

**High School Counselors' Influence on Low Socioeconomic
Students' College Enrollment**

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Abstract

This exploratory case study examined high school counselors' (n=12) influence on the college enrollment decisions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Study participants were employed across seven schools within the United States. The findings highlight five main themes: (a) school counselor as a source of college information, (b) counselor-student relationship, (c) counselor competency and preparedness, (d) strategies used to promote postsecondary success, and (e) curriculum usage to support postsecondary success. This article discusses implications for high school counselors.

Keywords: high school counselor, postsecondary counseling, college enrollment, postsecondary school decisions

High School Counselors' Influence on Low Socioeconomic Students' College Enrollment

Across the country, many high school students are dreaming of pursuing a college degree. Researchers noted that 87% of high school students aspire to attend college (Bryan, Young, Griffin, & Henry, 2015; Cox, 2016). However, few students from low socioeconomic backgrounds enroll (52%), and fewer graduate with a baccalaureate degree (10%) (Bosworth, Convertino, & Hurwitz, 2014; Bryan et al., 2015; Cox, 2016; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). In contrast, students from high-income backgrounds enroll in college (82%) and obtain baccalaureate degrees (50%) at higher rates (Bryan et al., 2015). These numbers indicate a substantial gap between college aspirations among students from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds and college degree attainment (Cox, 2016).

The challenges faced by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds differ from their high socioeconomic counterparts. For example, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have limited social capital in their families, requiring that they seek information on postsecondary opportunities from non-familial sources (Martin, Miller, & Simmons, 2014). Unlike students from high socioeconomic groups, these students experience challenges in the areas of affordability, insufficient college-related preparation, and limited access to college information hinder these students from transitioning to college (Zhang, Hu, Sun, & Pu, 2016; Alger & Luke, 2015). Without college-related knowledge and support, these students may forgo applying to college or miss important college-related deadlines (Castleman & Goodman, 2015). Consequently, the widening gap in college enrollment and attainment rates between low and high-

income students have placed high school counselors at the forefront of conversations on postsecondary enrollment by educators, researchers, and policymakers (Bryan et al., 2015).

The high school counselor is a central figure within a school to support postsecondary aspirations and enrollment. However, students from low socioeconomic environments do not always have access to college-related information and resources required to apply to and enroll in college like their counterparts from high socioeconomic backgrounds (Alger & Luke, 2015; Brown, Wohn, & Ellison, 2016; Zhang et al., 2016). Since the guidance of the high school counselor is critical to help students navigate the complexities of college, particularly for low socioeconomic students, it was important to explore their influence on college enrollment.

High School Counselors and College Access

College-access literature has uncovered the importance of high school counselors regarding improving college enrollment outcomes for students in the United States, particularly those students from racial/ethnic, first-generation, and low socioeconomic backgrounds. Specifically, Perna et al. (2008) conducted a case study in five states across fifteen high schools and noted that school counselors are an important source of information on college and financial aid for African-American and Latino low-income students. Similarly, Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore & Day-Vines (2009) revealed the significance of the school counselor regarding college-related matters for African-American students. Further, Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy (2011) found that school counselors have a significant influence on the college plans of African-American and Latino students. Later, Belasco's (2013) study

revealed that school counselors are important to help improve college choice and enrollment, particularly among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. While Belasco's (2013) quantitative research uncovered the potential benefits of college counseling, his analysis prevented the investigation of *how* counselors influenced college enrollment decisions. Thus, Belasco (2013) suggested further qualitative studies to examine how school counselors encourage postsecondary enrollment decisions among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Influence of the High School Counselor

Research documenting the high school counselor's influence on college enrollment has been scant. In a seminal study, Birman (1977) argued that influence occurs when after interacting with the counselor; the behavior of the student is different from predicted. Birman (1977) further noted that school counselors are influential relative to student outcomes, particularly among students from low social classes and ethnic groups. Another researcher, by contrast, argued that the school counselor's influence on future student outcomes was negligible (Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996). However, later studies record the significance of the school counselor on college enrollment outcomes (Belasco, 2013; Bryan et al., 2009; McDonough, 2004, 2005; Shamsuddin, 2016).

Results from previous studies indicated the positive, direct and indirect influence that school counselors had on student behaviors such as college aspirations, college readiness, academic achievement (Belasco, 2013; Bryan et al., 2015; Carnes-Holt, Range, & Cisler, 2012; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014), and college application completion (Bryan, Kim, & Moore-Thomas, 2012). Research has further indicated that high school

counselors influence students' college predispositions, support students' choice of college types, provide information on financial aid, increase students' social capital, and broaden college access. Likewise, Bryan et al. (2015) argued that school counselors play an integral role influencing college attainment by building a culture where there is an expectation that all students attend college. Moreover, Robinson and Roksa (2016) noted that high school counselors provide valuable guidance and advice to facilitate the college access process for low socioeconomic groups.

However, the most relevant, groundbreaking study was conducted by McDonough (1997) who called attention to the critical role of the high school counselor in helping to shape college choice (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). McDonough (2004, 2005) argued that no other professional is more equipped and important to influence college choice and to improve college enrollment outcomes than the high school counselor. Since McDonough's study, researchers have uncovered the potential benefits of school counseling in general (Bryan et al., 2015; Cox, 2016; Cinotti, 2014; Woods & Domina, 2014), but have not examined how school counselors influence college transition prospects (Belasco, 2013). Thus, the aim of this study was to explore how and why high school counselors are able to influence the college enrollment decisions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Conceptually, the student success model provided a framework to provide an in-depth examination on why and how high school counselors, a group that has been ignored in qualitative research (Holland, 2015; McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, 2012), are able to influence college enrollment among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This multilevel model consists of four layers of contexts including the student's internal

context, which represents his/her decisions and behaviors, family, school, and the broader socio-economic and political context (McKillip et al., 2012; Perna et al., 2008). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, which shapes the school counselor's roles, priorities, and activities when working with all students (Cigrand et al., 2015; Cinotti, 2014) was useful in understanding how the counseling activities of the high school counselor influence postsecondary enrollment decisions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research Question

To understand the phenomenon, the researchers explored a research question that addressed the high school counselors' perceived influence on college enrollment decisions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds: Why and how do high school counselors feel they influence decisions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to enroll at institutions of higher education?

Method

A qualitative exploratory case study approach allowed for a more detailed description of those college-preparation activities that propel college trajectories for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds from the viewpoint of the high school counselor. The collection of data from interviews, archival materials, and focus group served as three data sources required to triangulate the data.

Research Team

The research team consisted of a doctoral student (first researcher) from a medium sized private university in Arizona and an independent counselor and educator in Barranquilla, Colombia (second researcher). One member of the research team

identified as African-American and the other member as Afro-Mexican, with a mean age of 45. One member of the research team was female and the other was male. The second researcher provided guidance on the data collection and analysis process. The first researcher conducted the individual interviews, focus group session, collected, and analyzed the data.

Participants and Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of 12 high school counselors, 2 males and 10 females; employed in seven Title I high schools in southern California. All of the participants held Master of Arts degrees and pupil personnel services credentials. The age range of the participants were 25 to over the age of 55 years. Participants worked as high school counselors on average for 10 years. Each counselor worked predominantly with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and high school seniors. Purposeful, as well as multi-stage and theory-based sampling, subsets of purposeful sampling ensured that the participants met the criteria for inclusion. Inclusion for this study comprised of: (a) counselors who work (or worked) in a Title I high school in southern California within the targeted district, (b) work (or worked) as a high school counselor for at least five years, and (c) work (or worked) directly with high school seniors within the past four years. School types such as private or charter schools, were purposefully excluded to focus more deliberately on those counselors in large school districts with higher concentrations of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first researcher obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval prior to the collection of data. The main sources of data collected for this study were face-to-face,

semi-structured interviews, archival materials such as college curriculum, guidance lessons, district profile, college-related activities calendars, and a focus group. The use of the case study, interview, and focus group protocol guided the data collection process. Each interview and focus group session lasted between 30 and 62 minutes. Responses from the interview and focus group participants, along with archival materials helped the researchers better understand how and why high school counselors influence the college enrollment decisions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The method of analysis selected for this study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involved identifying patterns, insights, or concepts in the data that helps to explain why those patterns are there. The first researcher followed the six phases of thematic analysis described by Clarke and Braun (2013), which included (a) familiarization of the data, (b) generation of initial codes, (c) identification of themes, (d) review themes, (e) define and name themes; and (f) produce the report.

The process of thematic analysis allowed the first researcher to search across the interviews, focus group, and archival materials to identify repeated patterns for meaning and potential codes and identify themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013). To make sense of the data, the first researcher used the process of open and axial coding allowed the researcher to break apart each data source, make connections, and categorized. The first researcher divided the transcribed individual and focus group interviews into manageable units, which occurred by arranging the participants' responses under each theoretical construct, interview, and focus group question. This process offered the first researcher a more efficient method to view and find

commonalities from the participants. In addition, coding of the college-related archival materials allowed the first researcher to authenticate information from the interviews and focus group discussions as well as corroborate codes and potential themes.

Trustworthiness Procedures

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study, the researchers used the process of triangulation, member checking, and an expert review panel to strengthen construct validity during the data collection process. The selection of triangulation allowed the researcher to collect data using a combination of sources (semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and archival materials) to incorporate multiple perspectives on counseling approaches used by high school counselors perceived to influence postsecondary enrollment. Although archival materials did not require insight from the participants to increase the researchers understanding due to its pre-existing nature (Yin, 2014), the materials were instrumental in authenticating information from the interviews and focus group and were determined to be a valued data source. The simultaneous analysis of semi-structured interviews, archival materials and a focus group, which offered multiple perspectives, provided a complete and in-depth picture into the counselors perceived influence on postsecondary enrollment and increased validity and trustworthiness (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

Another method used to strengthen trustworthiness was member checking. The first researcher asked each participant to review the interview and focus group transcriptions to check for accuracy and offer feedback. Each participant returned the transcripts within the one-week timeframe with corrections or feedback. The last strategy used was a review panel. Several doctoral-level professionals in the field of

counseling and K-12 education validated the interview and focus group questions. Each expert offered feedback, such as adding the definition of a low socioeconomic student in one of the questions as well as adding more questions as part of the demographic information. All feedback suggested by the expert review panel was incorporated into the study.

Findings

The findings of this study provided an understanding of those specific activities and strategies that influences the decision of low socioeconomic students to pursue postsecondary education. The establishment of the five themes was instrumental in identifying key concepts, deemed important to understanding the phenomenon.

School Counselor as Source of College Information

Consistent with literature findings (Belasco, 2013; Savitz-Romer, 2012; Bryan et al., 2015; Holland, 2015), the analysis found that high school counselors are a valuable source of college information for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly when parents have low or limited understanding about college. To illustrate this point, Counselor 7 stated, “Parents who lack the college knowledge and expertise to help students understand the college process.... the role of the counselor becomes increasingly important.” High school counselors noted that these students often need additional support understanding the complexities of the college admissions process and norms. Counselor 9 stated:

We know that students that come from those backgrounds are ones that might need a little extra attention from us in order to have that college mindset and look at post-secondary options that the families might not even know about because mom and dad had to go to work to provide for the family. College is, even the

application and the transition into a post-secondary four-year institution or a two-year institution, sometimes a foreign language for those parents.

Counselors agreed that when parents have a limited knowledge about the prerequisite courses that students must take in high school to meet the threshold of college eligibility; they become the primary source of college-related information. Counselor 4 from the focus group described, “as a counselor, I’m their go-to person...I am their father between the hours of 7am to 3pm.... we are a bridge for those students to connect them to college.”

Factors identified by all counselors that lead to his/her ability to influence those students prepare, apply, and enroll in college when parental college knowledge is low is promoting college aspirations, having high expectations, and providing informational resources. Counselor 10 noted:

My job is to push them to reach higher...if you have high expectations of them, then they will have and met those high expectations that have been set forth. That is why I repeatedly encourage all of my students to take rigorous coursework such as advanced placement courses, have them take college entrance exams such as the ACT and SAT, and complete the college and financial aid applications.

While counselors have high expectations for their students to attend college after they graduate from high school, many recognized that some students struggle with having low expectations of themselves. During the focus group, Counselor 7 described:

Some of my students enter high school with low expectations and their ambitions are low, which is a daily struggle for many of them. My job is counsel and guide them. Sometimes before we talk about college, we have to help them see themselves beyond their circumstances.

High school counselors further perceived their role in the lives of low socioeconomic students as an important bridge to help connect them to information and resources required for college admissions. While all counselors agreed that their role is significant in promoting a college mindset to their low socioeconomic students, barriers exist. Eight counselors believed that some students did not have the foundational skills or understanding that education after high school is important. As such, results from the study found that academic performance (the need for course remediation) and financial limitations (the desire to work instead of attending college to help support the family) were potential roadblocks to students pursuing postsecondary education. Counselors also noted that when families struggle financially, students make the decision to focus more on finding a job rather than focus on academic and college readiness. Counselor 9 mentioned:

Sometimes the family also values work, and sometimes we find that in order to encourage students to continue their education, we're working against the families' desire for them to go to work in order to provide for the household right out of high school.

Despite these barriers, overwhelming, high school counselors perceived that are viable sources of college-related information for these students to support college aspirations.

Counselor-Student Relationships

Results from the data analysis indicated that high school counselors attributed the ability of guiding low socioeconomic students toward postsecondary success to building positive relationships. This theme is consistent with the literature findings that when students and counselors are able to connect and build relationships with one another, they have the potential to become influential agents in the college choice

process (Holland, 2015). Among the strategies suggested by counselors to connect and build positive relationships is through (a) open communication, (b) ongoing encouragement, (c) stay responsive to their questions or needs, and (d) remain non-judgmental. For instance, Counselor 11 described her process of building rapport with her students and stated:

I do not just look at their grades, but look at what they want to do, come up with a plan, build relationships with them, rapport, and get to know them so that they know that they can talk to me if they have a challenge. This is important because we are dealing with a population that is often silenced or unheard. While it seems simplistic, it's crucial to supporting this particular student demographic.

Counselor 7 from the focus group added:

They are looking for a non-judgmental place where what they express is safe. Our students are judged daily by the way they dress and speak. Negative assumptions are made about their future and potential to succeed so it's important that counselors remain non-judgmental in order to develop and maintain positive relationships with this group, actually any group.

Counselor 2 described the potential impact of building relationships through encouragement and stated:

These kids are told daily that they do not have potential every time that they turn on the television, walk into an expensive store, or walk down the street wearing a sweatshirt with a hood. I think with by us encouraging them that they can do this, it doesn't matter what backgrounds they've come from or how they look, if they have the grades and their goal is college, they can do anything.

Overall counselors agreed that once they forge a positive relationship with their students, they believed that they ability to influence their college decisions increased.

Counselor Competency and Preparedness

Findings from this study also indicated that counselors did not receive formal postsecondary counseling training prior to working in a high school, which they need to provide advice and support. For instance, Counselor 9 stated:

If I'm going to be honest, I went through a preparation program that I didn't feel really prepared me for high school counseling. There was small emphasis placed on things like transcript evaluation, scheduling, academics...., which the primary focus of your job is the academic college and career components, which was not the focus of my program.

All counselors agreed that they learned about college preparation, how to read and evaluate a high school transcript, college eligibility requirements, financial aid, Dream Act, ACT/SAT, and the mechanics of the college application on-the-job and through professional development opportunities provided inside and outside of their district. Counselor 2 added, "Honestly, I feel like I didn't gain those competencies (the application process, helping students prepare and apply) in the counseling program. That was on-the-job training." Counselor 11 added, "we learned a lot about the social emotional part but preparing them for college, no."

All Counselors from the individual interviews and focus group agreed that the competencies needed to support the college aspirations of their students centered on the college admissions and financial aid process. Although counselors believed that they did not receive the necessary training on college counseling through their counselor education program, ongoing internal and external professional development training received, once hired, on college admissions policies and standards was instrumental in successfully guiding and influencing college trajectories.

Strategies Used to Promote Postsecondary Success

Findings from the data analysis revealed several key strategies used by high school counselors to support postsecondary application and enrollment success among their students from low socioeconomic backgrounds: (a) workshops and presentations, (b) college and career field trips, and (c) the mechanics of the college application and admissions process, step-by-step. Being relentless with their students in providing support described above and offering information on college to students before, during, and afterschool, as well as during the evenings and weekends was repeatedly expressed during the interviews and focus group session. Counselor 9 indicated, “We hold workshops, before, after, and during lunch just in case they don't have information on college at home.” Counselor 11 stated, “After we go into the classroom to conduct presentations on the college application, then we offer application workshops after school and then they can always come in and during their lunch time or before school.” Similarly, Counselor 12 commented:

With the actual college applications, we go to the computer lab and through lunchtime, after school, and before school complete the entire college application. This level of intensive support has enabled more students to apply to more colleges and accepted at higher rates. What that looks like for us is our acceptances have grown from 36 percent to 52 percent within a two-year period!

High school counselors expressed the importance of students attending college field trips to inspire and provoke interest in attending college. According to Counselor 10:

Many of our students have never stepped foot on a college campus. We realize that once they have an opportunity to visit a college and see people there that

look just like them, they will start to picture themselves there and potentially apply. Visits to college is a great strategy to jumpstart their interest in college.

Along those same lines, Counselor 9 noted, “We offer college and career trips to everyone and then the students get more exposure.”

Another strategy described by counselors to promote postsecondary success is walking each student step-by-step through the college application process from start to finish. Counselor 6 recounted, “With the seniors, we’re (counselors) basically walking them step-by-step on applications and sitting there with them, having open labs going on the weekends. The results of this work have led to a 9 percent increase in overall college acceptance rate.” Counselor 2 added:

I have my students log onto CSU Mentor/Cal Apply to see the components of the application. Next, I take them systematically through the college application, starting with creating an account, typing in their name, and entering their demographic and transcript information.

Curriculum Usage

Counselors perceived that the use of college curriculum was a positive factor in promoting college preparation. Counselors used online and real-time college-related curricula as a strategy to introduce college concepts, increase their student’s understanding of college terms, investigate college majors, search for colleges and scholarships, engage with college representatives, and submit college applications. Further, counselors believed that using resources such as Naviance, a college and career-related curriculum, and online features has transformed the way that they deliver college materials to students. Counselor 9 commented:

One of the things that I think has been the biggest asset to supporting students with college preparedness and readiness is the addition of Naviance. Naviance

lays out a college and career curriculum, nine through twelve. The tool has been helpful in developing a strategic plan framed around Naviance so counselors meet with all grade levels in order to get them exposed to college from the minute that they walked in the door all the way through the transition to that post-secondary education.

Counselor 10 described, “We also use Naviance alongside college workbooks to compliment what we are teaching.” Counselor 3 added her perspective, “We're using Naviance and the Get Focused, Stay Focused in the classrooms. But Naviance seems to have everything for every grade level, where the other curriculum is just for ninth grade students.”

Discussion

The findings of this study align with the literature that many students from low socioeconomic whose parents have not attended college face barriers understanding the norms and actions required for college access (Belasco, 2013; Bryan et al., 2015; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014; Ryan, 2015; Martinez, Welton, & Anjalé, 2014). While many are academically qualified and capable to attend college, many students do not complete the steps necessary to enroll (Ryan, 2015). Moreover, they hesitate in applying to college for many reasons, including financial constraints, lack of preparation, and unfamiliarity with the order of the steps (Ryan, 2015). Navigating the steps required for college enrollment depends on access to resources, assistance, support, and college knowledge (Klasik, 2012). When families are limited in social capital, the degree to which individuals are able to access information and resources in their social networks, these students often rely on institutional agents like the school counselor in order to access information, privileges, and resources needed to increase college aspirations (Belasco, 2013). Scholars argued that school counselors provide tangible

college-related information to guide and support low socioeconomic students in their pursuit of postsecondary education (Belasco, 2013; Brown et al., 2016; Holland, 2015; Shamsuddin, 2016).

In this study, all counselors agreed that they are the primary source of college-related information for low socioeconomic students when their parents did not attend college. By pushing and inspiring college aspiration, setting high expectations, and offering a litany of college-related workshops and presentations, high school counselors predominantly believed that they positively influenced a college mindset with their low socioeconomic students. A key indicator described within the literature that promotes a counselor's ability to influence outcomes was building positive relationships. Through those relationships, students gain college knowledge, advice, and resources, which play an important role in shaping his/her future (Woods & Domina, 2014). High school counselors attributed connecting with their students to their ability in being relatable, offer ongoing encouragement, fostering open communication, staying responsive to their questions or needs, and remaining non-judgmental. Holland (2015) argued that when students and counselors are able to connect with one another, they have the potential to become influential agents in the college choice process.

Among the strategies used by high school counselors to influence the college preparation, application, and enrollment process are offering college and career-related field trips, leveraging college-readiness curriculum and online platforms, as well as supporting students through the college application process. Engberg and Gilbert (2014) argued that counselors who arranged college visits had a positive and significant effect on 2-year college enrollment rates. Another strategy identified by the high school

counselors to promote college preparation is the use of college curriculum. Counselors use online and real-time college-related curricula during instructional time as a strategy to introduce college concepts, increase their student's understanding of college terms, investigate college majors, search for colleges and scholarships, introduce the eligibility requirements, engage with college representatives, and submit college applications. Counselors believed that using the Naviance curriculum and online features has transformed the way that they deliver college materials to students. The use of college curriculum during instructional time is consistent with Shamsuddin's (2016) recommendation to incorporate information on the eligibility requirements into the course curricula where the high school counselor is the interpreter of the information.

Limitations

The research design, geographic location, sample, and selection criteria presented a weakness in this study. The use of a single, exploratory case study design restricted the study to one district in southern California, which limited the results of this study to this specific district. Further, only 12 counselors who worked in the targeted district participated in this study, which represented a small number. Moreover, the criteria established by the researcher limited the number of counselors who qualified to participate in the study. As a result, this study was limited and may not be representative of the high school counseling professionals.

Recommendations for Future Research

As districts and schools consider ways to bolster the college enrollment rates among low socioeconomic students, administrators should identify a counseling structure that will best meet the needs of their students. While several studies exist that

call attention to investigating the organization and structure of the counseling department to increase college enrollment, this study may serve as a springboard for districts and schools to further that dialogue. For example, the authors recommend further research to examine the impact of structural constraints within schools that prevent school counselors from providing postsecondary counseling from the school administrator perspective. In addition, the researchers recommend an investigation on college counseling interventions that promote postsecondary counseling and the benefits from a student perspective. Furthermore, this study uncovered several professional development needs of high school counselors. Thus, the authors recommend future studies to explore how counselor education programs support the needs of high school counselors, specifically in the area of college counseling.

Implications for School Counselors

Several practical implications emerged from of this study. If systematically institutionalized, the practical implication could assist school administrators in strategically, aggressively, and thoughtfully addressing the declining college enrollment rates among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In the areas of college counseling, activities conducted by high school counselors include conducting individual meetings; delivering college and career guidance curriculum; organizing field trips; inviting college recruiters to the school; walking all of their students through the college and financial aid applications; deciphering the financial aid packets; and helping students decide on if and where they will attend college. Thus, one practical implication to consider is hiring counseling interns in the counseling department to support in the areas of scheduling field trips, interfacing with college recruiters to schedule visits, and

supporting with delivering college readiness curriculum in classrooms. This approach could potentially free up more time of school counselors to support needs of students consistent with ASCA's school counseling program model.

The second practical implication is the need for continual college-related professional development. High school counselors need continuous training on the nuances of the college admissions process. The college preparedness, search, application, and enrollment process is complex. As such, training is required to support counselors in helping students successful prepare and navigate the college readiness process. When high school counselors are not knowledgeable about the college admissions process, they may not be prepared to guide students successfully towards applying to and enrolling in college. Thus, a practical implication for district offices or school sites is to set aside funding to ensure that high school counselors attend professional development trainings on college requirements, admissions, and financial aid, as well as join professional counseling and higher education associations.

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