imperative to ensure they have the skills necessary to succeed in college.

But an urban school counselor’s work doesn’t stop there. It’s also

getting students from under-represented populations to consider college is one

Challenger

Urban

College Career
The troubling news is that despite the fact that school counselors are the ones primarily charged with promoting students’ personal, academic and career development, their voices are noticeably missing from research reports, policy decisions and, most importantly, recommendations for improved practice. Although this is disconcerting for the school counseling profession at large, it is particularly concerning for those working in urban settings where first-generation, low-income and minority students are heavily concentrated. The urban school counselor is a critical element of students’ post-secondary success.

A resounding theme in much of the research is that low-income students and those who are first in their family to go to college rely heavily on help from school counselors, teachers and coaches for college planning and support rather than obtaining it from family members or peers.

**Drawing on Skills**

Although there is no shortage of Web sites or guidebooks designed to help students plan for college, many fall short of providing specific recommendations to help urban school counselors navigate the complex college counseling process. Very few traditional college planning resources address how to help undocumented students secure financial aid, provide information appropriate for parenting teens or suggest college counseling strategies for students living in foster care. Even more noticeable to urban school counselors is the pervasive assumption in resource guides that students themselves believe they can be successful in college when, in fact, many feel hopeless about their future and see college as unachievable.

School counselors working with urban students must draw on their counseling, teaching, advocacy and leadership skills to overcome the risk factors, both personal and environmental, that otherwise prevent students from developing and realizing their hopes and dreams. However, such a task calls for a process quite different than those found in broad-based approaches.

Three elements are essential to post-secondary success: strong academic preparation, high educational aspirations and expectations and high-quality college counseling. All three of which fall squarely within the scope of school counselors’ roles.

**Strong Academic Preparation**

Successfully undertaking a rigorous curriculum is believed to be one of the best predictors of college enrollment and success. Thus, implementing a college preparatory curriculum is a must. However, most school counselors know that raising standards in the classroom is only effective if the appropriate structures and supports are in place to meet all students’ needs. Urban school counselors can support students’ academic preparation in the following ways:

**GET THE WORD OUT:** Provide information and encouragement to all students about the importance of taking a rigorous course of study. Deliver this information via multiple people and multiple strategies. Posting information or sharing in an assembly is unlikely to influence course-taking patterns, unless it is reinforced by all staff members and others who have influence over students’ decision making. Educate students about the importance of their GPA, and give them multiple opportunities to see and understand how their GPA relates to future goals.

**OPEN THE GATES:** Ensure that students in all grades have access to gatekeeper courses, such as Algebra I and advanced math courses. Encourage administrators to offer Algebra I in eighth grade, and link appropriate academic tutoring to that class. In addition to math, be sure world languages and laboratory sciences are open and accessible to students. Use data to assess the extent to which programs, courses and services are equitable, and promote opportunity for all students. Advocate for the inclusion of multiple Advanced Placement courses.

**GET REAL ABOUT SUPPORT SERVICES:** Make certain appropriate academic supports are in place to ensure students are able to succeed in rigorous courses. Leverage community partners to provide the academic tutoring and skill development necessary for students to succeed. Establish partnerships with local universities, community-based agencies and public service organizations that can provide academic instruction and support tied to specific class goals, objectives and curricular methods.

**GET Schooled:** Read some of the reports identifying the skills and content knowledge necessary for success in college. Build your own college knowledge so you can educate teachers and administrators. Sign up for daily alerts from higher education and related media outlets that link to executive summaries of new reports.

**GET GOING:** Target efforts to students in the earlier grades to ensure they make academic choices that keep them on the academic pipeline to college. Use ninth-grade orientations, visits to middle schools and partnerships with middle school counselors to convey the importance of taking rigorous courses in high school. Set aside the time to work with early grades to ensure students understand both the importance of post-secondary education and the steps necessary to realize future college opportunities. Utilize graduate student interns, AmeriCorps volunteers and others to work with ninth-grade teachers and orientation programs.

**High Aspirations, Expectations**

In the past few years, educators have done a good job of sending the message that going to college has long-term benefits. And if this important message weren’t enough, eye-widening charts showing the difference in salaries between those with a college degree and those without certainly have had an impact on students’ aspirations. Ask a class of ninth-grade students if they plan to go to college, and most will raise their hands. However, the chorus of hands may not necessarily reflect students’ expectations but rather their hopes. Many reports suggest that urban students’ early intentions of attending
Come Find Your Focus

Program opportunities and the partners
aren't where the college knowledge and
educational benefit are. Ask what
children's learning needs are. Ask:
How does this help me?
To Make a World of Difference

**My Purpose:**

- Master's (MBA) degree
- College counseling
- Education investment
- Meaningful lives and tangible results on their work
- Arnold, executive editor of the "Best Universities" guide
- Essential role of education in preparing students for success
- Importance of engagement with professionals
- Commitment to education and community
- School counseling and college readiness
- Access to higher education
- Leadership in college counseling

**Aims:**

- To prepare students for success in college
- To develop leadership skills
- To foster a sense of community
- To provide a foundation for lifelong learning
- To promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills

**Contact us:**

- 800-345-8466
- contact@simmons.edu

**Simmons College**

- Boston, Massachusetts

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**Learning with Purpose**

- High-quality college counseling
- Financial aid and scholarship opportunities
- Academic advising and career services
- Community service and volunteerism
- Global partnerships and internships

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**Spread the Wealth:**

- School support for low-income families
- Assistance for students facing financial difficulties
- Advocacy for increased access to higher education
- Support for students from diverse backgrounds

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**Simmons College Foundation**

- Scholarship and financial assistance
- Support for students facing financial hardships
- Opportunities for academic and personal growth
- Commitment to diversity and inclusion

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**Simmons College Athletics**

- Intercollegiate and intramural sports
- Opportunities for physical activity and wellness
- Competitive and recreational options
- Support for student-athletes

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**Simmons College Libraries**

- Access to a wide range of resources
- Support for research and learning
- Online databases and catalogues
- On-campus and online learning opportunities

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**Simmons College Alumni Association**

- Networking and career development opportunities
- Events and gatherings
- Support for current and former students
- Community service and volunteerism

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**Simmons College Events**

- Cultural and educational events
- Lectures and discussions
- Workshops and seminars
- Opportunities for networking and community engagement

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**Simmons College Campus Life**

- Housing and residence life
- Dining and food services
- Student organizations and clubs
- Recreation and wellness programs
- Opportunities for leadership and community service
Together We Can Make a Difference in a Student's Life

Business, Culinary Arts, Hospitality, Technology