

# Leveraging Transformational Advising Partnerships for Student Success



## Spotlight Collaboratives

### Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES)

- Individualized Wrap-Around Support To and Through Systems



### Ivy Tech Community College System

- Higher Education Driven Approach to Partnership
- Coordinated Strategy to Promote Regionally Aligned Career Planning



### Redwood Coast K-16 Collaborative

- Pathways Facilitators as a Bridge Across Systems
- Shared Ownership to Enable Effective Collaboration



## 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 TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS MATTER

Students benefit from an intentionally connected system of timely college and career advising where school districts, higher education institutions, and community and workforce partners collaborate to provide personalized student support. True collaborative partnership between these systems bridge the transitional gaps between high school, postsecondary, and the workforce, equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions regarding their academic and career goals.

While many stakeholders recognize the benefit of partnerships to drive student success, there are barriers that arise in building connections to advise students. These challenges include breaking down long-standing silos among K-12, higher education, and the workforce; limited resources and capacity at the regional and state levels to provide funding and support; and a presumption that K-12 should exclusively own postsecondary planning while higher education should exclusively own credential completion. The inefficiencies created by the absence of strong cross-sector advising partnerships can be dire for students and systems alike. Students often face unequal access to resources, support services, and opportunities, and higher education and workforce systems experience disengagement, which can lead to lower persistence and completion rates, and, ultimately, a workforce that is unable to meet industry demands.

In the examples highlighted in this case study, local, regional, and state partners work together to mitigate these challenges through collaborative efforts to ensure effective navigational and academic advising support is consistent across the student’s educational journey to and through credential completion. These innovative partnerships are characterized by shared ownership across stakeholders, a strong financial and human capital commitment from postsecondary institutions, and cohesive advising approaches across systems.

### PAVING THE WAY

#### ACHIEVING COLLEGIATE EXCELLENCE AND SUCCESS (ACES)

Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) is a collaborative program that seeks to create a seamless pathway from high school to college completion for students in Montgomery County, Maryland. The program is a partnership between Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove (USG). ACES focuses on identifying and supporting students who come from backgrounds that are underrepresented in higher education and those who are the first in their family to attend college through academic coaching support as they plan for their transition from MCPS to Montgomery College and, eventually, to the USG. Through this partnership, each institution employs dedicated staff to oversee the ACES program. Montgomery College provides the largest percentage of this funding, employing staff at each of 14 MCPS high schools and at Montgomery College. USG also funds and employs ACES staff that works with students once they enter their doors. Programmatic outcome data show how successful this partnership is, as students in the ACES Program have a 99 percent high school graduation rate and an 85 percent postsecondary retention rate from the first

#### ACES Programmatic Outcome Data

99%

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT GRADUATION RATE FOR ACES STUDENTS

85%

POSTSECONDARY RETENTION RATE FROM FIRST TO SECOND YEAR

year to the second year, as opposed to the 65 percent persistence rate for non-ACES students.

**Individualized Wrap-Around Support To and Through Systems:** Through the ACES program, students are provided with support for up to six years as they make their way from high school to community college and finally to a four-year institution. Students work with their school counselor to apply to the ACES program in 10th grade, and if accepted, are provided with individualized coaching, college application and financial aid assistance, and college preparation support in 11th and 12th grades. As students transition from Montgomery College to USG, they continue to receive coaching, opportunities for career exploration, as well as transition support. While attending USG, students receive career readiness training aligned to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career competencies and social capital building opportunities to prepare them for successful entry into the workforce. This strong programmatic partnership provides a model that states can replicate to scale regional collaboration to drive student success.

#### ACES Individualized Wrap-Around Support System

STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO THE ACES PROGRAM ARE PROVIDED WITH INDIVIDUALIZED COACHING, COLLEGE APPLICATION AND FINANCIAL AID ASSISTANCE, AND COLLEGE PREPARATION SUPPORT IN 11TH-12TH GRADES.

#### IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

The traditional role of many K-12 and higher education institutional partnerships has focused on providing oversight and support for dual enrollment and early college high school programming. In addition to this work, Ivy Tech Community College’s 19 campuses partner with K-12 districts across the state to provide advising support to high school students in collaboration with school counselors and administrators on college and career readiness efforts. Ivy Tech bolsters these partnerships by hiring and training K-14 staff dedicated to district partnerships, providing support to district leaders in the creation of Indiana College Core and Career and Technical Education pathways, and partnering with school

counselors to provide pre-admissions advising support to students.

**Higher Education Driven Approach to Partnership:** Ivy Tech is unique in that it is an example of a higher ed institution that takes ownership of the K-12 partnership, driving the overall strategy and investing in the necessary staffing and leadership. At Ivy Tech campuses across the state, K-14 teams, most composed of College Connection Coaches, are employed and funded by Ivy Tech, and are responsible for K-14 related work including but not limited to: student registration, teacher credentialing, and college and career advising. College Connection Coaches meet with students on site at their high school to inform students about dual enrollment programming and next steps for enrollment, as well as pre-admission advising for non-dual enrollment students. Each site also employs a Director of K-14 Initiatives who is responsible for cultivating relationships and communicating with district leadership. Additionally, Ivy Tech has established an executive-level leadership position solely dedicated to overseeing these partnerships.

**Coordinated Strategy to Promote Regionally Aligned Career Planning:** Ivy Tech K-14 staff also assist in developing CTE pathways with high schools by conducting a gap analysis to compare current pathway offerings with actual regional industry needs. Ivy Tech staff add to the high school staff capacity as they collaborate to ensure these pathways are implemented with fidelity and help school counselors build labor market-aligned pathways within the master schedule.

*Ivy Tech K-14 Coordinated Partnership Strategies*

- IVY TECH STAFF ASSIST IN DEVELOPING CTE PATHWAYS VIA GAP ANALYSIS

- IVY TECH STAFF HELP COUNSELORS BUILD LABOR MARKET-ALIGNED PATHWAYS

This crucial component of the partnership supplements and builds staff knowledge and awareness of industry-aligned career pathways and ensures that students have greater access to career and technical education programs of study that lead to high-wage, high-demand careers.

**REDWOOD COAST K-16 COLLABORATIVE**

California has shown a deep commitment to cross sector solutions through the California Regional K-16 Education Collaborative Grant Program. The Redwood Coast K-16 Educational Collaborative utilizes funds awarded from the grant program to improve student retention and increase seamless transitions from K-12 to higher education and the workforce. It does this through the development of a regional partnership across K-12 school districts, county offices of education, institutions of higher education, and employers in the North Coast region of California.

*Redwood Coast Collaborative Grant Program*

- IMPROVES STUDENT RETENTION AND INCREASES SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS FROM K-12

- INCLUSIVE SUPPORTS ALIGN GUIDED PATHWAYS TO REGIONAL WORKFORCE NEEDS

The Collaborative has split into northern and southern regions to more effectively serve students, with the northern region focusing on Cal Poly Humboldt, College of the Redwoods, and K-12 districts in Humboldt and Del Norte counties, and the southern region focusing on Sonoma State University, Mendocino College, and K-12 districts in Lake and Mendocino counties. The entire region works with University of California (UC), Davis, the farthest north UC campus in California. The collaborative focuses on four core areas to improve educational and workforce outcomes for underrepresented students: supporting college preparation and early credit through dual enrollment; retaining students through inclusive supports; providing high-tech, high-touch advising and access to technology; and subsidies to provide internet access. Finally, to ensure this initiative is aligned to regional workforce needs, the collaborative narrowed their focus to build guided pathways in the healthcare and education fields.

**Pathways Facilitators as a Bridge Across Systems:** Sonoma State and Cal Poly Humboldt's Pathway Facilitators work directly in high schools across the Redwood Coast region, supporting schools that are located in remote and rural regions and struggle to

hire adequate student support staff. Using student data from CaliforniaColleges.edu, a state-wide college and career planning platform, the Pathway Facilitators are able to leverage both aggregate and student-level data to support the design and implementation of personalized advising strategies, and then share this data with relevant partners across the region. The collaborative has also made a concerted effort to hire Pathways Facilitators who reflect the communities they serve, prioritizing the hiring of indigenous and Native American staff where applicable to reflect the students they work with.

**Shared Ownership to Enable Effective Collaboration:**

The Redwood Coast K-16 Educational Collaborative has defined clear ownership by hiring an Executive Director and a Co-Director of the Collaborative. These higher education staff members are responsible for regional strategic planning, vision and goal setting, as well as the overall partnership development strategy within the Collaborative. Despite being located 250 miles and a four-hour drive apart, the Directors work collaboratively to define and implement a regional vision to ensure that students receive the support they need to get to and through higher education and ultimately gain employment in high-demand industries.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

The sites highlighted in this case study prioritize transformative partnerships that are focused on alignment across systems and hold important learnings for others who are grappling with how to structure partnerships for Aligned Advising. These high-impact strategies should be considered to promote cohesive advising partnerships:

- 1 Coordinate advising efforts between regional K-12, higher education, and workforce partners to ensure that student support is aligned and personalized as students move from one system to the next.
- 2 Incentivize higher education institutions and workforce partners to take ownership of creating, funding, and staffing partnerships focused on equitable access to postsecondary attainment and career opportunities.
- 3 Define roles and responsibilities across partners early and clearly outline ownership at all stages of implementation.
- 4 Cultivate strong regional partnerships that strategically leverage existing college and career initiatives and support cohesion.