

# FOR CAREER GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

BY SUSAN REESE

When Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the College AP Board Conference in July 2010, he stated, “School counselors should ‘own the turf’ when it comes to college and career readiness counseling. They should be leading advocates for students pursuing two-year and four-year college degrees. But the reality, as you know, could not be more different. Nationwide, there is roughly one guidance counselor for every 475 students.” Because of what he called “impossible caseloads and antiquated conceptions of the role of

counselors” he noted that many guidance counselors spend most of their day on non-guidance tasks, such as being hallway monitors, mailing deficiency notices, filling in as substitute teachers, and administering discipline.

The title of Secretary Duncan’s speech was “The Three Myths of High School Reform,” and the third myth he cited was, “the idea that high school educators and counselors cannot really prepare students for careers or college because the concept of college- and career-readiness is itself too elusive to evaluate meaningfully with assessments or to track with

longitudinal data systems.” Duncan sees counselors as being among those helping to lead the transformation of high schools, and changing the lives of disadvantaged students.

### ACTE Takes a Position

In 2003, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) reported on the role of the guidance professional in a shifting education system, noting the impact these rapid and complex changes were having on both academic and career and technical education (CTE). As a result, students and parents needed more



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assistance than ever in navigating the school system and accessing information so they could make informed decisions about courses and programs that meet students' individual needs.

ACTE has continued to state its position on the topic, and in December 2008, its Issue Brief on CTE's role in career guidance noted that the lack of preparation to navigate the changing workplace can be tied specifically to a lack of career knowledge and awareness. Without structured guidance activities, students may drift through high school without learning about all of the career opportunities avail-

able and without gaining the skills that can help them take advantage of those opportunities. They may also be in danger of failing to continue on to postsecondary education, or even worse, of dropping out of high school.

### The Comprehensive System

Programs often cited by ACTE and others as successful are those that are described as comprehensive. Norman Gysbers of the University of Missouri-Columbia and Patricia Henderson, an administrative and clinical supervisor of counselors for more than 35 years, are the authors of

*Comprehensive Guidance Programs that Work*. Gysbers also has served on the ACTE Guidance Career Development Division Policy Committee. Gysbers and Henderson list the delivery system components of a comprehensive guidance program as:

- a guidance curriculum that includes lessons on topics such as conflict mediation, career and educational planning, and alcohol/drug abuse prevention;
- individual planning that helps students create meaningful career directions and organize their personal plans of



There is no doubt that the job of today's career guidance counselor is a challenging one, as is even recognized by the education secretary. But despite those challenges acknowledged by Secretary Duncan and others, today's CTE programs can play a unique role in assisting counselors' efforts to provide students with career guidance. As ACTE's Issue Brief notes, "The new CTE is much broader and more inclusive and includes the philosophy that all education is career education."

study around their career goals;

- responsive services that help students who are experiencing problems that interfere with their success in school; and
- system support that allows guidance counselors and academic advisers sufficient time to carry out guidance program management and evaluation work, community collaboration, committee work and required administrative tasks.

In "School Counselors as CTE Stakeholders," the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEC) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) state that, "A comprehensive counseling program based on the ASCA National Model is a way for school counselors to show students all of their academic and technical options, including CTE courses."

The ASCA National Model supports a school's overall success by working with students on academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development. Comprehensive counseling and guidance programs include the components of individual student planning, guidance curriculum responsive services, and system support.

### Model Programs

Utah developed its Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Program in 1989,

and the program is recognized for its success in four areas of student outcomes that its counselors help students achieve: academic/learning development, life/career development, multicultural/global citizen development, and personal/social development. A key feature of the Utah model is the individual planning component better known as the Student Education Occupation Plan (SEOP), which allows students and counselors to organize and promote student accomplishments, and helps students, parents, teachers and counselors plan, monitor and manage educational and career development in middle and high school.

The October 2001 issue of *Techniques* featured the Utah model in the article, "Setting the Course," and spotlighted Utah's Davis School District, which in 1999 had received the Planning for Life Award developed by the U.S. Army and the National Consortium of State Guidance Supervisors (NCSGS). The district was honored for its academic and career planning, which included developing guidance curriculum manuals written by and for counselors to use with the curriculum in elementary, middle and high schools.

In 2009, NCSGS awarded first place in its ABC Awards Program to the Greenville Middle Academy in Greenville, South Carolina, because the school was highly rated across all of the NCSGS standards and program elements of guid-

ance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services and system support. "Most impressive," notes NCSGS, "was how guidance is integrated into the whole educational experience. The program deals with personal and social skills as well as life skills, employability and career and life planning. The core of the guidance experience is found within the school's guidance career awareness and exploration curriculum, including a program called GoalMine. The community and faculty seem to all be involved in some way in the planning, delivery and assessment of impact and effects of the program." According to NCSGS, in the Greenville Middle Academy program, students have job shadowing opportunities, as well as a variety of career assessments, and they are involved in character education. In addition, they each have an educational and life plan before graduation.

In Missouri, the Comprehensive Guidance Program curriculum is organized around three strands: personal and social development, academic development, and career development. The three strands then lead to nine "Big Ideas" that include not just developing goals, but applying career exploration and planning as well as educational skills. The curriculum framework is the result of the collaborative work of school counselors from across Missouri, and according to the NASDCTEC and ASCA report, the Mis-

souri Comprehensive Guidance Program has resulted in academic benefits for students and schools.

Nebraska is another state that is often cited for its model school counseling program. Nebraska's goals/standards are called "Essential Learning" and center around academic development, career development, and personal/social development. The Nebraska Career Education (NCE) Model is also based upon the ASCA National Model, and the school guidance curriculum includes what NCE calls structured developmental lessons designed to assist students in achieving the competencies of the Essential Learning domains. It is presented through the NCE delivery system in K-12 classrooms and group activities.

According to NASDCTE and ASCA, community colleges in the state are also "embracing the NCE model in admissions materials and other planning resources for seamless transitions between secondary and postsecondary."

NCE also includes Curriculum for Careers (C4C)—a middle school curriculum for career exploration that aligns with the NCE model and teaches students to develop their own personal learning plans. Individual student planning is an important component of the Nebraska delivery system and consists of school counselors coordinating ongoing systemic activities designed to assist students in establishing personal goals and academic and career planning. Among the other resources offered by NCE is Nebraska Career Connections, a Web-based information tool, which NCE notes "provides individualized accounts and valuable resources for determining career paths and necessary education to achieve career and life goals."

NCE's delivery system also includes what it terms "Responsive Services," which are activities that meet the immediate needs of students and their families, and which can be initiated through the school counselor or by the student, parent,

teacher or administrator. An Advisory Council is also part of the NCE management system, and its stated purpose is "to help set program goals, provide support, offer advice, review activities and advocate for the school counseling program within the community."

### Guidance Along the Career Path

As CTE has evolved from the old vocational-technical model, guidance and counseling programs have had to evolve as well. Today, there are career pathways and Career Clusters that help define occupational opportunities and the ways in which students can reach them. Many programs use these initiatives in their school counseling programs.

The Utah Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance program supports the Career and Technical Education Pathways initiative, which provides templates for school counselors to utilize when working with students on developing their individual SEOPs, and the program's Web site notes: "Through the SEOP process, counselors identify appropriate pathways that meet each student's interests, abilities and goals."

In Missouri, the Big Ideas include "applying career exploration and planning skills in the achievement of life/career goals," as well as skills that will help students in postsecondary education and the workforce.

The Nebraska school counseling program aligns with the Career Cluster Initiative, and its tools for individual student planning include a Career Cluster interest checklist. The Career Cluster Initiative is also part of the planning process at the Greenville Middle Academy, where eighth-graders are asked to develop an individual graduation plan and select a preferred cluster of study.

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Duncan and others, today's CTE programs can play a unique role in assisting counselors' efforts to provide students with career guidance. As ACTE's Issue Brief notes, "The new CTE is much broader and more inclusive and includes the philosophy that all education is career education." This new CTE philosophy provides career development to all students, for all levels of education and for all career fields. ■

### Further Guidance

For more information about the role of career guidance and development in CTE, here are some resources to explore, as well as the links to the programs featured in this article.

ACTE Guidance and Career Development Division  
[www.actedonline.org/guidance.aspx](http://www.actedonline.org/guidance.aspx)

ACTE Issue Brief: Career and Technical Education's Role in Career Guidance  
[www.actedonline.org](http://www.actedonline.org)

American School Counselor Association  
[www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)

School Counselors as CTE Stakeholders  
[www.careertech.org/show/publications](http://www.careertech.org/show/publications)

National Consortium for State Guidance Leadership  
[www.guidanceconsortium.com](http://www.guidanceconsortium.com)

Greenville Middle Academy  
[www.greenville.k12.sc.us/gvillem/index.asp](http://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/gvillem/index.asp)

Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program  
<http://missouricareereducation.org>

Nebraska School Counseling Model  
[www.nde.state.ne.us/CARED/index.shtm](http://www.nde.state.ne.us/CARED/index.shtm)

Utah Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Program  
[www.schools.utah.gov/cte/guidance.html](http://www.schools.utah.gov/cte/guidance.html)

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