

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: AN INVESTIGATION OF HIGH SCHOOL
COUNSELING PROGRAMS AS A
REFLECTION OF A COLLEGE-GOING
CULTURE

Denise Park, Doctor of Philosophy, 2012

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Special Education

The purpose of this study is to investigate high school counseling programs as a reflection of a college-going culture. A qualitative thematic analysis is used to examine four school counseling programs at high schools in a school district located along the Eastern seaboard of the United States. In order to increase the likelihood of identifying aspects of school counseling programs that are successful in reflecting a college-going culture, only high schools with high college-going percentage rates were selected for this study.

College-going culture theory, including the nine college-going culture principles, as proposed by McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) is used as a framework for this study. The college-going culture principles operate as themes to help categorize school counselor activities and measure whether the school counseling programs reflect a college-going culture in the schools. A methodological triangulation is employed to

identify planned college-going activities within three information sources from each school: school counselors' management plans, school counseling websites, and the school counseling departments' calendars.

Results suggest that collectively, the four selected schools plan college-going activities that are consistent with all nine college-going culture principles, thus suggesting that there is a college-going culture that is strongly supported and reflected by the school counseling departments in these schools. Suggestions, based on these findings, for how other schools might improve their college-going culture are included. Implications for promoting cultural reform to support college access and success for all students are also discussed.

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REFLECTION OF A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2012

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to all the students who have allowed me to serve them as their school counselor and have shared their path-to-college journeys with me. My decision to pursue a Ph.D. was inspired by you. I am so blessed and privileged to have known each of you. Thank you for deepening my passion for counseling and education.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Courtland C. Lee, for all of his guidance and encouragement throughout my years in the doctoral program. All that I have learned from you has helped me become a better counselor, better educator, and better leader. Thank you for always believing in me. I am forever indebted to you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Bryan, Dr. Fabian, Dr. Lucas, Dr. Marinelli, and Dean Wiseman, for their time and energy in helping me complete this endeavor. This research could not have been completed without you, and I am forever grateful.

To my parents, thank you for teaching me to value my education and instilling in me your strong work ethic. Most of all, thank you for your unconditional love.

To Jeff, Tim, Marcy, and Valerie, thank you for allowing me to pursue my education while working full-time and for your overwhelming support through this process.

I must also give honor and thanks to God, who gives me wisdom, strength, and hope. May all things I do be done for the glory of God.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The state of the 21st century global economy underscores the need for effective college- and career-readiness planning in schools. College and workforce training programs prepare students to meet the demands for a highly skilled and educated workforce, while K-12 schools prepare students for college (Pham & Keenan, 2011). Students' academic success must correlate with the needs of the economy not only to ensure that students will have jobs, but also to maximize the value of education to the economy as a whole (Sparks & Waits, 2011).

According to the *School Counselors: Literature and Landscape Review* provided by the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) (NOSCA, 2011), school counselors are uniquely positioned to address the gaps between education and workforce development. More specifically, school counselors can fulfill a role in helping students with their school-to-college path by making a positive impact on students' college choices, aspirations, and rate of applying to college (McDonough, 2005a, 2005b). Significantly, school counselors can help students become self-actualized and empowered learners for the students' own future and economic benefit (Fitzpatrick & Costantini, 2011).

Importance of School Counseling and School Counseling Reform

In creating and ultimately achieving postsecondary goals, students need basic information about their options for colleges, and they need to receive this information at a time in their educational careers when they can choose appropriate classes and make other important decisions (McDonough, 2005b). Students express a specific need for

information about types of colleges, college admissions requirements, and the subtleties of competitive eligibility (McDonough, 2005b). For this reason, academic advising and college counseling are among the most important services that can be provided by the school counselor (Chapman, DeMasi, & O'Brien, 1991). Increased guidance and assistance from the high school counselor will increase the likelihood that a student will attend a four-year institution (Plank & Jordan, 2001). Many school counselors, however, have limited time for college counseling and advising. School counselors' are commonly inundated with the following duties: scheduling, discipline, monitoring dropout potential, and engaging in personal crisis counseling with students who are dealing with drugs, pregnancy, suicidal ideation, and sexuality (McDonough, 2005a; Miller, 1998).

Since school counselors are positioned to provide effective college- and career-readiness planning for all students, research suggests that as education focuses on bringing today's schools into the 21st century, school counseling is in need of innovation and reform (Johnson, Rockkind, & Ott, 2010). When students meet with their school counselors, they should experience "a time set aside to talk about goals and plans with an adult trained to offer advice, options, and assistance," as well as an "opportunity to talk with advisors who know all about college and job training programs" (Johnson, et al., 2011, p. 74, 78). Many students, however, feel that their school counselors are not able to serve them in these capacities. In reference to findings from several large-scale surveys, NOSCA (2011) summarized: "When students are asked about their satisfaction with the college counseling and preparation they received, the results suggest that students' desired levels of support from counselors exceed the support they [actually] receive" (p. 23). It follows, therefore, that many students may not be utilizing their

school counselors to the fullest potential, thus failing to access information and guidance needed to navigate the college admissions process. If this is the case, all students will not be equitably positioned for access to higher education.

In order to help all students receive the help needed to make good decisions about preparing for and choosing a college, McDonough (2005b) suggests that we must change not only the structure of school counseling, but also the cultures of our schools. This study will therefore examine the structure of school counseling as it relates specifically to reflecting a college-going culture in schools.

Promoting a College-Going Culture

McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) have introduced nine specific school characteristics that are indicative of a college-going culture. These characteristics, or principles, have been derived from research on college access and educational attainment (McClafferty et al., 2002). These principles are designed to help schools determine whether they are fostering a college-going culture as well as determine what they might need to do to strengthen a college-going culture. Descriptions of each of the nine principles, with examples of how they might look in a school, are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Principles of a College Culture

College-Going Culture Principle	Description of the Principle	Examples
1. College Talk	Clear, ongoing communication about college, so that all students develop a college-going identity.	Newsletters, newspapers, posters, essay contests based on college application questions, college club

2. Clear Expectations	Explicit goals of college preparation must be defined and communicated clearly, consistently, and in a variety of ways by families and all school personnel.	Mission statement, four-year plans, frequent communication about college options, ongoing opportunities to discuss college preparation and define goals
3. Information and Resources	Students must have access to up-to-date, comprehensive college information and schools must build college knowledge infrastructure.	Financial Aid materials, testing materials, college catalogs, college choice guides, workshops on topics such as test prep and financial planning
4. Comprehensive Counseling Model	All counselors are college counselors and all student interactions with counseling's are college advising opportunities.	Counselors are college resources and distribute college information to all students, faculty, and staff; counselors at all grade levels have ongoing collaboration
5. Testing and Curriculum	Students must be informed about necessary tests, must be given the opportunities to prepare for these tests, and testing fees must be taken into account.	PSAT administered to all 10 th graders, master schedules allow more college prep classes to become available, students learn organizational skills
6. Faculty Involvement	Faculty must be active, informed partners with counselors, students, and families and professional development opportunities must be available.	Classroom decorations and "college corners," college talk in class, teachers understand role in test prep and college prep, teachers interact with counselors

7. Family Involvement	Family members must have opportunities to gain college knowledge and understand their role.	College fairs, parent workshops to learn about college preparation and financial planning, parents supported in their belief that their children are “college material”
8. College Partnerships	Have active links between K-12 schools and local colleges and universities that can lead to field trips, college fairs, and academic enrichment programs.	College visits, college dress days, door decoration contests, guest speakers, tutoring programs
9. Articulation	Students should have a seamless experience from Kindergarten through HS graduation, with ongoing communication among all schools in a feeder group, and work at one school site should connect with activities at other levels.	Students hear a consistent message at all grade levels; as early as kindergarten, students are seeing themselves as college material; middle schools connect with students as young as fifth grade; high school and middle school counselors are pooling resources and making connections

(College Tools for Schools, 2009)

It is important to note that it is not the sole responsibility of the school counselor(s) or the school counseling department to cultivate the nine college-going principles. As the descriptions and examples in this table indicate, ideally all members of a school community should practice and support the principles. The school counselor, however, can play a specific and important role in implementing programs and college-going activities, such as providing college counseling services and facilitating the dissemination of information and resources.

McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) assert that one solitary professional can not provide for a school's college resource infrastructure. Instead, expectations and information related to a college mission must be presented and communicated throughout the school and among all school faculty and staff. Likewise, maintenance of a college-going culture in schools calls for a collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including parental and community influences (College Board, 2006). Collaboration between school and parent is especially important given that in many families, the college application process is a new, complicated process (College Board, 2006).

It is important to note that numerous factors influence students' college choice process, including socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, academic achievement, parents' involvement, and parents' postsecondary expectations for their children (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, and Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Bozick & DeLuca, 2005; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000, 2001; McDonough, 2005b; Perna, 2000; Perna et al., 2008). Parental involvement in school, in particular, helps increase college aspiration and enrollment among students (Bryan, et al., 2011). School counseling, as well as academic help, and guidance from adults in schools, can compensate, however, when parents have limited resources (Bryan, et al., 2011). Many parents, for instance, may be limited in their knowledge of current college admissions requirements and knowledge of current scholarship and financial opportunities. Or, parents may simply be limited in their ability to spend time in researching this information and in becoming more involved at school. It is within this context, that school counseling becomes an important part of the process of helping students get into college.

Importance of a College-Going Culture

A school environment and culture has a powerful influence on how all students apply to and choose colleges (McDonough, 1997). A college-going culture helps build the expectation that all students will achieve postsecondary education goals; “it inspires the best in every student” (College Board, 2006, p. 2). In other words, college access is not for just the best students (College Board, 2006).

Building a college-going culture is also important because there are many benefits to helping all students achieve higher levels of education. Among these benefits is that students will have more employment options that will potentially lead them to higher levels of earnings. In *Education Pays 2010*, published by the College Board (2010), it is reported that workers with higher levels of education are more likely to work full-time. In fact, a college education reduces one’s chances of being unemployed by 50% (College Board, 2006). As shown in Table 1.2, the College Board also reports that the median earnings for workers with a bachelor’s degree working full-time in 2008 were \$55,700, \$21,900 more than the median earnings of high school graduates. Workers with some college, but no degree, earned \$5,900 more (17% more) than high school graduates working full-time.

Table 1.2

Median before-tax earnings of full-time year-round workers ages 25 and older, by education level, 2008

Education Level	Before-Tax Earnings
Not a High School Graduate	\$24,300
High School Graduate	\$33,800
Some College, No Degree	\$39,700
Associate Degree	\$42,000
Bachelor's Degree	\$55,700
Master's Degree	\$67,300
Doctoral Degree	\$91,900
Professional Degree	\$100,00

(College Board, 2010)

While these statistics may not be surprising, the reality is that the idea of completing or even reaching higher levels of education beyond high school is difficult for many students, regardless of their background (College Board, 2006). A college-going culture is therefore important because it seeks to foster an environment where all students are *expected* to attend college (College Board, 2006). In this environment, students will “appreciate academics, have a desire to succeed and a drive to attend college, and become lifelong learners,” (College Board, 2006, p. 2).

Purpose of the Study

Given the importance of school counseling and the importance of building a college-going culture in schools, the purpose of this study is to explore aspects of four selected high school counseling programs as a reflection of a college-going culture. An

investigation of the college-going activities that are being planned and implemented by these four school counseling programs will help clarify what school counselors really do in terms of helping students apply to and ultimately attend college.

In an effort to identify aspects of school counseling programs that are more successful in reflecting a college-going culture, this study investigates school counseling programs at high schools with only high college-going percentage rates. Ultimately, however, this investigation seeks to explore the college-going aspects of the selected school counseling programs and how they are consistent with the nine college-going culture principles.

The research questions guiding the study are:

1. What college-going activities, as delineated by the school counseling management plans, school counseling department websites, and school counseling department calendars are school counselors implementing at high schools with high college-going percentage rates?
2. Are college-going aspects of school counseling programs at high schools with high college-going percentage rates consistent with college-going culture principles?

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it focuses on the counseling programs planned by school counselors at the high school level, providing information regarding what school counselors actually do in relation to the college-going process. In selecting school counseling programs at high schools with high college-going percentage rates, this

becomes an exploratory study that seeks to look at the dynamics of the counseling programs at schools where the large majority of students plan to attend college.

This study is also important because it will provide suggestions for how other school counseling programs, including those in schools with lower college-going percentage rates, can better reflect a college-going culture. All students must be positioned equally for higher education and postsecondary success. In developing school counseling programs that can help increase all students' accessibility to higher education, educational equity in schools will become more enhanced.

Definition of Terms

School Counseling Management Plan.

A school counseling management plan is an agreement between a school counselor and school administrators outlining the organization of a school counseling program, including planned counseling activities and percentage of time allocated to those activities. A sample school management plan modified from the American School Counselor Association's School Management Agreement Form (American School Counselor Association, 2004) can be found in Appendix A. An actual school management plan that was used in this study can be found in Appendix B.

School Counseling Program.

A school counseling program is curriculum made up of activities delivered and designed by school counselors to ensure student success. According to the American School Counselor Association (2008), the design, delivery system, and content of a school counseling program are collaborative efforts to enhance students' ability to utilize available educational opportunities and benefit the overall school community.

College-Going Culture.

A college-going culture is a school environment that promotes all students to prepare for, apply to, and enroll in college.

High College-Going Percentage Rate.

In this study, a college-going percentage rate will be defined as the percentage of students who apply to, are accepted, and report that they plan to attend a two or four year college or university upon graduating from high school. The denominator for this percentage rate is the total number of students who are classified as seniors and are eligible to graduate in June 2012, as determined by the graduation requirements in the state in which they attend school.

According to *Education Pays 2010*, by 2008, 66% of males and 72% of females who had completed high school in the past year were enrolled in college (College Board, 2010). When college enrollment rates are stratified by students' family income levels, it is reported that 80% of recent high school graduates who come from families in the highest income quartile enroll in postsecondary institutions. These high school graduates do not include students who wait more than a year after graduation to continue their education (College Board, 2010); further details about these college graduates are not provided by the College Board.

For the purposes of this study, a high college-going percentage rate will be defined as at least 80% of students, in a given school, who apply to, are accepted, and report that they plan to attend a two or four year college or university over the total number of students who are eligible to graduate in 2012.

College-Going Activities.

College-going activities are programs implemented by school counselors dedicated to enhance students' access and success in post-secondary education. Examples of college-going activities include, but are not limited to: college admissions and financial workshops for parents and students, college fairs, and college application workshops.

Personal Experience with the Topic

My own professional experiences as a school counselor in a large public school district have led me to consider how school counselors can help reflect and support a college-going culture in high schools. As a counselor in a high school that had a consistently high college-going percentage rate during the years I was there, I became very aware of the pressure placed on me to provide adequate college counseling to students and their families. I came to believe that high school counselors, regardless of the college-going percentage rates at the schools in which they work, need to spend a significant amount of time and effort in planning and implementing college-going activities. More importantly, I firmly believe these efforts need to reach all students.

As I began to study social justice issues as a doctoral student in a Counselor Education program, I became even more passionate about college access for all students. Therefore, I have made a personal and professional commitment to helping high school counselors understand their role in supporting a college-going culture in their schools and in particular, in understanding how to help students become well informed about their post-graduation options and in becoming college-ready. It is for this reason that I chose

the subject of this study for my dissertation. It is my hope that this study can provide invaluable information for both school counselors and counselor educators.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research proposal by describing the importance of school counseling reform, and building a college-going culture in schools. Included in this chapter was an outline of the nine college-going culture principles. This chapter explained that given the importance of school counseling and of supporting a college-going culture in schools, the purpose of the study is to explore aspects of selected high school counseling programs as a reflection of a college-going culture. Included are definitions of the key terms to be used in the study. This chapter concluded with the researcher's statement of personal experience with the topic.

Chapter II

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that examines the role of the school counselor in college. A review of the literature focused specifically on college-going culture theory will conclude this chapter.

The Role of the School Counselor in College Admissions

Overall, there is limited research on school counselors impacting college admissions, and their role in building a college going culture in schools is almost non-existent. A call for progress in research in this area is timely with the increasing evidence of the economy's need for a highly educated workforce. Fortunately, there have been many calls for programs to address the weaknesses in college planning and transitions to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

Studies have found that students rely on their school counselor more than any other resource for information on college choice (Johnson, Stewart, & Eberly, 1991). In a survey of approximately 1100 urban high school students regarding their college choice process, Kern (2000) found that students need direct guidance and assistance in the planning process because the experience was new to them and their families. In literature focused on high-achieving schools, few studies research how counselors use their time, therefore providing little evidence to support the movement towards school counselors becoming more academically focused (Fitch & Marshall, 2004).

In a study focused on examining data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, Bryan et al. (2011), used social capital theory as a framework to investigate how high school counselors influence students' college application rates. The study, with an

analytic sample of 4,835 high school seniors, found factors that significantly predicted students' applications to two or more schools versus none and not one school versus none (Bryan et al., 2011). These factors were race/ethnicity, SES, students' postsecondary education aspirations, and mothers' postsecondary education expectations. Findings also indicated that students' contact with counselors have an effect on college application rates and that school counselors are an important source of social capital in the college application process (Bryan et al., 2011).

School Counselors as Social Capital.

Coleman (1988) emphasized that relationships are key to building one's social capital. Relationship ties, according to Coleman (1988), are the conduits through which resources flow. Relationship ties can be found either in personal, one-to-one, connections or in larger contexts, such as schools, churches, and other forms of social networks. While families are typically the primary source for students' social capital, schools can also provide a major, stable source. School-based social capital (Lin, 2001) provides relationships that can help improve students' life outcomes. School counselors, in particular, are often expected to form relationships with both students and their parents to assist students and their families with various developmental issues.

School counselors can be important sources of social capital for students to access postsecondary opportunities. Some students may gain access to this social capital directly from their school counselors, while others may gain access through their parents' contacts with the school counselor. This triadic relationship with the students' parents is ideal since it has been demonstrated that parental involvement in school contributes to students' access to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). If, however, families lack the

knowledge or ability to support their students through this process, school counselors may become the single key source of social capital for students. This particularly holds true for those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds or who are first in their families to apply to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). In cases such as these, it is especially critical that school counselors provide students access to helpful information that would not be otherwise attainable.

School counselors clearly possess a role in which they are positioned to cultivate the three properties of social capital: *obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness, information channels, and norms and effective sanctions.*

The first property of social capital is obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness, is based on the notion that there must be trust in response to one person doing something for another person. Without trustworthiness, the transference of social capital is compromised. For example, a student would not be more likely to seek out his or her school counselor for college admissions information if the two individuals have not formed a basic foundation of trust. Trusting relationships will enhance a students' college planning process. Based on the definition of this property, there is also an expectation that the student respond to the school counselor in repayment. When both individuals engage and exchange effectively, school counselors may experience, as a form of capital, personal fulfillment as they receive expressions of gratitude and stories of their students' successes. When high levels of trust are involved, it enhances the fundamental counseling relationship and is it is then possible for the relationship to develop beyond basic information sharing.

The second property of social capital is the sharing of information through a relationship. Social capital is the “information that facilitates action” (Coleman, 1988, p. 100). When a school counselor is able to share with a student when and how to apply to college, for example, the ultimate action occurs when the student attends college. The student is able to *move* as a result of that information. Potential information that can be channeled from school counselor to student, or school counselor to parent to student, includes college selection facts, college admissions requirements, financial aid and scholarship processes, and career information. Although school counselors are in a position where they are able to share these pieces of information, a study by Wilson (1996) found that school counselors reported not having the information, materials, or time to provide effective counseling. McDonough (1997) also reports that research, in fact, reveals a critical information gap. This is particularly true for students from urban areas. Unfortunately, these students may not have the ability to access this information elsewhere. More fortunate students, on the other hand, may be able to access this information from older siblings and parents who went to college, or from hiring private college counselors. As a result, it is evident that all students do not have equal access to college admissions information. There is a clear need for the dissemination of appropriate and adequate information to all students and improved college counseling (McDonough, 1997).

The third and final property of social capital is norms and effective sanctions. According to Coleman (1990), when a norm is present, it is a powerful form of social capital. In schools, norms encourage social capital formation through the instillation of educational aspirations. School counselors can help provide this by providing a college-

going culture. College-going culture principles are made up of a school's energy, time, and resources focused on students' college preparation. A strong college-going culture can have a strong impact on both students' aspirations and achievement. School counselors can further support a college-going culture by recognizing the importance of positive parental involvement in the college-going process (Bryan et al., 2011). One possible drawback to this property is that while norms can facilitate certain actions, they can also restrain others (Coleman, 1990). For example, it is possible to argue that a strong college-bound culture might restrict a student from considering non-college options such as vocational or military opportunities. It is important to consider, however, that a college-going culture promotes numerous benefits, including students' access to college. Social capital theory fundamentally allows us to understand how college admissions counseling affects students' access to college.

College-Going Culture

A college-going culture, as presented by McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002), can serve as a template for the type of school environment where attending college is a reasonable expectation for all students. Very few studies have been conducted using this theory as a framework. One study, however, conducted by Harris, Tucker, and Willis (2008) examines the college-going culture of urban high schools in Dallas-Forth Worth, Texas and uses college-going theory as a framework to offer suggestions to schools on how to improve their school culture. This project studied perceptions of the college-going culture in six schools that serve students primarily from underrepresented groups in higher education. The researchers collected information through review of websites, direct observations, interviews of at least one key informant,

a focus group interview, and a survey (Harris et al., 2008). Results and observations from the surveys led the researchers to offer recommendations for each specific school in their study.

One major pattern observed in these recommendations is the indication that a college-going culture is already in place at schools. For example, a recommendation was made to change or strengthen schools' AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, which is a system designed to promote college readiness. The recommendation to change or strengthen this program assumes that schools already have this college readiness program in place for students. Another example involves a recommendation to utilize graduate or alumni guest speakers, which indicates that schools will have a group of alumni who are college graduates. Other recommendations suggested starting a college newsletter, encouraging teachers to share their college experiences and display their diplomas, and developing a series of "college knowledge" events for parents of students at all grade levels (Harris et al., 2008).

As part of college-going culture theory, McClafferty et al. (2002) outline a set of nine principles that are consistent with the characteristics of a college-going culture and can help support and maintain such a culture in K-12 school settings. These nine principles will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. Brief descriptions of the nine principles, with examples of how they work and look in a school, can be found in Table 1.1.

College Talk.

The first college-going culture principle presented by McDonough, McClafferty, and Nunez (2002) is college talk. College talk is the clear and ongoing communication

between school staff, families, and students regarding preparation in applying to and attending college (McClafferty et al., 2002). College talk directly impacts students' college aspirations and helps students understand and navigate the college admissions and college choice process (McClafferty et al., 2002).

It is important to note that social capital theory, which posits that actual or potential resources are a product of a network of institutionalized relationships (Bourdieu, 1985), supports the notion of college talk. It does this by highlighting the importance of acquiring knowledge and skills in social contexts. Coleman (1988) emphasized that relationships are the conduits through which resources, contextual knowledge, and skills flow. Relationship ties can be found either in personal, one-to-one connections or in larger contexts, such as schools, churches, and other forms of social networks. While families are typically the primary source for students' social capital, schools can also provide a major, stable source. School-based social capital (Lin, 2001) provides relationships that can help improve students' life outcomes. School counselors, in particular, are often expected to form relationships with both students and their parents to assist students and their families with various developmental issues.

College-going culture theory provides an environment in which social capital can be nurtured. Communication in a school-based social network will help facilitate students' acquisition of resources, knowledge, and skills, an aim of the college talk principle (McClafferty et al., 2002).

Clear Expectations.

The second principle of college culture theory (McClafferty et al., 2002), is clear expectations. This principle suggests that schools with a college-going culture must

clearly communicate that all students are expected to be prepared for college and that the key players (teachers, counselors, other school staff, parents, and students) will help students' access to college.

The work of McDonough (1997) finds that both families and schools influence students' college choice process and their college aspirations. The study also indicated that students who came from families with high socioeconomic statuses had parents and families who had completed higher levels of education and therefore, increased social capital to eventually attend college. Similarly, Cofer, Comers, and VanderPutten (2002), used the National Education Longitudinal Study in their research to find that students who identified college as a goal by the eighth grade and whose parents' expectations were that they attend college, positively related to the students' enrollment in postsecondary education.

Information and Resources.

Information and resources is the third principle of college culture theory (McClafferty et al., 2002). According to McClafferty et al., information and resources must be current, comprehensive, and easily accessible. Schools with a college-going culture provide readily accessible college information and resources to students, parents, and school staff.

Comprehensive Counseling Model.

The fourth principle of college-going culture theory is the comprehensive counseling model. Counseling at schools with college-going cultures, according to this principle, is focused on college counseling (McDonough, 2006). Importantly, school counselors play an important role in students' college application and college choice

processes due to their unique position of being able to influence and provide support for students.

Testing and Curriculum.

The next principle of college culture theory is testing and curriculum. All students should be both informed of and prepared for college admissions tests and college entry requirements (McClafferty et al., 2002). Students must be academically prepared to take these exams by taking the appropriate coursework in high school. Additionally, schools with a college-going culture must also prepare students, academically, to meet college admissions requirements and be successful in college-level coursework.

Faculty Involvement.

The sixth principle of college culture theory is faculty involvement. This principle stresses the importance of the role of school faculty in building a college-going culture. Teachers can do this by integrating college readiness activities in classes (McClafferty et al., 2002). Other faculty can support students and their families by sharing their knowledge of the college process and advocating for policies that support the college-going culture within a school.

Family Involvement.

Family involvement is the next principle of college culture theory. Families must work collaboratively with schools with successful college-going cultures (McClafferty et al., 2002). Family involvement strengthens students' support network (McClafferty et al., 2002). In response to family involvement, schools must respond to families' engagement by providing proper support and resources. Findings from a study on parental involvement conducted Perna and Titus (2005), indicate that parental

involvement is an important form of social capital and impacts students' college enrollment.

College Partnerships.

The eighth principle of college culture theory is college partnerships. College partnerships allow students to learn more about college life and can increase students' commitment to attending college (McClafferty et al., 2002).

In a study of a college-student partnership program (Radcliffe & Stephens, 2010), middle school students attended college tours and participated in writing marathons. In responses to open-ended questions about their college visits, students' responses reflected positive feelings about college as well as college aspirations. These findings further support the argument that college partnership is both meaningful and important (McClafferty et al., 2002)

Articulation.

The final and ninth principle of college culture theory is articulation. Articulation refers to the collaboration that must exist between the set of schools that students attend from kindergarten to grade twelve so that a consistent college-going culture can prepare students for college throughout all grade levels (McClafferty et al., 2002). Articulation allows for students to be exposed to the importance of college readiness at an early age and consistently throughout their K-12 grade years.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the literature on the role of the school counselor in college admissions. It also included empirical research that has been conducted on school counseling in high achieving schools. Although research on school counselors impacting

college admissions and building a college-going culture in schools is limited, there are key studies that have highlighted the importance of the work of the school counselor. This chapter also describes, in detail, the school counselor as a source of social capital. The chapter concluded with a discussion of college-going culture theory and the nine college-going culture principles, which will serve as the conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter III

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the methodology, including the setting and participants, data collection and procedures, and the description of the analysis used to investigate the following research questions:

1. What college-going activities, as delineated by the school counseling management plans, school counseling websites, and school counseling departments' calendars, are school counselors implementing at high schools with high college-going percentage rates?
2. Are college-going aspects of school counseling programs at high schools with high college-going percentage rates consistent with college-going culture principles?

Setting and Participants

The participants for this study are four public high school counseling programs in a school district located in an urbanized, metropolitan area along the Eastern seaboard of the United States. The high schools were not selected randomly, but chosen on the basis of their college-going percentage rates. In choosing schools that have a high college-going percentage rate, there is an increased likelihood that there may be aspects of a culture in these school counseling departments that supports college-going and are helping the students get into college. By purposefully selecting these schools, the researcher may be more likely to identify aspects of school counseling programs that are successful in reflecting a college-going culture. Only one school in the district was

omitted from this selection, as it is a school that serves only a special population (students enrolled in a highly selective, technology- and science-focused program).

The decision to investigate four school counseling programs was made for two reasons. First, the researcher believed four schools would provide sufficient information for this study. The investigation of four school counseling programs would allow the researcher to study approximately 35 school counselor management plans, one from each school counselor in each of the schools. An example of a blank school counselor management plan can be found in Appendix A. An example of a school counselor management plan that was used in this study can be found in Appendix B. In an initial review of the available school counselor management plans, the researcher determined that many of the school counselor management plans provided similar information. This may be due to the fact that all four selected schools are located within the same school district. Limiting the number of schools would therefore likely eliminate the issue of redundancy. The second reason the researcher limited the number of participants to four was to eliminate any potential personal bias. The researcher had initially planned to select the five schools with the highest college-going percentage rates. However, the researcher learned that the school with the fifth highest college-going rate was a school in which she was a former employee. Therefore, to eliminate any potential bias, the decision was made to limit the study to four participants.

The four selected high schools were the schools in the district with the highest percentage of twelfth-grade students who reported plans to attend a two or four year college or university in the 2012-2013 school year. The survey that reports these percentages has a 99% response return rate from all students in the school district and

these college-going percentage rates are made available to the public and published on a profile sheet that each school has created for distribution to colleges. Since these plans are reported and verified in June of the students’ senior year, however, there is a possibility that some plans may change and the percentages will fluctuate in the summer and the fall.

In Chapter One of this dissertation, a high college-going percentage rate was defined as “at least 80% of students, in a given school, who apply to, are accepted, and report that they plan to attend a two or four year college or university upon graduating in a given school year” based on national data provided by the College Board. The four schools that were identified and selected for this study have “high college-going percentage rates” because each of the schools have college-going percentage rate of above at least 93%. Table 3.1 shows the four percentage rates for each school and how they are disaggregated into the percentage of students planning to attend a four-year college and the percentage of students planning to attend a two-year college.

Table 3.1

College-going percentage rates at selected high schools

School (2012-2013)	College-Going Percentage Rate	Percent of Students Planning To Attend a Four-Year College or University	Percent of Students Planning To Attend a Two-Year College
1	94.9	83.1	11.8
2	94.7	70.0	24.7
3	93.9	65.0	28.9
4	93.4	76.4	17.0

According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2010), the median income for a household in the school district where the four selected high schools are located was slightly above \$100,000. Specific median household incomes for each selected high school are not available, however general student demographic information is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Demographic information at selected high schools

School	College-going Percentage Rate (2011-2012)	Free or Reduced Lunch Fees (2010-2011)	Limited English Proficient (2010-2011)	Non-Asian/Non-White (2010-2011)	Special Education Services (2010-2011)
1	94.9%	1.45%	2.00%	11.05%	9.35%
2	94.7%	13.18%	6.27%	23.23%	12.06%
3	93.9%	16.28%	7.53%	26.32%	12.51%
4	93.4%	10.89%	7.03%	17.88%	11.51%

Additional demographic information for each school includes:

- School 1 (college-going percentage rate, 94.9%): During the 2011-2012 school year, a total of seven school counselors served approximately 2000 students at this 9th-12th grade school.
- School 2 (college-going percentage rate, 94.7%): During the 2011-2012 school year, a total of 10 school counselors served approximately 2600 students at this 7th-12th grade school.

- School 3 (college-going percentage rate, 93.9%): During the 2011-2012 school year, a total of 10 school counselors served approximately 2500 students at this 7th-12th grade school.
- School 4 (college-going percentage rate, 93.4%): During the 2011-2012 school year, a total of nine school counselors served approximately 2200 students at this 9th-12th grade school.

Table 3.3 specifies the student to counselor ratio at each of the four high schools. According to McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002), this ratio is important because it can help determine how much personal attention and college counseling a school counselor might be able to offer his or her students.

Table 3.3

Student to counselor ratios at selected high schools

School (2011-2012)	Number of Counselors	Approximate Number of Students	Approximate Student to Counselor Ratio
1	7	2000	286:1
2	10	2600	260:1
3	10	2500	250:1
4	9	2200	244:1

According to this data, all four ratios are at or the near the recommended average student to school counselor ratio as recommended by the American School Counselor Association (2009). The recommended ratio is 250:1 while the national average is 459:1 (American School Counselor Association, 2009).

Data Collection and Procedures

Upon determining the four high schools with the highest college-going percentage rates in the school district, the researcher gathered information on each of the schools' school counseling programs in three forms: school counselor management plans, school counseling department's website, and school counseling department's calendar. In order to gather this information, the researcher retrieved school counselor management plans and school counseling departments' calendars from the school district's public server, and used the internet to examine the school counseling departments' websites. Both retrieval and analysis of these sources occurred during the month of July 2012 and early August 2012. These specific sources were chosen because they are the tools that school counselors in this school district utilize to document details regarding the planning and implementation of school counselor activity. It is important to note that because this study involves the research of existing data and records that are publicly available, it received an exemption from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland. See Appendix C for a copy of the exemption letter.

Using the three sources of information, the researcher employed a methodological triangulation to conduct a qualitative thematic analysis. The analysis involved studying the information to determine whether college-going culture principles exist and to determine which aspects of the school counseling program may have contributed to the success of the college-going rates at each school. More information on this analysis and the procedures is provided in the next section.

Thematic Analysis.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method within psychology that is used to identify, analyze, organize, describe and report patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes within data can be identified in one of two ways in thematic analysis: inductive or theoretical. For the purposes of this study, a theoretical thematic analysis, using college-going culture theory (McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez, 2002) was employed. This form of thematic analysis provides a less detailed description of the overall data, and a more detailed analysis of a specific aspect of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) have provided an outline to guide researchers through six phases of analysis. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the six phases and how the researcher completed each phase.

Table 3.4

Six phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description	Process
1	Familiarizing yourself with your data	In this phase, the researcher collected and read the 35 school counselor management plans and the four school counseling department calendars from each of the selected schools. The researcher also perused the school counseling websites for each of the four schools.
2	Generating initial codes	In this phase, the researcher generated abbreviations for each of the nine college-going culture principles and for each of the information sources that were reviewed. See Table 3.5 for a list of these abbreviations.

Generating initial codes (continued)	<p>It is important to note that the researcher did not generate original codes from the information sources. Instead, the researcher used the nine college-going principles to categorize the bulk list of counselors' activities obtained from the information sources. This restricted the researcher's ability to generate her own ideas and codes from the information. However, by organizing the counselors' activities into preexisting categories, the researcher is better able to investigate whether the activities are consistent with the college-going principles.</p>
3 Searching for themes	<p>In this phase, the researcher searched for college-going activities in the information sources. As each college-going activity was identified and highlighted, the researcher marked it with the college-going principle abbreviation that it matched. For example, the researcher identified "College visits" as a planned college-going activity, so she highlighted this activity with a yellow marker. She then marked "CP" next to the activity to indicate that the activity matches the college-going culture principle of College Partnerships.</p> <p>Since the themes (the nine college-going culture principles) were already predetermined, it is again important to note that the researcher categorized the information into preexisting categories and did not search for new, original themes.</p>
4 Reviewing themes	<p>In this phase, the researcher utilized four volunteer auditors to review the analysis completed in Phase 3. Each auditor was given a copy of each of the information sources that highlighted college-going activities and marked the activities with a matching college-going principle (in some cases, activities were marked as matching more than one college-going principle). Individually, each auditor reviewed and provided feedback on the analysis.</p>

<p>Reviewing themes (continued)</p>	<p>All four auditors agreed that all of the activities initially highlighted by the researcher were “college-going.” However, some auditors found activities that they believed were “college-going,” but were not highlighted. Some auditors also found that some of the activities matched additional college-going principles. The researcher carefully considered and eventually agreed with all of the suggestions made by the auditors. More information about the auditors can be found in the next section of this chapter.</p>
<p>5 Defining and naming themes</p>	<p>In this phase, the researcher typed out a final list of all the identified college-going activities. This comprehensive list of activities was eventually divided into the preexisting categories (the nine college-going culture principles), by school, and produced into separate tables.</p>
<p>6 Producing the report</p>	<p>In this phase, the reports were produced into six separate tables. The final reports can be found in Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 in Chapter 4.</p>

Table 3.5

Abbreviations for categorization of college-going activities

Abbreviations for the nine college-going culture principles	College Talk	CT
	Clear Expectations	CE
	Information and Resources	IR
	Comprehensive Counseling Model	CCM
	Testing and Curriculum	TC
	Faculty Involvement	FCI
	Family Involvement	FI
	College Partnerships	CP
	Articulation	A
Abbreviations for the three information sources	School Counselor Management Plan	MP
	School Counseling Department Website	WB
	School Counseling Department Calendar	CA

Missing Information.

Table 3.6 details the information sources that were utilized to analyze the findings for this study. It also highlights the two missing sources of information from School 2: 1) one of the school counselor management plans and 2) additional information from the school calendar.

Table 3.6**Information sources and missing data**

Information Source	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
School Counselor Management Plans	7 out of 7 school counselor management plans available	9 out of 10 school counselor management plans available	10 out of 10 school counselor management plans available	9 out of 9 school counselor management plans available
School Counseling Department Websites	Available	Available	Available	Available
School Counseling Department Calendar	Available	Partial calendar available	Available	Available

The researcher was able to utilize only nine out of ten school counselor management plans from School 2. Also, the school counseling department calendar from School 2 only listed a few dates and activities. Reasons for the missing data are unknown. However, the existing school counselor management plans from School 2 were extremely detailed, including more information than any management plan from any of the other three schools. The website was also very detailed. This detail allowed the researcher and auditors to identify and analyze numerous school counselor activities related to building a college-going culture. Additionally, the school counselor management plans were identical to one another, with only slight differences between each plan. Although the missing sources might have included several college-going

activities that were not included in any of the other sources from this school, the impact of the addition of these activities would likely be minimal.

Auditors.

In order to increase validity and maintain accuracy of the thematic analysis procedures, the researcher employed four auditors, each who are either former school counselors or familiar with school counseling practices, to assist with the identification and verification of themes.

Auditor 1 is a former school counselor who is now a director of a high school counseling department in the district where the selected schools from this study are located. Although this individual does not have any affiliation with any of the four selected schools from this study, this auditor is very familiar with the activities that are planned and implemented at the schools. Auditor 2 is a former school counselor who is now a post-doctoral student at the University of Maryland. This individual received a Ph.D. in Counselor Education in August 2012 and is knowledgeable about college-going culture in schools and school counselor practices. Auditor 3 is a current school counseling master's student at the University of Maryland. Although this individual does not have any professional school counseling experience, this individual has previously worked in a school setting as a teacher and is familiar with school counselor practices through practicum experiences. Auditor 4 is a current school counselor who is employed in the district where the selected schools from this study are located. This individual is not affiliated with any of the selected schools from this study, but is very familiar with all of the school counseling activities that are found in the information sources for this study.

Similar counseling activities are planned and implemented in the school where she works.

Strengths and Limitations

Findings from this study assist in yielding suggestions for changing school culture to increase student access and success in college. By determining what college-going culture principles exist in high schools with high college-going percentage rates, suggestions for other high school counseling programs, especially under-performing high schools, can be made to improve low college-going percentage rates. A strength of this study, therefore, is that the information used to conduct this study comes directly from the school counselors' voices as they reflect on their plans and goals via management plans, websites, and calendars.

While the information sources can be considered a strength, they also have a couple of limitations. These include the variability, across schools, in how school counselors completed their own school counselor management plans and created and developed their school counseling websites and counseling departments' calendars. In addition, since the information from these sources were retrieved and analyzed during the summer months of July 2012 and early August 2012, and since school counselors are usually on summer break during those months, the websites and calendars may not have had up-to-date, comprehensive information.

Another limitation for this study is that since this study selected only four schools from only one school district as participants, it is not possible to generalize findings to other schools. The intention of this study is therefore exploratory, rather than generalizable. Findings from this study may, however, be generalized to school

counselors and school counseling departments located within the same district as the selected participants in this study.

Finally, my experiences as a school counselor and doctoral student allowed me to find four volunteer auditors to review the analysis that was completed, which is another strength in this study. Two of these auditors were very familiar with the counseling activities that were taking place in the selected schools because of their work experiences at schools in the same district. This perspective helped immensely with identifying activities that were “college-going.”

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology that was used to explore the nature of high school counseling programs with high college-going percentage rates. Included in this chapter is an outline of the specific research questions that guide the study, a rationale for choosing the selected participants: high school counseling programs with high college-going percentage rates, and a discussion of the impact of missing information. An introduction to thematic analysis and a detailed description of the six phases carried out to complete this study are included. Chapter three concluded with the strengths and limitations of the methodology.

Chapter IV

Introduction

This chapter details the methodological analyses and presents the findings for the study's research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings from the study.

Research Question I

Research question one asks: What college-going activities, as delineated by the school counseling management plans, school counseling department websites, and school counseling department calendars are school counselors implemented at high schools with high college-going percentage rates? To answer this question, a six-phase thematic analysis process, detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was utilized.

Although the phases have been detailed in the previous chapter, it may be helpful to highlight a few details regarding Phases 5 and 6. In Phase 5, the researcher typed out the final list of college-going activities according to the information source in which it was listed. In Phase 6, the reports were produced. The report, in Table 4.1, shows what college-going activities school counselors planned, as delineated by counselor management plans, school counseling websites, and school counseling calendars, at high schools with high college-going percentage rates. This table simply provides a listing of the activities that were determined to be "college-going." Each activity will be categorized into one or more of the nine college-going culture principles later in this chapter.

Table 4.1

College-going activities planned by school counselors

<p>1. School Counselor Management Plans (MP)</p>	<p>The following college-going activities were found in the school counselor management plans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Act as liaison with community resources including local post-secondary institutions2. Assist students and families in the preparation of college, scholarships, internships, other post-secondary options, employment applications3. Assist students with their post secondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military, and work representatives4. Attend department meetings with other subject areas to share upcoming programs and collaborate in order to promote student achievement5. Attend professional workshops (e.g. NACAC, College Board, etc.)6. Attend college, career, and testing workshops7. Attend semi-annual meetings with Middle School counselors to discuss students' high school course selection8. Collaborate with post-secondary professionals for small groups and parent nights9. Collect, continuously, data to assess the needs of all students and measuring the success of our program10. College partnership program11. Communicate news, information, and resources, on an on-going basis, with parents via Advisory Council, emails, phone calls, conferences, school website, mailings, and Naviance12. Conduct counselor information sessions/visits with post-secondary institutions13. Conduct meetings with parents/students/teachers in order to create a collaborative effort to improve student achievement or discuss other issues regarding students14. Consult on student and family concerns and provide resources as needed15. Coordinate financial aid information sessions16. Coordinate college/university on-site visits17. Ensure that faculty and staff are informed about counselors' activities18. Freshman Transition Program
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Help students understand and prepare college applications, and scholarship applications 20. Inform parents of upcoming events 21. Prepare and send transcripts and mid-year grades to colleges as requested, collect transcript fees, maintain correspondence with college admissions, school counselors, parents and students 22. Promote activities targeting minority groups 23. Provide consultation on student and family concerns and needs 24. Provide information about career and college planning, arranging student and college panel 25. Provide consultation, on an on-going basis, for student academic, personal and social issues 26. Provide parents with information regarding curriculum planning for the upcoming academic year 27. Provide scholarship information 28. Provide staff with consultation on student and family issues including behavior, attendance and academic performance 29. Recognize academic, emotional, and career needs for all students 30. Speak with feeder middle schools to ensure a smooth transition from middle to high school 31. Training on graduation requirements and academic monitoring for all teachers 32. Use of Parent Liaisons to act as an interpreter for parent meetings, 504 meetings, phone calls, and to translate information to be sent to parents 33. Use Naviance for career and college planning and communication with students and parents
<p>2. School Counseling Department Websites (WB)</p>	<p>College-going activities were evidenced by providing information on the following topics via links and pages on the school counseling department websites:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ACT Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, SATs and PSAT Testing 2. Available tutors 3. College Board 4. College deadlines/transcript request information 5. College application procedure and checklist 6. College partnership program 7. Course selection 8. Curriculum explanation of AP, IB, and Honors classes

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Family Connection 10. Four-year planning 11. High school graduation requirements 12. Instructions for students on sending standardized scores (SATs and ACTs) to colleges/organizations 13. National Collegiate Athletic Association 14. National Merit Scholarship Program 15. Post-secondary options 16. Parent conferences 17. Parent Liaisons 18. Post-secondary Planning Guide 19. Rising 9th Grade Parent Information Night 20. School Counseling Mission/Vision Statement 21. Senior Planning Guide 22. Student Self Evaluation Form and Parent Questionnaire
<p>3. School Counseling Department Calendar (CA)</p>	<p>The following college-going activities were scheduled on the school counseling departments' calendars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10th Grade Parent Night Program 2. 11th Grade Parent Night Program 3. 12th Grade Parent Night Program 4. Academic advising sessions 5. ACTs administered at school 6. Alumni admissions Panel (made up of returning students) 7. AP Exams 8. College visits (frequently scheduled) 9. Community college registration session 10. Financial Aid Workshop 11. Freshman/Sophomore Parent Coffee 12. Rising 9th Grade Parent Information Night 13. Freshman Student Orientation 14. Freshman Transition Program 15. High School Curriculum Night 16. Individual college conferences with Seniors 17. Information sessions on course selection 18. Meeting with 8th graders to discuss course options and graduation requirements 19. New Student Orientation 20. New Parent Program 21. Parent information night on college selection process 22. PSATs/ACT Explore administered at school 23. Pyramid Collaboration Meeting

	24. SATs administered at school 25. Senior survey administration
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Summary of Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 is a cumulative list of the college-going activities that the school counselors at the four selected schools report they plan to implement. This table demonstrates that school counselors at the four selected schools are implementing, or at the very least planning to implement, many activities that can be considered “college-going.” While it is not possible to assess the potential success of any of these activities, it is possible to deduce from this table that college-going activities are very much a part of the school counseling departments’ curriculum and that schools counselors in these four schools have goals and plans to provide college counseling to their students.

A second observation from Table 4.1 is that a large number of these activities are reported in the school counselor management plans. At the same time, however, it is important to mention that if a planned activity is reported in one information source, it is not necessarily mentioned in another. For example, the “Student Self Evaluation Form and Parent Questionnaire” which is a form used by school counselors to help write college recommendations for the students, was mentioned on the school counseling website, but not on the school counselor management plan or calendar. Therefore, while the school counselor management plans clearly provide the largest number of planned college-going activities, it did not provide a comprehensive list of these activities.

Research Question II

Research question two asks: Are college-going aspects of school counseling programs at high schools with high college-going percentage rates consistent with

college-going culture principles? To answer this question, the six-phase thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006), was once again utilized.

Since Phases 1-4 did not need to be completed again, the researcher began with Phase 5 to answer this question. For phase 5, the researcher listed all the college-going activities according to school and according to each college-going principle it matched and in which information source(s) they were found. With these lists, in Phase 6, the researcher produced the reports that are shown in Table 4.2, Table 4.3, Table 4.4, and Table 4.5 for Schools 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Since these tables are lengthy and each are several pages long, a statement with descriptions of the important observations follows each table.

Table 4.2

School 1: School counseling program activities as evidence of meeting college-going culture principles

	School 1 (MP): School Counselor Management Plan (WB): School Counseling Department’s Website (CA): School Counseling Department’s Calendar
1. College Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Sophomore Career Unit • (MP/WB/CA) Junior College Night: Student Role Vs. Parent Role, NCAA presentation and Q&A, Where to start in the college process, Standardized Testing PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, ACT, AP EXAMS • (MP) Senior Night: Detailed discussion of the college process i.e. choosing schools, deadlines, requirements, transcripts, processing requests, senior meetings, etc.

<p>2. Clear Expectations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) One-on-one academic advising with every student • (MP/WB/CA) Junior College Night: Student Role Vs. Parent Role, NCAA presentation and Q&A, Where to start in the college process, Standardized Testing PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, ACT, AP EXAMS • (MP) Senior Night: Detailed discussion of the college process i.e. choosing schools, deadlines, requirements, transcripts, processing requests, senior meetings, etc. • (WB) School Counseling Mission Statement • (WB) Course Selection Planning • (WB) High school planning for sophomores
<p>3. Information and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP/WB/CA) Junior College Night: Student Role Vs. Parent Role, NCAA presentation and Q&A, Where to start in the college process, Standardized Testing PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, ACT, AP EXAMS • (MP) Senior Night: Detailed discussion of the college process i.e. choosing schools, deadlines, requirements, transcripts, processing requests, senior meetings, etc. • (WB) Information regarding financial aid • (WB) Link to the National Association for College Admissions Counseling: Guide to the College Admission Process • (WB) Financial aid power point presentation • (WB) Scholarship bulletin • (WB) Gap Year Program Fair • (WB) Financial Aid Night • (WB) Link to summer preparation for rising seniors • (WB) Link to Family Connections • (WB) Link to presentation: The College Search Process • (WB) Link to presentation: Testing Information Power Point • (WB) Information about common application • (WB) Common Application Boot Camp Week • (WB) Information on Graduation Requirements • (CA) College Visits

4. Comprehensive Counseling Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP/WB/CA) Junior College Night: Student Role Vs. Parent Role, NCAA presentation and Q&A, Where to start in the college process, Standardized Testing PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, ACT, AP EXAMS • (MP) Senior Night: Detailed discussion of the college process i.e. choosing schools, deadlines, requirements, transcripts, processing requests, senior meetings, etc. • (WB) Link to information on the college counseling process
5. Testing and Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP/WB/CA) Junior College Night: Student Role Vs. Parent Role, NCAA presentation and Q&A, Where to start in the college process, Standardized Testing PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, ACT, AP EXAMS • (WB) PSAT Fee information • (WB) Link to all testing information • (WB) Link to information on SAT Changes • (CA) PSAT Administration • (CA) AP Pre-administration and Testing
6. Faculty Involvement	None reported
7. Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Junior student/parent meetings • (MP/WB/CA) Junior College Night: Student Role Vs. Parent Role, NCAA presentation and Q&A, Where to start in the college process, Standardized Testing PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests, ACT, AP EXAMS • (WB) Link to National Association for College Admissions Counseling: Tip for Parents • (WB) Link to Family Connections • (WB) Link to presentation: The College Search Process • (WB) Link to presentation: Testing Information Power Point • (CA) College visit/guest speaker • (CA) Sophomore Parent Night • (CA) Junior College Night • (CA) Rising Freshman Parent Orientation • (WB) Gap Year Program Fair • (WB) Financial Aid Night

8. College Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Attend college workshops • (CA) College visit/guest speaker
9. Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) New Student Program • (MP) Vertical articulation quarterly meetings with pyramid schools • (MP) Annual meeting with counselors from middle school • (MP) Freshman Transition Program • (MP) Rising Freshman Academic Advising presentations at feeder middle schools • (WB) Freshman Orientation • (WB) New Student Orientation • (WB) New Student Information Packet • (WB) Student-to-student mentoring program to enhance school's climate and will also help provide a positive transition for our freshman students • (CA) New Student Orientation

Table 4.2 shows that School 1 plans a variety of college-going activities that are consistent with the nine college-going culture principles. It is apparent, however, that there is no evidence of any planned counseling activities related to the principle of faculty involvement. Regardless of this fact, School 1 has the highest college-going percentage rate in the school district (94.9%) as well as the highest percentage of students planning to attend a four-year college or university (83.1%; the next highest percentage of students planning to attend a four-year college or university is 76.4%). College Partnerships is another principle that appears to be minimally supported by planned counseling activities. The two principles that are most supported by activities planned at School 1 plans are Information and Resources and Family Involvement.

Table 4.3

School 2: School counseling program activities as evidence of meeting college-going culture principles

	<p style="text-align: center;">School 2</p> <p>(MP): School Counselor Management Plan (WB): School Counseling Department’s Website *Only a partial School Counseling Department’s Calendar available from School 2</p>
<p>1. College Talk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Help students understand and prepare college applications, and scholarship applications • (MP) Information about career and college planning, arranging student and college panel • (MP) Using Family Connection for career and college planning and communication with students and parents • (WB) Information on the College Partnership Program
<p>2. Clear Expectations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Assist students and families in the preparation of college, scholarships, internships, other post-secondary options, employment applications • (MP) Information about career and college planning, arranging student and college panel • (MP) Using Family Connection for career and college planning and communication with students and parents • (MP) Ongoing consultation for student academic, personal and social issues • (WB) Student/Parent Input Form • (CA) Academic advising

<p>3. Information and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Information about career and college planning, arranging student and college panel • (MP) Parents: information regarding curriculum planning for the upcoming academic year • (MP) Provide scholarship information • (MP) Coordinate financial aid information sessions • (WB) Link to College Board • (WB) Link to National Collegiate Athletic Association • (WB) Link to National Merit Scholarship Program • (WB) College deadlines/Transcript request information • (WB) College checklist • (WB) Senior Planning Guide
<p>4. Comprehensive Counseling Model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Help students understand and prepare college applications, and scholarship applications • (MP) Parents: information regarding curriculum planning for the upcoming academic year • (MP) Provide scholarship information • (MP) Coordinate financial aid information sessions • (MP) Assist students and families in the preparation of college, scholarships, internships, other post-secondary options, employment applications • (MP) Training on graduation requirements and academic monitoring for all teachers • (WB) Senior Planning Guide • (WB) High school graduation requirements • (WB) 4-year Planning Card
<p>5. Testing and Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Parents: information regarding curriculum planning for the upcoming academic year • (WB) Curriculum: explanation of AP, IB, and Honors classes • (WB) Information on course selection • (WB) Information on ACT Tests, Advanced Placement Exam, SATs and PSAT Testing

6. Faculty Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Ensure that faculty and staff are informed about counselors' activities • (MP) Training on graduation requirements and academic monitoring for all teachers • (MP) Recognizing academic, emotional, and career needs for all students • (MP) Continuous collection of data to assess the needs of all students and measuring the success of our program • (MP) Ongoing consultation for student academic, personal, and social issues • (WB/CA) Rising 9th Grade Parent Information Night
7. Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Inform parents of upcoming events • (MP) Assist students and families in the preparation of college, scholarships, internships, other post-secondary options, employment applications • (MP) Information about career and college planning, arranging student and college panel • (MP) Using Family Connection for career and college planning and communication with students and parents • (MP) Ongoing consultation for student academic, personal and social issues • (MP) Parents: information regarding curriculum planning for the upcoming academic year • (MP) Use of Parent Liaisons to act as an interpreter for parent meetings, 504 meetings, phone calls, and to translate information to be sent to parents • (CA) Parent information night on college selection process
8. College Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Information about career and college planning, arranging student and college panel • (MP) Using Family Connection for career and college planning and communication with students and parents • (MP) Attend professional workshops • (MP) College and Career regional workshops for counselors • (MP) Coordinate college/university on-site visits • (MP) Mails semester and final grades to colleges • (MP) Promote activities targeting minority groups such as ALCANZA and Hispanic Youth Symposium • (WB) Information on the College Partnership Program • (WB) List of available tutors

9. Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Articulation with feeder middle schools to ensure a smooth transition from middle to high school • (MP) Semi Annual meetings with Middle School counselors • (CA) Meet with 8th graders to discuss course options and graduation requirements
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Table 4.3 shows that School 2 plans numerous college-going activities that are consistent with the college-going culture principles, suggesting the counseling department supports and reflects a college-going culture within the school. Unlike School 1, School 2 plans counseling activities that support all nine of the college-going culture principles. The principle that is least supported by counseling activity plans in School 2 is the principle of Articulation, while the principle that is most supported by planned counseling activities in the school is Information and Resources.

Table 4.4

School 3: School counseling program activities as evidence of meeting college-going culture principles

	School 3 (MP): School Counselor Management Plan (WB): School Counseling Department's Website (CA): School Counseling Department's Calendar
1. College Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (CA) 12th Grade Alumni Program • (CA) Senior Survey
2. Clear Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Assist students with their postsecondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military and work representatives • (WB) Post-secondary Planning Guide • (WB) Student Self Evaluation Form and Parent Questionnaire • (WB) School Counseling Mission/Vision Statement

3. Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Attend college workshops/testing workshops • (WB) Post-secondary Planning Guide • (WB) College Application Procedure and Checklist • (CA) Financial Aid Workshop
4. Comprehensive Counseling Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Assist students with their postsecondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military and work representatives • (WB) Post-secondary Planning Guide
5. Testing and Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (WB) Instructions for students on sending standardized scores (SATs and ACTs) to colleges/organizations • (CA) SATs administered at school (Oct, Dec, March, June) • (CA) PSATs administered at school • (CA) ACTs administered (Sept, Oct, Dec, Feb, April, June) • (CA) High School Curriculum Night • (CA) Information on course selection • (CA) AP Exams
6. Faculty Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Staff: provide consultation on student and family issues including behavior, attendance and academic performance
7. Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Ongoing communication via Advisory Council, emails, phone calls, conferences, website and mailings • (MP) Provide consultation on student and family concerns and needs • (MP) Prepare and send transcripts to colleges as requested, collect transcript fees, maintain correspondence with college admissions, school counselors, parents and students • (WB) Link to Family Connections • (WB) Student Self Evaluation Form and Parent Questionnaire • (CA) New Parent Program • (CA) 12th Grade Parent Night Program • (CA) 10th Grade Parent Night Program • (CA) 11th Grade Parent Night Program

8. College Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) College Partnership Program • (MP) Community: collaboration with post-secondary professionals for small groups and parent nights. • (MP) Act as liaison with community resources including mental health agencies and area colleges and universities • (MP) Attend college workshops/testing workshops • (MP) Prepare and send transcripts to colleges as requested, collect transcript fees, maintain correspondence with college admissions, school counselors, parents and students • (MP) Assist students with their postsecondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military and work representatives • (MP) Attend professional workshops
9. Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Freshman Transition Program • (CA) New Parent Program • (CA) New Student Orientation • (CA) 9th Grade Transition Program (5 lessons)

Table 4.4 shows that School 3, like School 2, plans college-going activities that are consistent with all nine of the college-going principles. At the same time, however, the number of college-going activities planned by School 3 is overall less than the number planned by School 1 or School 2. It is interesting to note, at the same time, that School 3 has the lowest percentage of students planning to attend a four-year college or university. The principle that is least supported by counseling activity plans at School 3 is Faculty Involvement, while the principle that is best supported by counseling activity plans at School 3 is Family Involvement.

Table 4.5

School 4: School counseling program activities as evidence of meeting college-going culture principles

	School 4 (MP): School Counselor Management Plan (WB): School Counseling Department's Website (CA): School Counseling Department's Calendar
1. College Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (CA) Individual college conferences with Seniors • (CA) Admissions Panel (returning students) • (CA) Senior Survey administration
2. Clear Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Assist students with their post secondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military, and work representatives • (WB) Four Year Plan Worksheet • (WB) School Counseling Mission/Vision Statement • (CA) Individual college conferences with Seniors
3. Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Consult on student and family concerns and provide resources as needed • (WB) Link to post-secondary options • (CA) Admissions Panel (returning students)
4. Comprehensive Counseling Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Assist students with their post secondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military, and work representatives • (CA) Individual college conferences with Seniors
5. Testing and Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Attend ACT and SAT Testing Workshops • (WB) Information on course selection • (CA) PSAT/ACT Explore Test Day • (CA) AP Testing Window
6. Faculty Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Department meetings with other subject areas to share upcoming programs and collaborate in order to promote student achievement • (MP) Provide consultation on student and family issues including behavior, attendance and academic performance • (MP) Conduct meetings with parents/students/teachers in order to create a collaborative effort to improve student achievement or discuss other issues regarding students

7. Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Ongoing communication via Advisory Council, emails, phone calls, conferences, school website, Family Connection, and Keep In Touch messages • (MP) Consult on student and family concerns and provide resources as needed • (MP) Prepare and send transcripts and mid-year grades to colleges as requested, collect transcript fees, maintain correspondence with college admissions, school counselors, parents and students • (WB) Parent conferences • (WB) Information on Parent Liaisons • (CA) Freshman/Sophomore Parent Coffee • (CA) Junior Parent Night • (CA) Sophomore Parent Night
8. College Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (MP) Collaboration with post-secondary professionals for small groups and parent nights • (MP) Act as liaison with community resources including mental health agencies, county organizations, and local post-secondary institutions • (MP) Counselor Information Sessions/visits with post-secondary institutions • (MP) Attend professional workshops • (MP) Prepare and send transcripts and mid-year grades to colleges as requested, collect transcript fees, maintain correspondence with college admissions, school counselors, parents and students • (MP) Assist students with their post secondary plans and maintain relationships with college admissions, military, and work representatives • (CA) Frequently scheduled: college visits • (CA) Community college registration session
9. Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (CA) Freshman Student Orientation • (CA) Freshman Transition Program • (CA) Pyramid Collaboration Meeting

Table 4.5 shows that School 4, like School 2 and School 3, plans college-going activities that are consistent with all nine college-going culture principles. The principle that is least supported by planned counseling activities at School 4 is Comprehensive

Counseling Model. The principle that is best supported by planned counseling activities in this school are Family Involvement and College Partnerships.

Summary of Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5.

To summarize the findings from Tables 4.2-4.5, Table 4.6 presents the number of planned counselor activities, organized by school and by how they support each of the nine college-going principles. The percentages within the chart reflect the percentage of the activities related to a principle over the total number of activities per school.

Table 4.6

Summary of Planned Counselor Activities

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	Total
Principle 1: College Talk	3 (5.2%)	4 (6.8%)	2 (5%)	3 (7.9%)	12 (6.2%)
Principle 2: Clear Expectations	6 (10.3%)	6 (10.2%)	4 (10%)	4 (10.5%)	20 (10.3%)
Principle 3: Information and Resources	16 (27.6%)	10 (16.9%)	4 (10%)	3 (7.9%)	33 (16.9%)
Principle 4: Comprehensive Counseling Model	3 (5.2%)	9 (15.3%)	2 (5%)	2 (5.3%)	16 (8.2%)
Principle 5: Testing and Curriculum	6 (10.3%)	4 (6.8%)	7 (17.5%)	4 (10.5%)	21 (10.8%)
Principle 6: Faculty Involvement	0 (0%)	6 (10.2%)	1 (2.5%)	3 (7.9%)	10 (5.1%)
Principle 7: Family Involvement	12 (20.7%)	8 (13.6%)	9 (22.5%)	8 (21.1%)	37 (19.0%)
Principle 8: College Partnerships	2 (3.4%)	9 (15.3%)	7 (17.5%)	8 (21.1%)	26 (13.3%)

Principle 9: Articulation	10 (17.2%)	3 (5.1%)	4 (10%)	3 (7.9%)	20 (10.3%)
Total Number	58	59	40	38	195

Although college-going culture theory as proposed by McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) does not suggest that school counselors should implement a specific number of activities for each of the nine college-going principles, these figures provide interesting information. First, it should be noted that School 1 and School 2 have the highest number of planned college-going activities; 58 and 59, respectively. School 3 and School 4, the schools with the slightly lower college-going percentage rates, have less reported planned college-going activities. While it may appear that this suggests the more college-going activities there are, the more likely students will attend college, it would be important to consider factors that might disprove this observation. As an example, the college-going percentages may not have been affected by the quantity of planned activities as much as the quality of the activities. The activities planned and implemented by School 1 and School 2 may have simply had better quality than those planned and implemented by School 3 and School 4. It should be pointed that this study's design is not able to provide a measurement of quality in the college-going activities.

It is also interesting to note that across schools, Faculty Involvement and College Talk had the least amount of supporting counseling activities, while Information and Resources and Family Involvement had the most amount of supporting counseling activities.

Table 4.7

Summary of Most Common College-Going Activities

	College-Going Activity
1. College Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with seniors: senior survey, helping them through the college application process, college planning, setting up a time for them to learn from alumni
2. Clear Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assisting students with post-secondary plans via planning guides and one-on-one academic advising or course selection advising• Having a School Counseling Mission/Vision statement
3. Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide information about career and college planning, financial aid and scholarships, and curriculum planning, as needed
4. Comprehensive Counseling Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assist students and their families with post-secondary plans and through the college application process via individual conferences
5. Testing and Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know and provide students and parents with testing information and curriculum/course selection information• Assist in administering the PSATs, AP exams, ACTs, and SATS, as necessary
6. Faculty Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet with other faculty to provide consultations, promote student achievement, share about counselors' activities
7. Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing communication with parents• Provide consultations via conferences• Use of Parent Liaisons (for parents whose first language is not English)• Conduct Parent Information Nights/Coffees
8. College Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselor information sessions and workshops• College visits• Prepare and send transcripts and mid-year grades to colleges as requested• Act as liaison with community resources including mental health agencies and area colleges and universities

9. Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshman Student Orientations and Transition Programs • Scheduled articulation meetings with feeder schools to ensure a smooth transitions between schools
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Table 4.7 provides a summary of most common college-going activities across the four selected school counseling programs. This table can also serve as a list of suggestions or recommendations for other schools to improve their school culture. Recommendations such as these are similar to those presented in the study led by Harris, Tucker, and Willis (2008), and may be helpful for schools that want to develop ideas for college-going activities and programming to reflect either a singular college-going culture principle, or in efforts to reflect and support a school’s overall college-going culture.

Summary of Key Findings

One of the key findings from this study is that school counselors, at the selected high schools with high college-going percentage rates, are planning numerous and various college-going activities as delineated by their school counselor management plans, school counseling department websites, and school counseling department calendars. The school counselor management plans, especially, served as a very important source of information in identifying counselors’ proposed college-going activities, as a large portion of these activities was found only in the plans.

A second key finding is that according to the college-going activities documented in the information sources, each of the school counseling programs in this study are consistent with the college-going culture principles (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002). While each of the college-going activities easily matched with one or more of the

college-going culture principles, three out of the four schools demonstrated that they were planning activities that matched up with all nine principles. School 1, however, did not explicitly state in any information source that they were planning activities reflecting the principle of Faculty Involvement.

A third key finding is that among all four schools, very similar college-going activities are being implemented. Overlap in activities was common; this is most likely due to the fact that all the schools are in the same school district. Additionally, it was found that the two college-going culture principles best supported in the reported activities were Information and Resources and Family Involvement. The two college-going principles that were supported by the lowest number of planned counseling activities were College Talk and Faculty Involvement.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarizes the researcher's methodological analyses and presents the findings for the study's two research questions. This chapter presents tables that help answer the two research questions. To answer research question one, the researcher produced a cumulative list of college-going activities that are planned by school counselors at the four selected schools. To answer research question two, the researcher organized the college-going activities according to the college-going culture principle that it reflects and by school. This chapter concluded with a summary of planned counselor activities, a summary of the most common college-going activities found, and key findings.

Chapter V

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections, beginning with an interpretation of the findings. The next two sections discuss limitations of the study and recommendations to school counselors and counselor educators. This chapter concludes with suggestions and implications for future research.

Interpretation of Results

This dissertation explores the school counseling programs at selected high schools with high college-going percentage rates and how their planned activities, as evidenced in school counselor management plans, school counseling department websites, and school counseling department calendars, reflect a college-going culture. The first research question identifies the college-going activities that are implemented at these schools, while the second research question examined how the college-going activities are consistent with the nine college-going culture principles.

Research question 1.

The first research question was “what college-going activities, as delineated by the school counseling management plans, school counseling websites, and school counseling departments’ calendars, are school counselors implementing at high schools with high college-going percentage rates?” This study finds that the three information sources suggest that school counselors at the selected high schools are conducting numerous and various college-going activities.

The researcher reviewed 35 school counselor management plans for the four schools: seven plans from School 1, nine plans from School 2, ten plans from School 3,

and nine plans from School 4. Although there were multiple plans for each school, upon closer inspection, each set of plans appeared identical to each other with the exception of one or two counseling activities between plans. When compared to the other two information sources, the plans clearly provided the most amount of detail regarding the counselors' implementation of college-going activities. Since duplicate activities between schools were eliminated for the purposes of editing the report, the full extent to how much information was provided by the plans may not be evident.

In addition to reviewing school counseling management plans, the researcher also reviewed each school counseling department's websites. Each website was updated and well-maintained. The four websites were also easily accessible from the school's homepage. In order to identify school counselor activities as college-going activities from the website, the researcher worked closely with the four auditors to determine which links and pages evidenced implementation of a college-going activity. Descriptions of the nine college-going culture principles (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002) were especially helpful in the process and also helped further validate the activities as those that are college-going related. For example, a link to "Four-year planning," which provides a four-year planning card that the school counselors use with each student, could possibly be overlooked as a college-going activity. According to (McClafferty et al., 2002), however, students benefit from these specific plans as they allow students to remain organized and make plans to enroll and take college-preparatory courses (McClafferty et al., 2002). The four-year planning cards are also important because students' educational expectations impact their own role in college aspirations and enrollment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

The third information source, the calendars, provided clear and specific college-going activities that the school counselors have either already actually implemented or have scheduled. However, for all four calendars, many college-going activities that were reported in the other information sources were not scheduled. One possible reason for this is that the activities have not yet been scheduled. Or, the calendars simply do not serve as a comprehensive list of all activities implemented by the school counselors. Another possible reason for this may be because the calendars were retrieved and analyzed during the counselors' summer break, thus the calendars may not be up-to-date. Despite this fact, all of the school calendars appeared to highlight major events held by the school counseling departments, many of which were related to the specific college-going principle of Family Involvement (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002). One reason for this is that the school counseling departments may use their calendars to keep parents and families informed of the activities and programs available at school.

Research question 2.

The second research question was “are college-going aspects of school counseling programs at high schools with high college-going percentage rates consistent with college-going culture principles?” This study finds that the college-going aspects of the school counseling programs at the selected high schools are consistent with college-going culture principles.

With the exception of School 1, this study finds that the school counseling programs at the selected schools are consistent with implementing counseling activities that reflect each of the nine college-going culture principles. School 1 did not indicate the implementation of any school counseling activities that reflected the Faculty

Involvement principle. However, the fact that School 1 has the highest college-going percentage rate within the district (94.9%) and the highest percentage of students planning to attend a four-year college or university (83.1%), suggests that it may not be important for a school counseling department to plan activities supporting all nine college-going culture principles. Instead, what is important is building a college-going culture with the collaborative effort of the entire school community. If the school counseling department does not plan counselor activities that supports the principle of Faculty Involvement, for example, then the school administrators may want to make sure they reflect and support faculty and teacher involvement under their leadership and administrative programming. An alternative explanation for why School 1 appeared to not have any activities that reflected Faculty Involvement is that those activities may have simply been missing from the information sources. Some school counselors or school counseling departments may implement college-going activities without explicitly recording them as planned activities on the management plans, websites, or calendars.

Additionally, this study was able to find the percentages for how much each college-going principle is reflected by college-going activities over the total number of college-going activities planned by the counseling department in each selected school. High percentages under Family Involvement and Information and Resources suggest that the selected schools implement a higher number of college-going activities that reflect those two principles, which in turn may have contributed to the high college-going percentage rates at these schools. Schools with lower college-going percentage rates might therefore consider implementing more college-going activities related to these two principles. Schools with lower college-going percentage rates may also want to consider

implementing the activities that were found to be among the most common between the selected schools. The most common college-going activities that reflect the principles of Family Involvement and Information and Resources, for example, are below in Table 5.1 (and are selected items from Table 4.7).

Table 5.1

Recommendations for Other Schools

Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about career and college planning, financial aid and scholarships, and curriculum planning, as needed
Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing communication with parents • Provide consultations via conferences • Use of Parent Liaisons (for parents whose first language is not English) • Conduct Parent Information Nights/Coffees

Limitations

This study was designed to explore the nature of school counseling programs and how their activities are consistent with building a college-going culture. While thematic analyses were implemented to successfully produce reports of the findings, it is still important to note the limitations of this study.

One limitation of the study is the make up of the participants. This study focused on a limited selection of schools in one school district, which reduces the generalizability of the results. Also, although the median family income of each of the schools is unknown, the median income of the school district and the schools' student demographics indicate that the selected schools are possibly located in mid- to high-socioeconomic communities. It is well known that students who come from more

privileged backgrounds or wealthier areas, may have access to more frequent and higher quality resources than their counterparts in poorer areas (NOSCA, 2011). Therefore, it is unknown whether the high college-going rates of these particular schools are a result of successfully implemented school counseling programs and the college-going cultures that exist at their schools or if the high percentage rates are more a reflection of students' access to other outside resources that are available to them. Social capital theory, for example, which refers to the concept that resources flow from relationship ties (Coleman, 1988), suggests that high college-going rates could be a result of contact and relationships with school personnel, and also that it could also come from students' contact and relationships with parents and their families.

A second limitation of the study is the validity and inconsistency within the sources of information. The school counselor management plans, school counseling department websites, and school counseling department calendars may not list all of the activities that are actually being implemented. For example, the calendars did not reflect scheduled dates for all of the activities that the school counselors reported in their plans. Another example is that "College Talk," which is the clear, ongoing communication about college between school counselor and student, may not have been explicitly stated in any of the information sources. On the other hand, the plans may have included some activities that are not actually implemented. Interviews with key stakeholders, who can provide an account for what is actually being done in school, would have addressed this limitation.

Implications for School Counselors

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings highlight several important implications for high school counselors. The first implication for school counselors, due to their unique and important position in schools, is the need for their personal and professional commitment to building a college-going culture. According to the findings from this study, school counselors' management plans are able to provide helpful information in identifying counselors' proposed college-going activities. Since school counselors will likely produce management plans that reflect their attitudes and behaviors, counselors who are committed to building a college-going culture will plan activities that reflect a college-going culture. This commitment would include partnering with all stakeholders in preparing students for college, delivering a consistent message to students that supports a college preparatory experience, and serving all students as a college counselor (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

A second implication for school counselors is that they may benefit from using a school counselor management plan. This study demonstrates that school counselors can utilize management plans to detail all of the counseling activities they plan to implement, including those that are related specifically to the college admissions process and college counseling in general. In this age of accountability, it would also benefit counselors to use these plans to share with stakeholders what their school counseling programs look like, what activities and programs they are implementing, and how often these activities and programs are being implemented. In doing so, school counselors can work collaboratively with others in their efforts to increase students' success and college access.

Implications for Counselor Educators

The results of this study also highlight several important implications for counselor educators. Educating future school counselors on their role in both college admissions counseling and supporting a college-going culture is important. According to an interview with Mandy Savitz-Romer of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (as cited in NOSCA, 2011), fewer than five states require course work in college advising for certification. Most counselor training programs do not include any coursework or instruction on helping students and their families navigate the financial aid system or on advising students and their families about college selection and other post-secondary options (McDonough, 2005b). This problem is compounded by the fact that there are few public school systems that require counselors to obtain any ongoing professional development in this area (Clinedinst & Hawkins, 2011).

This study may also provide counselor educators with ideas for college-going activities their school counseling students can implement in their practicum, internships, or professional work. Additionally, as a result of this study, counselor educators may teach their students about the use of a school counselor management plan and how it can be important in planning and organizing college-going activities.

If I could design a course for counselor trainees that would emphasize the college-going and financial aid process, I would make sure that students have extensive knowledge of the college admissions process (applications, admissions tests, essays, deadlines, scholarships, and college recommendations), be aware of the varying post-secondary options for students (military, four-year college or university, community college, apprenticeships/internships, and employment), and have the skills to successfully

help students and their families navigate through their options and make an informed post-secondary plan. Due to my own professional school counseling experiences, I have found that it is important to be knowledgeable about each of these areas. Unfortunately, however, these topics are generally not covered in school counselor training programs.

Future Research

Future research in building and supporting a college-going culture in all high schools is both important and necessary. Little empirical research has been conducted on college-going culture in schools and using college-going culture theory as a framework for an investigation. However, this study can suggest many areas for future research that would benefit K-12 students and promote college access and success.

A qualitative study that includes interviews with stakeholders would compliment this study and enrich college-going culture literature. In speaking with parents and families, administrators, teachers, and students, researchers could assess college-going culture at schools by getting a sense of how much the reported school counseling activities are occurring. Additionally, a quantitative study with a large dataset can both compliment this study and enrich the literature by allowing for a broader study, enhancing the generalization of results, and allow for greater objectivity and accuracy of results. This type of study would allow a researcher to study, for example, college-going activities implemented not only in schools with high college-going rates from one school district, but also from different school districts and from schools with varying college-going percentage rates.

Another suggestion for future research is to investigate the school counseling programs at schools with high college-going percentage rates and also at schools with

lower college-going percentage rates. Comparisons between the two groups of schools may provide insight on which college-going activities, or college-going culture principles, are more important or influential. A final suggestion for future research is to investigate the school counseling programs at not just high schools, but also schools at the middle and elementary school levels.

Conclusion

This dissertation explores high school counseling programs at select schools to study school counseling activities, as delineated by school counselor management plans, school counseling department websites, and school counseling department calendars. In order to ensure that all students are positioned for both access and success in college, creating and reflecting a college-going culture should be a top priority of the school counseling departments across the United States. Use of college-going culture theory and the nine college-going culture principles (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2006) provides a clear and organized framework for assessing college culture in schools and determining which aspects of the culture need to be strengthened (McClafferty et al., 2002). This study uses college-going culture theory as a framework in identifying a variety of college-going activities that can be implemented at other high schools and how they can be shared with stakeholders. This dissertation concludes with implications for school counselors and counselor educators and suggestions for future research.

Appendix A

Sample School Counselor Management Plan (Blank)

Academic School Year:
Counselor Name:

Date:

STUDENT ACCESS

Students will access the school counselor by:

- Grade Level
- Alpha Listing

PROGRAMMATIC DELIVERY

In order to achieve the results planned, the school counseling team will spend:

- _____ % of time in the classroom
- _____ % of time with individual planning
- _____ % of time with responsive services
- _____ % of time with system support

SCHOOL COUNSELOR AVAILABILITY

The school counseling department is open to student/parent/teacher access from:

The career center will be open to student/parent/teacher access from:

INDIVIDUAL

The school counselor will have the following individual responsibilities:

STAFF

The school counselor will have the following responsibilities to school staff:

PARENTS

The school counselor will have the following responsibilities to parents:

COMMUNITY

The school counselor will have the following responsibilities to community:

CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school counselor will participate in the following professional development activities

THE SCHOOL COUNSELORS WILL BE COMPENSATED FOR EXTRA WORK HOURS (BEYOND WORK DAY) BY?

- Extra duty pay
- Flex schedule
- Comp time
- Per union regulations
- By principal/counselor negotiations
- No option for this

PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

The school counseling department will meet:

- _____ time(s) as a school counseling department
- _____ time(s) as a Collaborative Learning Team
- _____ time(s) with the Local Screening Committee
- _____ time(s) with school staff (faculty)
- _____ time(s) with consult team; members include: _____
- _____ time(s) with the Advisory Council
- _____ time(s) with the Individual Educational Plan/504 Plan Committees
- _____ time(s) with administration
- _____ time(s) with Other: _____

OFFICE ORGANIZATION

Responsibilities for the support services provided the counseling team will be divided among the support services staff as follows:

The Administrative Assistant will:

The Transcript Assistant will:

The Student Information Assistant will:

The Career Center Specialist will:

The _____ will:

Accepted by:

Name
School Counselor

Name
Principal

*Modified from "Secondary School Counselor Management Agreement" (American School Counselor Association, 2004)

Appendix B

Sample School Counselor Management Plan

[REDACTED]
Office of School Counseling
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] Public Schools

High School Counselor/Principal Management Agreement

School Year: 2011-2012

School Counselor: [REDACTED]

Student Access

Students will access the school counselor by:

Alpha Listing: [REDACTED]
Grade Levels: 9, 10, 11, 12

School Counselor Availability

The School Counselors will be available from 7:15-2:45 daily. Pre-arranged appointment times are preferred but counselors do meet with students on a walk-in basis if they are available.

Programmatic Delivery

In order to achieve the results planned, the school counseling team will spend approximately the following time in each component area to ensure delivery of the school counseling program:

- 25% of time delivering guidance curriculum
- 33% of time with individual student planning
- 27% of time with responsive services
- 15% of time with system support

Programs and Services

The school counseling team plan will include programs and services with the following outcomes relating to:

Faculty/Staff

- Department meetings with other subject areas to share upcoming programs and collaborate in order to promote student achievement
- Provide consultation on student and family issues including behavior, attendance and academic performance
- Conduct meetings with parents/students/teachers in order to create a collaborative effort to improve student achievement or discuss other issues regarding students
- School Psychologist & School Social Worker

Parents/Guardians

- Ongoing communication via Advisory Council, emails, phone calls, conferences, school website, Family Connection, and Keep In Touch messages
- Consult on student and family concerns and provide resources as needed

[REDACTED]

Office of School Counseling
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] Public Schools

Community

- Collaboration with post-secondary professionals for small groups and parent nights
- Act as liaison with community resources including mental health agencies, county organization (Student Assistance Program), and local post-secondary institutions ([REDACTED] University and [REDACTED] Community College)

Diversified Staffing Responsibilities

- World Languages liaison
- RAMP Steering Committee Chair
- Freshman Transition Program
- ILC
- PLC Co-Chair

Professional Development

The school counselors will participate in the following professional development activities:
Professional Membership and Conferences (ASCA, PCACAC, NACAC, [REDACTED], [REDACTED])
Continuing Education County In-services
Professional Learning Courses College Workshops/ACT and SAT Testing Workshops
Profession Learning Communities (PLC)
Counselor Information Sessions/visits with post-secondary institutions

Professional Collaboration

The school counseling department will meet:

Weekly as a school counseling department

Weekly as a Professional Learning Community

Weekly with Local Screening Committee

Weekly with Grade-level/alpha Administrator

Monthly with subject-area department

Monthly with the school staff (faculty)

Bi-annually with the Advisory Council

As needed with Individual Educational Plan Committee/504 Plan Committee

Office Organization

Support services are provided as follows:

The Administrative Assistant/Registrar will greet visitors to the department, answer the department phone, register and withdraw students, and other clerical duties as needed.

The Transcript Secretary/Administrative Assistant will prepare and send transcripts and mid-year grades to colleges as requested, collect transcript fees, maintain correspondence with college admissions, school counselors, parents and students.

The Student Information Assistant will input, maintain, and update student data into SASI, enroll and withdraw students in SASI, and assist with system scheduling issues. In addition, the SIA will process faculty Time & Attendance.

Management Agreement – [REDACTED]

Page 2 of 3

[REDACTED]
Office of School Counseling
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] Public Schools

Test Assessment Coach will provide support and organization for standardized testing throughout the school year. In addition, this position will also provide support to counselors by helping to track the verified credits needed for graduation and provide information for Locally Awarded Verified credits, if necessary. Also serves as Profession Learning Community Co-chair, College Partnership Program, and [REDACTED] sponsor.

The College and Career Center Specialist will assist students with their post secondary plans, maintain relationships with college admissions, military and work representatives, develop programs to supplement the School Counseling Department's classroom guidance, and other duties as needed. Also serves as a member of the Scholarship Committee, College Partnership Program, RAMP Steering Committee Member, and Senior Survey support.

The Student Aides will assist counselors with clerical duties as needed.

Volunteers will assist with department programs, survey data analysis, and other duties as needed.

Materials and Supplies

All resources needed for implementation of the school counseling program are provided by the Student Services budget. They include, but are not limited to:

SASI (student information system), Family Connection/Naviance, [REDACTED] 24-7 Learning (Blackboard), laptops, email (Microsoft Outlook), Keep in Touch, printed resources, and office supplies.

Monitoring the Management Agreement

This agreement will be reviewed and updated by School Counselors, the Director of School Counseling, and the School Principal yearly.

[REDACTED] - School Counselor

September 30, 2011
Date

[REDACTED] - Director of School Counseling

September 30, 2011
Date

[REDACTED] - Principal

September 30, 2011
Date

Appendix C

IRB Exempt Letter



1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: July 19, 2012

TO: Courtland Lee, Ph.D.
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [354735-1] An Investigation of High School Counseling Programs and Their Promotion of a College-Going Culture

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: July 19, 2012

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 4

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

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