

The School Counselor and College Access Professionals

(Adopted 2016)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors play a critical role in preparing all students for life-long learning and success in a global environment. To ensure students have opportunity to reach their full potential, school counselors collaborate with community-based organizations, including college access organizations and college access professionals, within the framework of a comprehensive school counseling program.

The Rationale

Implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program includes working collaboratively with community-based organizations, including college access organizations and college access professionals, to help meet students' academic and career developmental needs. Community-based organizations often have expertise and time to work with hard-to-serve populations and should be part of the total communitywide approach to postsecondary education. Community-based organizations can provide tremendous value to the work school counselors do in the context of improving school-based programs and student outcomes. College access professionals might include the following: college advisors, professional/trained mentors, career advisors and other specialists trained to serve students in navigating their college and career pathway. Clear agreements between the school and the college access professional or community-based organization should be in place. The agreements should outline:

- a definition and delineation of functions and responsibilities of the college access professional with particular focus on the limitations college access professionals must have in students' social/emotional developmental needs
- clear language stating the college access professionals' role is in support of the work of the school counselor rather than a replacement for the role/function of the school counselor
- which student records or personal information college access professionals are permitted access
- expectations that college access professionals must maintain the highest level of confidentiality related to student records or personal information
- the responsible supervisory entity for the college access professional, which includes a statement indicating the need for college access professionals to make referrals to this entity in the event students present issues beyond the scope of their college access training and skills
- the responsible compensation entity

College access professional can be employed by schools, housed in school facilities or be based in off-campus facilities. School counselors serve as a catalyst in building collaborative partnerships with college access professionals, identifying community needs in college access and assisting in the identification of students/student groups who would benefit from the expertise and time provided by college access professionals (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2012).

Benefits from this collaboration may include:

- increasing students' postsecondary attainment rates, particularly among low-income and underserved student populations (Perna 2002).
- financial incentives, mentoring opportunities, individualized needs-based services and academic remediation to assist students in accessing postsecondary opportunities
- opportunities for students to enroll in postsecondary courses or programs to prepare for postsecondary education.
- partnering with college access programs, scholarship programs, the Department of Education and mentoring services that raise awareness of the importance of postsecondary training

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors define collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations within the framework of a comprehensive program. School counselors actively seek to assist students in preparing for postsecondary success. Through collaboration with college access professionals, school counselors can increase the scope of their work and provide communitywide benefits within a comprehensive school counseling program approach by:

- beginning conversations regarding community needs with community stakeholders
- planning a communitywide response to college preparation and access

- setting communitywide goals and action plans for college access
- sharing common data with community stakeholders
- implementing collaborative interventions in college access
- assisting students in completing the steps necessary for participating in college access programs or postsecondary programs, such as registering for tests or applying for financial aid
- referring/nominating students for programs

Summary

College access organizations and professionals can provide beneficial academic and career opportunities for students by extending the reach of comprehensive school counseling programs. Effective collaborations include a clear delineation of function and roles. School counselors are the catalyst for establishing the collaborative partnerships that help students receive these benefits.

References

Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2012). *The 2012 survey of school counselors, True North: Charting the course to college and career readiness*. New York, NY: College Board.

Perna, L. W. (2002). Precollege outreach programs: Characteristics of programs serving historically underrepresented groups of students. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*(1), 64–84.

Resources

Barnett, E. (2016). *Building Student Momentum from High School into College: Ready or Not: It's Time to Rethink the 12th Grade*. Jobs for the Future. Retrieved from <http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Building-Student-Momentum-021916.pdf>

Pathways to College Network. (2011). *The role of mentoring in college access and success*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED520415.pdf>

Tierney, W. G., Corwin, Z. B., & Colyar, J. E. (2005). Counseling matters: Knowledge, assistance and organizational commitment in college preparation. In *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach* (pp. 69-88). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.