

# The High School Visit:

## Providing College Counseling and Building Crucial K–16 Links Among Students, Counselors and Admission Officers

Response: “Revisiting High School Visits” by Andrew Fligel on page 117



In public schools, there is a well-documented need for college counseling staff and resources, particularly in lower-income settings. Moreover, most public schools, again in lower-income settings, have precious few connections with postsecondary institutions. Most of these schools rely on a patchwork of programs, services and professionals to provide college counseling. Students in these settings are fortunate if they receive any personalized counseling beyond group sessions with the school's counselor, whose job description may or may not emphasize college counseling.



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Dear Counselor,

*I am sorry to have missed you today while I was at your school. I know that counselors' caseloads are large these days and you probably did not have time to meet with me. Although I did not get the opportunity to meet with any students in the library, I look forward to visiting again next year and perhaps meeting with you and any students that may be considering our institution. We had a number of students apply from your high school last year, and I hope that if students choose to apply in the near future, you will feel free to call on me for any assistance that I can provide. I have enclosed information that you may find helpful as you counsel your students considering my institution. I wish you a very successful academic year!*

Sincerely,  
Angel B. Pérez

This journal entry is an example of the often-missed opportunities that occur during college admission officers' high schools visits. Although they work toward the same goal, high school counselors and admission officers often overlook one another as essential resources in the transition to postsecondary education. When addressing the best ways to utilize high school visits, education professionals must remember that while student academic preparation, family support and financial aid improve student access to postsecondary education, the adult tutelage provided to students, regarding the requirements for postsecondary success and the process of securing admission, and financial aid, significantly add to the likelihood that students will attend a postsecondary institution (King, 1996; Adelman, 1999; McDonough, 1997 and 2004; Orfield and Paul, 1993; Plank and Jordan, 2001). No adults are greater experts than the high school counselor and college admission officer, especially when they work in conjunction.

In public schools, there is a well-documented need for college counseling staff and resources, particularly in lower-income settings. Moreover, most public schools, again in lower-income settings, have precious few connections with postsecondary institutions. Most of these schools rely on a patchwork of programs, services and professionals to provide college counseling. Students in these settings are fortunate if they receive any personalized counseling beyond group sessions with the school's counselor, whose job description may or may not emphasize college counseling.

In recent years, researchers have begun to suggest that school counselors can take a new leadership role within the school, whether in

the context of "accountability" (Education Trust, 2002) or in the context of overall school reform efforts to prepare all students for college (Pathways to College, 2004). In keeping with the "counselor-as-leader or manager" role, counselors have an opportunity to maximize their college counseling capacity by utilizing college admission officers as "part-time counselors," who can help provide information about preparing for college, while at the same time achieving their institution's goal of recruiting students and getting to know high schools.

The relationship between high school guidance counselor and college admission officer has existed for decades. Indeed in 1937, high school counselors and college admission officers, seeking to establish standard, ethical practices for their respective professions and for the students' transitions from high school to college, founded the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). In the 1930s, the relationship between counselor and admission officer was intimate and exclusive. While those kinds of relationships continue to exist, the vast majority of counselors and admission officers serve a more far-reaching audience of students and families. The opportunities created when college admission officers, also known as "road warriors," visit high schools and counselors across the country in search of students are unique compared to the important, but impersonal, support that technology or college guide books can provide.

While the nationwide K-16 movement urges links between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education, to further postsecondary access and success, most policy agendas focus on curricular links and direct exchange links (i.e., articulation agreements between high schools with advanced coursework and area two- or four-year colleges) (Kirst and Venezia, 2004). However, on the micro level, meaningful and sustained relationships between high school counselors and college admission personnel may achieve the dual ends of alleviating the shortage of college advising and increase participation in postsecondary counseling.

There is little empirical research on the effect that a college admission officer's high school visit has on student applications, admission or enrollment. However, a recent study found recruiting activities, such as high school visits, had a positive effect on the number of applications the school received, especially when the visited school was similar in composition (i.e., if the high school and college were both Catholic) or if the college was within commuting distance. Additionally, if the students had previously visited the university as a sophomore or junior, the admission officer's high school visit had a stronger effect on them (Aguilar and Gillespie, 2002).

Counselors in nearly all high schools—98.4 percent of public schools and 99.2 percent of private schools—from a sample of more than 1,500 high schools whose counselors responded to the 2002–2004 NACAC Counseling Trends Surveys<sup>1</sup>, stated that one of the college counseling services provided to students included “hosting college representatives at their school.” On the surface, the data suggest that hosting college representatives is a standard practice at schools, both public and private. However, anecdotal evidence gathered during high school visits clearly indicates that further defining the term “hosting” would reveal vastly different practices that produce differing results for students, counselors and admission officers alike.

This article examines four primary areas where increased interaction between college admission officers and high school counselors could translate into student success: 1) alleviating the shortage of college counseling staff for students in high-need high schools 2) increasing the amount of time-on-task dedicated to college counseling 3) providing professional development to high school counselors responsible for college counseling, and 4) conveying financial aid information to high school counselors, students and families.

#### A Few Good Counselors: Shoring Up the Ranks

*Journal Entry:*

*I spent the day visiting two public schools in a large urban area in the Midwest. At both schools, I did not meet a counselor. No one officially greeted me when I walked into the counseling offices. The secretaries gave me a file, sat me down and said, “If students are interested, they will come around.” At one school, one girl showed up, but she was honest, saying that she was skipping class, so she figured she’d stop by and get some information. I felt bad for her. She was poorly trained by her counselors (if at all) and was not a good social or academic match for my college. I talked to her about her college search and tried to point her in the direction of schools that may be a better match for her. As quietly as I was received I was dismissed. At both schools, when the bell rang, I couldn’t even find the secretary to give them the folders back. I laid them on their desks and ran off to my next visit. This was another school visit where I felt leaving empty. I understood that I wouldn’t necessarily see students at all my visits, but I wished someone would have given me an orientation to the schools and told me a bit about what makes them unique. I wondered, “Are none of the 3,000 students in these buildings interested in my school’s type?” Many other questions ran through my mind, such as, “Did students even know I was there? Were the counselors even in the office today? Should I have insisted*

*on talking to one? I didn’t want to seem like a salesman. Should I come back next year? Was it worth it for my institution to spend thousands of dollars on airfare, hotel, food, and UPS packages to come to schools where counselors didn’t even greet us?” It was a missed opportunity for all and a costly one for us.*

Admission officers from colleges and universities travel across the country each year to search for schools and students that might have an interest in their institution. These representatives from postsecondary institutions present students and counselors an exclusive opportunity to have a dialogue with the person who will evaluate their applications for admission.

Data suggest that differential treatment of college representatives visiting high schools, between many public high schools and their more well-off public and private peers, is symptomatic of the systemic lack of attention to college counseling in most public schools. Overall, private schools employ more staff to provide personalized college counseling to their students than public schools. To begin, student-to-counselor ratios in public high schools (314:1) are significantly higher than those in private high schools (241:1). Public high schools with the highest enrollments—more than 2,000 students—have an even higher ratio (379:1) than average public schools (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2004). Consider also that while 40 percent of high schools nationwide reported that they employ at least one counselor whose exclusive focus is “helping students prepare for postsecondary education,” private high schools were almost four times as likely to designate such a counselor as public high schools (Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

While school size, percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, and the student-to-counselor ratio all appear to have a negative relationship to the provision of a college counselor,<sup>3</sup> further analysis shows that school control exhibits the only meaningful correlation with the provision of a college counselor.<sup>4</sup> In short, private schools employ more counselors than public schools, and private school counselors are more likely to be focused on college counseling, rather than other types of counseling.

Statistical analysis of the 2004 NACAC Counseling Trends Survey shows that, when combined with other variables, such as time-on-task and income level of school population, having a high student-to-counselor ratio was correlated with a lower percentage of graduates moving on to four-year postsecondary education. However, a low

<sup>1</sup> Of the 1,057 respondents to the Counseling Trends Survey (a response rate of 22 percent), 64 percent are employed in public institutions, 23 percent in private parochial schools, and 13 percent in private non-parochial schools. In the U.S. as a whole, there are 39,545 schools that include secondary grade levels. Of the 39,545 secondary schools in the U.S., 72 percent are public (28,884) and 28 percent are private (10,661). Of the 10,661 private schools that include secondary grades in the U.S., 69 percent (7,304) are religiously affiliated (also described as parochial), while 22 percent (2,355) are non-sectarian. Nine percent (1,003) of private schools did not provide information about their affiliation to the U.S. Department of Education.

student-to-counselor ratio loses its strong relationship to student progress to four-year postsecondary education when combined with variables that describe how much time the counselor spends providing college counseling. This indicates that while increasing the number of counselors in and of itself brings no guarantee of increasing the college-bound percentage of a student body, increasing the number of counselors focused on college counseling does.

National associations that represent counselors attest that significantly reducing the ratio of students to counselors nationally by even 25 or 50 students presents an almost impossible challenge, given the high price tag and the resulting lack of interest on the part of policymakers. For this reason, counselors in high-need schools are increasingly being forced to exercise their imaginations, ingenuity and leadership in helping to achieve school reforms and boost student achievement, including postsecondary attendance. While counselors may not be able to count on future increases in staff levels, they can count on a continued stream of college admission officers. Admission officers are likely to become more frequent visitors to high school campuses, as the current record numbers of high school graduates will begin to decline in the coming years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). In light of the unmanageable workload facing them, counselors may look to admission officers as an extension of their staff. In addition to representing their colleges, admission officers deliver a wealth of standard information about college preparation.

### Maximizing Visits as Leverage Toward More Postsecondary Counseling

*Journal entry:*

*I visited a very small private school in the Midwest (or “The Heartland,” as they like to say out here!) today and received a very warm welcome. When I walked in, a former admission officer at a midwestern university, now director of college counseling, made sure I was comfortable, well-hydrated and fed (the snack pack she put together for me was one of the best!). I always appreciate it when counselors take the time to put little packets together for us. Most people forget that we spend most of the day in our cars with very little time to pull over, go to the bathroom or even get some water. I did not meet with students at this school, but she took the time to tell me about the school, since it was my first time visiting. She gave me a tour and told me why she felt this school was unique. She took me to classrooms and let me hear students “in action.” It was obvious that she was passionate about this environment. I left with a smile on my face.*

**Table 1.**  
**Percent of High Schools Employing At Least One Counselor Whose Exclusive Focus is “Helping Students Prepare for Postsecondary Education”**

Percent of High Schools	
All respondents	40.0
<b>Control</b>	
Public schools	19.8
Private schools	75.4
<b>Free and Reduced-Price Lunch</b>	
0 to 25%	44.9
26 to 50%	15.3
51 to 100%	28.9
<b>Enrollment</b>	
Less than 500 students	48.9
500-999	42.3
1,000-1,499	32.3
1,500-1,999	29.3
More than 2,000 students	32.3
<b>Student-to-Counselor Ratio</b>	
Fewer than 100:1	68.0
101:1 to 200:1	53.1
201:1 to 300:1	34.9
301:1 to 400:1	28.5
401:1 to 500:1	32.7
More than 500:1	39.6

Source: NACAC 2004 Counseling Trends Survey

*This counselor truly understood the dynamic of the admission officer-high school counselor relationship. As much as we want high school counselors to understand our colleges and universities, we want to understand their high school environment and the reality that students face there every day. It provides us with a contextual framework to pull from when we make decisions in the spring. When I left this school in the Midwest, I had a new framework to help navigate me in admission committee this spring.*

Building relationships with postsecondary institutions is part of good college counseling. Statistical analysis of data from the Counseling Trends Survey suggests that increased time spent on postsecondary education counseling was positively correlated with a larger number of students enrolling in postsecondary education. As Table 2 shows, counselors in public high schools are focused on a wide range of tasks, often to the exclusion of postsecondary education counseling.

<sup>2</sup> Control of school exhibited a particularly strong correlation (Pearson's correlation coefficient of -.546, significant at the .01 level, two-tailed) with the provision of at least one counselor whose exclusive focus was helping students prepare for postsecondary education.

<sup>3</sup> Pearson's correlation values for: enrollment (.132, .01 level), FRPL percent (.199, .01 level), and student-to-counselor ratio (.126, .01 level).

<sup>4</sup> Based on linear regression analysis, control of school exhibited the only statistically significant correlation with the provision of at least one exclusively focused postsecondary counselor (R<sup>2</sup>= .281, control coefficient= -.590, significant at .0001 level).

Control of school (public/private) and percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch exerted the largest effect on the percent of students enrolling in postsecondary education after high school. However, the amount of time spent on several counseling activities exerted an independent and statistically significant effect on the percent of students enrolling in postsecondary education. For example:

- Spending 10 percent more time on postsecondary planning is associated with a four percent increase of students moving on to four-year college education after high school
- Correspondingly, each additional 10 percent of counselor time spent scheduling courses is associated with a four percent decrease of students moving on to four-year college education
- Each additional 10 percent of counselor time spent proctoring tests is associated with a six percent decrease of students moving on to four-year college education.

These findings are significant because they are independent of school control (public private), of percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and of the student-to-counselor ratio. Focusing more time on postsecondary education counseling, therefore, should yield results no matter what the setting.

### Admission Visits as Professional Development

*Journal entry:*

*At a New York City public school, the counselor rushed in to say hello and, although she had very little time on her hands, she picked my brain about the new SAT and how our institution was going to deal with it. She then asked for suggestions on how she could help professionally develop her faculty members about writing recommendation letters. "What do you like to see in your rec letters?" she asked. "What would make them memorable?" Not only did I talk to her about what worked in the context of my college, I shared how I assisted the faculty in developing letters when I worked at a public school in New York City as the director of college counseling. Many admission officers have a wealth of knowledge they are willing to share with counselors. They want to be honest about the intricacies of their admission processes and this can be of tremendous help for counselors seeking to guide students in the right direction. I walked away from that high school visit and, although no one met with me, I knew that our time had been effectively spent. "I am so glad I took the time to ask these things," the counselor said. "I am going back to my staff meeting this week and sharing all this good stuff!"*

Though they spend only 28 percent of their time engaged in college counseling, two-thirds (64 percent) of public school counselors reported that "developing relationships with college admission officers" was "very important." Furthermore, 67 percent of public school counselors expressed the desire for additional training on "developing relationships with college admission officers." Only 31 percent received any form of training in that area during the preceding school year.

Counselors at public schools, schools with large student enrollments and schools with medium student-to-counselor caseloads are far less likely to receive professional development funding than their peers at private, smaller schools. Sixty-seven percent of all counselors must pay at least some portion of their professional development costs out of their own pockets. (See Table 3.) In the highest-need schools, counselors clearly desire stronger ties with postsecondary institutions, but those who seek such development are faced with a lack of opportunities. Treating the visit as in-service professional development provides the dual opportunity for admission officers to learn about the high school and for high school counselors to learn about colleges and the admission process.

finally, 33 percent of high school counselors reported that their schools conduct a regular assessment of the performance of the counseling department. The most oft-cited basis for assessment was the percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary education. Building links with visiting admission officers, therefore, provides cost-free, in-service professional development and increased student exposure to college information that may have an impact on the assessment of the performance of the counseling department.

### Counseling, Financial Aid and College Access

The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance estimates that nearly half a million students were denied access to postsecondary education because of a need for financial aid between 1990 and 2000 (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2005). Furthermore, research indicates that timely, informed and reliable advisement about financial aid and college costs can increase enrollment in postsecondary education (McDonough, 2004). Finally, a majority of all students (55 percent) rely on federal aid of some form to pay for college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

Eighty percent of high school counselors nationwide indicate that the school in which they work provides financial aid information for their students. Nearly all of the counselors at the remaining 20 percent of schools indicate that colleges and universities are the primary source of financial aid information for students in high

**Table 2.**  
Average Percent Time  
Spent on Tasks by  
Type of School, 2004

Task:	Postsecondary admission counseling	Choice and scheduling HS courses	Personal needs counseling	Academic testing	Occupational counseling and job placement	Other non-guidance activities
All respondents	38.78	21.02	16.42	11.57	6.16	6.04
<b>Control</b>						
Public schools	28.04	26.06	19.24	12.87	7.89	5.90
Private schools	60.78	10.86	10.50	8.91	2.68	6.27
<b>Free and Reduced-Price Lunch</b>						
0 to 25%	31.23	25.45	20.08	11.75	7.35	4.82
26 to 50%	26.18	25.59	18.40	14.08	8.65	8.90
51 to 100%	26.32	24.49	18.60	13.49	9.73	8.09
<b>Enrollment</b>						
Less than 500 students	42.87	16.36	13.31	12.51	6.31	8.64
500-999	42.38	19.02	16.25	10.38	6.21	5.76
1,000-1,499	34.56	24.50	17.60	12.11	6.00	5.23
1,500-1,999	31.94	26.68	20.29	10.58	6.41	4.11
More than 2,000 students	33.07	26.87	17.34	11.70	7.33	3.69
<b>Student-to-Counselor Ratio</b>						
Fewer than 100:1	55.15	10.78	8.93	11.56	3.70	9.89
101:1 to 200:1	49.54	15.38	14.73	10.43	5.11	4.80
201:1 to 300:1	37.96	21.41	17.33	10.52	7.22	5.56
301:1 to 400:1	30.17	26.50	17.45	12.63	6.41	6.84
401:1 to 500:1	31.74	25.43	16.51	12.82	7.47	6.03
More than 500:1	32.17	19.92	16.22	14.94	6.39	10.3

Source: NACAC 2004 Counseling Trends Survey

school. For those high schools that provide financial aid information, nearly all (95 percent) indicate that the counselor is the school staff member primarily responsible for providing financial aid information to students (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2005). However, since counselors, on average, spend only 38 percent of their time counseling on postsecondary education issues, it is easy to see how the challenge of providing financial aid information—in addition to the academic advising and college selection/application assistance—proves difficult. The situation is worse in the schools with the highest-need populations, as counselors in public schools with high percentages of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch spend considerably less time on postsecondary counseling.

In addition to, or perhaps because of, the dearth of time for postsecondary counseling, counselors in public schools feel less prepared to speak to students and families about financial aid than average. In public schools, only 24 percent of counselors felt “very confident and prepared” when talking about financial aid. Compare this to survey data from the 2004 NACAC Admission Trends Survey,

which indicates that 54 percent of admission officers feel “very confident and prepared” to talk about financial aid.

Seventy-five percent of counselors expressed the need for more information about financial aid. Most counselors (69 percent) indicated that they “felt prepared to discuss financial aid with students and parents, but could use more support.” Forty-three percent of admission officers “felt prepared to discuss financial aid with students and parents, but could use more support.” Six percent of counselors (and only three percent of admission officers) indicated that they were “not at all prepared” to discuss financial aid with students and parents.

In addition, 55 percent of public school counselors stated that they had “too little time for educating students” about financial aid (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2005). On the contrary, 66 percent of admission officers reported spending between 10 and 50 percent of their time answering questions about financial aid. Given counselors’ time constraints, relying on well-informed admission officers, who regularly provide such information,

to help deliver financial aid is an efficient way to increase the amount of information provided to students. This relationship makes even more sense considering that counselors trust college and university officers to deliver financial aid information more than any other source, including federal or state governments. (See Figure 1.)

On a scale of one to four, one being “most trusted” and four being “least trusted,” school counselors indicated that college financial aid and admission officials were the most trusted source for information about paying for college (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2005). These ratings were nearly identical for both public and private schools, for all income ranges.

### Preserving Students’ Interest in the Transition from High School to College

*Journal entry:*

*My first visit today was at a small, private Catholic school in California. All of my energy went running down the tube when I arrived at the high school and the counselor directed me to a table in an outdoor cafeteria. She thanked me for coming and said, “When the bell rings, students will walk through and talk to you if they are interested.” Immediately, I grew frustrated—I knew I would not have a productive visit while sitting in an outdoor cafeteria. The bell rang and students flew by me. They ran to class, talked to each other, checked their lockers and caught up on everything they needed to do in between class. A few students looked at me politely and said hello, but they looked away quickly—in other words “if I stare too long, he might talk to me!”*

The end goal of quality high school counseling, and college and university student outreach, is facilitating students’ transitions to postsecondary education. Because the high school visit is an opportunity for students to cultivate a relationship with their future postsecondary institutions, maximizing an admission officer’s time and expertise can be a significant service to the student—underutilization of the high school visit may actually be a disservice. NACAC’s Statement on the Counseling Dimension of the Admission Process at the College/University Level confirms that high school counselors and college admission officers together play an important role in the transition from high school to college.<sup>5</sup> Admission officers’ visits put a face to universities in a manner unlike Web sites and college brochures. Admission officers are able to answer questions that students and faculty alike pose about the institution’s admission process, financial aid, student body, and programs. Due to the lack of school counseling resources, visits by admission officers may be especially important for students who attend schools in low socio-economic areas where college campus visits are limited, particularly when the college is a great distance from the high school. Such visits can serve as a tangible aspect of both the high school’s and the college’s commitment to students.

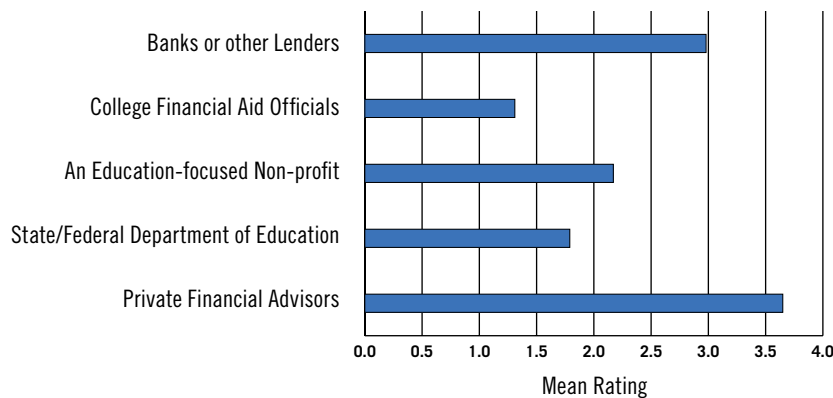
**Table 3. Percent of Counselors Reporting Financial Support of Professional Development by School or School District, 2004**

Coverage	All Costs Covered	Most Costs Covered	Some Costs Covered	No Costs Covered
All respondents	33	31	29	8*
<b>Control</b>				
Public schools	21	31	38	10
All Private schools	53	29	15	4
Private Non-Parochial	63	23	10	3
Private Parochial schools	34	38	23	6
<b>Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch</b>				
0 to 25%	23	32	38	7
26 to 50%	23	28	37	12
51 to 100%	18	34	39	9
<b>Enrollment</b>				
Less than 500 students	42	28	24	7
500-999	37	32	26	5
1,000-1,499	28	29	29	14
1,500-1,999	17	33	42	9
More than 2,000 students	17	33	43	7
<b>Student-to-Counselor Ratio</b>				
Fewer than 100:1	49	31	14	6
101:1 to 200:1	42	31	22	4
201:1 to 300:1	27	36	29	8
301:1 to 400:1	24	27	39	11
401:1 to 500:1	27	24	37	13
More than 500:1	38	23	28	11

\* Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding  
Source: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2004.

*Journal entry:*

*Today, I visited a public high school in California with very strong funding. As I drove down the sleepy street, my eyes immediately popped wide open when, about two blocks away, I read a huge billboard sign that read, “Welcome Mr. Pérez from Claremont McKenna College!” When I entered the school, a very energetic and excited prospective student greeted me at the door and told me that he would be my ambassador for the day. All of these students had either done research about the school or were chosen by their counselors to attend this session because they felt that it may be a good match for them. These students were bright, eager and obviously very well-prepared for my visit. Their eyes grew with excitement as I spoke of my college. One girl in particular leapt in excitement every time she had the opportunity to ask a question. After my official presentation, my ambassador gave me a tour of the school. He told me a little bit about the history of the school and told me how much he*



**Figure 1.**  
Counselor Level of Trust in Sources of Paying for College Information (All Schools)

loved it there. He then spent a little time telling me about his college search process. He mentioned that each student has to justify where they are applying to their respective colleges to a panel of counselors and administrators. As we walked through the counseling center, I got to peek into one of the panels through a glass window. There sat various counselors and the principal, attentively listening to a student explain why he wanted to apply to a particular list of schools. My ambassador said: "It ensures that every student does not apply to the same school and that students are applying to schools for the right reasons. It also prepares you for a college interview. If you can survive this panel, you can survive anything!" I left the school feeling a greater understanding of what the student experience is there. The ambassador walked me to my car and told me he looked forward to applying. As I slammed my car door and drove away, I knew I would remember him when he applied. When I left the parking lot, I noticed that the billboard letters had changed. "Welcome Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ from Amherst College!"

#### High School Counselors:

1. Meet the admission officer representing the college: Pick his or her brain about how he or she reads an application, perceives certain types of recommendation letters or how much he or she weighs one item versus another. Some admission officers may be willing to help you program, invite you on a college tour, assist you in counseling a student or even conduct an evening program for you. Even though it takes a little time, meeting with a admission officer can help you reap many rewards.
2. Discuss a prospective student or students: If you feel your school has a student serious about applying to the institution, talk about him or her. Admission officers will remember students and every little detail that you give them will help them make more informed decisions.
3. Market your high school: Just as admission officers "sell" their institutions, high schools can take the opportunity to market their high schools. What are unique programs that you can highlight? Can you give the admission officer a brief tour of the school, honing in on some of its best qualities? What is the one thing you want that admission officer to know when he or she leaves your high school?
4. Highlight your students: Have students greet the admission officers and serve as hosts for them when they are in the building. This frees up your time, allows you to show off the best that your school has to offer, and it gives the admission officer the opportunity to engage with a prospective student individually. Most students are more than happy to do it, and every school has students they are proud of.
5. Live in another reality for a day: If you work at a large public school, spend a day with a private counselor at a small private school and vice versa. You would be surprised how differently things run. Although you both exist in different realities with different resources, you could learn from one another and perhaps adopt aspects of one another's programs. If more of these exchanges take place, we would have more informed discussions at professional development meetings like NACAC and regional college counseling association meetings.
6. financial aid: When admission officers are visiting, take the opportunity to discuss financial aid questions you may have about the school or in general. They are a valuable resource. If they cannot answer your question, they still can refer you to their college's financial aid office.

<sup>5</sup> Statement on the Counseling Dimension of the Admission Process at the College/University Level. (1990). National Association for College Admission Counseling. Alexandria, VA. Available at: [www.nacac.com/downloads/policy\\_couns\\_dimension.pdf](http://www.nacac.com/downloads/policy_couns_dimension.pdf).



## Respect counselor time: Not every counselor has 15 or 30 minutes to meet with you, especially at schools where caseloads are huge.

### Admission Officers:

1. Respect counselor time: Not every counselor has 15 or 30 minutes to meet with you, especially at schools where caseloads are huge. Offer to meet with a counselor, but be considerate of his or her time. In addition, call before your visit and ask if you can be of any help. Sometimes the counselor may appreciate you bringing some material about a particular subject or he or she may want you to participate in a program. It never hurts to ask, and it helps establish a relationship and increase the possibility that the counselor will meet with you when you arrive.
2. Don't immediately dismiss schools: If you did not see students or counselors, don't give up. You are doing a serious disservice to the counselor and students at that institution. Write a note to the counselor letting them know that you look forward to perhaps meeting them next year. Making inroads and establishing relationships takes time. Most of you are passionate about the institutions you work for, and you feel they make a difference in the lives of students. How many students are you denying that opportunity if you walk away and never return to that high school?
3. Spend an afternoon or morning at a school: Whenever your schedule permits, sit in on a class at a high school or spend an afternoon with students there. If every admission officer did this once during each travel season they would truly engage in the every day life of many high schools throughout the country. Not only would this be helpful for evaluating students, but it would help create a more sympathetic profession. Admission officers invite counselors to spend half and full days at their colleges all the time. Shouldn't we do the same on our end?
4. Call in advance: If it is your first time at a high school, call ahead of time and try to make an appointment to meet with a counselor before or after your meeting with students. A counselor who agrees to meet with you is more apt to critically engage you than a counselor who assumes you only wanted to talk to students.
5. Adopt a high school: If we want to make a significant difference in the high school visit experience, each school should adopt a high school in the local region. Offer to assist counselors with college nights, financial aid nights and other essential programs. Perhaps offer a professional development program at a local high school or school district on the purpose of a school visit and the most effective ways to make use of it. Try to make it a point to adopt a high school where counselors may not be reading this particular publication. They need the assistance the most.
6. Financial aid: Be prepared to answer questions on financial aid, not only from your university, but also about financial aid as a whole. Bring with you to high school visits extra copies of the Federal Application for Student financial Aid (FASFA) form for interested students and the phone number of your college's financial aid office for students who have follow-up questions.

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