

College Counseling Sourcebook

Advice and Strategies
from Experienced
School Counselors

7th Edition

The College Board, New York



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Preface

For years, high school counselors have told College Board staff that most graduate-level counseling programs cover college counseling only briefly, and some do not cover the subject at all. New counselors find themselves thrust into college counseling in need of basic facts about college admission. New *and* experienced counselors need effective ways to work with students, parents and administrators, and to deliver information and advice efficiently, given the nature of the typical day in the life of a counselor! For this reason, we have created this *Sourcebook*.

This reference seeks to provide essential information about college counseling as well as time-saving forms and handouts that are ready to duplicate and use with students, parents and teachers. It assumes that high school counselors, no matter what their job title or job description, will have a vital role in advising students on their postsecondary options. (We use the term *college* to refer to any postsecondary educational institution: community colleges, technical and career institutes, military academies, and four-year colleges.)

The *Sourcebook* was created under the guidance of an editorial advisory board of experienced counselors representing schools from around the country — large and small; public and private; urban, suburban and rural. The advisers for each edition shared their knowledge and wisdom and helped fashion a valuable resource for counselors in any type of school, from those who have very large caseloads to those with the good fortune to have ample time for one-on-one counseling. All material was vetted by the editorial advisers and can be used with confidence.

In addition to tapping the expertise of the editorial advisory board, we talked with many other counselors about specific topics. Their “tips,” included in the margins of each chapter, provide insight into how counselors throughout the country have handled counseling situations, have delivered information to students and parents, and have sought to do as much advising as possible in a limited amount of time.

What’s new for the 7th edition

In early 2012 we interviewed 48 experienced counselors across the country, from Maine to Hawaii and Alaska to Florida. These counselors represent a wide range of schools: large and small, urban and rural, private and public. The tips, best practices and strategies that resulted from these interviews greatly enhance the content throughout, especially regarding uses of technology and working with parents.

Handouts, formerly appearing at the end of each chapter, have all been moved into a new tabbed section at the back of the book for fast and easy access. 25 new handouts have been added, including 12 in Spanish.

As part of its “Own the Turf” campaign, the College Board’s National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) has promulgated the *Eight Components of College and Career Readiness*, a

systematic approach to inspire all students – especially those from underrepresented populations — to strive for college opportunity and success. These essential steps are set out in a new Appendix A.

Finally, all key facts, references and data points have been updated throughout the entire *Sourcebook*.

Acknowledgments: Special thanks are due to consultants Dr. Joyce V. Brown and Margo McCoy Howe, who helped shape the revisions to the 7th edition with their invaluable insights and advice; to editorial assistant Steven Jay Griffel, who conducted and compiled the counselor interviews; and to the key members of our production team, Jim Gwyn and Suellen Leavy.

We want to hear from you. This book is by counselors, for counselors. New and experienced counselors are invited to submit tips, strategies, forms and descriptions of school activities that would benefit others in the profession. To submit, please:

- Email information to tvanderberg@collegeboard.org
- Mail material to College Counseling Sourcebook, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York NY 10023-6992
- Call us at 212-373-8745

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How to use this book

Each chapter begins with an overview of the topic and a summary of the counselor's role. There's no need to read chapters sequentially. We have kept the text as succinct as possible and have used lots of headings (all listed in the table of contents) so you can find what you need quickly. Tips from counselors are set out in the outside margin alongside the topic they relate to (as much as possible). Special topics and articles are in boxed text. A list of resources specific to each chapter appears at the end of each chapter; a general glossary of terms is in an appendix.

Handouts

Formerly, each chapter (except Chapter 1) ended with handouts. To make them easier to find, for the 7th Edition we moved all handouts to a new tabbed section at the back of the book, following the Appendixes. These handouts are still arranged by chapter order, and are separated by tabs designating the chapter to which they relate.

The handout number is in small type at the bottom of each handout page. Tabs at the top of each handout indicate the primary audience. Some handouts, however, have multiple audiences (for example, students and parents). In some cases there are multiple handouts for a given purpose: Use the one that you feel best suits your student body.

All handouts, unless otherwise noted, may be reproduced and distributed to students, teachers and parents. The College Board has obtained permission to reprint the material from the handout creators and to give readers the right to copy the material and hand it out. You may write your school name on it. We ask that when photocopying, the copyright line and creator information be retained.

Chapter 1

Fundamentals of college counseling

College counseling as a dimension of school counseling

At some schools, college counseling is a dimension of every counselor's job; at others, some counselors focus on college counseling exclusively. Names for this function vary from school to school. Some call these activities "college advising" in the belief that the term *advising* implies that the student is in the driver's seat, with the counselor providing support and guidance. For the sake of simplicity, the generic term *school counselor* is used throughout this book.

Whether you are a designated "college counselor" or not, you should be familiar with the best approaches to college counseling. This chapter will help you get started.

Overview

This chapter provides a broad overview of the fundamentals of college counseling:

- The responsibilities you may have
- The components of college and career readiness counseling
- Monthly activities related to college counseling
- Using technology and social media to communicate with students and parents
- Professional associations that assist counselors and the offerings that counselors find particularly valuable
- Useful books and websites related to college counseling

INSIDE THIS CHAPTER ...

Overview

The counselor's role

The eight components of college and career readiness counseling

Month-by-Month Calendar of College Counseling Activities

How counselors use technology to communicate with students and parents

Resources

The counselor's role

Whether your school sends many students to college or only a small number, you play a key role in placing students on the path to college.

As you counsel students, you will emphasize the development of strong academic and personal skills as the bases for sound educational planning. You will advocate for students who other school staff may not consider to be “college material.” The college counseling you provide will help students acquire the skills needed for college and for life after college; encouraging your students to enhance their abilities in reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking should enable them to achieve their goals more quickly.

Understanding your role

In schools that have more than one counselor, duties can vary among the counseling staff. If you're unsure what your responsibilities are, the first thing to do is to get clarification. In some cases, you should discuss the question with the principal or school head; in other situations, an agreement might be made among the counseling staff. Frequently, the first solution is to have a written description of everyone's role.

To provoke discussion and yield clarification, you might ask some of the following questions:

- Will all counselors be responsible for some aspect of college counseling?
- Will the same counselor be called on to provide college information, schedule classes and give personal/crisis counseling?
- Will the job of writing comments to accompany college applications be solely the responsibility of the counselor?
- Who will meet and greet college representatives when they visit the school?
- What is the relationship between the school registrar and the college counselor?
- Who will keep data on college admission results (by college) over time?
- Who will design and submit the school profile?
- Who will be the liaison to administrators on college admission issues?

TIP

“I always encourage new counselors to establish a personal **committee of mentors** who can provide timely and accurate advice. One of these professionals should be a **college financial aid administrator**, another **college admission officer** and the third an **experienced college counselor** in a nearby high school. Keep the private phone numbers and email addresses of several mentors to use for special cases. **Shadow an experienced counselor for a day** — ask for handouts and templates for the admission process, as needed.”

— **Carlene Riccelli**,
Amherst Regional High School, Massachusetts

- Will large groups of students be divided alphabetically among several counselors? Or divided by year/cohort?
- Will each counselor assume responsibility for a single area of information — becoming, for example, the office expert on financial aid forms or test preparation?

Competencies of the college admissions counselor

The National Association for College Admissions Counseling (described later in this chapter) has developed competencies for school counselors and for college counselors. These competencies, developed by the NACAC membership (which consists of high school and college admissions professionals), is a useful touchstone for new and experienced counselors. The complete Statement on Counselor Competencies can be found on the NACAC website (www.nacacnet.org).

Job descriptions

You may have a written job description, but it might be a good idea to create or refine your job description with the counseling office supervisor or the principal. The following college advising responsibilities could be included in a counselor job description:

- Schedule individual counseling sessions with students to help them focus on personal needs and goals.
- Hold group guidance sessions to discuss the college exploration process and procedures, including the role of testing.
- Meet with parents to discuss college planning.
- Maintain a library of resource information (guidebooks, college catalogs and videos).
- Use technology and online resources to help in decision making, college choice and career planning.
- Welcome individual visits by college admissions representatives to talk with students and to update counselors. Represent the school and explain its curriculum to college admissions staff.
- Host panels or workshops with college admission and financial aid advisors to present general information.

TIP

"I use surveys, classroom visits and individual planning sessions to gain an understanding of where students are — **personally, socially and academically**. Based on the information gathered, resources are provided to address students' needs."

— **Kimberly Merrill**,
Riverview Gardens High School,
Missouri

TIP

“Here are the four things I would tell a new counselor to remember above all else:

1. Recognize the fact that **each student is a unique individual**, living in a complex time and in a competitive environment.

2. Provide students and families with **reliable, accurate and current information** about all postsecondary opportunities so that appropriate application decisions can be made.

3. Help students develop **research, problem-solving, critical thinking and evaluation tools** that can be applied to the college admission process as well as everyday life experiences.

4. Support each student’s sense of **dignity and self-worth** through the college process so that a student will remember that one’s value as a person is neither enhanced nor diminished by any college admission decision.”

— **Tina Segalla-Grant**
St. Margarets-McTernan School, Connecticut

- Sponsor a local or regional college night (or day) and participate in a national college fair, bringing hundreds of college admissions representatives to the area.
- Invite recent graduates to return to the school and discuss their college experiences.
- Prepare school materials (transcripts, recommendations and profiles) to be sent to colleges on behalf of students.

If you do need to create a job description, on the following pages are two samples that might help you craft your own task list — one is from a public school and one is from a private school.

SAMPLE PUBLIC SCHOOL JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Primary function: To provide guidance and counseling services to students at the high school level.

Major responsibilities:

- Provide counseling for students with personal concerns.
- Provide academic counseling for students.
- Provide informational services for students and parents.
- Assist students with college and career planning.
- Serve as a consultant to parents of assigned students.
- Collaborate with and serve as a resource person to faculty, staff and administration.
- Contribute to the continual promotion of an educational climate in which students can grow intellectually and emotionally.
- Promote an educational climate in which students can grow intellectually and emotionally.
 - In conferences with members of the professional staff, work toward a cooperative effort on the part of counselors, teachers and administrators to achieve the objectives of the guidance and counseling program.
 - Demonstrate a commitment to the individual student and to a student-centered approach to learning and development.
 - Function as a facilitator of good human relations between students and their parents, their teachers and all others who make up the school community.
 - Assist students in gaining a sound knowledge of themselves and in developing a positive self-image.

Examples of key duties:

- Provide counseling for students with personal concerns.
 - Counsel students individually and/or in small groups.
 - Provide appropriate referral information to students and parents.
- Provide academic counseling for students.
 - Disseminate information on course selection and academic program planning in relation to student ability, course demands and rigor, high school graduation requirements and college admission requirements.
 - Advise students on strategies for academic success at the high school level.
 - Identify and assist students experiencing academic difficulty.
- Provide informational services for students and parents.
 - Disseminate information concerning such topics as career exploration, college planning, course selection, financial aid, job opportunities, summer enrichment programs, etc.
- Assist students with college and career planning.
 - Offer a developmental program designed to guide students through the college search and career exploration process.
 - Provide a college planning and career planning timeline.
 - Help students to assess strengths and areas in need of growth in preparation for colleges and careers.
 - Create opportunities for students to gain firsthand educational and job information through contacts with career speakers and college representatives.
- Serve as a consultant to parents of assigned students.
 - Assist parents in understanding and meeting the educational, family and personal/social needs of their sons and daughters.
 - Communicate with parents via telephone, mail, email, newsletters, websites, publications and meetings.
- Collaborate with and serve as a resource person to faculty, staff and administration.
 - Engage faculty, staff members and administrators in regard to the educational and emotional needs of students and parents.
- Qualifications:
 - Education
 - Graduate of a master's degree program with a specialization in guidance and counseling.
 - Certification
 - Appropriate certification for the state in which the counselor will practice.
 - Knowledge, skills and abilities
 - Ability to relate effectively to both high school students and professional staff members.
 - Skill in employing a variety of counseling strategies.
 - Ability to communicate effectively, including reading, writing, speaking and listening.
 - Knowledge of current college admission and career planning trends relevant to student interests and aspirations.
 - Knowledge of college, university, specialized school, and military programs and opportunities.
 - Knowledge of and ability to implement standardized testing programs as they relate to state standards, advanced placement, college admission and career aspirations.
 - Skill in writing college, scholarship and employment recommendation letters.
 - Organizational relationships
 - Ultimate accountability to the high school principal.
 - Day-to-day accountability to the guidance department chairperson or supervisor.
 - Staff accountability to the director of student services at the school district level.

Source: William Yarwood, Moorestown High School, New Jersey

SAMPLE PRIVATE SCHOOL JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: COLLEGE PLACEMENT AND 11-12 COUNSELOR

Under the supervision of the director of guidance and counseling and of the high school principal, the college placement and the 11th- to 12th-grade counselor will complete the following duties:

1. Counsel and schedule 11th- and 12th-grade students in academic and social areas. Serve as the case manager for each student and monitor the student's academic progress. Hold comprehensive counseling sessions with each 11th- and 12th-grade student.
2. Coordinate and direct all aspects of college placement and career guidance services. This includes the following:
 - Meet with individual students and parents regarding post-high school placement.
 - Publicize relevant information regarding post-high-school placement (dates of college admission tests, scholarships, etc.).
 - Function as information and resource center on colleges and careers.
 - Conduct college and career guidance advisory groups.
 - Write an individual counselor recommendation for each applicant.
 - Review and process students' college applications.
 - Give workshops on college essay writing, test-taking skills, etc., in English classes and advisory meetings.
 - Conduct college-night programs.
 - Serve as liaison to universities, the College Board, ETS and other relevant organizations and institutions.
 - Coordinate college fairs and visits from university admissions officers.
 - Assist with career-day or career-speaker programs.
 - Help students identify their strengths and the relevance of these attributes to their future.
 - Develop and update college counseling publications distributed to students and families dealing with all aspects of the college admission process, essay writing, financial aid, test-taking practices and other topics.
3. Coordinate and oversee the admission process for all new 11th- and 12th-grade students in the school. This includes interviewing all new students, meeting with new parents, administering placement testing, gathering all relevant information from previous schools and records, assuring that new student records and pertinent information are received from previous schools, making recommendations for admission, and implementing an orientation program for new students.
4. Oversee the scheduling process for each student and individually schedule each student; each spring, meet with teachers and students to plan schedules for the coming year.
5. Meet with 11th-graders regularly to discuss issues pertaining to students' futures (careers, college selection).
6. Oversee the grading process by reviewing report cards and progress reports written by teachers and by producing dean's lists each grading period.
7. Maintain updated records for all 11th- and 12th-grade students to monitor their progress toward graduation; include updated transcripts and credit sheets.
8. Initiate parent contact when appropriate.
9. Serve as the Advanced Placement Program® Coordinator. This includes ordering AP® Exams and materials; providing teachers and students with relevant AP information; maintaining contact with the College Board; organizing the setting, scheduling and proctoring of the AP Exams.
10. Supervise and coordinate PSAT/NMSQT® testing.
11. Serve as a member of the team that coordinates delivery of services to students with special needs.
12. Coordinate and use the services of specialists and agencies when appropriate.
13. Serve as a member of the crisis response team.
14. Perform other duties as assigned.

Source: Porter-Gaud School, South Carolina

TOP 10 SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

1. Read professional journals and attend workshops even when you don't think you have time.
2. Don't make difficult decisions in isolation. Consult with your colleagues.
3. Become familiar with the websites of the College Board, ACT, NACAC and ASCA. These are wonderful tools for you and your students. At least once a month, spend some time online growing as a professional.
4. Develop a habit of sending notes of encouragement to students prior to their taking admission tests.
5. Always be truthful — even if you make a mistake. Think of yourself as a role model for your students.
6. Be open to changes in the profession. You can't always do things the way they've always been done.
7. Visit a college campus at least once a year. Can you really be an effective school counselor if you haven't been on a college campus recently?
8. Look to your professional organizations for support and for answers. Join!
9. Remember that professional judgment and good common sense are usually the bases for the right decision.
10. Don't ever forget why you entered this profession.

Source: *Nadine Maxwell, former coordinator, Guidance Services for Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia*

The Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling

The Need for College Readiness Counseling

In today's global, knowledge-based economy, a college education is the gateway to social mobility and better lifelong opportunities. Yet too few students are graduating from high school ready for college. Furthermore, college-going rates differ disproportionately by family income, parent education level and other demographic characteristics. This education deficit is an urgent concern for the future of the nation as a whole and for our most underserved communities.

School counselors are uniquely positioned as the school professionals best able to guide all students toward college readiness. School counselors interact with teachers, administrators, students and their families each day, marshaling forces from across the school, district and community.

How NOSCA's Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling meets the challenge

Developed by the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) as the road map for the "Own the Turf" campaign (described on p. 1-11), the Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling chart a comprehensive, systemic approach for school counselors' use to both inspire and prepare students for college success and opportunity — especially students from underrepresented populations.

The eight components build aspirations and social capital, offer enriching activities, foster rigorous academic preparation, encourage early college planning, and guide students and families through the college admission and financial aid processes. By implementing these eight components, school counselors can provide information, tools and perspective to parents, students, schools and their communities that build college and career readiness for all students.

The Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling should be applied in elementary, middle and high schools.

Component	Elementary	Middle	High
College Aspirations	•	•	•
Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness	•	•	•
Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement	•	•	•
College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes	•	•	•
College and Career Assessments	•	•	•
College Affordability Planning	•	•	•
College and Career Admission Processes			•
Transition from High School to College Enrollment			•

The Transformative Process, Using the Eight Components

To implement each component successfully, school counselors must use strategies and interventions that take into account the context of the diverse populations in the school and community; encourage multilevel interventions involving students, parents, schools and community; and use data effectively.

- **Context:** Strategies and interventions for each component should be customized to the setting, community and demographics of the school.
- **Cultural Competence:** The components should be applied in ways that are culturally sensitive, with knowledge of how programs, policies and practices impact the perspectives and experiences of diverse student groups.
- **Multilevel Interventions:** College counseling programs and services should be applied at the student, school, family and community levels.
- **Data:** Use data to identify inequities, develop measurable goals, inform practice and demonstrate accountability within the eight components.

Equitable Outcomes for All Students

School counselors can be strong advocates for their students, using their skills to drive positive change in schools and conveying the expectation that all students, regardless of their backgrounds and economic status, can succeed in college. The Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling should be applied through the lens of equity. To be most effective, school counselors must use data to identify gaps and inequities in achievement, preparation and access, and measure progress toward equitable student outcomes.

School counselor practice is transformative when the eight components are delivered with equity, informed by data, applied systemically across grades K–12, and are culturally sensitive at all levels of intervention. This practice represents inclusion by design, with the goal of equitable outcomes for all students in college and career readiness.

“Now is the time for school counselors to become leaders and advocates for equity in education for all students. Implementation of the Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling ... will allow K–12 school counselors to own a critical piece of education reform. Never before in the history of our nation have we had a greater need to prepare every student for the greatest range of opportunities after leaving high school. All of our students need school counselors to champion their cause.”

— **Pat Martin**, Assistant Vice President,
National Office for School Counselor Advocacy,
The College Board

See **Appendix A: *The Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling for High School***.

Own The Turf

The College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) invites counselors to join *Own the Turf*, a national advocacy campaign to galvanize and mobilize school counselors to “own the turf” of college and career readiness counseling and take the lead in establishing a college-going culture in their schools, districts and communities.

Now is the time for school counselors to become leaders and advocates who work to ensure that all students — regardless of their background — graduate from high school prepared for college and career success. School counselors are uniquely positioned as the school professionals best able to guide all students toward college readiness, marshaling forces from across the school, district and community.

The Goals: Provide every student with the inspiration, planning, academic preparation and social capital to graduate from high school ready for college and careers, and increase awareness and understanding of the value and importance of college readiness counseling among school and district leaders, policymakers and the public.

The Turf: The “turf” is counseling that provides the guidance and support necessary for all students to graduate from high school prepared to enter college.

The Road Map: Working with school counselor leaders, practitioners and counselor educators, NOSCA identified the Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling — defining a focused agenda to ensure a clear, effective path toward the goals.

Join the Campaign: Sign up now to join the campaign to own the turf of college and career readiness counseling. Use the form included provided on the website, nosca.collegeboard.org/about/own-the-turf.

By joining the advocacy campaign, you will:

- Be part of a national movement
- Gain new strategies and tools related to college and career readiness counseling
- Belong to the Own the Turf school counselor online community
- Learn about opportunities to get involved

Month-by-month calendar of college counseling activities

This calendar represents all the college-related activities that a counseling office might undertake during the year and indicates the months in which the events are tackled. It's a long list, and most schools do not try to do everything mentioned. At most schools, you would share responsibility for many of these activities.

August

- Review students' schedules to ensure proper academic course selection.
- Return calls to colleges and military recruiters to set up fall visitation dates.
- Order financial aid forms.
- Add dates of professional conferences (NACAC, etc.) to calendar.
- Prepare career and counseling center.
- Organize and plan parent volunteer activities.
- Prepare remarks for parent orientation.
- Send introduction letter to parents and seniors with the following materials:
 - Calendar of college planning activities and events (including college visits).
 - Test dates and registration deadlines.
 - Senior college planning schedule.
 - Set up scholarship committee.
 - Update school profile (if possible, complete before college representatives visit).
- Revise and print student handouts.
- Prepare admission test materials — remind seniors of early September deadline for October SAT.
- Plan dates for SAT review preparation course with teachers, and publicize.
- Organize senior folders and do graduation credit checks.
- Update guidance Web pages.
- Schedule career center visits.
- Meet with English department to discuss college essay writing, the time for you to go into their classes and the college portfolio assignment.
- Register eligible students for Services for Students with Disabilities.

(continued on next page)

Month-by-month calendar of college counseling activities

September

- Check that PSAT/NMSQT materials have arrived; reorder (or order more) if necessary.
- Distribute senior and junior calendars.
- Have seniors submit updated résumés with spring term and summer information, along with any other information forms needed for recommendations.
- Attend NACAC conference.
- Gather information from faculty, coaches and club advisers on students for recommendations.
- Organize admission test prep classes.
- Prepare tutoring list.
- Set up college day/night program.
- Set up senior meetings.
- Set up group meeting with students who are considering applying under Early Decision/Early Action plans.
- Meet with coaches on NCAA eligibility requirements.
- Set up an NCAA meeting with all potential college athletes (grades 9-12) and their parents to discuss expectations.
- Visit classrooms regarding senior planning, essay writing, etc.
- Distribute calendar of high school visitation days to college campuses.
- Announce SAT and/or ACT registration; remind seniors to register for the November SAT.
- Meet with finalists in the National Merit Scholarship program, Achievement Scholarship Program for Black Students, National Hispanic Recognition Program, National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, and/or Telluride Association; ensure that deadlines are met.
- Visit classrooms regarding PSAT/NMSQT.
- Distribute school-created college-career planning guides.
- Set up parent conferences.
- Attend local counselor activities hosted by colleges.
- Hold senior class meeting (reserve auditorium) to review procedures for testing, college application process, financial aid, scholarships, etc.
- Meet with visiting college representatives.
- Distribute guidelines to teachers for writing student recommendations.
- Emphasize to seniors that they should be getting applications now — either by downloading or by mail.
- Check the list of SSD students to make preparations for PSAT/NMSQT.
- Arrange for proctor(s), room, etc., for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests™ administered at school for SSD students.
- Set up logistics of PSAT/NMSQT with English and math departments.

Month-by-month calendar of college counseling activities

October

- Set up scholarship files.
- Coordinate testing: PSAT/NMSQT.
- Present senior parent nights.
- Host college day/night program.
- SAT and SAT Subject Tests given.
- Mail National Merit Scholarship semifinalist information to National Merit.
- Prepare for Early Decision/Early Action applications; remind students to have scores from test organizations sent to colleges.
- Attend activities hosted by colleges.
- Registration for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests.
- Write letters of recommendation, with priority to students applying under Early Decision/Early Action plans.
- Announce college fairs.
- Remind seniors to register for the December SAT.
- Remind ESL students to register for the TOEFL — Test of English as a Foreign Language.
- Continue meeting with seniors; discuss how to fill out applications and give feedback on essays.
- Meet with college representatives.

November

- Arrange for proctor(s), room, etc., for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests for SSD students.
- SAT and SAT Subject Tests given.
- Early Decision/Early Action deadlines.
- Senior reminders: testing, recommendations, transcript requests.
- Write letters of recommendation and remind teachers to complete letters of recommendation.
- Conduct financial aid seminars or workshops.
- Review senior grades at end of grading period.
- Remind students to request college housing applications.
- Hold special programs for athletes, service academy applicants and students with disabilities.
- Review college choices with seniors to ensure that there is an adequate number of “safety” colleges on each list.
- Remind seniors to register for the January SAT.
- Remind foreign citizens to complete Certification of Finances and obtain multiple copies, with original signatures to be sent with each application.
- Review student transcripts.
- Attend the College Board Forum.

Month-by-month calendar of college counseling activities

December

- Prepare for applications due in January — ensure that all recommendations are completed; remind seniors to have scores sent from testing organizations to colleges.
- Host financial aid night for parents (English and Spanish). Remind seniors and their parents to complete the FAFSA as soon after Jan. 1 as possible; also remind them to complete all necessary financial aid forms.
- SAT and SAT Subject Tests given.
- Many selective colleges have December deadlines for applications.
- Early Decision and Early Action letters arrive.
- Invite recent high school graduates to discuss their college experiences at the school during their winter break.
- Conference with first-generation students to ensure that they are on track.
- Write letters of recommendation.
- ROTC scholarship deadline.
- Arrange for proctor(s), room, etc., for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests for SSD students.
- Arrange for speaker(s) at college night for parents of juniors to be held in February (covering college application process, testing, financial aid, etc.).
- Review PSAT/NMSQT results with students. Let each student know what he or she can do to improve scores.

- Update and send letter to parents of sophomores and juniors regarding PSAT/NMSQT results (junior letter contains a reminder about February college night).

January

- Prepare for applications due in February — ensure that all recommendations are completed; remind seniors to have official scores sent from test companies.
- Tell seniors to contact universities by either email or phone to make sure their applications were received. Also, check postcards to determine which have been received.
- Prepare for college night for parents of juniors; send final reminders/invitations to parents.
- Publicize scholarship opportunities.
- Prepare midyear report forms and send to colleges.
- Arrange for proctor(s), room, etc., for standardized admission tests for SSD students.
- Set up junior timelines and meetings.
- Remind students to submit financial aid applications.
- Complete any unfinished letters of recommendation.

Month-by-month calendar of college counseling activities

February

- Finalize all plans and materials for college night for parents of juniors (have extra materials available for divorced/separated parents in attendance).
- Many selective colleges have February deadlines for financial aid applications.
- Attend the College Board Regional Forum.
- Respond to students' notifications of rolling decisions.
- Review midterm grades; meet with at-risk seniors.
- Begin meeting with juniors and their parents; discuss after-graduation plans and the college admission process; remind students to register for the March and May SAT tests.
- Publicize scholarships.
- Set up community college nights/days/visits.
- Promote college visits.
- Encourage juniors to gather information about service academies.
- Prepare letter to parents of eligible SSD juniors and include a copy of the College Board letter for SSD students, with instructions for registering for the spring and fall SAT tests.

March

- Hold faculty workshops on recommendation guidelines.
- Promote registration for standardized admission tests and AP® Exams.
- Hold practice college admission testing workshops for ninth- and 10th-graders.
- Have a community college day for students, night for parents.
- Hold military days.
- Schedule statewide testing program.
- Arrange for proctor(s), room, etc., for SAT and SAT Subject Tests for SSD students.
- Discuss summer plans with students; offer advice on activities and internships in which they can participate.
- Continue meetings with juniors; discuss teacher recommendations and plan appropriate steps to meet the students' goals.
- Meet with seniors to discuss college admission decisions; remind students to notify each college of their decisions (only after receiving all financial aid offers); discuss alternative choices and wait-list strategies, when appropriate.
- Send forms to teachers/coaches/advisers for information about juniors (for letters of recommendation).
- Provide the NCAA updated core course information for the coming year.

Month-by-month calendar of college counseling activities

April

- Provide financial aid counseling.
- Hold parent conferences (grades, admission and junior testing).
- Promote and attend college fairs.
- Promote college visits over spring break.
- Continue meeting with juniors and their parents, and remind them to ask their teachers for recommendations (many teachers will write the recommendations after the junior year).
- Continue senior meetings to discuss admission decisions.
- Remind students to send their letter of intent to register to one and only one college by May 1.

May

- Distribute summer program information and applications.
- Hold transition workshops for seniors.
- Hold scholarship committee meetings.
- Meet with nongraduating seniors.
- SAT and SAT Subject Tests given.
- Continue meeting with sophomores and juniors.
- Schedule dates for next year's guidance events.
- Generate college acceptance list and senior plans list for school board.
- Order PSAT/NMSQT materials for fall.
- Arrange for proctor(s), room, etc., for SAT and SAT Subject Tests for SSD students.

June

- Hold awards ceremonies to recognize students receiving scholarships, service academy appointments and other academic awards.
- Submit final SSD eligibility forms for students.
- Send final transcripts to colleges.
- Review summer school applications, especially for students who will be graduating.
- Survey seniors to gather postgraduation plans.
- Promote college visits over the summer break.
- Remind junior athletes to send NCAA release form to NCAA Clearinghouse.
- Prepare map or list of college acceptances.
- Prepare scholarship report.

July/August

- Attend professional conferences.
- Visit colleges.
- Take a vacation where there are no phones and no mail to open.
- Pamper yourself for a week or two.
- Take a deep breath and get ready to begin the process all over again.

Source: Adapted from materials developed by the Western Association for College Admission Counseling

How counselors use technology to communicate with students and parents

As in all aspects of school counseling, effective college counseling depends on effective communication. As the various methods and media to communicate evolve, it's a challenge for counselors to stay current with how students and parents want to receive information. Ten counselors below share their experiences and thoughts on how they use technology and social media to meet this challenge:

On using email:

“Personal email is a huge part of my current communications system—especially with the advent of smartphones. I keep a list of student and parent emails on an Excel spreadsheet. I am not moved to use Facebook, Twitter or even text messaging because of privacy issues.”

— **Mr. Uyi Osunde**, East Hartford High School, Connecticut

“Actually, I have found that texting is more effective than emails for communicating with my students and their parents. People just pay more attention to their cell phones than their computers.”

— **Valerie Keating**, J.R. Tucker High School, Virginia

“The irony is, students spend so much time on Facebook and Twitter, we occasionally must remind them to check their email to see what important information we've sent them.”

— **Margaret Gaylor**, Ramsay High School, Alabama

On using social media:

“Our counseling department has its own page on Facebook because that's where our students are. They are more likely to check Facebook than a school website or email. Our page is not designed for dialog between students and counselors but as a tool for communicating important information. Initially, we had to convince students that they could trust us. We had to prove to them that we're not using Facebook to be intrusive or to spy on them; we just want to be easily accessible.”

— **Junie Jones**, Plano Senior High School, Texas

Our school does have a Facebook page, but it is not for active students; it's more for alumni and for general school news. We have a defacto policy that prohibits counselors from friending students on Facebook.

— **Lisa Sohmer**, Garden School, New York

“Our counseling department uses Twitter and our school’s website, which has many links to relevant websites that can help guide students through the college search process.”

— **Frank Coenraad** and **Barbara Conant**, Juneau SD, Juneau-Douglas High School, Alaska

“I have a Twitter account which I would like to use just about every day once my district gives approval. I would use it to post information about scholarships, test and application deadlines, etc. Too many emails drive parents crazy, and students are more likely to check their cell phones for messages and tweets than they are to check for email.”

— **Amy Thompson**, York Community High School, Illinois

“Because Facebook and Twitter are more ‘social media’ dedicated, I do not communicate with my students on those two sites. I need them to understand that there is some need for separation between their ‘social’ and ‘professional’ lives.”

— **Margaret Gaylor**, Ramsay High School, Alabama

On using other technologies:

“Our school uses newsletters, which are purely electronic and are posted on our website. We publish monthly for seniors and periodically for the other grades.”

— **Art Mandel**, Roslyn High School, New York

“We use an automated phone message system called ALERT NOW to send messages to parents. Messages are usually about something that affects a large group of students , such as 8th grade transition, junior/senior meetings, Financial Aid Night, etc.”

— **Mini’imah Robinson**, Heritage High School, Georgia

Resources

Professional organizations

School counselors are supported by numerous state and national associations. National organizations that can provide valuable resources include the College Board, the National Association for College Admissions Counseling and the American School Counselor Association. Each organization convenes membership meetings, provides professional development activities and is active in Washington on behalf of school counselors. Individuals may join NACAC and ASCA; schools or districts may become members of the College Board.

The College Board

www.collegeboard.org

In the organization's own words:

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and success, including the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT® and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

Of special interest to counselors:

The National Office for School Counselor Advocacy promotes the value of school counselors as leaders in advancing school reform and student achievement through the implementation of equitable counseling practices for preparing all students to exit high school college and career ready.

NOSCA works with K-12 schools and school counselors, school systems, pre-service training programs and state departments of education to:

- Build capacity of school counselor leaders and practicing school counselors to contribute to major district-wide goals for student achievement.

- Transform districtwide school counseling programs and practices.
- Help districts define, structure and implement strategies for counselors' roles in advancing the academic agenda so that greater numbers of students graduate college ready and career ready.
- Establish a framework for accountability for transformed work that can be expressed in measurable outcomes.

The office hosts an annual conference in April that focuses on enhancing school counselors skills with hands-on strategies and tools to increase their capacity to implement practices in their schools and communities to better prepare all students for college and/or careers after high school.

Fall Counselor Workshops: Each year the College Board conducts live and On Demand informative workshops throughout the United States to update counselors on developments to its products used by schools, such as the PSAT/NMSQT, the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests and the Advanced Placement Program. These free half-day workshops are open to College Board members and nonmembers. The schedule for the workshops is posted on the College Board website (<http://counselorworkshops.collegeboard.org/>).

Website: The College Board website (www.collegeboard.org) has a wealth of information on just about every aspect of college counseling. Some highlights:

- Extensive information about the PSAT/NMSQT, the Advanced Placement Program, CLEP®, the SAT and CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®, much of it in PDF format for easy download.
- Important dates for counselors: This comprehensive list provides key dates for tests, deadlines for filing SSD accommodation appeals and more.
- Robust, free college and scholarship searches.
- PDFs in Spanish: Spanish language publications are available on a range of topics, including a guide for juniors and seniors on the college process, and information for families on the PSAT/NMSQT, the SAT, the AP Program and the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE.

TIP

"I suggest that all new counselors work hard on establishing a great relationship with their school's principal and administration. 'Enhancing the Principle-School Counselor Relationship,' published by NOSCA, is must reading."

— **Frank Coenraad** and
Barbara Conant

*Juneau SD; Juneau-Douglas
High School, Alaska,*

- Various easy-to-use financial aid-related tools and calculators, among them the Estimated Family Contribution calculator, the college savings calculator and a Compare Your Aid Award tool for use in comparing financial aid awards from colleges.

Counselors can customize the Professional section to bring them to a K-12 counselor home page each time they visit the site.

YouCanGo![™]: YouCanGo! (Ycg.org) is a new interactive resource for high school students who have a desire to go to college, but may not make it because of real and perceived obstacles, such as:

- College costs: "I can't afford college."
- Real-life responsibilities, like family and work: "I'm doing it on my own."
- Concerns about grades and test scores: "I'm not college material."
- Feeling overwhelmed: "I don't know where to start."

It combines inspiration with practical support to show students that they can go to college — and how. It does this through:

- Real student stories: Videos from students who found a way to overcome obstacles and make it to college — and share how. Counselors can show students that they're not alone and find a student they'll relate to.
- Starting points: A variety of resources and interactive tools show students that they have college options and give them basic steps to getting there.
- A college pledge: In a world of social media, sharing experiences and dreams with peers is part of every young person's life. YouCanGo! lets students make a college pledge and share it with their friends, family and counselor.

The site is a simple but powerful resource for a counselor's toolbox as a way to engage more students and more types of students in college planning.

Regional and national forums: Members may participate in the regional forums (held in all six regions in February) and in the national Forum (held in late October or early November).

The National Association for College Admissions Counseling

www.nacacnet.org

In the organization's own words:

The National Association for College Admissions Counseling, founded in 1937, is an organization of more than 12,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education. NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice.

Of special interest to counselors:

College fairs: NACAC sponsors college fairs in major cities throughout the United States in the spring and the fall. Fairs are free to the public, and you can easily find the upcoming fairs on the NACAC website and alert your students to dates and locations. The Performing and Visual Arts College Fairs bring together colleges of interest to students who would like to pursue performing or visual arts in college.

Statement of Principles of Good Practice: This statement of ethical guidelines lays out the principles that govern the actions of the NACAC membership; you may print a copy from the NACAC website. The statement, organized into Mandatory Practices; Interpretation of Mandatory Practices; and Best Practices, covers promotion and recruitment, admission procedures, financial aid, and standardized admission testing policies and procedures.

State of College Admission: This annual report has good information on admission benchmarks and trends. Free for NACAC members (\$25 for non-members), the PDF can be downloaded from the NACAC website.

Electronic discussion group (EDG): Members may participate in an online discussion group. The EDG allows counselors to get advice on global, national and local issues related to college counseling.

Guiding the Way to Higher Education: Families, Counselors and Communities Together. Formerly called PACT, this manual provides materials for counselors to use in working with families on college awareness and planning. Activities cover five facets of the process.

website: NACAC has an easily navigated website, with much information available to members and nonmembers alike. Numerous articles for students can be downloaded.

Application fee-waiver form: NACAC members can make use of a college application fee-waiver form. The form provides income guidelines for the counselor's use in determining which students qualify for an application fee waiver.

List of professional development activities: The website has an up-to-date listing of professional development activities nationwide. Summer institutes, regional and national conferences, and college tours sponsored by numerous organizations are listed here.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

www.schoolcounselor.org

In the organization's own words:

ASCA's Vision

The American School Counselor Association is the foundation that expands the image and influence of professional school counselors through advocacy, leadership, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA empowers professional school counselors with the knowledge, skills, linkages and resources to promote student success in the school, the home, the community and the world.

ASCA's Mission

The mission of ASCA is to represent professional school counselors and to promote professionalism and ethical practices.

Of special interest to counselors:

ASCA National Model: ASCA has developed the National Model for School Counseling, a comprehensive approach to program foundation, delivery and management accountability. When implemented, the program not only answers the question "What do school counselors do?" but also allows schools to respond to the question "How are students different as a result of what we do?" Nonmembers can download an executive summary at no charge; the book is \$39.95.

Position statements: ASCA has easily accessed position statements on a range of topics counselors confront, among them dealing with at-risk students, test preparation, special needs students and much more.

Books

American School Counselor Association. *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*, Second Edition. Alexandria, VA: ASCA, 2005.

Gives a detailed explanation of each element of the ASCA National Model for School Counseling programs.

Avery, Christopher. *The Early Admissions Game: Joining the Elite*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Provides an analysis of early admission, based on more than 500,000 college applications to 14 elite colleges, and hundreds of interviews with students, counselors and admissions officers. The 2004 edition includes a new chapter.

Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis. *Getting There — and Beyond: Building a Culture of College-Going in High Schools*. University of Southern California Rossier School of Education. Los Angeles, CA: 2007.

This slim brochure lays out the challenges to building and sustaining a college culture, and provides a road map for creating one. The PDF can be printed from the University of California website: www.usc.edu/dept/chepa.

Matthay, Eileen R. *Counseling for College*. Princeton, NJ: Peterson's Guides, 1991. Out of print, but an excellent resource for college counseling.

Mayher, Bill. *The College Admissions Mystique*. New York: Noonday Press, 1998.

Covers practical issues, including discovering colleges, narrowing down the search, finding financial aid and using college counselors to the best advantage.

National Association for College Admissions Counseling. *Fundamentals of College Admissions Counseling*, 2nd edition. Alexandria, VA: NACAC, 2008.

A textbook for practicing counselors covering college counseling in chapters written by respected practitioners.

Rainsberger, Richard. *FERPA and Secondary Education*. Washington, DC: AACRAO and NACAC, 1997.

A useful reference when dealing with issues concerning the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

Steinberg, Jacques. *The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College*. New York: Viking Press, 2002.

Over the course of nearly a year, Steinberg accompanied a Wesleyan admissions officer on a tour to assess and recruit the most promising students in the United States. *The Gatekeepers* follows a diverse group of prospective students as they compete for places in the nation's most elite colleges.

Thacker, Lloyd. *College Unranked: Ending the College Admissions Frenzy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Essays by numerous admissions deans who want colleges and students to rediscover what college is really for — a chance to explore new worlds of knowledge.

Websites

American School Counselor Association; www.schoolcounselor.org

The College Board;
www.collegeboard.org

The Education Trust;
www.edtrust.org

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); www.ed.gov

National Association for College Admissions Counseling; www.nacacnet.org