

Building Advising Capacity Across Education and Workforce Systems



Spotlight Collaboratives

Jackson College

- Redesigned Roles
- Collaborative Partnerships



Missouri Postsecondary Advising Initiative

- Shared Training and Support
- Role Alignment



OneGoal Leadership Network

- Sustainable Capacity Building Support
- Enhanced Coordination Amongst Nonprofits and School Districts



Colorado's School Counselor Corps Grant Program

- Focused on Student Outcomes
- State Leadership and Sustainability



ALIGNED ADVISING OVERVIEW

Aligned Advising provides a model in which high-quality advising is an expectation for every student, not just a select few. This approach ensures that such support is an integral part of both high school and postsecondary education and training. It is grounded in deep collaboration between K–12, postsecondary, and workforce partners to ensure that students have access to a wide range of services and supports as they transition to college, career, and life. In our research, we consistently found that the connection across these systems is insufficient, and replicates silos that lead to inequitable access and outcomes for students, particularly those who have been marginalized in our education and workforce systems. Examples of these gaps include a lack of attention and resources toward supporting career development and a hesitance to clearly define roles across student support experts, leading to misaligned advising practices across college and career planning staff. State policymakers have a critical role to play in addressing these gaps, and ensuring that all students have the support necessary to navigate the maze from high school to college and career.

WHY BUILDING CAPACITY MATTERS

Only 1 in 5 high school students is enrolled in a school where there is a sufficient amount of school counselors, according to a joint study by The Education Trust, Reach Higher, and the American School Counselor Association.¹ With nearly half of college students reporting that they are not confident or only somewhat confident that they know how to get a job after college, it appears that advising capacity is not faring much better at the postsecondary level.² To address these challenges, there must be a coordinated effort across education and workforce systems to equip counselors with the training, tools, resources and information they need to avoid a piecemeal approach that further widens the gap between high school graduation and a student's next steps.

More often than not, postsecondary advising is the responsibility of counselors who are either under-prepared for and/or do not have the time to help every student navigate the maze to and through postsecondary education and training. In this case study, we examine sites redesigning roles to take a proactive approach to student support and encourage effective partnerships that supplement counselor knowledge and capacity. These sites highlight how strategic partnerships amongst districts and

¹ The Education Trust. (2019). School Counselors Matter. https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/30161630/School-Counselors_2019_V7.pdf. | ² Bellassai, J. & Skoweonski, J. (2023, April 10). Nearly Half of College Students Don't Feel Career-Ready, Forage Study Finds. Forage. Retrieved from <https://www.theforage.com/blog/news/forage-career-readiness-survey>

community-based organizations can support leadership in identifying their college and career readiness needs, and designing a plan to address these needs in collaboration with counselors. Finally, these sites have prioritized innovative ways of providing sustainable funding to districts to both increase the number of available positions and increase access to consistent training and quality resources. These efforts make up a [vision for Aligned Advising](#), where K–12, higher education, and partners provide intentional systems of support to all students.

PAVING THE WAY

JACKSON COLLEGE

Students benefit from a coordinated pathway with key individuals providing dedicated support along the way.³ Unfortunately, too few students have this type of support infrastructure on their path, which is what makes the work happening at [Jackson College](#) stand out. Jackson College was an early adopter of [guided pathways](#), a national movement to provide structured support and clear learning outcomes for students. These efforts are connected to a broader state effort to bring guided pathways to institutions across the state at large. Through an intentional redesign of its academic and workforce departments around meta-major fields, the college redesigned how its [degrees and certificates](#) mapped to all programs of study.



Recognizing that this pivot would likely require additional academic advising to support students as they navigated their programs of study, the college created the role of student success navigators. Prior to the redesign of the role, the college had four advisors to serve all students, making the advisor-to-student ratio almost 1,400 to 1. After hiring new advising staff

and partnering with other departments on campus to also provide mentoring support to students, the college brought the advisor-to-student ratio down to 275 to 1, allowing for more meaningful interactions between students and advisors to occur.

Redesigned Roles: Moving beyond the traditional advising approach for students, student success navigators are the first to welcome students after orientation and hold multiple meetings with their assigned students each semester. Navigators are integrated into departmental and academic touch points, fostering stronger relationships between student and academic affairs offices on campus. When faculty work to make changes to academic programs, navigators are alerted earlier in the process. As a result of these meetings, the institution is now using the early alert system across the campus, enabling multiple partners on campus (e.g. housing, athletics, and student success organizations such as TRIO) to access and take action on student data. Additionally, the institution is leveraging student retention data to have proactive conversations with faculty about their role in supporting student success. These focused conversations have the potential to expand shared ownership of student outcomes and create a sense of urgency and accomplishment across the institution.

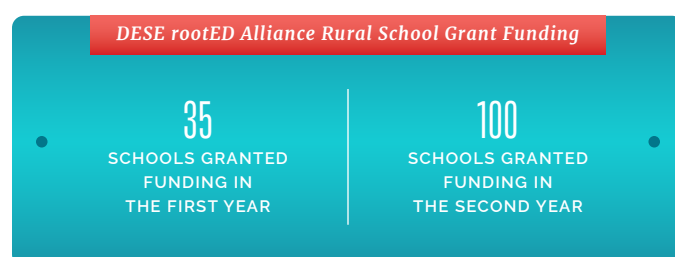
Collaborative Partnerships: Navigators serve as partners to both local K–12 schools and departments at the college. Strong relationships with the K–12 schools from the surrounding three counties and the region’s College and Career Access Center has effectively shifted the community mindset from viewing K–12 and higher education as siloed systems, to one of a continuum of student supports. This intentionality around partnerships continues through the first year at the college through the mandatory orientation and [first-semester seminar](#), a course that compliments the work of the navigators while expanding advising ownership to faculty.

MISSOURI POSTSECONDARY ADVISING INITIATIVE

School counselors and advisors benefit from training that intentionally brings positions together to align on student supports and ensure consistency across college and career advising practices. The [Missouri Postsecondary Advising Initiative](#) (MPAI) was created

³Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2020). Building momentum: Using guided pathways to redesign the student experience. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, Program in Higher Education Leadership.

to address the challenge of increased school counselor time focused on mental health support rather than postsecondary advising. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) partnered with [rootEd Alliance](#) to provide college and career advisors to rural students and Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) to provide rural students with access to dedicated college and career advisors.



The partnership with DESE leveraged the existing advisor model within rootEd, granting funds to 35 schools in the first year, followed by an additional 100 schools in the second year. Eligibility was restricted to rural districts and incorporated a ranking formula that included the districts' postsecondary success rates, percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, and COVID impact on the community. For selected schools, DESE provides subsidized grants to support the cost of the new advising position. Participating schools with rootEd advisors experienced a 13 percent increase in postsecondary enrollment, and 1 in 4 students shared they would not be going to college if it weren't for their advisor's support.

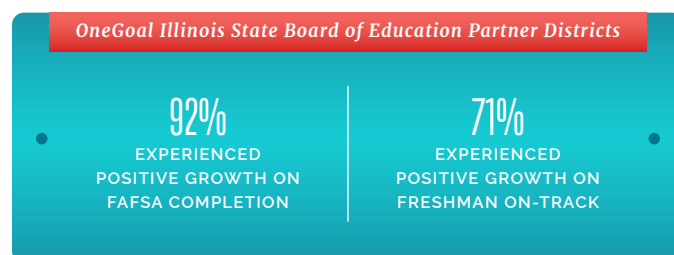
Shared Training and Support: The MPAI provides initial training and ongoing support for the rootEd advisors. Advisors are trained on degree pathways, including postsecondary planning maps, and provided with college and career exploration support. In partnership with DESE and OTC, school administrators, school counselors, and advisors participate in a summer conference that reinforces the team concept of fostering student success as a full school initiative. These trainings ensure participating counselors and advisors receive consistent and clear messaging.

Role Alignment: MPAI created explicit roles and responsibilities between current school counselors and college and career advisors. To mitigate any concerns of the advisors replacing the work of school counselors,

school administrators and school counselors met with DESE and rootEd to coordinate on role definitions, while centering the expertise of school counselors. By creating this partnership, the college and career advisors were able to explicitly focus on postsecondary planning and free up school counselors time to address students' social and emotional needs.

ONEGOAL LEADERSHIP NETWORK

The [Illinois State Board of Education](#) (ISBE), in partnership with [OneGoal](#), launched an initiative in 2021 and 2022 to engage [33 districts](#) across the state of Illinois in a comprehensive, multi-year professional learning and coaching network for college and career readiness. Partner districts joined the OneGoal Leadership Network, a supportive community of experts and peers working to eliminate equity gaps across entire districts. OneGoal, a national nonprofit, is using their reach to scale college and career resources across Illinois through direct student advising and by equipping school and district leaders with the necessary knowledge and awareness required to provide high-quality college and career advising. Participants in this initiative assessed their district's postsecondary readiness and, together with their OneGoal coach, defined a path to high-impact improvements tailored to their needs. They received expert coaching and participated in communities of learning with other district leaders. The end result was system-level improvements that led to better, more equitable, student outcomes. These results included 92 percent of partner districts that experienced positive growth on FAFSA completion and 71 percent of partner districts that experienced positive growth on Freshman On-Track.



On both metrics, the amount of growth at OneGoal partner districts outpaced the average state growth across all Illinois districts. Partners also had the option to launch [OneGoal's classroom model](#), which begins

with the OneGoal course in grades 11 and 12, and continues with remote support through the critical first year of a student’s postsecondary pathway. ISBE covered the funds for each selected district for the first two years of this partnership. In year three, districts began covering the costs of the partnership, with OneGoal leveraging a scaffolded and equitable cost structure to meet districts’ budget capacity realities.

Sustainable Capacity Building Support: ISBE and OneGoal’s partnership provides a strong example of how a state board of education can leverage their resources in partnership with a CBO to have a cohesive, statewide impact. This initiative allowed district leaders to focus more intentionally on college and career advising, and provided additional knowledge and resources to improve efficiency of school and district staff. As a result of the partnership, they were able to scale postsecondary advising to reach more students across Illinois.

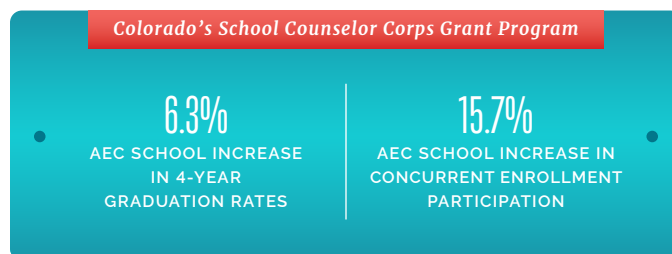
Enhanced Coordination Amongst Nonprofits and School Districts: In addition to building the capacity of school and district leaders through their Leadership Network, OneGoal provided a subset of districts with school-level support. These partnerships focused on coordinating efforts between the school district and OneGoal, promoting cohesion in advising approaches and adding capacity so that teachers complement and add to the advising supports already provided by counselors, CCR coordinators, and others charged with supporting students’ postsecondary transitions.

COLORADO'S SCHOOL COUNSELOR CORPS GRANT PROGRAM

Improving counselor ratios is critical to ensuring that schools and students have adequate support for postsecondary preparation. As an innovator in this space, [Colorado’s School Counselor Corps Grant Program](#) (SCCGP) was enacted in 2008 by H.B. 08-1370 and updated in 2014 by S.B. 14-150 and again in 2019 by H.B. 19-1187 to increase the number of school counselors and improve school counseling services. The goals of the grant aim to improve graduation rates, postsecondary preparation and participation, and support work-based learning awareness and education. Funds are awarded to eligible Local Education Providers (LEPs). To date, 13 cohorts have been awarded and 270 counselors have served Colorado

students through the grant. The most recent 2022 Legislative Report reveals that cohort 7 schools brought the average student-to-counselor ratio down to 221:1 for grantees, well below the American School Counselors Association’s recommendation of 250-to-1.

Focused on Student Outcomes: The clear student outcomes driving the grant have pushed districts to prioritize systems-level change in the way they structure school counselor positions and provide wraparound support for students. Comprehensive school counseling and postsecondary and career readiness is shared by all adults in the building, allowing school counselors to truly focus their efforts on academic, social/emotional, and career development. The school counseling services often include the implementation of the [Individual Career and Academic Planning](#) (ICAP) process, appraisal, advisement, instruction (classroom, small group, and individual), collaboration and consultation, and assistance with FAFSA and postsecondary application completion. The SCCGP awards aim to prioritize funding for LEPs that intend to use the grant to support schools with dropout and remediation rates that exceed the state average, serve a high percentage of identified students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch, considered at-risk, high percentages of first generation college students, rural and small rural schools, or higher student-to-school-counselor ratios. Cohort 7 non-Alternative Education Campus (AEC) schools increased 4-year graduation rates by 6.3 percent, while also increasing concurrent enrollment participation by 15.7 percent.



In addition to the School Counselor Corps Grant, the Colorado legislature has invested in the [Colorado Career Conversation Training Project](#) to further address the limited access that Coloradans—of all ages—have to trained career counselors and resources. Developed by the Colorado Department of Education and the Career Education Initiative, this project has a

goal of training as many Coloradans as possible in meaningful career conversations and equipping them with a multitude of free resources. Any trusted adult who wants to learn more about how to thoughtfully engage learners in conversations about their future is invited to participate in the free training.

State Leadership and Sustainability: Codifying increased access to school counselors was identified as a top priority through Colorado’s P-20 Education Coordinating Council. Acknowledging that access to school counselors alone is not enough to increase student outcomes, the council also made clear recommendations that school counselors be provided continuous training aligned with the American School Counselor Association standards. The council’s early efforts led to the sustained commitment from the legislature to provide ongoing grants and professional development opportunities for Colorado districts and schools. Support from the grant allowed recipients to attend almost 5,900 postsecondary and workforce professional development training sessions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The sites above have shown that investing time and funding in strategic capacity building efforts that provide human capital and training to school staff improves outcomes for students and staff. Increasing capacity for counselors in cohesive, calculated ways allows them to focus their support within the school more intentionally, and serve as a critical hub for student support schoolwide. To summarize, these capacity building strategies have proven to be highly effective:

- 1 Create clearly delineated responsibilities for school counselors and advising professionals to increase capacity and mitigate role confusion.
- 2 Coordinate training opportunities across K-12, higher education, and workforce systems that are directly tied to current accountability and reporting measures.
- 3 Leverage community-based organizations to improve postsecondary advising capacity statewide.
- 4 Implement state-level investments that provide consistent training and access to high-quality advising resources.
- 5 Identify bright spots that can be codified and shared to scale best practices for building capacity across partners and systems.