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October 1, 2013

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller
H-107 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Michael E. Busch
H-101 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 740 College and Career Readiness Completion Act of 2013 (MSAR # 9758)

Dear Governor O'Malley, President Miller and Speaker Busch:

In accordance with Section 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the Maryland State Department of Education, in consultation with institutions of higher education, shall develop a plan to improve college and career counseling that is provided to students in middle and high schools. The plan developed under subsection (a) of this section identifies best practices used in the State and nationally, and includes recommendations for a competitive grant program that would be used to implement the best practices, as well as, recommendations for implementing the College Outreach Program established under Section 18-303.1 of the Education Article. Attached for your review is the Plan for College and Career Readiness.

Should you have questions or need additional information, please contact Mrs. Katharine Oliver, Assistant State Superintendent, Career and College Readiness at (410) 767-0158 or via email at koliver@msde.state.md.us or Mrs. Maria Lamb, Interim Assistant State Superintendent for Student, Family and School Support at (410) 767-0286 or via email at mlamb@msde.state.md.us. Thank you for your continued efforts to strengthen college and career readiness in public education for all Maryland students.

Sincerely,

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

Attachments



October
2013

College and Career Counseling in Maryland



A Report to the
Governor
and the
General
Assembly

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INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted in response to Senate Bill (SB) 740: College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013. The Bill charged the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a plan, in consultation with institutions of higher education (IHEs), to improve college and career counseling that is provided to students in middle and high schools. The plan developed under subsection (a) of this section should: (1) identify best practices used in the State and nationally; and (2) include recommendations for a competitive grant program that would be used to implement these best practices across the state as well as recommendations for implementing the College Readiness Outreach Program established under subsection 18-303.1 of the Education Article.

In developing a plan, MSDE convened a design team comprised of representatives from IHEs, local school systems, experts in the field of career counseling and parents. The team discussed current challenges and successful practices to implementing comprehensive college and career counseling for all students. Their recommendations serve as the basis in this plan, which:

1. Describes the **foundation** that is currently in place in the State. This foundation includes, defining what it means to be college and career ready, adopting national models and guidelines, and implementing state initiatives.
2. Identifies the **promising practices** to support those goals; and
3. Includes recommendations for a **competitive grant program** whereby the funds would be used to implement the promising practices as well as support implementing the College Readiness Outreach Program.

THE FOUNDATION/BACKGROUND

Maryland has established a strong foundation to continue the improvement of college and career counseling for all students. The State recognizes that a comprehensive system of college and career counseling is necessary to support all students. Much of the work that has been done in Maryland speaks to the following eight components identified by the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center for college and career readiness counseling. They are:

1. **College Aspirations**
Build a college-going culture based on early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the resilience to overcome challenges along the way. Maintain high expectations by providing adequate supports, building social capital and conveying the conviction that all students can succeed;
2. **Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness**
Advance students' planning, preparation, participation and performance in rigorous academic programs that connect to their college and career aspirations and goals;
3. **Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement**
Ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase engagement with school;

4. **College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes**
Provide early and ongoing exposure to experiences and information necessary to make informed decisions when selecting a college or career that connects to academic preparation and future aspirations;
5. **College and Career Assessments**
Promote preparation, participation and performance in college and career assessments by all students. This means helping students know the types, importance and use of college and career assessments, assisting them in being test savvy, and mentoring students on how to analyze test results to identify skill gaps;
6. **College Affordability Planning**
Provide students and families with comprehensive information about college costs, options for paying for college, and the financial aid and scholarship processes and eligibility requirements, so they are able to plan for and afford a college education;
7. **College and Career Admission Processes**
Ensure that students and families have an early and ongoing understanding of college and career application and admission processes so they can find the postsecondary options that best fit with their aspirations and interests; and
8. **Transition from High School Graduation to College Enrollment**
Connect students to school and community resources to help the students overcome barriers and ensure the successful transition from high school to college.

The State defined expectations for college and career readiness, adopted national counseling and career development models and guidelines, established policy to implement a comprehensive system, created standards for instructional programs and developed resources. And yet, more needs to be done to ensure that all students are ready to meet the demands they will face in an ever-changing world where education beyond high school is a necessity.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY CHARACTERISTICS

Whether students are just starting their elementary education experience; transitioning to middle school; approaching high school graduation or stepping into postsecondary education, training or employment, young people need access to a number of supports to help them prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. In other words, they need to be college and career ready. According to Maryland's P-20 College Success Task Force Report and MSDE's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request, a student who is college and career ready has the following characteristics:

Be prepared to succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary introductory general education courses or in industry certification programs without needing remediation. Not so long ago, this was an either/or proposition. The assumption was that after completing high school "academically oriented" students would enroll in a postsecondary program at a college, and all other students would go directly into the workforce. Decades ago when well-paying, entry-level jobs requiring no further formal education were plentiful for graduating high school seniors, it was the norm for schools and caregivers to not place much emphasis on planning for further academic preparation for students entering directly into the workforce. Today, however, technology and the global economy have changed this situation. As the U.S. economy continues to demand a more educated workforce, students and caregivers will need to have a better understanding of the expectation that education and training beyond high school is required. The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that nearly 63% of jobs with wages

capable of supporting a family projected to be available in the year 2018 will require **some level** of postsecondary education after high school. Nearly 30% of those workforce opportunities will require less than a four-year degree.

Creating a college-going culture for all students in the public school system will require a concerted effort and begins with the understanding that postsecondary education includes many options for students. Changing the perception that postsecondary education strictly means preparation to earn a four-year degree is the first challenge. To prepare for the workforce of today, it is essential to clarify that continuing in a postsecondary program also includes opportunities to:

- Earn a certificate or associate's degree at the community college level,
- Continue on a path that includes licensure through a technical or trade school program,
- Participate in a formal apprenticeship program, or
- Receive technical training through the military that will assist students and their caregivers in making informed decisions for the best options available.

This means that educators and counselors must be responsive to the needs of all students. They must be particularly responsive to students: who may be the first in their families to attend college, who have very little support for further education and whose families believe that they do not have the financial resources to make postsecondary education a reality.

The second challenge is reducing the number of students needing to take remedial coursework once they enter a postsecondary program. For those students who pursue further education and training in Maryland, increasing numbers who enter community colleges are not prepared for college-level coursework and need remediation in mathematics (Maryland Higher Education Commission SOAR Report 2011). A system of college and career readiness counseling that includes appropriate academic placement for all students, academic supports and career counseling will increase the likelihood that students receive the assistance they need to overcome gaps and be prepared for higher level coursework.

To be college and career ready, students need to be competent in the [Skills for Success \(SFS\)](#).

Understanding, acquiring and practicing how to think critically, taking responsibility for learning, communicating appropriately, using current technology and relating well to others using interpersonal skills are the attributes that are required to be successful in life as well as in the workforce. A comprehensive system of college and career readiness counseling includes multiple opportunities to practice and become proficient in these skills. This helps students gain awareness of expectations of the workplace and build confidence as they progress in their education pathway.

To be college and career ready students must have identified potential career goals and understand the steps to achieve them.

Career Counseling is often misunderstood and not always fully appreciated by many professionals and the public. This is not surprising as many adults had little or no assistance in planning for their current career. However, in our current, fast-pasted, technology driven society, new employment opportunities are developed faster than ever before, and employment opportunities that exist are changing and even becoming obsolete. Assisting students in understanding their skill sets and abilities and matching them with types of career paths gives students a sense of where to focus their academic and career planning. No longer is our educational system preparing students for one type of job. Today, they must be prepared for a career that has multiple opportunities for employment and advancement. Further, students must be prepared to continue their education and training to acquire and keep current credentials in their field. This idea of lifelong learning is acquired and enhanced through a developmental process of college and career counseling.

To be college and career ready students must be skilled enough in communication to seek assistance as needed, including student financial assistance.

Part of the career counseling process is to ensure that students are prepared with current information to help them know what questions to ask and to identify appropriate resources. As their needs increase and students make transitions from one learning level to the next, they must be aware of resources that will help them meet their education and career goals. Strong communication and self-advocacy skills, the ability to navigate vast bodies of knowledge, and the capacity to make decisions on the best course of action are all skills that students develop by receiving support through strong college and career counseling. There are data to suggest that when students are strongly supported in their academic and career goals, they are more likely to stay on track to complete their goals. By requiring a systemic approach to college and career readiness preparation that begins in Pre-Kindergarten and continues beyond high school, students will have access to the academic and career readiness supports to increase the likelihood that students will be prepared for the workforce of the 21st century.

NATIONAL MODELS AND GUIDELINES:

Creating a systemic approach to college and career counseling is essential to standardizing supports for all students. Exposing students and their parents early on to age-appropriate college and career readiness practices sets the stage for successful transitions across the learning levels. Access to pertinent information such as the requirements to attend college, prior academic preparation and awareness of financial obligations, increases the likelihood of developing a culture and mindset of college and career readiness.

According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC, 2005), important to student success is access to a strong precollege guidance and counseling program that begins early and continues to support students' educational pathways. Maryland adopted a national model and guidelines to serve as a basis for a comprehensive system.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model

The ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs is a framework for delivering comprehensive school counseling programs from elementary school to high school with a focus toward improving student achievement. Comprehensive school counseling programs, driven by student data, promote the integration of students' academic, career and personal/social development and enhance the learning process for all students.

There are five basic premises that undergird the organization and management of guidance and counseling in schools. These premises are the point of departure for developing, managing, and evaluating comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs (Gysbers and Drier 2011).

1. School counseling is a program.
2. School counseling programs are developmental and comprehensive.
3. School counseling programs feature a team approach.
4. School counseling programs are developed through a systematic process of planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing.
5. School counseling programs have established leadership.

National Career Development Association (NCDA) and Career Development Guidelines

The NCDA is the recognized leader in developing standards for the career development profession for the provision of career counseling programs and services, and for the evaluation of career information materials. The NCDA Career Development Guidelines are a framework for building and evaluating comprehensive career development programs for youth and adults in a variety of settings. The Guidelines

include the domains, goals and indicators for Personal Social Development, Educational Achievement and Lifelong Learning and Career Management. The NCDA guidelines are the basis for the [Maryland Career Development Framework \(MCDF\)](#) that includes six career development standards. Five years ago, the MCDF was incorporated into the Code of Maryland Regulations, and all 24 local school systems in the State incorporated these standards to guide the educational programs that support students in becoming college and career ready.

STATE INITIATIVES:

The State established policies, created standards for instructional programs and developed resources supporting a comprehensive system of college and career counseling. For example, within the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) for Pupil Services Programs are specific regulations on [School Counseling \(13A.05.05.02\)](#). There are also regulations for a [Program of Instruction in the World of Work Competencies \(13A.04.10.01\)](#) as well as a [Program of Instruction in Personal Financial Literacy \(13A.04.06\)](#). Combined, these regulations require that students have:

- A planned, systematic program of counseling, consulting, appraisal, information, and placement services for students, grades K—12 (COMAR for School Counseling Program);
- A systematic instructional program in career development and decision making where before grade nine each student develops an individual academic and career plan and updates it in subsequent years (COMAR for World of Work Competencies); and
- An instructional program in personal financial literacy in the elementary, middle, and high school learning years (COMAR for Personal Financial Literacy).

When students' high school experiences are comprised of the services and programs listed above and include college preparatory academics and an instructional program in career and technology education, they are in the best position to graduate college and career ready. Additionally, academic and career counseling services that continue at the postsecondary level not only put students on the pathway to degree attainment, but they are more likely to earn their degree in a timely manner. Thus, the following efforts are in place providing a solid foundation from which to build a comprehensive system of college and career counseling:

Maryland's Career Development Framework (MCDF)

This instructional framework, included in the regulations for the World of Work Competencies, provides a structured, developmental approach for teaching students and adults about the world of work along with encouraging the development of positive personal characteristics and self-efficacy skills needed for making appropriate choices regarding their education and career paths. The **National Career Development Association (NCDA) Guidelines** support this Pre-Kindergarten through adult career development framework. The MCDF includes six career development standards: Self Awareness, Career Awareness, Career Exploration, Career Preparation, Job Seeking and Advancement, and Career Satisfaction and Transition.

The MCDF includes the ***Skills for Success*** workplace readiness skills. The ***Skills for Success*** is a Maryland model that is similar to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and prepares students to work successfully in a diverse, innovation-driven economy. By encouraging skill building in the areas of learning, thinking, communicating, technology and interpersonal skills, the MCDF framework provides educators with standards and learner objectives that are essential elements for curriculum, instruction and assessment activities to compliment the ***Maryland Common Core State Standards***.

Resources on the MSDE website are available using the MCDF standards to assist with implementation of [Career Guidance and Advisory Programs for Grades 7-12](#). This allows for the systemic approach for school

guidance and advisement that stresses both academic and career planning. Resources are also available for adult learners. [The Maryland Adult Career Development Toolkits](#) provide scenario-based lessons that teach the career development process with adult learning theory in mind and are effective in either group or individual settings. Interactive web-based resources are included.

Maryland's System of Career and Technology Education (CTE)

During the past several years MSDE's, Division of Career and College Readiness (DCCR) created a new model of CTE that prepares students for both employment and further education. Rapid changes in the economy provided the impetus for the establishment of Maryland CTE Programs of Study, which are sequential academic and technical programs guided by industry standards that result in students graduating prepared for employment and further education. Changes in employers' expectations led to:

- Using valid and reliable assessments leading to an industry-recognized certificate, license, or other credential;
- Implementing a system of career development;
- Blending or integrating instruction to ensure that students develop academic and technical knowledge as well as *Skills for Success* as part of their technical programs;
- Matching students and employers to provide authentic work-based learning experiences; and
- Linking learning levels through early college credit.

The Department's intent was to ensure students' access to challenging CTE programs that include academic, technical, and workplace skills and opportunities to earn college credit or an industry-recognized credential upon graduation from high school.

College Readiness Outreach Program

The College Readiness Outreach Program, established in the College Readiness for Disadvantaged and Capable Students Act of 2002, is designed to provide guidance to ninth and tenth grade students who are eligible for a Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access Grant to succeed in postsecondary education by: 1) completing a college preparatory curriculum, 2) graduating from high school, and 3) matriculating at an institution of higher education. To date, state funds have not been provided for this specific effort.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and MSDE continue to support college outreach initiatives targeted to low-income students through grant funding. For example, when MSDE received federal GEAR UP grants, the Department sub-granted funds to MHEC to provide academic and social supports to encourage postsecondary education preparation and attendance for one or more cohorts of low-income students beginning in seventh or eighth grade. The MHEC also used Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) funds to create the state's college planning web portal www.mdgo4it.org, to implement outreach and financial aid "marketing" through publications and media, and to deliver financial aid presentations at high schools and community organizations.

Currently, MHEC sub-grants a portion of the federal College Access Challenge Grant to MSDE supporting college access and success for secondary students transitioning to higher education. Specifically, funds are used to support the infusion of college financial planning in the statewide financial literacy curriculum and related school counselor professional development. Funds are also used to establish college-going climates in schools with high need (e.g. high numbers of students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Meal rates) populations. Emphasis is placed on helping students and their families prepare for college, apply to college and pay for college.

The State no longer has federal GEAR UP funding, and the federal statute enabling the College Access Challenge Grant sunsets in 2014. New federal or other sources of funding are being sought to continue and

expand a statewide college outreach initiative and to specifically support the College Readiness Outreach Program. The state-funded College Preparation Intervention Program (CPIP), established in 1999 and administered by MHEC, does provide required matching funds needed to attract federal and other grant funds. The purpose of CPIP is to supply academic and other supports to middle and high school students in high need school systems to encourage college preparation and college planning skills for economically disadvantaged students. The activities required under the College Readiness Outreach program align with the goals of preparing all students to be both college and career ready. In addition to supporting the promising practices, the design team recommended that grant funds be used to continue implementation of the College Readiness Outreach Program by:

- **Evaluating and updating existing resources** (e.g. www.mdgo4it.org) to reflect current and reliable information for students, families, and caregivers.
- **Coordinating communications and messaging** among MHEC, MSDE, postsecondary institutions and local school systems and providing formal lines of communication among secondary supervisors of school counselors and admissions officers.
- **Providing professional development to middle and high school counselors and postsecondary admissions officers** on information about early college access, college affordability, articulation and entry requirements. This information varies year-to-year as well as among postsecondary institutions; thus, keeping up-to-date is very difficult. For educators to be effective in helping students and caregivers navigate through this process (particularly low-income and first generation students), it is imperative that access to this information and training is accessible and user-friendly.
- **Developing formal means of coordination among institutions of higher education, secondary schools and community-based organizations (CBOs)** to deliver targeted outreach efforts to students and their families who need additional support services to overcome barriers to postsecondary education and training. These venues, which are typically outside of the traditional education system, are already providing direct services to families in need (e.g., CBOs, family support centers, and workforce development centers).

College Completion

For the last several years, college completion has been a primary focus of postsecondary education in Maryland. Understanding the critical importance of degree attainment to both individuals and the State, Governor Martin O'Malley established a goal in 2009 that by 2025, 55% of Maryland residents between the ages of 25 to 64 will have a college degree. For individuals, a college degree can provide employment stability and financial security. Increased degree attainment is needed in order for the State to remain globally competitive in an ever-evolving, knowledge-based economy where employment opportunities will increasingly require some form of postsecondary degree.

In order to increase completion rates, supports to students who are making the transition to college must be strengthened. While many graduating seniors seek postsecondary opportunities, many find the transition difficult from secondary to postsecondary—especially first time college-going students. Many IHEs operate programs designed to help elementary, middle and high school students and families improve their readiness for college. Because increasing demand for further education and training is compelling more diverse student populations to enter postsecondary education, IHEs must provide services to meet their needs so that they can successfully achieve their college and career goals.

This requires collaboration between and among secondary supervisors of school counselors and college admission advisors is essential to the successful transition of students. This can be accomplished through regularly scheduled affinity group meetings and other forms of ongoing communication.

PROMISING PRACTICES

The team agreed that the promising practices described below represent the core elements of a comprehensive college and career counseling system. Promising practices are defined as those strategies that are most beneficial for meeting the goals of the program and student outcomes, as well as, practical application in terms of being sustainable and replicable.

These practices, designed to work in tandem to meet a defined set of student outcomes, help to support college and career readiness for all students. The practices include strategies for preparing students for further education and careers, including:

1. Adhering to evidence-based, whole-school practices,
2. Systemic collaboration for secondary and postsecondary counseling,
3. Providing focused professional development and continuing education,
4. Using technology for supporting college and career ready practices and
5. Monitoring and evaluating program and student outcomes.

These practices should be included in a systemic model of implementation that demonstrates shared leadership and responsibility and work across the educational learning levels, Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve and into the postsecondary level. Designed to work in tandem and within a system of college and career counseling to meet a defined set of student outcomes, these practices help to ensure college and career readiness for all students. The design team identified the promising practices based on the following questions:

- Is this practice vertically aligned across learning levels?
- Does it address all students?
- Is it a sustainable practice?
- What measures will be used to indicate if the practice is effective or successful?
- Is it replicable in other schools and/or school systems?
- Can this practice be taken to scale?

Practice 1: Adhering to Evidence-Based, Whole-School Approaches

A whole-school approach, such as Teacher as Advisors Programs (TAP), creates a culture of shared responsibility for college and career counseling by involving all educators in teaching career-related lessons. Teachers serve as mentors to specific groups of students throughout their middle or high school careers. The TAP provides for every student to receive developmentally appropriate career awareness and exploration information to inform their academic and career planning. The TAP also helps to address the need to reduce excessive student-counselor ratios by including the teachers in the delivery of career-focused lessons during the designated TAP advisory period. This allows counselors more time to personalize their interaction with students and parents to address students' specific college and career planning needs. This personalization provides greater opportunities to have substantive conversations with students about how the academic decisions they make at the secondary level impact their postsecondary choices once they leave high school.

The design team recommends that the teacher as advisor model be expanded to include feeder patterns within school systems. This would mean that the TAP would be implemented at a high school along with the feeder middle and elementary schools—thus, creating collaborative efforts among school counselors and teachers for providing appropriate academic counseling for students and parents to improve students' academic achievement and college and career readiness. The model also includes the school system's postsecondary partners. Including IHEs in TAP allows students to receive the following “diploma to degree” activities:

- Administering postsecondary entrance exams to students such as Accuplacer, COMPASS or Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)/ Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT);
- Providing acceleration and intervention activities;
- Collaborating with schools on the dissemination of information about postsecondary options, financial aid and scholarship availability; and
- Exposing students and families to college campus culture through on-campus field trips, internships and enrichment activities.

Features of this practice include:

- Garnering full endorsement of the TAP by the leadership teams in local school systems, schools and IHEs;
- Refocusing and clarifying duties for the counselors and advisors who are responsible for the overall counseling program and the protocols that facilitate interactions among faculty and staff working on the TAP initiative;
- Dedicating staff such as the coordinator or facilitator to oversee implementation and organize professional development on the advisory lessons;
- Identifying a core group of top teacher/faculty advisors to set the standards – especially for those who may otherwise be reluctant to participate;
- Identifying students who will remain with the same advisor while at that secondary and/or postsecondary levels. This strategy is often referred to as looping;
- Dedicating instructional time and resources for an advisory period or advisory services to occur on a regular basis. At the postsecondary level, requiring students to access these services as part of their instructional program ensures that students are planning consistently for their workforce development;
- Identifying measures/student outcomes, gathering baseline data and tracking students' success;
- Using student portfolios to measure college and career readiness outside of standardized tests; and
- Engaging the parent, advisor and student in developing a plan to achieve academic and career goals and addressing concerns related to students' postsecondary assessment results and placement outcomes.

The TAP strategy demonstrates that it:

- Assists students with assessing education and career options, setting goals and working toward the achievement of those goals;
- Provides skill building in developing study skills, time-management skills and interpersonal skills – skills that result in higher-level achievement;
- Helps students make better use of the high school years in preparation for postsecondary studies, including earning college credit as well as industry-recognized credentials ;
- Establishes a college-going culture where students graduate without the need for remediation;
- Results in more students completing high school ready for both college and careers—particularly when they complete both a rigorous academic and technical program of study; and
- Supports students' completion of degree, licensure and certificate programs at the postsecondary level.

The design team’s endorsement of the TAP as a promising practice came as a result of its successful implementation in some Maryland schools. The team views that the practice is worth replicating and should include feeder schools.

Practice 2: Systemic Collaboration for Secondary and Postsecondary Counseling

A systemic collaboration of secondary and postsecondary counseling is needed if all students are to be college and career ready. Ideally, counselors and/or coordinators from elementary, middle and high schools and the postsecondary level work together to formalize student interactions by grade bands and across the learning levels. This vertical alignment structure provides for college and career counseling to all students and supports continuity in and among local school systems (LSSs), postsecondary institutions, and workforce development programs.

At the secondary level, this type of collaboration sets the stage for school counselors and advisors to:

- Gain a better understanding of how students can benefit from early college access, including: Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment and/or career and technology education programs. Representatives from secondary and postsecondary education can work together to “package” or align AP and dual enrollment courses into pathways that lead to a postsecondary degree or credential. Another strategy is providing rigorous career and technology education programs that give students opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials as well as early college credit. These strategies reinforce students’ confidence in their abilities to succeed in college-level courses and continue as lifelong learners with their postsecondary education. Information about early college access and CTE must be clearly communicated to students, so they understand how to take advantage of these opportunities.
- Implement innovative strategies to reduce barriers for first generation college-going students to prepare for, apply to, pay for and graduate from an institution of higher education.
- Identify a systematic approach to involve parents and caregivers in the college and career advisement process, including knowledge about financial aid options. Parents and caregivers are a child’s first teacher and must be brought into the process of college and career planning. This is not an easy task especially if students are the first to go to college in their families or if there are cultural barriers to overcome. Engaging the parents and caregivers early on and often increases their understanding of the importance of academic and career planning. In some instances, they may need additional “wrap-around” supports to encourage their own progress toward taking general educational development (GED) courses and receiving a high school diploma, or preparing to earn a technical certificate or college degree.
- Increase the use of business partners to provide early exposure to the work place. Role playing, job shadowing, field trips, online virtual experiences and work-based learning allow students opportunities for career awareness at the elementary level, career exploration at the middle school level and career preparation at the high school and postsecondary levels; and
- Expand access to paid career-focused work-based learning opportunities to students who need co-curricular work experiences but also need income support. This can be done on the college campus to increase students’ awareness of and familiarity with a college-going culture

Practice 3: Professional Development and Continuing Education

Ongoing professional development (PD) for teachers, school counselors, faculty, advisors, admissions staff and administrators is a critical component of college and career counseling. Using a systemic approach requires that PD is both vertically and horizontally aligned. Vertical alignment takes place across learning levels so that PD is organized by local school system feeder patterns. Horizontal alignment occurs when PD crosses curriculum or content areas. To implement evidence-based, whole-school approaches for college and career counseling, professional development aligned with these approaches must be offered on a regular basis.

Effective implementation of a system of college and career readiness depends on formal channels of continuing education and communication among professional educators at all learning levels, especially those who are responsible for the successful transition of students. To ensure continuity, a continuum of professional development for school counselors and college admissions advisors is necessary. Creating opportunities for PD and regular communication assures that students, parents and school staff understand the expectations for transition. This can be accomplished through online PD and/or regularly scheduled affinity group meetings as well as other forms of ongoing and intentional communication. Regardless of the format of the PD, educators should have opportunities to earn continuing professional development (CPD) credit toward their professional teaching certificate.

Classroom teachers and postsecondary faculty are in the unique position to engage students in content specific instruction about careers and career competencies. For example, secondary teachers have the opportunity to speak to students about their educational progress including helping them understand the results from any postsecondary placement exam they may have taken. However, to do this well, teachers need the appropriate PD for understanding the career development process, in addition to understanding postsecondary exams and relating them to appropriate academic interventions. Creating shared responsibility among school counselors and teachers for providing appropriate academic/career counseling for students and parents regarding postsecondary exam results and interventions will only help to increase students' academic achievement and college and career readiness. To build capacity of all staff, it is recommended that teacher preparation programs and teacher professional development offerings include how to integrate academic and career information into instruction.

In addition to professional development and continuing education, school counselors and interested staff should be encouraged to obtain additional credentials in the field of career development. Due to the trend toward state-mandated career and postsecondary planning brought on by the education reform movement, students and parents are having to develop academic and career plans beginning at the middle school level. Such decision-making requires professional school counselors to be current on the career development trends and information that can assist students and parents with navigating and understanding the developmental issues involved in helping students to become college and career ready. For school counseling professionals, it is recommended that additional coursework in college and career readiness preparation is included in graduate coursework.

School counselors and college advising staff must be encouraged to obtain the most current career and professional development and certifications available. One such credential is the ***Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) certification***. This national/portable credential enhances the skills and knowledge of individuals who work in any environment that requires a high degree of knowledge and expertise regarding career development theory and practice. Candidates must have successfully completed an approved CDF training program and meet specific educational and experience requirements to earn the credential. Participants receive training in each of the 12 career development competencies:

1. **Helping Skills** – Obtain proficiency in the basic career facilitating process while including productive interpersonal relationships.
2. **Labor Market Information and Resources** - Understand labor market and occupational information and trends. Be able to use current resources.
3. **Assessment** – Comprehend and use (*under supervision*) both formal and informal career development assessments with emphasis on relating appropriate ones to the population served.
4. **Diverse Populations** - Recognize special needs of various groups and adapt services to meet their needs.
5. **Ethical and Legal Issues** - Follow the GCDF code of ethics and know current legislative regulations.
6. **Career Development Models** - Understand career development theories, models, and techniques as they apply to lifelong development, gender, age, and ethnic background.
7. **Employability Skills** - Know job search strategies and placement techniques, especially in working with specific groups.
8. **Training Clients and Peers** - Prepare and develop materials for training programs and presentations.
9. **Program Management/Implementation** - Understand career development programs and their implementation, and work as a liaison in collaborative relationships.
10. **Promotion and Public Relations** - Market and promote career development programs with staff and supervisors.
11. **Technology** - Comprehend and use career development computer applications.
12. **Consultation** - Accept suggestions for performance improvement from consultants or supervisors.

Practice 4: The Use of Technology for Supporting College and Career Ready Practices

Another promising practice in college and career counseling is the use of **Computer-Assisted Career Guidance (CACG) Programs**. In keeping with the technology trends of today as a way of engaging students in the educational process, CACG programs offer one strategy to connect students and parents to the academic and career planning process. These computerized systems vary in their components but all contain mechanisms for career and academic planning to take place. These systems are vital to the academic and career planning process; however, as with much of technology, the effectiveness increases when trained counselors and teachers supervise the activities. Specifically, a meta-analysis conducted by Whiston, Brecheisen, and Stephens (2003) found that there were better outcomes for students using a CACG program when a counselor was involved as compared to completely self-directed interventions such as using a CACG program in isolation.

There are many types of CACG programs most of which provide academic and career planning activities to be used as part of the students' overall career and academic planning providing a process for self-awareness and career exploration. Requiring teachers and counselors to use the CACG system as part of instruction reinforces the notion of a whole-school approach. Incorporating the development of academic and career portfolios for students is one strategy that facilitates consistent focus on the importance of academic and career planning across learning levels and helps to increase parent involvement.

Moreover, using CACG programs in the development of students' academic and career plans which start no later than 8th grade and are updated annually, can be an essential tool in monitoring the development of a common academic and career plan that can be used statewide and uploaded electronically to local school systems (LSS) Computer Assisted Career Guidance (CACG) systems. It is essential that students' academic and career plans start no later than eighth grade, are updated annually throughout high school and continue for a minimum of two years after high school. The information that these plans yield will assist

counselors, parents, caregivers and the entire education community in supporting students in their educational endeavors by clearly linking in one place both their academic and career interests.

One example of a system to support CACGs is ***The Universal Encouragement Program (UEP)***. The UEP helps school counselors focus intervention and prevention efforts by identifying students with risk factors and allowing school counselors to take immediate, efficient and responsive actions. By using this technology, secondary and college counseling personnel are able to gather and report guidance data through an online assessment. The resulting comparison and change reports identify key benchmarks of college and career readiness that document growth and change across time. The UEP communication tools enable school counselors to target email messages to students and parents to document: 1) college readiness; 2) career readiness; 3) school engagement; 4) student involvement preferences; and 5) key benchmarks for academic attainment and success. Besides showing the effect of program interventions across time, the UEP helps to document the effectiveness of school counseling interventions and thereby provide needed accountability for school counseling programs. The team also endorsed the use of technology to create ways, such as through websites or list-serves, to share effective strategies and practices statewide.

Practice 5: Monitoring and Evaluating College and Career Readiness Systems

Monitoring comprehensive college and career readiness systems as well as using the results of the evaluation process to improve service delivery are critical practices that must be in place in building a comprehensive, effective system of college and career counseling. Outcomes must be identified and measured by secondary and postsecondary partners to appropriately align resources as well as foster shared leadership and accountability across education levels. Data are necessary to determine the appropriate supports, interventions and resources for use with students. To sustain and enhance the quality of these programs, the actions of both policy makers and practitioners must be guided by the results of sound evaluation practices (Borders and Drury 1992).

The following measures will increase the likelihood that all students will graduate prepared for both college and careers:

Academic Outcomes:

1. Increasing the number of students from low-performing subgroup populations in Advanced Placement (AP) courses from the previous year
2. Increasing the number of students participating in dual enrollment and who receive passing grades
3. Increasing the number of 10th grade students who take the PSAT
4. Decreasing the number of students needing academic remediation
5. Increasing the number of students being assessed for academic remediation prior to 12th grade
6. Increasing the number of students accessing academic interventions and demonstrating improvement

College and Career Readiness Outcomes:

1. Increasing the number of students completing a CTE program of study
2. Increasing the number of students who graduate high school as dual completers—meeting the University System of Maryland entrance requirements as well as completing a CTE program of study
3. Increasing the number of students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
4. Increasing the number of students accepted into postsecondary education including two- and four-year degree programs, trade school programs, certificate programs, and apprenticeship

5. Increasing the number of students participating in a supervised, co-curricular work-based learning experience
6. Increasing the number of students taking and passing exams for licensure or certification
7. Increasing the number of students accessing college and career counseling services to seek out information for academic and career planning

Programmatic Outcomes

1. Increasing the number of students who have access to and take career interest inventories at each grade level and meet with a counselor to discuss results related to academic and career planning
2. Increasing the number of school staff/faculty that have received relevant professional development on the CACGC system
3. Increasing the number of school staff/faculty that have integrated an aspect of the program into instruction (e.g. CACG system, portfolio process)
4. Aligning the student-to-counselor ratio with the ASCA recommendations, including 80% of the counselors' work centered on direct services to students

In addition to these outcomes, it is also essential to focus on inputs, especially adequate personnel. Another aspect of accountability is ensuring that school counselors are given adequate time to counsel students and provide significant leadership to whole-school college and career readiness efforts. Research indicates that counselors spend more than half their time on college related tasks in communities where people believe their children will be prepared to go to college after high school, (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center 2012). However, this situation is not likely in public high schools where the student-to-counselor ratio is out of balance.

In order for a comprehensive college and career counseling program to be successfully implemented, the ASCA suggests a maximum ratio of one counselor to 250 students. School counselor caseloads in many public schools still exceed the recommended ratio for college and academic counseling. In Maryland, the combined total average elementary, middle and high school counselor-to-student ratio is currently one counselor to 340 students, far in excess of the recommendation.

Merely increasing the number of counselors does not ensure that their time will be focused on college related tasks with students. Even where counseling ratios approximate the ASCA model, counselors often are assigned such administrative roles such as Testing Coordinator, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team Chair, Master Scheduler and other duties which can take counselors away from their primary role and responsibilities to students. Research indicates that counselors in public schools spend an average of only 29% of their time on postsecondary education counseling (National Association for College Admission Counseling State of College Admission Report 2011). The expectation is that they will spend 80% of their workday providing direct services to students. By supporting the appropriate counseling ratios and demanding accountability by developing a metrics-based evaluation to monitor student and programmatic success, policy makers and administrators will be more likely to appropriately align counselor duties and school counseling budget priorities.

COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM

Purpose

The design team recommends that a competitive grant program be established to foster coordination among secondary and postsecondary administrators, counselors, and educators to improve the comprehensive system of college and career counseling for middle and high school students. The recommendations include focusing on the promising practices included in this plan through a multi-year competitive grant program. The grant solicitation will include opportunities for both pre-implementation

and implementation proposals. To be eligible to receive funds, applicants must address the priorities listed below and describe how they will target activities to increase the number of students who qualify for a Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access Grant.

In developing the solicitation for grant proposals, priority will be given to applicants that demonstrate a level of readiness to fully implement a comprehensive system of college and career counseling to students in middle and high schools in partnership with representatives from postsecondary education. Applicants must demonstrate their readiness by completing a gap analysis that documents their progress as well as their plans to further improve the existing system. This analysis will help to reveal gaps that will either be addressed locally, or during the pre-implementation grant period, or part of the implementation grant. Examples of whole-school approaches that may already be in place include the system-wide use of a Career Information Delivery System (CIDS), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Restorative Practices, and TAP.

Priorities

At a minimum, applicants must address Priorities One, Two and Five in responding to the grant solicitation. Applicants may address Priorities Three and Four depending upon the results of their gap analysis. Initiatives funded under the grant are intended to supplement, not supplant, existing efforts. Funds must be spent in accordance with the following identified priorities:

- 1) **Adhering to Evidence-Based, Whole-School Approaches:** Expand the teacher as advisor model to include feeder patterns within school systems and appropriate postsecondary partners. This would mean that the TAP is implemented at a high school along with the feeder schools that send students to the high school. Applicants must describe how the initiative will align across the learning levels and include postsecondary “diploma to degree” activities. Through the gap analysis, applicants will determine where to focus their efforts to ensure that the system is aligned. Applicants must also explain how school counselors and teachers will collaborate to provide appropriate academic counseling for students and parents to monitor and improve students’ academic achievement and college and career readiness.
- 2) **Systemic Collaboration for Secondary and Postsecondary Counseling:** To increase systemic collaboration for secondary and postsecondary counseling, applicants must explain how both levels are working together to implement strategies that align counseling activities across grade bands and learning levels. The identified activities should result from the gap analysis and target improving the overall system of college and career counseling. Collaborative efforts between secondary and postsecondary should become part of the norm as school staff build and/or enhance a college-going culture.
- 3) **Professional Development and Continuing Education:** To implement evidence-based, whole-school approaches for college and career counseling, applicants must explain how they will provide regular professional development. Ongoing professional development for teachers, school counselors, faculty, advisors, admission staff and administrators is a critical component of a college and career counseling. Applicants must explain how they will implement a systemic approach to PD that is both vertically and horizontally aligned. Vertical alignment takes place across learning levels so that PD is organized by local school system feeder patterns and postsecondary education. Horizontal alignment occurs when PD crosses curriculum or content areas.
- 4) **The Use of Technology for Supporting College and Career Ready Practices:** Applicants must describe how they are currently using Computer-Assisted Career Guidance (CACG) Programs for college and career counseling. In keeping with the technology trends of today as a way of engaging

students in the educational process, CACG programs offer one strategy to connect students and parents to the academic and career planning process. These computerized systems vary in their components but all contain mechanisms for career and academic planning to take place. In order to apply to use funds under this priority, a CACG program must already be in place. Funds may be used to enhance the system to provide academic and career planning activities for all students. A plan must be included describing how the additional features to the system will be sustained after the grant funds end.

- 5) **Monitoring and Evaluating College and Career Readiness Systems:** As a result of the gap analysis, applicants must identify the college and career-ready outcomes they plan to accomplish and describe how they will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness their achievement. Applicants should also describe how results will be used to improve the strategies funded under the grant, including the postsecondary initiatives designed to create a college-going culture through appropriate academic and career planning. Monitoring comprehensive college and career readiness systems as well as using the results of the evaluation process to improve service delivery are critical practices that must be in place in building a comprehensive, effective system of college and career counseling.

Eligible Applicants

In order to apply for a grant, local school systems must partner with a postsecondary institution and identify the feeder schools included in the initiative. All partnerships must jointly agree on and designate one lead applicant. Applicants must complete a gap analysis for each of the schools and colleges to demonstrate readiness to implement a comprehensive system of college and career counseling. Additional components of the grant solicitation will be fully described if and when funding is appropriated for this initiative.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, to ensure that Maryland continues to have among the most educated populace in the country, all students must graduate with the academic knowledge and technical skills needed for success in postsecondary education and careers. Today, 38.7% of adults in the United States and 45.4% of Marylanders ages 25 to 64 have a postsecondary degree (Associate's degree or above) (U.S. Census, 2011). In order to meet and exceed Governor O'Malley's goal of 55% of Maryland adults age 25 to 64 obtaining an Associate's degree or above by 2025, the strategies outlined in this plan must be implemented through a collaborative effort among educators and the broader community. In conclusion, as prescribed in SB740, the design team submits this plan so that funding can be considered for inclusion in the fiscal year 2015 operating budget.

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