

The School Counselor and College Access Professionals

(Adopted 2016; Revised 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

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

The Rationale

Implementation of a 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. The Council of National School Counseling and College Access Organizations in collaboration with ASCA acknowledge the various professions that play a role in facilitating the process of aiding students in their postsecondary endeavors (Richardson, et al., 2022). College access professionals often include school counselors, 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:

- increased postsecondary attainment rates, particularly among low-income and underserved student populations (Perna 2002)
- mentoring opportunities, individualized needs-based services and academic remediation to help students access postsecondary opportunities
- opportunities for students to enroll in postsecondary courses or programs to prepare for postsecondary education
- partnerships 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 understand that partnerships are an integral component of college readiness (Bryan et al., 2017). As such, collaborative partnerships are defined as community-based organizations within the framework of a comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors actively seek to assist students in preparing for postsecondary success. Through collaboration and consultation with college access professionals, school counselors can increase the scope of their work and provide communitywide benefits within a school counseling program approach by:

- initiating and sustaining 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

School counselors can promote college access by fostering family and community-based partnerships that focus on access, knowledge sharing, and the creation of college opportunities for K-12 students (Bryan et al., 2017). College access organizations and professionals can provide beneficial academic and career opportunities for students by extending the reach of 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

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