



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

School Counseling in Ohio

A College Board 2011 National
Survey of School Counselors
State Brief

**A Brief for the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center's
National Office for School Counselor Advocacy
by Civic Enterprises with Hart Research**

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America is facing a high school and college completion crisis. The most recent data reveal the important linkage of a strong college and career readiness agenda in secondary school to later college enrollment and completion. One in four public high school students and 65 percent of students of color fail to graduate from high school with their peers.¹ During high school, many students do not have the resources they need to succeed in college, including access to college-preparatory courses. This is particularly true in schools serving populations with traditionally low college enrollment rates: Less than a third of high schools serving the most Hispanic and African American students offer calculus, and only 40 percent offer physics.² Of all students who do complete high school, only a quarter (28 percent) complete an associate degree within three years, and only half (57 percent) complete a bachelor's degree within six years.³

As a nation, we are falling far short of the College Board's goal of increasing the proportion of 25- to 34-year-olds with an associate degree or higher to 55 percent by 2025, with less than half (41.1 percent) with such a degree as of 2009.⁴ In order to support students in college and career success, and to regain our status in having the highest college attainment rates in the world, we must use all of the tools in our education toolkit — including our nation's counselors. School counselors are uniquely positioned to support students' success due to their ability to understand the entire picture of individual students — their family circumstances, social and emotional development, academic progress and other issues related to their success in school.⁵ School counselors 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.⁶ Research indicates that a counselor's unique role coordinating expectations, academics and support systems across secondary and postsecondary programs helps to improve academic readiness and persistence for students.⁷

Ohio, like the nation, is facing a high school and college completion crisis. This brief, *School Counseling in Ohio*, focuses on the unique challenges and opportunities facing school counselors in the Buckeye State. It is a supplement to the *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads* report, commissioned by the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA). The findings are based on one the largest surveys of school counselors: a nationally representative sample of more than 5,300 middle school and high school counselors. The survey revealed deep concerns within the profession and shed light on opportunities to better utilize these valuable leaders in America's schools.

Key Findings

Key Finding: School counselors in Ohio believe that the mission of schools and the counseling profession should be preparing students for college and careers and ensuring equity for low-income students, but few see this as a reality in their schools or their profession.

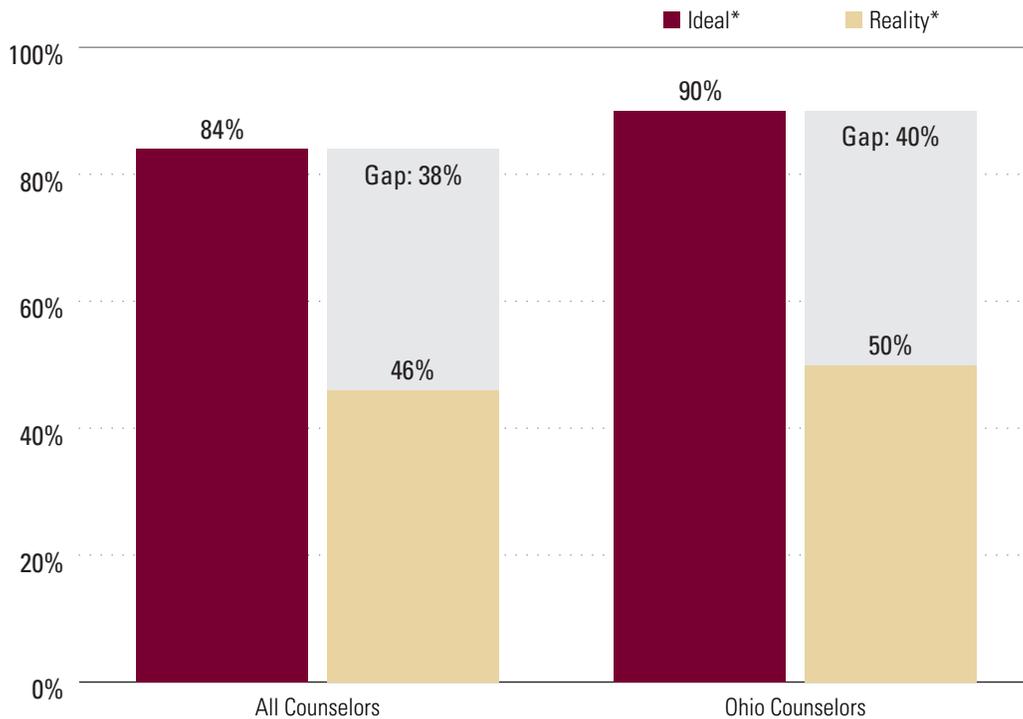
Like their peers around the country, Ohio counselors report a large gap between the ideal mission of schools and the reality. Nearly nine in 10 Ohio counselors (86 percent, versus 85 percent nationally) believe college completion and career readiness should be the mission of their schools. Less than one in three counselors sees this mission as a reality in their schools (28 percent in Ohio, compared to 30 percent nationally, rate their schools as a 9 or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). The gap between this ideal mission and its reality in schools is slightly larger in Ohio than across the nation (Ohio has a 58-point gap, compared to a 55-point gap nationally).

Counselors in Ohio report a larger gap than counselors nationally between the ideal mission of the school counseling profession and its reality regarding college and career readiness. A majority of counselors believe the ideal mission of counselors should be “to ensure that all students reach the end of the 12th grade and earn a high school diploma, ready to succeed in college and careers” (with 90 percent of Ohio counselors and 84 percent of the nation’s counselors giving this mission statement a 9 or 10 on how well it fits their view for the ideal mission for school counselors [See Figure 1]). When asked to reflect on the reality of this mission, Ohio counselors were more likely to see this mission in reality but also expressed a slightly larger gap than counselors nationally (with 50 percent of counselors rating this as a 9 or 10 in reality in Ohio, for a 40-point gap, versus 46 percent of counselors nationally with a 38-point gap).

Ohio’s counselors report a larger gap than counselors nationally between the ideal mission of school counselors and ensuring equity for low-income students. Nearly seven in 10 (68 percent) of counselors in Ohio and across the country rate “to make sure that students from low-income, disadvantaged, and immigrant backgrounds get the extra attention and support they need to achieve success equal to other students” as an ideal mission for school counselors. Yet only 20 percent of Ohio counselors see this as their reality, compared to 29 percent nationally, resulting in a 48-point gap.

Key Finding: Ohio counselors see their ability to be an advocate for their students and establish a relationship of trust with their students as important and unique contributions, but they do not believe their schools always take advantage of these important attributes.

Figure 1: Counselors See Large Gaps Between the Ideal and Reality for the Mission of School Counselors



*Counselors’ Rating “To ensure all students reach the 12th grade and earn a high school diploma, ready to succeed in college and careers” as a 9 or 10 for their school system’s mission statement in the ideal and in reality.

Like their peers across the country, counselors in Ohio believe their ability to serve as student advocates is important, but they are less likely to say their schools take advantage of it. More than three in four counselors in Ohio believe their ability to “work proactively as student advocates and actively intervene to create pathways and support to ensure that all students have opportunities to achieve their postsecondary goals” is important (76 percent, compared to 74 percent nationally). However, only 38 percent of Ohio counselors say their school takes full advantage of this unique role, compared to 42 percent nationally. Nationally and in Ohio, nearly 99 percent 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.”

Counselors in Ohio believe their school utilizes their ability to establish relationships of trust with students, but at lower rates than their peers nationally. More than three in five (62 percent) counselors in Ohio believe their ability to “establish relationships with students and be another adult to talk to when they are in situations of conflict” is one of the most important roles of school counselors, compared to 65 percent nationally. The majority of counselors in Ohio believe their school takes advantage of this unique role, although at slightly lower levels than counselors across the nation (55 percent in Ohio, versus 57 percent nationally).

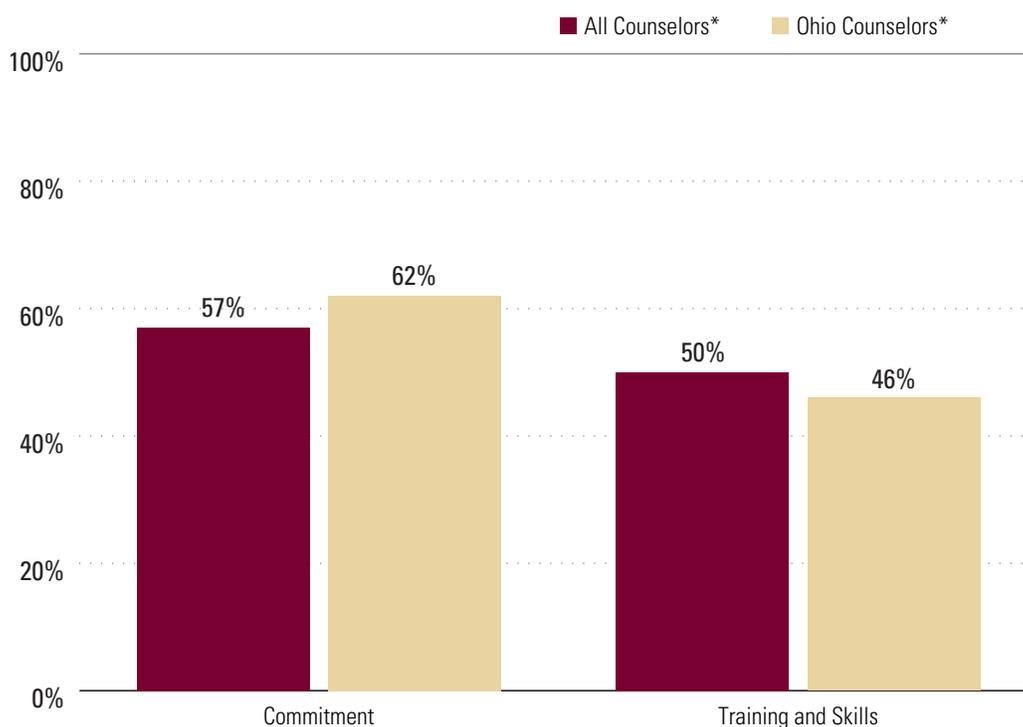
Professional Development for School Counselors — Filling a Gap in Ohio

While the majority of counselors in Ohio can see themselves committing to a college and career readiness agenda, fewer than half of Ohio counselors say they have the training and skills needed to successfully implement each of the components (46 percent, compared to 50 percent nationally rate their training as a 9 or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). Less than one in five counselors believe the training they received prepared them for a job as a school counselor (13 percent in Ohio and 16 percent nationally rate their training as a 9 or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). Further, more than half of counselors would like to spend more time on professional development or in-service training counselors (53 percent in Ohio, and 54 percent nationally). The College Board is helping counselors in Ohio get the resources they need to support their students' success.

In the spring of 2012, the Ohio School Counselor Association and the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy partnered to provide resources and expertise to the state with federal college access challenge grant funding support. Their goal is to redefine the role of the counselor to lead district-level college and career readiness efforts. With a K–12 and systemic focus, the workshops were offered in six regions of the state in order to deliver the message to all corners of Ohio. Topics included *Leadership in Increasing and Supporting AP Participation and Success for Underserved Populations*, which provided school counselors with the skills and knowledge necessary for promoting equitable participation and performance of underrepresented student groups in the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) and *Increasing College and Career Readiness Through Parent, Family and Community Partnerships*, where counselors learned about the sensitivity necessary to effectively engage diverse parent, family and community populations in the college and career readiness process. Participants also received practical resources to use immediately in their school and communities. A webinar has been planned for later in the spring to give attendees the opportunity to reflect on the information from the training and to talk about challenges and opportunities as they plan the next steps. Nearly 300 counselors across the state have participated, including one who said, “*I am going to hit the ground running. ... I have known how important college and career readiness is, but it seemed so daunting and like I was alone in the effort. I feel much more confident [as a result of the College Board training].*”

Key Finding: School counselors in Ohio support key elements of a framework for advancing college and career readiness, as well as certain accountability measures of counselor effectiveness.

Figure 2: Counselors in Ohio Feel More Committed to the Eight Components but Feel Less Adequately Trained to Be Successful



*Counselors' Rating of "Commitment and Training and Skills Needed to be Successful" as a 9 or 10 for the Eight Components.

Counselors in Ohio are extremely committed to a college and career readiness agenda, but they are less likely to think they have the support required to be successful.

Counselors were asked to assess the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's "Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling," a counseling system that focuses on ensuring all students are college and career ready when they graduate from the 12th grade. The majority of counselors can see themselves committing to this approach (62 percent of counselors in Ohio and 57 percent of all counselors rated this as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale [See Figure 2]). Among the Eight Components, counselors in Ohio rated "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" as the most important (74 percent rated it a 9 or 10, compared to 72 percent nationally). Only 30 percent of counselors in Ohio and nationally say their schools are extremely successful at accomplishing this component. Despite the commitment to a college and career readiness agenda, only one in four counselors believe that they have the administrative support and resources necessary to successfully implement each of the items (25 in Ohio and 27 percent nationally rate this as a 9 or 10).

Many counselors are supportive of specific proposals of reform, but relatively fewer Ohio counselors believe that specific measures are fair and appropriate ways to assess school counselors. To improve student success, the vast majority of Ohio counselors say that at least some changes to the education system are needed (98 percent in Ohio

and nationally), but fewer Ohio counselors (45 percent) than counselors nationally (55 percent) believe that major changes or a complete overhaul of the education system is needed. Counselors in Ohio show levels of support similar to all counselors nationally for specific educational reform proposals such as collecting and disseminating data on the success rates of high school graduates (65 percent in Ohio and nationally). Slightly fewer, but still a majority, also support creating measures of accountability and incentives for counselors (59 percent in Ohio, 61 percent nationally). Of the various accountability measures, counselors in Ohio were most likely to view completion of a college-prep sequence of courses as a fair and appropriate way to assess their effectiveness, with 56 percent rating it a 6 or higher on a zero-to-10 scale, compared to 61 percent nationally). Ohio counselors were less likely to see using access to advanced classes and tests (49 percent in Ohio compared 61 percent nationally) and transcript audits of graduation readiness (52 percent in Ohio compared to 62 percent nationally) as a fair or appropriate measure.

Next Steps

The Ohio high school and college completion crisis comes at tremendous costs — to individuals, communities and the nation. School counselors are supportive of a college and career readiness agenda and have indicated a desire to be leaders in supporting their students' success. School counselors are highly valuable professionals in Ohio's education system, but they are also among the least strategically deployed. This is a 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.⁸ Now is the time to support school counselors in their efforts — to strengthen Ohio's educational system and secure the state's future.

Endnotes

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8. Bridgeland, John M. and Mary Bruce. *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads* (New York: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research for the College Board, 2011). Available at http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf.





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