White House College Opportunity Agenda
Strengthening the School Counseling Profession Through First Lady’s Reach Higher Initiative

Trish Hatch, PhD
Laura Owen, PhD
The Journey to Reach Higher

In January 2014, the White House sponsored a Summit during which President Barack Obama called for “an ambitious new agenda aimed at improving college value, removing barriers to innovation and competition, and ensuring that student debt remains affordable.”
Expanding Opportunity
The Journey to Reach Higher

Following this Summit, First Lady Michelle Obama continued the call for action through the Reach Higher Initiative which aims to inspire every student in America to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school, whether at a professional training program, a community college, or a four year college or university.
The First Lady’s Reach Higher Initiative

• The Reach Higher initiative will help make sure all students understand what they need to complete their education, including:

  • Exposing students to college and career opportunities
  • Understanding financial aid eligibility that can make college affordability a reality
  • Encouraging academic planning and summer learning opportunities
  • Supporting high school counselors who can help more kids get into college
Senior White House staff convened a Listening and Learning Session on School Counseling with experts from the field, higher education, and professional organizations. This session examined the challenges and opportunities for school counselors to support students’ college aspirations.
What Would YOU Write?

Questions to Address:
1) Given the challenge of building adequate social, emotional, academic, and college and career support services for every young person. What are the challenges and barriers that school counselors face to accomplish these goals?

2) The national growing focus on College and Career Readiness in prek-12 to adequately prepare young people for success in post-secondary education has placed expanded expectations on school counselors. What resources, training and support do school counselors need to meet these expanded expectations?

3) What are some recommendations for how the College Opportunity can support the work of school counselors?
What Did We Write?

**Concerns:**

- **Marginalized Professionals** Advocating for Marginalized Youth
- Lack of Federal/State/County/District School **Policies that Require** Highly Qualified School Counselors
- Most Programs **Lack Administrators** at Site or Central Office who Understand the Appropriate Role of the School Counselor
- Even Highly Experienced School Counselors **Struggle to Resolve Institutions Gatekeeping**
- School Counselors Need **Proper Pre-Service Training**, Professional Development and Support to Lead

**Recommendations:**

- Continue to **Promote the Appropriate Role of the School Counselor**
- **Revise, Create and Support Policies, Legislation** and Federal Funding Legitimizing School Counselors
School Counselors and College Access Partners

Scaffold the progression of services provided by appropriately trained and certificated or licensed college/career readiness experts, a pipeline or continuum approach to increasingly appropriate responsibilities tied to appropriate training of service providers.

Create and support policies that ensure advisement programs are performing under the umbrella of the school counseling programs and not in separate silos of overlapping work.
June 25, 2014

Eric Waldo, Executive Director, College Access Initiative
Greg Darnieder, U.S. Department of Education

Dear Drs. Waldo and Darnieder:

San Diego State University is pleased that Dr. Trish Hatch, Director of our School Counseling Program, and Dr. Laura Owen, a new faculty member in school counseling, were recently invited to attend a White House conversation brief on chief advisors to the President and First Lady about school counseling. They have shared that you are seeking new and innovative university commitments to align with the President and First Lady’s College Opportunity Agenda and the Reach Higher Initiative. Specifically, we understand you are seeking school counseling focused commitments designed to improve college access for underrepresented youth such as:

1. Providing high quality instruction for pre-service school counselors
2. Providing high quality professional development for practicing school counselors
3. Developing tools that school counselors can use in real time to close opportunity gaps
4. Increasing the quality and quantity of rigorous research to identify best practices

In light of the focus and attention being given to these important matters, the Office of the President and the Office of the Dean of the School of Education at San Diego State University would like to offer our university as a location for convening thought leaders, hosting conferences, and providing professional development opportunities in support of the President’s College Opportunity Agenda and the First Lady’s Reach Higher initiative.

Dr. Joseph Johnson, Dean of the College of Education and I have discussed the following initiatives proposed by Dr. Trish Hatch and Dr. Laura Owen. We join together in full support for each initiative and encourage them to move forward in planning and implementation:

- Development of a CCR Division within our Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership (CESCaL) that will convene local, state, and national conferences to support CCR, present at major educational conferences, and develop new professional development programs that build the capacity of school counselors to promote CCR.

As the President of San Diego State University, I am committed to developing and supporting innovative approaches and strategies to improve postsecondary educational access and outcomes. The new, bold initiatives mentioned above align with initiatives in our strategic plan “Building on Excellence” (available at https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/strategicplan/images/finalstrategicplan.pdf) including the ones listed below:

- Invest funds to increase the four-year graduation rates of all students and eliminate the achievement gaps of under-represented students.
- Invest funds to increase the recruitment and retention of under-represented students through targeted recruitment and outreach to inform students of exceptional programmatic and co-curricular opportunities.
- Invest in the recruitment and retention of under-represented faculty and staff through targeted activities.
- Promote commuter student success based on results of an in-progress needs assessment by the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, with relevant support and resources in association with the established Patient Student Lounge of the Aztec Student Union.
- Provide focused interventions for at-risk first-time freshmen in order to increase continuation rates and four- and six-year graduation rates.
- Provide diverse educational experiences for all students by leveraging our campus’s rich diversity. Integrate diversity initiatives in support of these goals.)

San Diego State is proud to be a model in the preparation of the next generation of school counselors. We look forward to working with, sharing with, and learning from other institutions pursuing the same goal. We hope the First Lady and the President are pleased with our commitments and that our efforts will spur other institutions to move forward as well.

With best regards,

Elliot Hirshman
President
First Lady Michelle Obama addresses the ASCA Conference on July 1, 2014
“School counseling should not be an extra or a luxury just for school systems that can afford it. School counseling is a necessity to ensure that all our young people get the education they need to succeed in today’s economy”

- FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA
The College Opportunity Agenda

On July 28, 2014 a special White House Convening at Harvard University focused on maximizing school counselors’ impact and influence on college enrollment.
Reach Higher Connecting Experience

Connecting:

• College Access Partners
• School Counselor Educators
• Funders
• Researchers
• Non Profits Agencies
• School Districts
• State Department

Attendees agreed to work collaboratively for the benefit of all students.
8:45 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks, Askwith Hall
DEAN JIM RYAN, Harvard Graduate School of Education
JAMES KVAAL, Deputy Director, Domestic Policy Council, The White House

9:20 a.m. Panel: Professional Development and Training, Askwith Hall
INTRODUCTION
MANDY SAVITZ-ROMER, Harvard Graduate School of Education

PANELISTS
BRANDY JOHNSON, Michigan College Access Network
MELISSA MILLER KINCART, Utah System of Higher Education
RACHELLE PERUSSE, University of Connecticut-Storrs

10:05 a.m. Breakout Discussion Groups, Various locations

11:25 a.m. Panel: Innovative Programming and Research, Askwith Hall
INTRODUCTION
PAT MARTIN, Education Consultant

PANELISTS
LAURA OWEN, San Diego State University
JOYCE BROWN, Center for College and Career Readiness
JUDY PETERSEN, Granite School District, Utah

12:10 p.m. Breakout Discussion Groups, Various locations

1:10 p.m. Lunch, Gutman Library Reading Area

FEATED SPEAKERS
ERIC WALDO, Executive Director Reach Higher, Office of the First Lady
TRISH HATCH, San Diego State University

Representatives from College Board, College Possible, Complete College America, Council for Opportunity and Education, iMentor, National College Access Network, National College Advising Corps, and the Posse Foundation

2:40 p.m. Panel: College Counseling Tools, Askwith Hall
INTRODUCTION
CHERYL HOLCOMB MCCOY, Johns Hopkins University

PANELISTS
ALICE ANNE BAILEY, Go Alliance, Southern Regional Education Board
KEITH FROME, College Summit/King Center Charter Middle School
DREW SCHEBERLE, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
SYLVIA LOPEZ, Dallas Independent School District

3:35 p.m. Breakout Discussion Groups, Various locations

4:40 p.m. Call to Action and Closing, Askwith Hall
TED MITCHELL, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
BRIDGET TERRY LONG, Harvard Graduate School of Education

5 p.m. Reception, Gutman Library Reading Area

Generously sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
Outcomes of Reach Higher To Date

SDSU Convening November, 17/18, 2014

SDSU “invitation only” convening of committed leaders and commitment makers is to support those taking steps necessary to create systemic change within the school counseling profession in several specific areas:

• Designing, changing, revising the School Counselor preparation at Higher Ed to ensure certain non-negotiable preparation standards for school counselors (SC) in College and Career Readiness (CCR)

• Developing, improving, and sustaining partnerships between university training programs and K-12 school districts to ensure appropriate field site placements and activities during fieldwork training and training for site supervisors and administrators with new school counselor requirements in CCR during placement

• Supporting and ensuring professional development in district for existing SC in CCR and ensuring collaborative scaffold roles partnering with college access partners
Outcomes of Reach Higher To Date

SDSU Convening November, 17/18, 2014

• Creating **policies, practices and procedures** for hiring and placement of SC prepared to work in CCR

• Providing opportunities to create **strategic partnerships with donors and funders** interested in supporting any or all of this work supporting and promoting new systemic change models and excellence in implementation and outcomes for SC, and the students we serve

• The **San Diego State University** convening will provide a unique opportunity for those ready, to **commit** to and take a deep look at training and professional development practices and policies that best prepare and support school counselors to advance college opportunities for all students.
20 Universities~20 Districts~20 Partnerships
Supporting the President’s 2020 Goals (We have 30+!)

- 20+ University/K-12/Community Partnerships meeting 80% or more of the aforementioned criteria
- 20+ Solidified Working Groups of Strategic Collaborative Partners
- 20+ Formalized and Finalized Strategic Action Plans
- Announcements of High Impactful Partnerships (Funders, Tools, etc.)
- Commitments for Future Opportunities to Link Successful Partnerships with those Seeking Mentoring to create them
- Mechanisms to Create, Consult and Contribute Action Plans, supporting documents, policies, outcomes and research designed to assist Strategic Partners in meeting the goals and outcomes stated above over the next two years and beyond.
School Counselors #Reach Higher

Complete Your Education. Own Your Future.
MAKE YOUR COMMITMENTS to the Reach Higher Initiative TODAY! (click here!) http://goo.gl/d3SB9C
Contact Info

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