



The College Board National Office for School
Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA)

2011 National Survey of School Counselors

Counseling at a Crossroads

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2011 National Survey of School Counselors

Counseling at a Crossroads

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Produced for the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center by

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Contents

An Open Letter to the American People	4
Executive Summary	5
Counseling at a Crossroads	10
Survey Overview	12
Counselors See a Broken School System in Need of Reform	12
Counselors Provide Unique, Underutilized Contributions to Schools	21
Counselors Are Supportive of Certain Accountability Measures	31
Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness	32
Paths Forward	38
In Schools and Communities	38
In States	39
In the Nation	40
Conclusion	42
Acknowledgments	43
Methodology	44
Appendixes	
Appendix 1: Profile of School Counselors	45
Appendix 2: Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation	51
Bibliography	53

An Open Letter to the American People

School counselors are highly valuable professionals in the education system, but they are also among the least strategically deployed. This is a national loss, especially given the fact that school counselors are uniquely positioned, in ways that many educators are not, to have a complete picture of the dreams, hopes, life circumstances, challenges and needs of their students. Counselors have both a holistic view of the students in their schools and the opportunity to provide targeted supports to keep these students on track for success, year after year.

For the past century, counselors have been hard at work performing many roles in their schools, from guiding student decision making, helping students to address personal problems and working with parents, to administering tests, teaching and filling other gaps unrelated to counseling. Counselors' roles have been as diverse as the students they serve, often resulting in an unclear mission, a lack of accountability for student success, and having school counseling seen as "a profession in search of identity."¹ Consequently, even though there are nearly as many school counselors as administrators across America,² counselors have been largely left out of the education reform movement.

To understand the perspectives of counselors, the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, Civic Enterprises, and Peter D. Hart Research Associates collaborated to survey 5,308 middle and high school counselors, which is the largest and broadest national survey of these education professionals to date. We sought insight into how they view their roles and missions and spend their days, as we believe they might be more strategically deployed to better serve students. We also were interested in their perspectives on measures of accountability and education policies and practices that could strengthen their roles and the systems in which they work. We hoped to learn what challenges they face and what solutions might be found to better leverage the extraordinary resource that school counselors represent.

1. Schimmel, C. 2008. "School Counseling: A Brief Historical Overview." West Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/history.html>

2. United States Department of Labor. 2011. "Education Administrators." Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010–2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos007.htm>; United States Department of Labor. 2011. "Counselors." Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010–2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm>

We are at a crossroads in American education in defining the role our nation's school counselors will play to help improve student achievement. America is fast losing its place in the world in the highest levels of educational attainment. The costs to students, communities, the economy and our nation merit an urgent national response — one that includes our counselors. At a time when school district dollars are more constrained than ever, and when one in four public school students fails to graduate on time,³ now is the time to be highly strategic with these precious educational resources. In the pages that follow, we share the perspectives of school counselors to better understand how the school counselor, a critical component of the education sector and an underutilized tool in education reform, can be better leveraged to promote student achievement and ensure more students graduate from high school ready for college and their careers.

3. Balfanz, R. et al. 2010. *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic*. Civic Enterprises.

Executive Summary

This survey of more than 5,300 middle school and high school counselors reveals deep concerns within the profession and sheds light on opportunities to better utilize these valuable leaders in America's schools. The frustrations and hopes of school counselors reflect the central message of this report: school counseling as a profession is at a crossroads. Despite the aspirations of counselors to effectively help students succeed in school and fulfill their dreams, the mission and roles of counselors in the education system must be more clearly defined; schools must create measures of accountability to track their effectiveness; and policymakers and key stakeholders must integrate counselors into reform efforts to maximize their impact in schools across America. School counselors believe their mission should be to prepare children for high school graduation, college and careers, and they report that they are ready to lead in the effort to dramatically accelerate student achievement, in school, careers and life.

Survey Overview

Counselors See a Broken School System in Need of Reform

Counselors, on average, have high expectations for themselves, their students, their schools, and the education system, yet reality falls far short of their hopes. Although counselors want a high-quality education for all students, these professionals report a broken system that does not align with their aspirations. They call for changes to the educational system, view themselves as leaders in effecting change, and want more support.

- ✓ More than eight in 10 counselors report that a top mission of schools should be to ensure that all students complete 12th grade ready to succeed in college and careers (85 percent rated this as a 9 or a 10 on a 10-point scale), yet only 30 percent of all school counselors and 19 percent of those in high poverty schools (as measured by 75 percent or more of the students on free or reduced-price lunches) see this as their school's mission in reality.
 - Nine in 10 counselors (89 percent rate this as a 9 or a 10) say that the mission of schools should be that all students, regardless of background, have equal access to a high-quality education, but only 38 percent of all counselors and 32 percent in high poverty schools see this as a reality. Counselors in low poverty

schools (as measured by 25 percent or fewer students on free or reduced-price lunches) fare only slightly better, with only 39 percent reporting this as a reality in their schools.

- Nearly all counselors (93 percent) say they support a strategic approach to promote college and career readiness by 12th grade, including 57 percent who strongly support this approach. However, more than one in three of all counselors (35 percent) and 43 percent of counselors in lower-income schools do not think they have the support and resources to be successful at promoting this mission.
- ✓ More than half of counselors (55 percent) say significant changes are needed in schools, and 9 percent say a complete overhaul is necessary. Nearly every counselor (99 percent) agrees that they should exercise leadership in advocating for students' access to rigorous academic preparation, as well as for other college and career-readiness counseling, even if others in the school do not see counselors in this leadership role.

Counselors Provide Unique, Underutilized Contributions to Schools

School counselors are a vital, but often overlooked part of the education system, playing key roles in supporting students in holistic ways. Counselors, nearly half of whom (49 percent) are former teachers themselves, are uniquely positioned to support student achievement not only because of their specialized education, but also because they have a more complete picture of every student they counsel, understanding their hopes and life circumstances, while working with them from year to year to help them meet both academic and nonacademic needs.

- ✓ More than eight in 10 counselors say the mission of school counselors should be: to address student problems so that all students graduate from high school (85 percent rate this a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale); to ensure that all students earn a high school diploma and graduate ready to succeed (84 percent); and to help students mature and develop skills for the adult world (83 percent). Yet, few say that these goals closely fit the mission of their school in reality, including:
 - A 50 percentage-point gap between the ideal and the reality of helping students mature and develop;

- A 41 percentage-point gap between the ideal and the reality of addressing student problems so all can graduate from high school; and
 - A 38 percentage-point gap between the ideal and the reality of ensuring all students earn a high school diploma ready to succeed.
- ✓ Three out of four counselors (74 percent) rate their unique role (one of their two or three most important contributions among a list of five) as student advocates who create pathways and support to ensure all students have opportunities to achieve postsecondary goals, while only 42 percent say their schools take advantage of this contribution (giving ratings of 9 or 10).
- Three out of five counselors (62 percent) see their specialized training to work with the whole student as a top contribution, but only two in five (40 percent) see this as well utilized in their schools.
 - School counselors give their schools the most credit for seeing their value in building trusted relationships. Over six in 10 (65 percent) say their unique contribution is establishing a trusting relationship with students and nearly as many (57 percent) agree that their school takes advantage of this skill set.
- ✓ The majority of counselors would like to spend more time on targeted activities that promote student success, including career counseling and exploration (75 percent), student academic planning (64 percent), and building a college-going culture (56 percent). More than two out of three (67 percent) would like to spend less time on administrative tasks.
- Three-fourths of counselors (75 percent) in high poverty schools want to spend more time on building a college-going culture, compared to 55 percent of counselors in low poverty schools; 72 percent in high poverty schools want to spend more time on student academic planning, versus 63 percent of counselors in low poverty schools; and nearly equal and high percentages of counselors in higher-income schools and high poverty schools (79 percent versus 75 percent) want to spend more time on career counseling and exploration.
 - More than half of counselors, including 59 percent of middle school counselors and 60 percent of public school counselors, want to spend more time building a college-going culture.
- Counselors are largely divided, however, on where to spend their time to advance equity in education, with 52 percent saying each student should receive equal amounts of support and attention and 48 percent wanting to target students with the greatest challenges.
 - Although the majority of counselors have a master's degree (73 percent) and important prior work experience (58 percent were teachers or administrators), only a small minority feel very well trained for their jobs (only 16 percent rate their training as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale). Nearly three in 10 (28 percent) believe their training did not prepare them well for their job and more than half (56 percent) feel only somewhat well trained.
 - The majority of counselors have sought out additional training in targeted areas to promote student achievement, including in technology use (75 percent); in college and career counseling (68 percent); in federal and state policies for reporting abuse (59 percent); and in learning styles, special education regulations and understanding test results (58 percent in each case).

Counselors Support Certain Accountability Measures

In an era of data-driven education, counselors will only be viewed as critical assets in education and relevant to the reform agenda once they are accountable for student success in schools. They must be responsible for defining their contribution and responsibility — and for presenting how they can be part of existing measures of accountability. Counselors support multiple measures of accountability that align with their views of their mission and unique role.

- ✓ The majority of high school counselors endorse certain accountability measures as fair and appropriate (with a rating of 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale) in assessing counselor effectiveness, including measuring their own success, based on:
- Transcript audits of graduation readiness (62 percent);
 - Completion of college-preparatory course sequence (61 percent);

- Students' gaining access to advanced classes/tests (60 percent);
 - High school graduation rates (57 percent); and
 - College application rates (57 percent).
- ✓ More than six in 10 counselors (61 percent) support accountability measures and incentives for counselors to meet the 12th-grade college and career-ready goal, with African American counselors (50 percent) twice as likely as white counselors (25 percent) to strongly support creating these measures and incentives. This proposal also garners stronger than average support among counselors in urban public schools (32 percent strongly support), schools with high minority populations (44 percent), and schools with lower-income students (38 percent).
- ✓ There is less support for other specific measures of accountability, with only a minority of high school counselors endorsing measures of effectiveness as fair and appropriate (with a rating of 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale), such as:
- College acceptance rates (46 percent);
 - FAFSA completion rates (40 percent); and
 - Dropout rates (37 percent).
- ✓ The majority (55 percent) of middle school counselors endorse middle school completion rates as a fair and appropriate measure of effectiveness (with a rating of 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale).
- Nearly half of middle school counselors (47 percent) accept high school graduation rates as an appropriate accountability measure.
 - Four in 10 middle school counselors (40 percent) rank college acceptance rates as fair and appropriate measures of counselor effectiveness, even though middle school counselors are working with students up to seven years before college acceptance decisions would be made.

Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness

Only 44 percent of high school freshmen and 69 percent of recent high school graduates enroll in a postsecondary

institution.⁴ Even fewer graduate. Counselors are uniquely positioned to help reverse these trends, restoring America's status as first in the world in college attainment. Counselors have strong views on areas ripe for reform:

- ✓ When asked to rate reform proposals, nearly all counselors (95 percent) are in favor of additional support, time and empowerment for leadership to give students what they need for college, even outpacing 91 percent reporting support for reducing administrative tasks and 90 percent wanting smaller caseloads.
- ✓ Counselors also express strong support for other reforms, including:
 - 88 percent support counselor training to help students align the jobs they want with what the skills they will need to succeed in those jobs;
 - 87 percent support collaboration among middle/high school counselors and colleges to build a college-going culture;
 - 65 percent support data collection and dissemination on high school graduate career and college success; and
 - 61 percent support the creation of accountability measures and incentives for counselors.
- ✓ When provided a college and career readiness framework (the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's Eight Components), counselors are in favor of all the components, but far fewer rate their school as successful on each measure. The top-rated components are:
 - More than seven in 10 counselors (72 percent) say the College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes component is very important, yet only 30 percent rate their school as successful in achieving this measure;
 - More than seven in 10 counselors (73 percent) rate College and Career Admission Processes as very

4. National Center for Education Statistics. 2009. "Table 201: Recent High School Completers and Their Enrollment in College, by Race/Ethnicity." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_201.asp?; Mortenson, T. 2008. "Postsecondary Opportunity." The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Retrieved from: <http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=62&year=2008&level=nation&mode=data&state=0>

important, yet only 30 percent say their school is successful; and

- More than seven in 10 (71 percent) rate Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness as very important, but only 34 percent say their school is successful.

Paths Forward: Counselors

We are facing a critical crossroads in education reform: for the first time in our history, this generation of students is at risk of having lower educational attainment than their parents.^{5,6} Schools will need every asset available — especially professionals in schools who have a complete picture of students and can follow and support them over time — to ensure they get the support they need to stay on track to graduate from high school, ready for college and career. With a clear mission, accountability for results, and a clear contribution to school improvement efforts, counselors can fulfill their desire to be strong student advocates. To accelerate this progress, we must take the following actions:

In Schools and Communities

- **Align the Mission of Counselors with the Needs of Students.** Given America's high school and college completion crises and accompanying labor market skills gap, counselors should be leaders focused on keeping students on track to graduate high school, ready for college and career. The mission of counselors should be tightly tied to this goal and roles designed to meet it.
- **Focus Counselor's Work on Activities that Accelerate Student Success.** Administrators, and other supervisors, should focus the work of counselors on activities that support and improve student outcomes, redeploying less expensive, and less highly skilled employees to perform administrative tasks.
- **Target Professional Development Dollars.** The No Child Left Behind Act provides districts with the flexibility and resources to apply professional development and other funds as states and districts see fit. Our survey

shows that counselors are eager to receive professional development, and that these training sessions should be targeted at critical levers like college and career readiness, financial aid, and the use of technology to promote these goals.

- **Schools Should Pilot Test Measures of Accountability.** With the importance of accountability and the support among counselors for measures of effectiveness that relate to their mission and their unique role in boosting student success, districts and schools should accelerate the testing of such performance-based measures and report the results. Counselors should be given incentives to focus on and achieve success on accountability measures.
- **Coordinate Initiatives with Community-Based Organizations.** Counselors report tremendous workloads. There are, however, resources to support their efforts. Nonprofit and community-based college access programs are tremendous assets to students, families and schools, but are often staffed with volunteers or professionals who are not as well trained as counselors. Counselors should utilize these services to lessen their individual workloads and also, when appropriate, be considered the point person in schools for coordinating these initiatives.

In States

- **Align Counselor Education and Training Requirements with the Needs on the Ground.** Counselors indicate that their preservice training, while somewhat satisfactory, does not adequately prepare them for the realities they are facing in schools. Course requirements should be updated to reflect this reality, including mandatory course work on advising for college readiness, access and affordability.
- **Redefine Certification Requirements to Advance College and Career Readiness from a Systems Perspective.** Counselors are caught between crosscurrents asking them to play very different roles, thus limiting their effectiveness. Counselors report a preference for work in which one-on-one counseling is part — but not all — of their role.
- **Enact and Enforce Caseload Requirements.** As of 2009, only five states met the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommended ratio of 250 students per counselor (Louisiana, Mississippi, New

5. Time Is the Enemy: The Surprising Truth About Why Today's College Students Aren't Graduating and What Needs to Change. 2011. Complete College America. Retrieved from http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA_national_EMBARGO.pdf

6. U.S. Census Bureau. CPS Historical Time Series Tables: Table A-2. Percent of People 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed High School or College, by Race, Hispanic Origin and Sex: Selected Years 1940 to 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/historical/index.html>

Hampshire, Vermont and Wyoming).⁷ States that do not have caseload maximums should create them, and all states should enforce manageable student-to-counselor - ratios. These efforts could align with reforms that break up large schools into smaller, more personal learning environments.

in the areas of technology, accountability, and the role of counselors in closing the achievement gap and as leaders in the education system.

In the Nation

- **Enlist Counselors' Expertise in the Grad Nation Campaign.** Counselors have been largely left out of the education reform agenda — until now. As one example, counselors will now be enrolled as key members of the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation, contributing their expertise to help America achieve a national graduation rate of 90 percent by 2020 and the highest college attainment rates in the world.
- **Create and Implement Accountability Measures.** Until counselors are accountable for success in our schools, they will not be viewed as critical leaders in the system. We need to continue testing measures of accountability for counselors from the ground up to see what the emerging consensus will produce in terms of effectiveness, how progress will be measured, and how counselors will be held to the standards that are created.
- **Continue Strategic Philanthropic Investments in the Counseling Profession.** Some national foundations have prioritized counselors as a strategic investment. Other local and national foundations should follow their lead.
- **Align Federal Legislation, especially ESEA, with High-Impact Counseling Initiatives.** We expect that a focal point of the upcoming Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization will be to ensure that students are college and career ready. This should include a focus on how counselors can be better leveraged to promote college readiness and academic achievement for the lowest-performing students and reduce the structural barriers to quality college guidance.
- **Expand Research Initiatives Focused on the Efficacy of the Counseling Profession.** The body of information on school counseling consistently shows a field that struggles with role definition and measuring efficacy and is inconsistently integrated into or absent from the larger education reform agenda. Research is particularly limited

7. National Center for Education Statistics. 2009. "Common Core of Data." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences.

Counseling at a Crossroads

The Perspectives and Promise of School Counselors in American Education

This report of school counseling in America comes at a time when the interest in high school graduation and college attainment is high and its importance is clearly recognized. Across the country, young people are dreaming about and planning to attend college in large numbers. A poll released in 2005 showed that 87 percent of all young people want to go to college.⁸ Young people are not alone in thinking about this goal; parents, especially those of minority groups under-represented in higher education, also see a need for postsecondary education. In fact, 92 percent of African American parents and 90 percent of Hispanic parents consider college for their children very important, as do 78 percent of Caucasian parents.⁹

Often, however, these dreams for the future are not being realized. Many young people never enroll in a postsecondary institution and even fewer ever graduate. Current statistics show that only 44 percent of high school freshmen and 69 percent of recent high school graduates enroll in a postsecondary institution.¹⁰ These statistics shed light on the severity of the U.S. high school dropout crisis, with one-fourth of all public high school students and 40 percent of minorities failing to graduate on time.¹¹ Of the students who do complete high school, only 57 percent complete a bachelor's degree within six years, and only 28 percent complete an associate degree within three years.¹²

A labor market skills gap accompanies this crisis in high school and college completion. Unlike a generation ago, the majority of job openings in the next decade will require at least some postsecondary education.¹³ Experts estimate that despite high unemployment rates overall, American businesses are in need of 97 million workers for high- or middle-skill jobs, yet only 45 million Americans currently possess the necessary education and skills to qualify for these positions.¹⁴ This skills gap illustrates the importance of today's postsecondary credentials and sheds light on why postsecondary planning is increasingly an essential component of not only high-quality school counseling, but also the U.S. economy and America's future.

Counselors are uniquely positioned to help address these key gaps in education and workforce development, given their unique position within the school, which allows them to work with the whole child, supporting both academic and nonacademic needs. The research on the counseling profession, however, is limited. For example, utilizing Google Scholar, a database that includes America's largest scholarly publishers, the search term "teacher" produced more than 2 million results, and "superintendent" produced more than half a million. By comparison, "school counselor" produced just 230,000 results and "guidance counselor" only 116,000.¹⁵ Counselors are also missing from major education reform discussions and initiatives, such as the Grad Nation campaign to boost high school and college graduation rates. To address these information and participation gaps, the College Board's Advocacy & Policy Center, partnering with Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates, launched the largest-ever national survey of middle and high school counselors. This survey, which gathered the opinions of 5,308 middle and high school counselors, is the first entry in an annual initiative.

The development of the survey and the analysis of the survey findings were informed by the most recent and relevant research available in the field, including more than 300 sources ranging from studies to evaluations, surveys to interviews. The research focused on middle and high school counselors, excluding work on elementary school counselors, private college admission counselors and counselors at colleges. The research also focused on the counselor's

8. Bridgeland, J. M. et al. 2006. *The Silent Epidemic: Perspective of High School Dropouts*. Civic Enterprises.

9. Bridgeland, J. M. et al. 2008. *One Dream, Two Realities: Perspectives of Parents on America's High Schools*. Civic Enterprises, citing a poll released by MTV and the National Governors Association.

10. National Center for Education Statistics. 2009. "Table 201: Recent High School Completers and Their Enrollment in College, by Race/Ethnicity." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_201.asp; Mortenson, T. 2008. "Postsecondary Opportunity." The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Retrieved from: <http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=62&year=2008&level=nation&mode=data&state=0>

11. Balfanz, R. et al. 2010. *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic*. Civic Enterprises.

12. National Center for Education Statistics. 2009. "Table 331: Graduation Rates of First-Time Postsecondary Students Who Started as Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_331.asp?referrer=report

13. Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce. "College Is Still the Best Option." Georgetown University. Retrieved from: <http://www9.georgetown.edu/>

14. Gordon, E. E. 2009. *The Global Talent Crisis*. *The Futurist*, September–October, 2009, 34–39.

15. The search terms, "teacher," "superintendent," "school counselor," and "guidance counselor" were entered separately on July 17, 2011, at <http://scholar.google.com/>

educational role, and those functions directly related to academic achievement and college and career readiness. Areas such as mental health counseling, student welfare, adolescent development and crisis counseling, though rich fields, were studied in less depth. Among the topics covered in this report are the roles that counselors are performing today, the opportunities and challenges they face, and the degree to which they and their schools are engaging in college and career readiness counseling.

The U.S. education system is facing significant challenges that are affecting individuals, families, communities and the nation. Because of their unique role in schools and school systems, school counselors have the potential, working in partnership with other educators and stakeholders, to impact not only the success of our nation's students, but also the preparedness of our workforce and the health of our economy. The following provides an overview of these findings, including a comprehensive profile of America's school counselors and an overview of their role in schools and the educational system. It also provides counselors' perspectives on how to better leverage their role in schools and their priorities for improving the system to successfully prepare students for college and career. The pages that follow explore what research — and counselors themselves — can tell us about the counseling profession and its highest potential impact on the lives of children.

Survey Overview

There are nearly as many counselors in American schools as there are administrators, yet the counselor's role in education reform has been largely undefined and their perspectives on how to best contribute largely unknown — until now. The first-ever nationally representative survey of counselors in America was conducted in the spring of 2011. The voices of 5,308 counselors, including 1,327 middle school and 3,981 high school counselors, shed light on the unique contributions counselors can make to improve the lives of our nation's most distressed students. They also shared their hopes for improving a struggling education system and their nearly unanimous interest in helping to lead these reforms within their schools.

From April 19 to June 6, 2011, counselors across America were invited to participate in the first comprehensive online survey of their profession. The survey design was informed by focus group sessions that took place in San Antonio, Texas, in January 2011, and in New York, N.Y., in February 2011. In each city, both middle school and high school counselors were engaged. Particular emphasis was placed on recruiting a diverse pool of participants in terms of school district, years in the profession and personal demographic characteristics. Counselor survey invitations were then made on a state-by-state basis and were proportional to the size of the state. The survey results were also weighted to proper proportions by state for a representative national sample. A second set of weights was then applied to match known measures of counselor population based on available information, including by ratios of private/public schools and schoolwide Title I enrollment and eligibility. We are confident that this sample, once weighted, represents a true national sample of school counselors in America.

It is important to note that although most counselors work in either a middle school or a high school, some work in both. For purposes of this report, counselors were allowed to classify themselves as working in middle school, high school, or a combined K–12 school. Counselors who responded “K–12 school” were asked to choose the type of school that that reflected the students they primarily counsel. They then chose between middle school and high school and were combined with the original groups. (Please also see Appendix 1 for more information about the profile of counselors today.)

The report outlines findings along four major themes: (1) Counselors See a Broken School System in Need of Reform, which shares the views of counselors on the school system

and the profession in its ideal form, versus their perceptions of the reality on the ground; (2) Counselors Provide Unique, Underutilized Contributions to Schools, which explains counselors' perspectives on their unique value to the education system; (3) Counselors Are Supportive of Certain Accountability Measures, which details those measures that counselors' support — and those that they do not — to drive forward the accountability-based counseling movement; and (4) Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness, which provides counselors' views on helping to prepare students for postsecondary achievement. The report then provides recommendations — Paths Forward — for how schools, communities, states and the nation can better leverage school counselors to promote student success in school and in life. Appendix 1 also includes a detailed profile of America's school counselors, including their demographics, educational and professional backgrounds, and training.

Counselors See a Broken School System in Need of Reform

Counselors, on average, have high expectations for themselves, their students, their schools, and the education system, but reality falls far short of their hopes. Our survey shows that counselors are, in large part, disenchanted with both the reality of their profession and the schools in which they work. In fact, the majority of counselors are calling for changes in the educational system. Counselors are also largely enthusiastic about supporting college and career readiness initiatives, but here again, do not think they have the support and resources to successfully promote their students' postsecondary achievement. Altogether, the majority of counselors report a broken system that does not align with their aspirations for their students. They call for changes to the system, want to help lead these reform efforts in their schools and ask for more support to fulfill their mission.

Counseling — A Developing Profession

The practice of school counseling began informally in American schools as teachers, administrators, parents, and others gave vocational and life guidance to students. The counseling of youth was established as a widespread presence in our nation's schools with the 1958 National Defense Education Act, which provided funds to train and place counselors in schools across America. Comprehensive counseling programs that focused on both developmental psychology and educational achievement emerged by the end of the 1980s, and have largely informed current practices by the counseling professions.¹⁶ In 1995, The Education Trust, veering away from the traditional pathways, launched the Transforming School Counseling Initiative, a national effort to reshape school counseling through preservice training of school counselors that focused on equity in student outcomes, creating counselors who could be leaders, advocates and systemic change agents, intentionally focusing on ensuring brighter futures for all students. By 1998, a need for more consistent and high-quality school counseling programs led the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to create national standards for counselors and counseling programs. Yet while comprehensive counseling programs and the ASCA model, developed in 2005, which included many of the tenets put forth by The Education Trust, have become commonplace in American schools, confusion and misunderstanding about the proper role and use of school counselors remain part of the field.¹⁷ In schools across America today, the day-to-day job of the counselor includes personal needs counseling, the choice and scheduling of school courses, academic testing, postsecondary admission counseling, occupational counseling and job placement, teaching, and other non-guidance activities (e.g., new student registration, record maintenance and other administrative tasks).¹⁸ Often, “counselor” is less of a defined position in schools than a catchall: When schools, teachers and administrators need a job done, or when new responsibilities arise, they tend to look to the school counselor. As of 2008 (the most recent data available), more than 130,000 counselors were hard at work in our nation's schools,¹⁹ with job descriptions as diverse as the students they serve.

16. Gysbers, N. C., and P. Henderson. 2000. *Developing and Managing Your School Guidance Program*, 3rd ed. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Myrick, R. D. 1993. *Developmental Guidance and Counseling: A Practical Approach*, 2nd ed. Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation.

17. American School Counselor Association. 2005. *School Counseling Principles: Foundations and Basics*. American School Counselor Association, 219–221.

18. National Association for College Admission Counseling. 2008. *Counseling Trends Survey*; Schimmel, C. 2008. “School Counseling: A Brief Historical Overview.” West Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/history.html>

19. United States Department of Labor. 2011. “Education Administrators.” Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010–2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos007.htm>; United States Department of Labor. 2011. “Counselors.” Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010–2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm>

Counselors Views on the Ideal Mission of Schools

Counselors' views of the school system's ideal mission do not translate to their reality (Table 1). Counselors report that the largest gap — 55 percentage points — is in the realm of college and career readiness. Nine out of 10 counselors report that a top mission of schools should be ensuring all students complete 12th grade ready to succeed in college and careers (85 percent rated this as a 9 or a 10 on a 10-point scale), yet only 30 percent of all school counselors and 19 percent of counselors in high poverty schools (defined by 75 percent or more of the students receiving free or reduced-price lunches) see this as their school's actual current mission. The degree to which this mission fits the reality in their schools varies significantly across key subgroups. The contrast between public and private schools is especially stark, with 67 percent of counselors in private schools saying the mission closely

matches that of their school, but just 25 percent of counselors in public schools saying the same. In urban public schools the proportion falls to just 21 percent. Furthermore, twice as many counselors (43 percent) in schools where college acceptance rates are high, score this statement as a 9 or 10 for fitting reality in their school, versus those who are in schools where the college acceptance rate is lower (21 percent). This indicates a link between a school's vision for their students and the realities they face. As will be discussed in detail in the Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness section of this report, nearly all counselors (93 percent) say they support a strategic approach to promote college and career readiness by 12th grade, including 57 percent who strongly support this approach. This may indicate an area where counselors can step in to lead within the education system, defining their unique role within the profession, as well as the metrics for their accountability.

**Table 1: Counselors' Rating
"To Ensure All Students Complete the 12th Grade Ready to Succeed in College and
Careers" as a "9" or "10" for a School System's Mission Statement in the Ideal**

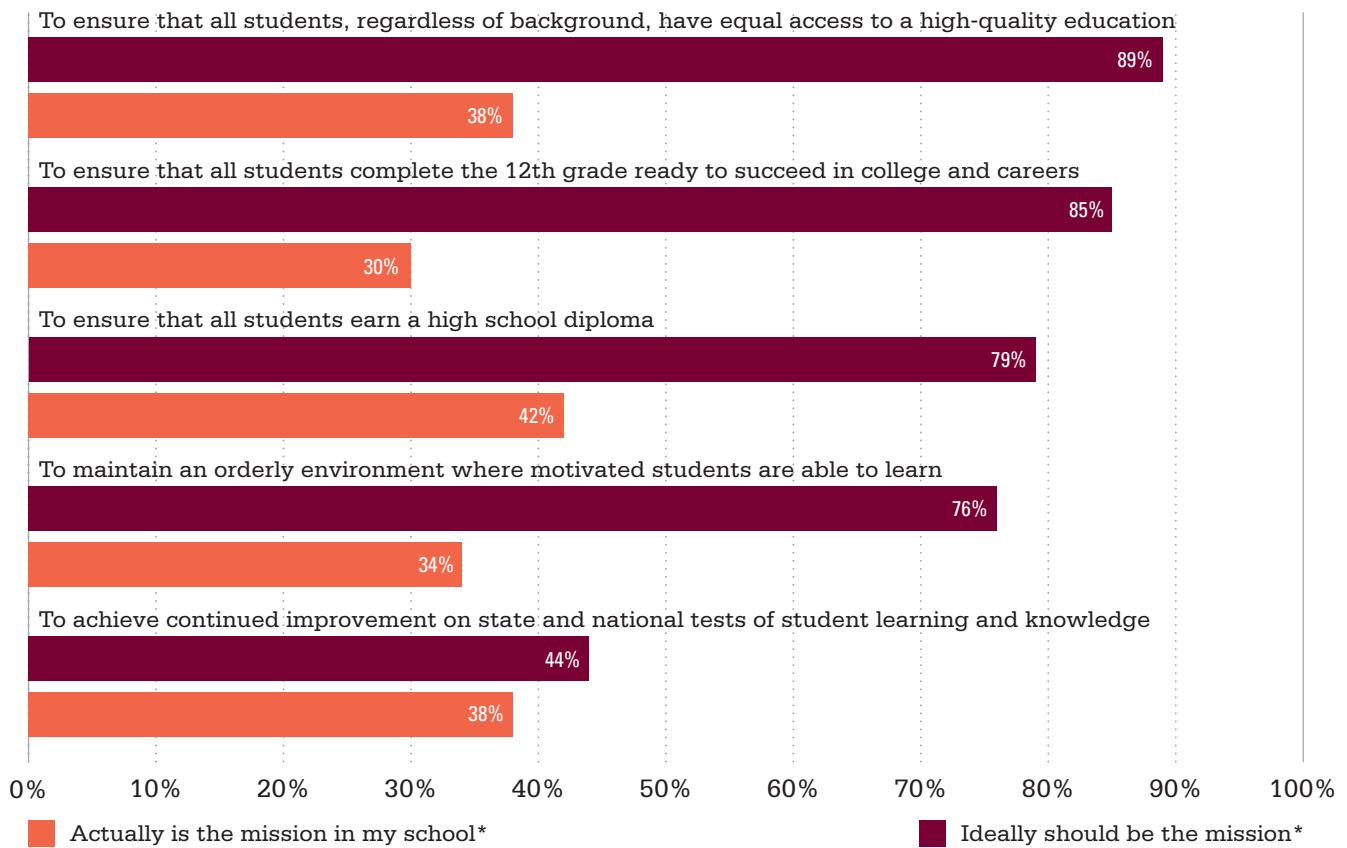
	Mean Score #	"9" + "10" %
All Counselors	9.4	85
Race of Counselor		
White counselors	9.4	85
African American counselors	9.4	87
Hispanic counselors	9.3	84
Region		
Northeast	9.4	84
Midwest	9.4	85
South	9.3	84
West	9.4	85
Type of School		
All public	9.3	84
Urban public	9.4	85
Suburban public	9.3	83
Rural public	9.4	85
All private	9.6	90
Percent of Student Population that Is Minority		
0 to 24%	9.3	83
25 to 49%	9.4	85
50 to 74%	9.3	82
75% or more	9.3	87
Number of Students in Caseload		
Fewer than 250	9.4	85
250–349	9.4	85
350–449	9.4	84
450 or more	9.3	84
College Attendance Rates (HS Only)		
High college attendance (80% or more)	9.4	87
Lower college attendance (70% and below)	9.3	84

When asked to select among a range of possible missions for schools, the highest rated item, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have equal access to high-quality education, earned nearly a 10-out-of-10 rating, indicating near consensus that this should be the ideal mission statement for schools. In a focus group, one counselor summed it up by

asking: "Are we preparing them to get into college, or are we preparing them to succeed once they're there?"²⁰ Counselors felt strongly about this mission: nearly nine counselors out

20. Focus group conducted by Hart Research Associates. New York, N.Y., February 2, 2011.

Figure 1: Ideally, what should be the mission of the education system? And in reality, how well does this fit your view of the mission of the school system in which you work?



*9–10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = perfectly fits my view, 0 = does not fit my view at all

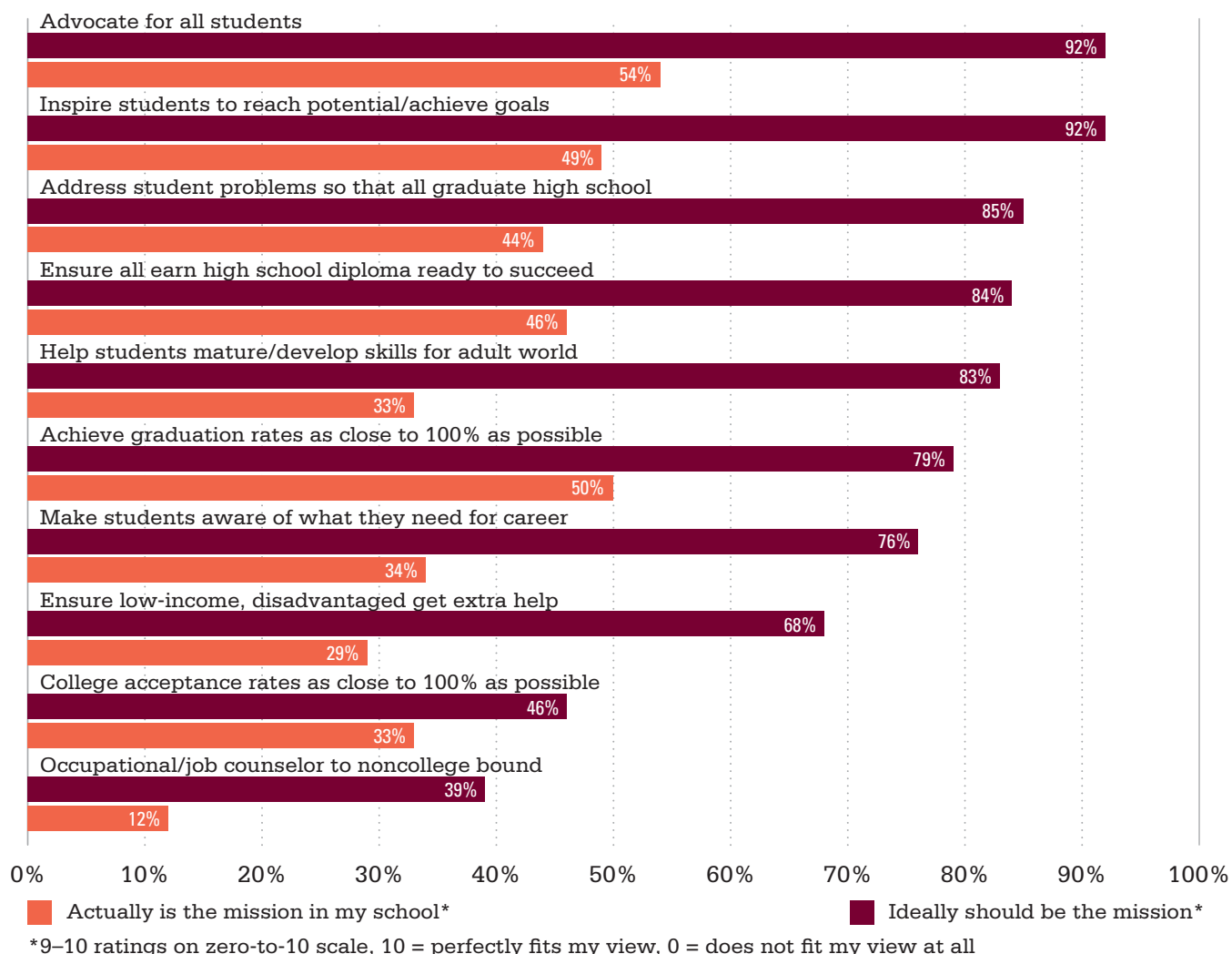
of 10 (89 percent) rated the statement as either a 9 or 10, but only 38 percent of all counselors and 32 percent in low-income schools see this in their schools (Figure 1). Counselors in schools fare only slightly better: only 39 percent report this as a reality in their schools. More than three out of four counselors rate two additional items as a 9 or 10 — to ensure that all students earn a high school diploma (79 percent), and to maintain an orderly environment where motivated students are able to learn (76 percent).

Counselors report that they face a very different reality in their schools: there is a large gap between the ideal and reality for almost all items. For example, while 89 percent gave a 9 or 10 rating to the mission to ensure all students have equal access to a high-quality education in the ideal, just 38 percent say this is a 9 or 10 in reality in their school system. Only one mission statement clearly deviates from the pattern of disappointment: the mission of “achieving continued improvement on state and national tests of student

learning and knowledge.” Not only does testing earn a lower rating as an ideal mission, it is the only mission for which the ideal and the reality are nearly perfectly aligned. Here again, counselors shed light on their dissatisfaction with current measures of progress. However, the possibility for counselors to exercise leadership in defining how they can contribute to existing measures or define new, more effective measures of accountability.

Counselor ratings indicate these professionals do have students’ best interests in mind, but are less concerned with — or in agreement with — how progress is measured. Again, this could indicate a potential area for counselors to lead in defining their measures of progress and how their contributions can align with current initiatives. As will be discussed in the accountability section of this document, this question of measurement and the related issues of accountability and progress are core to the broader issue of how counselors can be most effective in schools.

Figure 2: What is the mission of school counselors, both ideally and in reality in the school in which you work?



Counselors in Our Nation's Most Struggling Schools

While nearly one in four public high school students does not graduate from high school on time, the rate is as high as one in two in our nation's most struggling schools.²¹ Our survey showed that, on average, counselors in schools with higher rates of students on free or reduced-price lunches, or higher rates of minority students, also face larger caseloads. This finding mirrors the limited research that shows the work of counselors is often more complex in lower-resourced areas.^{22, 23} In addition, because of resource constraints, the quality, consistency, accessibility and perception of counseling services vary among student subgroups, with more favorable services often provided to students of higher socioeconomic backgrounds.^{24, 25} Because counselors have unique training and can offer specialized academic and nonacademic supports, it is possible that their work may have the highest impact on the students with the greatest need.

21. Trusty, J. et al. 2008. "Closing Achievement Gaps: Roles and Tasks of Elementary School Counselors." *The Elementary School Journal* 108, no. 5: 407–421.

22. Bryan, J. et al. 2009. "Who Sees the School Counselor for College Information? A National Study." *Professional School Counseling* 12, no. 4: 280–291.

23. King, J. E. 1996. *The Decision to Go to College: Attitudes and Experiences Associated with College Attendance Among Low-Income Students*. New York: The College Board.

24. Auwarter, A. E., and M. S. Aruguete. 2008. "Counselor Perceptions of Students Who Vary in Gender and Socioeconomic Status." *Social Psychology of Education* 11, no. 4: 389–395.

25. Savitz-Romer, M. 2008. "The Urban Challenge." *ASCA School Counselor* 46, no. 2: 13–19.

Counselors' Views of Their Profession

Moving from a macro education systems discussion to a school-based one, counselors report a similarly disturbing gap between what the mission of their profession should be and the reality they are facing as professionals in schools. The two highest-rated ideal missions for counselors are “to be advocates for all students within the school system” and “to inspire students to reach their full potential and achieve their goals” (these were both rated a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale by 92 percent of counselors). In an ideal context, three additional missions rank just below serving as advocates and inspiring students: “addressing student problems so students stay in school through graduation” (85 percent rate this a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale); “ensuring students earn a diploma and are ready to succeed in college and careers” (84 percent); and “helping students mature and develop the interpersonal skills they will need to succeed in the adult world” (83 percent).

As with the mission for the education system, counselors report major gaps between what they would ideally like to see and what they are experiencing in schools (Figure 2). The largest gap is seen for the mission of helping students mature and develop skills for the real world, for which 83 percent of counselors say it closely fits their view of the ideal mission, but just 33 percent say it closely fits their mission in reality, a gap of 50 points. There also is a large gap of 43 points for the mission of inspiring students to reach their full potential and achieve their goals, where 92 percent of counselors say it closely fits their view of the ideal mission, but just 49 percent say it closely fits their mission in reality.

Counselors' Views on the Mission of College and Career Readiness

Counselors see a disconnect between their commitment to promoting college and career readiness and the commitment of their administrators. As will be discussed in more detail in the section “Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness,” the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) developed eight components of a counseling system that focuses on ensuring that all students graduate from the 12th grade college and career ready. This survey offered counselors an opportunity to weigh in on the importance of these eight components for the first time. As previously mentioned, nearly all counselors (93 percent) say they support a strategic approach to promote college and career readiness by 12th grade, including a full 57 percent who strongly support this approach. However, more than one in three counselors (35 percent), and one in two counselors in high poverty schools (43 percent), do not think they have the support and resources to be successful

at promoting their students' college and career readiness by 12th grade. Counselors at public schools, especially urban ones, are less likely to feel they have the support and resources required than are private school counselors, by a 25 percent margin (20 percent in agreement in urban public schools, versus 45 percent in agreement at private schools).

Counselors See a Need for Change

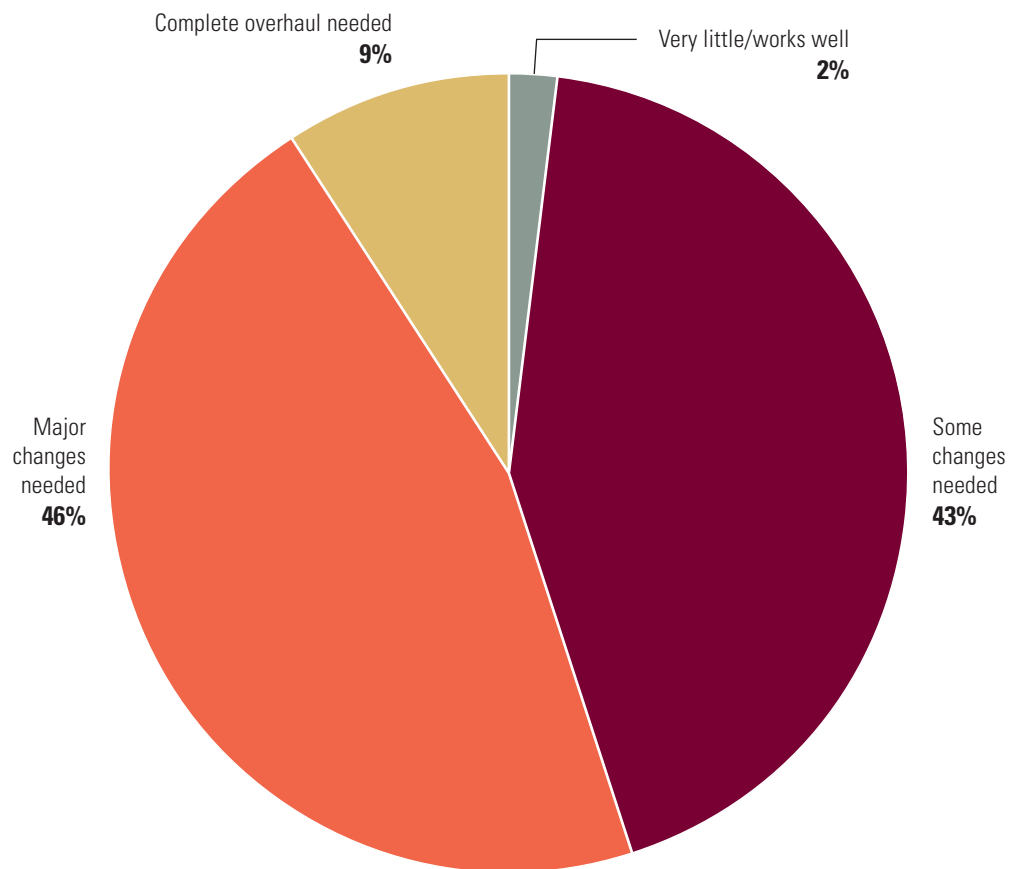
Counselors report a need for change to the education system (Figure 3). More than half (55 percent) of all counselors say that significant changes to the education system are needed in order to improve student success. Nearly one in 10 (9 percent) says the system needs a complete overhaul. Believing that significant changes are needed is a particularly prevalent viewpoint among counselors from urban public schools, minority schools (25 percent or more minority students), and lower-income schools (50 percent or more students receiving free or reduced-price lunches), but counselors' attitudes toward education reforms do not differ greatly by counselors' characteristics or the schools in which they work.

Interestingly, these responses are not too different from those of the parents of the students they counsel. In response to a similar question in an NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey taken in September 2010,²⁶ only 6 percent of parents of children in grades pre-K through 12 said the education system works pretty well now, and 35 percent said some changes are needed, but basically the system should be kept the same. As with counselors, a majority (55 percent) of parents said major changes or a complete overhaul of the system is needed, but the proportion saying “major overhaul” (18 percent) is twice as high among parents than it is among counselors, while the proportion saying major changes is lower (37 percent). The alignment between these viewpoints not only confirms the opinion that the education system is in need of improvement, but also reveals parents and counselors as potential allies in education initiatives.

Though counselors are divided on education reform initiatives, they are clearly very interested in contributing. Nearly every counselor in the survey endorses the importance of counselors' taking a leadership role for change in their schools, even in the face of some opposition. A nearly unanimous 99 percent of counselors agree with the statement, “It is important for school counselors to exercise leadership in advocating for students' access to rigorous academic preparation, as well as other college and career-readiness counseling, even if others in the school don't see counselors in this leadership role.” Three-quarters (76 percent) of all counselors say they strongly agree with the statement.

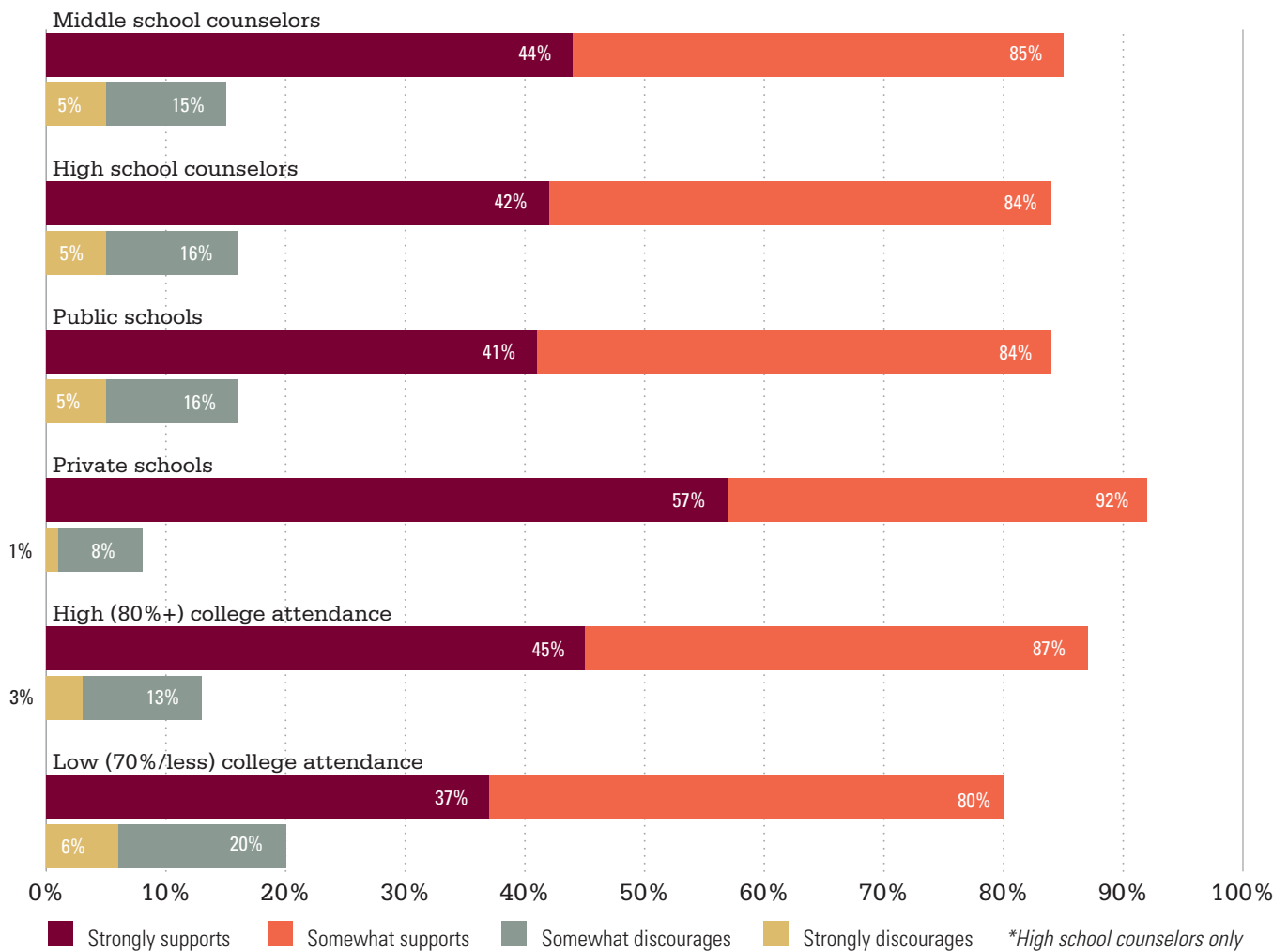
26. NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll; Field Dates: Sept. 22, 2010–Sept. 26, 2010. This question was included in a survey conducted by Peter Hart and Bill McInturff for NBC/WSJ.

Figure 3: To what extent do you think changes are needed in the education system to improve student success?



This view is most common among counselors in:	Major Change/Complete Overhaul
Urban public schools	68%
Minority schools (25% or more)	68%
Lower income (50% or more students receive free or reduced-price lunches)	64%
And among:	
Minority counselors	66%
Counselors with large caseloads (450 or more)	63%
Counselors who believe education reform has been negative	67%

Figure 4: To what degree do you feel the administration in your school supports a strong leadership role for school counselors toward improving student success?



Counselors as Leaders

Counselors have near unanimous agreement on the importance of exercising leadership within the school. In fact, 99 percent of counselors in our survey agreed with the statement, “It is important for school counselors to exercise leadership in advocating for students’ access to rigorous academic preparation, as well as for college and career-readiness counseling, even if others in the school don’t see counselors in this leadership role.” Yet what leadership within counseling is, and pathways to leadership within the field, are still being defined. The Education Trust’s National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) has taken the lead in this area, presenting the New Vision for School Counseling. This vision defines school counselor leadership as including activities such as “provid[ing] leadership for schools to view data through an equity lens,” and “provid[ing] data on student outcomes.”²⁷ With the counselors’ role often encompassing academic and nonacademic aspects of the student experience, as well as in- and out-of-school partners (like parents and wraparound service providers), leadership may mean bringing along a diverse set of stakeholders toward a common goal — such as building a college-going culture within a school. For more information, please look for the “Scope of Work” of Transforming School Counseling at www.edtrust.org.

27. The National Center for Transforming School Counseling. “The New Vision for School Counseling: Scope of Work.” Retrieved from: http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/Scope%20of%20the%20Work_1.pdf

Counselors have less of a consensus on how well they perceive they would be supported as leaders in their schools (Figure 4). Even though a high proportion (84 percent) of counselors say their administration supports counselors' taking a leadership role, about the same proportion say their administration "somewhat supports" the leadership role (41 percent) as say the administration strongly supports the leadership role (43 percent). This may reveal that while desired, there may be some hesitancy on the part of counselors to step into this role. An additional 16 percent say that their school administration does not support a leadership role for counselors.

Counselors Are Divided on Education Reforms of the Past 10 Years

Despite the increased focus in the United States on academic success and postsecondary achievement, current state and federal laws pertaining to school counseling are limited, and counselors have remained largely in the background of major school reform initiatives. Recent education policy, including the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the Department of Education's Race to the Top competitive grant fund (RttT) of 2009–2011, left counselors largely out of the discussion. Funding for counseling is also limited, in proportion to other education initiatives. In 2010, for example, the U.S. Department of Education awarded less than \$15 million to 42 local educational agencies in 20 states to create or expand counseling programs, which accounted for just 0.04 percent of the \$38.9 billion appropriated to elementary and secondary education programs in FY2010.²⁸

Perhaps because they have been largely left out of the education reform discussion, our survey shows that counselors are divided on whether the various education reforms that have taken place over the past 10 years have had a positive or negative effect on improving student outcomes. Few feel strongly either way. Nearly equal proportions of counselors say those reforms have been positive (42 percent) as say they've been negative (38 percent). Another 20 percent say the reforms have had neither a positive nor negative effect. For the most part, counselors' attitudes toward education reforms do not differ greatly by counselors' characteristics or the schools in which they work.

28. U.S. Department of Education. 2011. "Education Department Budget History Table." Elementary and Secondary Education Budget History Tables. Retrieved from: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/history/edhistory.pdf>; U.S. Department of Education. 2010. "U.S. Department of Education Awards Nearly \$15 Million in Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Grants." Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov/category/program/elementary-and-secondary-school-counseling-program>

Counselors Are Largely Unified on Reform Initiatives for Their Profession

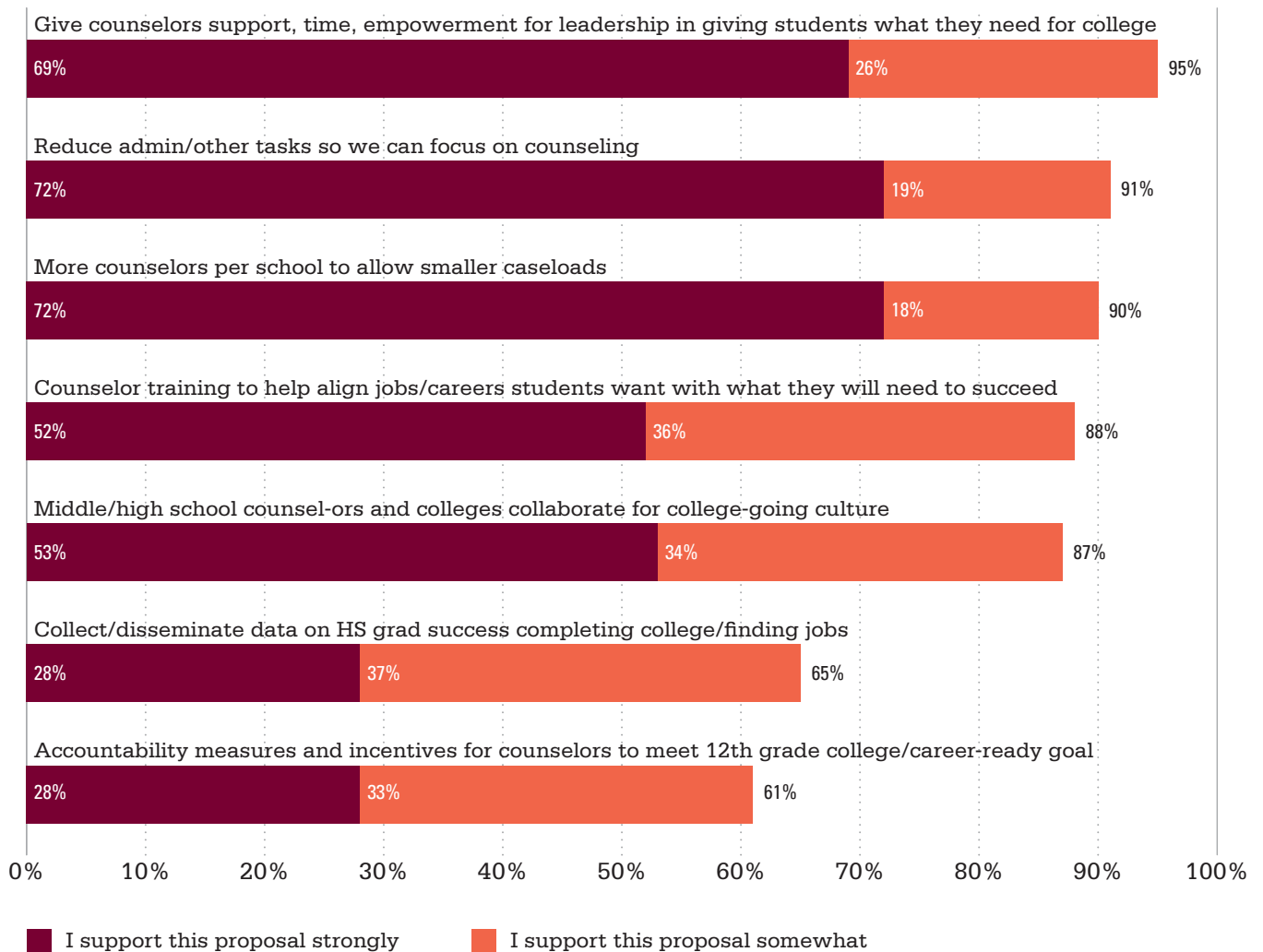
Though counselors are ambivalent about reform initiatives in the broader education system, they are largely unified on reform initiatives within their profession (Figure 5). In fact, counselors shared that they would change the role they play in their school mostly by changing the way they allocate their time. When asked to rate reform proposals, nearly all counselors (95 percent) are in favor of giving counselors support, time and empowerment for leadership to give students what they need for college (where this percentage includes both the rating "strongly support" and "somewhat support"). A majority of counselors also support other reforms, including reduced administrative tasks (91 percent); smaller caseloads (90 percent); counselor training to help align the jobs students want with what they will need to succeed (88 percent); collaboration among middle/high school counselors and colleges to build a college-going culture (87 percent); data collection and dissemination on high school graduate career and college success (65 percent); and the creation of accountability measures and incentives for counselors (61 percent).

Counselors' preference for reduced caseloads corroborates research: lower student-to-counselor ratios may be correlated to student success and fewer instances of disciplinary problems.²⁹ In our survey, public school counselors reported an average caseload of 389 students, and private school counselors reported an average caseload of 211. Counselors in higher performing schools have smaller caseloads. High schools with high college acceptance rates have lower counselor caseloads (335) than do schools with lower college acceptance rates (390). Counselor caseloads rise to 427 students in schools where students are facing the greatest economic challenges. Counselors report slightly lower proportions than the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2009 national average of 1:457,³⁰ perhaps discounting students they do not work with on a regular basis. Though below the NCES figure, the average reported caseload for all counselors in our survey was 368 students, nearly 50 percent greater than the ASCA recommendation of 250 students per counselor.

29. Carrell, S. E., and S. A. Carrell. 2006. "Do Lower Student to Counselor Ratios Reduce School Disciplinary Problems?" *Contributions to Economic Analysis & Policy* 5, no. 1: Article 11.

30. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2008. "Common Core of Data." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. Common Core of Data, 2008.; National Center for Education Statistics. 2009. "Common Core of Data." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences.

Figure 5: How fair and appropriate is it to use this measure or changes in this measure to assess the effectiveness of middle school counselors?



Counselors Provide Unique, Underutilized Contributions to Schools

The role of the counselors is frequently murky, with poorly defined goals that may place them with one foot inside the traditional education system, and the other foot in a network of mental and social support services that is not uniformly tied to the rest of the education system. Counselors report lacking clarity of purpose, both in their day-to-day responsibilities and as a part of the broader education system. Despite the increased focus in the United States on academic success and postsecondary achievement, current state and federal laws pertaining to school counseling are limited; counselors have remained largely in the background of major school reform initiatives. In all, much of the confusion and poor deployment of school counselors across the education

system seems to arise from what has been described as a “general lack of understanding by critical stakeholders about what school counselors do that impacts student outcomes.”³¹

This lack of role clarity may prevent counselors from maximizing their impact on the lives of children. School counselors are a vital part of the education system and play key roles in supporting students in holistic ways. These professionals, who are often former teachers themselves, are uniquely positioned to support student achievement, not just because of their specialized education, but because they have a more complete, year-to-year perception of every student they counsel, understanding their hopes and

31. McGannon, W. 2005. *The Current Status of School Counseling Outcome Research*. National Center for School Counseling Outcome Research, 7.

life circumstances, while working to help them meet their academic and nonacademic needs. This section provides an overview of counselors' background and training and also provides an overview of counselors' perspectives on their unique contribution to the education sector. Please see Appendix 1 for a more comprehensive profile of America's school counselors.

The Role of the Counselor

The day-to-day job of the counselor is often broad, and may include postsecondary admission counseling, the choice and scheduling of school courses, personal needs counseling, academic or other testing, occupational counseling and job placement, teaching and other non-counseling activities.³² Some tasks identified as "inappropriate," such as administrative duties, are regularly performed by counselors and could be undertaken by staff with little or no background in school counseling.³³

In their early years, counselor training programs tended to embrace either a psychological or educational approach to the field, leading to confusion among teachers and school professionals about the role and function of the counselor that has yet to be fully clarified. In fact, research indicates that, "the history of school counseling has depicted a profession in search of an identity."³⁴ Our findings corroborate this anecdotal evidence. The most recent information available from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) *College Trends Survey* and from ASCA's *Professional School Counseling* reviews agree that the "most significant challenge for school counselors rests in the ongoing debate over role definition."³⁵

Many new resources, guided by new directions in teaching and research on 21st-century learning, are beginning to more tightly define roles for school counselors. There is not a unified sense of which direction the field should take, however, and the role of counselors in the 21st century may also be shifting along with workplace needs, national demographics, the

accountability movement and new research on education and child development.³⁶

According to our survey, counselors are responsible for a wide range of often unrelated school responsibilities. In the words of one counselor, "Counseling is more art than science."³⁷ They report being involved in many activities within their schools, including counseling individual students with personal problems, helping administer tests, developing master schedules and individual student schedules, as well as college and career counseling, and communicating with students, parents, and the community. Private school counselors are more likely to focus on college counseling (88 percent) than are public school counselors (78 percent). In contrast, public school counselors are far more likely than are those in private schools to say their job includes personal needs counseling, occupational counseling, student scheduling, and family and community outreach.

Figure 6 shows that in terms of how they would best be utilized, the majority of counselors would like to spend more time on targeted activities promoting student success, including career counseling and exploration (75 percent), student academic planning (64 percent), and building a college-going culture (56 percent). A majority (67 percent) would also like to spend less time on administrative tasks. Table 2 illustrates that academic planning and college-focused activities are given greater emphasis by counselors in high poverty, high minority schools than by those in more affluent schools; 75 percent of counselors in high poverty schools wanting to spend more time on career counseling and exploration (versus 79 percent in higher income schools); 75 percent would like to spend more time on building a college-going culture (versus 55 percent); and 72 percent want more time for student academic planning (versus 63 percent). More than half of counselors, including 59 percent of middle school counselors and 60 percent of public school counselors, want to spend more time building a college-going culture.

For counselors, it often seems that there is little that the school counselor does not do over the course of a school year (Table 3). Not surprisingly, it is difficult to cohesively understand and manage a group of professionals whose

32. Counseling tasks identified by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) *College Trends Survey*, 2008.

33. American School Counselor Association. 2005. *School Counseling Principles: Foundations and Basics*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

34. Schimmel, C. 2008. "School Counseling: A Brief Historical Overview." West Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/history.html>

35. Paisley, P. O., and H. G. McMahon. 2001. "School Counseling for the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities." *Professional School Counseling* 5, no. 2: 106–115.

36. Erford, B. T. 2003. *Transforming the School Counseling Profession*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall; Baker, S. B., and E. R. Gerler, Jr. 2004. *School Counseling for the 21st Century*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall; Sink, C. A. 2005. *The Contemporary School Counselor: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

37. Focus group conducted by Hart Research Associates. New York, N.Y., February 2, 2011, 5:30 p.m.

Figure 6: If the goal is to improve student success, how much time would you spend on each of these, compared to how much you currently spend?

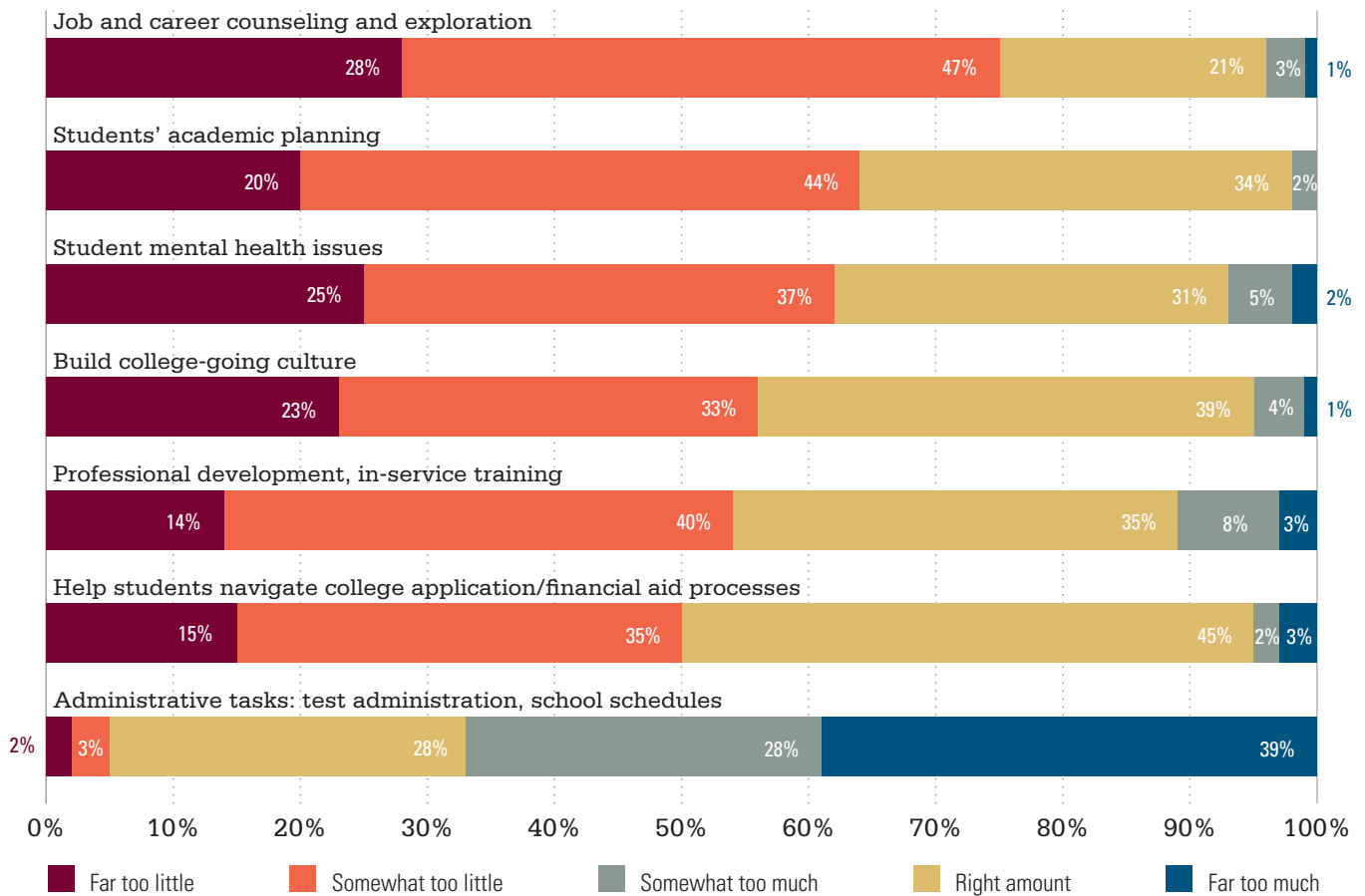


Table 2: Counselors Would Spend More Time on Selected Areas to Improve Student Success

	By Minority Percentage				By Free Lunch Percentage			
	0% to 24% %	25% to 49% %	50% to 74% %	75% or more %	0% to 24% %	25% to 49% %	50% to 74% %	75% or more %
Career counseling/exploration	76	76	76	79	76	76	76	79
Academic planning	63	67	69	71	60	65	69	72
Student mental health issues	62	68	65	67	63	61	62	74
Build college-going culture	55	66	67	75	49	61	66	75
Professional development, in-service training	51	56	58	60	55	52	53	58
Help students navigate college application/financial aid process	50	56	51	55	48	53	51	55

Table 3: Aspects of Counselors' Job

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %	High College Attendance (90%+) High School Only %	Lower College Attendance (up to 60%) High School Only %
Personal needs counseling	93	99	91	97	68	80	96
Student scheduling	89	86	90	92	65	79	94
College counseling	80	35	96	78	88	95	96
Academic testing	79	76	80	80	75	76	82
Family and community outreach	74	84	70	78	45	59	74
Developing a master schedule	45	51	42	47	25	29	50
Occupation counseling and job placement	42	20	49	43	30	41	52
Teaching	34	47	29	33	37	32	28

job is broad and whose roles vary significantly from school to school. The counselor's role is viewed, in fact, as less of a defined position in schools than as a catchall: When schools, teachers, and administrators need a job done, or when new responsibilities arise, they tend to look to the school counselor. Despite the lack of role definition, leading academics explain that if the counseling profession can achieve clarity of mission and role definition, counselors are "uniquely positioned to make the biggest difference in schools."³⁸ Perhaps, then, the most significant way in which counselors can provide leadership is in the process of defining their role within schools and the profession's broader impact on educational improvement.

Counselors' Views on Equity

Counselors are largely divided, however, on whether to spend their time advancing equity in education, with 52 percent saying each student should receive equal amounts of support and attention and 48 percent wanting to target students with the greatest challenges (Table 4). This discrepancy highlights what may be a key area of tension in the future of the counseling profession: Given time constraints, should counselors focus on efficiently providing one set of resources to all students, regardless of individual student need, or should they provide different sets of services, as determined by individual student need? (Some of which, by their nature, will be more time intensive.) As the table below illustrates, counselors are more likely to demonstrate a commitment to equality (that "all students should receive equal support/attention") when they work with higher rates of minority

38. Savitz-Romer, M. 2011. Interview with Mandy Savitz-Romer of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, July 21, 2011.

students, with larger percentages of impoverished students and in schools with more limited college attendance rates. This may point to the fact that in the more challenged schools where they work, students need more support. Said another way, equity ("giving students with the greatest challenges more support") may not be possible if a subgroup of students with challenges is not identifiable in the sea of students needing additional support. Therefore, a strategy may be required that combines a comprehensive approach that focuses on pulling high-impact levers for broad numbers of students with an equitable approach that provides each student the individualized services he or she needs — and that counselors are equipped to provide.³⁹

Counselors' Unique Contributions

Despite the many roles counselors play in both the academic and nonacademic realms, the research consistently shows that the work of counselors is linked to higher student aspirations and outcomes.⁴⁰ In the words of one counselor, "I think the counselors know the obstacles in the way of students' [success] better than almost anybody, on a personal level. So I think they would give tremendous feedback as far as what needs to be changed for education to improve for these students. The question would be, is anybody going

39. Holcomb-McCoy, C. 2007. *School Counseling to Close the Achievement Gap: A Social Justice Framework for Success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

40. Brigman, G., and C. Campbell. 2003. "Helping Students Improve Academic Achievement and School Success Behavior." *Professional School Counseling* 7: 91–98; Brigman, G. A., L. D. Webb, and C. Campbell. 2007. "Building Skills for School Success: Improving the Academic and Social Competence of Students." *Professional School Counseling*; [NEED JOURNAL NUMBER AND PAGES] Webb, L., G. Brigman, and C. Campbell. 2005. "Linking School Counselors and Student Success: A Replication of the Student Success Skills Approach Targeting the Academic and Social Competence of Students." *Professional School Counseling* 8, no. 5: 407–413.

Table 4: Which Statement Comes Closer to What You Believe the Goal of Equity Should Be in Your School?

	Equality—All Students Receive Equal Support/Attention %	Equity—Students With Greatest Challenges Receive More Support/Attention %
All counselors	52	48
Percent of Student Population That Is Minority		
0% to 24%	48	52
25% to 49%	57	43
50% to 74%	56	44
75% and above	62	38
Percent of Student Population on Free/Reduced-Price Lunches		
0% to 24%	49	51
25% to 49%	50	50
50% to 74%	56	44
75% and above	60	40
College Attendance Rates (HS Only)		
High college attendance (90% or more)	48	53
Lower college attendance (60% and below)	57	43

to listen?”⁴¹ Strong adult–student relationships can have a significant impact on student outcomes, and many students — particularly dropouts — long for a strong adult advocate in school. Though many students do not have such an advocate, and many do not identify counselors as a key resource, counselors may be positioned to fill this role. One counselor declared during a focus group that, “I want ... to have [my students] know that somebody cares about them ... to feel like there’s an adult who believes in them.”

Counselors can, and often do, provide this support — and they are able to do so because they hold a unique position in schools. Counselors have the ability to understand the entire picture of an individual student — their family circumstances, social and emotional development, academic progress and other issues related to their success in school. They also have the ability to follow students over time, unlike teachers who have them for just one year and are often focused only on their academic progress in a single subject. This comprehensive lens on the student provides counselors a powerful position that is often uniquely theirs — and counselors agree. As mentioned in the section “The Role of the Counselor,” when asked how they would reallocate their time to improve student success,

the majority of counselors supported activities constituting a comprehensive approach that includes academic and nonacademic supports. For example, the majority of counselors say they would like to spend more time on career counseling (75 percent), academic planning (64 percent), student mental health issues (62 percent), building a college-going culture (56 percent), and helping students navigate the college application and financial aid process (50 percent). Counselors — unlike other adults in the school — not only are able to understand students from a well-rounded perspective, but also are able to provide the wide range of necessary supports to their students, year after year, and follow the progress of students they counsel over time.

When asked to define their unique contributions to schools in their own words, counselors consistently emphasize a role that supports the whole student — one that may be essential to promoting student success, but somewhat out of scope for a teacher or administrator. For example, when asked to define the mission of school counselors in their own words, one counselor stated that a counselor is, “a ‘jack-of-all-trades,’ who is ... skilled in assessing needs, in tune with the latest college and career trends, an encourager and exhorter who communicates that each student has potential.” Another shared the following thoughts:

41. Focus group conducted by Hart Research Associates. San Antonio, Texas, January 26, 2010, 5:30 p.m.

At the beginning of my career my mission of school counseling would have been much different, but now I believe that a school counselor must be everything to everyone. A counselor must have a vast range of knowledge and be extremely flexible throughout the school year. They must be able to help students plan for their future as well as help guide them through turbulent times in their lives. They must be able to bring unity and peace to students who suffer, as well as motivate and encourage students who don't care. Today a counselor is a teacher, administrator, parent and friend.

Similarly, when counselors were asked to define the role of school counselor in an ideal school system in their own words, the theme of supporting the whole child consistently arose. For example, one counselor stated, "Be everything to each child. Catch needs early and address the whole child." Another explained that the counselor "should be a support for the whole student ... [and be] available to attend directly to students for academic, personal, and social issues." Our survey confirmed counselors' unique role as a comprehensive student advocate. When asked to rate their top contributions

and unique roles, the majority of counselors agreed with a range of activities that support the whole child. In Figure 7, the most popular response — creating pathways to help achieve postsecondary goals — was rated among the top contributions by three out of four counselors (74 percent of counselors rated this as one of their two or three most important contributions among a list of five). A majority also rated other measures to support a comprehensive approach as a top contribution, including establishing a trusting relationship with students (65 percent rated this as one of their two or three most important contributions among a list of five); utilizing their specialized training to work with the whole student (62 percent); and helping students with long-term planning (50 percent). A counselor's comprehensive approach, however, does not mean that other education professionals should not be working comprehensively. Rather, these are all areas that teachers and administrators should be considering in their roles, but areas in which only counselors are equipped to contribute to students year after year. This may signal a key area where counselors could lead within schools. For example, although teachers and administrators should also be promoting a college-going culture in schools, counselors may be best equipped to dedicate the time and resources to help students develop postsecondary plans,

Figure 7: Among these suggestions for the unique role and special contribution of counselors in the school community, which two or three are most important to achieving the goal of an education system where by 12th grade all students are college and career ready?

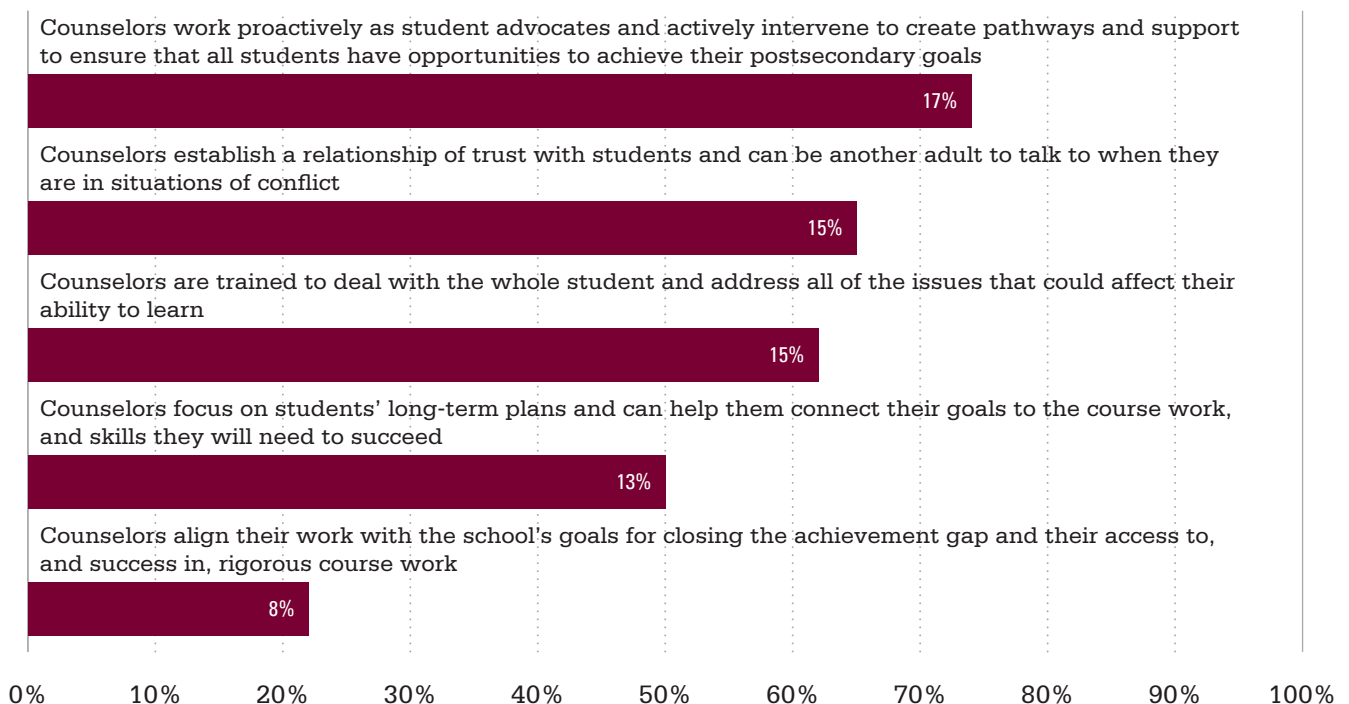
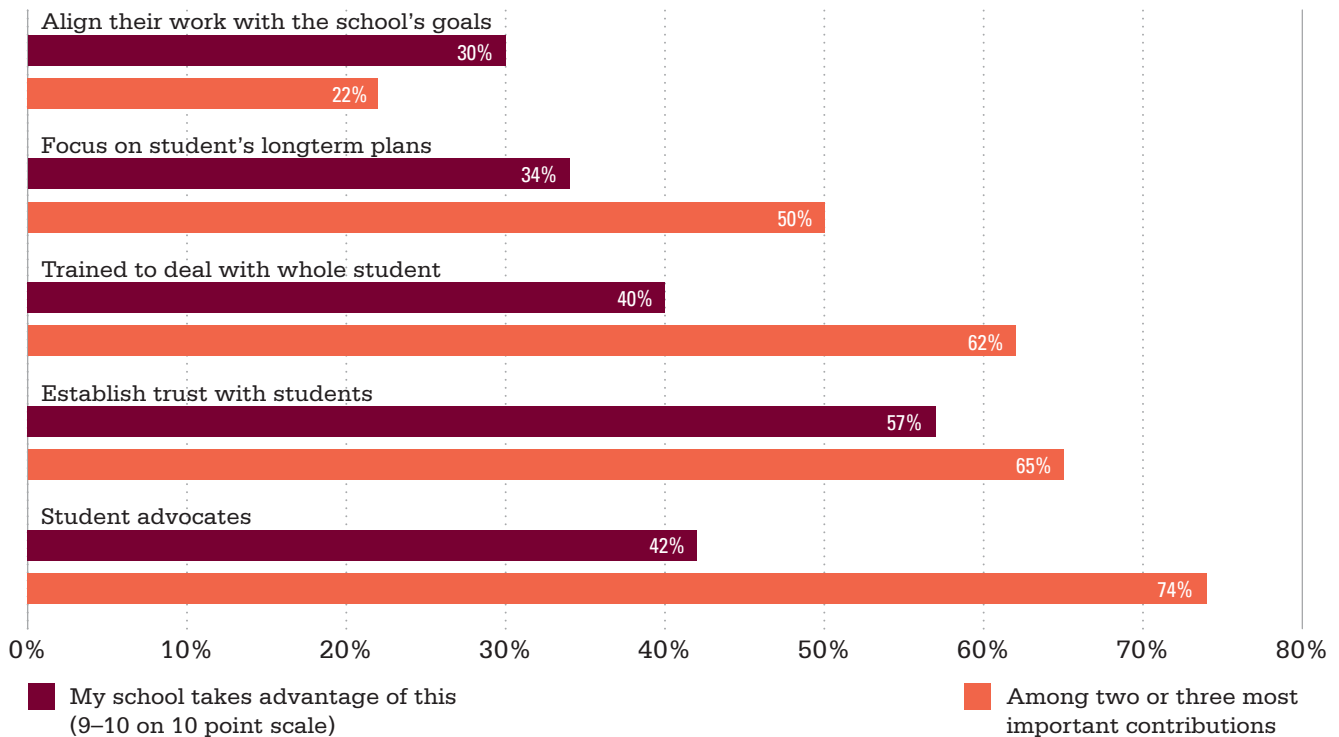


Figure 8: Perceptions of Unique Contributions Counselors Can Make to Ensure that All Graduate High School College/Career Ready



from academic, nonacademic and financial perspectives. (Please see the section titled “Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness” for additional information on this role.)

Only two in 10 counselors (22 percent), however, deem aligning their work with the school’s goals among a top priority, indicating a potential misalignment of school resources or a troubling disconnect of strategy among school leaders. This may indicate a lack of understanding of the counselors’ role on the part of schools. This was widely confirmed when counselors were asked if schools took full advantage of their unique contributions — indicating the need for counselors to more clearly communicate their role, contributions and measures of success to schools. “Establishing trusting relationships” was the only category of contributions that a majority of counselors believed their schools utilized well (57 percent rated this as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale, where 10 signifies the opinion that the school takes full advantage).

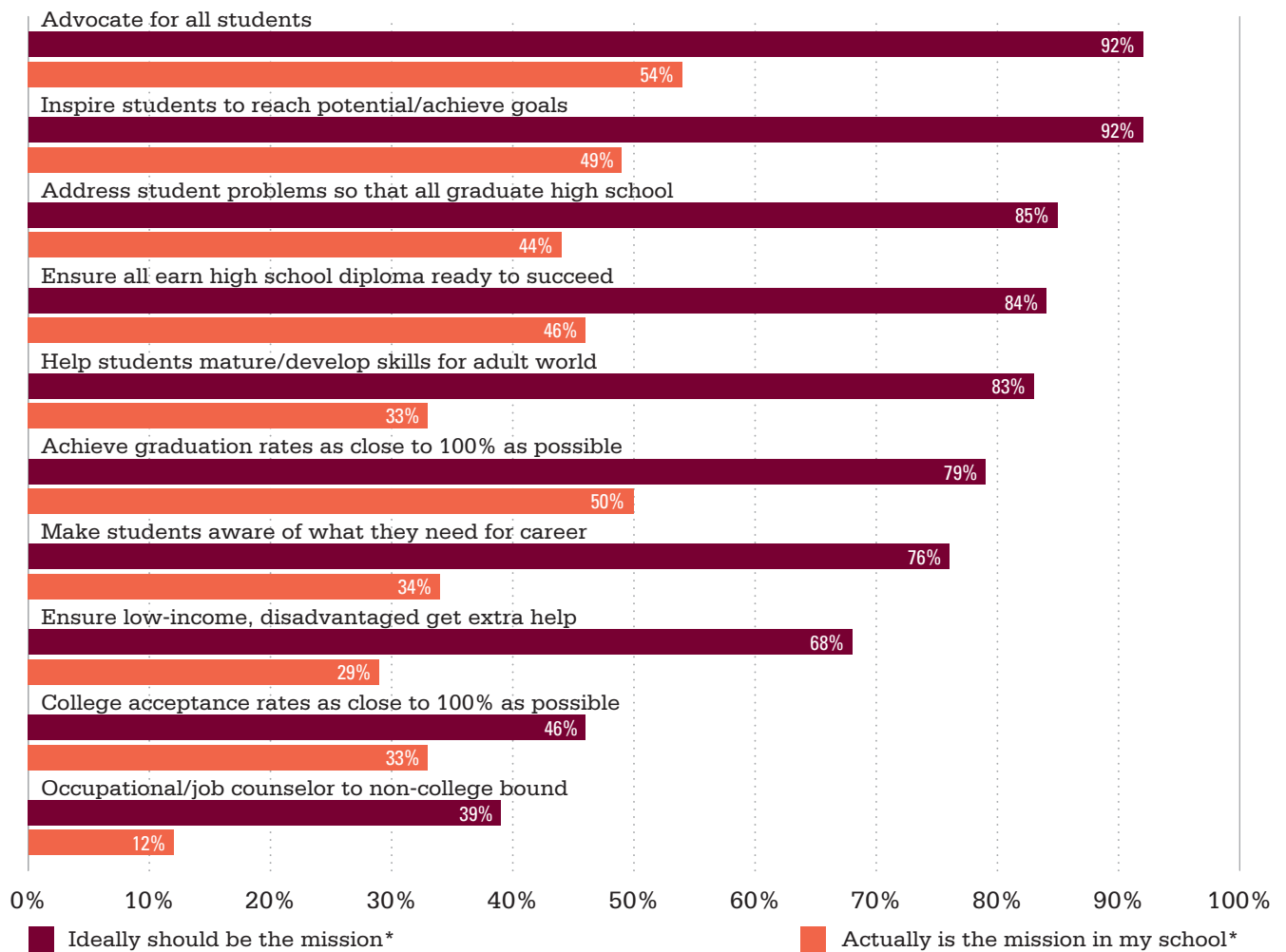
Within this comprehensive approach, there is also broad consensus among counselors that their ideal role in schools should be related to promoting the academic success of their

students (Figure 8). More than eight out of 10 counselors say the mission of school counselors should be to address student problems so all graduate from high school (85 percent rate this as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale), to ensure all earn a high school diploma ready to succeed (84 percent), and to help students mature and develop skills for the adult world (83 percent). However, there are large gaps between what counselors believe the ideal should be and the realities they report, including a 50 percentage-point gap between the ideal and reality of helping students mature and develop; a 41 percentage-point gap on addressing student problems so that all graduate from high school; and a 38 percentage-point gap on ensuring all students earn a high school diploma ready to succeed (Figure 9).

Education and Training

The majority of America’s school counselors have master’s degrees, yet most report having lacked adequate preparation when they began their careers. The contradiction between how these professionals are prepared and what skills they need in schools may be limiting their effectiveness. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of counselors report having a master’s degree, including one in four (26 percent) with a

Figure 9: What is the mission of school counselors, both ideally and in reality in the school in which you work?



*9-10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = perfectly fits my view, 0 = does not fit my view at all

master's degree in education. Half of the counselors (49 percent) were teachers before becoming counselors and 9 percent were administrators, signifying a deep commitment to the education profession (Table 5). However, more than one-third of counselors (36 percent) cite no prior work experience. Counselors in schools with high proportions of students on free or reduced-price lunches also are more likely to have been teachers by nearly 10 percent, indicating that in our nation's toughest schools, counselors are deeply committed to improving the state of the education system.

Despite the good intentions of many of these professionals, research suggests that little alignment exists among counselor training, work assignments and school goals. Instead, there seems to be consistent misalignment between the counseling field and the education system. Some of

the most discussed educational goals — including college and career readiness — are among the most poorly aligned with counselor training. Despite the master's degree level of education of most counselors, only 16 percent rate their training as highly effective. Counselor preservice training occurs at the graduate level and typically includes both academic course work and an internship or practicum experience with supervised clinical work.

There is minimal research on where counselor education programs excel or fall short, yet there is broad agreement in the literature that current programs are poorly aligned to current and 21st-century projections of the counseling field. Programs are designed to comply with counselor certification and licensing requirements, which are set by each state and lead to some national variations in course and practicum

Table 5: Prior Work Experience

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %
Teacher	49	51	48	48	51
Administrator	9	5	11	7	26
Private sector for at least 3 years	13	10	14	11	25
Nonprofit sector for at least 3 years	10	9	10	8	21
Government sector for at least 3 years	5	5	5	5	5
No prior work experience	36	36	36	38	23

requirements. Typically, course work in counselor training programs includes: counseling techniques; counseling theories; human growth and development; group counseling; career development; crisis intervention; coordination of services; legal and ethical issues; advocacy; multicultural counseling; appraisal; research and professional orientation. The practicum allows counseling students to practice under the supervision and guidance of a counselor already serving in the field, and ranges from 200 to 600 hours of fieldwork (for the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs), including 100 hours in an internship.⁴² Although school counseling internships are required to be in the school, current practices in school counselor education programs remain focused on clinical counseling and often fall short of an integrative and collaborative experience.⁴³

The shortcomings of existing programs suggest that counselor training programs must develop professional mentoring practices, train on-site supervisors, push novice counselors to develop relationships with stakeholders and provide ongoing professional development for practicing school counselors, especially if new counselors are expected to effect systemic change in the schools and on the counseling profession.⁴⁴ Research on this subject, however, consistently notes the lack of implemented supervisory systems available for study, and most research also points to a lack of counselor supervision and a desire among counselors for additional oversight structures.⁴⁵ These issues around supervision are also central

to accountability — what are counselors being asked to do, and to whom are they accountable for showing results? A focus on systemic action dominates perceptions of the future of counseling, with notable movement away from individual and small-group counseling. As part of this philosophical shift in counseling practice, leaders in the field note that counseling as a field must, in effect, prepare its professionals to be more efficient and effective change agents — and, according to our survey, counselors agree.⁴⁶

Perhaps in response to their dissatisfaction with preservice training, and the quick realization that their formal education did not prepare them for their work on the ground, many counselors undergo extensive in-service training. Although the quality and quantity of professional development is limited in many districts, most counselors have participated in training since beginning their careers, and the vast majority (89 percent) report being certified/licensed by their state department of education. Previous surveys have shown that counselors have cited a general desire for more leadership training in the counseling field, as well as increased focus on classroom management, presentation skills, student engagement and basic instructional technology skills.⁴⁷ As a result, they are seeking this out in their training. Figure 10 shows that more than two-thirds (68 percent) of all counselors say they have been trained in college and career readiness counseling, and the majority of counselors also report being trained in the use of technology (75 percent). These two areas are often left out of preservice requirements; this demonstrates that counselors are responding to their students' needs through additional training.

42. American School Counselor Association. 2005. *School Counseling Principles: Foundations and Basics*. American School Counselor Association.

43. Coker, K., and S. Schrader. 2004. "Conducting a School-Based Practicum: A Collaborative Model." *Professional School Counseling* 7, no. 4: 263–267.

44. Jackson, C. M. et al. 2002. "Inducting the Transformed School Counselor into the Profession." *Theory into Practice* 41, no. 3: 177–185.

45. Studer, J. R., and A. Oberman. 2006. "The Use of the ASCA National Model in Supervision." *Professional School Counseling* 10, no. 1: 82–87; Crutchfield, L. B., and E. S. Higgs. 1997. "Impact of Two Clinical Peer Supervision Models on Practicing School Counselors." *Journal of Counseling and Development* 75, no. 3: 219–230; Agnew,

T. et al. 2002. "Peer Group Clinical Supervision Program Fosters Confidence and Professionalism." *Professional School Counseling* 4, no. 1: 6–12.

46. Hayes, R. L., and P. O. Paisley. 2002. "Transforming School Counselor Preparation Programs." *Theory into Practice*, 41 no. 3: 169–176.

47. Stein, D. M., and S. DeBerard. 2010. "Does Holding a Teacher Education Degree Make a Difference in School Counselors' Job Performance?" *Journal of School Counseling* 8, no. 25.

How adequately do you feel the training you received prepared you for your job as a school counselor (using a zero-to-ten scale, 10 = perfectly prepared)?



Top Areas of Additional Training Since Beginning Career

	All	Middle School	High School
Use of technology	75%	72%	76%
College and career readiness counseling	68%	52%	73%
Federal and state policies for reporting abuse	59%	66%	56%
Learning styles	58%	62%	56%
Special Ed regulations	58%	61%	56%
Understanding test results	58%	56%	58%
Academic planning	54%	48%	56%
FERPA and student confidentiality	52%	53%	51%
Leadership training	46%	46%	46%
Closing the achievement gap	43%	50%	40%
Counseling students with disabilities	40%	40%	39%
Engaging community resources	38%	43%	36%
Test taking and study skills for youth	38%	43%	36%

Top Areas of Additional Training Since Beginning Career

	All	Middle School	High School
Brain theory	37%	42%	34%
Programs for academically challenged students	36%	41%	34%
Developing and implementing mentoring programs	34%	39%	32%
Decreasing dropout rates	34%	30%	36%
Parent outreach	32%	38%	30%
Time management	31%	35%	30%
Working with teen parents	24%	19%	26%
Working with undocumented students	23%	17%	25%
Minority male achievement	14%	16%	14%
STEM courses for underrepresented populations	12%	9%	13%
None of the above	3%	3%	3%

Critical Transitions

Researchers have assessed the importance of the middle to high school transition, explaining, “Ninth-grade students have a very difficult time adjusting to the academic and social demands of high school and therefore experience higher rates of academic failure, disciplinary problems and feelings of not belonging than they did in middle school. Students who fail to successfully integrate into the school culture drop out of school as early as the end of the ninth grade.”⁴⁸ Counselors can fill substantive and meaningful roles to ease the transition to high school and promote student well-being and success. Our survey found this could be an area of targeted impact for the counseling profession. Just two in five (40 percent) middle school counselors and even fewer high school counselors say they communicate frequently with each other about the student transition from middle school to high school. There is even less communication reported between middle school and high school counselors about collaborating on districtwide initiatives or building an academic pipeline. This is an area that deserves much more attention and collaboration.

48. Cooper, R., and D. D. Liou. 2007. “The Structure and Culture of Information Pathways: Rethinking Opportunity to Learn in Urban High Schools During the Ninth Grade Transition.” *The High School Journal* 91, no 1: 43–56. Retrieved from: <http://j.b5z.net/i/u/2135872/i/Cooperarticle.pdf>, 91, no. 1, 43–56

Counselors Are Supportive of Certain Accountability Measures

Data, standards and accountability have become central to teaching, instruction and whole-school reform under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), but have received little attention in the counseling field. Since its passage in 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act has moved educational professionals to adopt broad school-based changes to focus on data and accountability. The law does not, however, include specific provisions regarding school counselors or fundamentally require direct changes in the role or performance of school counselors. Consequently, federal legislation has moved teachers and administrators — but not counselors — toward data-driven decision making and new accountability and incentive provisions. Rather, counselors themselves are increasingly driving a movement toward data-driven counseling.⁴⁹ Some education professionals suggest that a well-entrenched holistic and mental health culture has created a profession where, “an implicit assumption lingers in the minds of some school counselors that solid graduate-level training, good intentions, and strong motivation to help should be enough to ‘validate’ their work with students.”⁵⁰ Intentions, however, are not enough. As other areas of education (as well as selected portions of the counseling profession) have demonstrated, metrics and accountability can drive counselor performance and, ultimately, student achievement.

The Education Trust’s Transforming School Counseling Initiative indicates that accountability is at the forefront of education reform, as represented by the American School Counselor Association-developed National Standards (1997), the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005), the School Counselor Competencies (2008), and the CACREP 2009 Standards.⁵¹ Accountability measures remain uneven and under-implemented in the counseling field, especially in terms of federal legislation. The leading professional counseling organizations have been the primary advocates for implementing accountability measures and increasing data-driven counseling practices. Some leaders in counseling explain that “the school counseling community has positioned itself as an influential partner in contemporary school improvement with the expressed purpose to eliminate the

barriers to educational opportunity for every student [through] principles of leadership, advocacy, teaming and collaboration, and data-driven decision making.”⁵² Further, the National Standards (1997), the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005), the School Counselor Competencies (2008), and the CACREP 2009 Standards may be beginning to influence outcomes in the counseling field.⁵³

Research, however, is inconsistent both on how thoroughly counselors have adopted changes to accountability practices, how much counselors are driving accountability measures in their schools, and how widespread knowledge of the data-driven counseling movement and its standards are among school administrators.⁵⁴ Furthermore, with accountability and data-driven decision making still in the nascent stages of implementation in the counseling field, incentives and performance-based pay are in their infant stages. A question also remains as to how to hold counselors accountable for a job that is both broad and loosely defined. In an era of data-driven education, counselors will only be viewed as critical to the reform agenda once they are accountable for success in schools. Increased accountability measures have been proven to drive student outcomes in other aspects of education. Similarly, the school counseling profession can be better leveraged through increased accountability measures. The majority of counselors agree that counselors must be responsible for defining their contribution and responsibility — and present how they can be part of existing measures of accountability.

The majority of high school counselors endorse certain accountability measures (Figure 11). In fact, more than half of the counselors surveyed agreed with five of 16 effectiveness measures being fair and appropriate in assessing counselor effectiveness (rating them at least 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale). They are: Using transcript audits of graduation readiness is deemed the most fair and appropriate (62 percent rate it a six or higher), followed by completion of college-preparatory sequence of courses (61 percent); students gaining access to advanced classes/tests: AP®, IB, Honors, Dual Enrollment courses (59 percent); high school graduation rates (57 percent); and college application rates (57 percent). The opinions on these five measures could indicate openness among counselors to explore homing in on appropriate measures of accountability. Furthermore, when asked to

49. Savitz-Romer, M. 2011. Interview with Mandy Savitz-Romer of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, July 21, 2011.

50. Sink, C. A. 2009. “School Counselors as Accountability Leaders: Another Call for Action.” *Professional School Counseling* 13, no. 2: 68–74.

51. Dahir, C. A., and C. B. Stone. 2011. *The Transformed School Counselor*, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

52. Dahir, C. A., and C. B. Stone. 2012. *The Transformed School Counselor*, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

53. Dahir, C.A., and C. B. Stone. 2012. *The Transformed School Counselor*, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

54. American School Counselor Association. 2005. *School Counseling Principles: Foundations and Basics*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

rate proposals to contribute to career- and college readiness, more than six out of 10 counselors (61 percent) support accountability measures and incentives for counselors to meet the 12th-grade college- and career-ready goal, with African American counselors (50 percent) twice as likely as white counselors (25 percent) to strongly support creating these measures and incentives. This proposal also garners stronger-than-average support among counselors in urban public schools (32 percent), schools with high minority populations (44 percent) and schools with lower-income students (38 percent).

***EXCE*Lerating Success**

During the 2007–08 school year, middle school counselors in Hillsborough County Public Schools in Florida were given the challenge of helping to increase both the enrollment and the success rate of students in Algebra I and Algebra I Honors. This district, which has the eighth-largest enrollment in the nation, hoped to increase both enrollment and success rate by 10 percent within three years. This goal was created as part of an EXCEerator™ grant, funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in partnership with the College Board. For several years, the counselors have worked on accountability, measuring their impact, and moving data — and that focus paid off. They exceeded expectations and increased enrollment in these courses by 32 percent (from 47 percent to 79 percent of the entire eighth-grade class) and course passing increased by nearly 20 percent (from 40 percent to 58.8 percent of the entire eighth-grade class). According to one staff member, “[when you look at the results,] you can see why we are excited about what counselors can do to move data and student academic success!” Building on this culture of data-driven decision making, counselors and other support staff of the Hillsborough County Schools will start performance pay this coming year (2011-12). They have developed a guidance evaluation instrument that measures performance along categories including planning and preparation, the environment, evaluation, and professional responsibilities. The district’s teachers started a program of performance pay last year (2010-11) enabled by a Gates Foundation grant, one year before the state mandated all teachers to do so (2011-12). For more information, click on the “Empowering Effective Teachers” link at <http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/>.⁵⁵

55. Smith, Pat. Hillsborough County Public Schools. Email Correspondence. September 1, 2011.

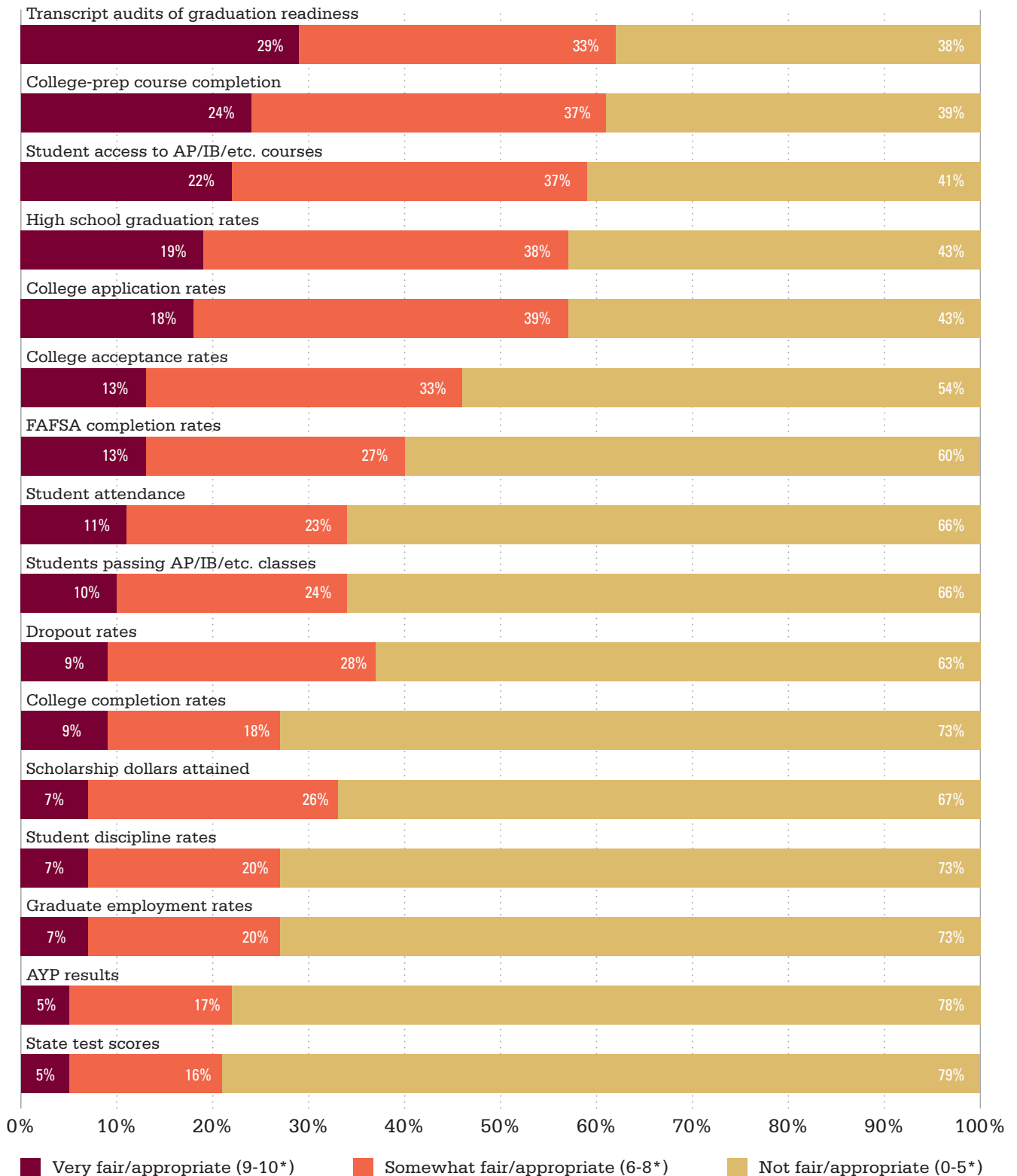
There is, however, less support for other measures. Only a minority of high school counselors endorse the following indicators (with a rating of 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale): college acceptance rates (46 percent rate as fair and appropriate); FAFSA completion rates (40 percent); dropout rates (37 percent); student attendance (34 percent); students passing advanced classes/tests (34 percent); students’ scholarships (33 percent); college completion rates (27 percent); student discipline rates (27 percent); graduate employment rates (27 percent); AYP results (22 percent); and state test scores (21 percent).

Middle school counselors were less enthusiastic about accountability measures, but certain measures were endorsed (Figure 12). The majority (55 percent) of middle school counselors endorse middle school completion rates as a fair and appropriate measure of effectiveness, but nearly half (47 percent) also accept high school graduation rates as an appropriate accountability measure. A remarkable four in 10 (40 percent) rank college acceptance rates as fair and appropriate measures of counselor effectiveness, even though middle school counselors are working with students up to seven years before college acceptance decisions would be made.

Counselors Contribute to College and Career Readiness

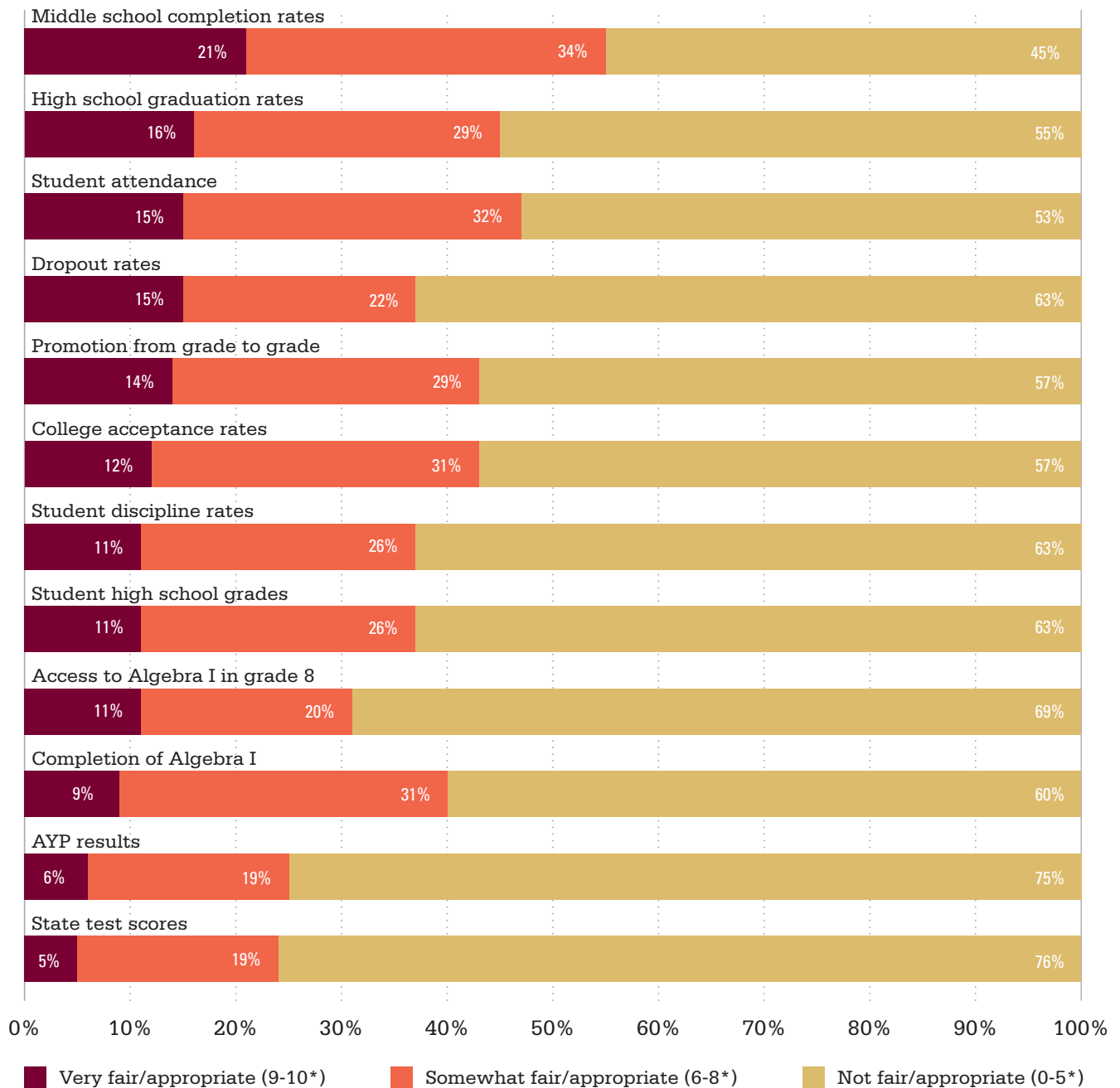
Our nation is facing a high school and college completion crisis, accompanied by a labor market skills gap. These gaps illustrate the importance of today’s postsecondary credentials and shed light on why postsecondary planning is increasingly an essential component of high-quality school counseling. As mentioned previously in this report, counselors are in a unique position to support college and career readiness. Counselors agree. As the previous sections have outlined, counselors have optimistic views of their profession and the education system as a whole — in their ideal forms. The majority of counselors also say that, in reality, changes are needed in the education system to improve student success. These education professionals, however, are largely divided about existing education reform measures and how they should be held accountable within the system. What they are clear on, however, is that they would like to be leaders within their schools — and that they see supporting college achievement and career success as central to this contribution.

Figure 11: How fair and appropriate is it to use this measure or changes in this measure to assess the effectiveness of high school counselors?



*Ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = completely fair and appropriate, 0 = not at all fair and appropriate

Figure 12: How fair and appropriate is it to use this measure or changes in this measure to assess the effectiveness of middle school counselors?



*Ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = completely fair and appropriate, 0 = not at all fair and appropriate

Counselors as Leaders in Promoting College and Career Readiness

Most counselors recognize the importance of college and career readiness for their students — and believe they can play an important role. As one counselor in a focus group said,

“They have to decide in the seventh and eighth grades that they’re going to go to college or that they’re at least hoping to go to college, because that decision can change everything, and help them make all the other decisions along the way.”⁵⁶

56. Focus group conducted by Hart Research Associates. New York, N.Y., February 2, 2011, 5:30 p.m.

In fact, when asked to define what successful schools are doing for their students, nearly seven in 10 counselors (67 percent) state that it is supporting college aspirations, and more than six in 10 (63 percent) say that strong academic planning for college and career readiness matter the most in schools that are successful in making all students college and career ready by the 12th grade. For a deeper assessment of counselors' views on promoting college and career readiness, counselors were asked to assess the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's (NOSCA) "Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling," a counseling system that focuses on ensuring that all students graduate from the 12th grade, college and career ready. These components were developed over a four-year period by NOSCA to outline how counselors could most effectively contribute to their students' college readiness. This survey offered counselors an opportunity to weigh in on the importance of the eight components for the first time. A majority of counselors deem all eight of NOSCA's college and career readiness components as very important, but — similar to the discussion of mission earlier in this report — far fewer rate their school as successful on each measure.

As mentioned in the section of the report titled "Counselors Provide Unique, Underutilized Contributions to Schools," counselors are uniquely positioned within the education sector to support the whole student. Their enthusiastic endorsement of these eight components reflects this role, as these components — although targeted at college and career readiness — address the holistic needs of the student

in order to achieve this goal. In assessing the components, the largest proportion of counselors give high (9 or 10), ratings to the following components: "Connect college and career to academic preparation and aspirations," (72 percent); "Early understanding of application and admission processes," (72 percent); and "Rigorous academic programs," (71 percent). Not surprisingly, counselors in schools with lower rates of college attainment place greater importance on college affordability planning (a five-point difference in percentages), connecting students to school and community resources to help ensure a successful transition from high school to college (a four-point difference in percentages).

As in previous assessments, there is a gap between the counselors' ideal and what they are experiencing in reality. Although counselors, on average, support NOSCA's Eight Components, far fewer counselors rate their school as successful in meeting these measures. Only small differences exist between public and private high school counselors' views of the importance of the eight components, but when counselors rate their own schools' success in meeting the components of college and career readiness, there are large differences between public and private schools and between the high schools that have high and low college acceptance rates. The largest differences are in building a college-going culture by nurturing and instilling in students the necessary confidence to aspire to college, for which 80 percent of counselors in private high schools, and only 32 percent in public high schools, rate their school as successful, for a startling 48-point difference. Counselors report, on average,

Data at Work

Data and accountability measures can promote counselor effectiveness — and help secure funding. Greg Darnieder, special assistant to the Secretary of Education on College Access and the former head of Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) Office of College and Careers, explains that when facing budget cuts in CPS, data were essential to demonstrate his team's effectiveness. They counted scholarship dollars won by each graduating class by school, set goals around scholarship attainment, and tracked FAFSAs. They assessed senior exit surveys, Advanced Placement® scores, college match rates, ninth-grade on-track numbers, and eighth- to ninth-grade transition grades and attendance rates. They compared student outcomes of those who participated in a five-week transition program, Freshman Connection, versus those who did not enroll in the program. Through consistent, ongoing and targeted data usage, the CPS Office of College and Careers was not just able to secure budgets during tight fiscal times, they were able to increase their efficacy and improve student outcomes. Similarly, counselors across the country are taking a lead in the FAFSA Completion Project, an initiative that leverages data to better serve students. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a critical component of access to postsecondary education, but many school administrators have overly optimistic perceptions of their students' completion rates. This project provides data on who has completed the FAFSA, enabling counselors to track students' efforts, as well as to target outreach to assist students and families who have not yet submitted a FAFSA, or whose submitted FAFSA may be incomplete. Visit www.chooseyourfuture.org for additional information about CPS initiatives and <http://www2.ed.gov/finaid/info/apply/fafsa-project.html> for more information about the FAFSA Completion Project.

Table 6: Proportion of Counselors Who Rate the Importance of and Degree to Which Their School Is Successful in Accomplishing Each of the Eight Components as a “9” or a “10”

	Importance %	Success %	Difference ±
Connect College/Career to Academic Preparation/Aspirations: 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.	72	30	42
Connect Students to Resources: Connect students to school and community resources to help ensure a successful transition from high school to college.	64	24	40
Rigorous Academic Program: Advance students' planning, preparation, participation, and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and career aspirations and goals.	71	34	37
Early Understanding of Application/Admission Processes: Ensure that students and families have an early and ongoing understanding of the application and admission processes so they can find the postsecondary options that are the best fit with their aspirations and interests.	72	31	42
Exposure to Extracurricular Opportunities: Ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase engagement with school.	58	32	26
College Affordability Planning: Provide information about college costs, financing, and the financial aid and scholarship processes, so students are able to plan for and afford a college education.	68	36	33
Promote College and Career Assessments: Promote preparation and participation in college and career assessments by all students.	63	34	30
Build a College-Going Culture: Build a college-going culture by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college. Maintain high expectations by providing adequate supports and conveying the conviction that all students can succeed in college.	65	37	27

that they could see themselves committing to NOSCA's Eight Components. They also believe they have the training and the skills necessary to be successful at counseling in these eight areas. Importantly, the affirmation of these two statements remains strong across most subgroups, even among counselors with high caseloads or who work at schools with high minority populations. This positive response may also indicate that the eight components are aligned with counselors' ideal concept of their mission in schools.

Despite the support of this framework, counselors' frustrations with the system again show through. Although counselors say they possess the will and training to adopt NOSCA's eight-point approach, they question whether they have the necessary levels of administrative support and resources to be successful in each of these components. In judging whether they feel they have the support and resources needed to be successful, counselors representing various subgroups have differing perspectives on the matter. Table 6 shows that counselors at public schools, especially urban ones, are less likely to feel that the statement is true than are private school counselors. Similarly, counselors with

low caseloads or in schools with low minority populations and low levels of free or reduced-price lunches are more likely to feel that they have the resources and administrative support necessary to adopt the readiness agenda.

Altogether, NOSCA's Eight Components and the counselors' views on them are as follows (Table 6):

- More than seven out of 10 counselors say the College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes component is very important (72 percent rate this as a 9 or a 10 on a 10-point scale); yet only 30 percent say their school is successful in achieving this, for a 42 percentage-point gap.
- More than seven in 10 counselors (73 percent) rate College and Career Admission Processes as very important; yet only 30 percent say their school is successful in this area.
- More than seven in 10 (71 percent) rate Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness as very

important; but only 34 percent say their school is successful.

- College Affordability Planning (68 percent rate this as important; 36 percent say their school is successful).
- College Aspirations (65 percent rate it as important; 37 percent say their school is successful).
- Transition from High School Graduation to College Enrollment (64 percent rate it as important; 24 percent say their school is successful).
- College and Career Assessments (63 percent rate it as important; 34 percent say their school is successful).
- Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement (58 percent rate this as important; 32 percent say their school is successful).

As the survey results have shown, the counseling profession struggles with mission definition and role clarity. The reality of their day-to-day experience falls short of the ideal they would like to see for their profession, their schools and the education system. NOSCA's measures, on the other hand, are enthusiastically endorsed. It seems that this profession, which appears to lack a driving mission, a unifying framework and a set of benchmarks to measure success, may already have the resources available to align their mission, role and metrics: NOSCA's Eight Components.

Paths Forward

We are facing a critical crossroads in education reform; for the first time in our history, this generation of students is at risk of having lower educational attainment than that of their parents. Schools will need every asset available — especially professionals in schools who have a complete picture of students — to ensure they get the supports they need to stay on track to graduate from high school, ready for college and career. With a clear mission, accountability for results and reforms that include counselors, these leaders in our schools can fulfill their desire to be strong student advocates.

This decision could significantly impact how we use precious education dollars and how we leverage an underutilized profession, ultimately impacting not just the future livelihood of students, but also that of our nation. School counselors have the potential to place themselves in the center of the education reform movement as an important and highly leveraged player. As one example of involvement with broader education improvement efforts, counselors can strategically align themselves with the benchmarks of the Civic Marshall Plan to build a Grad Nation, helping America to achieve a 90 percent on-time high school graduation rate nationwide by 2020 and to have the highest college attainment rates in the world, with all students ready for college and the 21st-century workforce. (Please see Appendix 2 for more information on the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation, or access <http://www.civicerprises.net/reports.php> for the full report.) With the support of administrators, educators, legislators and philanthropists, counselors can accelerate high school and college completion rates across the nation and in America's most struggling schools. Through research, policy and funding, we have the opportunity to support them in this success.

It is apparent that in the best cases, counselors create dynamic systems that support student success in school and in life. However, there is a link missing between what we

know counselors can do, with what they are doing — and what they are enabled to do — on a broad scale. Counselors are uniquely positioned within schools to address targeted areas greatly in need of support within the education system, including supporting at-risk students for college and career readiness. Despite this opportunity, the body of information on school counseling — including this large survey of the profession — consistently shows a field that struggles with role definition, efficacy and inconsistent integration into the larger education reform agenda.

The nation is at a critical crossroads in the history of education reform. The time is now: we, as a nation, can support counselors in their desire to step in as student advocates and school leaders. To accelerate progress, we must:

In Schools and Communities

- **Integrate the Eight Components of College & Career Readiness Counseling within the vision of schools and communities.** The Eight Components is a means of institutionalizing practices and processes that will ensure all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to successfully transition from high school to college or career of their choice. The Eight Components is a comprehensive systematic approach that helps school counselors inspire and prepare students for college success and opportunity — especially students from under-represented populations. The Eight Components build aspirations and social capital, offer enriching activities, foster rigorous academic preparation, encourage early college planning, and guide students and families through the college admission and financial aid processes.
- **Align the Mission of Counselors with the Needs of Students.** Given America's high school and college completion crises and accompanying labor-market-skills gap, counselors should be highly utilized leaders focused

Are Counselors a Cost-Effective Solution?

According to recent research by Scott Carrell at the University of California and Mark Hoekstra at the University of Pittsburgh, counselors may be among the most cost-effective options to help boost student achievement. According to their January 2011 paper, "Are School Counselors a Cost-Effective Education Input?" school counselors "have a direct positive impact on student achievement." Though the research is limited and not yet published, their findings (which focused on elementary school counselors' impact on boys) show that the "marginal counselor has the same impact on overall achievement as increasing the quality of every teacher in the school by nearly one-third of a standard deviation, and is twice as effective as reducing class size by hiring an additional teacher." The full article is available at the Social Science Research Network website: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1629868>.

on keeping students on track to graduate high school, ready for college and career. The mission of counselors should be tightly tied to this goal and roles designed to meet it. Counselors can take greater responsibility for defining their role, contributions and metrics for success.

- **Focus Counselors' Work on Activities That Accelerate Student Success.** Our survey shows that school counselors' day-to-day activities may not best leverage these professionals' strengths to promote student achievement. For example, in several parts of the survey, they called for less administrative duties and more time to focus on activities that support their students' academic success. Counselors' work should be focused on those activities that promote student outcomes, reduce dropout rates and increase college going.
- **Target Professional Development Dollars.** The No Child Left Behind Act provides districts with the flexibility and resources to apply professional development and other funding as states and districts see fit. However, reports show that while available, professional development funds are not being applied to these key areas or being used as incentives to support and entice school counselors to schools in need of improvement. Our survey shows that counselors are eager to receive professional development, and that these trainings can, and should, be targeted at critical levers like college and career readiness, financial aid and the use of technology to promote these goals.
- **Schools Should Pilot Test Measures of Accountability.** Given the importance of accountability and the support among counselors for measures of effectiveness that relate to their mission and unique role in boosting student success, schools should ramp up the piloting of such performance-based measures and report results. Counselors should be given incentives to focus on and achieve success on accountability measures.
- **Coordinate Initiatives with Community-Based Organizations.** Counselors report tremendous workloads, but resources exist to support their efforts. Nonprofit and community-based college access programs are tremendous assets to students, families and schools, but are often staffed with volunteers or professionals who are not as well trained as counselors. Counselors should utilize these services to lessen their individual workload and also, when appropriate, be considered the key point person in schools coordinating these initiatives and as

key resources to students, families, educators and the community.

In States

- **Align Counselor Education and Training Requirements with the Needs on the Ground.** Counselors indicate that their preservice training, while somewhat satisfactory, does not adequately prepare them for the realities they are facing in schools. Counselor training programs, including graduate and doctoral work, should be tightly aligned with the needs counselors are meeting in schools. Although programs are designed to comply with counselor certification and licensing requirements, they typically lean toward training for one-on-one counseling, rather than the systems-oriented approaches that counselors report they want — and schools need. Course requirements should be updated to reflect this reality, including mandatory course work on advising for college readiness, access and affordability.
- **Redefine Certification Requirements to Advance College and Career Readiness from a Systems Perspective.** Counselors are caught in crosscurrents asking them to play very different roles, thus limiting their effectiveness. Counselors report a preference for work in which one-on-one counseling is part — but not all — of their role. Certification requirements should support this broad approach to counseling, which recognizes the importance of one-on-one social and emotional supports, but also enables counselors to do more comprehensive, schoolwide work.
- **Enact and Enforce Caseload Requirements.** As of 2009, only five states met the ASCA recommended ratio of 250 students per counselor (Louisiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Vermont and Wyoming).⁵⁷ Most states were well above this average, which counselor reports confirmed. States that do not have caseload maximums should create them, and all states should enforce manageable counselor-to-student ratios. Identify schools that are successfully reducing caseloads and share their implementation practices broadly. These efforts can align with reforms that break up large schools into smaller, more personal learning environments. Reduced caseloads, however, are only one input into a student's counseling experience and thus not a sufficient condition

57. National Center for Education Statistics. 2009. "Common Core of Data." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences.

to improve counselor effectiveness. To get the greatest positive student impact, the work of counselors must focus on measurable outcomes.

In the Nation

- Establish the Eight Components of College & Career Readiness Counseling as a national framework and standard for college and career readiness training.** In order for the United States to regain leadership in postsecondary degree attainment, many more students than ever before will need to successfully exit high school prepared to enter and complete college. A national framework for school counselors and school districts must be established to ensure consistent and systematic change within our education system to ensure all students acquire the academic preparation and social capital needed to complete college and/or credential requirements for certification in a career of their choice. The Eight Components defines a process for ensuring equitable outcomes, college and career readiness for all students. This framework should be tightly connected to pre-service training and funding requirements for college and career readiness grants and government funding.
- Enlist Counselors' Expertise in National Initiatives.** Counselors have been largely left out of the education reform agenda — until now. As one example of this participation, counselors will now be enrolled as key members of the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation, contributing their expertise to help America achieve a national graduation rate of 90 percent by 2020 and the highest college attainment rates in the world. On the national level, they will contribute to the campaign's strategy development; locally, they can determine how their unique role can be best leveraged to support achieving success on Civic Marshall Plan's benchmarks, and then share best practices with counselors across America. (Please see Appendix 2 for more information on the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation's strategies. The full report can be found at <http://www.civicenterprises.net/reports.php>).
- Create and Implement Accountability Measures.** Until counselors are accountable for success in our schools, they will not be viewed as critical leaders in the system. Measures of accountability can accelerate student and school success. Whereas No Child Left Behind has driven an accountability movement in teaching from the highest legislative levels, measures of accountability

for counselors need to continue to be tested from the ground up to see what the emerging consensus will produce in terms of effectiveness; how measuring and tracking progress will be accomplished, and how will counselors be held to the standards that are created. With the partnership of professional organizations, including the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation (CSCORE), the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA), the Education Trust's National Center for Transforming School Counseling,⁵⁸ and the Pathways to College Network, now is the time for counselors to join the accountability-driven education movement on a broad scale. Working groups should be convened at the local, state and national levels to determine which measures are both appropriate and highly effective. Existing initiatives should be studied and targeted pilots should be launched to begin assessing the effectiveness of those measures that are implemented.

- Continue Strategic Philanthropic Investments in the Counseling Profession.** Each year, millions of philanthropic dollars are invested in education. According to Benchmarking 2010, Grantmakers for Education's (GFE) annual report on trends in education funding, the top priorities of funders often align with the role of the school counselor. These priorities included: "increasing outcomes and opportunities for the most disadvantaged," "investing in education's human capital," and "reforming school systems to promote college and career-readiness."⁵⁹ However, specific investments did not highlight the role of school counselors, though the role of school and district leadership, as well as teachers, was discussed. Some foundations have prioritized counselors as a strategic investment. Other local and national foundations should follow their lead, particularly as it relates to supporting incentives for counselors to focus on their unique role in promoting a culture of high school and college completion and career readiness, together with measures of accountability.
- Align Federal Legislation, Especially ESEA, with High-Impact Counseling Initiatives.** We expect that a

58. National Center for Transforming School Counseling. The Education Trust. Retrieved from: <http://www.edtrust.org/dc/tsc/>

59. Grantmakers for Education. (2010). Benchmarking 2010: Trends in Education Philanthropy. Grantmakers for Education.

focal point of the upcoming Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization will be to ensure that students are college and career ready. Counselors should be included in this process. This should include a focus on how these professionals can be better leveraged to promote college readiness and academic achievement for the lowest-performing students and reduce the structural barriers to quality college guidance. To accomplish that goal, the legislation should affirm the important role played by school counselors in establishing a college-going culture in a school, as early as elementary and middle school, and ensuring that students receive the information and support required to successfully attend and complete college. Specifically:

- Support the hiring of additional qualified school counselors in low-income schools and in schools cited for improvement;
 - Support more extensive and enriched professional development for counselors, focusing on trends and strategies in school counseling, curricula, instructional techniques, technology, academic and career advising, access and equity, multicultural counseling and data-driven programs; and
 - Ensure the availability of at least one qualified school counselor in every school to implement a systemic school counseling program that provides academic and career counseling for postsecondary school options, including a commitment to encouraging all students to consider college as a postsecondary school option.
- **Expand Research Initiatives Focused on the Efficacy of the Counseling Profession.** The body of information on school counseling consistently shows a field that struggles with role definition and efficacy measurement, and which is inconsistently integrated into or absent from the larger education reform agenda. Research is particularly limited in the areas of technology, accountability and the role of counselors with regard to the achievement gap, and as leaders in the education system. Additional research related to these areas, particularly in terms of determining which counseling activities have the most impact on student achievement, could significantly advance the field as a research- and data-driven enterprise.

Conclusion

School counselors report a striking gap between their ideals and the realities they see in their schools. The profession lacks a clear mission, focused roles and appropriate metrics to measure their impact on student success. With a struggling economy and lagging high school and college completion rates, haphazard deployment of precious educational resources is unacceptable.

Fortunately, counselors are uniquely positioned within schools to pull key levers to change children's lives, improve our schools and strengthen our economy; they are focused like a laser on ensuring that all students have a high-quality education and graduate from high school prepared for college and their careers. Many counselors are ready and willing to step up as student advocates and school leaders. Some early progress is being made to establish benchmarks of success.

The counseling profession is at a crossroads in terms of its role in education reform — and we need all hands on deck to educate our way out of this economic crisis. Our nation should help ensure that one of its greatest resources — our school counselors — become central to our education reform movement to help accelerate progress in our schools, boost student success and resume our place in the world as an education leader.

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College Board Annual National Counselor Survey Advisory Committee

The College Board, together with Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates, would like to thank each of the members of the College Board Annual National Counselor Survey Advisory Committee who provided both guidance and support for this survey. The members of the advisory committee include the following:

Advisory Committee Member	Institution
Liliana Ballestas-Cuevas, Director of Student Support Services	Manchester High School
Anita Berger, Principal	Benjamin Banneker Academic High School
Joyce Brown, Senior Advisory - Secondary School	Chicago Public Schools
Odie Douglas, Associate Superintendent	Lodi Unified School District
Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, Director of Counseling and Human Services	John Hopkins University
Brian Law, School Counselor	Valdosta High School
Gary Meunier, School Counselor	Weston High School
Susan Rusk, WCSD Guidance Services	Glen Hare Center
Carolyn Stone, Program Director, School Counseling	University of North Florida
Ginger Taylor, School Counselor	Benson Polytechnic High School
Shun Fang Chang, AP/Guidance	Bronx High School of Science
Belinda Chung, College Counselor	St. Andrew's Priory School
Suzzane T. Colligan, Director of College Counseling	Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School
Pat Smith, Director Guidance Services	School District of Hillsborough County
Gordon Stanley, Director of Counseling	Marist School
Jay Tucker, Counseling Department Chairperson	Delaware Valley High School

Methodology

On behalf of the College Board, Hart Research conducted 5,308 online interviews among 1,327 middle school and 3,981 high school counselors from April 19 to June 6, 2011. The ratio of high school counselors to middle school counselors was predetermined at three-to-one, to include the voices of middle school counselors, but not fully in proportion to the actual numbers of middle school counselors.

Counselors were invited to participate in the online survey via email and by postcard, and many received both forms of invitation. Counselors' contact information was obtained through the list provider MDR, a Dunn and Bradstreet company. Records were divided by the available contact information — those that had emails were contacted via email and records that had only postal mail contact information were contacted by postcard. There was overlap, and many counselors, particularly those in the smaller states, received both forms of contact. The overall response rate to the survey was 6.3 percent.

Survey Development

The survey was developed over a period of several months through a collaboration among researchers and managers from the College Board, the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA), Civic Enterprises, and Hart Research. Civic Enterprises conducted an exhaustive Literature and Landscape Review (available from the College Board under a separate cover) to inform the survey development process. In addition, four focus groups were conducted among school counselors; two in San Antonio, Texas, and two in New York, N.Y., in January 2011, to explore potential survey topics and to give some counselors an opportunity to express their views in their own words.

More than a dozen drafts of the survey passed between the organizations on the way to the final survey that attempted to cover a wide variety of topics without imposing an excessive time burden on the counselors who volunteered to complete the survey. Counselors were not compensated or offered any incentive for the time it took from their other work.

Survey Invitations

Counselor invitations were made on a state-by-state basis targeting 200 completed surveys from 12 of the largest states (California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia)

and 100 completed surveys from each of the other 38 states. For the District of Columbia, the target was 50 completed surveys. In many states and the District of Columbia, the number of completed surveys fell short — in many cases, far short — of these goals.

Although the survey fell short of reaching the goal of at least 100 interviews in each of the 50 states, the goal was reached in 22 states. Three-quarters (75 percent) of all middle school and high school counselors work in those 22 states.

Whenever records were selected, they were done so at random (using an Nth selection method), but this survey should not be viewed as a randomly sampled survey because all available counselors were sent invitations in a large number of states. In the largest states, only a small fraction of the available counselors were selected randomly for each purpose. However, in small- and medium-population states, the email and postal invitations exhausted the available number of counselors and all records received repeated invitations of both types.

Appendix 1: Profile of School Counselors

This section provides a detailed profile of 5,308 middle and high school counselors, constituting the largest national survey of these education professionals.

Gender

Among school counselors, women outnumber men by a considerable margin. More than three-quarters (77 percent) of counselors are women. Women are represented particularly well in middle school, where 80 percent of counselors are women compared with 76 percent in high school. Women make up higher proportions of counselors in every state, with Massachusetts having the highest proportion of male counselors (36 percent) and Virginia having the lowest (14 percent).

Age

As a group, America's counselors are distributed fairly evenly between the ages of 30 and 65 (see Table 7). As we would expect, given the education, training and certification processes required to become a school counselor, very few (6 percent) counselors are under age 30. At the older end of the age spectrum, we also see very few counselors who are age 65 and older.

While no meaningful age differences exist between middle and high school counselors, private school counselors are notably older than their public school counterparts. For

example, about one in four (24 percent) counselors in private schools is age 60 or over, compared with just 12 percent of counselors in public schools. Counselors' ages vary between some states as well. For example, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Virginia have the highest proportion of young counselors in the nation (44 percent, 42 percent and 41 percent are between 18 and 39, respectively). By contrast, Massachusetts and New Jersey have the highest proportion of counselors ages 60 or over, both with 21 percent.

Race and Ethnicity

America's counselors represent diverse racial and ethnic groups (see Table 8). Just 10 percent of counselors consider themselves to be Hispanic or Latino (including Spanish and other Spanish origin). Within the 10 percent who identify as Hispanic, 4 percent are of Mexican origin, 1 percent are Puerto Rican and 5 percent are from other Hispanic origins.

Three out of four counselors identify as "white," a group defined in the survey to include people of Portuguese, Brazilian, Persian and Middle Eastern descent. And 8 percent of all counselors identify as black or African American.

Notably, counselors who identify as African American are nearly twice as likely to work in a middle school (11 percent) as a high school (6 percent). Otherwise, the racial breakdown of counselors is fairly consistent between middle and high schools. More dramatic differences exist, however, in the racial breakdown of counselors in private as opposed to public schools. Only 16 percent of private school counselors identify as nonwhite compared with 26 percent of public school counselors. As we might expect, Arizona, California and Texas

Table 7: Counselor Age by Grade Level and School Type

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public %	Private %
25–29	6	7	6	6	7
30–34	12	11	13	13	8
35–39	13	13	13	14	8
40–44	14	13	14	14	14
45–49	11	12	10	11	9
50–54	13	15	13	14	10
55–59	16	16	16	16	18
60–64	11	11	11	10	15
65 and over	3	2	4	2	9
Total %	100	26	66	86	12

Table 8: Counselor Race

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public %	Private %
White (including Portuguese, Brazilian, Persian and Middle Eastern)	75	69	77	74	84
Hispanic or Latino	10	12	10	10	6
Yes, Mexican	4	4	4	4	2
Yes, Puerto Rican	1	1	1	1	--
Yes, Other	5	7	5	5	4
No, not Hispanic or Latino	85	82	86	84	88
I do not wish to respond	6	7	5	6	6
Black or African American (including African and Afro-Caribbean)	8	11	6	8	2
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1	1	1	1
Asian or Asian American (including Indian subcontinent)	1	1	1	1	2
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
I do not wish to respond	5	6	5	6	5

have the highest proportion of Hispanic or Latino counselors (20 percent, 27 percent and 18 percent, respectively).

Georgia and North Carolina have the highest proportion of African American counselors (32 percent and 20 percent, respectively).

Education and Degrees Earned

Given educational requirements for becoming a public school counselor, it is not surprising that the majority of America's counselors have postbaccalaureate degrees. As Table 9 shows, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of counselors have a master's degree in school counseling,⁶⁰ and one in four has a master's degree in education.

Notably, educational attainment is very similar among both middle school and high school counselors (Table 10). However, the chart below indicates that differences exist in the education level of public and private school counselors. Private school counselors are more likely than their public school counterparts to have only a bachelor's degree (10 percent as opposed to 1 percent of public school counselors), and they are much less likely to have a master's in school counseling (46 percent as opposed to 77 percent of public school

counselors). However, slightly more private school counselors have their master's in education than do public school counselors (29 percent and 22 percent, respectively).

What Training Do Counselors Have?

As noted above, most counselors have a master's degree in school counseling or another type of postgraduate degree. In addition, most of them have participated in many areas of training since beginning their careers (Table 11). For example, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of all counselors say that they have received training in college and career readiness counseling, with that figure increasing to 73 percent among high school counselors. The majority of counselors also report being trained in the use of technology (75 percent), federal and state policies for reporting abuse (59 percent), learning styles (58 percent), special education regulations (58 percent), understanding test results (58 percent), academic planning (54 percent), and FERPA and student confidentiality (52 percent).

Certification

The vast majority (89 percent) of school counselors report being certified/licensed by their state department of education, with middle school counselors slightly more likely to report being certified than high school counselors (see Table 12). Certification is far less ubiquitous among private

60. To simplify question wording, the survey asked respondents specifically if they had a master's degree in School Psychology. However, it should be noted that school counselors receive master's degrees as an M.Ed. or an M.A. with a *concentration* in school counseling.

Table 9: Degrees Earned by Grade Level and School Type

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %
Master's in school counseling	73	77	72	77	46
B.A./B.S. (major OTHER than education)	35	29	37	33	42
B.A. (teaching/education)	26	26	26	27	19
Master's in education	23	20	24	22	29
Pupil Personnel Services Credential in school counseling	11	10	11	12	6
Ed.S. in school counseling	4	4	4	4	2
Master's in educational psychology	3	3	3	3	3
Master's in social work (MSW)	2	3	2	2	2
Ed.S. in pupil services administration	1	1	1	1	--
Ph.D./Ed.D. in counselor education	1	1	1	1	1
Ph.D./Ed.D. in education leadership	1	1	1	1	1
Ph.D. in counseling psychology	1	1	1	1	1
Other	21	18	21	19	29

school counselors — only 49 percent report being certified or licensed by their state department of education.

NCSC (National Certified School Counselor) certified counselors are rare just 10 percent nationwide report having this certification. Even less common are counselors who are certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) only 5 percent say that they are NBPTS certified.

Prior Work Experience

About two out of three (64 percent) school counselors worked at a different job before becoming a school counselor, with about half saying that they were a teacher before becoming a counselor (see Table 13).

Counselors in the Midwest (55 percent) and in the South (57 percent) are far more likely than their Northeastern (36 percent) or Western (44 percent) colleagues to have been a teacher before becoming a counselor. Counselors in schools with high proportions of students on free or reduced-price lunch also are more likely to have been teachers; 53 percent of counselors in schools with at least 75 percent of students on free or reduced-price lunch were teachers, as compared with 43 percent in schools with fewer than 25 percent of students on free or reduced-price lunch.

Previous professional experience varies widely among the states. Reflecting its status as the only state that requires teaching for school counseling certification, Texas stands out with 75 percent of its counselors coming from the teaching profession. Pennsylvania and New York hold up the other

Table 10: Educational Attainment by Grade Level and School Type

	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %
Bachelor's degree only	1	3	1	10
M.A. school counseling	77	72	77	46
M.A. education	20	24	22	29
MSW	3	2	2	2
M.A. education. Psychology	3	3	3	3
Ph.D./Ed.D.	3	2	2	2

Table 11: Additional Training Received

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %
Use of technology	75	72	76	75	73
College and career readiness counseling	68	52	73	68	68
Federal and state policies for reporting abuse	59	66	56	62	37
Learning styles	58	62	56	57	67
Special Ed regulations	58	61	56	61	33
Understanding test results	58	56	58	57	65
Academic planning	54	48	56	55	48
FERPA and student confidentiality	52	53	51	53	41
Leadership training	46	46	46	46	45
Closing the achievement gap	43	50	40	46	19
Counseling students with disabilities	40	40	39	40	37
Engaging community resources	38	43	36	40	22
Test taking and study skills for youth	38	43	36	37	42
Brain theory	37	42	34	36	43
Programs for academically challenged students	36	41	34	38	25
Developing and implementing mentoring programs	34	39	32	35	24
Decreasing dropout rates	34	30	36	38	8
Parent outreach	32	38	30	32	32
Time management	31	35	30	31	35
Working with teen parents	24	19	26	25	15
Working with undocumented students	23	17	25	24	12
Minority male achievement	14	16	14	15	11
STEM courses for underrepresented populations	12	9	13	13	6
None of the above	3	3	3	3	5

Table 12: Certification by State's Department of Education

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %
Yes	89	95	87	95	49
No	11	5	13	5	51

Table 13: Prior Work Experience

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %
Teacher	49	51	48	48	51
Administrator	9	5	11	7	26
Private sector for at least 3 years	13	10	14	11	25
Nonprofit sector for at least 3 years	10	9	10	8	21
Government sector for at least 3 years	5	5	5	5	5
No prior work experience	36	36	36	38	23

end of the spectrum, with just 26 percent and 27 percent of counselors having worked previously as a teacher.

Counselors in private schools are more likely to have worked in the private sector (25 percent) and nonprofit sector (21 percent) than are those in public schools (11 percent private, 8 percent nonprofit).

Counselor Caseloads

As Table 14 shows, the average caseload for all counselors is 368 students, though it is higher (411 students) for middle school counselors and lower (352 students) for high school counselors.

A substantial difference exists between the caseloads of public and private school counselors — the average for a public school counselor is 389 students and the average for a private school counselor is 211 students.

High schools in the upper quartile of achievement (90 percent or greater) for two- and four-year college acceptance rates (based on the counselors' reporting of their school's overall statistics) have markedly lower counselor caseloads (276) than do schools in the bottom quartile of college acceptance rates where 60 percent or fewer students go on to postsecondary education (393).

Noticeable regional differences also exist in the size of counselor caseloads the average caseload in the Northeast (261 students) is 200 students fewer than that in the West (461). Caseloads in the Midwest (354 students) and in the South (402 students) also are significantly higher than in the Northeast (see Table 15).

Table 15 also shows that caseloads are lowest (average of 359 students) in schools with the lowest proportion of minority students (0 percent to 24 percent), but in schools with minority populations of 25 percent or higher, the average

Table 14: Number of Students in Caseload

	All Counselors %	Middle School %	High School %	Public School %	Private School %	High College Attendance (90+ %) ⁶¹ High School Only %	Lower College Attendance (< 60%) High School Only %
0–100	8	5	9	5	25	17	6
101–200	12	5	14	8	35	25	10
201–300	25	21	26	25	24	30	24
301–400	26	28	25	28	9	15	27
401–500	17	21	15	19	4	7	20
501–600	6	9	5	7	1	3	6
601–700	2	4	2	3	1	1	3
701 +	4	7	3	4	1	2	4
Mean	368	411	352	389	211	276	393

61. Among high school counselors' self-report of the percentage of students at their school who went on to a two- or four-year college, 90 percent and greater corresponds to the upper quartile of the distribution while 60 percent and lower corresponds to the bottom quartile of the distribution.

caseload also is substantially higher. Caseloads average 429 students in schools that are 25 percent to 49 percent minority, 435 in those that are 50 percent to 74 percent minority, and 429 in those that are 75 percent minority or higher.

Counselor caseloads in urban schools (375) are similar to those in suburban ones (385). Counselors in more affluent schools, where fewer than 25 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, have lower counselor caseloads (352) compared with schools where more students qualify and caseloads exceed 400, rising to 427 students in the average counselor's caseload in schools where students are facing the greatest economic challenges (75 percent or more of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.)

Table 15: Average Caseload

	Average Caseload #
All Counselors	368
Percent of Minority Student Population	
0 to 24%	359
25 to 49%	429
50 to 74%	435
75% or more	429
Region 2	
Northeast	261
Midwest	354
South	402
West	461
Percent of Student Population on Free or Reduced-Price Lunches	
0 to 24%	352
25 to 49%	412
50 to 74%	408
75% or more	427
School Location	
Urban area	375
Suburban area	385
Small town	373
Rural area	351

Appendix 2: Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation



END THE DROPOUT CRISIS

In the aftermath of World War II, Secretary of State George C. Marshall instructed George Kennan and his policy planning staff to “avoid trivia” in developing their plan to help rebuild Europe. A coalition of leading institutions has adopted this same approach in developing a “Civic Marshall Plan” to end the dropout epidemic and reach the national goal of having 90 percent of our students graduating from high school and obtaining at least one year of postsecondary schooling or training by 2020. We believe that ending the dropout epidemic is possible because we now know which students are likely to drop out, absent effective interventions, and where these students go to school. We also know that evidence-based solutions exist. Thus, we are left with an engineering

problem of getting the right supports to the right students in a timely fashion at the scale and intensity required. To meet this challenge, we need to take a targeted and phased approach, driven by our understanding of where the challenge is greatest and where concerted efforts can have the largest impact.

Dropout Factory and Related Schools

We will first target and help build the capacity of the states and school districts to transform or replace the remaining 1,634 dropout factories and their feeder elementary and middle schools that account for half of the nation’s dropouts, and the high schools with graduation rates between 61 and 75 percent. If the nation’s dropout factories and the high schools with graduation rates between 61 and 75 percent collectively increase their graduation rates by 20 percentage points by 2020, amounting to an average of a 2 percentage point increase per year, the nation will achieve its 90 percent graduation rate goal.

Initial Benchmarks

The Class of 2020 needs to earn 600,000 more high school diplomas than the Class of 2008 (holding population growth constant). To ensure this happens, we will use a phased approach with clear goals.

Take Action Within Low Graduation Rate Communities	Start with Early Reading
	Focus on the Middle Grades
	Turn Around or Replace the Nation’s Dropout Factories
	Harness the Power of Nonprofits to Provide Expanded Student Supports
Build and Enable State and District Capacity to Improve Graduation and College Readiness Rates	Link Researchers to Practitioners and Policy
	Build Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems
	Create a Multi-Sector and Community-Based Effort
	Enhance High School and College Graduation Rate Data
	Develop New Education Options Based on Student and Community Needs and Interests
	Develop Parent and Family Engagement Strategies
Accelerate Graduation Rates by Strengthening the Public Education System	Elicit Perspectives of Students, Educators and Parents
	Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
	Build Linked, Common Data Systems and Enhance Data-Driven Decision Making
	Set High Expectations and Provide Engaging Course Work
	Train and Support Highly Effective and Accountable Teachers
	Train and Support Highly Effective and Accountable Principals
Connect the Postsecondary Completion Agenda with High School Graduation	

For 2012: Substantially increase the number of struggling students reading at grade level by fifth grade; reduce chronic absenteeism; and conduct needs and capacity assessments of targeted schools.

For 2013: Establish early warning and intervention systems in every targeted school district and state; redesign the middle grades as necessary to foster high student engagement and preparation for rigorous high school courses; and place a trained nonprofit school success mentor for every 15 to 20 students with off-track indicators.

For 2016: Transform or replace the nation's dropout factories and provide transition supports for struggling students in grades eight to 10 in all schools with graduation rates below 75 percent; provide all students (including those who have dropped out) with clear pathways from high school to career training and college; and raise compulsory school age to 18 in all states.

Next Steps

Ending the dropout crisis will take a concerted effort by leaders and citizens at all levels of our communities, states and nation. Progress over the last decade gives us confidence that good research can continue to guide our efforts, accurate data can prompt appropriate responses, and a targeted approach can help us reach our goals. The futures of millions of children are at stake, as are the health and vibrancy of our communities, economy and nation. We should redouble our efforts to keep the high school dropout challenge a top national priority; mobilize the will, people and resources to meet the challenge; and equip next generations with the knowledge and skills they need to find productive work and participate actively in American life. We have created a "Civic Marshall Plan Index" and will provide annual updates to keep track of our progress and challenges in ending the dropout crisis and building a grad nation.

For more information, please visit <http://www.civicerprises.net/reports.php>.



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