

Facts for Education Advocates

School Counseling, Access and Persistence

School counselors play a critical role in preparing students for success in and completion of college. But their important work is often overlooked and not fully understood by other educators and the general public. If we are to ensure that all students are ready to enter and graduate from higher education, school counselors need better and greater support. This month's Facts for Advocates focus on school counseling, access and persistence.

Counselors

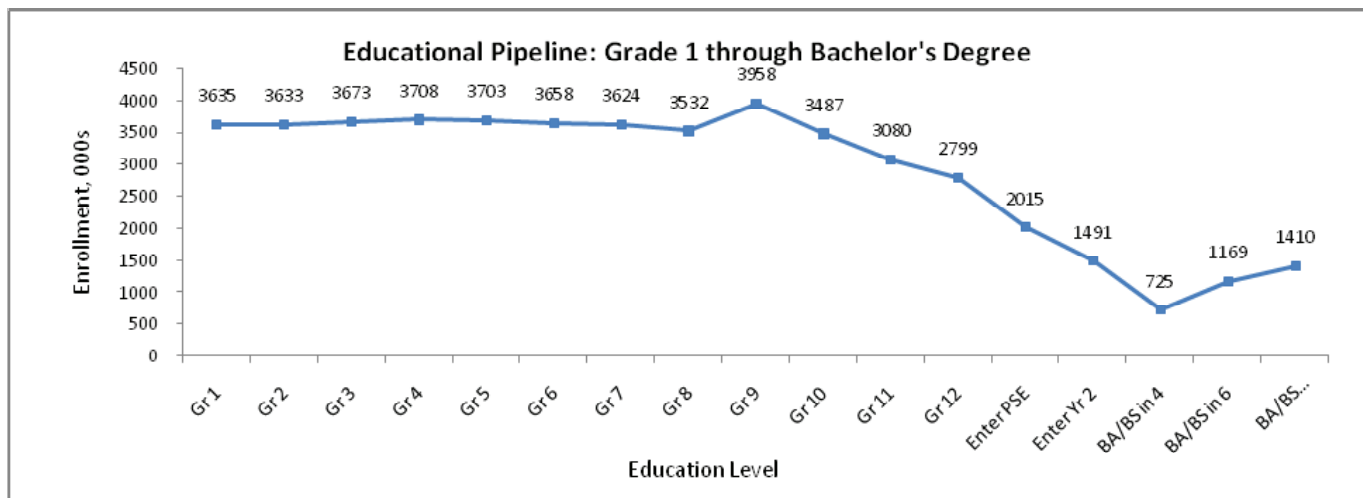
- Inadequate access to college counseling during high school can greatly hinder a student's postsecondary plans. The type of school a student attends often determines how much college counseling the student will receive. For example, private school counselors spend on average half of their time on college counseling, while public school counselors can often devote just a quarter of their time. Schools in low-income urban and rural settings have limited resources for adequate counseling, often resulting in a counselor-to-student ratio of 1:1,000 or more (College Board, 2008).
- Counselors can have a significant influence on student aspiration, especially among low-income students (King, 1996).
- To maximize the benefits offered by school counselors, a counselor-to-student ratio of at least 1:250 has been recommended (American School Counselor Association, 2004).
- The national counselor-to-student ratio is about 1:476 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

College Access and Success

- Many academically qualified, low-income students do not attend postsecondary education because of financial barriers, insufficient information about postsecondary education options, and a lack of encouragement, support or aspiration (Lumina, 2003).
- High-achieving, low-income students have about the same chance of attending college as low-achieving, higher-income students, 77 percent and 78 percent respectively (Dannette & Haycock, 2007).
- The access gap is not closing. In 1972, 45 percent of high school graduates from the lowest income quartile and 74 percent of graduates from the highest income quartile attended college. In 2000, the numbers had increased to just 54 percent and 82 percent respectively. (Lumina, 2003)
- Minority high school students are less likely than white students to gain the skills and qualifications demanded by many postsecondary institutions. The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 suggests that half of Latino and African American students were minimally qualified for admittance to a four-year college, versus 68 percent of white students (Roderick et al., 2006).
- The educational pipeline (below) shows that American schools are losing many students at the upper-secondary and postsecondary levels (College Board, 2008).

College Going Rates by Income and Achievement Levels		
Achievement Level	Low-Income	High-Income
First (Low)	36%	77%
Second	50%	85%
Third	63%	90%
Fourth (High)	78%	97%

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Persistence

- A student's high school academic performance is a strong indicator of how successful the student will be in college (Roderick et al., 2006). High academic performance includes high test scores, a strong GPA and rigorous high school classes.
- While college enrollment rates for minority students have increased over the last 20 years to just over 50 percent of African American students and around 33 percent of Latino students, the college graduation rates have remained virtually unchanged — 17 percent for African American students and 11 percent for Latino students. (Roderick et al., 2006).
- Students who need to take remedial classes because they are unprepared for credit-bearing courses upon entering college are significantly less likely to graduate. Only 49 percent of students at four-year colleges who took remedial courses as freshmen earned bachelor's degrees, compared to 70 percent of those who did not enroll in remedial courses (Adelman, 2006).
- Of U.S. undergraduates who enroll at a four-year college seeking a degree, only 36 percent achieve this goal within four years. Fifty-eight percent obtain a bachelor's degree within six years (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).
- The completion rate for students starting in a two-year institution is even more sobering. Of students who enrolled during the 1995-96 school year, only 38.4 percent had earned a degree six years later (College Board, 2008).

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