



12-19-2020

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Recommended Citation

Kim, Jungnam; Geesa, Rachel Louise; and McDonald, Kaylee (2020) "School Principals' and Counselors' Focus on College-Going: The Impact of School Leader Expectations and Primary Counseling Goals on Postsecondary Education," *Journal of College Access*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jca/vol5/iss2/4>

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School Principals' and Counselors' Focus on College-Going: The Impact of School Leader Expectations and Primary Counseling Goals on Postsecondary Education



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine how school counselors', and principals' primary counseling goals and expectations impact postsecondary enrollment in order to learn what best helps students achieve their postsecondary goals. It was found that school counselors' expectations of students were positively related to students' postsecondary education decisions. Further, it was found that principals' primary school counseling goals; regarding preparing students for postsecondary education, was significantly related to an increase in students' decisions to enroll in postsecondary education. These findings support existing evidence that school counselors' high expectations and principals' primary goals are crucial in promoting college-going culture, which may ultimately pave the way for students to attain their goals of earning a college degree.

Keywords: primary counseling goals, expectations, postsecondary enrollment

Preparing students for a successful transition from high school to postsecondary education is an important goal for many high school settings, which may be largely due to the research findings that postsecondary education often becomes a pathway to both economic success and social mobility (Poynton & Lapan, 2017). For instance, according to the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education

Statistics (NCES), students who earned a college degree had a salary one and a half times higher than the average salary and a 10% higher employment rate than those who had a high school diploma only (De Brey et al., 2019). Additionally, 91.9% of high school sophomores in 2002 reported they aspire to have a college degree, however, 52% of those students have attained postsecondary education in 2012 (Chen et al., 2017).

Considering the gaps between students' college aspirations and the attainment of their goals, it is important to examine the factors that contribute to postsecondary outcomes. A number of studies suggest that high school counselors and principals can contribute significantly to successful transitions for high school students from secondary curriculum to postsecondary education programs (Bryan et al., 2011; Kim, et al., 2018; Lapan & Harrington, 2010; Woods & Domina, 2014). Particularly, scholars documented that expectations and/or beliefs school leaders (e.g., counselors and principals) have toward students are vital factors for creating a college-going culture that may affect students'

School Principals and Counselors

decisions to apply for and enroll in postsecondary education (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2018). Indeed, school counselors and principals can serve as institutional agents in which their perceptions about counseling goals may affect students' decisions to apply for and enroll in postsecondary education (Bardhoshi & Duncam, 2009; Beesley & Frey, 2006; Poynton & Lapan, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how school counselors' and principals' primary counseling goals, and expectations impact postsecondary enrollment, in order to learn what best helps students achieve their postsecondary goals.

School counselors' perceptions of what values or beliefs counselors and principals have for students' postsecondary education are likely important to increase students' awareness of postsecondary options through the promotion of a college-going culture (Athaneses, et al., 2016; McKillip, et al., 2013). Although a substantial body of literature highlighted the importance of beliefs, expectations, and primary counseling goals in college-going culture (McClafferty, et al., 2002; McKillip et al., 2013), few studies examined whether counseling goals and perceptions of counselors' and principals' expectations were associated with students' postsecondary plan or status. This study aimed to validate prior research which describes that school counselors and principals may play critical roles in postsecondary decisions and enrollment of students. Specifically, using nationally representative data from NCES's High School Longitudinal Study of 2009, the

study examines whether counselors' and principals' primary counseling goals affected the likelihood of taking postsecondary educational classes. The study also attempted to investigate counselors' perceptions of both their own and principals' expectations toward students that influenced students' decisions to take postsecondary classes in 2013.

The partnership between school counselors and principals is especially important to promote a student's pursuit of postsecondary education. If principals do not involve school counselors in incorporating college-going culture into a school, principals might be more inclined to focus only on their own views of what will best foster this type of culture (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017). For example, Convertino and Graboski-Bauer (2017) found in their case study that the changes that were made in favor of college-going culture in an urban, United States high school were based upon the principal's personal perceptions of what would make an effective program. As a result, the culture of the school became less inclusive overall and focused on college-going culture from a "culture of poverty" standpoint or for students from "culturally deficient backgrounds" (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017, p. 64). When solely focusing on students' college-going ability through a deficit-based lens, the assets and strengths of all students to go to college are not highlighted. Thus, college-going culture in a school is likely to be more impactful when school leaders collaboratively make it a

School Principals and Counselors

priority and principals work with school and community stakeholders to promote it.

Conceptual Framework

We referred to Social Capital Theory (SCT) (Lin, 2001) in this study, which is essentially the idea that principals and school counselors are institutional agents that help students gain access to valuable resources and information, such as materials and knowledge, to prepare students for postsecondary education (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). For example, in their study, Lowery, Mayes, Quick, Boyland, Geesa, and Kim (2019) outline three key standards that align principal and school counselors in promoting social justice advocacy. One of these standards, “**advocacy actions**,” includes creating access to academic rigor for students who are under-represented, which is one way school leaders can help students gain access to materials and knowledge. Also in school settings, evidence suggests that institutional agents are critical to the SCT in which they transmit not only valuable resources, knowledge, and information, but also aspirations, beliefs, expectations, and goals that contribute to academic success (Bryan et al., 2011), college enrollment (Kim et al., 2018), and postsecondary attainment (Poynton & Lapan, 2017).

Next, we incorporated college-going culture as a part of the framework to describe the important roles of principals and school counselors for students’ successful transitions to postsecondary education (McKillip, et al.,

2013). College going culture refers to “the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage students and families to obtain the information, tools, and perspectives to enhance access to and success in postsecondary education” (Center for Educational Partnerships, 2019, p. 1). McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) described college-going culture with nine principles that provide guidelines and steps that schools can take to create a college-going culture, particularly for school staff who wish to build a culture to prepare students to be ready for college. The nine principles include: clear expectations, information and resources, comprehensive counseling model, testing and curriculum, faculty involvement, family involvement, college partnerships, and articulation. The college-going culture emphasizes the important roles of school leaders’ expectations, beliefs, and counseling goals that may lead to enhanced postsecondary outcomes (Athanases, et al., 2016; Lapan & Harrington, 2010; McDonough, 2005; McKillip et al., 2013; Woods & Domina, 2014). In the college-going culture framework, principals have the power to influence students’ postsecondary education status specifically through their commitment to creating and maintaining a culture of college readiness (McDonough, 2005) and through intentional partnerships with school counselors (Beesley & Frey, 2006). Relatedly, explicit counseling goals are integral to creating a college-going culture which contributes to educational success (Athanases, et al., 2016; McDonough, 2005; Woods &

School Principals and Counselors

Domina, 2014).

Perceptions of Primary School Counseling Goals and Students' Postsecondary Education

Several studies documented principal perceptions on counseling goals (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; Beesley & Frey, 2006).

According to Bardhoshi and Duncan (2009), principals ranked responsive services (e.g., crisis intervention) as the most important role of school counselors, followed by creating peer relationships, teaching coping strategies and skills, and individual counseling. Further, McClafferty et al. (2002) assert that in order to foster a college-going culture, school counselors should provide college choice advising that includes information about college types, eligibility requirements, and competitive eligibility, which many do not have time for when assigned a large amount of tasks (both appropriate and inappropriate for their position). Beesley and Frey (2006) examined how principals perceived primary counseling goals, as they saw the above duties, such as responsive services, as being top priority goals along with academic planning/college preparation, career counseling, multicultural counseling/diversity awareness, program evaluation/accountability, and public relations/community outreach. Therefore, while the sample population of this study also included K-12 principals, these principals perceived the role of academic planning/college preparation as slightly more important. Unfortunately, the study did not consider the

impact that principal perceptions of primary school counseling goals have on postsecondary enrollment (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; Beesley & Frey, 2006). One could potentially infer that principals who perceive college preparation as a highly important school counseling goal would promote college-going culture in their school, thus increasing the chances of postsecondary enrollment. However, this cannot be known without further research.

Related to school counselors, many studies address the importance of school counseling in shaping the college-going culture (Bryan et al., 2011; Lapan & Harrington, 2010; Poynton & Lapan, 2017). Specifically, several studies highlighted the significant roles of school counselors influencing college application rates and college enrollment through student-counselor contact (Bryan et al., 2011; Woods & Domina, 2014) and by considering counselor caseload (Woods & Domina, 2014; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Other studies found that college counseling focusing on financial aid assistance, college fairs, and college application assistance were associated with positive postsecondary outcomes (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014; Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). In a similar way, Perusse, Poynton, Parzych, and Goodnough (2015) noted eight essential components that school counselors should emphasize in implementing college-going culture, including: college aspirations, academic planning for college and career readiness, enrichment and extracurricular engagement, college and career exploration

School Principals and Counselors

and selection process, college and career assessments, college affordability planning, college and career admission process, and transition from high school graduation to college enrollment. However, little empirical data is known about the impact of primary counseling goals on postsecondary outcomes. Of the few studies, Engberg & Gilbert (2014) examined whether the primary counseling goal of college-going is related to four-year or two-year college enrollment using the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09). The results showed the importance of the primary goal of college counseling to facilitate students' college outcomes (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Thus, our study extended the previous study by examining which primary counseling goals among academic, career/college, and social/emotional development are related to students' decision of taking postsecondary classes.

Expectations of School Leaders Toward Students

From the college-going culture framework, high expectations set by school leaders were important in college-going culture (Athanasios et al., 2016). The high expectations may lead to relationships between students and staff, specifically non-academic relationships like advisory programs, which can be incredibly beneficial to students in preparing them for college and higher education (McKillip et al., 2013). McKillip and colleagues suggested that social support, belief of school leaders in students, and setting up achievable academic challenges can contribute to student success

(McKillip et al., 2013). Similarly, Holland (2015) asserts that school staff building trusted relationships with students is vital in effective college-going culture, as is intentionally seeking out students to teach them about college. This is specifically because many students do not seek out this information on their own (Holland, 2015). Also, Bosworth, Convertino, and Hurwitz (2014) contend that college-going culture begins with student-school staff relationships, and that it is the responsibility of principals to set this culture in motion and to partner with school counselors to plan and implement college and career readiness. While there is a significant amount of research on how school leadership generally can promote a college-going culture (Athanasios et al., 2016; Bosworth et al., 2014; Holland, 2015; McClafferty et al., 2002; McKillip et al., 2013), not quite as much information exists on the impact of school leaders' expectations on postsecondary education status.

With respect to counselor expectations, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2019) states that school counselors' beliefs that all students can learn and reach their potential are critical factors to promoting student success. For instance, Bryan et al. (2011) examined whether counselor expectations toward students were associated with student-counselor contact using the Educational Longitudinal Study (2002) (ELS:2002). The study indicated that students who reported they believed their counselors had low expectations toward their education were less likely to meet with school

School Principals and Counselors

counselors (Bryan et al., 2011). It is possible that counselor expectations may affect students' willingness to contact counselors or even their overall relationship with them. Similarly, Muhammad (2008) investigated, with a nationally representative sample (n=941), whether counselor expectations for students' future education were associated with African American students' desire to attend college and their decision to search for colleges to attend. The results demonstrated that counselor expectations are the strongest factor in college aspiration and search among African American students (Muhammad, 2008).

The Current Study

Guided by the social capital theory and college-going culture, we investigated the following question in our study: What is the relationships of counselor and principal expectations and primary goals to students' postsecondary education status after controlling for student and school variables (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, SES, school type, urbanicity, academic achievement, and counselor caseloads)? We hypothesized that counselors' and principals' expectations and primary counseling goals would be associated with students' postsecondary education plans or status.

Methods

Participants

We used data from the HSLs:09 which is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of high school students, including base year data from Fall 2009 with ninth and eleventh graders, the first follow-up with eleventh graders in Spring 2012, and the update with high school graduates in 2013. Also, the dataset includes important contextual data from other sources such as the school administrators and school counselors in the base year and in the first follow-up. In our study, of the 10,273 analytic sample of high school completers from the Fall 2009 ninth-graders, 0.8% were others (including American Indian/Alaska Native and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), 4.0% were Asian, 9.4% were Black/African American, 16.1% were Latina or Hispanic, 61.6% were White, and 8.0% identified as multiracial. We combined Hispanic (no race specified) and Hispanic (race specified as one category as Latina or Hispanic) into one category as "others" in the NCES in the ELS:2002 data report (Bozick, Lauff, & Wirt, 2007). Also, we combined American Indian/Alaska Native and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander as "others."

Approximately 50% were male students and 49.8% were female students. Of the sample, 7.9% of students attended Catholic or private schools, while 92.1% students attended public schools. Regarding residential area, 26.7% of students lived in a city area, 35.8% lived in suburban areas, and 37.5% lived in a town or rural area.

School Principals and Counselors

Measures

Dependent variable. Postsecondary education plans/status was measured by asking high school completers who were ninth-grade students in the Fall 2009 about whether they were taking or planned to take postsecondary classes in November 2013. Their responses were measured with a trichotomous variable (yes, no, don't know) originally. In our study, we combined "no" and "don't know" as one category for the regression. While students who answered "no" likely differ from those of "don't know," the aim of this study was to investigate the factors associated with having greater odds of being in the "yes" category as compared with the "no" and/or "don't know" categories. Radford, Ifill, & Lew (2016) suggested that identifying the factors associated with being "no" versus "don't know" may not be highly important to policy implications. The variable was used as an indicator of the postsecondary education pipeline. Of the sample, 75.7% of students reported that they were taking or planning to take postsecondary classes, while 24.3% of students reported that they were not taking or planning to take postsecondary classes in Fall 2013 or were unsure if they will take classes.

Demographic variables. Race/ethnicity was a categorical variable of six categories: White, Latina or Hispanic, Black or African American, others (e.g., American Indian/Alaska Native, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and multiracial. Race was dummy coded, with White serving as the reference group.

Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured by a composite variable based on parents' occupation, educational level and income in the HSLS:09 dataset, which is a continuous variable and standardized for use in the regression. School type (i.e., public, private or Catholic) and urbanicity (i.e. city, suburban, town or rural) were both dummy coded with "town" or "rural" and "private" or "Catholic" as reference groups. Academic achievement was defined as academic grade point average (GPA) from students' ninth grade year as a categorized variable, which was treated as a continuous variable and standardized for the regression. The school counselor caseload was a continuous variable in the HSLS:09 dataset that measured the number of students per counselor in a school. In the study, we transformed the variable into a set of four dummy variables (i.e., 250 or less, 251-350, 351-450, and more than 450) with more than 450 as the reference group. This was chosen as the reference group because the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2012) recommends that schools maintain student-to-school counselor ratios of 1:250 to foster academic, career, and personal development for all students.

School counselors' perceptions of counselor expectations. There is a scale of the school counselor's perceptions of the counseling staff's expectations that was created by the HSLS:09. The counselors' perceptions of counselor expectations reflect school counseling culture on a macro-level. In other words, it can be proxy variables measuring what expectation the school counseling

School Principals and Counselors

department holds toward students. The scale had six variables (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$) coded (1=*disagree or strongly disagree*, 2=*agree*, 3=*strongly agree*): "counselors in this school set high standards for students' learning," "counselors in this school believe all students can do well," "counselors^a in this school have given up on some students," "counselors^a in this school care only about smart students," "counselors^a in this school expect very little from students," and "counselors in this school work hard to make sure all students learn." Some variables were re-coded so that high values represented more positive assessments of the counseling staff's expectations. The reliability of the current study was adequate (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

School counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations. This variable is a scale of the school counselor's perceptions of the school principal's expectations that was created by the HSLS:09. The scale had six variables (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$) coded (1=*disagree or strongly disagree*, 2=*agree*, 3=*strong agree*): "principal in this school sets high standards for students' learning"; "principal in this school believes all students can do well"; "a principal in this school has given up on some students"; "a principal in this school cares only about smart students," "a principal in this school expects very little from students"; and "principal in this school works hard to make sure all students learn." Some

variables were re-coded so that high values represented more positive assessments of the principal's expectations. The reliability of the current study was adequate (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

Principals' primary school counseling goals. The primary school counseling program goals were the program's most emphasized goals. Principals were asked to identify their most highlighted goals, and four categories emerged: (1) helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school, (2) helping students with personal growth and development, (3) helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling, and (4) helping students improve their achievement in high school. Helping students improve their achievement in high school served as the reference group.

Counselors' primary school counseling goals. Other variables considered were counselors' primary school counseling program goals, measuring counselors' most emphasized goals. The four categories are as follows: (1) helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school, (2) helping students with personal growth and development, (3) helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling, and (4) helping students improve their achievement in high school. Helping students improve their achievement in high school served as the reference group.

^a Recoded-variables

School Principals and Counselors

Data Analysis

We conducted hierarchical logistic regression analysis to investigate the relationships of the predictors (e.g., demographic variables, school counselor/principal variables) to each category (e.g., Yes, No) of the dependent variable (e.g., whether high school graduates were taking or planned to take postsecondary classes). Given that HSLs:09 is a complex sample using oversampling and multistage collection procedures, we used SPSS Complex Samples 25.0 to correct sampling weights and apply the sample design effects (Bryan et al., 2017).

Results

The correlations among the variables were below .20, except between the variables of counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations and perception of counselors' expectations ($r = .66, p < .01$). We then assessed all variables for multicollinearity with attention to variance inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance scores. Collinearity, as measured by these factors, was not indicated, with VIF scores not above 1.2 and tolerance scores below .84. Therefore, we proceeded to regression. In Table 1, we presented the results of the final model predicting students' postsecondary education plans or status (see Table 1 on pages 41-42). We entered the variables in two steps with the demographic variables and academic achievement in Model 1, adding school counselor and principal variables in Model 2 (see Table 2 on pages 43-44). The logistic regression model was

significant at the first block comprising only demographic variables and academic achievement, Wald $\chi^2 (14) = 1038.74$, adjusted Wald $\chi^2 (11) = 701.72, p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .324$, and at the second block when school counselor and principal variables were entered, Wald $\chi^2 (22) = 835.49$, adjusted Wald $\chi^2 (19) = 615.75, p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .327$, change in Nagelkerke $R^2 = .003$. The demographic variables and academic achievement explained 32.4% of the variability and explained an additional 0.3 % of the variability in postsecondary education plans or status after controlling for the demographic variables and academic achievement.

In the final model, after controlling for the demographic variables and academic achievement, principals' primary school counseling goals, school counselors' perceptions of counselor expectations, and school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations were associated with postsecondary education plans or status, while counselors' primary school counseling goals were not significantly associated with postsecondary education plans or status. Specifically, when principals reported that helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling was the most emphasized goal in their school counseling program above helping students improve their achievement in high school, the odds of taking postsecondary classes increased by 22% (OR=1.22). Also, counselors' perceptions of counselors' expectations were positively associated with taking postsecondary classes

School Principals and Counselors

Table 1a.
Descriptive Part 1

	Weighted N	Weighted Percent or Mean
Student Variables		
Gender^a		
Male	1252625.90	51.0%
Female	1204751.98	49.0%
Race/Ethnicity^a		
Others	20716.661	0.8%
Asian	94589.580	3.8%
Black or African American	251727.445	10.2%
Latino/a	404757.561	16.5%
Multiracial	202834.995	8.3%
White	1482751.64	60.3%
School Type^a		
Public	2272897.34	92.5%
Private or Catholic	184480.541	7.5%
Urbanicity^a		
City	649869.68	26.4%
Suburban	886630.05	36.1%
Town or Rural	920878.14	37.5%
SES		.09

Note. Nagelkerke $R^2 = .327$, Wald $\chi^2 (22) = 835.49$, adjusted Wald $\chi^2 (19) = 615.75$, $p < .001$

^a Reference category for each variable in order: Female, White, Private or Catholic, Town or Rural, more than 450, and improving Academic Achievement.

School Principals and Counselors

Table 1b.
Descriptive Part 2

	Weighted N	Weighted Percent or Mean
Student Variables		
Academic Achievement		2.69
School Counselors' Caseload		
250 or few	512282.371	20.8%
251-350	755861.574	30.8%
351-450	696009.402	28.3%
More than 450	493224.536	20.1%
Counselor's school counseling primary goals		
Preparing for Career/Work Roles	88259.102	3.6%
Personal Growth/Development	316616.277	12.9%
Preparing for Postsecondary Education	1218071.08	49.6%
Improving Academic Achievement	834431.428	34.0%
Principal's school counseling primary goals		
Preparing for Career/Work Roles	106319.521	4.3%
Personal Growth/Development	316198.217	12.9%
Preparing for Postsecondary Education	1331731.38	54.2%
Improving Academic Achievement	703128.763	28.6%
School counselor's perceptions of principal expectations		.08
School counselor's perceptions of counselor expectations		.06
Postsecondary education plan/status		
Yes	1860843.61	75.7%
No or don't know	596534.269	24.3%

School Principals and Counselors

Table 2a.

Final Model of the Hierarchical Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Postsecondary education plans or status (N=10,273)

Postsecondary education plans or status	Yes vs. no ^b		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Intercept	-.95	.30	.38**
Student Variables			
Gender ^a			
Male	-.33	.08	.71***
Female			
Race/Ethnicity ^a			
Others	-.18	.44	.83
Asian	.43	.20	1.55*
Black or African American	.37	.16	1.41*
Latino/a	.63	.12	1.87***
Multiracial	.12	.16	1.13
White			
School Type ^a			
Public	-.93	.20	.39***
Private or Catholic			
Urbanicity ^a			
City	.54	.13	1.71***
Suburban	.33	.09	1.39***
Town or Rural			
SES	.92	.07	2.52***

Note. Nagelkerke $R^2 = .327$, Wald $\chi^2 (22) = 835.49$, adjusted Wald $\chi^2 (19) = 615.75$, $p < .001$

^aReference category for each variable in order: Female, White, Private or Catholic, Town or Rural, more than 450, and improving Academic Achievement.

School Principals and Counselors

Table 2b.

Final Model of the Hierarchical Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Postsecondary education plans or status (N = 10,273)

Postsecondary education plans or status	Yes vs. no ^b		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Academic Achievement	1.06	.05	2.90 ^{***}
School Counselors' Caseload			
250 or few	.34	.15	1.40 [*]
251-350	-.09	.12	.91
351-450	.04	.12	1.04
More than 450			
Counselor's school counseling primary goals			
Preparing for Career/Work Roles	-.00	.20	.99
Personal Growth/Development	-.02	.13	.97
Preparing for Postsecondary Education	.03	.09	1.03
Improving Academic Achievement			
Principal's school counseling primary goals			
Preparing for Career/Work Roles	.09	.21	1.09
Personal Growth/Development	.05	.12	1.05
Preparing for Postsecondary Education	.20	.09	1.22 [*]
Improving Academic Achievement			
School counselor's perceptions of principal expectations	-.11	.05	.89 [*]
School counselor's perceptions of counselor expectations	.13	.05	1.14 [*]

^b No category includes: Don't taking or planning to take postsecondary classes in fall 2013, and don't know if they will take classes.
^{*} $p < .05$; ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{***} $p < .001$.

School Principals and Counselors

(OR=1.14). In other words, the odds of taking postsecondary classes increased by 14% compared to no classes (OR = 1.14). When school counselors perceived that other school counselors had a positive impact on student success, had high expectations, cared about all students, and worked hard for the success of all students, they were more likely to take postsecondary classes. Surprisingly, school counselors' perceptions of principal expectations were negatively associated with postsecondary education plans/status (OR=.89). This may be due to other expectations principals have, such as meeting students' social, emotional, and career needs and the school- and district-level vision and goals. School counselors' perceptions that principals believed all students could do well, had high expectations for all students, cared about all students, and worked hard to make sure all students learned, were negatively associated with postsecondary education plans among high school graduates.

Discussion

The present study examined whether school counselors' perceptions of counselor expectations and principal expectations were related to students' decisions regarding postsecondary education. The study also investigated whether perceptions of school counselors and principals about primary school counseling goals were associated with students' postsecondary decisions.

The results indicated that school counselors' expectations of students were positively

related to students' postsecondary education decisions. Also, principals' primary school counseling goals of preparing students for postsecondary options was significantly important for increasing students' decision to take postsecondary classes. These findings corroborate existing evidences that school counselors' high expectations and principals' primary goals about postsecondary education are integral to enhancing college-going culture, which ultimately leads to positive college outcomes (Lapan & Harrington, 2010; McKillip et al., 2013; Woods & Domina, 2014).

Specifically, the study supported previous studies about the influence of counselor expectations on students' decisions or plans to take postsecondary classes (Bryan et al., 2009; Muhammad, 2008). High school students were more likely to plan or take postsecondary classes when their counselors believed all students could succeed and reach their potential in learning. The result is significant in a practical sense, as school counselors are critical social capital that provide information, resources, and support through counseling services (e.g., one-on-one meeting, group counseling, classroom guidance), which may influence whether or not they encourage students to enroll in postsecondary education. Also, this finding supports college-going culture theory in that the culture is created and conveyed through expression of high expectation of school leaders, including counselors (Athanasios et al., 2016, Bosworth et al., 2014; Holland, 2015; McKillip et al., 2013). Furthermore, the results of this study go hand-in-hand with Engberg

School Principals and Counselors

and Gilbert's (2014) finding that schools dedicating more time to college counseling were associated with students' higher rates of four-year college-going. Thus, both counselor expectations and time spent on college counseling are important in postsecondary enrollment.

Interestingly, school counselors' perceptions of principals' high expectations toward students were negatively associated with students' decisions

regarding postsecondary education. Even though high expectations for students were considered some of the most crucial administrative leadership skills that lead to student success (McKillip et al., 2013), Valentine and Parter (2011) found principals' high expectations were not

associated with high school student achievement scores among principal leadership factors. Considering this study used the item that counselors reported whether principals in their school had high expectations for students, it is possible that counselors' perceptions of the principal's expectations may not accurately reflect principal's expectations toward students. A future study may need to examine principals' self-reports on expectations toward students.

Another finding of this study demonstrated that principals' primary counseling goals of

preparing students for postsecondary education are critical factors in postsecondary educational decisions. When principals made college counseling a priority, students were more likely to take or plan postsecondary education. This finding is meaningful in providing quantitative evidence of the importance of principals' primary goal of college counseling. Indeed, this finding echoes the suggestion of McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) that

principals play a central role in creating a college-going culture by focusing on college counseling to promote postsecondary outcomes. When principals set the primary goal of college counseling, school counselors may be more likely to be committed to college counseling and to build collaborative relationships

with principals, moving toward the goal of preparing all students for postsecondary education (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017). Indeed, the principal's focus on college counseling may support and empower school counselors to be able to devote more time and energy to college counseling (McKillip, et al., 2012). Thus, it is incredibly important that principals continue to be trained in *how* to establish a college-going culture, specifically through creating a strong collaborative relationship between themselves, school counselors, teachers, and students. As has been discussed, supportive staff-student



“When principals made college counseling a priority, students were more likely to take or plan postsecondary education. This finding is meaningful in providing quantitative evidence of the importance of principals' primary goal of college counseling.”

School Principals and Counselors

relationships tend to be very helpful in encouraging college-going and promoting student growth, meaning that it is crucial that school leaders adopt an overall more collaborative culture in which this can take place.

Implications

School principal and counselor expectations of high school students and primary school counseling goals are critical components for school principals and counselors to consider when ensuring *all* students are college and career ready when they graduate high school. The findings from our study support pre- and in-service principals and school counselors, higher education faculty, and policy makers as they consider how best to work with one another and identify primary goals focused on students' success in postsecondary education.

The expectations and preparation for students to be college ready by school counselors and principals takes time and collaboration. To promote a college-going culture, students need opportunities to lead, develop skills, and obtain competencies. In a study of students' college readiness and leadership style in two early college high schools, Villarreal, Montoya, Duncan, and Gergen (2017) found that leadership style was a significant predictor of all career readiness foundation skills (i.e., basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities) and competencies (i.e., resource management, interpersonal skills, information skills, system management, and

technology use). Principals and school counselors may collaborate to set expectations for secondary students to go to college or pursue postsecondary education, which will likely mean setting up specific opportunities for students to learn about their own leadership styles and skills and how they can implement these in the future.

To encourage college-going for students, some schools provide high school students with college counseling. When considering counseling resources and norms for school counselors, Engberg and Gilbert (2014) found the average student caseload, the number of hours spent on college-focused counseling, and the number of college and counseling resources were significantly related to a schools' college-going culture. While school counselors may advocate for time and materials, school administrators must set the expectation for students to go to college or postsecondary schooling and ensure counselors have appropriate time and resources to support and educate students as they prepare for their futures.

However, as is mentioned by Lowery, Quick, Boyland, Geesa, and Mayes (2018), many school counselors are assigned inappropriate tasks because principals are unsure of their specific roles. Lowery et al. (2018) go on to explain how pre-service educators can benefit from learning more about the school counselor's role, and how collaboration between schooling counseling and leadership pre-service programs can be instrumental in fostering this collaboration both pre- and in-

School Principals and Counselors

service. As has been mentioned, in order effectively promote college-going culture, it is crucial that school leaders are taught how to collaborate properly so that school counselors can spend a sufficient amount of time working with students on college counseling. In their study, Boyland et al. (2019) lay out units of study for higher education preparation programs that foster collaboration between principals and school counselors. Thus, because principals and school counselors have such a great impact on college-going culture and on students' postsecondary enrollment, preparing these administrators to work well together is an often-ignored piece of the puzzle. Implementing these units of study in pre-service programs could be a practical and realistic means by which to teach future school leaders how to collaborate well.

In further discussing the importance of school leaders, it is essential to note that school counselors can serve as liaisons between their students, the high school, colleges, and principals in order to collaboratively guide the students to consider and prepare for college. As the lead decision makers in schools, principals' expectations of students to go to college must be a priority, as well as providing students and school counselors with the information and materials they need at school. In a study of concurrent enrollment, Hanson, Prusha, and Iverson (2015) found that principals believed that concurrent enrollment had a positive impact in their schools and better prepared students for college. By offering prerequisite courses and

concurrent enrollment programs, school administrators and counselors expose students to ways of learning and content that will prepare them for college. College-going culture is further supported in these types of environments, as students can earn college credit while in high school.

Limitations and Future Research

Limited quantitative research exists on the direct impact of perceptions of primary school counseling goals and expectations toward students on postsecondary enrollment. We are contributing to the knowledge base of this topic with this study. The limited amount of research available, specifically quantitative studies about principals' expectations about college-going culture, made it challenging to conduct a thorough literature review with a variety of studies. There are limitations on the data we used for our study, as well. The survey data was collected between 2009 and 2013, and it would be beneficial to conduct a similar survey now in more recent years. A majority of participants in this survey identified themselves as White, which may limit the important consideration of how race relates to postsecondary enrollment.

Building on the findings, future research will be beneficial to extend the current findings to measure the construct of McClafferty (2002)'s college-going culture comprehensively. For instance, future research can use structure equation modeling (SEM) to examine relationships of various college-going culture factors determining enhanced postsecondary

School Principals and Counselors

outcomes. The findings also indicate a need for quantitative research on school leaders' expectation and primary counseling goals. Future research could investigate a moderating and mediating effects of expectations of school leaders (e.g., school counselors and principals) and primary school counseling goals on postsecondary outcomes.

Conclusion

Information and materials to promote a college-going culture are available throughout the United States, however it seems that many schools do not foster this culture in schools. It is evident that school counselors and principals can have a positive impact on students' postsecondary enrollment when they develop and foster a college-going culture in their schools. We recognize more research is needed on collaborative efforts by school leaders and community stakeholders in creating a college-going culture. As school leaders, counselors, principals, and community partners work together to create and foster a college-going culture, it is critical to consider the information, resources and guidance students need in order to make and achieve postsecondary goals for future success. 

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