



NOVEMBER 2013

**POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS**  
**Leveraging Partners and Assets**

Citi Foundation



The Citi Foundation is committed to the economic empowerment and financial inclusion of low- to moderate-income individuals and families in the communities where we work so that they can improve their standard of living. Globally, the Citi Foundation targets its strategic giving to priority focus areas: Microfinance, Enterprise Development, College Success, and Financial Capability and Asset Building. The Citi Foundation works with its partners in Microfinance and Enterprise Development to support environmental programs and innovations. Additional information can be found at [www.citifoundation.com](http://www.citifoundation.com).



FHI 360 is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. Our staff includes experts in health, education, nutrition, environment, economic development, civil society, gender equality, youth, research, technology, communication and social marketing—creating a unique mix of capabilities to address today's interrelated development challenges. FHI 360 serves more than 60 countries and all U.S. states and territories. [www.fhi360.org](http://www.fhi360.org).



Headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning provides evaluation and philanthropic services to major private and community foundations, government organizations and national and regional nonprofits. Our areas of focus include "cradle-to-career" education, asset development, community health, diversity leadership and arts and culture, among other fields. To learn more about the OMG Center, visit [www.omgcenter.org](http://www.omgcenter.org).

**FHI 360 would like to give a special thank you to the local education funds for making this work possible and successful:**



<https://www.educationfund.org/>



<http://www.philaedfund.org/>

san francisco **education** fund  
[www.sfedfund.org/](http://www.sfedfund.org/)

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	Foreword
<b>2</b>	A National Imperative
<b>4</b>	Traits that Get Results
<b>5</b>	Results
<b>6</b>	Building School-Community Roadmaps for Postsecondary Success
<b>6</b>	Success Trait #1: Providing Leadership
<b>8</b>	Success Trait #2: Using Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping
<b>10</b>	Infographic
<b>12</b>	Success Trait #3 : External Partners
<b>14</b>	Success Trait #4: Raising expectations
<b>16</b>	Success Trait #5: Starting Early
<b>18</b>	Recommendations and Lessons Learned
<b>20</b>	Partner Lists

*“We want students of color and students from low-income backgrounds to hear the higher education messages that children of college-educated parents take as a given. The messages are: You can go to college. You can succeed. You will have more and better opportunities if you do.”*

**- Rochelle Nichols-Solomon**

Director, Postsecondary Success Programs, FHI 360

Dear Colleagues:

If we are to keep the American Dream alive for future generations, we must ensure that more students enroll in and finish postsecondary programs. According to recent federal data, only 54 percent of low-income students who complete high school enroll in college, compared to 82 percent of high-income students. That is simply unacceptable.

This report, *Postsecondary Success for All: Leveraging Partners and Assets*, demonstrates how we can put higher education within reach for millions of students and turn the tide. The report provides concrete steps that schools and communities can take today to ensure more low-income youth are getting the education, tools and skills to succeed in higher education and today's increasingly competitive job market.

In 2008, FHI 360 teamed up with the Citi Foundation to launch the Citi Postsecondary Success Program, now the Postsecondary Success Collaborative (PSC). The effort was made possible by a \$5.1 million grant from the Citi Foundation, whose vision and thought leadership over the past five years have contributed greatly to the initiative's success. Together, we have worked to move the needle on access and completion for students who face the most barriers to success—those from low-income communities, students of color and first generation students.

Five years and 12,000 students later, the Postsecondary Success Collaborative has transformed the way participating schools and partners in Miami-Dade County, Philadelphia and San Francisco map resources and needs and collaborate to support college readiness and completion.

We began with a belief that most communities have the partners with the will and many of the necessary resources to significantly increase the odds for low-income students—if those resources are marshaled effectively. PSC strives to give partners tools and support to create a focused, collective call to action that makes best use of existing resources and leverages new ones where needed. To that end, we focused on partnerships between schools, districts, higher education and community organizations as the levers for change. And we saw results, including college enrollment gains in schools in each of the three cities of up to 40 percent for students of color.

Critical to the success of this initiative was the development of Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping, which is a research-based approach to help school staff and community partners assess strengths and challenges and prioritize the greatest needs around college access and then identify and align resources for the greatest impact.

The report describes how national and local partners collaborated to reshape how schools and their communities support college readiness, including an explanation of asset mapping and our results and recommendations. On behalf of FHI 360 and the Citi Foundation, we invite schools, districts, and their partners including higher education, community organizations, funders and policymakers to use this report to increase college success for young people in communities nationwide.

**Patrick Montesano**

Director, United States Programs  
FHI 360

**Rochelle Nichols-Solomon**

Director, Postsecondary Success Programs  
FHI 360



## A NATIONAL IMPERATIVE

Higher education is the nation's most powerful tool for economic development and its most reliable escalator out of poverty for low-income families. But the United States will not achieve its economic goals or close gaps in equity and opportunities unless more students graduate from high school and enroll in and complete college or other forms of quality postsecondary education.

Despite the noble efforts of schools, districts, community organizations, higher education and philanthropies, the nation has not moved the needle sufficiently on college enrollment and completion for all students. That is why in 2008, Citi Foundation, FHI360 and the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning forged a collaboration to rethink how schools in challenging urban environments work with partners to address college readiness effectively.

The partnership, initially called the Citi Postsecondary Success Program, was launched with a \$5.1 million grant from the Citi Foundation, and an additional \$1.5 million investment to support OMG as the third-party independent evaluator. It began with 10 pilot schools across Miami-Dade County, Philadelphia and San Francisco with leadership from local education funds (LEFs). These LEFs—The Education Fund of Miami-Dade County, the Philadelphia Education Fund and the San Francisco Education Fund—helped to develop partnerships to create college-going cultures through closer collaboration that aligns and strengthens existing resources and leverages new ones where needed. The three to four pilot high schools in each of the three communities were the testing ground for an initiative that did not bring a new program, but rather a new approach.

The initiative, now called the Postsecondary Success Collaborative (PSC), has served more than 12,000 students by providing a clear and accessible pathway to postsecondary education and the comprehensive services and support students need along the way. It also has developed Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping, a simple yet revolutionary tool and approach to help schools and communities identify resources and needs to better develop college pathways for all students. That tool, along with a toolkit of resources to guide its use, is available free to all schools. It helps schools to become a key part of the glue that holds partners together around concrete, shared priorities and actions.

By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require a postsecondary education or training beyond high school. Viable family incomes and the health of our state and national economies depend on more of our young people succeeding in college. The Postsecondary Success Collaborative shows us that it's possible to shift the culture of schools, higher education and community partners to support every student's ambition to achieve their postsecondary goals.

**Pamela Flaherty**  
President and CEO,  
Citi Foundation

PSC schools and their partners in Miami-Dade, Philadelphia and San Francisco have created college-going cultures where more students are pursuing postsecondary opportunities and are staying longer in postsecondary programs.

The sites are not reinventing the wheel. Instead, they have mapped resources and gaps in and across their schools and coordinated with existing college access and youth-serving resources to build comprehensive approaches to postsecondary access and success. In reviewing the past five years of PSC, this report does not offer a silver bullet for schools and communities. Instead, it identifies and highlights conditions and traits that can be effective parts of a coordinated and sustained postsecondary success in any school system or community.



## TRAITS THAT GET RESULTS

The Postsecondary Success Collaborative seeks to increase postsecondary enrollment and completion in communities with historically low college attendance and completion rates, particularly among low-income students, students of color and first-generation college students. To monitor progress and provide feedback along the way, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning was the formative and summative evaluation partner throughout the initiative.

OMG's 2009-12 evaluation paints a picture of steady progress across all three sites, where college enrollment and persistence rates have increased in PSC pilot schools beyond district averages. The outcomes are even more impressive in schools that implement a set of core conditions, which we call Strong Implementation Traits. These traits, explained later in greater detail, are:

- » Principals view college access as a priority and provide **leadership** for PSC-related activities.
- » Principals, administrators and faculty **expect all students to go to college.**
- » Schools use Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping to determine priorities, shifting from a reactive, piecemeal approach to a coherent **strategic approach**, intentionally seeking and deploying resources to support PSC goals.
- » Schools focus attention on **early grades**, establishing a college-going culture from ninth grade on, and then set benchmarks and support students in achieving **college access milestones** during each year of high school.
- » Schools **leverage supports** from external partners to complement their internal efforts.

“This model has really changed the belief system of students and adults. We have moved from asking students if they are going to college to asking where they are going to college.”

### Deborah Carrera

Principal,  
Kensington High School for Creative  
and Performing Arts (Philadelphia)

## RESULTS

The 2009–12 OMG evaluation also documented these results from the three PSC sites:

**College Enrollment:** The 10 PSC pilot schools posted a **12 percent** overall increase in college enrollment compared to a 4 percent increase in the three school districts during the same period. There were even larger gains in the five schools with Strong Implementation Traits. Those schools saw a **26 percent** increase in college enrollment for all students and a **39 percent rise for African American and Latino students**, compared to a 4 percent increase among students of color in the districts overall.

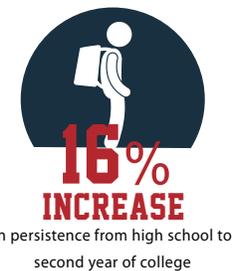
**Persistence through College:** The 10 PSC pilot schools posted a **16 percent increase** in persistence (the percentage of students who enrolled in college the fall after high school graduation, and then continued as sophomores the next fall) compared to a 5 percent increase across the three districts. Again, the Strong Implementation Trait schools saw even greater gains—a **26 percent increase in persistence**, compared to 5 percent increases in the school districts.

**Local Trends:** Some of the strongest local outcomes were in Miami-Dade County, where college enrollment rose sharply during the 2009–12 period, with Latinos posting a **42 percent** gain in college enrollment, African American enrollment increasing **47 percent** and English-Language Learners showing a **45 percent** rise.

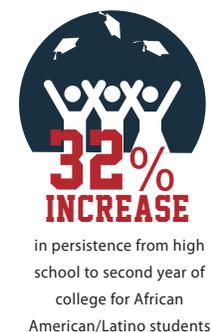
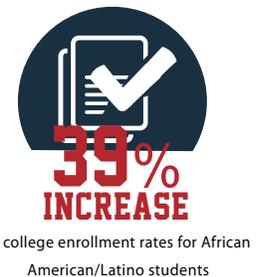
**Local Partnerships:** With leadership from the local education funds, PSC sites worked with existing school partners and added new ones to reach all students with the support and services they need to get to college and succeed. The partners come from virtually every sector of the communities, including local schools, community colleges and four-year universities, philanthropies, business groups and service organizations. Today, the sites have dozens of partners contributing to this effort in strategic ways. The three local education funds themselves increased their capacity to serve as advocates and conveners for multi-stakeholder partnerships, moving from managing programs to supporting broad changes in the PSC schools.

**Local Support:** Funders in local communities signaled their strong commitment to the PSC by investing a combined \$1.8 million in matching funds.

Across all schools in the 3 cities we saw:



In our strong implementation schools we saw:





## BUILDING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ROADMAPS FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

As the results demonstrate, the PSC sites are taking important steps that we hope can guide other schools and community partners. While each site tailored its own strategy to fit its local context, OMG identified implementation traits that are common across the schools with the strongest gains.

To varying degrees, these five Strong Implementation Traits can be found in most schools and communities across the United States. But our work has affirmed that when they are implemented together with high levels of commitment and quality, they produce powerful outcomes. They represent an evidence-based and cost-effective set of conditions for any community seeking to increase college success for all students. Based on careful evaluation and experience in our three sites, PSC recommends these traits as key components of building a postsecondary success road map across America. More detailed descriptions and examples of what the traits look like in practice follow.

“In the past, high school was just about getting kids through high school. In freshman orientation, now the curriculum is geared toward college readiness.”

**Patrick Vega**  
Chair of English, Westland Hialeah  
High School (Miami-Dade)

### POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS TRAIT #1

#### **Principals make college access and success a priority and provide leadership for PSC-related activities.**

The most effective PSC school principals demonstrated their belief in and commitment to creating college-going cultures. They engaged faculty in developing long-term visions and integrating postsecondary success priorities into annual school plans and called on teachers and other staff to take on leadership duties and become fully invested in the changes. In addition, they worked with community partners to support their shared vision.

Together, principals and their staff embedded college-readiness goals and objectives into their schools, using faculty meetings and common planning sessions to plan, measure progress and build school-wide commitment. Principals also represented their schools at multi-sector PSC meetings. Facilitated by the local education fund, these meetings provided opportunities for principals to discuss their progress with fellow principals and to discuss data and other timely information with key higher education, district and community partners.

Perhaps most important, principals' leadership led all staff to encourage students to believe in themselves and their postsecondary education goals and provided or facilitated supports within and outside the school. The schools' unifying mantra was that every child should have a plan for postsecondary education, and no student would slip through the cracks.

## **LEADING THE WAY IN MIAMI-DADE**

### **Westland Hialeah Senior High School Builds a Pathway to Success**

Principal Guillermo Muñoz of Westland Hialeah Senior High School in Miami-Dade County wanted all of his students to begin preparing for college as soon as they entered his building. With a 98 percent Hispanic population, a location in the heart of Miami's Cuban American neighborhood and many first-generation students, his school was an ideal PSC partner.

When Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping helped reveal that the school was doing little to promote college readiness in the ninth grade, a crucial year to begin preparing students, Muñoz began by funding teachers to work in the summer to revise the Freshman Orientation course. The new course walks ninth graders through a process to put them on a path to college. Hands-on projects allow students to see what their lives will be like based on career choices and the education required for each career pathway.

Students quickly learn that a high school diploma is not enough to afford them the lifestyles they imagine. The next step is setting individualized career and postsecondary goals. The year-long course and supplemental after-school college club activities give students a leg up; they learn about college applications, the grades required for different schools, the need for community service and how to write college application essays.

Muñoz also made sure that every student, starting in ninth grade, enrolled in an individualized ePersonal Education Planner to help them monitor progress toward postsecondary goals. The planner provides information on graduation requirements, scholarships and state university admissions. For 11th graders, Muñoz implemented a college-readiness course to help them set goals, prepare for college-entrance exams and build writing and research skills.

Muñoz went further, establishing an advisory group of representatives from student services, the IT department and counseling whose members meet regularly and address ways to use data to drive classroom instruction. For example, he relied on data to increase the size of the dual-enrollment program with Miami-Dade College. He and his staff then targeted students by comparing Florida state assessment results and AP test scores to identify those who seemed to be coasting and in need of greater academic challenge.

He also targeted groups traditionally underserved in college, especially lower- and middle-achieving students, who needed support to improve their grades and succeed in college courses. Through supplemental instruction and individualized educational plans, Muñoz provided academic support and guidance to struggling students. He worked with staff and partners to push students to enroll in college-level courses in high school or on college campuses. The school staff embraced this priority with Muñoz, increasing the numbers of students taking dual-enrollment classes by 250 percent in one year.

## STRONG IMPLEMENTATION TRAIT #2

**Schools used Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping to determine priorities, shifting from a reactive, piecemeal approach to a strategic approach, intentionally seeking and deploying resources to support PSC goals.**

“The advisory classes last year were useful. They taught me that my grades were actually important for college when I thought they weren’t. I thought I could just go to college.”

**Marco**

Student, Mission High School  
(San Francisco)

Before educators and communities can create college-going cultures for all students, they need to understand what students need for college success and how well the school meets these needs for all students. Too often, educators overwhelmed by the perceived needs of students work without a systematic approach and miss students who are most in need.

To eliminate the guesswork around building pathways to postsecondary success, FHI 360 developed a unique asset-mapping tool to help determine what to do and how to do it. The Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping (PSAM) tool is based on a framework developed by David T. Conley of the University of Oregon. The tool is a simple survey that all adults working in or with the school should take. It collects and organizes the survey data to provide a snapshot of a school’s college readiness strengths and weaknesses. Its goal is to build student assets in:

- » contextual skills and awareness, such as knowing college admissions requirements and expectations;
- » learning behaviors, such as setting goals and persisting through difficult tasks;
- » key cognitive strategies, such as interpretation and problem solving; and
- » academic content in English, math, social studies and science, including understanding core concepts and ideas.

The PSAM process also helps schools and partners examine their approach to college readiness through the lens of four cross-cutting issues: use of data, diversity and equity, family engagement and K–16 instructional alignment. Through PSAM, a school and its partners develop a shared definition of college readiness that improves communication and collaboration. This happens through focused discussions, ideally facilitated by a trusted lead partner, in which school and partner staff members analyze their survey data to assess the extent to which they are supporting students—starting in the ninth grade—in developing the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college.

Once a school sees where it’s doing well and where it’s falling short, the PSAM process helps set priorities. They include identifying partners and showing how to work with them and ensuring that all students set realistic

goals, have plans for the future, know how to apply for college and financial aid and so on. In this way, schools identify gaps in college readiness, connect with partners who can address those gaps and determine next steps and timeframes for moving forward.

Asset mapping challenges schools and community partners to consider changing how they collaborate and do business. PSAM helps create college-going cultures and increases efficient use of important resources.

## **ASSET MAPPING IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

### **New Math for College Readiness Curriculum Paves Way to Success**

Working with The Education Fund of Miami-Dade County through the Postsecondary Success Collaborative, Miami Beach Senior High used PSAM to look at what it was doing to help students prepare for and go to college. Miami Beach Senior High educates students from a diverse community in which the average family income is less than \$20,000 per year. Coming from households with little or no exposure to college, students struggled to succeed beyond high school. In fact, less than one-third of the school's students made it to any type of postsecondary education.

"Asset mapping is about identifying and activating the key players in the school. Not the administrators or department heads: yes, they are there, but it's really teacher involvement we're after," said Maria Sahwell, who coordinates PSC at the school. "As a group, we look at where we are and where we want to go, on many levels. We look at our gaps, educationally and otherwise, and figure out what we need to do to support the postsecondary process. I think asset mapping is one of the most revolutionary tools to come out of this work."

PSAM provided a road map of what needed to be accomplished, and teachers started devising strategies with their administrators and counselors to make it happen. A key finding was that students struggled in college because they were not ready for college-level math.

The Education Fund heard the same issue across all the PSC schools and, in true PSC spirit, brought the problem to the PSC Advisory group made up of the principals, district and higher education representatives and a funding partner. They found a substantial gap between what high school teachers were required to teach for students to pass Florida's Competency Achievement Test and what students really needed to test out of college remedial math classes. With this epiphany, The Education Fund coordinated an effort by high school math teachers and college professors to design a curriculum to build college math-readiness skills in 12th grade. The curriculum was an immediate hit and soon was credited with helping prepare more students for college.

By 2012, the combined use of asset mapping and the math readiness curriculum helped to boost the proportion of students who graduated from Miami Beach High School and went to college by 23 percent. The district took notice, and now more than a dozen high schools use it district-wide. Miami Beach Senior High's college advisor said of the success, "I know it had a lot to do with the asset mapping because we all took ownership of what we wanted our students to learn."

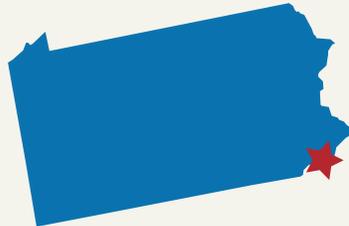
See the Miami-Dade video at <http://vimeo.com/68349080>.



# Making **POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS** ----- a reality ----- **FOR ALL STUDENTS**

## ----- **A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT** -----

In 2008, the Citi Foundation launched what is now known as the Postsecondary Success Collaborative to create college-going cultures in 10 pilot schools in Miami-Dade County, Philadelphia and San Francisco.



## ----- **TRAITS FOR SUCCESS** -----



Principals and school staff lead the way



Expectations are raised for all students



Asset Mapping helps communities plan pathway to success



College preparation begins early



School/ Community partnerships are critical

## THE PROBLEM PERSISTS

America is facing a college completion crisis.



Only 54 percent of low-income students who complete high school enrolled in college, compared to 82 percent of high-income students.\*



\*Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2012

## BUILDING A PATHWAY

The Postsecondary Success Collaborative focused on these priorities:

Local Leadership

Collaboration & partnerships

Map college-readiness resources and needs

Align resources and partners to meet needs



## SEEING RESULTS

Across all schools in the 3 cities we saw



in college enrollment rates



in persistence from high school to second year of college

In our strong implementation schools we saw



in college enrollment rates for African American/Latino students



in persistence from high school to second year of college for African American/Latino students

## PARTNERS FOR PROGRESS

### Founding National Partners

- » Citi Foundation
- » FHI 360
- » Public Education Network
- » The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

### Participating Local Education Funds

- » The Education Fund, Miami-Dade
- » Philadelphia Education Fund
- » San Francisco Education Fund

## STRONG IMPLEMENTATION TRAIT #3

### Schools leverage supports from external partners to complement their internal efforts.

Locally, schools, colleges and universities, community-based organizations (CBOs), foundations, employers and other education partners often work in isolation. Without strong partnerships and coordination, organizations may duplicate efforts or overlook some of the most vulnerable students. Partners also fail to benefit from shared expertise, capacity and cooperation in pursuing funding opportunities.

Leveraging the support of external partners plays out differently at each school and in each community, but they share several common steps: designating a local group to lead the work; getting all major stakeholders at the table; defining clear roles and responsibilities, and sharing data such as student grades, scores on college admissions tests or FAFSA completion rates to guide strategic planning. In PSC sites, the PSAM process helped schools to pinpoint where partners could be the most help in preparing students for entry and success in college.

A trusted local organization helped to direct this work. In PSC sites, the local education fund (LEF) played this role and was essential in making these steps happen. LEFs began to facilitate the process from the first gatherings of partners to discuss PSC and managed it through to data collection, analysis, building plans and monitoring progress. With LEF guidance, the PSC pilot schools were selected with input from the district, and each PSC school built a team to focus on postsecondary success and coordinate partners to ensure that students are supported efficiently and effectively.

The evolution of PSC in San Francisco is a great example of how partnerships can maximize the collective impact of everyone involved to benefit more students. Before PSC, Mission High School had 40 community partners, but did not match partners systematically to student needs. Some students received duplicative services, while entire populations remained underserved. Some organizations focused on a grade level or worked through just one teacher.

The PSAM process and meetings convened by the San Francisco Education Fund (SFEF) identified gaps in services as well as ways for these CBOs to align efforts and fill them. According to Hanna Doerr, PSC program director at the San Francisco Education Fund, "It was about getting everyone who's really concerned with the life of that student to sit at the same table and begin the conversation about how they were going to define success for each student."

PSC did not bring a new program to Mission; instead it ensured that the programs already there complemented each other by improving communications and increasing transparency in serving all students. The meetings established a sense of “collective goodwill” and, facilitated by SFEF and supported by school leaders, helped to bring clarity and accountability to partners working with the school.

## **BUILDING NEW COLLABORATION IN PHILADELPHIA**

### **K–12 and Higher Education Instructors Learn from Each Other to Better Help Students**

It’s a common refrain from college faculty: High schools send us students who lack basic skills and can’t do college work. Then there’s the other refrain from K–12 schools: Why can’t higher education systems better support first-year students?

As the director of Temple University’s first-year writing program put it, for kids from underserved communities, “high school and college don’t seem parts of the same continuous system.” As a result, students who navigate their way to college are often unprepared and flounder in a less structured, more rigorous academic environment.

To create a smoother transition, the Philadelphia Postsecondary Success Program (PPSP) worked with faculty from Temple University, Community College of Philadelphia and the four PPSP high schools: Kensington Business, Kensington Creative and Performing Arts, Benjamin Franklin and Roxborough.

The initial work began with instructors from Temple’s First-Year Writing Program partnering with teachers from Roxborough High School to improve the college transition process and improve students’ ability to be successful writers in college. Inspired by the medical field’s practice of instructional rounds, high school and college instructors met to discuss best practices, expectations for college-level work and how they could align instruction between high school and college classrooms to improve student success. This work was informed by the research of Richard Elmore and colleagues at the Harvard Graduate School of Education as well as FHI 360’s Reviewing Student Work and School Self-Assessment program.

The instructors did more than talk. The rounds involved visits to college and high school classes, where instructors could observe one another’s work and see what was happening in the respective classrooms. The groups examined lesson plans and assignments, collaborating to address gaps in how students were asked to perform from one institution to the next.

The visits and resulting conversations were eye-opening. University faculty were surprised to see such strictly structured lesson plans in high school, while high school faculty were equally surprised to see the level at which students were expected to learn independently and take responsibility for their learning.

The experience was so enlightening that the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) began to conduct instructional rounds with other PSC schools. In addition, Temple, CCP and the four PSC high schools expanded their collaboration to include an annual Spring Institute meeting. This annual meeting showcases and builds on lessons from the rounds and shares them with an expanded audience of school and district administrators, community partners and representatives from both two- and four-year postsecondary institutions.

See Philadelphia Video at <http://vimeo.com/68349081>.

## POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS TRAIT #4

### Principals, administrators and faculty expect all students to go to college.

High expectations that are explicit and real for all students are critical to creating college-going cultures, especially for low-income, minority or first-generation students. A strong college-going culture means communicating to students that higher education is an option, then backing up that expectation with sustained action and support. Students need to understand and discuss the connection between course selection, college-placement tests, extracurricular activities and FAFSA completion on the one hand, and their eventual goal of success in college and a good job on the other.

Expecting to enter and succeed in college must be more than an event; it must permeate every aspect of the school day. High schools need to expect students to develop skills and learn knowledge that will be essential to the next phases in life, not to view high schools as “places to chill,” as one Philadelphia principal described her school before it joined PSC.

There are many ways to create, communicate and sustain college-going cultures. Students experience high expectations when they have to create college preparation plans or have regular, focused check-ins with counselors or advisors to monitor their progress. Communicating high expectations can be very concrete. For example, schools can support student-led college clubs that are open to all grades, engage all staff in keeping students on track to meet key application and financial aid deadlines and expose students to college campuses and career options.



## U.S. COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES\* HAVE BEEN TOO LOW FOR TOO LONG

### TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

30.5% (Starting in 2000)

31% (Starting in 2008)

### FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

57.5% (Starting in 2000)

58.8% (Starting in 2008)

\*Source: U.S. Department of Education



## **RAISING EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL IN SAN FRANCISCO**

### **Reinventing Home Room as College Prep**

Three high schools across San Francisco have reinvented the traditional “home room” period as an advisory time to raise college-going expectations. At least once a week, home room advisors focus on the culture and expectations of college, college-application and financial-aid processes and college supports that are available in the community.

Through PSC, the San Francisco Education Fund (SFEF) developed an extensive curriculum for this advisory approach that helps students beginning in ninth grade to chart their academic journey to college. Students and teachers use the curriculum to walk through the possibilities college offers: the chance to choose a major, participate in athletics, work with professors doing interesting work and live near (or far from) home.

Checklists give students grade-specific, monthly recommendations regarding how they can learn about California’s college-entrance requirements, set up meetings with guidance counselors and identify colleges to visit. Students have access to ConnectEDU, a free online tool that helps them manage the college search and application process and helps CBOs understand students’ goals and needs; one of its key features compares to an “online dating service” for students and colleges.

Today, the higher expectations are reflected in home room and in discussions that take place before, during and after the school day. Instead of saying, “if,” students now say, “when,” in talking about college.

See San Francisco video at <http://vimeo.com/68349079>.



## POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS TRAIT #5

**Schools focus attention on early grades, establishing a college-going culture from ninth grade on, and then set benchmarks and support students in achieving college access milestones in each year of high school.**

“Without the Philadelphia Education Fund and the other people and organizations that helped me, I wouldn’t have known how to get to where I needed to go.”

### Angel

Student, Kensington Creative and Performing Arts High School (Philadelphia)

It’s never too soon for students to see themselves as college material. This is critical for students who are underrepresented on college campuses or are the first in their families to consider higher education. According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, just 44 percent of ninth graders nationally are on track to be ready for college by the time they turn 19.

PSC communities learned through asset mapping that many students were exposed to college material and expectations too late in high school to improve their chances of college success. PSC schools all identified the need to expose students to the possibilities for postsecondary opportunities and ensure that the pathway to college begins no later than the ninth grade.

Schools and communities can rethink assumptions about who is college material and who is not by helping all students create a vision of what postsecondary opportunity looks like. Once schools and communities identify and affirm student aspirations, these organizations can build the pathway to put necessary pieces in place including dedicated time for teachers to talk to students at all grade levels about higher education, required courses and academic progress for students.

These conversations are common in affluent communities or schools with high percentages of students going to college, but they are not part of the daily conversation in all schools, especially schools serving mostly low-income students.

## ACCELERATING COLLEGE AWARENESS IN PHILADELPHIA

### Ninth-Grade Orientation Sets a New Tone for Students and Parents

The School District of Philadelphia has reported that on average, 57 percent of its students graduate from high school in four years and less than two-thirds graduate in six years. Less than one in five Philadelphia students graduates, enrolls in college and persists to the sophomore year. The Philadelphia Postsecondary Success Program's approach to this problem includes focusing earlier on college awareness and preparation.

The Ninth-Grade Orientation now signals to students and parents that their new school is about preparing all students for postsecondary success. Held at the end of August or in September just before school reopens, the orientations highlight for entering freshmen and their families that a college-going culture is in place.

The new message is clear. Students hear teachers, community partners and administrators tell them that their new school will help them achieve their dream of completing a two-year, four-year, certificate or licensure program without needing remedial or developmental coursework.

The messages build a vision. Students learn they will visit college campuses, attend college fairs and gain the knowledge and skills necessary to transition successfully to life beyond high school. Students and their families are introduced to postsecondary partners who talk about study habits, good decision-making and taking responsibility for education to foster college readiness.

Students and their families also learn in an introductory financial education workshop how they can prepare to pay for college. The ability to understand financial aid options and procedures is just as critical to students' success post-high school as are high grade-point averages and SAT scores.

Most important, Freshman Orientation makes it clear to students and families that their high school is prepared to provide them with sufficient knowledge, tools and skills to ensure success in whatever postsecondary institution they attend.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

An advantage of the “collaborative” part of the Postsecondary Success Collaborative has been the opportunity to work with national and local partners to implement and evaluate a blend of strategies to determine which are the most effective for promoting postsecondary access and success. We began this work knowing that there was no single activity or strategy capable of significantly improving student college access and success outcomes. Today, however, we can draw from our evaluation and experience to make the following recommendations that we believe, when used together and sustained over time, can help leverage resources, target supports and create conditions to make real and lasting impacts in schools and communities.

### SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS CAN

- » Assume institutional responsibility for creating college-going cultures that ensure success for all students by making a public commitment to creating a coordinated system of supports that makes the best use of existing resources and leverages new ones as needed.
- » Move from serving SOME students to serving ALL by beginning with a comprehensive postsecondary readiness framework and process, such as Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping, to develop a shared understanding and set of priorities for improving the college and career readiness of all students.
- » Use the information from the asset mapping as well as critical data on student progress to make strategic decisions about how to address priorities, to clarify the roles and responsibilities that school and local partners - including higher education institutions - must play, and to measure and track progress.
- » Share responsibility beyond counselors and external college access programs with the entire school community by integrating grade-appropriate college readiness activities into the fabric of school life using the structures schools and partners already rely on or can develop and co-own—e.g., advisory and home room periods, parent nights, FAFSA Marathons, extended learning activities such as College Clubs and Summer Bridge as well as faculty meetings, common planning time, professional development, and school improvement planning sessions.
- » Begin no later than ninth grade to provide comprehensive college access supports to all students to increase enrollment and completion rates, particularly for low-income Black and Latino students.
- » Align policies and supports with goals for college readiness, access and success. This includes course alignment, academic support, SAT preparation, family outreach and public engagement. This also requires improving the collection and use of data, i.e. FAFSA completion, PSAT/SAT/ACT taking, credit accumulation, college applications, tutoring and mentoring, etc.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERS AND PARTNERS CAN

- » Identify a local organization that can credibly organize and lead the postsecondary access and completion work in their communities. As a neutral, community-based player, the lead organization maintains focus and a sense of urgency, frames opportunities and challenges and promotes the use of evaluation and data for learning and progress. Such an organization is critical to building relationships, identifying resources and needs and coordinating better delivery. This work is achieved by tapping a lead organization that:
  - Has or is making college access and success integral to its strategic direction and in doing so, deepening or expanding its role from being primarily an in-school program provider to a local college access and success leader.
  - Is developing capacities in systems thinking, partnership building, and data collection and use.
- » Commit to a deliberate initiative like the Postsecondary Success Collaborative to create the time, space, structure and focus for the postsecondary success agenda. Without these elements, stakeholders will continue to work largely independently, driven by institutional agendas and individual responsibilities.
- » Utilize the findings from a research-based process such as Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping. This process can identify gaps in resources and capacities necessary to guide their work and secure the resources of schools and partners to meet new and ongoing challenges. This may require partners to refine and refocus their own work in order to better meet school and districtwide college access and success goals.

## NATIONAL INTERMEDIARIES AND POLICYMAKERS AND FUNDERS CAN

- » Develop new structures—like the partnerships of the PSC—to manage relationships among a unique mix of college access players and systems that are likely to outlast initial philanthropic investments.
- » Bring together stakeholders around concrete pieces of work to foster stronger relationships and alignment of work among systems, such as higher education, business, school districts, philanthropies, etc.
- » Build in enough time (e.g., multi-year) to learn, make mistakes and adjust the work. Carving out deliberate and focused learning time is critical to ongoing improvement and sustainability.
- » Help local lead organizations strengthen their infrastructures to build and engage partners, communicate progress, manage data and think systemically. Where the lead organization lacks pre-existing capacity, funders must provide sufficient support and resources to develop that capacity.
- » Make the effective use of data a top priority by supporting lead organizations, schools and community partners to develop technical research skills and clearly present key data. Strong facilitation skills that support discussions about data also are necessary and can lead to actions and improved results. Investments that seek to be data-driven must allocate the appropriate resources, technical assistance and time for organizations to build these assets.

# POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS COLLABORATIVE PARTNER LISTS

## MIAMI-DADE

### Pilot Schools:

Miami Beach High School  
Miami Southridge High School  
Westland Hialeah High School

### Core Partners:

Citi Foundation  
The Education Fund\*  
Barry University  
Bayview Foundation  
Dade Community Foundation  
Florida International University  
Florida Memorial University  
Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce  
Miami Dade College  
Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
Miami-Dade County School Board  
Nova Southeastern University  
Roblee  
University of Miami  
Walmart

### School and Community Partners:

5000 Role Models of Excellence  
Access Miami (Uaspire)  
AVID  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Catalyst Miami  
College Summit  
Educate Tomorrow  
Enlace Florida  
Florida National College  
Human Services Coalition  
Infinite Scholar Program  
Junior Achievement of Greater Miami, Inc.  
National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship  
Neighborhood Resource Center  
New Futuro  
Pangaea Life  
Posse Foundation  
PTA/PTSA Miami-Dade  
Take Stock In Children  
United Negro College Fund  
Upward Bound Miami-Dade College  
Women of Tomorrow Mentor & Scholarship Program  
Women's Fund of Miami Dade

## PHILADELPHIA

### Pilot Schools:

Benjamin Franklin High School  
Kensington Creative and Performing Arts High School  
Kensington International Business/ Finance and Entrepreneurship High School  
Roxborough High School

### Core Partners:

Citi Foundation  
Philadelphia Education Fund\*  
ACE Group  
City Year  
Community College of Philadelphia  
Lincoln University  
Mayor's Office of Education  
Philadelphia Academies Inc.  
Philadelphia Youth Network  
School District of Philadelphia  
Temple University  
White-Williams Scholars

### School and Community Partners:

Amongst Men  
Biotech Academy  
CADE (Drug and Alcohol Prevention)  
Campaign for Working Families  
Communities in Schools  
College Access Program  
Deloitte Education Collaborative  
Devereaux School Based Support Services  
Education Works  
Foundations, Inc.  
Jewish Family and Child Services–EOS (Education and Outreach)  
Legacy Program  
Motivos Magazine  
Navy JROTC  
New Kensington Community Development Corporation  
Nu Sigma Youth Services  
Philadelphia Academies Inc.  
Biotech Academy  
Business Academy  
Communications Academy  
Hotel, Restaurant, Tourism and Travel Academy  
Philadelphia Futures  
Project Grad  
School Based Social Services  
Social Work Connection  
Student Success Center  
Urban Sustainability Leadership Academy

\*Lead Organizer

## SAN FRANCISCO

### Pilot Schools:

Mission High School  
Phillip & Sala Burton Academic High School  
Thurgood Marshall Academic High School

### Core Partners:

Citi Foundation  
City & County of San Francisco, Department of Children,  
Youth, & Their Families  
San Francisco Education Fund\*  
City College of San Francisco  
San Francisco State University  
San Francisco Unified School District  
University of California San Francisco

### School and Community Partners:

7 Teepees  
826 Valencia  
Asian American Recovery Services  
Athletic Scholars Advancement Program  
Bar Association of San Francisco  
Bay Area Urban Debate League  
BAYCAT  
Bayview Association for Youth - 100% College Prep Institute  
Bayview Beacon Center  
Beyond 12  
BMAGIC  
Brushfire  
Burton High School Wellness Center  
Campaign for College Access- Sacramento  
Campaign for Quality Education  
Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)  
Coleman Advocates  
College Access Foundation  
College Success Network  
College Track  
Community Youth Center (CYC)  
Coro Exploring Leadership  
Early Academic Outreach Program (UC Berkeley)  
Ella Hill Hutch Community Center  
Environmental Service Learning Initiative  
First Graduate  
Friendship House  
Gear Up!  
Hire-Ability (RAMS)  
HOMEY (Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth)  
Horizons Unlimited  
Juma Ventures

Junior Achievement  
La Casa de las Madres  
Larkin Street  
Maisin Scholars  
Mission Economic Development Agency  
Mission Graduates  
Mission SF Community Financial Center  
New Day For Learning  
New Generations Health Center  
Nextcourse  
NFTE  
Omega Boys Club  
Outward Bound (Bay Area)  
Pact, Inc  
Pathways Career Consulting  
Peer Health Exchange  
Peer Resources Pie Ranch  
Produce for the People  
Scholar Match  
SEE College Prep  
San Francisco College Access Center  
Students Rising Above  
Summer Search  
Upward Bound  
Vietnamese Youth Development Center  
Writers Corps  
Youth Data Archive (John Gardner Center, Stanford University)



<https://www.educationfund.org/>



<http://www.philaedfund.org/>

san francisco **education** fund  
[www.sfedfund.org/](http://www.sfedfund.org/)



*“We will continue building on this effort and expanding community partnerships to increase the number of adults who earn college degrees -- not only because it’s an economic imperative, but because it’s the right thing to do. Working together, we can make the Postsecondary Success Collaborative pathways available to even more students.”*

**- Linda Lecht**

President, The Education Fund of Miami-Dade County

