Building Behaviors, Beliefs, and Identity in College Counseling

A UChicago Consortium research presentation that brings together two strands of related research: 1) postsecondary access and attainment, and 2) adolescent development.
Building Behaviors, Beliefs, and Identity in College Counseling
From a Case Management to a Developmental Approach

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Objectives for Today

- Bring together two strands of related research
  - Postsecondary access and attainment
  - Adolescent development and identity
Why focus on college?

Men’s Real Hourly Wages by Education (2011 Dollars)

Source: Economic policy institute http://www.epinet.org/datazone
Great News

All indicators of educational attainment are going up in Chicago Public Schools (CPS):

- High school graduation
- FAFSA completion
- College enrollment
- College completion

In Less Than a Decade, Chicago has Made Significant Progress on High School and College Attainment
Rates of FAFSA Completion are also Increasing Rapidly
Percentage of CPS Students Who File a FAFSA by the End of the School Year

CPS Enrollment Rates are also Going Up

[Graphs showing trends in FAFSA completion and CPS enrollment rates over years]
Less-Than-Great-News

College success is largely stagnant:

- College graduation rates are going up only very slightly
- Important early indicators of college success, such as high school GPA and college choice, are improving more slowly

Ultimately, a Higher High School GPA Increases the Odds of Making it Through College

Graduation rates from 4-year colleges for CPS students by high school GPA:

- 18% <2.0
- 33% 2.0-2.4
- 47% 2.5-2.9
- 55% 3.0-3.4
- 82% 3.5+
CPS Students’ Ninth Grade GPAs have Risen Steadily Since 2006

CPS freshmen A and B averages from 2006-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

College Choice Matters for College Completion

Note: These lines were from logistic regression models, performed for each college, predicting graduation with GPA. The regression line includes all students at each college based on their actual post-secondary GPA. However, points are excluded on the graph for a college only if at least 20 students at the college had a one-year high school GPA in the range of the x-axis. Colleges that enrolled more than 20 CPS alumni, such as the University of Chicago, are not shown to protect student confidentiality. This figure is reproduced from: Hirschl, Kargl, and Mironachen (2013) and shows college graduation rates from the CPS graduating classes of 1998 and 1999.
More CPS Students have Enrolled in Four-Year Colleges with Graduation Rates above 50 percent over the Past Decade

What’s the Next Stage of our Work?

- Celebrate success – we’ve made huge strides on postsecondary work.
- Evaluate our practice – what are we doing:
  - RIGHT that’s leading to higher enrollment?
  - NOT-YET-RIGHT that’s not supporting higher levels of persistence?
Building Social Capital for CPS Students

- Students with limited access to college-educated adults in their families and communities are especially reliant on their schools for “college knowledge”
- Some of this work we can do by changing behaviors; some of the work requires changing beliefs

Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges

- You can solve some problems by changing students’ behaviors
  - Coming to class and passing
  - Filling out college applications
  - Submitting the FAFSA
- Other problems require a change in deeply-held beliefs
  - Supporting deeper learning
  - Leveraging college choice
  - Building a college-going identity
Behaviors vs. Beliefs

Behaviors
- I filled out my FAFSA
- I applied to five colleges
- I got accepted to a match college
- I can come to class on time

Beliefs
- I understand what I have to do to afford college
- There are five colleges that I am excited to attend
- I believe I will be successful at a selective college
- I know what it takes to achieve mastery of this course material

Reframing our Counseling Approach Using a Developmental Lens

- Changing students' beliefs requires a developmental lens and a broader understanding of “success”
- Agency and identity are important traits for college-bound students to build
- Developmental experiences and developmental relationships are the key tools for supporting students' development
Defining Success

- We know we have to focus on college
- How do we think about young adult success more broadly?

Critical Questions

- What does “success” in early adulthood look like?
  - What roles do “agency” and “identity” play in success?
- What are the foundational components that underlie success in young adulthood, based on our definition?
- What is the developmental trajectory of these factors from early childhood through young adulthood?
- What do we know about how adults can support this development?

For more information on this framework, visit: http://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/foundations-young-adult-success-developmental-framework
Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework
What Defines a Successful Young Adult?

“We define a person who is ready to make a successful transition into adulthood as having three key factors: the agency to take an active role in shaping one’s path; the ability to incorporate different aspects of one’s self into an integrated identity, and the competencies needed to successfully navigate a range of social contexts…

…developing [these factors] is likely do be a lifelong endeavor, but the foundations lay in childhood and adolescence… thus, the development of [these factors] is the central task of raising and educating young people to prepare them for the life changes that can begin in young adulthood.”

Agency

- Agency is the ability and opportunity to take an active role in shaping and managing one’s chosen path, rather than being at the mercy of circumstances
  - Taking an active role does not mean taking a solo role
  - Managing one’s chosen path does not mean navigating without aid or succeeding without support
  - The development of agency and integrated identity are fundamentally social processes, embedded in relationships
Integrated Identity

- Integrated identity is a sense of internal consistency of who one is across time and across multiple social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, profession, culture, gender, religion).
- Serves as an internal framework for making choices and provides a stable base from which one can act in the world.
- Presents an extra challenge to students who are marginalized in any way (by race/ethnicity, gender identity, income status, or sexual orientation).

Youth Learn and Grow through Developmental Experiences
Planning a College Trip…

- Turn to an elbow partner and discuss:
  - What would look different (and how) if we approached planning a college trip as creating a developmental experience?
    - How would the goal or objective for the visit potentially change?
    - What aspects of action would be important? Why?
    - What elements of reflection would you include? Why?
  - Share out
Key Take-aways for Practice

▪ Development is always happening everywhere.
▪ Development is multifaceted and interconnected.
▪ Experiences and social interactions are the vehicles for development – and depend on how children make meaning of them.
▪ Development is facilitated by strong, supportive, and sustained relationships with adults and peers.
▪ Adult practices are more effective when intentional, developmental, and focused on key factors that matter.