

How to Provide Postsecondary Navigation Supports

Definition

- **What:** Postsecondary navigation supports are ways to help students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, identify and successfully navigate the many steps required to select, apply to, and enter a promising postsecondary pathway suited to their interests and abilities, such as researching college or training opportunities, taking required standardized tests (ACT and/or SAT), submitting applications, completing the FAFSA, and returning enrollment documents.
- **Why:** Research has shown that the complexity of the college application process is a major hurdle for poor and working-class students. While middle-class parents tend to draw on their own experiences and social networks to take an active role in coordinating and influencing their children's postsecondary education planning process, poor and working-class parents rely heavily on schools to provide that guidance. In addition, the more accurate students' beliefs are about the educational qualifications required for the careers they aspire to, and about college costs and ways to defray them, the more likely they are to apply to, and actually enroll in, college. Filling out the FAFSA is a major hurdle for first-generation students, while failure to do so significantly reduces students' likelihood of actually enrolling in a four-year school; conversely, students who apply to multiple colleges (three to five) are more likely to actually enroll. Finally, students who do not receive appropriate guidance are more likely to enroll in schools below the selectivity level for which they are qualified, where they often receive less support and have a significantly lower probability of attaining a degree within six years of enrolling.
- **How:**
 - Create a strong college-going culture in your school, with appropriate Tier 1 interventions offered to all 11th and 12th grade students (e.g., college fairs and visits, parent awareness workshops, FAFSA workshops, etc.) to demystify the process
 - Develop a data system that offers the capacity to track college exposure and navigation steps, such as counselor visits, ACT/SAT registration and scores, colleges applied to, FAFSA submission, acceptance letters, scholarship offers, and enrollment
 - Identify choke points and challenges specific to your school or system context
 - Disaggregate students using GPA and SAT/ACT scores to identify best match colleges in terms of selectivity and offer students who need extra help the right support at the right time
 - Educate teachers and counselors (as well as students) on the importance and advantages of enrolling in an appropriately-matched school in terms of selectivity
 - Educate students and parents on the significant financial aid opportunities available at many selective public and private four-year colleges

- Encourage teachers and counselors to establish relationships of trust with students that allow them to “nag and nurture” them across the finish line for college applications, financial aid, and enrollment

Note: In addition to the resources suggested below, you may wish to check out the extensive list available at <https://ncs.uchicago.edu/postsecondary-tools>.

Training Materials:

- **Developing Systems to Monitor College Applications**
U.Chicago Network for College Success, 2018
Excellent series of videos offering step-by-step hands-on guidance for developing a data system that will enable counselors to support the right students at the right time to apply to the right colleges. <https://ncs.uchicago.edu/tool-set/developing-systems-monitor-college-applications>
- **From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College**
UChicago Consortium for Chicago School Research, 2008
Identifies the challenges that prevented over half of qualified Chicago public school students from actually enrolling in college, and even more from enrolling in colleges at the selectivity level for which they were qualified. Executive summary: https://consortium.uchicago.edu/downloads/1835ccsr_potholes_summary.pdf
- **First in my Family: Supporting First- Generation College Students**
American Youth Policy Forum, Dec. 2016
Several first-generation college students and graduates share their experiences and the supports they needed to successfully navigate the college application and enrollment process.
<https://youtu.be/eAvitIDqB3w>
- **To & Through Issue Brief: College Choice**
UChicago Network for College Success
Brief summary of the rationale for, and importance of, helping students select a college at the right selectivity level.
https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_URAD_Set_A_ToThroughIssueBrief.pdf

Exemplars in Practice:

- **Senior Support Timeline from Washington High School**
UChicago Network for College Success
https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_BST_Set_D_SeniorSupportTimeline.pdf

- **Thrive Senior Seminar Curriculum: Scope & Sequence. College Success Seminar, detailed lesson planning tool**
UChicago Network for College Success
https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_BST_SetD_ThriveCurriculum.pdf
- **Senior Presentation on College Planning**
UChicago Network for College Success
Presentation for high school seniors on steps to take and factors to consider in planning for college. Well done and very helpful.
https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_ESF_Set_C_SeniorPresentation.pdf
- **Senior Day of Action Guidelines**
UChicago Network for College Success
Sample guidelines from Tilden HS for volunteers to have one-on-one conversations with students early in their senior year to help them clarify their postsecondary thinking and planning. Very helpful.
https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_ESF_Set_C_SeniorDayAction.pdf
- **Senior Passport: Tracking Postsecondary Milestones**
UChicago Network for College Success
Two sample “passports” used to guide seniors through the steps involved in successful college planning and application. Very helpful. https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_ESF_SetB_SchurzPassport.pdf and https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_ESF_Set_B_SeniorPassport.pdf
- **Plan for Supporting Students with FAFSA: Sample from Kelly High School**
UChicago Network for College Success
https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_BST_Set_D_SupportingStudentsFAFSA.pdf
- **Ramping up for college readiness in Minnesota high schools: Implementation of a schoolwide program**
REL, 2016
Implementation and impact of a college readiness and navigation program in a cohort of primarily rural and suburban Minnesota schools.
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_2016146.pdf

Research Foundations:

- **High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College**
UChicago Consortium for Chicago School Research, 2008
Study found that fewer than half of qualified Chicago public school students who aspired to attend four-year colleges complete the necessary steps to research, apply to, and actually enroll in colleges; of those who did so, two-thirds enrolled in colleges below the selectivity level for which they were qualified; executive summary cited above.
https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/SOE_Potholes.pdf
- **“Class and the Transition to Adulthood,” A. Lareau and E. Weininger, in *Social Class: How Does It Work?* (ed. A Lareau & D. Conley)**
Russell Sage Foundation, 2008
Study compares engagement patterns of middle and lower class families, particularly around college search and application. https://www.amazon.com/Social-Class-How-Does-Work/dp/0871545063/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1540486046&sr=1-4
- **“Student Perceptions of College Opportunity: the Boston COACH Program,”**
C. Avery & T. Kane, in *College Choices: The Economics of Where to Go, When to Go, and How to Pay for It*, ed. Caroline Hoxby
University of Chicago Press, 2004
<https://www.nber.org/chapters/c10104.pdf>
- **“Trusting Each Other: Student-Counselor Relationships in Diverse High Schools,”**
Megan M. Holland, *Sociology of Education*, 2015
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0038040715591347>