

School Counselor Preparation:

A Regional Case Study Analysis of the
Formal and Informal College
Counseling Curriculum

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How are Guidance Counselors Prepared for their Role as College Advisors?

“By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world”

-President Barack Obama, February 24, 2009

- One critical barrier to postsecondary enrollment is the lack of specific knowledge on the college going process
- Guidance/School counselors play a critical role
- McDonough (2005) counselors are limited through:
 - High national student to counselor ratio
 - Debates over college advising role as counseling or marketing function of colleges and universities
 - Increased administrative responsibilities
 - College counseling has not been part of the formal curriculum



Research Framework

“...(T)raining in college counseling is often not part of a school counselor’s formal education, as college counseling has traditionally been viewed as inconsistent with a counselor’s focus on students’ mental health”

-McDonough (2005, p. 134)

- Signaling Theory
 - Misalignment of educational systems results in erratic and inconsistent signals being sent to student along the educational pipeline (Kirst & Venezia, 2004)
- Role of School Counselors
 - Exist in the critical intersection between secondary and postsecondary opportunity



Methodology

- Instrumental Case Study Design
 - Designed to place a situation within its context
- Western New York Consortium of High Education (WNYCHE)
 - 22 Colleges and Universities within a 8 county region in one state
 - Graduating roughly 16,000 students per year
- Five School Counseling Programs within the region
- Professional Development Opportunities within Region



Context and Results

Is it Reasonable to Expect School Counselors to Provide College Advising?

- National Standards
- State Expectations and certification
- Counselors reported use of time



Formal Curriculum

- None of the programs required a course in college advising
- Two out of Five offered Elective in College advising
- All Graduate Curriculums included a course in Career Development
- Four out of the five programs allow for electives
- At three of the colleges also have programs in Higher Education or Students Affairs from which students could take electives.



Informal Curriculum

- Professional Development
 - New York State Association of College Admissions Counselors (NYSACAC)
 - New York State High Education Services Corporation (NYS-HESC)
 - State University of New York College Admissions Professionals (SUNYCAP) Operation Inform
 - WNYCHE Annual School Counselor Breakfast
- Casual Interactions of Counselor and Admissions Professionals



Conclusion

- An under reliance on the formal curriculum to prepare Guidance Counselors to become college advisors
 - Focus on Counseling aspects of the position
 - Career and College Counseling exist as 3 credits out of a 60 credit hour program
- Opportunities exist for training but not universally accessible
 - No single source provides a complete picture
- The counselor to student ratio isn't the only college counseling challenge the system faces



Questions?

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