



NCSCPS

The National Consortium for School Counseling
and Postsecondary Success

The State of School Counseling:

REVISITING THE PATH FORWARD

JANUARY 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success (NCSCPS) would like to extend special thanks to everyone who contributed to this report.

Specifically, we would like to thank **The Kresge Foundation** for its commitment to this important work of fostering access to and success in postsecondary education for underserved and first-generation college students;

Professionals who contributed time and expertise participating in the Chicago two-day Think Tank cross sector focus group event, the Jacksonville focus group, the research focus groups, and the NCSCPS school counselor and counselor educator surveys;

Reach Higher state teams for their support to measure, mobilize and move forward an agenda to strengthen school counseling and college advising;

Greg Darnieder, Former Senior Advisor to US Secretary of Education on College Access Initiatives, for his unwavering support of school counselors and expertise in systemic change, and;

Jeanne Russell, Mission Street Consulting LLC, for her skillful assistance in editing this report.

FUNDING FOR THIS REPORT PROVIDED BY

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION Funding for this report provided by Kresge Foundation, a \$3.6 billion private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities in America's cities through grantmaking and social investing in arts and culture, education, environment, health, human services, and community development in Detroit. In 2015, the Board of Trustees approved 370 grants totaling \$125.2 million, and nine social investment commitments totaling \$20.3 million. For more information, visit kresge.org.

When citing this document, please use the following reference: Brown, J., Hatch, T., Holcomb-McCoy, C., Martin, P., Mcleod, J., Owen, L., & Savitz-Romer, M. (2016). *The State of School Counseling: Revisiting the Path Forward*. Washington, DC.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background & History	4
Summary of the Research	7
Findings	12
Summary of Recommendations	14
Policy	14
Practice	14
Research	14
Credentialing	14
Conclusion	16
Appendix	19

Executive Summary

The 2011 national survey of school counselors, [Counseling at a Crossroads](#), charted a clear new direction for the profession, highlighting the unique opportunity for school counselors to advance the nation's goal of increased college attainment. This comprehensive survey of the field positioned counselors as key leaders within schools and drivers of education policy, explicitly linking the work to broad academic outcomes as well as specific college-related tasks ranging from the completion of financial aid applications to the creation of a college-going culture. This report cast a spotlight on the conditions that undermine counselors' current efforts to increase postsecondary success, such as limited training and poorly defined roles. Most importantly, it told the profession: "We could either become central to accelerating student academic achievement in our schools or remain at the margins of educational progress."

A national focus on college attainment combined with an emphasis on career pathways has affirmed the criticality of school counselors to assist in navigating the college and career process. In 2015, the [National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success](#) (NCSCPS) formed in response to First Lady Michelle Obama's [Reach Higher](#) initiative and the call for improvements to school counseling and school-based college and career counseling systems. NCSCPS members coordinated four national White House convenings (*Harvard, San Diego State University, University of North Florida, and American University*) to carry the momentum of the 2014 introduction of Reach Higher and the achievements that followed. The

consortium aims to provide a leading voice for college and career readiness with specific attention to advancing equitable and accessible pathways to postsecondary success for all students, especially those who face formidable barriers to postsecondary opportunities.

The consortium's goal was to act as a catalyst to strengthen school counseling and college advising through targeted activities across the four areas of policy, research, practice, and credentialing, all of which are predicated on school counselor leadership and strategic partnerships. NCSCPS members are researchers, policy advocates, and practitioners. Together they provide a leading voice championing equitable and accessible pathways to college and career success for all students.

Even as there is growing recognition of the centrality of the school counselor in achieving educational outcomes, school counselors today operate under severe constraints, juggling multiple roles and hampered by large student caseloads. Ideally, a repositioning of the counselor role as a college and career readiness leader must also be accompanied by attention to freeing counselors from unnecessary administrative work and other duties that detract from their core mission. The purpose of this latest report, *Revisiting the Path Forward*, is to advance that college and career readiness leadership vision through a collaborative, accountable framework resulting in equitable outcomes and achievement for all students.

“WE COULD EITHER BECOME CENTRAL TO ACCELERATING STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS OR REMAIN AT THE MARGINS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS.”

—2011 report *Counseling at a Crossroads*

What is the National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success – NCSCPS?

NCSCPS members are individuals who have established themselves within the fields of school counseling and college advising. The Consortium aims to provide a leading voice for college and career services with specific attention to increasing equitable and accessible pathways to postsecondary success for all students. NCSCPS emerged in response to First Lady Michelle Obama’s **Reach Higher** initiative and the call for improvements to school counseling and school-based college and career counseling systems.



With findings drawn from research from the field and existing scholarship, this report seeks to bring further understanding and recommendations as to how school counselors can capitalize upon their unique access to youth making key life decisions.

Given the achievement and opportunity gaps in our country, this report stresses the need to maximize the role of counseling in underserved communities where youth have the least access to adults with college experiences and where they may be most reliant on school resources.

This report seeks to broaden the foundation of the 2011 College Board report and *Path Forward* recommendations by including additional perspectives and voices from multiple data collection methods, with an effort on capturing futuristic thinking, emerging practices and leading edge ideas.

This report lays out a critical need for research but also recognizes that in a fast-evolving field, practice is driving

innovation and change. The recommendations capture those new insights across four emerging themes of **leadership, alignment, collaboration** and **accountability**. Taken together, these recommendations offer a clear direction for moving the counseling profession to the forefront of the college and career readiness campaign and guiding the field to new areas for research, such as, but not limited to, the role of technology in guiding college advising, as well as how to work more effectively within a collaborative framework that engages community-based providers, parents, and families. They also make a strong case for action research as part of a powerful feedback loop where practice drives changes in policy and research. Given the fast pace of change on the ground, the top priority is to articulate further a common set of College and Career Readiness Competencies based on today’s best information, to be consistently used by practitioners and counselor educators alike.

Background & History

In 2011, the College Board, with support from the Kresge Foundation, published *The State of School Counseling in America, 2011*¹. This major contribution to the profession presented a comprehensive review of the scholarship on school counseling. Yet, despite presenting a wide body of scholarship on the school counseling profession, it discovered a limited body of research on counselor role definition and efficacy and called for expanded research on “the development of counseling as a profession and school counselors in the educational system.”² This report clearly explained to school counselors, school counseling directors, school counselor educators and other educational leaders why current systems may not be well designed to support our most educationally disadvantaged young people. Subsequently, *The Path Forward* sought to operationalize the findings to provide a blueprint for a new focus on college and career advising. This follow-up report, *Revisiting the Path Forward*, seeks to build on that foundation with new recommendations to push the field toward a leadership role in helping youth achieve their college and career dreams.

Aware of the opportunity gap and the uneven access to high-quality counseling based on her personal experience, First Lady Michelle Obama launched Reach Higher, a signature initiative aimed at supporting President Obama’s [2020 North Star Goal](#) of increasing the number of American citizens who earn a postsecondary credential. Reach Higher is intended to “inspire every student in America to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school, whether at a professional training program, a community college, or a four-year college or university.”³ As a central component of this initiative, the First Lady emphasized the importance of school counselors, identifying them as instrumental in providing postsecondary supports to those who are first in their family to attend college.

This initiative marked the first time a national leader has called for improvements to the school counseling profession with a specific focus on college readiness counseling, and almost immediately created a groundswell of support among practicing school counselors and counselor educators committed to promoting educational equity.

Reach Higher is intended to “inspire every student in America to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school,



whether at a professional training program, a community college, or a four-year college or university.” said First Lady Michelle Obama at the launch of Reach Higher in San Antonio, Texas.

1 College Board Advocacy & Policy Center and Civic Enterprise (2011). School counselors literature and landscape review: The State of School Counseling in America. College Board: New York.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



Report Objective

The goal of this report is to draw on research gathered from the field and existing scholarship to provide recommendations for specific practices and research necessary to ensure all students are career and college ready.

Together, the 2011 College Board Report and the launch of Reach Higher created a call to action for changes in practice, policy and research, as well as an explicit focus on the counselor's role in supporting educational attainment for low-income and first-generation students.

Across the country at the national, state and local levels, policymakers, educators and community leaders mobilized to propose and implement policies and practices to support President Obama's goal of getting more adults to complete two- and four-year degrees as a means of securing the United States' position of world leadership. To propel this momentum, members of the NCSCPS and Reach Higher hosted a series of convenings at Harvard University, San Diego State University, American University, and University of North Florida in Jacksonville. These convenings brought together practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to identify areas for improvement in the field. Across those groups there was a universal call for more empirical research and understanding about which practices and conditions are most conducive to high quality college and career counseling, particularly with respect to first-generation college goers.

Recent calls for the repurposing of school counselors by the Office of the Civil Rights and the Office of the First Lady

have generated new energy and interest in advancing school counselor leadership to achieve national goals. These same stakeholders also share a desire to promote educational opportunity among those groups of students currently underrepresented in higher education.

We must acknowledge that despite the hard work of many well-intentioned professionals working in the college advising space across institutions, we have failed to accelerate the degree attainment process, particularly with underserved populations across the nation who are in greatest need of assistance. Our challenge becomes how to repurpose, align, and coordinate existing systems to work collaboratively and open postsecondary pathways for a growing first-generation, low-income population, especially in large urban districts, where significant numbers of underserved students reside. Increasing the numbers of underserved students who exit high school prepared to successfully complete a substantial postsecondary option, be it a two- or four-year college degree or a certificate from a credentialed career program, is presently a national imperative and will require all professionals engaged in college and career advising to set aside their dedication to "*doing what has always been done.*" Urgent action is required, and counselors can no longer act in isolation from others who share these goals.

Notable organizations like Lumina Foundation, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, The College Board, and the National Governors' Association all set degree attainment goals that complemented those of President Obama.



In general, college access efforts focus on postsecondary completion strategies within schools during grades 11 and 12; however, this work often exists in silos, rather than through coordinated efforts to reach every student, and is seldom integrated with a broader college and career strategy that spans a child's Pre-K to postsecondary educational journey. Progress is often impeded because internal school staff, who have existing relationships with students and families, and external partners, who have resources and information, do not function as a collaborative team. This

fragmentation impacts postsecondary outcomes and fails to propel increased numbers of underserved students across the high school graduation stage and into viable college and career pathways.

Best practices emerging on the ground level from across the country, in regional collaborations or at the state, local, district or even school level are catalyzing a redefined counselor role to advance the college and career readiness agenda for greater numbers of students, in some cases

linked to accountability metrics that validate equity in outcomes for underserved student populations. We must capture how this work happens and the accompanying attitudes, dispositions, knowledge, and skills so as to scale best practices and spotlight changes in the field for school counselor training and standards of practice. *Revisiting the Path Forward* offers new insights toward systematizing these emerging best practices and research based on valuable ideas emerging from the field.



Summary of the Research

Multiple methods were used to conduct this latest round of research designed to inform a national framework for school counseling and college advising to ensure all students have access to high quality college access programs in schools.

The **systematic literature review** identified existing studies about college and school counseling within the context of college and career readiness in schools. This literature review focused on new information and evidence-based counseling practices so as to identify changes in scholarly research in the five years since the original 2011 publication. It followed a protocol designed to extract and synthesize highly pertinent studies relevant to college and career readiness practices relevant to the field of school counseling.

While the research on school counseling and college readiness counseling is growing, it still lacks the robust scholarship necessary to guide effective practice. More empirical research is needed, most notably in the areas of technology use, early college awareness, family engagement, evaluation systems, and professional development. The bulk

of the research remains focused on school counselors' role and pre-service training.⁴ That research affirms that the school counselors' role remains poorly and inconsistently defined. It amplifies previous work about the negative impact of large counselor caseloads. A new trend in the research shows positive effects of a variety of college planning and advising efforts, including some effects on broader educational outcomes, but the research base remains small.⁵

While the review found additional research on the importance of pre-service training, and in some cases, effective models, that research did not delve into career and college readiness. There was an emerging body of research suggesting that counselors are a key contributor to youth developing college awareness, particularly with under-resourced students or first-generation college goers. A number of studies examining the role of counselors by subgroup also found that, while counselors can play a catalytic role in a student's college journey, their ability to do so is constrained by a wide range of competing priorities and demands upon their time.⁶

Counselors can play a catalytic role in a student's college journey; however, their ability to do so is constrained by a wide range of competing priorities and demands upon their time.

4. For publications on the role of school counselors, see: Woods, C. S., & Domina, T. (2014). The school counselor caseload and the high school-to-college pipeline. *Teachers College Record*, 116 (10), 1-30; Martinez, M. A., & Welton, A. D. (2014). Examining college opportunity structures for students of color at high-“minority,” high-poverty secondary schools in Texas. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24 (5), 800-841; Malone, H. J. (2013). The search stage: When where, and what information do urban public high school students gather about college. *Journal of School Counseling*, 11(13); Anctil, T. M., Smith, C. K., Schenck, P., & Dahir, C. (2012). Professional school counselors' career development practices and continuing education needs. *Career Development Quarterly*, 60(2), 109-121. The role of preservice is also well-established in the literature. (Bruce, M., Bridgeland, J., & College Board Advocacy & Policy Center. (2012). *2012 national survey of school counselors: True north—charting the course to college and career readiness* College Board Advocacy & Policy Center; Savitz-Romer, M. (2012). The gap between influence and efficacy: College readiness training, urban school counselors, and the promotion of equity. *Counselor Education Supervision*, 51(2), 98-111; Schmidt, C. D., Hardinge, G. B., & Rokutani, L. J. (2012). Expanding the school counselor repertoire through STEM-focused career development. *Career Development Quarterly*, 60(1), 25-35; Anctil, Smith, Schenck & Dahir, (2012).
5. Hurwitz, M., & Howell, J. (2014). Estimating causal impacts of school counselors with regression discontinuity designs. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(3), 316-327.
6. Squire, D., & Mobley, S. (2015). Negotiating race and sexual orientation in the college choice process of black gay males. *Urban Review*, 47(3), 466-491; Williams, J. M., Greenleaf, A. T., Albert, T., & Barnes, E. F. (2014). Promoting educational resilience among african american students at risk of school failure: The role of school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 12(9); Martinez, M. A. (2013). Helping Latina/o students navigate the college choice process: Considerations for secondary school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 11(1); Clark, M. A., Ponjuan, L., Orrock, J., Wilson, T., & Flores, G. (2013). Support and barriers for latino male students' educational pursuits: Perceptions of counselors and administrators. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(4), 458-466.

Summary of Research Methodology

This update sought to identify:

- 1.) Shifts in knowledge and/or behaviors about college counseling in schools between 2011-2015,
- 2.) Details about existing school counselor practice as it relates to the **Path Forward** recommendations, and
- 3.) Details related to the practice of school counseling in relationship to college and career policy, research, pre-service/in-service, standards and credentialing.

The scan sought to broaden the findings from 2011 report by calling on a variety of audiences and approaches: **a]** a systematic literature review, **b]** a grey literature review, **c]** survey research, and **d]** focus groups.

Within this narrow lens of the counselor role in college and career readiness, only one encouraging Connecticut study found state policy positively influencing student readiness outcomes. A study of the Dallas Independent School District made a similarly strong case that school districts are uniquely positioned to enhance school counselors' college readiness programs with strong district-wide policies and programs.⁷ A number of studies amplified this concept of a focused effort around college readiness, but were limited to the school level.

Importantly, the systematic literature review shows that the field continues to lack research demonstrating school counselors' unique impact on post-secondary metrics and outcomes. Further, the research suggests that the field remains unclear about a specific counselor role in college readiness counseling. Gaps in the scholarship in areas such as technology use, family engagement, professional development, data-driven practices, and collaborative partnerships are concerning, given the importance and salience of these topics to the field today.

In addition to the systematic literature review, a **grey literature review** gathered unpublished or in-progress research to learn what college counseling information is publicly available to counselors, college access professionals, parents

and students. Recognizing that the research on the role of the counselor in career and college readiness is on the leading edge of change, this non-traditional literature review sought to capture futuristic views, trends, and important new insights.

The grey literature review reinforced many of the findings from the traditional literature review, offering additional insights mainly on college and career counseling and working with underserved populations of students. The bulk of that new research was qualitative in nature; therefore, it did not fill the void of quantitative research on the school counselor role or its link to improvements in college and career success.

Importantly, the systematic literature review shows that the field continues to lack research demonstrating school counselors' unique impact on post-secondary metrics and outcomes.

7. Hall, S. (2013). Putting college and career readiness at the forefront of district priorities in Dallas. *Voices in Urban Education*, (38), 6-9; Lapan, R. T., Whitcomb, S. A., & Aleman, N. M. (2012). Connecticut professional school counselors: College and career counseling services and smaller ratios benefit students. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2), 117-124.

Emerging studies continue to show an important role for counselors in encouraging students to enroll in rigorous courses, engage in relevant college and career planning such as financial aid applications, or make career decisions. High student to counselor ratios tend to be exacerbated in urban settings, with counselors also among the most under-resourced and vulnerable to school budget cuts, compounding the difficulty in providing services in communities with the greatest need.

While there is significant research about the challenges faced by counselors and particularly urban school counselors, there is little research offering a proof point for effective

models. Going forward, there is a real need to identify models and approaches with a track record of success in helping students to and through college.

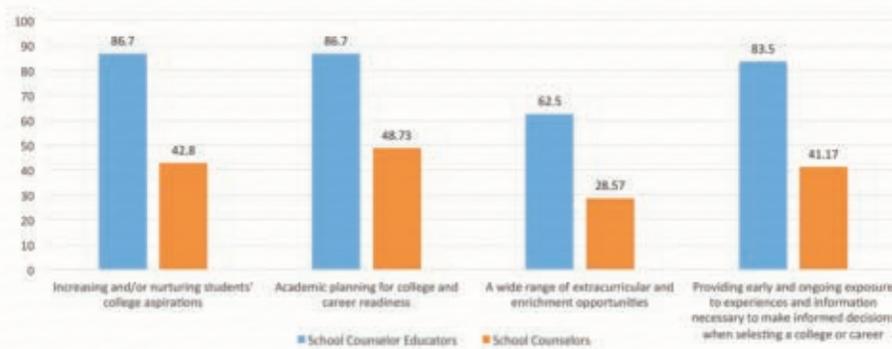
The absence of a robust body of empirical research demonstrating the positive impact of the school counselor presents a challenge for the profession and opens the door for administrators and policy makers to undervalue the role of counselors. It will be important for doctoral students and researchers to participate in more rigorous studies with large data sets, and to conduct studies using randomized control designs to build an unassailable case supporting the counselor’s role in improved college and career attainment.

To complement existing research with current perspectives from the field, a **survey** was conducted to capture a range of viewpoints from practicing school counselors and counselor educators. The survey assessed the perceptions of both groups on the eight college and career readiness components developed by [NOSCA](#) (National Office for School Counselor Advocacy) to include perceptions of the school counselors’ role as it related to college and career counseling. Specifically, it was designed to identify significant differences between school counselors’ perceived importance of the components and their graduate program’s actual ability to carry out the necessary training. For counselor educators, it sought perceptions of the components’ importance as well as their graduate program’s coverage of the component. The surveys also asked participants to report on their agreement with several statements pertaining to the school counselor’s role in key counseling functions such as administrative duties or academic planning.

School Counselor Educators Versus School Counselors

My Graduate Program Includes/Included Training, Coursework, Internship, Etc.

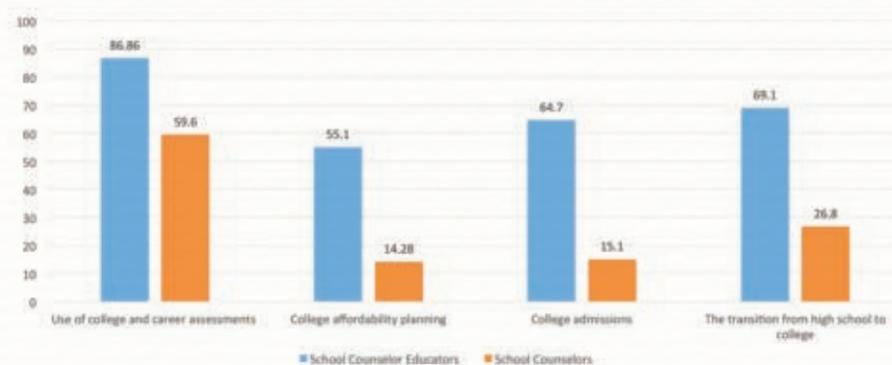
(% AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE)



School Counselor Educators Versus School Counselors

My Graduate Program Includes/Included Training, Coursework, Internship, etc.

(% AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE)



They converged around a resounding call to action to reorganize resources around a collaborative model to effectively move (and track) student level outcomes.



Interestingly, the survey discovered a strong discrepancy between school counselors and school counselor educators on the content covered in counselor education programs, with counselor educators reporting much more effective coverage of topics than practitioners. This gap in perceptions suggests that counselor educators may need to pay closer attention to the demands of those in the field as well as emerging responsibilities such as a greater need to support career and college readiness.

The final research component, **focus groups** conducted by the NCSCPS, sought to capture a cross-section of thinking from across the field to include: a) counselor educators, b) a mix of counselors and advisors from college access groups, and c) researchers. Participants for each focus group represented leaders in their respected fields. The counselor educator focus group was held at the Florida White House Convening, where they were selected as representatives from state teams. The researchers attended three prominent research-focused conferences: [American Educational Research Association](#) (AERA), [American Counselor Education and Supervision Association](#) (ACES) and the [Evidence Based School Counseling Conference](#) (EBSCC). Although focus group results cannot be generalized, they offer yet another window into current thinking.

At the Chicago Think Tank, a mixed group of school-based and community-based practitioners highlighted a key concern: though many organizations provide college and

career readiness programs in the nation's schools, the work is often conducted in silos and has failed to prepare all students. They converged around a resounding call to action to reorganize resources around a collaborative model to effectively move (and track) student level outcomes. In such a collaborative model, it will be important to establish both ownership and shared accountability.

Across the focus groups, there was a consistent desire to turn the eight components into a more clearly defined set of activities informed by research, despite widespread recognition that the research will continue to evolve. While the eight components are insufficiently defined, they remain the primary resource available for focusing college and career readiness advising. As a result, participants believed that while some schools and districts were aware of, or adopting and addressing, the eight components, most are unaware or are only implementing them at least in part, and seldom "systemically or systematically."

Because of the limited published research examining best practices around the eight components or consistent metrics to demonstrate measureable effectiveness, participants felt strongly about the need to intentionally focus efforts to move the needle of workforce and college opportunities. The lack of a consistent set of practices or even a clear understanding of the evidence supporting various practices, especially for underserved populations, makes it challenging to scale or move this agenda forward with equity and fidelity.

EIGHT COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS COUNSELING

The Eight Components provide a systemic approach for school counselors to implement, across grades K-12—elementary through high school and beyond—to ensure equity both in process and results.

1. College Aspirations

Build a college-going culture based on early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the resilience to overcome challenges along the way. Maintain high expectations by providing adequate supports, building social capital, and conveying the conviction that all students can succeed in college.

2. Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness

Advance students' planning, preparation, participation and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and career aspirations and goals.

3. Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement

Ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase engagement with school.

4. College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes

Provide early and ongoing exposure to experiences and information necessary to make informed decisions when selecting a college or career that connects to academic preparation and future aspirations.

5. College and Career Assessments

Promote preparation, participation and performance in college and career assessments by all students.

6. College Affordability Planning

Provide students and families with comprehensive information about college costs, options for paying for college, and the financial aid and scholarship processes and eligibility requirements, so they are able to plan for and afford a college education.

7. College and Career Admission Processes

Ensure that students and families have an early and ongoing understanding of the college and career application and admission processes so they can find the postsecondary options that are the best fit with their aspirations and interests.

8. Transition from High School Graduation to College Enrollment

Connect students to school and community resources to help the students overcome barriers and ensure the successful transition from high school to college.

Findings

These mixed research methods collectively found that school counselors play a critical role in connecting young people to necessary information about college and careers, and have the potential to be a catalyst toward improved college attainment rates, yet they struggle for clarity about their role and purpose on the school campus. Concerns across the field about ratios and other limitations on school counselor time and resources are exacerbated in the communities that most need them, typically urban communities with limited resources and a high percentage of first-time college goers.

NOSCA had sought to codify activities into the eight components for college and career readiness as a way to provide useful tools in this emerging yet critical K-12 school counselor role. However, the eight components have failed to drive practice and are not universally seen as guiding documents for school counselor or college access partner practice. Because the eight components represent focal areas for work with youth regarding career and college readiness at the school setting, there would be value in refining the

eight components into a sharper, evidence-based operational framework with competencies that school counselors could embrace with confidence. This could include clear strategies and actions that are prioritized based on research regarding their effectiveness with specific audiences.

The practice of school counseling varies greatly by setting, and there has been insufficient research to understand how to most effectively counsel young people in urban areas, leaving a huge gap in our understanding of best practices and a compelling need for additional research. Similarly, there is limited empirical research to define a college-going culture or demonstrate its efficacy. Still, practitioners are committed to instilling such a culture and believe that it will make a difference. Because the focus for school counselors on the nuts and bolts of college and career readiness is relatively new, professional development lags and there is insufficient research to determine how to most effectively train counselors for this work, especially for an urban setting. There is a critical need for research to provide the necessary tools to both practitioners and policy makers.



Concerns across the field about ratios and other limitations on school counselor time and resources are exacerbated in the communities that most need them, typically urban communities with limited resources and a high percentage of first-time college goers.



There is an opportunity for the role of counselors to be redefined and cast as leaders in the quest for improved college attainment.

The national focus on college attainment has strengthened the role of community-based organizations working with youth to apply to and attend college, but there is limited research or practice to guide effective collaboration between school counselors and community-based college access organizations. Just as the role of the counselor must extend beyond the school building to engage community organizations and community members, new attention is also needed to understand the role of parents and family members in supporting a child's preparation for college and careers and collaborating with school-based personnel. Research can fill in this gap in our understanding and provide guidance for policy and practice.

There is an opportunity for the role of counselors to be redefined and cast as leaders in the quest for improved college attainment; however, given the lack of clarity about the core role of counselors and the heavy weight of large caseloads, redefining this role may require policy changes as well as providing clear exemplars of what an effective counselor leader could look like in practice. This represents yet another opportunity for research from the field to

offer insights as to how this more inclusive, collaborative approach is best designed and implemented.

As we redefine the role of the school counselor, additional attention should be given to supporting youth as they make the transition to college, and the popular but ill-defined strategy of supporting early awareness and planning for college, while also addressing topics such as the effective use of technology, social media and virtual counseling as college and career counseling strategies. Such approaches will require counselors to expand their services related to college readiness activities, which must begin much sooner, preferably in elementary school, and expand beyond high school.

Finally, much more should be done to standardize school counselor education programs, which vary significantly in terms of providing course content, instruction, practicum experience, and guidance and support on effective college and career readiness practices. There is a tremendous need for both school counselor education programs and professional development to address this important gap in school counselor training and support.

Summary of Recommendations

Across all the recommendations, the Consortium identified four cross-cutting themes of **alignment**, **collaboration**, **accountability**, and **leadership**. Out of an initial list of

23 recommendations drawn from the research findings (and included in the appendix), it identified its top six priorities categorized by policy, practice, credentialing or research.

CHANGE LEVER	TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION
Policy	Training/ Evaluation	1 Create, operationalize, launch, and disseminate a set of College and Career Readiness Competencies drawn from existing College and Career Readiness research and literature, that defines the observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes of school counselors, college advisors, community agencies and higher education and training providers to effectively implement college and career readiness activities for underserved communities. These competencies will be inclusive of various skill sets and disciplines (e.g., family engagement, early college awareness, transition into and out of high school, summer melt support, developmental readiness, and cultural competence).
Practice	Framework	2 Create collaborative networks including school counselors, school building administrators and other school-based leaders to coordinate the work of community-based, external partners (e.g., college access professionals) with school-based professionals. The goal of these networks will be to provide strong college and career readiness supports for students and their families within and outside of the school setting.
Practice	Metrics	3 Align new College and Career Readiness Competencies with student outcome metrics that can be easily adopted, tailored, and implemented by school counselors and college access partners in states, districts and schools.
Research	National Center	4 Launch a National Research Center, funded by foundations and sponsored research funds, charged with identifying effective school counseling and college advising models and practices that drive successful postsecondary outcomes and economic mobility, specifically within underserved student populations. The Center will disseminate new knowledge and discovery of College and Career Readiness models while simultaneously connecting new knowledge to policy formation. Focus of the Center will be to examine the effectiveness of the proposed competencies.
Research	Professional Development	5 Evaluate effectiveness of College and Career Readiness professional development for school counselors and other college advising professionals as the competencies are instituted and integrated in professional development models.
Credentialing	School Counselor Preparation	6 Collaborate with and continuously communicate with accrediting, licensing and state authorization agencies to ensure that College and Career Readiness Competencies (i.e., knowledge and skills) are aligned and integrated within state and local requirements for the practice of school counseling.

A research priority should be given to emerging practices with the greatest likelihood of impacting success, especially with underserved

students, and exploring the school counselor's role in a more collaborative, integrated approach to include community-based organizations, parents and families.



Above all else, the Consortium recognized an urgent need to operationalize a new set of College and Career Readiness Competencies to be consistently applied to those engaged in similar work across institutions, and finally to be linked to training, credentialing and licensing, as well as success metrics. As clear competencies, frameworks, and practices are adopted and evaluated, it will be necessary to ensure that college and career readiness activities are not too narrowly defined, but rather include a wide array of activities spanning across ages, to work with community organizations, parents and families, and involve culturally relevant practice. For success, school counselor educators and administrators must be prepared to integrate these evidence-based practices into their programs and evaluation systems.

At the policy level, there is a clear need to codify the school counselor's central role in college and career readiness and as campus leader across relevant federal, state and local policies. We must identify and provide the necessary supports to make the work possible, and adopt clear standards and practices so as to ensure consistency across the field.

For practitioners, a specific framework is needed to help clarify the roles of key partners in the college and career readiness ecosystem going beyond the school counselor to include key resources such as community-based organizations, college access partners, and college advisors. It will be important early on to establish reliable metrics so as to measure the effectiveness of counselors in this relatively new role, and

to guide improvement. Throughout the focus groups, the Consortium noted that a wide variety of metrics related to college and career success is being collected, ranging from test scores, completion of key college admissions and financial aid applications, to enrollment and persistence, but there is no consistent standard of how to measure success. A minimum number of agreed-upon metrics should be consistent across the field and adopted by governing bodies at all levels – school, district, state, federal – with additional metrics to reflect local priorities and cultures. The process of establishing clear metrics should also pave the way for better assessment of professional development and training.

Finally, while research is needed to support these practices, there is an urgent need to take advantage of emerging insights by publishing cutting-edge research and working papers online so as to not delay dissemination and implementation of promising practices. A research priority should be given to emerging practices with the greatest likelihood of impacting success, especially with underserved students, and exploring the school counselor's role in a more collaborative, integrated approach to include community-based organizations, parents and families. As the field moves to operationalize competencies within an actionable framework, that work should be coupled by ongoing research to help prioritize and target elements within that framework. It is critical to strengthen the feedback loop between practice, policy and research, so as to maintain relevance and ensure that training and professional development programs stay current.

Conclusion

In a field rapidly responding to a national drive to improve college attainment rates, this report represents a resounding call to stay abreast of practice in order to drive continuous improvement in credentialing and policy, and also to validate promising practices through research.

The eight components of college and career readiness represent the early genesis of a framework that must be expanded upon, researched and operationalized. The top recommendation to emerge from the Consortium was to identify effective school counseling models that drive postsecondary opportunities for all students. These models need to guide the development of new College and Career Readiness Competencies for counselors to implement, accompanied by ongoing and rigorous research to help school counselors and administrators prioritize activities and target services in the most effective manner. While this is first and foremost a policy recommendation, it will be critical to effective practice; it must be accompanied by research, and it must become central to credentialing.

The downsides of high school counselor-student ratios are well-documented and especially harmful for underserved youth, yet the Consortium recognized the limitations given scarce public dollars. Of that reality, the Consortium recommended developing a clear and shared set of metrics to consistently evaluate the role of the school counselor's impact on college and career readiness. Success on those metrics should necessitate a shift toward the school counselor playing a clear leadership role guiding those activities, and collaboration beyond school to include community-based organizations and families. To stay relevant, training and credentialing programs must embrace this new vision of the school counselor as the collaborative leader. And finally, the Consortium recommended the opening of a national research center to explore the focused questions raised in this report and to ensure the ongoing dynamic relationship between practice, research and policy.

The Consortium recommended the opening of a national research center to explore the focused questions raised in this report and to ensure the ongoing dynamic relationship between practice, research and policy.



Appendix

RESEARCH

MODEL PROGRAMS: Commission a set of exploratory studies targeting promising collaborative school counselor and college advising workforce and college readiness advising models for underserved student populations that could serve as a basis for evidence-based trials. Identify clear collaborative relationship models and research that demonstrate their effectiveness and in what contexts they work, and under what conditions.

FUND RESEARCH: Dedicate federal funds to open a National Research Center charged with identifying effective school counseling and college advising models that drive successful postsecondary outcomes and economic mobility, specifically within underserved and underrepresented student populations.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Call on colleges and universities to better prepare and support school counselor educators and researchers to conduct and disseminate high quality, rigorous research on issues related to school counseling.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: Expand empirical research examining the unique role school counselors play within college and career readiness, inclusive of effective ground-level implementation practices and postsecondary outcome impact studies.

EVALUATE: Advance the field's understanding of graduate programs' effectiveness in preparing school counselors to implement postsecondary readiness practices through evaluation of pre- and in-service programs.

WIDEN PRACTICES: Broaden postsecondary readiness research to include a wider array of practices including family engagement, early college awareness, transition into and out of high school, summer transition support, developmental readiness, culturally competent counseling, adequate supervision and field experiences.

POLICY

AUDIT: Conduct an audit of documents, blueprints, and policy briefs to insure school counseling is included and defined accurately when the topic of college and career readiness is addressed by the US Department of Education (i.e. Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA).

FEDERAL FUNDING: Identify school counselor support in all federal funding programs that aim to widen access to and success in higher education.

ESSA: Widen ESSA to include necessary reforms to school counseling that take into account the appropriate conditions for effective practice (i.e. role articulation and accountability).

ANALYZE: Conduct critical analysis of state and national College and Career Readiness policies related to school counseling.

CONVENE: Continue to convene stakeholders to inform college and career readiness policy recommendations at the local, state and federal levels designed to close the achievement gap for underserved populations.



Continue to convene stakeholders to inform college and career readiness policy recommendations at the local, state and federal levels designed to close the achievement gap for underserved populations.

Create national credentialing requirements for school counselors that ensure the acquisition of College and Career Readiness Competencies.

LICENSURE/CREDENTIALING: Promote the adoption of College and Career Readiness Competencies in Statewide licensure requirements for school counseling, college access advisors, educational staff and other stakeholders.

TRAINING: Articulate a set of College and Career Readiness Competencies central to all training of professional staff associated with postsecondary planning. These competencies should include a wide array of practices including family engagement, early college awareness, transition into and out of high school, summer melt support, developmental readiness, and culturally competent counseling.

CREDENTIALING

CREDENTIALING STANDARDS/COMPETENCIES: Create national credentialing requirements for school counselors that ensure the acquisition of College and Career Readiness Competencies.

CERTIFICATION STANDARDS/COMPETENCIES: Create minimum certification requirements that align with the credentialing standards for college access partners that ensure acquisition of College and Career Readiness Competencies.

COMPETENCIES: Promote the adoption of College and Career Readiness Competencies for School Counselors and College Access Partners in statewide licensure requirements for school counseling, college access advisors, educational staff and other stakeholders to administrators, legislators, community agencies, etc.

COMPETENCIES: Ensure college and career competencies include family engagement, early college awareness, transition into and out of high school, culturally competent counseling for traditionally underserved student populations, adequate supervision and field experiences, dispositions and evaluation tools.

ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION: Ensure training of school administrators covers the appropriate role of school counselors and college access professionals to ensure the work of external partners is connected to the work of internal staff.

EVALUATION: Establish guidelines for states to evaluate/ rate the effectiveness of college and career readiness preparation of school counselors and college access providers.

FACULTY: Call on higher education to ensure school counselor educator faculty are adequately trained and prepared to instruct school counselors in college and career readiness theory and practice.

PRACTICE

FRAMEWORK: Develop a College and Career Readiness Framework that articulates the unique roles and functions of school counselors, college advisors, community agencies, and higher educational institutions to decrease silo implementation of college and career readiness interventions, for underserved student populations

METRICS: Create a clear list of evidence-based Student Outcome Metrics for College and Career Readiness (SOMCCR), inclusive of key required metrics that can be easily adopted, tailored, and implemented by school counselors and college access partners in states, districts and schools to guide practice and evaluations

COLLABORATIVE MODEL: Establish collaborative guidelines for postsecondary leadership that articulate the unique roles and functions of school counselors, college advising partners, administrators, university-based partners and community agencies.

EVALUATE: Evaluate effectiveness of on-line college and in-person college and career readiness professional development designed to close achievement gaps for underserved student populations

CCR COMPONENTS: Develop College and Career Readiness Components designed to close the postsecondary opportunity and attainment gaps for students that:

- Are collaboratively created to drive the work of school counselors and college access partners
 - Incorporate and/or draw from previous work (e.g. 8 components)
 - Model leadership in cultural competency attainment
 - Are aligned to Student Outcome Metrics for College and Career Readiness (SOMCCR)
- Include family engagement, early college and developmental awareness
 - Guide professional development, credentialing and certification for school counselors and college access professionals
 - Utilize evidence-based strategies and interventions that increase outcomes for underserved youth
 - Advance technology needed to assist in the identification, delivery and evaluation of college and career practices
 - Incorporate technology to increase the reach and outcomes of school counselor and college advising practice.

Evaluate effectiveness of on-line college and in person college and career readiness professional development designed to close achievement gaps for underserved student populations.





NCSCPS

The National Consortium for School Counseling
and Postsecondary Success