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Innovative School Counseling Approaches to Improving College and Career Readiness

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Abstract

School counselors are at the forefront of efforts to improve the college readiness of K-12 students. It is clear that many roadblocks exist with regard to college readiness and adequate access to college counseling. Many public schools serving minority, first-generation, low-income students have school counselors with large caseloads and numerous non-counseling duties leaving them with little time to spend on college counseling (Clinedinst, Koranteng, & Nicola, 2015). This exploratory study aimed to review promising practices that target college and career readiness for students. A deeper investigation was conducted at an urban school serving underrepresented students which revealed an innovative five-year, comprehensive, relationship-driven school counseling model that promotes equity, fosters social and emotional growth, and supports students and families through college readiness, enrollment, and degree attainment leading to a potential new framework for schools to consider.

Innovative School Counseling Approaches to Improving College and Career Readiness

Review of Literature

College Readiness

College readiness is a commonly used term that refers to a specific set of knowledge and skills believed to be necessary for postsecondary success (Savitz-Romer, 2012). One of the most prolific researchers in the field of college readiness is William Sedlacek (1993), who theorized that there are eight essential non-cognitive components of college readiness: positive self-concept regarding academics; realistic self-appraisal; understanding/dealing with racism; long-term goal setting; having an available support person; demonstrated experience and success with leadership; community service; and knowledge acquired in/about a field. Later, Conley (2007) offered a narrower view that included four key areas: 1) identifies key cognitive strategies, 2) key content knowledge, 3) academic behaviors, and 4) contextual skills and awareness. Conley (2007) also noted that all four areas interact with and affect one another, highlighting the important belief that these elements are relational. In that way, the idea of readiness can be considered a process in that growth in one area impacts readiness in another and so on (Conley, 2007). Breaking these concepts down further, Conley (2010) delineated the college readiness framework to include strategies focusing on college knowledge, academic behaviors, and content knowledge. College knowledge includes specific information about postsecondary institutions and the application/enrollment process from tuition costs to the college culture (often hidden or unknown to the first generation student). Academic behaviors include persistence, self-management, self-advocacy and a range of other non-cognitive factors connected to college

readiness (Sparkman, Maulding, Roberts, 2012). Content knowledge includes proficiency in core academic subject areas such as English, math, world languages, etc. (Conley, 2010).

School Counselors and College Readiness

Today's school counselors are at the forefront of efforts to improve the college readiness of K-12 students. In their position statement on the topic, the American School Counselor Association ([ASCA], 2013) calls on all school counselors to help students "acquire knowledge and skills to be college and career ready upon graduation" (p. 1). In an effort to assist counselors in this area, ASCA recently released their *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014) which are intended to "describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need to achieve academic success, college and career readiness, and social/emotional development" (p. 1). Based on a review of relevant research and recommendations on college and career readiness, these 35 mindset and behavior standards are considered by ASCA to be applicable to student development in the three relevant domains: academic, college/career, and social/emotional.

Much of the structure for the *Mindsets & Behaviors* (ASCA, 2014) was drawn from the work of Farrington et al. (2012), whose critical review of literature on academic success echoed the works discussed above in stressing the importance of particular attitudes, skills, behaviors, and beliefs that are critical to school achievement. Dubbed "noncognitive" factors by Farrington et al., it is these building blocks of student achievement -- things like the belief in one's ability to succeed, or a system for organizing materials -- that allow students to find success in the form of course grades, which Farrington et al. consider to be a better predictor of high school and college completion than standardized test scores or curricular rigor. In fact, Farrington et al. (2012) go so far as to say that course grades could be considered "the primary driver of differences by

race/ethnicity and gender in educational attainment” (p. 3). Given the mounting research in the area of noncognitive factors, coupled with the unique opportunity school counselors have to impact students in ways that reach beyond just knowledge of academic content, it is no surprise that noncognitive factors serve as the framework for the *Mindsets & Behaviors* (ASCA, 2014).

College readiness counseling provided by school counselors is therefore a developmental process that engages young people at various points in their K-12 careers in establishing postsecondary aspirations and expectations, gaining awareness of their interests and abilities, becoming aware of the importance of beliefs and skills such as the *Mindsets & Behaviors* (ASCA, 2014), and receiving more specific support and information needed for college access and success (Ravitz-Somer, 2012). This process takes time and requires intentional programming designed and delivered by school counselors in various formats such as individual meetings, small groups, classroom lessons, and large group meetings with students and their families. Additionally, school counselors are also positioned to impact college readiness via advocacy, or efforts intentionally focused on addressing the inequalities that often prevent underrepresented student groups from pursuing rigorous college-preparatory coursework (College Board, 2010). In addition, counselors might make a hyper-focused effort to engage these student groups in college readiness counseling and help them successfully transition to college (Wood, McKillip, Rawls, Barry, 2012).

Current State of College Readiness: Statistics & Barriers

The unfortunate reality is that the current state of college readiness in the U.S. is simply unacceptable. Research shows that urban school communities with a high percentage of students of color and prospective first-generation college attendees have inadequate counseling services (McDonough, 2005) resulting in lower readiness. Despite increased national policy mandates

and focused work on issues of equity, data continue to reveal disparities in the academic achievement and postsecondary outcomes of these groups -- particularly African American students and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds -- when compared to national averages. The National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2016a) reports that the high school graduation rate for African American students is 73%, compared to the highest rate of 89% for Asian/Pacific Islander students, who are followed by White (87%), Hispanic (76%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (70%) students, respectively. College participation rates tell a similar story, with NCES (2016b) reporting no increases for college enrollment between 2004 and 2014 for African American youth despite a 12% increase in the general African American population according to the 2010 US Census states. Similar disparities exist across income levels, with NCES (2016c) reporting that while 81% of high school students who indicate that they plan to enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school actually find their way to a campus the following October, only 52% of low income students manage this achievement. Statistics such as these indicate that a high number of students who have plans to enroll in college are prevented from doing so by a variety of barriers.

One such barrier to college readiness and enrollment is the fact that far too many students are graduating from high school without the academic skills needed for college. For example, only 26% of the class of 2015 who took an ACT exam demonstrated college readiness in all four subjects (ACT, 2016). Furthermore, ACT notes that while 34% of White students met all four ACT college readiness benchmarks, only 6% of African American students did so. Sadly, research shows us that students who are not academically prepared have lower levels of college performance and persistence in college completion (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Another factor that undoubtedly contributes both to a lack of academic preparation and more general college readiness is the relative lack of deliberate, developmental counseling services during the high school years. As discussed above, in addition to academic preparation, high school students must have access to college information, support throughout the application and enrollment process, and counseling services that support the development of critical non-cognitive skills (e.g., ASCA, 2014; Conley, 2010; Farrington et al., 2012). Unfortunately, as noted in the *2015 State of College Admission* report (Clinedinst, Koranteng, & Nicola, 2015) published by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), many high school students, especially those attending public schools, receive college counseling services that are “limited at best” (p. 4). In their report, NACAC notes that school counselors face many obstacles to providing adequate college readiness services, including the fact that they are “few in number, often have large student caseloads, and have additional constraints on the amount of time they can dedicate to college counseling” (Clinedinst et al., 2015, p. 4). As such, public school counselors are only able to spend approximately 22 percent of their time on postsecondary counseling. While some public schools have tried to combat this trend by employing a “college specialist” in the counseling department, these schools are the exception (approximately 30%), and even these specialists often find they are pulled in many directions and unable to focus solely on college advising (Patterson, 2015).

While no school employee should be personally responsible for the college readiness of all students, the school counselor must clearly have a hand, as discussed above. And because of the need for the counselor to reach every student on some level, a critical discussion must be had on the issue of student-to-counselor ratios when examining college readiness counseling. The ASCA National Model recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1 (ASCA, 2012), but

national studies estimate that actual ratios are consistently much higher (ASCA, 2013) and that an astounding 20 percent of high schools employ no school counselor at all (US Department of Education, 2014). Taken together with the statistics above, the reality is that the work of a school counselor often far exceeds best practice recommendations and falls short of the services needed by students, despite the best efforts and intentions of the counselor.

It is clear that many roadblocks exist with regard to college readiness. Whether it is a lack of academic preparation or quality access to a school counselor, the sad truth is that relatively low numbers of high school students, especially those in urban areas, are exposed to a college-going culture in high school where expectations include not only applying to college, but being accepted, enrolling, and completing a degree (Venezia, Krist, & Antonio 2003; Roderick, 2008; Tsoi-A-Fatt Bryant, 2015).

Innovative School Counseling Approaches to College Readiness

In 2015, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Foundation collaborated with the Center of Excellence and Leadership in Education (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis and Fleck Education to review literature and conduct surveys and interviews in search of exemplary models of school counseling programs specifically focused on college and career readiness (ICC, CELL, & Fleck Education, 2015). The goal was to develop a framework of promising practices that schools may replicate within the following domains:

- promising practices in delivery services
- promising practicing in financing services over time
- promising practices in evaluating counselors, and
- promising practices professional development and pre-service training programs for counselors

For the purposes of this article, promising practices in delivery services will be highlighted. Although college and career counseling was the main focus of the investigation, information related to both academic and social/emotional counseling was also reviewed. Innovative delivery service models are those that find ways to allocate counselors' time to ensure students are holistically served by counselors in all three domains of counseling. These strategies vary by school, but all have administrative support which is considered critical since, "Administrative leadership drives a culture that insists on postsecondary success. Ideally counselors are a part of this leadership team to lend voice to the needs of students" (ICC, CELL, & Fleck Education, 2015, p. 3).

Examples of promising practices in delivery services. Persons interested in all promising practices should review the report in question (ICC, CELL, & Fleck Education, 2015), but a brief summary of certain findings will be given here, followed by a more in-depth look at one school's counseling program. Strategies by some schools are as simple as enlisting teachers in providing college and career education during advisory time; employing specialized college coordinators; recruiting parent volunteers to assist in college/career centers; and the intentional use of technology to equip students with accurate and additional college and career information (2015). One small, rural Indiana high school serving approximately 400 students (roughly 50% of whom receive free or reduced price lunch) described an "intentional" yet "intrusive" model of school counseling in which every 9th grade student and his or her parent/guardian meets with a team (school counselor, principal, advisory teacher) to develop a postsecondary plan that includes opening a 529 college savings plan in coordination with community partners. The school counselor collaborates with and trains teachers to provide college and career education

during advisory period and to serve in non-counseling roles such as test administration. Finally, this school is working toward a school-wide Early College Program.

Another program highlighted is a large comprehensive high school in California that serves approximately 1,500 students across three smaller schools, each of which has an assistant principal, counselor, and special education teacher. The school counselor “loops” with their students across all four grades of high school in order to assist in relationship building. Additional positions shared across campuses include a school psychologist, college and career advisor focused on financial advising and college planning, and a crisis counselor (contracted through a community partner). All are part of the counseling team available for students. Counselors collaborate with teachers and train them on a college/career curriculum that is delivered to all students during advisory periods. Social and emotional needs are a priority, and multiple counseling groups are offered with the help of school counseling interns when available.

These are a brief glimpse into two school counseling practices highlighted in the *Promising Practices* report (ICC, CELL, & Fleck Education, 2015). As discussed above, the time has come for schools to address the college readiness needs of our nation’s youth, especially with regard to addressing gaps in equity and access for minority, first-generation, and low-income students. As such, the frameworks and practices outlined in the report (ICC, CELL, & Fleck Education, 2015) offer schools a vision for innovation and change.

We will now shift our focus to a closer examination of the counseling program at one college preparatory high school in Chicago which provides numerous examples of promising practices with regard to the delivery of a counseling program aimed at college readiness. The school has full administrative support and leadership, includes teachers as partners, enlists

specialists in college access, and provides extensive programming and counseling to all students across the four years of high school and at least the first year of the college experience.

A Closer Look at North Lawndale College Preparatory High School

North Lawndale College Preparatory High School (NLCPHS) is a charter school consisting of two campuses on the West side of Chicago, each with approximately 400 students in grades 9-12. Admission to NLCPHS is non-competitive and determined primarily via a lottery which includes interested applicants in the Chicago Public School system. The population of NLCPHS is 99.4% Black, and 96.5% of students receive free or reduced priced lunch (Illinois Report Card, n.d.). The community in which NLCPHS rests could be categorized as “rough” to say the least, with a violent crime rate higher than all but 1 of 77 areas of Chicago during a 30-day period from November 16 to December 16, 2016 (Crime in Chicago, n.d.) and where less than 6% of the population has college degrees (NLCPHS, n.d.).

Despite its location and the unique needs of its primarily low-income, minority students, NLCPHS is focused on student success, and particularly on college enrollment and completion. The school’s mission statement, displayed prominently on their website, reads “NLCPHS develops in its students the personal resilience and academic skills necessary to successfully complete college” (NLCPHS, n.d.). While the mission statement at some schools sits idly on a shelf or website and lacks any true meaning, the NLCPHS mission perfectly illustrates the culture one experiences when entering the doors of the school. This culture resonates with each and every educator in the building helping the school achieve results such as an approximately 80% college enrollment rate, compared to a rate of 40% for all Chicago Public High School graduates (NLCPHS, n.d.). Additionally, NLCPHS graduates complete college at rates 4-5 the

national average for low-income students (NLCPHS, n.d.) and exceed the district's graduation rate by 20% (NLCPHS at 94%).

In Carol Lieber's 2009 report titled, *Increasing College Access through School-Based Models of Postsecondary Preparation, Planning, and Support*, one of the key recommendations for urban high schools addressing achievement and college access gaps is referred to as the saturated counseling model, or specifically making efforts to addressing student-to-counselor ratios. Following a Pell Institute study with first generation college students, it was recommended that schools "drastically" reduce student-counselor ratios (Engle, Bermeo & O'Brien, 2006). Further conversations with urban school counselors revealing the numerous duties, current large caseloads, and crises needs of students, it is suggested a 100:1 student-counselor ratio that would professionalize the role of a school counselor and allow intentional, comprehensive programming that could adequately provide college counseling for all students (Lieber, 2009). Research further supports smaller, more intimate school settings with low student-to counselor ratios to best support college readiness and access outcomes for all students, but especially those students from underserved communities (Hawkins & Lautz, 2005; Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, 2009)

School counseling at NLCPHS. The school counseling model at NLCPHS closely resembles the saturated counseling model described above (Lieber, 2009). Up until this school year (when district wide budget cuts forced staffing and operational changes, the impact of which are yet unknown), each 9th grade class was assigned to a school counselor who was responsible only for those students, resulting in a student-to-counselor ratio of approximately 70:1 (NLCPHS, n.d.). Under this model, access to the counselor is easy and frequent, and the counselor provides services to their students during each year of high school and through their

first year of college, at which time students are turned over to another NLCPHS staff member who serves as an alumni counselor. Given their small caseloads and extended relationships with students -- even into their college years -- NLCPHS counselors develop meaningful and authentic relationships with students and families and serve as consistent advocates who help students stay on the path toward achieving their academic and college goals. More specific findings on this approach and its impact are detailed below.

Findings

This project was an exploratory study into the role and impact of the counselors at one urban, college preparatory high school. The investigators carried out interviews with school stakeholders and emphasized reflection on the experiences of these participants as described in their own words to better understand their personal meanings and interactions with the school counseling program (Creswell, 2007). The researchers were able to gain entry to the research community through a personal connection and coordinated the interviews and visit through this personal connection. Semi-structured small group interviews were conducted with administrators, counselors, college specialists, teachers, graduates, and a parent/basketball coach. Four main themes emerged from our interviews with NLCPHS staff and stakeholders: (a) meaningful, authentic student-counselor relationships; (b) collaboration between and among educators, parents, and the community; (c) college readiness that includes both academic and non-cognitive skills; and (d) counselors at the core of the school culture.

Theme One: Relationships

Throughout every conversation, it was apparent that relationships are at the core of school counseling success at NLCPHS. We heard phrases like “counselors are like pseudo parents” and “extended family” time and again. One teacher even stated, “It’s almost like the

kids are their [counselors'] children.” This family atmosphere was further evident when an alumnus of the high school shared how students love coming back and sharing their successes during holiday breaks or over the summer. She stated that it is a “lifetime membership” when you graduate from NLCPHS. One counselor summed that up by stating, “That word ‘relationships’ is so significant to what we do here.”

This theme was further illustrated by a story told by an NLCPHS parent who also works as at the school. When asked why he chose NLCPHS for his children, he told us that several years earlier, when he was working at the school but not yet sending his children there, he saw a counselor leaving school late one Friday afternoon with a pile of luggage. When he asked where she was headed, the counselor told him she was headed to a neighboring state to visit one of her students who was struggling with the transition to college. Our interviewee said he decided then and there that NLCPHS was the place for his kids.

School counselors at NLCPHS realize that these deep relationships can be traced directly to their smaller caseloads, reduced “non-counseling” duties, and the support of their administrators, all of which allow them to be student-centered in providing a truly holistic approach to counseling. They also realize that this approach is different than at most high schools. As one counselor stated, there is “None of the ‘I want to change my schedule’ stuff,” explaining that students see the counselors for much more than the rote tasks common in other high schools. Furthermore, the school employs a test coordinator to manage the heavy burden of standardized testing that is frequently carried by counselors in other schools.

As explained above, the NLCPHS model assigns 9th grade students to a counselor who follows only this class over the next four years of high school and into their first year of college. This model allows the counselor to grow strong relationships with students and families, but it

also creates high expectations for the counselor to impact student outcomes. Below, a counselor describes a type of “positive pressure” that arises from these smaller caseloads and the desire to understand the root cause of students’ presenting issues.

“I remember the first week I was here getting an email with a list of all the students who were absent from school that day. That was a lot of pressure – I felt bad and felt I needed to take ownership. I felt like I wanted to know why the kids were gone, what was going on at home. I knew every Freshman very well within just a few months.”

Administrators emphasized that students trust the school counselors because of their interest in and advocacy for them over a period of several years. This allows the school counselors to closely work with and build self-efficacy in their students. It was apparent that all interviewees place great value on the relationships the NLCPHS school counselors have with their students and understand that it is critical to student success.

Theme Two: Collaboration

At NLCPHS, counselors are viewed as the “go-to” educators. They are leaders who provide professional development to staff, create college readiness curriculum, and are considered the expert on their students. As stated by one teacher, “They’re [counselors] the first person I go to.” If something is going on with a student, the teachers feel comfortable in seeking out a counselor for assistance. Communication among staff is They are viewed as the “point person” most likely to have insight into the home life of a student and on the impact it might have on the educational environment. As shared by another teacher, “I haven’t found an issue we couldn’t solve together.” Teachers and administrators overwhelmingly view school counselors as problem-solvers.

Another vital role of the school counselor is collaboration with families. NLCPHS students frequently face challenges both in and out of school. Additionally, the college process can be overwhelming and somewhat intimidating, but families feel safe to seek assistance and support from a counselor with the application and financial aid process. With the counselor assisting through the first year of college, they can also help families navigate any unforeseen issues that may arise after the student arrives on campus. For example, one NLCPHS administrator described how a counselor was able to make an emergency campus visit when a student was upset about finances due to an outstanding balance. The counselor was able to work with the student and get this issue resolved while also teaching the student self-advocacy skills in the process too.

Theme Three: Non-cognitive Skills

College readiness involves the whole student, both academic and non-cognitive. As stated by one NLCPHS administrator, “Making them smarter at math is only part of what we need to do.” The college readiness process was described by NLCPHS staff as a “both/and” proposition, not an “only” framework. All educators with whom we spoke genuinely expressed care and concern for how their students grow and develop as people and gain life skills in addition to academic preparation. As another administrator noted, “The most important thing we can do to prepare them for college success is working on personal resilience, rather than hard academics.” The counselors are instrumental in this work. In addition to providing students with developmentally appropriate “college knowledge,” the school counseling department also helps coordinate restorative justice programming to help students work through interpersonal conflict and commonly leads conferences between students, parents, and teachers as they work to create student success plans.

While much of this growth takes place at school in the classroom or counseling office, it can also happen off campus. A topic that came up in both counselor and administrator interviews was the value of travel experiences that numerous NLCPHS students participate in during high school. It was explained that students can apply to spend parts of school breaks (all the way up to three full summers) away from home either volunteering in a community or studying at various participating college campuses, all free of charge for the students. These experiences have multiple benefits for both the student and the family. It was explained that in many cases these trips are the first time a student has traveled away from home and family. The experiences become great sources of personal growth and give participants a chance to “practice” what college will be like when the student will be away for a semester at a time. As one administrator pointed out, it is likely that many NLCPHS students are “scared” to go to college, and that they must build up “enough escape velocity to get away from this place and then persist once they get there.” One reason given for this is that most NLCPHS students have traditionally attended predominantly Black schools during their K-12 careers, making these travel experiences opportunities for cultural immersion during which students experience being a true minority in the classroom for the first time. It is often during these experiences that students feel racism or discomfort with issues of race for the first time. While administrators explained that this can be challenging, it provides an opportunity for counselors to have cultural conversations that help students think about their college choices and prepare for the transition to schools that may be more or less culturally diverse than they have previously experienced. Like other attitudes and beliefs described in this section, these non-cognitive skills are vital for college readiness.

Theme Four: Culture

Even with the low student-to-counselor ratios, the NLCPHS counseling department understands the importance of enlisting all educators at the school in reinforcing the school's college-going culture to all students. It was apparent during our interviews that every staff member, regardless of their position in the school (i.e., resource officer, basketball coach, classroom teacher, etc.), constantly provides students with information, messaging, encouragement and support that encourages and maintains a college-going culture. As one counselor notes, "The word 'culture' is so important here -- peace, our beloved community, our advocacy." And while all staff members play an important role in this, it would seem that counselors are especially crucial to building and maintaining this culture. One teacher indicated that counselors are "at the heart" of a lot of the culture. And as one administrator put it, the counselors are the "soul of the school." According to another administrator, at NLCPHS, the staff "...have a sense of the spirit of kids. You can just tell when you walk through the door at a place, whether they have this or not. When kids experience trauma, toxic families...how do you direct their energy, how do you encounter them?" Well, that same administrator explained that at NLCPHS, the "counselors are like our spiritual directors" helping pick up on these disturbances and bring people together to support them.

As pointed out above, in addition to their direct work with students, counselors also provide professional development to staff on a variety of topics and design lessons delivered by teachers to enhance the college readiness of students. In this way, they are able to extend their reach beyond the counseling department and partner with administration in building and maintaining the culture of the school. This approach is consistent with previous literature calling for the systemic involvement of all school professionals in committing to and carrying out the vision of a school community (Lee & Mishook, 2012)

Discussion

Whether it is raising test scores or helping students enroll in college, the challenges facing our schools are numerous. That said, creative, dedicated educators across the nation are working to find innovative approaches to tackling them. While this article barely skims the surface of these challenges, we hope that the portrait we painted of one college preparatory high school has been inspiring. NLCPHS serves predominantly underrepresented or disadvantaged students (i.e., those classified as first-generation college attenders, African American, low socioeconomic status [SES], at-risk, etc.) who are chosen at random and come with no special academic qualifications, and yet, are driven and nurtured to realize that they are capable of attending college. The school has constructed an effective, innovative school counseling model that reduces the student-counselor ratio, removes non-counseling duties, and places a laser focus on getting kids to and through college. College aspirations, expectations, knowledge, and critical non-cognitive skills such as resilience and cultural awareness are nurtured and monitored. Counselors develop deep relationships with a small group of students beginning in their 9th grade year and extending all the way through the first year of college. And in fact, what we discovered is that this school, and particularly its counselors, seems to support students for a lifetime.

Limitations and Potential for Future Research

This examination of NLCPHS was admittedly limited. While the authors interviewed numerous staff, alumni, and other stakeholders, it is impossible to get a full sense for a school's culture or educational practices via interviews alone. Furthermore, an interview format only gives a partial picture of the actual climate and forces investigators to take the word of interviewees. Care is taken to only share findings that are backed-up by numerous statements,

but the findings are nonetheless not observed. A final limitation is the fact that NLCPHS has been forced to make adjustments to their counseling model as indicated above. Heavy budget cuts have forced them to reduce the counseling staff, with each counselor now expected to work with two grade levels. Furthermore, off-campus opportunities for students are now more limited. As stated above, it is not known by either the staff or investigators how these changes will impact the students, but it bears mentioning.

As previously stated, this project was a preliminary investigation into the innovative school counseling practices at an urban, college preparatory high school. Next steps could include an analysis of the school's quantitative data such as Clearinghouse or other college enrollment/attrition statistics; student surveys; and standardized test scores. Furthermore, interviews with NLCPHS students and greater numbers of alumni could help support or dispute the findings herein. Researchers might attempt to find schools with populations similar to NLCPHS in order to examine differences in outcomes or conduct true experimental research. Researchers might also be interested in tracking the outcomes of this year's changes to the NLCPHS program due to budget cuts. A longitudinal study may provide useful data for other schools faced with similar budgeting decisions.

Conclusion and Implications

This initial review has revealed an innovative and promising school counseling model aimed to support the college readiness and focus on the whole student. We recognize a school would need to fully dedicate resources or make a radical reallocation of existing funding to support this approach. If this is not possible, components of this model could be replicated with success. For example, one simple and no cost strategy is to remove non-counseling duties such as test administration responsibilities, allowing counselors the time to meet with students and

provide direct service counseling and support. Additional areas that can be replicated from this model include making at least one contact with students after graduation to check on and/or assist with college enrollment; looping counselors with students during high school; focusing heavily on getting to know freshman/new students; developing partnerships with universities where large percentages of graduates attend; partnering with families; helping students find or create cultural and learning experiences during summer and school breaks; and collaborating with teachers to assist in college and career guidance curriculum delivery. The innovative five-year, comprehensive, relationship-driven school counseling model promotes equity, supports social and emotional growth, and supports students and families through college readiness, enrollment, and degree attainment leading to a potential new framework for schools to consider.

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