THE COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS ASSESSMENT (CASA): USING DATA TO EVALUATE AND ENHANCE A SCHOOL’S COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

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USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

- Founded in 2007
- Dedicated to research and action that advances the societal benefit of enrollment policies and practices in higher education
- In 2010, the center became part of the USC Rossier School of Education, one of the world’s premier schools committed to strengthening society through excellence in education
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Today’s Current Context

- We know that college is important
  - In 2006, bachelor’s degree holders earned 28% more than associate degree holders and 50% more than those with a high school diploma
  - Eight in ten job openings in the U.S. over the next decade will require postsecondary education or training
  - Expectations of employers and colleges are converging
  - There are social benefits associated with educational attainment

- We know that President Obama has set the goal of making the U.S. the nation with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020

- We know that Secretary Duncan believes schools should be held responsible for student outcomes
Today’s Current Context

- We know not enough students are enrolling in college
  - Over 30% of students who complete high school do not immediately enroll in a postsecondary institution
  - 48% of 18- to 24-year olds have no college education whatsoever
  - Gaps in the college enrollment rate continue to persist by race/ethnicity, family income, and parental education

- We know not enough students are completing college
  - 37% of students who immediately enroll in a four-year institution will not graduate within six years
  - Less than one-third of the U.S. population has completed a bachelor’s degree
  - The bachelor’s degree attainment gap between white and non-white students has widened in the last three decades
The Problem

- America’s high schools do not currently have a reliable measure of their college-going culture, one which can evaluate and enhance efforts to encourage, counsel, and otherwise prepare students for college and career success.
- Well-recognized college readiness best practices have not been tied to actual college-going behavior.
The Solution

- The College Access and Success Assessment (CASA)
  - A diagnostic tool that measures school improvement efforts through the eyes and behavior of students within the school.

- CASA is founded upon the following notion:
  - A school’s college-going culture is marked by the extent to which student views of the environment, their attitudes, and their behaviors align with the opportunities and perspectives necessary to ensure access to and success in postsecondary education (en route to productive and sustainable careers)
CASA

- A survey of approximately 150 questions/statements
- Survey 12th grade students within each school who have been enrolled from 9th through 12th grade
- Survey administered during one 45 minute class period
- Survey is comprised of three components:
  - Environmental
  - Attitudinal
  - Behavioral
- Uses National Student Clearinghouse data to determine predictive values of survey constructs for college attendance and success
Desired CASA Outcomes

- Valid and reliable measure of environmental, attitudinal and behavioral components at student, school, and district levels

- Estimates of predicted outcomes given a school’s component values
Benefits

- Concise
- Empirically sound
- Provides a data-driven barometer
  - Schools can measure the extent to which they have a college-going culture and identify short-term and long-term trends in specific areas of focus
  - Schools can make informed decisions regarding improvement efforts
- Simple and valid accountability
- Benchmarking capacity
- Expert guidance
- Best practices web portal
CASA: Environmental Component

- Measures the extent to which students perceive their schools help to foster a college-going culture

- Environmental Constructs
  - Accountability
  - Communication
  - Curriculum
  - School Requirements
  - Student Tracking/Use of Data
  - School Climate
  - Student Support
  - Advising
  - School Facilities
  - Student Co-Curricular Opportunities
  - Support for Parents/Family Members
  - Partnerships
CASA: Environmental Component

- My school’s mission statement is focused on college readiness.
- My school principal communicates a vision, mission, and/or focus for the school community centered on preparing students for college.
- Teachers help students understand how what they learn in the classroom develops the skills they need to be ready for college.
- Teachers at my school believe all students have the potential to go to college.
- My counselor clearly explains the educational requirements for various types of careers.
**CASA:**

**Environmental Component**

- *(YES/NO/NOT SURE)* RESPONSE OPTION STATEMENTS:
  - My school posts school-wide college goals (may include your school’s graduation rate, college attendance rate, and/or college completion goals).
  - I have been placed into a college prep curriculum.
  - My school requires students to submit at least one college application as a graduation requirement.
  - My counselor has mapped out a four-year high school course plan for me that is meant to prepare me for college.
  - My school offers testing fee waivers for students wishing to take the SAT or ACT.
CASA: Attitudinal Component

- Assesses student attitudes regarding the extent to which they value a college degree and their perceived capacity to pursue and complete a college degree

- Attitudinal Constructs
  - Perceived value of a college degree
  - College preparation
  - The college application process
  - The admissions process
  - The financial aid process/college costs
  - Enrollment in college
  - How college works
  - Expectations for college success
CASA:
Attitudinal Component

- A college degree is necessary to achieve my career goals.

- The long-term benefits of earning a college degree outweigh the short-term costs.

- I understand where to find a college application.

- I understand how to complete a college application.

- Thinking about your capacity to pay for college using a combination of personal resources, family resources and/or expected financial aid, please state your level of agreement with the following statement: I can afford to attend college.

- I will earn a bachelor’s degree within six years of graduating from high school.
CASA: Behavioral Component

- Measures the extent to which students are behaving in ways conducive to college-going and in ways that reflect college readiness.

- Constructs come from environmental component as well as other research.
CASA: Behavioral Component

- I have met with teachers outside of regular class time for advice or assistance with schoolwork.

- Over the course of your high school career, how often have you:
  - Applied ideas learned in one class to an assignment in another class

- (Yes/No/Not Sure):
  - I have completed the federal financial aid application form (FAFSA).
  - I have attended a workshop about how to pay for college.
  - I have written a personal statement for use with college applications.
2010 Pilot Study

- Intended to move beyond face validity to establish reliability, construct validity and predictive validity
- RQ1: To what extent can we measure the concept of college-going culture?
- RQ2: To what extent can our measures of college-going culture predict specific outcomes related to college access and college success?
2010 Pilot Study

- **Partner districts**
  - Fresno Unified School District (CA)
  - Long Beach Unified School District (CA)

- **Partner district characteristics**
  - Rural and urban geographic locations
  - 80% students of color
  - 27% English learners
  - 68-80% of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals
Pilot Study Analysis

- Cleaned and merged data sets
- Checked the reliability of scales
  - Combined items to create measurable component constructs and sub-constructs
    - Identified reliability coefficients
  - Only analytical approach thus far
Pilot Study Findings

RQ1: To what extent can we measure the concept of college-going culture?

- **Environmental**
  - 80 items
  - Coefficient alpha of .913

- **Attitudinal**
  - 16 items
  - Coefficient alpha of .761

- **Behavioral**
  - 35 items
  - Coefficient alpha of .839
Pilot Study Findings

- Sub-construct reliability
  - Environmental
    - Advising (0.79)
    - School Climate (0.73)
    - Communication (0.71)
    - Resources dedicated for college-going services (0.65)
    - Co-curricular opportunities (0.64)
Pilot Study Findings

- RQ2: To what extent can our measures of college-going culture predict specific outcomes related to college access and college success? (predictive validity)
  - NSC data details:
    - College yes/no (includes institution)
      - If so, 2-yr/4-yr
    - Enrollment status (FT, PT, W)
Pilot Study Lessons Learned

- We can reliably (consistently) measure college-going culture components in the aggregate.
- We can reliably measure a number of smaller, more focused sub-constructs as well within the environmental component.
- We can provide descriptive data to inform and add depth to these measures.
Moving Forward: Continuing Analyses and CASA Refinements

- We still need to ensure the instrument measures what we say it measures (construct validity)
- We are still in the process of determining the capacity for the instrument to predict student outcomes (predictive validity)
- On-going efforts to enhance the reliability of component sub-construct measures
- More detailed outcomes data from the NSC and additional sources such as the Partnership to Assess College and Career Readiness (PARCC)
Next Steps

- Continued analyses
- Pilot study reports to be released in June 2011
- CASA refinements
- Summer/Fall 2011 district/school/funding partner outreach
- Implementation of the CASA in up to 100 high-need, urban schools (public and charter) nationally in April 2012
Questions and Feedback

Presentation will be available at:
http://www.usc.edu/cerpp

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