national average: anywhere from 20 to 44 percent of students in this population fails to enroll at any college in the fall semester after high school (Arnold, Fleming, De Anda, Castleman & Wartman, 2009; Castleman & Page, 2014a, 2014b; Daugherty, 2012; Matthews, Schooley & Vosler, 2011).

Summer Matriculation Support for Low-Income Students

This article reports on qualitative studies of an intensive advising intervention and a text-message-based intervention intended to stem summer melt among low-income college-intending students. Arnold, Lu and Armstrong (2012) have argued that progress toward the goal of improving college access for low-income students remains stalled because of a failure to account for the interactions among relevant personal, institutional, and societal factors. College access can be understood as emerging from a complex human ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1979, 1993, 2005). Each of the intervention modes took an ecological approach by attempting to address the full range of circumstances that affect students in the summer after high school graduation. In a human ecology framework, students' pre-enrollment experiences and decisions are seen as taking place within their immediate settings and relationships: *microsystems*. Student microsystems contain their families, friends, and neighborhoods. In the summer after high school, students are largely or entirely separated from previous microsystems of school, teachers, counselors, and college access program staff. College microsystems are typically absent in the summer, as most high school graduates are not yet connected directly to particular college settings or people.

The *mesosystem* refers to the interacting connections among different microsystems; for instance, the intersections among summer intervention counselors, family, and loan organizations. Students have some agency in the ways they engage, interpret, and partially shape these individual (*microsystem*) and overlapping (*mesosystem*) direct settings. What happens in students' immediate contexts is also conditioned by more distant institutional and policy arenas in which they are not physically present (*exosystem*). Financial aid availability, immigration regulations, and parents' workplaces are examples of exosystem factors affecting students. The *macrosystem* includes broad social contexts, such as cultural beliefs or the capitalist ideology of higher education as a private good. The entire ecology also varies with time (*chronosystem*). Figure 1 (see page 8) illustrates this ecological model of the transition from high school to college with the most salient environmental factors that emerged from a comprehensive review of the literature on college readiness (Arnold, Lu & Armstrong, 2012) and our own empirical research.

Summer Melt: An Ecological Transition
For college-intending high school seniors, immediate settings (microsystems) of school, teachers, out-of-school programs, peers, and families form a congruent mesosystem. These microsystems collectively encourage college-going expectations and behaviors. The summer after high school, in contrast, constitutes an ecological transition in which new graduates are no longer immersed in high school and college access programs and have yet to connect to the college where they intend to enroll. College-intending students face challenging new microsystems after graduating from high school. Students fail to

Figure 1: Ecological Model of College Readiness in the Transition from High School to College

Chronosystem

K-12 school calendar

College calendar

Recession recovery

Timing of college acceptance and financial aid

Higher education as private good

Macrosystem

Globalism

Social stratification

Exosystem

College matriculation processes

Financial aid availability / policy processes

Mesosystem

Prep program-workplace-peers

Lending credit requirements

Educational reform

Microsystem

Technology

Family

Prep program counselor

Facebook

College costs

Lenders-family

Individual

Peers

College knowledge

Academic preparation

Lenders

Forms-family

Race/ethnicity/gender

Motivation

Self-efficacy

Higher education prestige hierarchy

prep program design/ funding

Social activities

Family immigration status

Immigration status

Social media

Labor force structure

College and financial forms and communications

High school quality

Parental jobs and education

Counselors-family

American Dream

Family attitude toward debt

College and high school summer staffing

Capitalism

Adapted from Arnold, Lu & Armstrong (2012). *The Ecology of College Readiness*

matriculate at their intended college, the research suggests, primarily because of financial and informational barriers they face over the post-high school summer (Arnold et al., 2009; Castleman, Arnold & Wartman, 2012; Castleman & Page, 2014b; Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014; Rall, 2013). Students encounter these barriers through new, unfamiliar microsystems in which they are placed in direct contact with college and financial bureaucratic systems. Over the summer, students and their families need to make financial decisions related to college costs and may need to take out loans to complete financial aid packages. They need to access, understand, and respond to college correspondence and bills. They must register for and attend orientation, take placement tests, arrange housing and travel plans, make course selections, and buy books. These requirements emerge from institutional and policy arenas in the exosystem. Many of these tasks are challenging, especially for families with limited financial means, English language literacy, bureaucratic savvy, or college experience. Furthermore, this array of tasks occurs during a period in which students are no longer working with high school counselors or access program staff but before they are connected to college faculty and advisors. In sum, summer melt can be understood as resulting from a pervasive ecological transition in which students face significant challenges in multiple microsystems at a point in time where key supportive microsystems have been withdrawn. These challenges emerge from exosystem policies and practices of financial

lending institutions and higher education requirements and costs. They also emerge from student exosystem factors such as federal regulations affecting their immigration status or the salary levels of their parents' occupations.

Method

Summer College Connect is a college access intervention developed in response to a challenging transition in students' ecology. Qualitative Summer College Connect 2011 and 2012 studies accompanied large-scale randomized controlled trials. In both years, school districts and community-based organizations collaborated with university researchers to provide assistance to low-income, college-intending students in the summer after high school graduation (Castleman & Page, 2014b, 2014c; Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014). Participants in each study included June high school graduates from urban high schools with high percentages of low-income, first generation, and minority students who indicated their intention to enroll in college in the fall.

Summer College Connect 2011

The 2011 Massachusetts experimental intervention consisted of summer advising delivered by uAspire, a Boston-headquartered non-profit college access and success organization that provides college affordability and financial aid advising to youth in urban areas in Massachusetts, Florida, and California (Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014). The 927 students in the sample were June 2011 Boston high school

graduates who had been accepted to college and applied for a supplementary scholarship from uAspire. Divided randomly into treatment and control groups, the student sample was representative of the larger urban school population from which it was drawn, including 87% students of color and 74% who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. While all students in the sample had indicated an interest in remaining engaged with uAspire by virtue of having applied to the scholarship, uAspire did not explicitly offer summer support as part of the scholarship application process. The results of this randomized intervention therefore generalize to other settings in which community-based organizations or schools offer support to all college-intending high school graduates, not just those who have signed up to request this support.

Trained financial aid advisors at uAspire contacted members of the treatment group to offer summer help, including reviewing financial aid letters and college bills, obtaining additional funding, and completing required college paperwork and preparation tasks. uAspire advisors used task lists that were customized for each college's requirements and deadlines to organize their counseling meetings with students and to provide guidance to students about important follow-up activities. Providing two to three hours of summer support cost $100-$200 per student and increased on-time enrollment rates by five percentage points in comparison with the control group (See Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014 for a full description of the

randomized controlled trial study's quantitative methods and findings.).

The qualitative portion of the study attempted to understand how students experienced and used the intervention by posing the following research questions:

- What is happening in the lives of students during the post-high school summer that affects their college transition behaviors and how they feel about enrolling in college?
- How is college affordability affecting students' feelings about college and their college planning? How does the intervention affect their feelings and behaviors about affordability?
- How do students and advisors experience what is happening within the intervention and perceive its effects on college transition behaviors and feelings?

To answer these questions, we conducted interviews and focus groups with the uAspire advisors who delivered the intervention and interviewed a subset of students in the treatment group. We used a purposive intensity sample (Patton, 1990) by selecting advisors who were identified by the site supervisor as the most experienced, capable, reflective advisors. Specifically, we interviewed four advisors in July, approximately three weeks into the intervention. Three of those advisors were interviewed again in late August, at the end of the intervention. We also interviewed an additional advisor and the supervisor of the

intervention in early September. The majority of the 60 to 90 minute interviews covered in-depth narratives of eight to ten individual students from each advisor's caseload. Advisors were asked to choose students with whom they had met and whom they considered to be representative and/or particularly information-rich cases. For each of these cases, advisors shared their experience in contacting students, specific college planning issues they covered in advising, and the process and outcomes of working with the student. In the second interview, advisors provided updates on the same student cases. On both occasions, they were also asked to comment on student experiences and intervention issues more broadly.

In addition to these individual case-based interviews with advisors, we held focus groups in August and November with six to eight advisors and uAspire leaders. In each instance, advisors were asked to discuss patterns of student issues, reflect on summarized interview findings, describe the ways that they assisted students, and assess the intervention itself. The November focus group also served as a member check-in which advisors reflected on the validity and implications for practice of study findings and preliminary interpretations.

As part of the study, three graduate student interviewers with similar backgrounds to the study population conducted individual interviews with nine students from the treatment group. The purposive sampling frame for student respondent selection was a maximum variation sample of students chosen to represent a variety of postsecondary plans and intervention experiences. The interviews covered students' summer experience as it related to college attitudes, plans, and actions; perceptions of college affordability; and reflections on the experience of working with a uAspire advisor during the summer.

All interviews and focus group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were entered into a qualitative research data analysis program (Hyperresearch). Data analysis followed a constant-comparative approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in which open codes are assigned to units of text and subsequently clustered into patterns and then into core themes.

Summer College Connect 2012

In order to test a scaled-up, low-touch summer melt intervention, Castleman and Page (2014c) designed a text-message campaign for a summer 2012 randomized control/treatment intervention. In Massachusetts, the study population included Class of 2012 high school graduates from the cities of Springfield, Lawrence, and Boston who had initiated at least two individual meetings with a uAspire financial aid advisor at their high school during their senior year. This operational definition of college-intending yielded a sample of 2,833 students who were representative of their urban school populations: predominantly of color (89-99%

across sites) and low-income (78-89% as measured by qualification for free and reduced-price lunch). The sample was divided randomly into control and treatment conditions, with 1,070 students receiving the text message treatment. As with the summer 2011 intervention, students in the experimental sample did not select into being eligible to receive additional summer support from uAspire. Rather, uAspire identified eligible students from their own administrative records.

In the 2012 Summer College Connect treatment group, students received a series of 10 text messages that were sent directly to their mobile phones during the summer after high school graduation. The messages were personalized with the student's name and customized for each student's intended college. They reminded students of important tasks they needed to complete, such as logging on to their personal web portal at the college to access important information and forms, signing up for placement tests and orientation, filling out housing forms, and arranging health insurance. Messages also provided reminders about financial aid forms, understanding aid letters, and interpreting tuition bills. Students could follow embedded links in most of the text messages to access additional information and carry out tasks on college and financial aid websites. They could also request a meeting with a uAspire advisor by responding to the text outreach.

In Lawrence and Springfield, Massachusetts, where there is a deficiency of college planning

supports and resources for students, Castleman and Page (2014c) reported increased enrollment of 7.1 percentage points for students in the treatment group over a control group enrollment rate of 63%. In Boston, by contrast, where there is a high concentration of college planning supports, both during the school year and the summer following high school graduation, there was no impact of the texting intervention (Castleman & Page, 2014c). The cost of the treatment was $7 per student. (See Castleman & Page, 2014c, for a full account of the intervention and experimental trial methods and findings.)

The qualitative portion of the study was designed to explore how students experienced the intervention, used the text messages, and considered their decisions about college in light of the messages. The research questions were:

- How do students experience and use text messages intended to assist them in completing college tasks during the summer after high school?
- How do students perceive the influence of text messages on their college-planning behaviors and enrollment outcomes?
- Why do some students who receive summer support choose not to begin college?

Qualitative study participants were a stratified random sample of treatment group students from Boston, Lawrence, and

Springfield. In order to learn about the students for whom the intervention had not resulted in college enrollment, we oversampled students who were not in college in fall 2012 according to the National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker. One hundred non-college students and fifty college students were asked to participate. We received responses from 41 students (27%) across these two groups.

In keeping with the digital intervention mode, data were collected in April 2013 via a short mobile phone survey (10-15 minutes, 32 questions) with a combination of forced-choice and open-ended questions about students' current activities, reactions to the intervention, use of the messages, and reflections about post-high school choices and plans. Students received a personalized invitation from uAspire to take the survey and were offered a $20 gift card to complete it. It is important to note that students who sought out assistance might be more likely to report positive results than other students in the treatment group who did not take up the offer of support.

Findings

Summer College Connect 2011
The 2011 qualitative findings yielded themes about students' summer challenges related to postsecondary planning and themes related to the delivery of uAspire's summer intervention. Most importantly, the results show a high need for summer assistance. In one characteristic, comprehensive statement,

a uAspire student told the interviewer, "It's freaky. I'm the first generation in my family to go to college and I don't know what to do!" In fact, advisors found that students and parents were often unaware that colleges were sending bills and other information electronically.   "It's not like they aren't sending the information at all or that they don't want the students to be informed," an advisor said. "They are creating these complex interfaces online. They are sending packets I'm sure. But something is getting lost along the way." This finding demonstrates an exosystem influence, as colleges move to online communications with admitted students without accounting for the level of college knowledge or availability of home computers among first generation students and their families. Chronosystem challenges arose as well. Colleges typically sent information about required summer tasks with an acceptance packet. The early timing of these instructions and their complexity led many students to put off summer tasks in favor of more immediate and pressing pursuits.

The Summer College Connect intervention design was a good match for students' summer financial and informational needs. In addition to their role as an important summer microsystem for treatment group members, advisors who had worked in students' high schools served as a mesosystem connection between high school and the pre-college summer. Students found their interactions with advisors to be comfortable and helpful. Advisors found that their financial aid

expertise was always useful and frequently crucial in enabling students to implement their college plans or to make a new postsecondary plan. Students reported finding their meetings helpful and were particularly positive about "to-do" lists that advisors assisted in customizing to the tasks and deadlines of their intended college. The students who took up the offer for meetings found that the process helped keep them organized and on track. Even students who initially told advisors they were "all set" benefited from some assistance. As a student said, "I guess without [this program] I don't think I would have survived this process. My family and friends have given me support, but not the support that I feel like [uAspire] has given me. I've had them walk me through the whole college process."

The match between uAspire's college affordability expertise and student need was particularly strong because the vast majority of work over the summer dealt with affordability and information related to finances. Struggles to afford college spanned the entire student ecology. From the macrosystem, students faced high college costs because of a steady rise in institutional expenses at the same time as declining state appropriations to higher education. The structure of the labor force and manifestations of social inequality were macrosystem factors affecting their family's ability to pay for college. In the exosystem, loan policies, government regulations, and bureaucratic procedures all influenced the content, timing, and difficulty of arranging financing.

Students approached the array of financial tasks in light of the characteristics of their family and advisor microsystems.

The interaction between pressures emerging from distant levels of the environment and students' tasks in their immediate contexts produced challenges for nearly all of the students. Facing first-year funding shortfalls from $500 to $18,000, students had trouble making sense of their gap. Many needed assistance in understanding that it was possible to fill a modest gap and others needed to be dissuaded from taking on large, unsubsidized private loans. Hands-on work during meetings was particularly helpful: going over award letters and bills, making phone calls to college financial aid offices, and completing required paperwork. Advisor help ranged from assistance in completing master promissory notes and health insurance waivers to appeals of financial aid awards and loan advising.

Students commonly faced unanticipated gaps or extra expenses that threatened to derail their plans. When combined funding sources did not cover college costs, as was often the case, advisors assisted students to consider alternative college options. This was the situation for a student who did not know the meaning of the term "trimester" and so did not realize until her advising meeting that what she and her mother took as the entire cost of her college year was just a third of her first year bill. Sometimes the financial aid award paperwork, the initial bill, and/or the real college costs were unclear to students and

parents. While much of this confusion was due to families' limited understanding of complicated bureaucratic and financial forms, advisors noted that some colleges were occasionally misleading students by presenting inconsistent information about college costs on their website, initial financial aid award letter, or final bill. In other situations, students knew the costs but had no idea how to meet them. Many students faced both issues. "I thought I only had to pay $600 after all those scholarships. But it turns out I have to pay another thousand, and [uAspire advisor] helped me realized that. And I was 'So what do I do? What do I do?' And she was really helpful."

Students were dealing with numerous problems that were intertwined with affordability. Attempts to finance college occurred within mesosystem interactions among the contexts of advisor, family, peers, and community. As an advisor told us: "Financial aid is the biggest issue, obviously, because it comes from other issues. They'll all connect, but at the end of the day, you can't even begin to address those things unless you address those emotional or other issues that are going on that are not so much [about] money or filling out the form." Family issues, in particular, often determined whether students were able to implement their postsecondary plan. Parents' beliefs and actions sometimes hampered their student's plan, for instance by an inability to provide financial information or a cultural reluctance to have their child live on campus. Family issues like these were sometimes crises that

necessarily became the focus of advisor assistance. Other families were supportive but unable to help; some were actively helpful; and some dominated the student or pushed hard for high-debt college choices. Violence in inner city Boston over the summer led some families to increase the priority of college and to make additional financial sacrifices to enable their student to leave the neighborhood for college.

All interviewed students felt their advisors cared about them and were open and receptive to anything they brought up. Every advisor reported acting as a personal counselor on occasion. However, apart from family problems related to financing college, student and advisor concerns about personal issues, academic readiness, and strategies for thriving in college were almost always set aside in order to focus on paying for college. The intervention necessarily concentrated on helping the student matriculate into college. For this population of students, financial and logistical tasks were the most salient issues in the transition to college. This work took priority all summer. Advisors had little time to take up academic, emotional, and socialization transition issues that might influence college success once students were enrolled.

Another challenge for summer program advisors was the significant tension between encouraging all students to pursue the goal of college and pushing many students to understand that their specific plan was unfeasible. Many students had strong

attachments to particular campuses and to the idea of themselves at a four-year college. These ideas came from the macrosystem and exosystem messages about the American dream and the normative college experience in the U.S. generally, and in the Boston higher education context. Students had encountered these social ideals in their microsystems via high school messages and norms, family ideals, peer attitudes, college recruitment, and self-concepts related to college-going. For the many students with insurmountable gaps between their financial aid and the cost of attendance at their intended institution, advisors encouraged them to consider community college or a less expensive four-year option. Students varied in their response to these suggestions, with some resisting what they saw as a less-desirable or lower-status option. Some advisors pointed to the difficulties of serving as the realist at the end of a line of adults who have assured students that they can achieve anything if they work hard and desire it enough. Notably, many students expressed a belief that the finances would "work themselves out" as long as they were accepted to an institution. Helping students manage and sometimes reset their expectations was a major theme in the uAspire work. In the words of one advisor: "I was playing the role of dream crusher."

Given the high need for assistance among the study population, it is perhaps surprising that a major finding of the Summer College Connect 2011 qualitative study was the considerable time expended on persuading students to take up the offer of assistance. A major frustration for the advisors was the difficulty in reaching students and scheduling meetings. Students routinely ignored phone calls, voicemails and emails and frequently canceled or failed to show up for scheduled meetings. Timing of the meetings during the workday was difficult for many students, as was the trade-off between an advising meeting and foregone pay from taking time off of work. For some, the unfamiliarity or travel time to downtown Boston proved to be obstacles. Although at least one advisor had reasonable attendance at off-site meetings, most were hesitant to risk no-shows, especially on evenings and weekends. While offered, the incentive of department store gift cards did not seem to make a major difference in students' receptiveness to the offer of help. One advisor said that everyone was "stunned at how hard it was going to be to track down students…We just had no idea how much effort it was going to take." The difficulty in reaching students and setting up meetings was related to advisors' sensitivity to the balance between helping students take responsibility for themselves and fostering dependency by "holding their hands." "It's hard, you know," an advisor said. "You don't want to be stalking the student!"

By the end of the summer, advisors had exchanged a phone call or email with 80% of the treatment group. Fifty-one percent had met at least once with a uAspire advisor. Students' willingness to accept the offer of advisor support increased dramatically toward the end of the summer, as students faced deadlines to pay their first bill and

finalize their loans. The late surge of interest in advising also appeared to be related to adolescents' strong bias toward the present. Many students put off enrollment tasks until there a very strong sense of urgency to complete them finally dominating other immediate concerns and pressing tasks. For ethical reasons, the control group had been informed during their last month of high school of the availability of summer help; however, only 2% sought out support from uAspire. Clearly, active outreach was necessary to mobilize students to take up the offer of summer support. The reasons for the lower take up rates earlier in the summer are not entirely clear, but advisors agreed that many students perceived that they were "all set" after getting accepted to college and graduating from high school:

> In the early summer, they don't yet realize that they're not all set. So, I think that early summer is still kind of the honeymoon period of 'I just graduated and I'm all set to go to college. I was accepted, I paid my deposit, and now I just get to do what, you know, whatever my summer brings until September… I mean, if someone's calling you unexpectedly during the summer, and you don't feel like there's anything pressing, then you might see it as, you know, a nice offer for help that you don't need to take up (uAspire advising supervisor).

Advisors agreed that students and their families did not foresee the college tasks of summer or the full realities of the costs related to college attendance. By the time some of them realized the seriousness of the tasks, they were unable to finance their intended college.

The focus on finances and informational activities precluded students from using the summer to prepare for the role of becoming a college student. Anticipatory socialization is the process of learning about and beginning to adopt the values and norms of groups that non-group members hope to enter (Merton, 1968; Weidman, 1989). Given the pressure of financial and informational concerns, few Summer College Connect students were able to have conversations with their advisors about, choosing courses, finding and using campus resources, connecting with future classmates, dealing with academic weaknesses, affording books, and other transition issues. These are the kinds of anticipatory socialization issues that generally occupy the pre-college summer of high school graduates from higher income, college-educated families (McDonough, 1997; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Such preparation is likely to affect the smoothness of the transition into college and, arguably, college persistence.

Summer College Connect 2012
The 2012 Summer College Connect intervention turned to automated text-message based communication to reach out and offer summer support to students. The motivation for this strategy is twofold. First, automated outreach reduced the advisor time

and expense in tracking down students and persuading them to accept assistance. Second, advisors had found text based communication to be effective for reaching students during the school year and in the prior summer's implementation of Summer College Connect. In addition, text message outreach is cost-effective, scalable, and relevant to the digital lives of young adults (Castleman & Page, 2014c). In this treatment condition, students actively chose to pursue information or seek advising by responding to at least one of the automated messages received (34%-48% depending on city) or by taking up the text invitation for an advising meeting (20%-31% across cities).

The qualitative study of the 2012 text message campaign used a survey delivered via mobile phone to follow the outcomes and evaluate the intervention experiences of treatment group students eight months after the end of the message campaign. The report of results begins with examining the third of the respondents who had not begun college after high school. As in the 2011 study, the entire student ecology was implicated in the host of issues they gave for postponing college. Students' reasons for not matriculating related to a variety of financial issues, including needing to work to help their families, not wanting to take out loans, missing financial aid deadlines, and feeling they could not afford college. A few students missed application deadlines or did not get into the schools they wanted; one still needed to finish a failed high school class. Others had competing interests: "needed a break," "was

enjoying my job," "wasn't interested." Only one student expressed feeling academically unprepared. In keeping with the 2011 study, 2012 graduates' consideration of academic preparation issues was overshadowed by the effort required to pay for college and complete required paperwork.

An important reason for studying students who do not attend college is to find out whether they are, in fact, successfully pursuing routes to upward mobility outside of higher education. It was not the case that students in this study skipped college to enter other potentially high-wage career ladders. Instead, the pattern for respondents who had not enrolled in college was one of unstable employment and unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

Across the sample, 96% of respondents in and outside of college had worked full time at some point in the nine months since high school graduation. By April, however 46% of college and non-college respondents were unemployed and looking for work. Of those employed, only the few enrolled students with college work-study jobs and a single individual with an internship could be seen as pursuing career-related work; the rest of the group was employed in food service and retail positions. The group was somewhat satisfied with their pay and work environments but not with the connections of their job to their interests and desired career.

Students varied greatly in their response about whether they would make the same

decisions about college again. Almost half of the group said they would make the same choice again about whether and/or where to enroll (definitely yes: 24%; probably yes: 24%); the remainder would not (probably not: 30%; definitely not 22%). Satisfied college students felt they had worked hard and experienced success in their first year of college: "I made a smart investment the first time." "I've had a successful first year of college." "I learned from my mistakes my first year of college. I now feel better prepared going into my second year." Dissatisfied or struggling college students and non-college attenders, in contrast, saw their poor decisions as coming from motivational and self-management issues: "I was disorganized"; "I'd be more prepared on sending in the correct applications, more organized"; "I'd manage my time better"; "I feel like I could have worked harder when it came to applying to colleges." A few students felt they should have sought out additional knowledge: "Learn more about loans, explore majors."

Enrolled and non-enrolled students repeatedly used the image of "following dreams" and "being true to myself" to explain their relative satisfaction with their decision about whether and where to attend college. These themes also appeared in feedback about what they would have done differently, if anything: "Maybe go to a different school and follow my dreams"; "I would stay true to myself and my dreams, rather than follow someone else's"; "I wasted one whole semester in college, until I transferred to

[university] and majored in what I loved."

Students held themselves responsible for their college enrollment outcomes and did not articulate the role of any larger social structures and systems surrounding them. For example, no students attributed their choices to external factors like the availability of financial aid or the lack of accessible college staff over the summer. No enrolled students blamed any aspect of their college for a negative experience, as with the student who reported that her university "is not a bad school but I wasn't comfortable so I wanted to come home." The closest reference any student made to academic readiness was one comment of regret about high school: "I would try harder in my classes." Exosystem and macrosystem social forces, in short, were either not apparent or not salient to students' lived experience.

Direct student feedback about the effects of receiving text message nudges for college tasks was encouraging (although respondents to the survey might have been more likely than non-respondents to view the messages as helpful). When asked whether the messages influenced their college preparation, the majority of students reported that the messages positively influenced their actions at the following percentages (selected as "somewhat true for me" or "very true for me"):

- Got me to complete a task I hadn't yet done (86%);
- Informed me about something that I hadn't realized I needed to do (86%)
- Helped me manage my time better, like planning better or meeting my college deadlines, or not procrastinating as much (75%)
- Got me to reach out to a uAspire advisor for help (72%)
- Helped make the summer tasks less overwhelming or less stressful (70%)
- Helped make summer tasks for college clearer or more understandable (67%)

When asked the open-ended question of how they used the messages, the large majority of respondents reported that they used messages as reminders of tasks they needed to complete. "The text messages were reminders. [It was] a hectic time with everything going on and they definitely kept me on task with what needed to be completed." "I used them as a source of information. It was helpful and useful to someone like me who did not know a lot about preparing for college." "I read them and did what I had to do with my uAspire advisor after." These repeated themes suggest that our responding students took primary responsibility or worked closely with their advisors to complete enrollment tasks and keep track of deadlines.

A handful of students found the messages irritating and deleted them because they were already on top of the tasks, had another mentor, or had already decided they did not want to go to college: "I usually had my things done ahead of time and the constant reminders annoyed me." "They told me things I already knew." "I had an Upward Bound advisor to talk things over with. I didn't need the messages." "I really did not know if I wanted to go to college."

Responses like these were rare, however. Of all text recipients, a small minority (approximately 4%) requested that the text outreach stop. Of survey respondents discussed here, the majority found the messages were useful, overall, in "helping me get everything done for college during last summer" (84% 'somewhat true or very true for me'). Nearly two-thirds of respondents agreed that: "Overall, the text messages helped me make up my mind about whether to go to a particular college or to any college at all" (62%). As this last response demonstrates, many students' commitment to attending a particular college was not firm at the point of leaving high school. Summer nudges (Castleman & Page, 2014c) clarified the choice for many; however, the messages were most effective in helping students complete the tasks to actualize their enrollment.

A Model of Summer Intervention
Mirroring the connections among college issues for students, college tasks affect one another. Figure 2 (page 21) shows the four major kinds of tasks required of college-intending high school graduates: postsecondary planning, financing, logistics/information, and anticipatory socialization.

Figure 2: Levels of Summer Melt Intervention

Success Factors
Less Turbulence =
Smoother Transition

Anticipatory Socialization
(picking classes, buying books, choosing major, seeking work-study job, considering extracurriculars, talking to roommate, joining college Facebook)

Logistics/information
(entrance counseling, understanding bills and documents, filling out paperwork, waiving health insurance, completing promissory note)

Financing
(understanding gap, searching and applying for new funding sources, appealing financial aid package)

Postsecondary Plan
(re-deciding whether and where to go to college)

Access Factors
More Turbulence =
Rougher Transition

Summer Matriculation Support for Low-Income Students

The intervention model in this figure specifies the content of summer melt interventions, but it also indicates the interrelations among requirements in the last stage of college access.

The summer begins with high school graduation. By the time they graduated from high school, all of the 2011 and many of the 2012 Summer College Connect students had completed the many tasks involved in choosing to attend college: applying, being accepted, and deciding where to matriculate (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). By graduation, most students had also completed financial aid applications and received their aid package from their intended college. Some students' financial aid was delayed because they completed the FAFSA late. Others faced delays in financial aid awards because their FAFSA was flagged by the U.S. Department of Education or their intended institution for income and asset information verification. Nearly all the graduates faced summer tasks of filling in gaps between their financial aid and the costs of college attendance. The most pressing set of summer tasks, therefore, has to do with ensuring the financing of the first year of college. Higher-income students with parents who are able to pay for college, have strong enough credit histories to qualify for different types of loans, and/or take responsibility for loan procedures bypass this step. Similarly, a handful of low-income students who receive early notification of full financial aid from highly selective colleges or programs like the Gates Millennium Scholarship face considerably less financial

pressure. Even students with extensive financial aid packages, however, face additional college expenses that are not covered by their awards and that can derail their plans.

As discussed, many of the low-income students are unable to work out how to finance payment for the college where they have been accepted and want to attend. Unable to find an affordable way to matriculate at their desired college, these students are forced to reopen the previously-completed process of deciding whether and where to go to college. In repeating the college application and college decision steps, students typically decide either to attend the local community college or not to matriculate anywhere. Whatever the outcome of repeating the college decision process, summer time spent in this way takes away from time spent on other preparation tasks.

All Summer College Connect participants completed informational and logistical tasks that were largely or solely the responsibility of the student rather than a parent. Postsecondary paperwork and related bureaucratic procedures were new and frequently incomprehensible to these 18-year-olds and their families. In fact, advisors found that students and parents often missed crucial requirements and deadlines when colleges switched from paper-based communication to sending bills and other information electronically. Even the very few low-income students with full financial aid needed to complete the cluster of logistical

college preparation tasks and paperwork. In contrast, families who are college-educated, savvy, and technologically connected typically assist students with logistical issues or take responsibility for these tasks themselves. Such students are heavily supported or freed entirely from this set of challenging tasks (McDonough, 1997; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Information barriers hinder students who are at the stage of dealing with logistical issues. Typically, students encounter a block in a college or financial procedure or discover something in their paperwork that brings their plan into question. For instance, the student and her mother who did not understand the term "trimester" on the bill misunderstood what a full year of college would actually cost. Like this Summer College Connect participant, students who were tripped up by informational barriers were sometimes forced to return to the task of trying to pay for college and many wound up reconsidering the whole idea of college.

Anticipatory socialization issues generally occupy the pre-college summer of high school graduates from higher income, college-educated families. In fact, most higher income students enter directly into the level of anticipatory socialization where they spend their summer rehearsing and preparing for being a college student and campus community member (McDonough, 1997). Such preparation is likely to affect the smoothness of the transition into college and, arguably, college persistence (Attinasi, 1989;

Merton, 1968). As described, very few of the low-income study participants were able to spend the summer prioritizing their consideration of residential options, choosing courses, finding and using campus resources, connecting with future classmates on social media, addressing academic weaknesses, and generally anticipating what it will be like to be a college student. Students can fall from even this top level of Figure 2 when, for instance, they are unable to afford books, encounter racism during orientation, or face uncertainty about how to acquire a work-study job. All of these circumstances affected students in the qualitative study.

In sum, pre-college summer intervention with low-income students appropriately includes assistance with interrelated clusters of financial, logistical, and socialization tasks. Low-income students frequently encounter financial and logistical barriers related to socioeconomic status. When these barriers require students to revisit basic decisions about where and whether to attend college, they contribute to summer melt. Even low-income students who enter college in the fall after high school graduation are likely to find that the lack of pre-college socialization opportunities positions them poorly for an optimal transition into higher education.

Discussion: A Tangled System
An ecological view of summer melt among low-income and first-generation college students reveals the advantages of an interactive systems theory for understanding the problem. Within the summer period,

each student is part of a complex ecology that combines that individual's interconnected settings and relationships. These direct experiences, in turn, are influenced by organizational and policy levels of the environment in which students are not physically present. The interaction of issues in the summer is affected by individual motivation and capabilities, which themselves fluctuate with changing tasks and signals from the environment.

Summer melt arises from a tangled web of interacting educational and financial institutional practices, academic background, family relationships, and peer and community experiences. College financing tasks, for instance, are intertwined with institutional calendars, family and peer issues, college knowledge, cultural and community norms, and academic history. The role of timing is clearly important in understanding why significant numbers of low-income students fail to matriculate at the colleges where they have been accepted or intend to enroll. With rare exceptions, no high school, college, or college preparatory program takes responsibility for maintaining the alignment of aspirations, expectations, and enrollment tasks over the summer. Few low-income parents can take over the tasks of financing higher education and completing paperwork for their children. As a uAspire advisor said: "The summer is kind of no man's land, no one else is doing this work because the high schools are done with the students and the colleges, even though they might be reaching out, they're not doing so in a way that really gets to our population of students." Policy accountability levers are weak or absent in the post-high school summer: most high schools can count their students as college-bound graduates, and colleges do not have to count a non-matriculated student in retention statistics. The organizational decoupling of K-12 and higher education (Venezia & Kirst, 2005), and the disincentives for either high schools or colleges to provide summer support are exosystem factors that may thus contribute to high levels of melt.

The words of a uAspire staff person aptly capture the "broader, tangled system" that belies the American dream for her students:

> They're doing what they can with what they have to better themselves, and still, the odds are stacked so high against them. And when you see that it's part of a broader, tangled system, it's very frustrating…. They did everything we asked them to do. And they're willing to twist themselves into any shape to try to fit that mold. And you know, there's just not an affordable path.

Viewing summer melt as an ecological problem shows how social and educational inequalities that emerge from connected social contexts appear on the ground and are worked out by different individuals. It also offers a guide for organizations, policy-makers, and researchers who wish to understand how and when to intervene effectively to boost college entrance and

persistence among college-intending low-income students.

Ecology theory emphasizes the importance of coordinating efforts and reducing incongruence across student and institutional contexts that collectively determine college readiness. Efforts to improve college access require appropriately timed supports that enable students to access financial resources and to understand and complete complex bureaucratic tasks. This assistance can be delivered in the summer by high schools or college access programs that continue to deliver services to recent graduates, or by colleges that begin working with admitted, pre-matriculated students.

Comprehensive recommendations for practice are detailed in Castleman and Page (2014b). Best practices for high schools include the collection of exit survey information about students' admission status and enrollment intentions. High schools also need to obtain National Student Clearinghouse fall enrollment data to determine the extent of summer melt. Depending on their level of resources, schools and school districts can provide various types of assistance for graduating students. At a minimum, schools can produce worksheets for summer pre-enrollment tasks that are personalized for a student's intended college. Costlier, more intensive interventions include proactive summer outreach to college-intending students offering assistance in completing college financing and informational tasks. This outreach can be delivered by high school

or access program counselors, by digital text message, or both, and evidence indicates that being proactive with students is critical to connecting them to the summer support from which they can benefit.

Castleman and Page (2013b) detail the content and costs of various summer melt interventions and call for action by colleges in the form of active outreach to admitted students who have indicated their intention to matriculate. Such outreach could be carried out by college admission officers, first-year transition program staff or currently enrolled students who are alumni of the incoming students' high schools.

Stemming summer melt also requires systemic changes such as financial aid reform or government or accreditation requirements that would hold colleges and universities accountable for their rate of summer melt. Major expansion of summer bridge programs would be another useful systems-level change. On a smaller scale, colleges could incorporate more personalized communications technologies to more effectively reach out to students who have not completed important summer tasks, like logging in to their online portal or registering for orientation.

Regardless of which entities deliver summer melt interventions, research on related student outcomes and costs should be conducted. Like the studies reported here, randomized controlled trials with a qualitative component are the best way to

assess the impact of a particular intervention. New research should vary the timing and duration of interventions, ideally beginning before the senior year of high school and following students into college. A large-scale national study of this type is currently beginning with funding from the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (http://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1560).

Whether originating from a high school, a college access program, or a college, intervening in and increasing college access will only be successful when programs and policies act upon the entire ecology. Importantly, the supports that students need to actualize the offer of college admission might have limited relevance to increasing their capacity to succeed academically once enrolled (Conley, 2010; Perna, 2005). Reducing the summer barriers to matriculation would enable college-accepted, low-income students to spend the months after high school graduation preparing for the academic and social aspects of being a college student. A summer spent remediating academic weakness, connecting with future classmates, considering classes and majors, and anticipating the college experience is arguably better aligned with the conditions for maximizing students' progress toward their ultimate goal: attaining a college degree that opens the door to upward social mobility.

JCA

References

Arnold, K.D., Fleming, S., De Anda, M., Castleman, B., & Wartman, K.L. (2009, Fall). The summer flood: The invisible gap among low-income students. *Thought & Action, 25,* 23-34.

Arnold, K.D., Lu, E.C., & Armstrong, K. J. (2012). *The ecology of college readiness*. ASHE Higher Education Report, *38*(5). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Attinasi, L.C., Jr. (1989). Getting in: Mexican Americans' perceptions of university attendance and the implications for freshman year persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 60*(3), 247-277.

Aud, S., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Kristapovich, P., Rathbun, A., Wang, X., and Zhang, J. (2013). *The Condition of Education 2013* (NCES 2013-037). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved October 19, 2013 from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

Bailey, M. J., and Dynarski, S. M. (2011). Inequality in postsecondary education. In. G.J. Duncan & R. J. Murnane (Eds.), *Whither opportunity: Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances* (pp. 117-132). New York: Russell Sage. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974). Developmental research, public policy, and the ecology of childhood. *Child Development*, *45*, 1-5.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993). The ecology of cognitive development: Research models and fugitive findings. In R. H. Wozniak and K. W. Fischer (Eds.), *Development in context: Acting and thinking in specific environments* (pp. 3-44). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Castleman, B., Arnold, K.D., & Wartman, K.L. (2012). Stemming the tide of summer melt: An experimental study of the effects of post-high school summer intervention on low-income students' college enrollment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 5*(1), 1-17.

Castleman, B.L., & Page, L.C. (2014a). A trickle or a torrent? Understanding the extent of summer "melt" among college-intending high school graduates. *Social Sciences Quarterly, 95*(1), 202-220. DOI: 10.1111/ssqu.12032

Castleman, B.L., & Page, L.C. (2014b). *Summer melt: Supporting low-income students through the transition to college*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Castleman, B.L., & Page, L.C. (2014c). *Summer nudging: Can personalized text messages and peer mentor outreach increase college going among low-income high school graduates?* Center for Education Policy and Workforce Competitiveness Working Paper No. 9. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia.

Castleman, B. L., Page L. C., & Schooley K. (2014*). The forgotten summer: Does the offer of college counseling the summer after high school mitigate attrition among college-intending low-income high school graduates? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 33*(2), 320-344.DOI:10.1002/pam.21743.

Conley, D.T. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Daugherty, L. (2012, November). *Summer link, a counseling program to address the transition from high school to college*. Paper presented at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Annual Meeting. Baltimore, MD.

Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University, 62*, 207-221.

Matthews, C., Schooley, K., & Vosler, N. (2011). *Implementation of a post-graduation summer counseling intervention program for college-going seniors, Fulton County Schools*. Strategic Data Project Capstone Report. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Education Policy Research.

McDonough, P.M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Merton, R.K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. New York: Free Press.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Obama, B. (2009). *Address to joint session of Congress*. Retrieved May 30, 2009 from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack- Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress/

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Perna, L. W. (2005). The key to college access: Rigorous academic preparation. In W. G. Tierney, Z.B. Corwin, and J. Colyar (Eds.), *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach* (pp. 113-134). Albany: SUNY Press.

Perna, L.W., & Jones, A. (2013). (Eds.). *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups.* New York: Routledge.

Rall, R. (2013, November). *Forgotten students in a transitional summer: Low income students of color experience the summer melt*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, St. Louis, MO.

Venezia, A., & Kirst, M.W. (2005). Inequitable opportunities: How current educational systems and policies undermine the chances for student persistence and success in college. *Educational Policy, 19*(2), 283-307.

Wartman, K.L., & Savage, M. (Eds.). (2008). Parental involvement in higher education: Understanding the relationship among students, parents, and the institution. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 33*(6). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Weidman, J.C. (1989). Undergraduate socialization: A conceptual approach. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 5, pp. 289-322). New York: Agathon.

The Importance and Implementation of Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling in School Counselor Education Programs

JCA

Authored by

Rachelle Pérusse (*University of Connecticut*), Timothy A. Poynton (*University of Massachusetts Boston*), Jennifer L. Parzych (*Mercy College*), Gary E. Goodnough (*Plymouth State University*)

ABSTRACT

School counselor education program administrators (N = 131) responded to an online questionnaire where the importance and extent of implementation of The College Board's National Office of School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) Eight Components of College and Career Readiness in their school counselor education program were assessed. The mean importance of the components was rated between 'moderately important' and 'very important' by participants, and the components were 'usually' implemented in the curriculum of their programs. Implications of this study include the need for increased attention in graduate-level school counselor training programs on equity-focused college and career readiness counseling and knowledge of current national initiatives.

School counselors must be prepared to develop the academic, college/career, and personal/emotional domains of every child. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) defines a school counselor's role as one of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change agent (ASCA, 2012). As such, school counselors are positioned to identify the needs of students, focus on their future goals and aspirations, and assist in the educational preparation required to fulfill those goals (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011). With 24 states mandating K–12 school counseling programs, six states mandating programs in grades 9–12, and even fewer advocating for local districts to adhere to the ASCA recommended 250:1 student-to-counselor ratio (ASCA, 2013), it is increasingly more difficult for districts to effectively support a comprehensive developmental model. However, there is evidence that positive academic achievement outcomes exist in students graduating from K-12 schools that have a fully implemented ASCA National Model program (Wilkerson, Pérusse & Hughes, 2013), and that adding just one more school counselor to a high school increases college enrollment by 10% (Hurwitz & Howell, 2013).

As of 2014, 43 states had adopted the Common Core State Standards in an effort to dramatically change the way all students are equipped with the academic skills necessary for successful post-secondary training and education (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). However, beyond core academics, it is widely recognized and accepted that students need learning and innovation skills, information, media and technology skills, and life and career skills to compete in the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009).

Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

Fifty years ago in the United States, the goal for education included attaining one's high school diploma as a necessity to enter the workforce as "career ready" (Tyler, 1974). However, there is a growing need for advanced training beyond high school to compete in our global economy (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In *The Condition of College and Career Readiness*, American College Testing (ACT, 2013) reported that only 26% of students taking the ACT met the benchmarks for all four subject areas (including math, reading, writing, and science). Within this total number of students who have met the readiness benchmark for all four areas, widespread disparities existed by race/ethnicity. Forty-three percent of Asian American students met all four benchmarks, compared to 33% White American, 14% American Indian, 10% Hispanic, and 5% African American students (ACT, 2013). In comparison, 43% of students met the benchmark for The College Board's SAT in the three areas of critical reading, math and writing in 2013 (College Board, 2013). These statistics equate to large percentages of students needing to take some form of remedial coursework in their first year of college.

Despite the challenges and limitations facing school counselors, research continues to reveal the vital role they play in developing equitable student college and career readiness skills. Leaders at The College Board have undertaken several large-scale reviews and recently completed a national survey regarding school counselors. Their "School Counselor Landscape and Literature Review" highlights the gap in labor market skills, including an "estimated need of 97 million middle and highly skilled workers in American businesses, yet only 45 million Americans currently possess the necessary education and skills to qualify for these positions" (College Board, 2011, p. 1). In their report entitled, "Poised to Lead," Hines, Lemons, and Crews (2011) asserted that school counselors are in a position to identify the barriers to college and career readiness skills within the context of their schools, and advocate strongly for change. The authors linked three critical factors that must be addressed to support school counselors in promoting systemic change in the area of college and career readiness. These factors included: pre-service training programs with college and career readiness counseling preparation; appropriate hiring, supervision and evaluation practices by administrators; and closing the disparity between counselor ideal and reality roles. (College Board, 2011; Lapan & Harrington, n.d.; Pérusse & Goodnough, 2001). Because it is essential that professional school counselors carry out the work of equity-based college and career readiness, this study focused on how master's level school counseling students are prepared to offer services to K-12 students that include The College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

Counseling (2010).

School Counselor Preparation

Students who enter a graduate school program preparing professional school counselors find variation in the number of required credits, courses offered, fieldwork experiences, and faculty experience (Pérusse & Goodnough, 2001). Many programs do not yet offer a college admissions course for school counselors, much less one that is equity-based (The College Board, 2010). Curriculum and coursework may also vary among programs and differ based on whether they are accredited. For example, there were 224 master's level programs accredited by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs in 2013 (CACREP, 2014). The CACREP (2009) Standards provide a uniform framework for counselor educators to prepare their students. All CACREP-accredited counselor preparation programs must be at least 48 hours and include coursework that addresses the following topics: 1. Professional orientation and ethical practice; 2. Social and cultural diversity; 3. Human growth and development; 4. Career development; 5. Helping relationships; 6. Group work; 7. Assessment; and 8. Research and program evaluation. A supervised 100-hour practicum and 600-hour internship experience is also required by CACREP Standards (CACREP, 2009). The CACREP Board is in the process of revising their standards for 2016. In the most recent published draft of the 2016

standards (CACREP, 2013), provisions for promoting equity-based college and career readiness are evident.

According to Conley (2011), college readiness is defined "as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a credit-bearing general education course at a post-secondary institution, without remediation" (p. 1). This preparation includes the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to successfully complete a college course, and be able to move on to the next course level in the subject area (Conley, 2011). To assimilate the skills needed for college and career readiness, NOSCA identified eight components of college and career readiness counseling for students in grades K-12. These include:

> *College aspirations:* building a college-going culture based on early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the resilience to overcome challenges along the way. Maintain high expectations by providing adequate supports, building social capital and conveying the conviction that all students can succeed in college;
>
> *Academic planning for college and career readiness:* to advance students' planning, preparation, participation and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and

career aspirations and goals;
Enrichment and extracurricular engagement: ensuring equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase engagement with school;

College and career exploration and selection process: to provide early and ongoing exposure to experiences and information necessary to make informed decisions when selecting a college or career that connects to academic preparation and future aspirations;

College and career assessments: to promote preparation, participation and performance in college and career assessments by all students;

College affordability planning: providing students and families with comprehensive information about college costs, options for paying for college, and the financial aid and scholarship processes and eligibility requirements, so they are able to plan for and afford a college education;

College and career admission process: to ensure that students and families have an early and ongoing understanding of the college and career application and admission processes so they can find the postsecondary options that are the best fit

with their aspirations and interests.
Transition from high school graduation to college enrollment: connecting students to school and community resources to help the students overcome barriers and ensure the successful transition from high school to college (College Board, 2010, p. 3).

This research study was designed to address the question of what school counselor educators throughout the country perceive to be important and what they are teaching their students in relation to The College Board's NOSCA Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling.

Method

Procedures
Entry-level school counselor preparation programs were identified using several sources (e.g., CACREP and ASCA directories, and state-level school counseling association websites). Three hundred and twenty two programs were identified. An email message was sent to the department chair or school counseling program coordinator of each identified program containing a link to the online survey. The survey was initially distributed at the end of the Spring semester of 2010, and a reminder was sent early in the Fall semester.

Participants
A total of 131 submissions were received from the online survey, for a return rate of 41%.

Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

The initial request to complete the survey yielded 71 submissions (22% of all potential respondents), while the second request yielded an additional 60 submissions (19%). Given the amount of time that elapsed between the initial survey request and the reminder, the data were sorted by program characteristics unlikely to change in the relatively short amount of time between participation requests (number of credits, specializations offered, and CACREP approval) and examined to identify duplicates. Five duplicate entries were identified, leaving 126 usable surveys and an effective response rate of 39%. Of those 126 participants, 72 (57%) identified their program as CACREP accredited.

Instrument

The online survey consisted of four parts. The first three parts assessed program characteristics such as the number of credits, screening methods, faculty experiences, and course requirements and were provided to assess changes over time since Pérusse, Goodnough, and Noël (2001) reported on them. The fourth part of the online survey is the focus of the present study, and consisted of an instrument designed to assess the perceived importance and extent to which respondents incorporated the NOSCA Eight Components into their school counseling program curriculum. External validity was achieved by working directly with the NOSCA staff at The College Board to create the survey instrument (V. Lee, personal

communication, 2012). Respondents were asked to rate the perceived importance and extent to which each of the 11 concepts (see Table 1) were currently taught in their master's level school counseling program, yielding a total of 22 items. All items used to assess the NOSCA Eight Components are presented in Table 1 on page 34. The perceived importance of the items was obtained by asking participants "How IMPORTANT do you believe each item below is, in terms of the preparation of Master's level School Counselors?" Responses to each item were provided using a 4 point scale where 0=unimportant, 1=somewhat important, 2=moderately important, and 3=very important. The extent of implementation was obtained by asking participants to "please indicate to what extent these concepts are taught to your Master's level School Counseling students." Responses to each item were provided on a 4 point scale where 0=never, 1=sometimes, 2=usually, and 3=always. The internal consistency estimates were .89 for the 11 perceived importance items and .90 for the 11 extent of implementation items.

Results

To assess the perceived importance and the extent of implementation of the eleven NOSCA items, descriptive statistics were calculated and are presented in Table 1 (see page 39). The mean importance ratings indicated that participants viewed each of the items to be between 'moderately important'

Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

Table 1.

Perceived importance and extent of implementation ratings for the 11 items assessing the NOSCA eight components of college readiness counseling

NOSCA Component	Item stem	Importance	Extent of Implementation	$r*$
		M(SD) N=121	M(SD) N=120	
1	Build an equity-focused culture of college readiness counseling	2.56(.67)	2.28(.72)	.60
2	Advance the academic rigor necessary for equitable educational outcomes which connect to student career aspirations and/or future options	2.54(.67)	2.31(.70)	.52
3	Understand the importance of a wide range of extracurricular opportunities within the school and community to increase students' connectedness to school	2.41(.69)	2.08(.79)	.42
5	Use college admissions assessments (SAT, PSAT, etc.) appropriately to enhance students' college and career readiness	2.13(.84)	2.06(.82)	.52
1	Encourage the highest possible career aspirations in students	2.77(.50)	2.56(.63)	.47
7,4	Engage students and their families in completing college application and admissions requirements	2.46(.66)	2.10(.85)	.56
6	Help families plan for the financial costs of higher education, beginning in the elementary grades and continuing K-12	2.22(.82)	1.79(.92)	.62
8	Ensure successful transitions from high school to college	2.58(.68)	2.40(.74)	.55
1	Create a K-12 college-going culture within their schools	2.37(.78)	2.18(.83)	.53
1	Appreciate educational equity, especially in relation to the college opportunity gap	2.67(.55)	2.43(.71)	.49
	Be knowledgeable of national initiatives, such as "Race to the Top."	2.39(.77)	2.03(.80)	.63

*all correlations significant at $p < .001$

and 'very important.' The item perceived to be most important was "encourage the highest possible career aspirations in students." This item was rated 'very important' by 76.2% of the respondents, nearly a full standard deviation higher than the lowest-rated item "use college admissions assessments (SAT, PSAT, etc.) appropriately to enhance students' college and career readiness," which was rated 'very important' by 37.3% of the sample. The items "appreciate educational equity, especially in relation to the college opportunity gap" (rated 'very important' by 67.5% of sample) and "ensure successful transitions from high school to college" (rated 'very important' by 64.3% of sample) were the next most highly rated by participants, while the item "help families plan for the financial costs of higher education, beginning in the elementary grades and continuing K-12" (rated 'very important' by 43.7% of sample) and "create a K-12 college-going culture within their schools" (rated 'very important' by 50.8% of sample) were the next lowest rated.

The mean ratings of the extent of implementation of the items indicated that school counselor education program administrators 'usually' include the NOSCA Eight Components of College Readiness Counseling in their curriculum, and the three items with the highest perceived importance ratings were also given the highest implementation ratings by participants. The item participants indicated was implemented

the most often was "encourage the highest possible career aspirations in students." This item was rated to be 'always' implemented in the curriculum by 59.5% of the sample, and was approximately one standard deviation higher than the lowest-rated item, "help families plan for the financial costs of higher education, beginning in the elementary grades and continuing K-12," which was 'always' implemented in the curriculum by 23.8% of respondents. The items "appreciate educational equity, especially in relation to the college opportunity gap" and "ensure successful transitions from high school to college" were the next most highly rated by participants, both of which were 'always' implemented by 50.8% of the sample. The items "be knowledgeable of national initiatives, such as 'Race to the Top'" and "use college admissions assessments (SAT, PSAT, etc.) appropriately to enhance students' college and career readiness" were the next lowest rated, and were 'always' implemented by 27.8% and 30.2% of the sample, respectively.

To assess the degree to which school counselor education program administrator ratings of the importance of the NOSCA Eight Components of College Readiness Counseling were related to inclusion in their program's curriculum, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated between the importance and extent of implementation rating for each of the 11 items. The correlation coefficients, presented

in Table 1, ranged from .42 to .63 (*M* = .54, *SD* = .06) and indicated that the relationship between perceived importance and implementation is moderately strong. The strongest relationship exists between the importance and implementation ratings of the item "be knowledgeable of national initiatives, such as 'Race to the Top'" (*r* = .63, while the weakest observed relationship exists between the importance and implementation ratings of the item "understand the importance of a wide range of extracurricular opportunities within the school and community to increase students' connectedness to school" (*r* = .42).

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that, in general, school counselor educators agree that there is indeed some importance and relevance to preparing future school counselors to practice equity-based college and career readiness counseling. The moderate correlations observed between the perceived importance and extent of implementation ratings suggest that some counselor educators may have a sense of the NOSCA Eight Components as a menu from which to select school counseling program content in relation to equity-based college and career readiness counseling and are implementing the Eight Components in somewhat of a piece-meal fashion according to their own beliefs as to what is "most important" and may not be regarded by some as a comprehensive whole. However, the NOSCA Eight Components of College and

Career Readiness were created to guide school counselors while implementing college and career readiness programming in K-12 schools. It is considered a systemic approach for school counselors to "build aspirations and social capital, offer enriching activities, foster rigorous academic preparation, encourage early college planning, and guide students and families through the college admission and financial aid process" (College Board, 2010, p. 2). According to NOSCA, in order for successful implementation in K-12 schools to occur, school counselor educators need to stress to their students the importance of each of the NOSCA Eight Components to ensure that school counseling students implement all the components into their school counseling curriculum.

Reform efforts

At the heart of the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2011, is "graduating every student college and career ready" (U. S. Department of Education, 2011, p. A-1). Current education reform efforts have been aimed at reducing the achievement gap that exists between ethnic minority and low-income students, compared to their non-minority and high-income peers (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002; Improving Head Start for School Readiness, 2007). School counselor preparation programs participating in this study place an overall moderately important rating to items related to equity and college readiness counseling, yet implementation of each is consistently rated lower.

Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

Race to the Top is an essential component of current education reform. Government funding is awarded to states which identify innovative strategies to improve college and career readiness, particularly in the lowest performing schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). Results indicated moderate importance in the area of being knowledgeable of national initiatives, such as "Race to the Top," and to a slightly lesser extent, the implementation of this in respondents' programs. This finding runs counter to the emphasis placed on college and career readiness in the literature (ACT, 2013; College Board, 2013; College Board, 2011; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014; Conley, 2011; Education Trust, 2009; Hines, Lemons, & Crew, 2011; Hurwitz & Howell, 2013; Lapan & Harrington, n.d.; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009; Pérusse & Goodnough, 2001). A strong relationship (r = .63) exists between level of importance and extent of implementation for this item, suggesting that as school counselor education program administrators perceive this topic to be of less importance and are less likely to implement this as a core component of their curriculum.

Our findings indicate that school counseling program administrators view the process of financing postsecondary education as less important than most other aspects of college and career readiness counseling. Concomitantly, opportunities for future

school counselors to acquire knowledge and skill in financing postsecondary education occur less frequently than any other component of college and career readiness. The relative lack of importance or inclusion in the graduate-level school counseling curriculum may translate into undesirable school counseling practice, as McDonough and Calderone (2006) found most of the 63 counselors from urban high schools they interviewed "did very little beyond providing basic information" (p. 1710) in preparing students and families to finance postsecondary education. As highlighted by Poynton, Lapan & Marcotte (in press), financial planning can usefully be viewed as a barrier to career development – a barrier that affects both the setting and implementation of career choice goals. Given the high ratings school counseling program administrators in this study assigned to both the importance and implementation of encouraging the highest possible aspirations in students, approaching the task of providing high quality financial planning assistance can be bolstered by explicitly acknowledging the relationship between financial planning and achieving the highest possible postsecondary aspirations.

Limitations

Several limitations inherent to this study should be kept in mind while interpreting the findings. Although the survey was intended for the "school counseling coordinator" representing each program, the views of this

person may not reflect the views of other program faculty. A self-selection bias may also be present in our results; those who took the time to respond to our survey may be different in their views of the NOSCA Eight Components than those who did not. While our measurement of the NOSCA Eight Components has face validity and satisfactory internal consistency, concurrent validity has not established.

Future research

Future research assessing the importance of and extent to which equity-focused college and career readiness knowledge and skills are provided to future school counselors should consider providing surveys to multiple faculty from each institution and other methods for acquiring this type of information, such as syllabi review and surveys of school counseling graduate students. Future longitudinal research assessing the extent to which acquiring equity-focused knowledge and skill (e.g., knowledge of various financial aid forms, ability to identify achievement and opportunity gaps) affects school counseling practice and student outcomes is also needed. Since counselor educators rated elements of the NOSCA Eight Components as moderately important, further research is needed to understand the source of their knowledge and beliefs (e.g., assessing whether beliefs were informed by the NOSCA Eight Components themselves or from other related knowledge and beliefs such as social justice advocacy).

Conclusion

Equity-based college and career readiness has recently become elevated to the public agenda. In June, 2014, First Lady Michelle Obama presented her "Reach Higher" initiative to an audience at the American School Counselor Association conference (Obama, 2014a). In July 2014, national leaders in school counseling and college advising were convened to discuss ways to prepare school counselors to help all students realize their post-secondary plans (Obama, 2014b). In November 2014, the efforts to create systemic change in the area of college opportunity were furthered through a White House convening at San Diego State University. Outcomes of this convening included formalized strategic action plans between universities, professional school counselors, and community partnerships (Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership, 2014).

The Reach Higher (2014) initiative lists four specific foci to help all students understand what they need to finish their education: exposing students to college and career opportunities, understanding financial aid, encouraging academic planning and summer learning opportunities, and supporting high school counselors. The first three foci are student-centered and highlight specific activities to which school counselors can positively contribute, while the final focus is counselor-centered. School counselors have not garnered such national attention since the

Eight Components of College and Career Readiness

National Defense Education Act [NDEA] of 1958 (NDEA, 1959). ASCA has updated their standards to focus more explicitly on college and career readiness through the creation of the recently-released Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student (ASCA, 2014). The need for school counselors to be prepared to assist all students with their post-secondary plans has garnered national attention, and is the start of an important chapter in the history of the school counseling profession. JCA

References

American College Testing. (2013). *The condition of college and career readiness.* Iowa City, IA: Author.

American School Counselor Association (2014). *ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). (2013). *State school counseling mandates and legislation.* Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?pl=325&sl=133&contentid=535

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). (2012). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs.* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership. (2014, December 2), Retrieved from http://go.sdsu.edu/education/cescal/Default.aspx

College Board. (2013). *The SAT report on college and career readiness.* Civic Enterprises.

College Board. (2011). *School counselors literature and landscape review: The state of school counseling in America.* Civic Enterprises.

College Board. (2010). *Eight components of college and career readiness counseling*. Retrieved from http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/nosca/10b_2217_EightComponentsWEB_100625.pdf

Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2014). *Common core standards: Standards in your state.* Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/

Conley, D. T. (2011). *Redefining college readiness*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.

Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2014). 2013 *Annual Report*. Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/about-cacrep/publications/

Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2013). *Draft #2 of the 2016 CACREP standards*. Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2009-Standards.pdf

Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2009). *The 2009 standards*. Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2009-Standards.pdf

Education Trust. (2009). *The new vision for school counseling*. Retrieved from http://www.edtrust.org/dc/tsc/vision

Hines, P. L., Lemons, R., & Crews, K. (2011). Poised to lead: How school counselors can drive college and career readiness. Retrieved from http://www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/poised-to-lead.

Hurwitz, M. and Howell, J. (2013). Measuring the impact of high school counselors on college enrollment. College Board Advocacy & Policy Center Research Brief. Retrieved from http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/advocacy/policycenter/research-brief-measuring-impact-high-school-counselors-college-enrollment.pdf

Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, P.L. 110-134, 40 U.S.C. § 9801 (2007).

Lapan, R., & Harrington, K. (n.d.). *Paving the road to college: How school counselors help students to succeed.* Center for School Counseling Outcome Research, University of Massachusetts. Retrieved from http://www.umass.edu/schoolcounseling/uploads/TheChicagoReport.pdf

McDonough, P. M., & Calderone, S. (2006). The meaning of money: perceptual differences between college counselors and low-income families about college costs and financial aid. *American Behavioral Scientist, 49*(12), 1703-1718.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common Core State Standards.* Washington D.C. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2002).

National Defense Education Act of 1958, P.L.85–864, 70, Part 1, Stat. 1580–1605 (1959).

Obama, M. (2014a). *Remarks by the First Lady to the American School Counselor Association Annual Conference -- Orlando, Florida*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/01/remarks-first-lady-american-school-counselor-association-annual-conferen

Obama, M. (2014b). *White House/Harvard College Opportunity Agenda* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJX6dtNZ-81ZxuKzn3EzfmsTTRAF1T9y6

Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2009). *P21 framework definitions.* Washington, DC.

Pérusse, R., & Goodnough, G. E. (2001). A comparison of existing school counselor program content with the education trust initiatives. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 41*, 100-110. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6978.2001.tb01274.x

Pérusse, R., Goodnough, G. E., & Noël, C. J. (2001). A national survey of school counselor preparation programs: Screening methods, faculty experiences, curricular content, and fieldwork requirements. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 40*(4), 252-262.

Poynton, T.A., Lapan, R.T., & Marcotte, A.M. (in press). Financial planning strategies of high school seniors: Removing barriers to career success. *The Career Development Quarterly.*

Reach Higher. (2014, December 2). Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/reach-higher

Tyler, R. W. (1974). The federal role in education. *National Affairs, 34,* 164-187.

United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics. (2012). Fastest growing occupations. *Occupational outlook handbook.* Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm

United States Department of Education. (2014). *Setting the pace: Expanding opportunity for America's students under race to the top.* Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/settingthepacerttreport_3-2414_b.pdf

United States Department of Education. (2011). *Reauthorization of the elementary and secondary education act: Overview.* Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget11/justifications/a-eseaoverview.pdf

United States Department of Education. (2010). *Race to the top fund.* Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html

Wilkerson, K., Pérusse, R. & Hughes, A. (2013). Comprehensive school counseling programs and student achievement outcomes: A comparative analysis of RAMP versus non-RAMP schools. *Professional School Counseling, 16* (3), 172-184.

Increasing Access to Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Authored by
Amy L. Cook (University of Massachusetts Boston), Laura A. Hayden (University of Massachusetts Boston), Felicia Wilczenski (University of Massachusetts Boston), Timothy A. Poynton (University of Massachusetts Boston)

ABSTRACT

Students with intellectual disabilities (ID) are increasingly seeking postsecondary education (PSE) opportunities. High school to college transition presents its challenges for all students, and school counselors are uniquely positioned to assist students with ID throughout the PSE process. This article provides a review of the literature on PSE and specifically explores the different types of PSE programming available and strategies high school counselors can employ to effectively assist students with ID in PSE planning.

When preparing students for college and career readiness, traditionally educators have focused on mainstream students, leaving out students with moderate to severe disabilities, including intellectual disabilities (ID) (Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, & Harrison, 2012). According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5), intellectual disability (ID) includes limitations in intellectual functioning and social/adaptive behavior (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Schalock et al., 2010). Educators have held misconceptions about promoting college access among students with ID, and may believe that encouraging students with ID to pursue postsecondary education (PSE) is tantamount to setting them up for failure (Cook, Hayden, & Wilczenski, 2014). These misconceptions may be fueled in part by educators' focus on disability and weaknesses rather than abilities, strengths, and learning variabilities. Increasing access to PSE for students with ID is a shared responsibility, involving collaboration across a variety of service providers, including schools and agencies, and reaching out to families and community members (Mock & Love, 2012). High school counselors are integral to promoting these collaborations in addition to providing counseling and advocacy support to students with disabilities, including ID (Milsom, 2007).

In an effort to increase higher education accessibility among students with disabilities, including ID, federal funding under the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA, 2008) has resulted in the development and expansion of transition and PSE programs across the U.S. (Folk, Yamamoto, & Stodden, 2012). There are currently over 200 PSE programs for students with ID (Cook et al., 2014), and there is an easily-accessible online database describing these programs through Think College, a national organization dedicated to increasing inclusive options of higher education for individuals with ID

(thinkcollege.net). Despite the significant improvement and expansion in PSE opportunities for students with ID, transition planning and college readiness preparation are typically not adequately executed, resulting in this student population being ill-prepared for such opportunities (Folk et al., 2012; Griffin, McMillan, & Hodapp, 2010).

PSE, including college attendance, for students with ID is associated with improved access to employment and higher paying jobs (Migliore, Butterworth, & Hart, 2009). Employment outcomes are poor for youth with ID, and have resulted in high rates of poverty for this population as a whole, but minority youth with ID in particular (Baer, Daviso III, Flexer, Queen, & Meindl, 2011; Mock & Love, 2012). More specifically, in conducting high school exit and one-year follow up interviews with students with ID, Baer et al. (2011) found that participation in inclusive education during high school almost doubled the chances of engaging in PSE. However, African American students with ID were more likely to encounter negative employment outcomes. This latter finding was attributed to potential concerns of losing disability benefits and difficulty obtaining jobs in local neighborhoods. These outcomes emphasize the need to increase access to PSE opportunities among students with ID, while paying close attention to cultural differences and potential additional barriers that could manifest for individual students. Through building partnerships and collaborative relationships with parents/families,

community organizations, and higher education services, high school counselors can connect students with ID to the necessary supports and programs to be successful in navigating the postsecondary transition process. These services may include, but are not limited to, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, job coaches, career services, and disability services. Through these partnerships, counselors can promote and assist with facilitating greater opportunities for inclusion, given the relationship to improved outcomes for PSE (Baer et al., 2011).

High school counselors hold a central role in implementing equitable educational practices for students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). The ASCA position statement on students with disabilities describes the need for school counselors to assist all students in reaching academic goals regardless of ability, and outlines school counselors' role in serving students with disabilities through implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2013). Additionally, researchers have identified school counselors as being integral members of school support teams that assist students with disabilities (e.g., Fier & Brzezinski, 2010; Gillis, 2006).

In an effort to improve PSE and employment outcomes, coordinated efforts are needed to increase access to PSE opportunities and to effectively prepare students with ID to be college and career ready. High school

counselors are trained to assist students to be successful in the areas of academics, social/emotional functioning, and college/career readiness (ASCA, 2012). Their expertise can be utilized to support students and families throughout the postsecondary transition process. To that end, we provide a review of the literature describing the college and career readiness interventions that have helped to prepare students with ID to successfully navigate the PSE process, including the role of high school counselors and recommendations for practice and professional development.

Promoting College and Career Readiness for Students with ID

Developing the skills needed to enhance college and career readiness for students with ID involves understanding the potential needs, strengths, and challenges of this student population in high school and beyond. This involves being aware of diagnostic criteria concerning ID. However, albeit diagnoses should be interpreted with caution and should not be used to preclude students from accessing PSE opportunities, nor should they be utilized as a sole criteria for determining access to PSE. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) has defined intellectual disability as "significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills" (Schalock et al., 2010, p. 1). Additionally, the onset of significant impairment of intellectual functioning and

adaptive behavior occurs before the age of 18 (AAIDD, 2013). Adaptive behavior can be measured through assessment of conceptual skills, social skills, and practice skills, including activities of daily living and occupational skills (AAIDD, 2013), and intellectual functioning can be measured through an IQ test (AAIDD, 2013). An IQ score of 70-75 (or lower) combined with significant need for support in adaptive behavior would meet the criteria for diagnosis of ID (AAIDD, 2013). While the diagnostic criteria emphasizes limitations, it is important to recognize that individuals with ID have significant strengths upon which counselors and educators can build throughout the postsecondary transition process (Kleinert et al., 2012; Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenbark, & Little, 2013; Wehmeyer, Lawrence, Garner, Soukup, & Palmer, 2004).

In focusing on strengths, Wehmeyer et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of developing students' self-determination, which include skills involving self-advocacy, self-awareness, problem solving, goal setting, and decision-making. Level of self-determination has been associated with positive post-school outcomes, academic success, and community engagement (Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010; Shogren et al., 2013). These findings suggest the importance of developing and enhancing self-determination during the postsecondary transition process (Wehmeyer et al., 2007). Many PSE programs for students with ID promote the acquisition of self-determination.

Increasing Access to PSE

The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) is an evidence-based curriculum that focuses on goal attainment through engaging in self-directed activities (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000). Thus, throughout the postsecondary transition process that occurs during high school, counselors can assist students with ID by reinforcing the self-determination skills learned in the classroom and beyond. Students with ID can be encouraged to explore the different PSE options available in a manner that promotes continued development of self-determination skills.

PSE Programming Opportunities

There are a variety of PSE and service delivery options available to students with ID. According to data maintained by Think College (thinkcollege.net), there are currently over 200 PSE programs housed at colleges and universities throughout the U.S. In general, these PSE programs offer students with ID various opportunities at the college level, including enrolling in college classes (for credit or not for credit) and engaging in college-based activities, such as intramural sports, student clubs and other extracurricular activities, and some also provide housing on campus (Hart & Grigal, 2010). While these are some of the general types of offerings, PSE programs can significantly differ in structure based on the level of inclusion. Researchers have identified three different types of PSE programs: substantially separate, mixed/hybrid, and inclusive individual support

(Hart & Grigal, 2010; Neubert & Moon, 2006). Counselors can access a plethora of information about PSE opportunities through Think College.

Substantially separate programs.
Colleges and postsecondary institutions that run programs following a substantially separate model offer distinct course work and activities for students with ID, and thus there is often little connection with mainstream college students (Hart & Grigal, 2010). The coursework provided is designed to address the various learning needs of students with ID, including teaching life skills (Hart & Grigal, 2010; Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006). Upon completion of a substantially separate program, students would typically receive a certificate of completion but not a degree. Some examples of PSE programs following a substantially separate model include higher education institutions that have partnerships with local school districts to provide job readiness skills, independent living skills, socialization skills, and other skills as identified in the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). In some cases, PSE programs following a substantially separate model may allow students with ID to participate in other activities with mainstream students, such as exercising at the gym, eating at the student cafeteria, and engaging in college mentorship programs (Hart & Grigal, 2010).

JCA

Mixed/hybrid programs.
While participation in coursework and campus activities within programs following the substantially separate model are primarily exclusive to students with ID, the mixed/hybrid model offers greater opportunities for students with ID to be involved in campus activities with mainstream college students (Hart & Grigal, 2010). In these mixed/hybrid programs, students with ID typically complete specific coursework on life skill development, such as building financial literacy and independent living skills, and they often have opportunities to engage in internships and job training while attending some college courses alongside traditional college students (Casale-Giannola & Kamens, 2006). While mixed/hybrid programs are often two-year programs, they vary in length and offerings, and tend to offer more opportunities for inclusion, both in coursework and campus activities, than programs following a substantially separate model (Hart & Grigal, 2010).

Inclusive individual support programs.
The focus of inclusive individual support models is to engage students with ID through inclusive practices (Hart & Grigal, 2010). That is, students participate in all aspects of the campus community, similar to mainstream college students, with additional counseling and instructional supports (Folk, Yamamoto, & Stodden, 2012). For example, such programs often provide education coaches to work individually and in small groups to assist students in reaching educational and

career goals (Hart & Grigal, 2010). There are opportunities to engage in inclusive higher education programs while working toward high school completion. Such dual enrollment programs allow students with ID to gain exposure to a college setting through inclusive programming, and they typically receive coordinated transition assistance through services provided at both the college and high school. Once high school is complete, students with ID in these dual enrollment programs may continue to participate in college-related experiences similar to mainstream students. These experiences include, for example, engaging in student orientation, completing placement tests, and meeting with academic advisors (Hart & Grigal, 2010). They also have the opportunity to complete project-sponsored workshops, which provide development and training in employability skills, study skills, money management, and other life skills.

Other supports in higher education.
Colleges and universities have a wide range of supports to offer students with ID. In a study of 149 PSE programs serving students with ID, Grigal, Hart, and Weir (2012) found that half of the institutions surveyed provided students with ID advising services in the same manner as all other students on campus, and slightly more than half received services from the institution's disability services office. A key requirement in accessing the services of a Disability Services Office (DSO) on a college campus is self-disclosure; if a student does not self-disclose a documented disability, no

services or accommodations can be provided by the DSO. In a longitudinal study with more than 4,800 participants, Newman et al. (2011) found that 63% of the participants identified in high school to have a disability did not consider themselves to have a disability while attending PSE. An additional 9% considered themselves to have a disability but chose not to disclose this to the DSO. This finding suggests that school counselors should direct students with ID to the PSE's DSO and help them practice talking about their disability while in high school. Furthermore, the various PSE options can be explored with students and families as part of the transition planning process. As part of this process, high school counselors can collaborate with key professionals within the high school, community, and from higher education institutions to ensure supports are in place to assist students with ID in making the transition from high school to post-school options.

Direct Services

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) charges school counselors with providing direct services (i.e., in-person interactions) to *all* students through delivering a school counseling core curriculum, providing individual student planning, and delivering responsive services designed to meet students' immediate concerns. High school counselors can offer their expertise in providing targeted interventions to support students with ID in becoming college and career ready. Youth with disabilities,

including ID, are increasingly likely to take rigorous academic courses in school, including college-preparatory courses (Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2004). Furthermore, Cameto, Levine, and Wagner (2004) found that PSE is an important post-high school goal for over 80% percent of secondary school students who have transition plans, which could include students with ID. High school counselors can help students explore what courses best match their abilities and goals while working with teachers to ensure that students with ID have the academic support systems in place to help them succeed with a rigorous course load. In other words, high school counselors are encouraged to differentiate their outreach and intervention approaches with students to improve PSE and employment outcomes. Differentiated instruction is particularly important considering that students with ID from lower SES and minority backgrounds have reported less involvement in career and educational planning activities and employ fewer self-determination strategies compared to regular education peers (Washington, Hughes, & Cosgriff, 2012).

In relation to providing direct services through individual student planning, high school counselors can assist students with ID during the postsecondary planning process by providing information about entrance requirements for various vocational education programs and about available jobs that might meet students' needs and skills (Levinson, 1986). Given the access school counselors

have to occupational and career-related awareness information, they can support students with ID by providing them with the relevant information needed to explore and determine postsecondary plans. Furthermore, school counselors can use their expertise in youth development to provide preventative and responsive counseling in relation to self-esteem, academic, and/or bullying issues, which may contribute to the ease with which they transition from high school (Mitcham, Portman, & Dean, 2009). High school counselors can provide large group or classroom guidance lessons on career exploration, goal setting, and career planning, while helping to empower students with intellectual disabilities ID to advocate for themselves through teaching them interpersonal skills relevant to the postsecondary transition process (Mitcham, Portman, & Dean, 2009). Assisting students with ID in the development of interpersonal skills can include highlighting and building on their existing abilities and strengths. Researchers have found that including students with ID in classroom lessons facilitates a more tolerant and accepting environment for the whole class, while allowing for students with ID to interact with diverse peers and learn from positive role modeling (Bennett & Gallagher, 2013; Freeman, 2000; Wiener & Tardif, 2004)

Collaboration with Parents and Families
Numerous researchers have identified the importance of involving parents and families in the process of PSE exploration (e.g. Davies & Beamish, 2009; Griffin, McMillan, & Hodapp, 2010; Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). Involving families is particularly important given the sudden decrease in services available for youth with ID during this period of transition from high school to adulthood (Neece, Kraemer, & Blacher, 2009). Positive post-school transition outcomes are associated with a number of factors, including individual youth, family, and environmental characteristics, and particularly the importance of family well-being (Neece, Kraemer, & Blacher, 2009). This latter finding suggests the importance of and need for greater family outreach and collaboration throughout the transition process.

In addition, there are a variety of barriers that may impede accessing and understanding the various PSE options, including a lack of information sharing and sufficient guidance from professionals (Griffin, McMillan, & Hodapp, 2010). Griffin, McMillan, & Hodapp (2010) found only 26% of parents reported that a post-school transition plan was included in their child's individualized education plan (IEP), and 36% of the parents reported feeling the school did not provide sufficient guidance to assist in understanding PSE options. However, parents tend to report greater involvement in postsecondary transition planning as their children with ID spend increasing more time within the regular education curriculum (Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). This finding suggests the importance of high school counselors reaching out to engage students

with ID and their parents in participating in college and career counseling. While parental involvement in transition planning is mandated under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), it may be that in some instances the mode for providing the information is not clearly understood and/or accessible to all parents. For example, Martinez, Conroy, and Cerreto (2012) found that more than half of the parents surveyed reported feeling "overwhelmed and confused" with the PSE transition process, and described feeling they were given a prescribed set of options rather than engaging in an ongoing collaborative process" (p. 285). High school counselors can help to bridge the information gap that many parents have reported experiencing during the transition planning process.

Lack of access to sufficient community supports and resources can also present a major barrier to immigrant families, resulting in disparities in educational and health outcomes (Begeer, El Bouk, Boussaid, Terwogt, & Koot, 2009; Cohen, 2013). Due to language and cultural differences, Latina/o families may not be aware of existing services that are available and have often reported feeling dissatisfied with services rendered to their children with ID as a result of misinformation, poor communication from providers, and experiences of discrimination (Cohen, 2013). To address these concerns, high school counselors can collaborate with a cultural broker (or community member volunteer) to assist with communication

when language and cultural barriers present (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Cohen, 2013). Additionally, it is helpful to understand cultural factors and how they may be employed as a resource in postsecondary planning. For example, Latina/o families tend to value family cohesiveness and maintain extensive social networks (Borrero, 2011; Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010), and a variety of other immigrant populations also value strong community connections (Sue & Sue, 2012). These values of family and community support can serve as a source of strength that high school counselors can cultivate when working with immigrant families and students with ID on postsecondary transition planning.

To effectively engage in collaborative outreach to parents regarding postsecondary plans for students with ID, it behooves high school counselors to employ a comprehensive approach. While students with ID may participate in a curriculum that emphasizes development of self-determination skills, a highly recommended training strategy for transition education programs is for high school counselors to regularly collaborate with the professionals providing such training and periodically hold consultation with students, parents, and other educators throughout the process to facilitate discussions linking self-determination skill attainment and the postsecondary transition (Davies & Beamish, 2009; Wehmeyer, Lawrence, Garner, Soukup & Palmer, 2004). That is, given high school counselors'

expertise in college and career planning, their collaborative involvement in PSE exploration during this transition process could help to positively engage youth and parents in decision-making, while concomitantly counselors can provide information about relevant community and higher education resources. In working closely with families, it is important to maintain a culturally sensitive perspective, one that is respectful of individual family preferences and needs (Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). Information sharing needs to be relevant and reflective of preferred cultural values. For example, Kim, Lee, and Morningstar (2007) emphasized the importance of materials being provided to parents and families in an accessible manner—that is, in a variety of formats and representative of cultural differences.

Collaboration with Key Community Members

As recognized by various researchers (e.g. Bemak, 2000; Bryan, 2005), school counselors can serve as change agents in schools by assuming many roles, including that of collaborator with members of the school, families, and communities. As Bryan (2005) noted, performance in school can be affected by a variety of non-school factors (e.g. personal/social issues and, community issues). Supporting collaboration between administrators and outside agencies that target the academic concerns of students with ID to promote their academic development is an appropriate mandate for high school

counselors. Mitcham, Portman, and Dean (2009) listed various external strategies that the high school counselor can be responsible for coordinating in relation to developing partnerships to serve students with ID, including: (a) maintaining a resource list and community support materials for referrals for students and families in need; (b) developing a network system for educational and employment needs of students and families; and (c) providing parents and community leaders an opportunity to influence the advocacy and educational needs of students with ID that may affect community climate and policies. High school counselors can facilitate collaborative meetings with family members that involve key community-based providers (such as transition specialists or vocational rehabilitation counselors) to address anticipated needs and respond to problems that may arise. For example, high school counselors can encourage parental involvement through inviting them to school meetings, holding frequent conferences, and referring them to outside resources. They can also work with parents to understand their concerns and perceptions so they can advocate for the whole family during the postsecondary transition process (Mitcham, Portman, & Dean, 2009).

Implications for High School Counselors

High school counselors are uniquely positioned to assume a transition leadership role to advocate for students with ID who have traditionally had limited access to PSE. Similar to PSE transition planning for

students without disabilities, high school counselors need to support more rigorous programs for students with disabilities so that they gain access to more inclusive classes. High school counselors typically have connections with local colleges and universities so that PSE for students with ID may follow existing high school to college pathways and initiatives.

High school counselors know the different expectations of high school and college. That knowledge will serve them well in coordinating appropriate transition supports across high schools and higher education institutions. It behooves school counselors to prepare students with ID for PSE and to foster self-determination as a primary goal (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000; Wehmeyer, Agran, Hughes, Martin, Mithaug, & Palmer, 2007). It would be beneficial for high school counselors to understand principles of self-determination and apply those principles in their work with all students, while employing a culturally sensitive approach that promotes effective communication and addresses potential barriers to engagement.

Since the inclusion movement shifted emphasis to employment outcomes, transition education and transition specialist training has been gaining momentum nationwide over the past decade. Although few states have credentials specific to transition (see: nsttac.org), most states have transition-related content as part of their standards

(Kleinhammer-Tramill, Geiger, & Morningstar, 2003). To date, there are three states that have identified school counselors as eligible to acquire transition specialist endorsements or certifications. These include Massachusetts (MA, 603 CMR 7.00 § 7.14), Michigan (MI, R340.1799g § 99g), and Nebraska (NE, 92, Ch. 24 § 007.04). For example, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers credentialing as a transition specialist available to licensed school counselors who fulfill competency requirements. Advanced training in transition education for high school counselors should focus on developing the leadership skills necessary to promote system-wide transition supports and services for students with ID (Paiewonsky & Ostergard, 2010). Professional development for high school counselors needs to address capacity building within school districts to support students with disabilities as they negotiate school to PSE transitions as well as interagency coordination with adult disability services.

Conclusion

It is critical for students with ID to envision a life beyond high school, and along with their non-disabled peers, they need to be prepared for the 21st century workforce. High school counselors can help students with ID take the lead in their own career preparation and community inclusion. Given high school counselors' expertise in the areas of college and career readiness, they serve a key role in assisting students with ID throughout the

postsecondary transition process. Specifically, they can provide direct services to students and parents through counseling interventions and consultation; they collaborate with outside service providers to promote effective transition from high school to PSE options; and they engage in advocacy to ensure all students with ID can access services and take action to remove potential barriers. Through providing these services to support students with ID, high school counselors take a culturally sensitive approach that is responsive to the diverse needs and preferences of students and families.

The idea of students with ID accessing PSE is gaining popularity among the students themselves, families, communities, high schools, and institutions of higher education, and the students themselves. The socialization, employment, and independent living benefits of PSE accrue to students with ID just as it benefits their peers without disabilities. PSE is an important way to change life outcomes for persons with ID, and high school counselors serve an integral role in facilitating that process. **JCA**

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

American School Counselor Association. (2012). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2013). *Position statement: The professional school counselor and students with disabilities*. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_Disabilities.pdf

Baer, R. M., Daviso III, A. W., Flexer, R. W., Queen, R. M., & Meindl, R. S. (2011). Students with intellectual disabilities: Predictors of transition outcomes. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 34*, 132-141. doi:10.1177/0885728811399090

Begeer, S., El Bouk, S., Boussaid, W., Terwogt, M., & Koot, H. (2009). Underdiagnosis and referral bias of autism in ethnic minorities. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 39*, 142–148. doi:10.1007/s10803-008-0611-5

Bemak, FK. (2000). Transforming the role of the counselor to provide leadership in educational reform through collaboration. *Professional School Counseling, 3*(5), 323-331. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/publications/professional-school-counseling-journal

Bennett, S. M., & Gallagher, T. L. (2013). High school students with intellectual disabilities in the school and workplace: Multiple perspectives on inclusion. *Canadian Journal of Education, 36*(1), 96-124. Retrieved from http://www.csse-scee.ca/CJE/http://ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1440186359?accountid=28932

Borrero, N. (2011). Shared success: Voices of first-generation college-bound Latinos/as. *Multicultural Education,* 18(4), 24-30. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ963746.pdf

Bryan, J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools through school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling, 8*(3), 219-227. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/publications/professional-school-counseling-journal

Bryan, J., & Henry, L. (2012). A model for building school–family–community partnerships: Principles and process. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 90*, 408-420. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2012.00052.x

Cameto, R., Levine, P., & Wagner, M. (2004). Transition planning for students with disabilities. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Retrieved from http://www.nlts2.org/reports/transition_report.html

Casale-Giannola, D., & Kamens, M. W. (2006). Inclusion at a university: Experiences of a young woman with Down syndrome. *Mental Retardation, 44*, 344-352. doi:10.1352/0047-6765(2006)44[344:IAAUEO]2.0.CO;2

Cohen, S. R. (2013). Advocacy for the "Abandonados": Harnessing cultural beliefs for Latino families and their children with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 10*, 71-78. doi:10.1111/jppi.12021

Cook, A. L., Hayden, L. A., & Wilczenski, F. L. (April, 2014). Focusing on ability, not disability. *Counseling Today*. Retrieved from http://ct.counseling.org/2014/04/focusing-on-ability-not-disability/

Davies, M. D., & Beamish, W. (2009). Transitions from school for young adults with intellectual disability: Parental perspectives on "life as an adjustment". *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, 34*, 248-257. doi:10.1080/13668250903103676

Fier, S. M., & Brzezinski, L. G. (2010). Facilitating the high school-to-college transition for students with psychiatric disabilities. Information and strategies for school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling, 8*(10), 1-40. Retrieved from http://jsc.montana.edu/articles/v8n10.pdf

Folk, E. D. R., Yamamoto, K. K., & Stodden, R. A. (2012). Implementing inclusion and collaborative teaming in a model program of postsecondary education for young adults with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 257-269. doi:10.1111/jppi.12007

Freeman, S. (2000). Academic and social attainments of children with mental retardation in general and special education. *Remedial and Special Education, 21*, 3-26. doi:10.1177/074193250002100102

Gillis, L. L. (2006). Effective transition services for students with disabilities. Examining the roles of school principals and school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling, 4*(25), 1-17. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ901161.pdf

Griffin, M. M., McMillan, E. D., & Hodapp, R. M. (2010). Family perspectives on post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 45*(3), 339-346. Retrieved from http://www.thinkcollege.net/administrator/components/com_resdb/files/Griffin_McMillian_attitudes.pdf

Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Weir, C (2012). A survey of postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 223-233. doi:10.1111/jppi.12012

Hart, D., & Grigal, M. (2010). The spectrum of options—Current practices. In M. Grigal & D. Hart. (Eds.). *Think college: Postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities* (pp. 49-86). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Hart, D., Grigal, M., Sax, C., Martinez, D., & Will, M. (2006). *Postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities*. Institute for Community Inclusion. University of Massachusetts Boston. Retrieved from http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178

Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA), P.L. No. 110-315, 122 Stat. § 3078. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2007). *School counseling to close the achievement gap: A social justice framework for success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kim, K. H., Lee, Y., & Morningstar, M. E. (2007). An unheard voice: Korean American parents' expectations, hopes, and experiences concerning their adolescent child's future. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 32*, 253-264. doi:10.2511/rpsd.32.4.253

Kleinert, H. L., Jones, M. M., Sheppard-Jones, K., Harp, B., & Harrison, E. M. (2012). Students with intellectual disabilities. Going to college? Absolutely! *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(5), 26-35. Retrieved from http://www.thinkcollege.net/administrator/components/com_resdb/files/students%20in%20college%20absolutely.pdf

Kleinhammer-Tramill, P. J., Geiger, W., & Morningstar, M. (2003). Policy contexts for transition personnel preparation: An analysis of transition-related credentials, standards, and course requirements in state certification and licensure policies. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 26*, 185-206. doi:10.1177/088572880302600206

Landmark, L. J., Ju, S., & Zhang, D. (2010). Substantiated best practices in transition: Fifteen plus years later. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 33*, 165-176. doi:10.1177/0885728810376410

Levinson, E. M. (1986). A vocational evaluation program for handicapped students: Focus on the counselor's role. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 65*, 105-106. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1986.tb01245.xMA, 603 CMR 7.00 § 7.14. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=14

Martinez, D. C., Conroy, J. W., & Cerreto, M. C. (2012). Parent involvement in the transition process of children with intellectual disabilities: Influence of inclusion on parent desires and expectations for postsecondary education. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 279-288. doi:10.1111/jppi.12000 MI, R340.1799g § 99g. Retrieved from http://www7.dleg.state.mi.us/orr/Files%5CORR%5C1113_2012-106ED_orr-draft.pdf

Migliore, A., Butterworth, J., & Hart, D. (2009). *Postsecondary education and employment outcomes for youth with intellectual disabilities.* Retrieved from http://www.thinkcollege.net/images/stories/site_images/pubs/FF_1.pdf

Milsom, A. (2007). School counselor involvement in postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities. *Journal of School Counseling, 5*(23), 1-21. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ901184.pdf

Mitcham, M., Portman, T., & Dean, A. (2009). Role of school counselors in creating equitable educational opportunities for students with disabilities in urban settings. *Urban Education, 44*, 465-482. doi:10.1177/0042085909341042

Mock, M., & Love, K. (2012). One state's initiative to increase access to higher education for people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 9*, 289-297. doi:10.1111/jppi.12006 NE, 92, Ch. 24 § 007.04. Retrieved from http://www.sos.ne.gov/rules-and-regs/regsearch/Rules/Education_Dept_of/Title-92/Chapter-24-guidelines.pdf

Neece, C. L., Kraemer, B. R., & Blacher, J. (2009). Transition satisfaction and family well being among parents of young adults with severe intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 47*, 31-43. doi:10.1352/2009.47:31-43

Neubert, D. A., & Moon, M. S. (2006). Postsecondary settings and transition services for students with intellectual disabilities. Models and research. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 39*(4), 1-8. Retrieved from http://journals.cec.sped.org/ec/

Newman, L., Wagner, M., Knokey, A. M., Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D.,… Schwarting, M. (2011). The post-high school outcomes of young adults with disabilities up to 8 years after high school. National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) (NCSER 2011-3005). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Retrieved from www.nlts2.org/reports/

Paiewonsky, M. & Ostergard, J. R. (2010). Local school system perspectives. In M. Grigal & D. Hart (Eds.). *Think College: Postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities* (pp. 87-160). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Schalock, R. L., Borthwick-Duffy, S. A., Bradley, V. J., Buntinx, W.H.E., Coulter, D. L., & Craig, E. M. (2010). *Intellectual disability: Definition, classification, and systems of supports* (11th ed.). Washington, DC: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Shogren, K. A., Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Rifenbark, G. G., & Little, T. D. (2013). Relationships between self-determination and postschool outcomes for youth with disabilities. *Journal of Special Education*. Published online before print June 25, 2013Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0022466913489733

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2012). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Wagner, M., Newman, L., & Cameto, R. (2004). Changes over time in the secondary school experiences of students with disabilities. National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Retrieved from http://www.nlts2.org/reports/changestime_report.html

Washington, B. H., Hughes, C., & Cosgriff, J. C. (2012). High-poverty youth: Self-determination and involvement in educational planning. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 35*, 14-28. doi:10.1177/0885728811420135

Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., Hughes, C., Martin, J., Mithaug, D. E., & Palmer, S. (2007). *Promoting self-determination in students with intellectual and developmental disabilities*. NY: Guilford Press.

Wehmeyer, M. L., Lawrence, M., Garner, N., Soukup, J., & Palmer, S. (2004). *Whose future is it anyway? A student-directed transition planning process* (2nd ed.). Beach Center on Disability, KUCDD, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS. Retrieved from https://www.ou.edu/content/dam/Education/documents/wfc-guide-final.pdf

Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Agran, M., Mithaug, D. E., & Martin, J. E. (2000). Promoting causal agency: The self-determined learning model of instruction. *Exceptional Children, 66*(4), 439-453. Retrieved from http://www.beachcenter.org/research/FullArticles/PDF/SD9A_Promoting%20Casual%20Agency.pdf

Wiener, J., & Tardif, C. (2004). Social and emotional functioning of children with learning disabilities: Does special education class placement make a difference? *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 19*, 20-32. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5826.2004.00086.x

Yamamura, E. K., Martinez, M. A., & Saenz, V. B. (2010). Moving beyond high school expectations: Examining stakeholders' responsibility for increasing Latina/o students' college readiness. *High School Journal, 93*, 126-148. doi:10.1353/hsj.0.0045

Guest Perspective: Mandy Savitz-Romer

Authored by
Mandy Savitz-Romer, Ph.D., Harvard University

Realizing the goal of increasing the number of college degrees held by American citizens requires that *all* school-aged students have access to high quality postsecondary counseling beginning no later than middle school and continuing throughout high school and into the summer following graduation. Such postsecondary counseling includes the experiences, information, and relationships that enable students to reflect on their passions and interests, develop postsecondary aspirations and dreams, and acquire the academic, personal and social skills needed to achieve their goals. Yet, we know access to this type of counseling is limited, especially among low-income and first-generation college bound students. While various perspectives exists on what type of change needs to occur to equalize postsecondary opportunity, I contend that guaranteeing that all students, regardless of zip code, have access to postsecondary counseling, can be best accomplished by closing the preparation gap that exists in pre-service and in-service training.

Looking back on my own professional experience as a school counselor, I cannot help but question the adequacy of my own training. Entering a large, urban school district, I was well equipped with counseling skills and an understanding of adolescent development. I entered my first position passionate and excited to promote educational equity through a career in school counseling. What I lacked, I quickly discovered, was an understanding of how young people come to envision a future for themselves, especially those students otherwise disengaged or off-track in school. Before the forms, the applications, the training programs, and the choices, came the process of helping students understand their passions and future-oriented identities, transmitting labor market trends and the higher education landscape, and engaging students in the processes and behaviors necessary to support their postsecondary goals. Now, as I train and research school counselors and college access professionals, I have witnessed how good intentions and a passion for supporting young people and their post-secondary aspirations bring talented people to this field. We are strong in our caring and committed workforce. However, I have also realized that while good intentions and passion are important, those two qualities are insufficient to tackle this challenge of ensuring that not just some, but all students leave high school with a postsecondary plan. Truly engaging young people in envisioning a future for themselves, creating a pathway to arrive at that destination, and then actually ensuring that they succeed will only happen when we

have people on the front lines – working with students, families, and teachers – whose work is informed by specific college and career readiness competencies.

There is little question that high quality college and career counseling can only happen when we have a knowledgeable and well-trained workforce of professionals working on the front lines. Preparing educators, especially those who will work with students for whom college, or any sort of postsecondary training, feels abstract, foreign, or worse, not for them, requires training - and not just any training. Quality training. Training that comes through professional pathways that prepare individuals for the role and the on-the-job-training that enhances one's experience. Yet, despite its importance, our current model of training and professional development does not adequately prepare school counselors, and in many cases college access professionals, for the true challenges we face today.

The Preparation Gap

I refer to this lack of training as the Preparation Gap and in fact, there is not just one gap, but rather several gaps in the preparation of school counselors and college access professionals. These gaps appear in pre-service programs, professional development initiatives and existing content areas. I contend that closing these gaps, thereby building a skilled and knowledgeable

group of professionals, holds the greatest promise for creating a stronger workforce to advance postsecondary opportunities for all students.

The Pre-Service Gap

For *school counselors*, whose professional preparation includes a master's degree, graduate programs and curricula are simply not aligned with the college and career readiness aspects of their role. Few graduate programs require courses in postsecondary counseling and development. And some, operate using outdated modalities that over-emphasize clinical training and underemphasize the specific skills necessary to integrate college and career readiness planning into students' academic and social development in the context of schools. Moreover, graduate programs rarely arm counselors with leadership skills to prepare them to broker and manage supportive partnerships with community-based organizations. These graduate programs appear out of sync with the college and career demands that are central to school counselors' work.

For *college access professionals*, or those working to supplement the work of school counselors, challenges include the absence of a professional credential and a lack of clarity regarding standards for the profession. These professionals are hired into these positions following a range of pre-service pathways.

Many host organizations provide robust internal training programs; however, this approach lacks uniformity and is not linked to standards that would otherwise signal quality and readiness. In addition, these trainings rarely cover the type of knowledge necessary to work effectively in school settings, which is necessary to successfully partner and engage with school counselors and other school staff. Without training on this topic, they will be unable to see how their work fits into the public education landscape and how to deliver services to maximize their impact on student outcomes.

The Professional Development Gap
Several studies have illustrated the limited access school counselors have to quality and relevant professional development. For example, school-based in-service is largely focused on teachers and instructional topics, while district-based trainings cover such a wide array of topics attempting to address the multifaceted (or in some cases, poorly defined) school counselor role. And while many professional organizations hold training on college advising, accessibility is compromised due to the cost of training, opportunity costs associated with missing days of work, and even the unwillingness of school-leaders to prioritize the release time needed for school counselors to attend.

As I already mentioned, many non-profit organizations working in the field do provide robust training for their staff, some of it through on-going professional development. However, at worst, college access programs rely on the assumption that well-intentioned, young professionals who have recently gone through the college application process are capable of coaching others through the process. This over reliance on good intentions is insufficient, especially when one considers the complex array of developmental, academic, and financial challenges faced by first-generation students, students of color, and urban and rural students.

The Content Gap
In both the pre-service and in-service contexts, we also see a gap in appropriate content necessary to engage in college and career readiness counseling. The content currently addressed in college access training and professional development ranges from the Instrumental (how to complete forms and disseminate information) to the Informational (understanding the key steps required to succeed in gaining college admission). There is no question that our advisors and counselors need be trained in concrete tasks such as the specialized practices of FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) completion and policies surrounding undocumented students. However, beyond this, the content of training is inconsistent and frequently misses important topics. For example, trainings must equip practitioners with the cultural competency and proficiency

to counteract educational disparities. Counselors and advisors should be fluent in using data to make decisions about what additional programs are needed in their schools and which students have not benefitted from any additional enrichment support or opportunities. Training should include content that instructs in how to manage school/community-based and business partnerships in ways that complement one another, rather than work in competition.

While these gaps in preparation shed light on our current shortcomings, they simultaneously provide targets for reform. Specific policy reforms should be leveraged including the addition of college readiness competencies to statewide licensure requirements or specific funds for school districts to provide adequate professional development. At the same time, this workforce challenge calls for institutions of higher education to examine their programs and course curricula to ensure they are aligned with the realities of the profession. These new opportunities are of critical importance in building a cadre of professionals who deeply care about educational equity, are uniquely positioned to have an influence on students' planning, and are skilled and knowledgeable based on more than just personal experience. Closing these gaps will require the good will, investments, and dedication of many graduate programs

and non-profit organizations that seek to advance educational opportunity.

The Importance of this New Journal

At a time when our nation is focused on widening postsecondary opportunities to all Americans, it is critical that training and professional development are informed by scholarship that takes into account research and its application to the field of college and career readiness. To date, few journals dedicate their publications to this specific topic of college access, while maintaining a balance between research and applied practice. The introduction of the *Journal of College Access* signals a professionalization for those whose work positions them to directly influence students' college-going orientations, behaviors and choices. I expect this journal will contribute to our professional understanding of which competencies are critical to the profession and will assist the field in moving away from good intentions and toward scientific and developmental theories that guide postsecondary counseling. This, I believe, will ensure that all counselors and their community-based partners can work responsibly and effectively with all young people. JCA

Guest Perspective: Lumina Foundation

Authored by
Jamie P. Merisotis, President & CEO

It's an exciting time to be involved in higher education. In fact, as higher-ed professionals and advocates, we live and work in an era marked by rapid, near-constant change. From competency-based learning models to digital badges to income-based student financing mechanisms, new features pop up almost daily in the postsecondary landscape. Today, more than ever, those who work in this dynamic field need access to — and ways to *share* — reliable, relevant information.

That's why the launch of the *Journal of College Access* is so welcome, and why I am proud to contribute to this, its inaugural issue. The *JCA* has great potential to inform — and yes, to inspire — people who play a critical role in the lives of millions of students. And make no mistake; those students are our future. Their success is vital to this nation's progress and continued prosperity.

In fact, there is no greater national need than the growing need for *talent* — for citizens who embody the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to fuel the global economy. And the only way for this nation to build that talent is through postsecondary education. College-level learning — that is, the learning inherent in degrees and other high-quality postsecondary credentials — is absolutely key for any individual who hopes to attain and maintain a middle-class lifestyle. And if we are to thrive as a nation, we must extend the benefits of higher education far more broadly, encompassing many more people in all walks of life.

At Lumina Foundation, which I am privileged to serve as president and CEO, that effort constitutes our entire mission. All of our resources are directed toward achieving a single, ambitious goal, what we call Goal 2025. Within the next decade — that is, by the year 2025 — we want 60% of Americans to hold a degree, certificate or other high-quality postsecondary credential.

We know it won't be easy to increase attainment to that level, but labor economists and other experts insist that it's necessary, and we're convinced that it's possible. But it's only possible if we embrace change and work to fundamentally redesign the higher-ed system so that it truly meets the needs of the 21st century.

Indeed, fundamental redesign is a must — because the traditional higher-ed model is simply insufficient to our needs as a society. That's not a criticism of any institution or type of institution. All have their strengths, and each can claim its successes. But taken as a whole, the current system lacks the capacity and the flexibility to properly serve the millions of additional students who must be served if we are to succeed as a nation.

Clearly, to meet that 60% goal, we need a revamped system — one that puts students firmly at the center and provides clear, multiple pathways that are defined by actual learning outcomes, not merely by the amount of time spent in classrooms. We need a system that requires transparency and cooperative effort, one that encourages innovation by rewarding genuine results, not mere process or effort or good intentions. We need a system that challenges everyone to be accountable for the success of students — *all types* of students, in greater numbers than ever before. This is especially true for those who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education: low-income students, first-generation students, students of color and working adults.

This system must make it a priority to eliminate persistent attainment gaps based on race and broaden opportunity among underserved students. In short, we need a higher-ed system that fosters equity *and* excellence — and Lumina is committed to helping build that system.

Creating such a system is a major undertaking, of course — one that goes far beyond Lumina and will take many years to accomplish. Still, even though this work is in its early stages, system redesign has already become a central focus for us because we know that it's critical to achieving that 60% goal.

The main point is, we won't reach that goal by any well-worn path. We need new routes, new ideas, new approaches designed to serve much larger numbers of students — and serve them better.

And that's where you and the *Journal of College Access* come in. This journal can be a place where those new paths are explored, where new ideas are surfaced and innovative new approaches are discussed and perfected. I urge you to take advantage of this forum, to use it as a conduit for sharing your best thinking and as a tool for refining your own efforts to enhance college access and increase postsecondary attainment.

Those efforts are vitally important — to all of us as Americans.