

Advising at Scale: For Districts

Equitable Postsecondary Advising Systems

Expanding access to help close the degree divide

OVERVIEW

Postsecondary education dramatically increases the likelihood of employment and economic success. This is true for elite colleges, other four-year institutions, and community colleges. But many young people, especially those furthest from opportunity and from the most underserved communities, are not accessing postsecondary pathways or realizing the benefits that come with a degree. To disrupt this inequity, we must better support students to identify, pursue, and complete college, thereby improving their life trajectory.

Quality postsecondary advising – equipping students to identify and evaluate their full set of postsecondary options and to select and successfully pursue the best option for them – is one critical lever for closing the degree divide.

A Common Vision:
All high school students equitably receive high-quality postsecondary advising that results in a successful transition to college and career

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVISING SYSTEMS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

Equitable: Advising supports are tiered and differentiated such that all students receive supports that meet their specific needs

High-quality: Well-trained advisers provide information and assistance to students using resources, curricula, tools, and delivery models that have been demonstrated to be effective

Measurable: Advising meaningfully contributes to and accelerates student progress toward measurable postsecondary outcomes

Aligned to college and career: Supports enable the exploration of multiple pathways to achieving postsecondary success, including a range of college and career options

Financially sustainable: The ongoing costs of delivering supports are primarily covered by public revenue and are not dependent on philanthropy

CONDITIONS REQUIRED TO CREATE EXPAND ACCESS TO THESE SYSTEMS

Our field research suggests that most K-12 systems are relatively early in figuring out how to best deliver postsecondary advising supports. To significantly expand advising access, districts – with the partnership of college access organizations, policymakers, funders and other supporters – must focus on creating six conditions for success.



Case for Change

Build broad support for postsecondary success as a unifying purpose of the core work of K-12



Vision & Milestones

Create a shared district vision for postsecondary outcomes and a strategy to achieve the key milestones that students must reach to successfully navigate postsecondary pathways



Data & Platforms

Use data to understand student needs – prioritizing milestones and which student needs to address – and to track student outcomes



Supports – Content, Coverage, & Delivery

Identify the internal supports and resources available and how/whether to leverage outside supports



Coordination & Continuous Improvement

Identify partners, establish staffing models, and define roles in order to optimize the provision of services, reducing duplication and ensuring coordination



Resources

Identify and secure adequate and sustainable financial resources

FOR MORE INFORMATION bit.ly/PostSecondaryAccess

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CRITICAL STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING POSTSECONDARY ADVISING SUPPORTS

When the Case for Change already exists, and a K-12 system is already implementing postsecondary advising, the focus should be on making the work more effective and sustainable. At a high level, there are a few strategies that are most critical for driving impact:

Focus on data

Districts should define what success looks like and what the indicators are of success (and CAOs and intermediaries can support districts in doing that). Decisions about what advising services to provide should be anchored in data, starting with a coverage map of which students are receiving supports and their outcomes. Systems and platforms to track, report, share, and discuss data are critical to success.

Ensure equitable access

Districts that have multiple CAO partners should ensure that services and supports are being delivered efficiently and to the broadest possible set of students. Districts should use coverage maps to assess how equitably supports are being delivered across schools and student groups. Where overlap exists, districts should reallocate resources to meet the needs of underserved students through the most effective option.

Move toward sustainability

Districts should push CAO partners to develop multiyear approaches that phase down direct student support over time, ensuring the district builds the capacity needed to own the delivery of core student supports.

If the Case for Change is not already established in the District, focus on:

Making the case

Funders, the business community, CAOs, and any district champions can catalyze a coalition of stakeholders to advocate for increased emphasis on postsecondary advising.

Building ground-up support

CAOs and/or individual school leaders can pilot models in a few schools to demonstrate to district leadership the impact of the work.

Increasing accountability/transparency

Funders and the business community can use their collective voice and financial resources to advocate for state accountability and transparency policies that incentivize leaders to focus on postsecondary advising.

Select Recommendations for Districts to Accelerate Progress

Case for Change



- Build postsecondary access metrics into district and school accountability frameworks
- Hire superintendents and high school principals who deeply believe college access is a core K-12 role

Vision & Milestones



- Define the district's vision and goals for college access
- Seek out existing frameworks for college advising milestones and collaborate with CAOs, funders, regional CANs, and other districts to enhance and improve on these frameworks

Data & Platforms



- Leverage National Student Clearinghouse student tracker to access postsecondary metrics for high school alumni
- Use disaggregated data to identify district and/or subgroup needs (working with a consultant if necessary)

Supports — Content, Coverage, & Delivery



- Build baseline college advising activities (e.g., presentations, drop-in hours on FAFSA) into existing counselor job descriptions and trainings
- Partner with CAOs to address identified needs/specific gaps in internal capacity

Coordination & Continuous Improvement



- Take an active role in determining who will coordinate college advising activities in the district (district department or a CAO/intermediary)
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities of all people/entities providing college advising services are clearly defined

Resources



- Advocate for greater access to state and federal funds available for postsecondary advising
- Align district resources to activities proven to be effective

Access the full research report, including additional strategies and recommendations aligned to the six conditions, [here](#).

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