COLLEGE ASPIRATIONS TO COMPLETED APPLICATIONS: A STUDY OF INTENTIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PRACTICES DESIGNED TO INCREASE POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT.

Mary E. Riepenhoff

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Findlay College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

March 16, 2016

Committee:

Rahman Dyer, PhD
Chair, Dissertation Committee

Joanne Kerekes, PhD
Committee Member

Michael Scoles, EdD
Committee Member
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the intentional practices which promoted or increased post-secondary enrollment of Ohio high schools who predominantly serve underrepresented students. Many studies have examined the disconnect existing between the college aspirations and actual college enrollment of low socioeconomic, first-generation college and minority students. This study examined the support during the college enrollment process provided by high schools serving a majority of poverty students, first-generation college and/or minority students to determine what practices were instrumental in promoting actual college enrollment. It also examined the role of school personnel in supporting the enrollment process, especially for underrepresented students. While there was no silver bullet discovered during this study, no one single program, practice, or person who made college enrollment a reality for underrepresented students, there were many programs, practices and personnel found to be instrumental in promoting post-secondary opportunities for students of low socio-economic status, first-generation college, and/or minority students in the Ohio high schools participating in the study. Overwhelmingly, the high schools delivered whatever was necessary to support individual students throughout their high school career. Their differentiated approach with underrepresented students translated to a better than average college enrollment in Ohio. The practices identified and described in this study could serve to support other high schools’ efforts to promote and increase the post-secondary opportunities of underrepresented students. With the current emphasis on increasing post-secondary enrollment, this study illuminated the need for intentional practices in high schools that reach deeper into the student population who need further support in navigating the path from college aspirations to completed applications.
Keywords: college readiness, low socioeconomic students, first-generation college students, college aspirations, college enrollment, steps to college enrollment FAFSA, college-going culture, college knowledge, college enrollment process.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Rahman Dyer
Associate Professor of Education
University of Findlay

Dr. Joanne Kerekes
Director of Student Achievement
Hopewell-Loudon Schools

Dr. Michael Scoles
School Counselor, Findlay City Schools
Founding Director, Doctor of Education Program Chair
University of Findlay

Eight participating Ohio High Schools

Derek, Laura and Thomas
Three Ohio high school staff who participated in the interview

Doctor of Education Faculty
University of Findlay
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backgrounbd of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale &amp; Significance of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Bias</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call to Increase College Enrollment</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Enrollment Gaps and Barriers</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School College Access Programs</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation &amp; Data Sources</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Procedures</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. RESULTS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the Sample</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument Validity and Reliability</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories and Theme</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 4</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Study</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 4</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations ........................................................................................................ 150
Future Research Opportunities .................................................................................. 157
REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 160
APPENDICES
A. Acronyms .................................................................................................................. 171
B. National School Lunch Program .............................................................................. 173
C. Ohio Department of Education Economically Disadvantaged
   Demographic Report (Sample) ................................................................................. 175
D. Ohio Department of Higher Education College Remediation Report
   (Sample) ..................................................................................................................... 176
E. Institutional Review Board Approval ........................................................................ 177
F. Communication to Superintendents ........................................................................ 178
G. Survey ....................................................................................................................... 179
H. Interview Questions ................................................................................................ 186
I. Letter of Introduction and Request for Participation ............................................. 187
J. Transcripts from Interview Participants ................................................................ 189
K. Example of Survey Question Scoring Method ..................................................... 206
L. Excerpt of Question Tallies per Survey Question ................................................ 207
M. Initial Coding Excerpt ............................................................................................ 208
N. Codes ....................................................................................................................... 209
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ohio District Typology (2013) and 24 Schools Selected for Study</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Typology of Districts Whose High Schools Participated in the Study</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Demographics of 24 High Schools Selected for Study</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Demographics of Eight High Schools Responding to Survey</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Survey Results by Area 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Survey Responses by Question-Area 1, College-Going Culture</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Survey Responses by Question-Area 2, College Enrollment Supports</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Survey Responses by Question-Area 3, Financial Aid Supports</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mailboxes from High School M</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Three Legged Stool</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>College-Going Culture Signage</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Do you know a high school graduate who expressed his aspirations to attend college but did not know how to navigate college and financial aid application processes, and therefore did not pursue post-secondary study? Perhaps this graduate was a minority student, a low socio-economic student and/or a student whose parents had not attended any post-secondary education; an underrepresented student. Disconnects between college aspirations and the actual process of applying and enrolling in college have created an enrollment gap especially for underrepresented students: low socioeconomic status (SES), minority, and first-generation college (FGC) students.

In 2012, only 52% of children from families in the bottom fifth of the income distribution were enrolled in post-secondary education immediately following high school graduation, compared to 82% of graduating students from families in the top fifth of the income distribution (Executive Office of the President, 2014). The college-going rate of recent high school graduates placed Ohio 38th among the 50 states (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2015). According to a report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, given the current higher education production rate, the United States will fall five million short of the needed workers with post-secondary credentials by 2020 (Carnevale, Smith, Strohl, 2013). Realizing the United States’ position in the world and the future workforce needs, the President of the United States declared in his 2009 State of the Union Address to Congress, “I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma” (Obama, 2009).
In the 2011 fourth report on the conditions of higher education in Ohio, it was determined underrepresented Ohioans need more education to meet the state’s workforce needs. In its executive summary the following statements set forth the need for Ohio now, more than ever, to intentionally support underrepresented students in their quest for post-secondary education.

A knowledge economy demands capable, highly skilled workers. Four in ten Ohio employers report having a hard or very hard time finding qualified workers. Not enough Ohioans, particularly underrepresented adults and racial-ethnic, first-generation college, and low-income individuals have degrees. Ohio must tap the capabilities of these citizens to meet future manpower needs. Ohio’s businesses and industries are more likely to expand and new industries are more likely to move to Ohio when highly skilled workers are available. It is important for Ohio that these students attain a degree. The degree matters for the individual, the state, and businesses and industries. Those who earn associate and bachelor’s degrees in Ohio stay in Ohio. They earn good incomes. They have low unemployment rates. Most of Ohio’s future jobs will require some post-secondary education (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2011, p. 9).

The report continues with data regarding underrepresented students in Ohio. Ohio’s white adult males are two times more likely to have a bachelor’s degree than black or Hispanic adult males. In Ohio’s rural Appalachian counties, less than 20% of the adults have a two-year degree or higher. The report concludes Ohio must take “bold actions” (p. 11) to overcome barriers of college enrollment such as academic preparedness, financial issues, college knowledge supports, and cultural preparedness for low SES, FGC, and minority students (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2011).
Yet, what is happening to turn the tide to increase college enrollment of underrepresented students and who is responsible to do it? Low socio-economic, first-generation, and minority students require a level support and intervention for college readiness that must take place in the high school setting. Cabrera and LaNasa (2001) found low SES, minority, and first-generation students’ parents were at a disadvantage when assisting their children through the post-secondary enrollment process (Cabrera and LaNasa, 2001).

Potential first-generation college (FGC) students who typically are minority and/or low SES come with an extra disadvantage of family members without college experiences to connect the dots between college aspirations to completed applications. Eighty-three percent of Chicago Public School seniors stated they had aspirations of earning a bachelor degree or higher, but reflecting national trends, less than half of these seniors had enrolled in a four year program the fall after their high school graduation even though the students’ college aspirations were supported by their parents. More than 90% of the Chicago seniors stated their parents wanted them to attend college in the fall after high school graduation (Nagaoka, Roderick, Coca, 2009). Research suggests underrepresented students and their parents often do not have access to the information and guidance needed to effectively navigate the college application, or the financial aid process (Cabrera and LaNasa, 2001).

Therefore, the disconnect of aspirations becoming actual enrollment, and the enrollment gap between underrepresented students and all students is a call for high schools to do something different. Implementing programs and practices that impart knowledge of the college enrollment process to high schools’ students and parents, and increasing post-secondary enrollment for their graduates; especially their underrepresented student population can help bridge the gap.
Hooker and Brand (2010) suggest, “College knowledge comes from acquiring practical knowledge about how to plan for and enroll in college, as well as developing a college-going identity through exposure to the world of post-secondary education” (Hooker and Brand, 2010, p. 78). The programs which were successful in helping underrepresented students understand the college enrollment process included early exposure to college through campus visits, hosting college information fairs, providing opportunities to earn college credits. The programs also facilitated a pairing of students with school adults who could answer questions and guide the students through the admission process that included ways to finance the education.

Urban high schools have shaped college enrollment among underrepresented students by ensuring seniors who aspire to a four-year college take steps to apply and enroll in post-secondary institutions (Roderick, Coca and Nagaoka, 2011). This study highlighted the importance the high school plays in establishing intentional practices that support students’ efforts in applying to college since the family support, although encouraging, does not always translate to enrollment.

The actual preparation of college and financial aid applications has historically rested on the family. While middle class parents drew on their college experiences and professional circles to take an active role ensuring their children were college ready, working class and low-income parents saw their children as autonomous adults. They did not play the active role middle class parents did in college preparation (Lareau, 2006). Low SES and minority families’ children were also typically first-generation college students who may not possess the skills and resources to assist their children. In a study by Cabrera and La Nasa (2001), 23% of lowest SES parents believed they could provide college guidance based on their own experience, where nearly all high SES parents could offer guidance (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001). Research has shown that
first-generation college students and their parents were significantly handicapped in navigating the college enrollment process and atmosphere (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini, 2004). Parents of low SES, FGC, and minority students often lacked the college knowledge. College knowledge is having an understanding of the complex college admission and selection process, financial aid opportunities, academic requirements, and the cultural differences between high school life and college life. College knowledge includes understanding the practical information needed to enroll in college as well as developing a college-going identity which is especially critical for low SES, FGC, and minority students (Hooker and Brand, 2010). As an example, in a college athletics meeting with parents of a prospective player, the parents embarrassingly admitted they had no idea how to navigate the college enrollment process for their daughter. To the aspiring student’s fortune, the coach met with the parents to complete the entire process including the student’s eligibility for a full Pell Grant (federal grant for undergraduate students with financial need). The student is now enrolled and attending as a first-generation college student. Very few high school students become college athletes. Could and should the supports given to this student and her parents be made available to all families who need assistance with navigating the college enrollment process?

The school counselor has also historically taken a role in helping students navigate the enrollment process. The findings of Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines and Holcomb-McCoy (2010) show school counselors are critically instrumental in bridging the gap between aspirations and enrollment, especially for students of low SES (Bryan, et al., 2010). However, today’s counselors are immersed in social-emotional and school testing issues that may force college preparation to the bottom of their list. In a study by Partin, school counselors estimated they spent 47.7% of their time during the school day directed at educational counseling which was
primarily focused on class scheduling and course credits rather than college advising (Partin, 1993). Couple this with financial shortcomings leaving many high schools short-handed in counseling departments, and it becomes clear that some high schools’ guidance departments lacked the support to assist underrepresented students in becoming post-secondary students. High schools serving predominately low-income and minority students have student-to-counselor ratios twice the national average; 1,000 students per counselor versus 470 students per counselor nationally (Haskins, Holzer and Lerman, 2009). In a study by Dockey & McKelvey (2013), students frequently cited their school counselors as unavailable, spending time on other students’ needs, discouraged students, or did not provide accurate information about the college application process. If a college-going culture did not exist in students’ homes, then the guidance department which traditionally provided the family with the information for navigating the college enrollment may not be sufficient to actualize underrepresented students’ aspirations.

School counselors who offered concrete support and became the source of social capital in the application process did help students gain access to college. In a report by the College Board National Office for Guidance Counselors Advocacy, eight components for college and career readiness spelled out the role of the school counselors in supporting all students’ post-secondary aspirations and planning.

The Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling chart a comprehensive, systemic approach for guidance counselors’ use to inspire all students to, and prepare them for, college success and opportunity - especially students from underrepresented populations. The eight components build aspirations and social capital, offer enriching activities, foster rigorous academic preparation, encourage early college planning, and guide students and families through the college admission and financial aid
processes. By implementing these eight components, guidance counselors provide information, tools and perspective to parents, students, schools and their communities that build college and career readiness for all students.

Eight elements:

- College Aspirations
- Academic Planning for College and Career Readiness
- Enrichment and Extracurricular Engagement
- College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes
- College and Career Assessments
- College Affordability Planning
- College and Career Admission Processes
- Transition from High School Graduation to College Enrollment (The College Board National Office for Guidance Counselors Advocacy, 2010).

However, given the demands on time and limited resources, high schools supporting underrepresented students cannot solely rely on their school counselors for closing the aspiration to enrollment gap for underrepresented students. The entire school community must be intentional in reaching out to students to teach them how to transform their college aspirations into completed applications. The idea of high schools providing supports, practices, personnel, and policies devoted to the mechanics of navigating successful post-secondary enrollment for all students becomes an important equal access point of entry to college, and a means to ensure increasing post-secondary enrollment especially in light of Ohio and the nation’s call to increase the number of students pursuing education beyond high school.
Rationale & Significance of the Study

To meet the needs of Ohio’s future workforce, Ohio lawmakers have instituted many initiatives to support college and career readiness through the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The Ohio Department of Higher Education launched Ohio College Application Month in November, 2014. As part of the American College Application Campaign (ACAC) initiative, the goal of the Ohio College Application Month was to increase the number of students applying to college early in their senior year, with a focus on first-generation and low-income students as well as students who may not otherwise apply to college. During Ohio College Application Month, assistance was provided to students at participating high schools in completing college applications during school. The goal of the program was to assist each participating student in submitting at least one post-secondary application. ODHE believed that generating an increase in the number of students participating in College Application Month could help support the demands of Ohio’s workforce (ODHE 2014). The Common Application is an online or hard copy college application accepted at hundreds of colleges and universities nationally and internationally. One application is filed by students. Seventeen schools in Ohio accept the Common Application (ODHE 2015).

The state and national initiatives to develop more students who were college and career ready was a clear call to intentionally look at each student’s aspirations, abilities, and skills to provide a career path. The resources for aspiring college students are countless and beneficial, but are they enough to take underrepresented students from aspirations to applications? Bountiful online resources for college enrollment supports did not necessarily mean students who lacked ‘college knowledge’ knew how to sift through the resources to support them through the college
enrollment process. Even if the student was able to sift through the incredible amount of online resources to support his/her college enrollment process, it did not mean he/she had access to a computer and internet. The research suggested low SES, minority, and FGC students required further support and intervention throughout their high school careers to successfully enroll in college (Roderick, Coca and Nagaoka, 2011). This additional support and intervention did not mean showing students the resources, then leaving them to figure it out from there. It is a unique student who would find internet access, sift through countless sites and checklists to learn how to apply to colleges and financial aid, and persist with his/her college aspirations throughout four years of high school. High schools must go beyond their typical college preparation support in an effort to increase the number of students successfully transitioning to post-secondary education. Increasing the student population heading for post-secondary education means schools must create and implement support and guidance needed by underrepresented students. By studying the practices of Ohio high schools whose data suggested a successful college enrollment rate among its underrepresented students, other high schools with similar demographics may gain knowledge of practices to achieve the same or better college enrollment rates.

**Purpose of Study**

This study sought to not only identify practices, programs, and key personnel but also to deeply understand how the selected high schools built a college-going culture, and college enrollment supports with their students, specifically underrepresented students. If practices and personnel were identified as promoting a college-going culture, and increasing college enrollment rates, the implications would be for high schools with poor college enrollment rates, especially among FGC, low SES, and minority students to implement like practices, personnel, and resources. This study included Ohio public high schools having an average of at least 50%
poverty from 2011-2013, a college enrollment rate of 41% (Ohio’s three year average college enrollment rate in public two and four-year colleges) or greater from 2011 to 2013, and an average of at least 50 graduates during the same three years. The study sought to identify the key factors contributing to these schools’ college-going culture and college enrollment support.

If the goal is to increase college enrollment in Ohio and nationally, then high schools must devote intentional attention to assisting students, especially FGC, minority, and low SES in navigating the college enrollment process beginning with early aspirations to full completion of applications. As shown by Roderick, et al. (2011), the high schools that created a college-going climate promoting norms for college attendance, and providing information and support to navigate the college application process showed higher college enrollment especially for students who were first-generation college and low SES students (Roderick, et al. 2011).

In a report by the Ohio Department of Higher Education 2011, college students reported the needs they felt may have helped to support their college readiness by responding to, “What keeps you coming back to college?” The students listed the following:

- Services leading from admissions to enrollment
- Financial aid
- Counseling, coaching, advising
- Quality classes
- Quality and caring instructors
- Quality campus facilities and services
- Policies that eliminate barriers (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2011).

This list suggested the mechanics of getting to college; the actual steps necessary for enrollment and financial aid were extremely important to students. The findings from research by
Klasik (2012) also illuminated the need for high schools to implement programs, practices, and personnel which guided all students through critical steps of navigating the college enrollment process which he named the “application gauntlet” (p.1) These steps were: having a college aspiration, taking college entrance exams, attaining minimal college qualifications, and actually applying to college (Klasik, 2012). Identifying the intentional actions or steps high schools take to support students’ college enrollment may assist other high schools in creating similar strategies to narrow the enrollment gap of underrepresented students and increase post-secondary enrollment of low SES, minority, and first-generation students.

**Theoretical Framework**

College and career ready has flooded the education dialogue for the past few years in Ohio and at the national level. The nation is lagging in its worldwide standing of the number of college-educated citizens. Ohio public colleges report that nearly 40% of freshmen entering two and four-year colleges require English and/or mathematics remediation (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2011). The United States is now tenth among 25-36 year olds holding a two-year degree or above (Marks, 2013). President Obama set a benchmark of the United States leading the world in the number of college graduates by 2020 (B. Obama, 2009). First Lady Michelle Obama issued the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Challenge at the start of 2015. She challenged high school seniors to complete the FAFSA starting January 1, 2015 in an effort to inspire and encourage students, teachers, school counselors and administrators to demonstrate their commitment to prepare more students for college. She states in the FAFSA Challenge promotional video,

> Through FAFSA, the Department of Education provides more than $150 billion each year in loans, grants, and work-study programs that can help you and your family pay for
college. That’s why I’m calling on every high school senior in America to complete their FAFSA form starting on January 1st (Obama, 2014).

The Ohio and national college enrollment standings, the President’s 2020 goal, and the First Lady’s challenge have raised the bar for high schools to increase college enrollment opportunities by ensuring college and career readiness for all high school students, including underrepresented students.

To remedy the college enrollment gap, work toward a more educated workforce, and inform Ohioans of resources and services, Ohio lawmakers passed laws specific to college and career readiness. Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3313.6020, a career-advising bill requires all public schools in Ohio to develop career advising policy by the 2015-2016 school year. This policy must include the following requirements:

- Career advising for grades 6-12, to be determined at the district level
- Career Connections Learning Strategies-grade level experiences which link curriculum to career fields
- Interventions and supports necessary to assist transition to post-secondary destination, especially in English Language Arts and Mathematics
- Training for all staff on career pathways and the Ohio site; Ohio Means Jobs K-12 and other career advising resources
- Documentation of career planning for all at-risk students 6-12, to be reviewed by the student, parents/guardians, and future schools the student may attend. Evidence of this career planning must include support of students’ academic, career, and social/emotional development
• Interventions for students at-risk of dropping out of school using a locally developed early warning system to assist in identifying the students. Schools must provide each student who is at-risk of dropping out Student Success Plan that includes post-secondary pathways. The Success Plan must be shared with and signed by the parents/guardians, and reviewed annually.

• Multiple pathways provided to earn a high school diploma, per Ohio’s graduation requirements (Ohio Revised Code 3313.6020, 2014).

Ohio lawmakers also wrote legislation requiring schools to publish information regarding a career planning tool, specifically the Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ) website:

Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, each public high school shall publish or provide, not later than the first day of April of each year, in its newsletter, high school planning guide, regular publication provided to parents and students, or in a prominent location on the school web site, information regarding the online education and career planning tool developed under section 6301.15 of the Revised Code. The information shall include the internet web site address for the planning tool and a link to that web site. The information also shall include a link to the Ohio Means Jobs web site (Ohio Revised Code 3313.89, 2014).

Ohio Means Jobs aligned resources for students, parents, and educators that aid in the search of potential career pathways.

New measures on the Ohio report card hold high schools accountable to report college and career readiness using the Prepared for Success component. This component contains six measures that will be reported on each district’s report card. The component grade is based on
the percentage of a school’s graduation cohort that demonstrates college and career readiness. The six measures are:

- College Admission Test (participation rate and percent receiving non-remediation score)
- Dual Enrollment Credits (percent earning at least three credits)
- Industry Credentials (percent of students with a credential)
- Honors Diplomas Awarded (percent of students with an Honors Diploma)
- Advanced Placement (participation rate and percent scoring three or above)
- International Baccalaureate Program (participation rate and percent scoring four or above) (Ohio Department of Education, 2014).

Along with rating schools for their ability to develop college ready graduates, Ohio lawmakers also changed the graduation requirements for students offering them different pathways toward meeting college and career readiness. These requirements allowed students to show their readiness by meeting industry credential standards, college admission standards, or a compilation of points earned on course exams provided by Ohio’s, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate exams (Ohio Department of Education, 2015).

An issue for high schools wishing to earn a high mark on the Prepared for Success accountability standard is how to increase their college enrollment rate. This will require high schools to support underrepresented students all through their college aspirations to enrollment in post-secondary education in ways and means that are most likely different from their current resources, personnel, and practices. School counselors and school staff cannot simply copy more application forms and hope many more students will sign up for college. The high schools must develop and implement intentional practices, personnel, and resources to increase the number of students seeking post-secondary education that ensure a successful transition to post-secondary
education opportunities. High schools must reach deeper into the graduating class to identify college-ready students if they expect their college enrollment to grow and, the college enrollment gap between underrepresented students and their counterparts to narrow, especially in light of recent data from the United States Department of Education showing that more students than ever are graduating high school. The graduation rate of minority students rose nearly four percentage points from 2011-2013, outpacing the rate for all students (Ed Homeroom, the Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Education 2015).

Since the reach must go deeper into the graduate pool, it will net more underrepresented students. Yet, as research supports, typically underrepresented college students: low SES, FGC, and minority students require additional support and intervention throughout the aspiration to enrollment process (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, and Perna, 2009). Underrepresented students were less likely to attend college fairs, complete as many college applications or visit college campuses. Their parents/guardians, although supportive of their children’s college aspirations, lacked the knowledge and resources to assist at home (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Many times, programs in high schools focused on the academic preparation side of college readiness. Whereas, this study seeks to identify supports and interventions that turn aspirations into completed applications by studying high school practices, personnel, and resources dedicated to sustaining college aspirations, assisting with the mechanics of completing and submitting applications (college and financial), writing college application essays, and finally enrolling. It is these tasks which have been found to positively influence post-secondary enrollment of underrepresented students (Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, Hurd, 2009).
Research Questions

This study set out to answer the following questions:

1. What strategies, classes, or programs does the high school use to intentionally promote college aspirations, especially for underrepresented students?

2. What strategies, classes, or programs does the high school use to intentionally support students through the college enrollment process, especially for underrepresented students?

3. What strategies, classes, or programs does the high school use to intentionally support students through the financial aid process, especially for underrepresented students?

4. What do the leaders in the school do to promote a college ready environment and pathway to college, especially for underrepresented students?

Definition of Terms

Acronyms. Listed in Appendix A

Application Gauntlet. As used by Klasik (2012), The steps to complete for successful enrollment in a four year college (Klasik, 2012).

Barrier. Circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents progress.

College readiness. The combination of skills, knowledge, and habits of mind necessary to fully participate in college-level courses (courses at the 100 level and above) to completion.

College aspiration. The desire or ambition to attend any post-secondary educational opportunity.

College-going culture. Embedded beliefs and practices which develop college aspirations and assist students through the college application and enrollment processes.

College knowledge. Sometimes referred to the academic alignment between high schools
and universities. Hooker and Brand (2010) define it as having an understanding of the complex college admission and selection process, financial aid opportunities, academic requirements, and the cultural differences between high school life and college life. Attaining college knowledge includes understanding and navigating the practical information needed to enter college, and developing a college-going identity (Hooker and Brand, 2010).

*College melt.* Students intending to attend college in the fall, but for various reasons do not make it.

*Community support.* For this study, community support encompasses any organizations or people outside the school community who offer support (time or resources) to students as they explore and plan their post-secondary options.

*Enrollment gap.* The gap in college enrollment between underrepresented students (low SES, FCG, and minority) and all other students.

*FAFSA.* Free Application for Federal Student Aid. FAFSA is used to determine federal student loan and grant allowances.

*Federal Pell Grant.* Need-based grants to low-income undergraduate students to promote access to post-secondary education. Grant amounts are dependent on: the student's expected family contribution; the cost of attendance (as determined by the institution); the student's enrollment status (full-time or part-time); and whether the student attends for a full academic year or less.

*First-generation College Student (FGC).* Students whose parents have not attended or earned any post-secondary education.

*Generational Poverty.* A family having been in poverty for at least two generations.
GPA. Grade point average. The average of the accumulation of grades during enrollment in high school or post-secondary education.

In Vivo Coding. Assigning a label to a section of data, such as an interview transcript, using a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data.

Low Socioeconomic Status (Low SES), Poverty, Economically Disadvantaged. Students whose families meet the federal income guidelines qualifying them for the national free and reduced lunch program (Appendix B).

Pre K-16. Pre-kindergarten through grade 16 (college senior)

Post-secondary. Any formal education, in any institution, which leads to a license, certification, associate, or bachelor degree.

Screener. Tool and measuring system used by researcher to select high schools for the interview portion of the study. In this study the screener was the 36 question survey.

School counselor. Guidance counselor.

Simultaneous Coding. The application of two or more codes to a single set of data/text.

Social capital. Used in sociology, social capital refers to the social connections used by people which enable and encourage mutually advantageous social networking. In this study, social capital is used to describe similar social connections students and parents may or may not possess when encountering the college application and enrollment process.

Typology. For ODE’s purpose: The classification of Ohio schools and districts according to their similar characteristics.

Triangulation. Research technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources of data.

Underrepresented students. Students whose representation in colleges is low compared to
their number in society. These are typically low socio-economic, minority, and/or first-generation college students.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of the study were chosen by the researcher to specifically target Ohio public high schools whose enrollment and demographic data suggested the high school may be implementing intentional programs, personnel and/or practices that resulted in positive college enrollment numbers, especially with low SES, minority, and/or first-generation college students. In selecting Ohio high schools for the study, the schools had to meet the following criteria: an average of at least a 50% poverty rate (determined by free and reduced lunch data) (Appendix B) among graduates from 2011-2013, an average college enrollment rate in Ohio’s two and four-year colleges from 2011-2013 of at least 41%. Along with the two criteria cited, schools with an average of 50 or more graduates during the same years (2011-2013) were included on the final list of schools because the study aimed to identify systems or programs which high schools were implementing on a higher level of influence than fewer than 50 students. Twenty-four Ohio public high schools met the three criteria.

**Limitations**

The researcher used a purposive sample in this study, 24 Ohio public high schools met all three criteria out of over 1000 high schools in Ohio. The sample to be surveyed was much smaller than the overall number of Ohio high schools. Therefore, the results could not be generalized to all Ohio public high schools, but the description of the practices, programs, and resources dedicated to promoting college enrollment may provide other high schools with enough information to compare and contrast their practices which target college enrollment of underrepresented students. A limitation the researcher felt existed in the study was the language
used in the survey. As an example, the researcher asked if students had timelines to monitor and track their college enrollment progress. The word ‘timeline’ may not translate to the systems and/or processes used by the school to track its students’ college enrollment progress. Another limitation of this study may come from the survey scores the responding participants earned when the surveys were tallied. Some survey response tallies did not earn enough points to conduct as many personal interviews as the researcher planned to conduct. The survey responses and interviews may have failed to reflect any specific trends or unique practices the selected 24 high schools were implementing that made an impact on their college enrollment rates.

Finally, since this was a study conducted by one researcher, the thoughts and words chosen by the researcher from the interviews, although accurately portrayed, were subject to the researcher’s choice and own sense of relevance to the overall study. Had this been a multi-researcher study, the thoughts and words of the interviews would have been compared and contrasted with another researcher to determine salient points supporting or refuting the researcher’s purpose for conducting the study.

**Researcher Bias**

This research was primarily focused on what high schools were doing to help students whose backgrounds (low socio-economic, first-generation college, and/or minority) hindered them from successfully navigating the college application to college enrollment path - the application gauntlet (Klasik, 2012). The researcher limited the study to college-going culture in the high school and the actual tasks to apply and enroll in post-secondary opportunities. These tasks included, but were not limited to taking college entrance exams, and completing financial aid and college applications.
The researcher believed high schools could implement better programs, practices, and personnel to identify and assist students who could have success in college. High schools should help underrepresented students navigate the college enrollment process if they wished to increase their college enrollment rate and reduce the college enrollment gap of underrepresented students compared to all students enrolling in college. If a high school student has taken the academics that allowed his/her admission to a community or a four-year college, then he/she should be taught how to apply and enroll in the post-secondary opportunity; especially low SES, minority, and FGC students. These students were most likely eligible for financial assistance making college affordable. Research suggested the call to increase college enrollment nationwide would not happen if changes were not made in how students were served throughout their high school career in college readiness and planning. Society may be missing a talent pool simply because the programs, personnel, and resources were not in place in high schools that intentionally walked all students through and to the possibility of a post-secondary education.

Three major events shaped the researcher’s bias. High school administrators and school counselors in a specific school were charged with presenting lessons or a unit on how to complete the FAFSA and college applications during junior or senior courses. The reluctance to complete this task was overwhelming, and the formal hands-on instruction for completing the FAFSA and college applications was never created. The professionals closest to the student population could have made a difference in turning college aspirations into completed applications for their underrepresented students but did not act to do more.

Another event happened with an aspiring young man who was enrolled in a career-technical field which he loved and demonstrated talent. Little was done by his instructor or high school to help him apply to trade school. The student had a passion for the trade he was learning
and the parents, understanding the value of further education, wanted him to have a post-secondary experience. The parents’ lack of knowledge of trade schools and the high school's lack of initiative to help this student highlighted the need for high schools to identify and assist students who do not know how to navigate the post-secondary education process.

Finally, as discussed in the Introduction, a women’s college softball coach lamented that many of her recruits had not taken any steps toward college readiness except in their coursework. Many of the players were first-generation college students whose parents did not know how to help their child. Some of the athletes she was signing for an athletic scholarship boasted a solid C grade point average (GPA) demonstrating the students’ coursework was college-ready, but little else was ready for enrollment. The coach realized that if she did not help the students and parents complete the FAFSA and college applications, as well as assuring eligible students take the ACT with accommodations, these young women would not have enrolled in college. Imagine the college enrollment rate if all students were assigned such a coach.

Based on the researcher’s views of how schools should and could support underrepresented students attain college enrollment, the research examined resources and supports the high schools believed were valuable to the college-going process. The researcher understood the intense focus on college readiness is new territory for many high schools and therefore, fully developed programs may not be implemented yet. The researcher needed to remember high schools might not have an urgency about helping underrepresented students even though these students probably will not go to post-secondary education unless someone is intentional in walking them through the aspiration to application process. The parents may not have known how, the students may not have known how...but all of the professionals in a high school did know how to apply and enroll in college.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review begins with data and statistics highlighting the reasons Ohio and the nation are pushing to increase college enrollment. Ohio’s economic well-being and its future workforce needs, and the United States’ ranking of college graduates worldwide are important factors further supporting the need for more students to complete college applications and successfully enroll in post-secondary education. The literature review cites various barriers and college enrollment gaps impeding the goal to increase college enrollment, especially for underrepresented students. Many barriers have been identified over the past several years. The college enrollment gap of underrepresented students compared to all students enrolled in college is slowly closing in part to successful high school college access programs (Ed Homeroom, 2015). Many of the programs directed specifically at low SES, FGC, and minority students have shown to be effective in providing supports and interventions to students during their high school careers taking them from college aspirations to completed applications.

Call to Increase College Enrollment

By 2020, 65% of all jobs in the economy will require post-secondary education and training beyond high school. Of these, 35% will require at least a bachelor’s degree, 30% will require some college or an associate’s degree while 36% of the job openings will not require education beyond high school. At the current higher education production rate, the United States will fall five million short of the needed workers with post-secondary credentials by 2020 (Carnevale, 2013). Furthermore, the United States ranks third among 30 countries in the adult population (25-64 year olds) with an associate’s degree or higher, and tenth among 25-34 year olds with a two-year degree and above (Marks, 2013). In an effort to turn the tide on America’s academic standing in the world, national and state goals and initiatives were set.
At the federal level, President Barack Obama, in his Address to Joint Session of Congress, January 2009, asked every American to commit to at least one year of post-secondary education or career training. He stated, “In a global economy, where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity. It is a prerequisite” (Obama, 2009). President Obama set a goal: by 2020, America will have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. The President stated there would be support necessary to complete college and make it affordable (Obama, 2009). In order to carry out the President’s goal, legislators supported a goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of all students graduating from high school ready to succeed in college and the workplace by 2020 (Duncan, 2010). In a speech delivered by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, he expressed the goal and focus of the K-12 system was to prepare students for the next step. College and a career became his reverberating message (Duncan, 2010).

In his State of the Union Address, January 2015, the President took a bold step to increase post-secondary opportunity and remove the financial barrier for underrepresented students by advocating free community colleges nationwide. He remarked,

By the end of this decade, two in three job openings will require some higher education -- two in three. And yet, we still live in a country where too many bright, striving Americans are priced out of the education they need. It’s not fair to them, and it’s sure not smart for our future. That’s why I’m sending this Congress a bold new plan to lower the cost of community college - to zero” (Obama, 2015).

In Ohio, three of the five Race to the Top (RttT) goals focused on college and career readiness. Through the funding of the RttT grant, the Ohio Department of Education created initiatives to increase high school graduation rates by .5% for each of the four years of the RttT
grant. It also desired to reduce graduation rate gaps by 50% between underrepresented and majority students, and more than double the increase in college enrollment for students age nineteen and younger (Ohio Department of Education, 2010). These RttT goals specifically focused on college and career readiness which raised the bar for high schools to graduate more students and prepare more of their graduates for enrollment in post-secondary education.

The Ohio Department of Education finalized new high school graduation requirements which were mandated by law and included the free administration of a nationally recognized college admission exam to all students in the 11th grade. As well as traditional credits students must earn, Ohio’s high school students must also: take and earn a cumulative passing score from seven end of course exams; earn a remediation free score on a college admission exam; or earn a State Board of Education approved industry recognized credential or state-issued license for practice in a career with a score that demonstrates workforce readiness on a job skills assessment (Ohio Department of Education, 2015).

High schools’ data on college and career readiness will be publicized on the Ohio Report Card. This measure, titled Prepared for Success, is a component grade derived from the percentage of a school or district’s graduating class which demonstrated college and career readiness based on six measures. The six measures include:

- **College Admission Test** (participation rate and percent receiving non-remediation score)
- **Dual Enrollment Credits** (percent earning at least three credits)
- **Industry Credentials** (percent of students with a credential)
- **Honors Diplomas Awarded** (percent of students with an Honors Diploma)
- **Advanced Placement** (participation rate and percent scoring three or above)
- **International Baccalaureate Program** (participation rate and percent scoring four or
The State Board of Education has yet to decide to include the results of the state administered college admission exam in the overall grade of the Prepared for Success score. The individual measures will not receive a grade, rather a component score will be assigned to demonstrate the schools’ efforts and levels of preparing students for college and careers. The method for calculating the component grade will be set by the State Board of Education before the grades are released on the 2015 report card (Ohio Department of Education, 2014). Ohio’s new high school requirements and measures mandated by Ohio’s legislators provide data so high schools may focus efforts on preparing all students for college and careers.

**College Enrollment Gap and Barriers**

At a time when Ohio and the country are ramping up to prepare more students than ever to be college and career ready, and more students are graduating high school, there is a declining college enrollment of low socio-economic status (SES) students (Heller, 2002). Low SES, first-generation college students (FGC) and minority students are underrepresented in colleges (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, and Perna, 2009) which created an enrollment gap between upper and middle class students and low SES, FGC, and minority students. No more than 6% of college students from the lowest SES earn a bachelor’s degree. In fact, the college-going rate is the same for the highest achievers of low income as it is for the lowest achievers of high income (Heller, 2002). Perhaps one of the most important figures facing the college and career ready goal is the large number of first-generation college students who comprise 25% of college enrollees of which 50% are low SES (Engle and Tinto, 2008).

First-generation college students were identified by Shaw, Korbin and Packman (2009) as needing specific assistance in navigating the college process despite their median level high
school grade point average (GPA). First-generation college students did not pursue more rigorous high school courses. They were less likely to attend as many college fairs, complete as many college applications, or visit as many college campuses as their counterparts; continuing generation college students (CGC) (Shaw, Korbin and Packman, 2009). Additionally, in the class of 2004, national data showed only nine of 20 black students enrolled in college yet, 68% of these students had aspirations of attending college (United States Department of Education, 2006). At-risk students further compound the enrollment gap. The largest loss of students even having a college aspiration by tenth grade occurs when students accumulate only one risk factor. The risk factors identified by Choy, et al. included: single parent, sibling who did not graduate high school, average grades in 6-8, attending multiple schools, and lowest SES. Every risk factor that an eighth grade student possessed decreased his chance of applying to college by his senior year by 7% (Choy, Horn, Nunez, Chen, 2000).

State and national goals set important benchmarks for our students, yet high schools and colleges fall short in fully defining what must occur in high schools and colleges to ensure more students than ever, specifically underrepresented students (low SES, minority, and first-generation college students), successfully navigate the pathway from college aspirations to completed applications. If the post-secondary pool must get bigger, then the applicants’ pool must go deeper. In a study by Cabrera and La Nasa (2001), 65.5% of low SES college-ready students applied to college which is 22% less than high SES students and 16% less than the national average of college applicants (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001). If the applicant’s pool must go deeper, then the students navigating the path to college becomes more diverse to include more FGC, low SES, and minority students who have enrollment hurdles unlike middle and upper class students. In a report prepared for the Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the
Economy by the Ohio Department of Higher Education (2003), Ohio did not fare well in comparison to other states on a national ranking. Ohio ranked 39\textsuperscript{th} out of the 50 states in the percentage of adults with bachelor’s degrees or higher in 2000. Ohio ranked 35\textsuperscript{th} in state and local appropriations for higher education per capita in 2002, yet was seventh in the nation in tuition as a percentage of family income in 2001 (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2003). The college-going rate of recent high school graduates ranked Ohio 38\textsuperscript{th} in the nation (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2015).

Furthermore, in a 2011 report on the condition of higher education in Ohio, the Ohio Department of Higher Education demonstrated the need to enroll more underrepresented students in post-secondary education to meet the workforce needs. The college enrollment of African American, Hispanic, and Native American males was half that of white males. The poorest counties in Ohio have only a 20\% population of adults with a two year degree or higher. African American students were less likely to return to their second year of college than the likelihood of white students. Forty percent of less than 2-year certificates and associate degrees were awarded to low SES students, while only 27\% of bachelor degrees were awarded to low SES students. These statistics further depicted the challenges of increasing college enrollment in Ohio especially for its low SES, first-generation, and minority students (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2011).

The enrollment gap was further widened due to a lack of social capital necessary to understand the increasingly complicated post-secondary application process among low SES, minority, FGC students, and their parents which presented barriers to college enrollment (Hooker and Brand, 2010). The concept of social capital referred to the resources gained from relationship ties. The relationship ties were typically personal relationships, institutional relationships, and
social networks. The resources available through relationship ties enhanced a person’s ability to understand norms, seek support, and gather information (Coleman, 1988). For example, students with parents who attended college, and who relied on family and school to navigate the college application process were using their social capital and college knowledge to gain successful college enrollment. College knowledge is defined by Hooker and Brand (2010) as having an understanding of the complex college admission and selection process, financial aid opportunities, academic requirements, and the cultural differences between high school life and college life (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Attaining college knowledge included understanding and navigating the practical information needed to enter college as well as developing a college-going identity; both critical for low SES, FGC, and minority students.

Many students began their high school careers with aspirations of attending college. Far less actually made it to college. In a nationally representative group of 8th grade students in 1988, just one out of 10 low SES eighth grade students were attending a four year post-secondary institution. The parental involvement (of these eighth grade students) towards college enrollment was found to be directly related to the amount of information parents had about college (Choy et al., 2000); further illuminating the lack of social capital’s impact on attaining college enrollment for low SES, FGC, and minority students. Students are highly dependent on their families as a primary source of college information, followed by the internet, and high school (Bell et al., 2009) making the barrier to college enrollment for underrepresented students even more difficult to pass through due to their parents’ inability to draw on a social capital.

The social capital of middle class parents was an asset for students when navigating the college application process. Low SES and working class parents were hampered by their lack of knowledge. Only 23% of lowest SES parents believed they could provide college guidance based
on their own experience, where nearly all high SES parents could offer guidance. Additionally, low SES parents were less likely to offer encouragement. Therefore, the most in need (low SES) were least to receive (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001). Among the college students of working class parents interviewed by Hurst (2009), very few mentioned support from families, teachers and school counselors as resources for gaining access to college. When parents of low SES and FGC students were minimally qualified to assist their children in navigating the college application and financial aid process, students were left to their own knowledge and abilities to navigate the application process (Hurst, 2009). Lareau (2006) found working class and low SES parents viewed their children as adults who could make college-going decisions and plans on their own whereas, middle class parents were shown to have extensive knowledge and involvement in the college application process (Lareau, 2006).

Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini (2004) reported first-generation college students and their parents were significantly handicapped in navigating the college enrollment process and atmosphere (Pascarella, et al., 2004). Helping first-generation college students’ parents understand the connections between further education and future economic benefits increased the likelihood of parental involvement in their children’s college preparation (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000).

Ohio mandates a financial literacy course for all high school students typically taught in the 11th grade social studies curriculum (Ohio Revised Code, 2015). A topic in Ohio’s Financial Literacy Content Standards reads; Career choices impact earning potential. Many factors, including a sound work ethic, educational level, skills and experiences, affect gross income. Decisions related to benefits, deductions, retirement, investments, etc. affect net income (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). This topic becomes vitally important to the statistics
demonstrating the direct relationship between education attainment and lifetime earnings. The higher the level of education a person has, the greater the earnings. Nationally, an increase of one percent in college graduation rates with an associate or bachelor’s degree produces an increase of $291 billion in income (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). In 2002, possessing a bachelor’s degree equated to 75% more earning potential over a lifetime than someone with only a high school diploma. Today, that earning potential is 84%. On average:

- High school dropouts earn $973,000 over a lifetime
- High school-educated workers earn $1.3 million over a lifetime
- Workers with some college credit earn $1.5 million over a lifetime
- AA-holders earn $1.7 million over a lifetime
- BA-holders earn $2.3 million over a lifetime
- MA-holders earn $2.7 million over a lifetime
- PhD-holders earn $3.3 million over a lifetime (Carnevale, 2013).

It seems appropriate for high schools to consider college and career planning in the curriculum of financial literacy since an adult’s personal finances are directly tied to his/her level of post-secondary training. The course offering in 11th grade may be too late to turn the direction of many students’ post-secondary plans but college preparation in the high school coursework aligned to the topics teachers instruct can support students’ aspirations and parents’ understanding of the economic benefits of furthering education (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000).

Along with Ohio’s financial literacy requirement, Ohio legislators required high schools to post information regarding college and career pathways on their school websites. Recent laws required schools to implement Success Plans for students at risk of dropping out of school beginning at grade six through senior year. As a part of the career planning requirements, schools
must demonstrate knowledge and advertisement of an Ohio college and career-planning website, Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ). Ohio Means Jobs is an online suite of resources for students, parents, educators, and employers to help students navigate potential career pathways through online exploration of careers and the level of education/training required for each career. The planning tools of OMJ assist exploring and entering the post-secondary education arena which hosts career pathways of interest. The site also helps students and adults explore funding resources for their education and finding the job once their education/training has been completed. Consideration of college preparation within a mandated course such as Ohio’s financial literacy, required Success Plans, and aligned Ohio resources such as Ohio Means Jobs, if used with integrity and persistence could assist in developing strong college and career ready high school students.

First-generation college students lack the social capital to guide their own post-secondary enrollment. Therefore, when the process became difficult, there was little to no capital to call upon as each step toward college was completed which led to withering aspirations of attending college. For example, many middle class students have a college-educated parent and college-going peers to discuss and work through the college application hurdles. Middle class parents turned to each other for assistance and advice when helping their children with the college enrollment process. The same parents have the social capital to initiate conversation and action in their children’s schools. Discouragingly, low SES, minority, and first-generation students do not engage in the same level of discussions with peers (Bryant and Nicolas, 2011). In studies on discussions and interactions with parents, schools, and students about college, it was found no matter the income level, when parents engaged in college aspirations and college preparations, communication was enhanced between parents and their children. When serious discussions
happen between high schools and homes the student’s chances of enrolling increased (Myers & Myers, 2012; Plank and Jordan, 2001). When parents of children with risk factors discussed and planned higher education with their children, the likelihood of enrolling in college doubled (Choy et al., 2000). These practices helped families and students build social capital. A strong school and strong family resulted in 91.6% chance of enrolling in college, a weak school and weak family equaled a 50.5% chance of college enrollment (Plank and Jordan, 2001).

Students of underrepresented groups reported having encouragement from home but shared their families were ignorant on how to support college planning. One of the largest factors that came from Hurst’s study of interviews with college students from the working class was a sense of betrayal by the student of his roots, family, community and even self (Hurst, 2009). In the study many students were told by their family they were on their own. Bethany wrote, “…we were told that, as soon as we graduated from high school, our parents weren’t paying for anyone’s college. There was no money for that. We could just expect that if we wanted to go that route we were to pay for it on our own.” Bethany also recalls when she was taken to college by her mother. Her mother helped unload Bethany’s belongings and left while her roommates’ parents lingered the whole day (Hurst, 2009, p. 272). Students struggled with getting parents to complete the required forms for college enrollment. One student shared she got into several heated discussions with her mother over the application process because neither of them knew what to do so their frustrations were directed at each other (Hurst, 2009).

Low SES families have less social and economic resources, therefore the need for high schools to create intentional practices for the college aspirations to completed application process pathway becomes an imperative. Plank and Jordan (2001) found if low SES students had the same quantity and quality of information and guidance as affluent students, and encouragement
in completing the college application process there would be a lessening of the college enrollment gap between affluent and low SES students. Equal access of guidance and information given to two students with similar academic performance and college aspirations, despite their economic status, resulted in similar odds of pursuing college (Plank and Jordan, 2001). This finding made it very important for high schools to actively engage students in the college application, testing, and financial aid process. The family component in sustaining college aspirations through completed applications was critical; therefore, the need for programs and events focused on parents who have little social capital and college knowledge should be considered a vital part of college preparation.

Important to college aspirations becoming completed applications was the influence of a student’s peers. Much like the parents’ lack of college knowledge and the inability to draw on their social capital, peers have little to offer students with aspirations of attending college if they were not part of the college-going culture too. In Hurst’s (2009) interviews with college students from the working class, he found many students resisted academically achieving labels because they were more interested in remaining loyal to their family and friends even though research bore out the importance of college-going peers. In a study on student characteristics which influenced enrollment in two or four year post-secondary institutions, Engberg and Wolniak (2010) suggested the aspirations of peers, just like the family, highly impacted the likelihood of the student enrolling in post-secondary education (Engberg and Wolniak, 2010).

Socio-economic status was a strong indicator of college enrollment. High schools with an average to above average SES population and a school culture where friends and families have aspirations for college significantly contributed to both two and four-year college enrollment. The number of friends attending a two-year college negatively impacted a student’s likelihood of
attending a four-year college (Engberg and Wolniak, 2010). Nearly 50% of continuing
generation college students reported having many discussions with peers about college while
first-generation college students reported feeling peer pressure not to attend college (Bryant and
Nicolas, 2011). Having peer groups with college plans was a strong indicator of college
enrollment (Choy et al., 2000). Moderate to high risk students’ odds of enrolling in college
increased four times if they had peers who were planning to attend college. When low SES urban
minority students reported they had friends going to college and friends who wanted them to go
to college, the probability of college attendance increased more than ten times. The peer
influence was a stronger predictor of college enrollment for low SES urban minority students
than it was for a comparison sample of all United States graduates. Low SES students whose
friends attended a four year institution was the single best predictor of college enrollment of half
time or more for that student even when controlling for SES, academics, and family background
(Sokatch, 2006). Because of these findings, plans for increasing the college enrollment of Ohio’s
underrepresented students and leading the world in college graduates proportionately by 2020
must harness the influence of peers when creating programs and support.

Further illuminating the problem of successfully completing the college enrollment
process, Klasik (2012) demonstrated as students navigated the steps to enroll in college they
began on similar ground but as each step was reached, the gap of completing the necessary steps
grew between white and wealthy students, and minority and low SES students. The completion
of each of the nine steps identified by Klasik was a strong predictor of completing the later steps,
thus gaining college entrance. The steps identified by Klasik are:

- Having a college aspiration in tenth grade
- Having a college aspiration in twelfth grade
Attaining minimal college qualifications
Taking college entrance exams
Consulting with a college counselor or representative
Submitting a college application
Completing financial aid applications
Gaining admission to a four year college
Enrolling in a four-year college (Klasik, 2012).

Of the students tracked, between 86% and 93% of them had college aspirations, took entrance exams or had minimal qualifications, yet only 48% ultimately enrolled in a four year college. If students completed five of the nine steps (had aspirations in 10th and 12th grade, took entrance exams, earned minimal academic qualifications, and completed applications), then college enrollment was likely. As the application process progressed through the nine steps, low SES and minority students began to drop out of the “application gauntlet” (p. 1) creating a growing gap in the underrepresented students and wealthy and white students (Klasik, 2012).

Predictive measures were found; students with 10th grade aspirations of attending college were three to five times more likely to complete the steps to enroll in college. Having both 12th grade aspirations of college and taking the college entrance exams were strongly predictive of enrollment in a four-year college (Klasik, 2012).

In a senior exit survey conducted by Stephan and Rosenbaum (2009), low SES urban students from one district were asked about their college-going plans in an effort to determine effectiveness of college-promoting programs in different high schools within the same district. Eighty-three percent of the students planned to attend college, 64% enrolled. Students with general plans to attend college were less likely to complete college admission steps, where
students with specific plans completed the steps. Sixty-nine percent of students who completed at least one college application enrolled compared to 36% who did not. Many of the urban students whose parents lacked social capital had serious difficulties turning general college-going plans into specific college-going plans and specific plans into enrollment (Stephan and Rosenbaum, 2009). The research was clear about minority, low SES, and first-generation students; although they may have college aspirations, these students must have specific supports and guidance along the path to enrollment.

Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) identified three critical tasks necessary to help disadvantaged youth attain access to college. Their three steps closely aligned with previously cited research on the importance of completing the college application steps for successful admission to college. In navigating the path to college, students needed to earn minimal course requirements, graduate from high school, and apply to a four-year college. The lowest SES students were 51%, 30%, and 18% less likely to secure minimal course requirements than their upper, middle-upper, and middle-lower counterparts were. Twenty one percent of the lowest SES applied to a college by their senior year, while 76% of their highest SES had applied. Once the lowest SES students did apply to a four-year college, their chances of enrollment closely compared to the national average and high SES students (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001).

Even if students completed the necessary steps to college enrollment, barriers existed for low SES students in the form of financial aid. As discussed previously, Ohio ranks 35th in state and local appropriations for higher education but seventh in the nation in the cost of tuition. The percent of family income needed to pay tuition for a public four-year college in Ohio in 2001 was 28.9%. This percentage of family income needed for tuition ranked Ohio seventh and ninth in the nation for costliness of four and two-year colleges, respectively (Ohio Department of
Higher Education, 2003). Also discussed previously, parents of low SES, first-generation college, and minority students did not have the knowledge or social capital to navigate financial aid forms and scholarship applications (Cabrera and La Nasa 2000; Coleman, 1988).

Fourteen million households seek financial aid for college each year by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). As a response to the lengthy FAFSA form, the United States Department of Education set out to simplify the application for financial aid. Dynarski (2012) suggested that simplifying the FAFSA system would be the cheapest way to increase college attendance. The simplified version of the FAFSA dropped from 127 questions to 116 questions, which was still significantly longer than the typical tax forms lower income families completed such as the 1040EZ and 1040A (shortened tax forms). The financial aid application process also became available online. Users could import their Internal Revenue Service (IRS) returns into the FAFSA. Twenty-four percent of online FAFSA users used the IRS link. Paper applications of the FAFSA dropped from 696,000 undergraduates in 2006-2007 to 500,000 the following year. The online FAFSA produced an immediate estimate of federal aid available to the student while paper applicants must wait for an award letter to arrive from colleges. Many applicants cannot use the FAFSA-IRS link because of the timelines for both systems. The FAFSA, mostly submitted in February and March, must represent the family’s previous year income. When families use the FAFSA-IRS link in April, many state aid programs were closed. Forty percent of Kentucky applicants received no state grants because the funds ran out before the filing deadline, making the use of the FAFSA-IRS link impossible (Dynarski, 2012). Although there are issues with the FAFSA application process, students who completed the financial aid application had a 77% enrollment in college while those who did not complete the aid application had a 40% enrollment (Stephan and Rosenbaum, 2009). The importance of
completing financial aid due to its positive impact on college enrollment must also be considered in the supports low SES, minority, and FGC students receive. Viewing an online video about the costs and typical earnings associated with post-secondary education, use of a financial aid calculator to estimate their college costs, and financial aid application packages for local universities which included instructions on how to apply for aid significantly impacted students’ post-secondary expectations (Oreopoulos and Dunn, 2013).

The impact of two interventions related to the FAFSA was studied by Bettinger, Long, Oreopouls and Sanbonmatsu in 2012. When tax professionals helped students and recent high school graduates collect necessary data for the FAFSA, provided assistance in completing the FAFSA, and provided an estimate of aid eligibility the students’ likelihood of submitting the FAFSA, attending college, and staying enrolled for two years was significant. Applying for financial aid was a critical key to realizing college affordability and a college degree. First Lady Michelle Obama created a public service announcement challenging high schools and students to help more students than ever complete the FAFSA. Her challenge launched January 2015 (Obama, 2015).

Another facet of high schools affecting a student’s college aspirations to completed applications was the role of the school counselor and other school staff. When students, no matter the SES level, did not know if a school counselor had college aspirations for them, the students had less contact with their counselor (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, 2009). Students had more contact with counselors for college information in small schools and when their parents contacted the counselors for support. Students who visited the school counselors by the 10th grade for college information were twice as likely to apply to one college and 3.5 times more likely to apply to two or more colleges (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-
Vines, Holcomb-McCoy, 2009). Unfortunately, in schools where the low SES students did not see the counselor for college information, college enrollment for these students was negatively impacted. Large caseloads and other duties as assigned by administrators have diminished the role of the counselor in college planning which created yet another barrier to college access for underrepresented students (McKillip, Rawls, Barry, 2012).

When first-generation college students experienced a high student-to-counselor ratio, their chances of college enrollment at a four-year university were decreased (Pham & Keenan, 2011). In their discussion, Pham and Keenan (2011) suggested three implications for schools to address the lack of equal access to college information and counseling for first-generation college students. First, schools should identify FGC students so that counseling efforts can be focused on them. Second, the ratio of student to counselor for FGC students should be lowered to enable counselors to facilitate the complicated and often confusing college application process. In 2010-2011, the student-to-school counselor ratio in Ohio was 480 students to each school counselor (American School Counselor Association, 2011). Finally, schools should identify students early in their high school career for differentiated college counseling strategies (type of colleges, course work necessary for those types of colleges, entrance exams, etc.) (Pham and Keenan, 2011).

Dockery and McKelvey (2013) conducted a survey asking respondents to indicate what their high school counselors could have done and did to encourage college enrollment. The respondents (university students from low SES and minority groups) were asked to rate the degree their high school counselors assisted them in the application process. Students in the study indicated high school counselors could have done more than what they actually did with the college application process specifically in the areas of financial aid, applying to colleges, and
making college selection decisions. Less than a fifth of the respondents indicated their counselor helped them decide which college to attend or assisted them with making the transition to college. In a study of school counselors and time management by Partin (1993), counselors agreed; their time spent on academics had little to do with college planning and enrollment (Partin, 1993). Minority students were significantly less likely to expect help from counselors compared to white students. Because of lesser expectations from their counselors for college assistance, minority students infrequently sought services, making it important for school counselors to identify students who may need targeted support as found in the Pham & Keenan (2011) study. Interviews with working class college students supported the lack of contact with school counselors. Hurst (2009) found very few students mentioned counselors in their discussions of who helped them gain college admission. The working class students viewed their counselor as a disciplinarian rather than a resource for academic support or guidance.

Further research on the role of counselors in helping underrepresented students gain access to college information and planning conducted in two high schools suggested college searching, especially for low SES and minority students must begin early (Malone, 2013). When low SES and minority students began to gather information, they most commonly sought advice from parents first, followed by school counselors, then teachers, peers, and finally to their own independent searching. During the students’ senior year, the school counselors became the primary source for guidance and assistance especially for students with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or below, but students also complained their counselors had too many students (Malone, 2013). The counselors of the two high schools studied by Malone (2013) acknowledged the schools needed to do more to target underrepresented student populations, help students understand the diverse post-secondary opportunities, and offer more customized
services. These steps along with similar steps described by Pham and Keenan (2011), emphasized the need for further support in an effort to increase the college enrollment especially for students who represented low SES, first-generation, and minority populations.

As stated in *Potholes on the Road to College: High School Effects in Shaping Urban Students’ Participation in College Application, Four-year College Enrollment, and College Match*, the authors ask of the goal to lead the world in college graduates by 2020, “What will it take to transform high schools from institutions that prepare a select group of students for college to institutions that prepare the majority of their students for this goal of leading the world in college graduates?” (Roderick, Coca, Nagaoka, 2011, p. 202).

**High School College Access Programs**

A means to transform college aspirations into completed applications for students and their parents who did not understand the college-going process or know how to navigate the application process has become formalized instruction starting early in some high schools. Many programs located in and during the high school day have shown positive relationships between support and guidance, and increasing college enrollment especially for low SES, FGC, and minority students.

In an effort to create a typology of several federal and state programs designed to promote college enrollment, Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell and Thomas (2008) found the majority of the federal and state college access programs and policies were channeled directly to the student from the government. Of the 103 programs studied, 88% were designed to benefit the student directly and 90% of the programs were financial awards only. A mere 3% offered academic and application/enrollment knowledge about college, and 1% offered only application/enrollment knowledge about college. None of the programs offered information and
support for all three; academic preparation, financial resources, and application/enrollment knowledge. These statistics demonstrated the need for high schools to develop intentional practices that help students gain college knowledge of how to actually enroll in post-secondary education. The most common time students were targeted by government programs was at the time of college enrollment. Only 5% of the federal and state programs designed to promote college enrollment studied were available to high school students (Perna et al., 2008). Too late for students who had aspirations in the 10th grade. Although the effectiveness of the federal and state programs was not studied in Perna, et al.’s (2008) research, the typology alone illustrates the lack of timely, comprehensive assistance and support for FGC, low SES, and minority students in navigating the college pathway.

Many roadblocks to successful college enrollment exist for low SES, minority, and first-generation college students. High schools committed to interventions as students navigated the pathway to completed applications positively influence the enrollment process. High schools promoting a college-going climate where adults help students engage in norms, promote college attendance, provide support in navigating college searches, and assistance with applications are keys to college access for all students (Roderick et al., 2011). The Consortium of Chicago School Research found attending a high school with a strong college-going culture was the most consistent predictor of whether students took steps to enroll in college (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Students and their parents must have access to expectations, information, and support needed to turn the students’ aspirations into enrollment. It is clear the high school must become the vehicle of supports and information (Roderick et al., 2011) for gaining college knowledge which includes the acquisition of practical information of the enrollment process, as well as developing a college-going identity (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Therefore, if high schools are the
bridge to successful college enrollment, then more must be done in high schools across Ohio and the country to increase college enrollment, especially for low SES, minority, and first-generation college students.

Indiana implemented a 21st Century Scholars Program. The program provided specific assistance to increase college enrollment for low SES students beginning in the eighth grade. It stressed similar steps as Klasik (2012) to ensure successful enrollment in college; aspirations, academic preparation, entrance exams, college application, financial aid, admission, and enrollment. The program’s review cited a positive impact on college enrollment. The Affirmed Scholars pledged to graduate from high school, maintain a 2.0 GPA, apply for admission to an Indiana college, apply for financial aid, and refrain from using illegal drugs and alcohol. In return, the students were promised full tuition at an Indiana state university as well as support and encouragement for students as they developed a college-going identity. Parents also received support throughout the program. The Affirmed Scholars of high poverty were 5.3 times more likely to enroll in college than students of high poverty not enrolled in the program. Researchers suggested removing the financial barrier (full tuition) had a positive impact on college enrollment for students especially when additional services and supports were included in the program. The support services contributed to the completed application for aid, and the availability of aid contributed to the post-secondary enrollment (St. John, Musoba, Simmons, Chung, Schmit, Peng, 2004).

Twenty-three college access programs were evaluated for their success in impacting college enrollment in a study by Hooker and Brand (2009). When evaluated on the criterion of planning for college at the high school level, five of the programs had a positive impact. Talent Search and Upward Bound both showed higher rates of completed financial aid applications; one
of the identified steps toward likelihood of attending college especially for low SES students (Hooker and Brand, 2009). Several of the five programs were designed to provide information about the college application and admission process for underrepresented groups of students. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and Advancement Via Individual Achievement (AVID) both showed measurable increase in acquiring college knowledge. GEAR UP was also associated with an increase of parental awareness in helping their children navigate the college application process. Participants of Early College High Schools had increased aspirations of college with plans to enroll in college directly from high school at a higher rate than the national average (Hooker and Brand, 2009).

AVID targeted students with GPAs of 1.0 to 3.0, who were also low SES and FGC in an effort to increase these students’ college enrollment. Beyond the academic supports and course demands, AVID students received college tutors who served as role models and parents were highly engaged in the program which increased their social capital (Hooker and Brand, 2009).

The Early College programs served high school students who represented low SES, FGC, and/or minority populations. More than half of the Early College programs were located on a college campus so students began to see themselves as college students. Beyond the academic support, participants in the Early College programs received college application support, and college entrance exam prep classes (Hooker and Brand, 2009).

Participants of GEAR UP were supported with individual counseling on college preparation, college fairs, career awareness activities, 8th grade visits to college campuses, and parent institutes in an effort to increase the college-going rate for underrepresented students. In order to qualify for GEAR UP funds, schools must have at least 50% free and reduced lunch. Its purpose was to increase college aspirations, support students through the college application
process, and engage the parents in helping their children gain college admission (Hooker and Brand, 2009).

Talent Search participants were typically low SES and FGC middle and high school students who had the academic ability to attend college but because of their backgrounds, lacked the knowledge necessary to turn college aspirations in completed applications. Funds were granted based on programs the high schools wished to implement. Ninety percent of the funds were allocated to programs having one or more of the following components: test taking and study skills, academic advising, college orientation activities, campus visits, college counseling, financial aid counseling and workshops, and/or assistance with the FAFSA and scholarship searches. Talent Search had success in helping students overcome the financial barriers associated with college enrollment (Hooker and Brand, 2009).

Upward Bound focuses on 13-19 year olds representing low SES and FGC populations. Participants were offered pre-college services year-round in college preparation and college counseling along with guidance in the college search and application process. Upward Bound participants showed increases in their college aspirations. The likelihood of earning a post-secondary certificate or license from a vocational school also significantly increased (Hooker and Brand, 2009).

Other efforts to increase college enrollment for underrepresented students have shown success. One high school access program devoted to intensive college enrollment provided support and resources necessary to ensure all of its graduates obtained college degrees. This program sent 100% of its students who completed the three year program to college (Dyce, Albold, and Long, 2013). The program studied by Dyce, Albold, and Long (2013) tapped into student and parent aspirations. Every activity the student and parent experienced throughout the
program was aligned to the goal of the program. “From the moment students are accepted into the program, the staff begins by saying, “When you go to college and when you are awarded that scholarship…” Students do not hear the word if.” (Dyce et al., 2013, p.162). For this program, the importance of building social capital and a college going identity for underrepresented students and their parents delivered grand returns.

In a study on expanding college opportunities, Hoxby and Turner (2013) found providing low SES, high academic seniors with an intervention program including college application guidance, financial information, and application fee waivers resulted in significantly expanding college opportunities. The application guidance packet consisted of tables showing deadlines for application and graduation rates of local colleges, state colleges, and selective colleges. The financial information included actual costs of attendance in different college options. Finally, students in the program received a waiver allowing them to apply to 171 selective colleges. The percentage of students who applied to selective colleges increased over the comparison group, and they were more likely to be admitted to and enrolled in a selective college. Overall, students who received the intervention also completed more applications and were admitted to more colleges than students in the comparison group (Hoxby & Turner, 2013).

The Washington Achievers program made college possible for students in Washington. In 2001, about two-thirds of Washington students graduated from high school. The state had the lowest four-year college entrance rates in the nation. Therefore, 16 high schools committed to transforming their schools and qualifying their students for the Achievers Scholarship Program. Along with increased academic rigor, the Achiever schools increased the college-going culture and awareness across all student groups. College enrollment increased. Most of the Achievers came from low SES families and many Achievers were minorities and first-generation college
students. A cornerstone of the program was its mentorship component. Each high school in the program had a College Preparatory Advisor (CPA). The CPAs provided daily support and guidance as the Achievers worked through the college application process. CPAs also offered early intervention to students in grades 8-10 encouraging college readiness and increasing awareness of the Achievers program. Local community members met with students during their junior and senior years of high school to help with decisions related to college selection, preparation, and financial aid (O’Brien, 2011).

GO Centers in Texas high schools are college access centers which assisted students with college preparation and building a school-wide college culture (Stillisano, Waxman, Brown, and Alford, 2014). The college access program was initially implemented in low performing high schools. It has expanded to include over 300 sites. The centers incorporated a variety of strategies that actively reached out to students and their parents to attract them to the GO Center. Ice cream socials were hosted for students and parents completing their financial aid applications. Personnel at the centers used active participants to entice their peers to use the centers and found that once a student received help to gain college admission, word spread to others. GO Centers regularly arranged visits to and from colleges, facilitated college nights, and FAFSA days. The personnel encouraged students to register for entrance exams and assisted them in completing Texas’ common application for college admission. The GO Centers influence did not stop at the center’s door. Teachers actively assisted in writing college application and scholarship essays. GO Center personnel presented in classrooms and were allowed to pull students from class to complete applications. Teacher and administrator support was evident in all of the sites studied. Exemplary GO Centers were visible in the communities
too. The Stillisano et al. (2014) study examined three core components in the centers identified as promoting and encouraging college culture:

- GO Center staff understands how students develop college aspirations
- GO Center’s comprehensive services are available to students and parents including guidance and support in applying to college and financial aid.
- GO Centers involve all stakeholders within the school, community, and family to promote college enrollment (Stillisano et al., 2014).

In a study conducted by Castleman and Page (2013), summer nudging was found to be effective in promoting college enrollment and mitigating the ‘college melt’ (students intending to attend college in the fall, but for various reasons do not make it). A series of ten automated text messages were sent to remind students and if possible, their parents, of the tasks required by their intended college and encouraged the students and parents to request help if needed. If a student or parent responded to a text, a counselor was assigned to assist. Messages included financial aid deadlines and reminders to access college portals for enrollment requirements. This method of intervention had a positive impact on enrollment in two-year institutions, especially for students of low SES (Castleman and Page, 2013). Another method employed to help the students transition from high school to college was personal outreach from peer mentors currently enrolled in college. The peer mentors made contact with students and assisted them in completing all of the tasks to enroll in college. Students who received the peer mentor strategy were more likely to enroll in a four-year college. Both summer interventions (text messages and peer mentors) for high school graduates were most beneficial for students who had little access to college planning supports and minimal college plans (Castleman and Page, 2013).
In 2009, the Institute of Education Sciences created a practice guide for high schools, *Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do*. The guide’s authors developed recommendations after researching best practices used in gaining college access especially for underrepresented students. The panel of researchers found two key issues with increasing the college-going rate; students must be academically prepared and students need to take the necessary steps during high school to prepare for college due to lack of awareness, guidance, or support (Tierney et al., 2009). Many of the same findings about barriers to college access were reported in the guide but the authors went further to make five recommendations for high schools. The recommendations were scored for their positive impact on college enrollment. Two of the recommendations had a moderate impact, while the other three were low impact. Authors of the study caution that a low impact rating did not necessarily denote ineffectiveness. Research on the low impact recommendations did not exist or was not experimental in its design.

The guide recommended college planning to begin with 8th grade students and their parents; especially focused on the economic benefits of post-secondary education, college costs and, college-ready coursework. High schools should identify students (via entrance exams and coursework performance) who are not on target for college readiness and inform students about their performance, and its implications for gaining college admission. Another recommendation stressed the importance of establishing relationships and adult supports especially for low SES, FGC, and minority students. One-on-one mentors should be available to serve as college-going models, offer assistance in completing the steps of the college application process, and monitor academic progress.

A moderate impact recommendation from the study suggested high schools assist students in completing the critical steps for college admission. One-on-one assistance in
registering students to take entrance exams, searching for colleges, visiting colleges, and completing applications resulted in improved college enrollment rates. The one-on-one assistance cannot be the sole responsibility of the school’s guidance department. High schools, parents, peers, and community members were important stakeholders in helping their students gain college access.

The final moderate impact recommendation made by the researchers challenged high schools to increase families’ financial awareness and help students apply for financial aid. Workshops early in high school should help students and parents understand the true costs of various colleges, the availability of financial aid, and how that aid impacts the affordability of college. Beyond the workshops, hands-on assistance with completing the financial aid forms was especially beneficial for low SES, minority, and FGC students (Tierney et al., 2009).

As discussed previously, Ohio has implemented many resources and requirements aimed to increase college enrollment especially for underrepresented students. Online career and college planning through the Ohio Means Jobs website, the Common Application, a free college admission exam during the junior year of high school, required Success Plans for 6-12 grade students at risk of dropping out of high school, financial literacy education in high school, advertisement of online resources, and district policies aligned to college readiness. Nationally, the amount of online resources through the U.S. Department of Education, non-profit, and profit organizations are countless. The myriad of resources are a valuable start and necessary to support high schools in their college readiness programming but cannot replace the role of the high school and/or community personnel in guiding students from college aspirations to completed applications, especially for low SES, FGC, and minority students. For it is a unique student who
could maintain his post-secondary aspirations and navigate the complicated college enrollment process on his own.

**Summary**

The college access programs discussed in this literature review offered insight and strategies of what high schools can and should do to support low SES, minority, and FGC students on their journey of college aspirations to completed applications. If Ohio and the nation are committed to increasing the college enrollment, especially for low SES, minority, and FGC students, then intervention strategies to increase the college-going rate of underrepresented students should be holistic, yet differentiated due to the high degree of interdependence between the school, parents, and the student (Cabrera and La Nasa 2000). The diversity of the students’ needs must be considered when delivering support to all students in an effort to ensure equal opportunities to access college (Roderick et al., 2011).

Successful programs partnered students with adult mentors who guided the students’ admission process and assisted them in seeking financial awards (Hooker and Brand, 2009; Tierney et al., 2009). Programs designed to monitor and mentor students’ progress through the critical steps leading to college enrollment (Klasik, 2012; Tierney et al., 2009) had positive impact. Identifying then targeting specific populations in order to deliver differentiated college preparation interventions was a key element to supporting students and families who did not know how to turn aspirations into applications (Tierney et al., 2009). Establishing peer groups for support and help in sustaining aspirations were critical components to help underrepresented students (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Removing financial barriers by offering hands-on assistance to students and parents, sending text reminders, offering community mentors to assist with the FAFSA, and using the IRS link to the FAFSA were shown to have a positive influence
on the college enrollment. Waiving college application and college entrance exam fees, developing early intervention strategies as early as middle school, and helping middle school parents understand the importance of course selection in high school were also shown to have a positive impact on low SES, FGC, and minority students’ college enrollment status (Bettlinger et al., 2012; Bryant and Nicolas, 2011; Castleman and Page, 2013; Dynarski, 2012; St. John et al., 2004; Tierney et al., 2009). High school counselors’ aspirations and expectations for all students negatively or positively impact a student’s college aspirations. School counselors who were intentional in targeting students with the most need, and maintained and communicated aspirations for students positively impacted college enrollment (Bryan et al., 2011; Malone, 2013; Pham and Keenan, 2011). School counselors also positively affected students’ college enrollment when intentional contact about college aspirations was made early in a student’s high school career (Klasik, 2012).

Equally important in helping students and their families complete a checklist for college enrollment was the need to build systems and cultures where college knowledge and social capital were embedded in high schools’ activities surrounding college enrollment. High schools with a college-going culture fostered aspirations and monitored the college application process (Hooker and Brand, 2010; Tierney et al., 2009). The enrollment of low SES, minority, and FGC students cannot be left to their own. Parents and their children should engage in college discussions. Students who knew more about college were more likely to go to college (Myers and Myers, 2012). Helping parents and students build social capital through supports, networks, and resources was necessary to successfully navigate the college application process (Lareau, 2006; Plank and Jordan, 2001).
If high schools continue to do what they have always done for their students, the goals of the nation and Ohio will not be met. High schools must find ways to dig deeper into their student population, offer college preparation education to all students, and monitor each student’s college-ready status throughout his/her high school career. Creating structures and systems that walk students and parents through the college application process is necessary for successful college enrollment of underrepresented students. Creating ways to make up for the differences in students’ and parents’ lack of social capital (Klasik, 2012; Lareau, 2006), and lack of college knowledge (Hooker and Brand, 2010) while creating college-going high school environments is necessary to meet the goals of increasing college enrollment in Ohio and the United States. More importantly, creating ways to make up for the differences in students’ and parents’ lack of social capital (Klasik, 2012; Lareau, 2006), and lack of college knowledge (Hooker and Brand, 2010) while creating college-going high school environments is necessary to fulfill the aspirations of low SES, minority, and first-generation college students. Simply stated, if Ohio plans to increase the college enrollment of underrepresented students and the United States plans to lead the world in its proportion of college graduates by 2020, then the college application and enrollment process cannot be left to the student and his parents. Minority, low SES, and first-generation college students must have a different level of support to successfully navigate the application process to enroll in post-secondary programs. These students’ post-secondary opportunities will require their high schools to be intentional with support and assistance in navigating the college enrollment process from aspirations to completed applications.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This study, College Aspirations to Completed Applications: a study of intentional high school practices designed to increase post-secondary enrollment sought to identify Ohio high school efforts toward answering the state and national call of increasing students’ opportunities for post-secondary education. The economic well-being of Ohio is dependent on workforce preparedness, and the national goal of leading the world in college graduates by 2020 have created an urgency to increase post-secondary enrollment for the nation’s high school graduates.

The problem for high schools becomes preparing and supporting more students through their college aspirations to college enrollment, especially underrepresented students. The barriers to college enrollment and enrollment gaps among low SES, minority, and first-generation college students and all other students must be considered when developing a college-going culture in high schools. The supports which guide underrepresented students through the college enrollment and financial aid processes also must be a consideration of high schools desiring a more robust post-secondary enrollment. Implementing successful practices directed at increasing college enrollment for all students will help high schools close the enrollment gap and send more underrepresented students to college.

The methods used in this study sought first to identify Ohio high schools whose college enrollment rate and demographics suggested efforts were implemented which supported underrepresented students’ college aspirations, college applications, and financial aid eligibility. Once the schools were selected for the study, specific and/or general programs, practices, and personnel in the selected Ohio high schools were examined using a close-ended questionnaire focused on three areas: college-going culture, college enrollment support, and financial aid support. Interviews were conducted to further understand and identify efforts supporting college
enrollment for the selected high schools’ graduates. High schools, whose survey responses represented a higher level of implementation of practices, programs, and personnel dedicated to increasing college enrollment when compared to each of the schools responding to the survey, were selected to be interviewed. High schools demonstrating an average or better college enrollment rate while meeting the needs of underrepresented students may become a model for other Ohio high schools with similar demographics in creating a college-going culture, and dedicating programs, personnel, and resources to support students on their path to successful college enrollment.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, the data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change (Creswell, 2013, p. 44).

This study aimed to tell the story of how Ohio high schools created successful college enrollment while serving a majority of students in poverty, who may also be first-generation college, and/or minority students. The study sought to find patterns and themes in the practices of the high schools in an effort to identify intentional practices, programs, and/or personnel that
enriched the high schools’ college enrollment rate, therefore the researcher chose to qualitatively study several Ohio high schools.

The research was particularly designed to collect data which informed the researcher of how and what were reasons for any phenomenon which supported underrepresented students’ post-secondary enrollment. Therefore, the desire to understand how and what Ohio high schools were doing to foster college enrollment by studying their practices through surveys and interviews might identify what high schools can do to support underrepresented students, and how they can sustain efforts which promote an increased college enrollment.

Twenty-four Ohio high schools were purposely selected by merging data sets accessed from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) (See Appendix C for sample) and Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) (See Appendix D for sample). The data sets included: ODE high school graduation numbers 2011-2013, ODE high schools’ economically disadvantaged percentages 2011-2013, and ODHE number of students each Ohio high school had enrolled for the first time in Ohio’s two and four-year public post-secondary institutions 2011-2013.

Rationale for selecting the data sets to create the purposive sample was as follows. The years 2011, 2012 and 2013 were chosen because Ohio Department of Higher Education’s college enrollment reports were current through the 2013 fall enrollment. The 50% or greater benchmark for economically disadvantaged was selected since the economically disadvantaged status of a school population is a large factor in determining school funding and grant eligibility at both state and federal levels. Schools with 50% or greater economically disadvantaged students face many challenges, and typically have higher rates of first-generation and minority students.
Next, any schools with an average of fewer than 50 graduates were removed from the final list of high schools to be studied because the researcher aimed to identify systems or programs high schools were implementing on a higher level of influence of fewer than 50 students. Finally, any Ohio high school that did not have three years of data in any of the data sets was not included in the study. Post-secondary enrollment, high school graduation, and economically disadvantaged data were taken from the Ohio Department of Education, therefore private school information is not available and these schools were not included in the study.

Any Ohio public or community high school which met the following criteria: an average poverty enrollment of 50% or greater during 2011-2013, an average of 50 graduates or greater over the same years, and an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s public two and four-year post-secondary institutions during 2011-2013 were asked to voluntarily complete a survey.

The purposive sample for this study was determined using Ohio Department of Education’s Advanced Reports and the Ohio Department of Higher Education Data and Reports. As stated earlier, many data sets were merged and the explanation is as follows. The Ohio Department of Education data sets allow users to create reports using different variables. The percent of poverty was retrieved from the following ODE website trail: Ohio Department of Education home page; search report cards; search Advanced Reports; select Enrollment; select Enrollment by Demographics (Building). Once at this page, the user selects Economic Disadvantage Flag and the years desired for the report. The researcher chose 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Since the report covered every publicly funded school building in Ohio by its economic disadvantaged percentage for the three years, the researcher eliminated all schools containing the words preschool, primary, K-8, elementary, intermediate, middle, and junior high,
and any schools without all three years of data from 2011-2013. The mean of the three years of data for the economically disadvantaged population was calculated for the remaining schools. Any school with less than an average of 50% was removed from the list. Seven hundred eighteen schools met the criteria and remained on the list, and were merged with the number of graduates as reported by the Ohio Department of Education.

The number of graduates of each Ohio high school was retrieved from the following ODE website trail: Ohio Department of Education home page; search report cards; search Advanced Reports; select Graduation Rate; select Graduate Count (Building). Once at this page, the user selects the school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013, and all of the schools listed (1220 schools) to run the report. The report was downloaded to a spreadsheet where further filters and calculations were applied. The mean of the graduates by school building was calculated and any schools with fewer than 50 graduates or less than 3 years of data were removed from the list. This list totaled 700 schools.

Once the two lists were created the final filter to meet the three criteria was applied. Forty-one percent benchmark was the average college enrollment rate in Ohio for 2010-2013 in two and four-year Ohio public post-secondary institutions. In accordance with 3333.041 of the Ohio Revised Code, ODHE must submit an annual report on number of graduates of Ohio school districts enrolled at state institutions of higher education, percentage needing remedial courses, and other information to the governor and general assembly (Ohio Revised Code, 2015). The researcher understands the actual college enrollment rate for high schools in this study may be higher than the public college average. The data set from ODHE does not include private universities or out-of-state universities students may attend, and high schools’ college enrollment percentages are typically derived from their students’ acceptance to college not actual
enrollment. Whereas, the Ohio Department of Higher Education reports actual enrollment of Ohio high school’s graduates. The percent of enrollment in Ohio’s two and four-year, public post-secondary institutions was retrieved from the following ODHE website trail: Ohio Department of Higher Education home page; select Educators; select Data and Reports; select High School Report 2011, 2012 and 2013. The number of first time enrollees in Ohio’s two and four-year public post-secondary institutions was represented on each of the reports; 52,486 students in 2011, 51,627 students in 2012, and 46,151 students in 2013. To determine the percentage of high school graduates enrolled in Ohio’s two and four-year public colleges, the number of enrollees from ODHE was divided by the total number of high school graduates in Ohio for the same years. The researcher used ODE Advanced Reports to find the number of graduates in the state for the corresponding years by selecting Graduation; selecting Graduation Count (State). There were 124,230 high school graduates in 2011, 123,109 in 2012 and 122,491 high school graduates in 2013. The percentage of high school graduates enrolling for the first time in Ohio’s two and four-year colleges was 42% in 2011, 42% in 2012 and 38% in 2013; equating to a 41% average enrollment rate.

Finally, the high school list of 50% or greater poverty and 50 or more graduates was aligned to the high schools contained in the report by ODHE. When the two lists were aligned, calculations were applied to determine each high school’s percent of enrollment in Ohio’s two and four-year public post-secondary institutions. The average college enrollment number for each high school was calculated then divided by each high school’s average graduation count. This was the final calculation which resulted in 24 high schools meeting all three criteria: an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s two and four-year public colleges, an average of 50% or greater poverty rate, and an average of 50 or more graduates from 2011-2013.
Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study March 2015, a letter inviting participation and a paper survey were mailed to the 24 high school principals whose schools met the three initial criteria (Appendix E). An email to each superintendent of the high schools’ districts was sent to inform him/her of the study (Appendix F). Once the surveys were returned and totaled, the schools with the highest scores were invited to participate in an interview to further identify and define their practices, personnel, and resources contributing to their college-going culture, college enrollment, and financial aid support. As time progressed and the majority of paper surveys were not returned, the researcher sent the survey via email attachment and later created an electronic survey inviting the non-responsive schools to participate in completing the online survey.

Participants

Ohio high schools were purposely selected based on three data sets accessed from the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Higher Education as previously described. Any Ohio public or community high school meeting the following criteria: an average poverty enrollment of 50% or greater during 2011-2013, an average of 50 graduates or greater over the same years, and an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s public 2 and 4-year colleges during 2011-2013 was mailed a survey and cover letter explaining the study. The completed and returned survey was implied consent to participate in the study.

Participants completing the survey were selected by the high school administrator. The letter asked the school leader/principal to select the person most familiar with the college enrollment and college-going culture to complete the survey in each high school. High schools with the highest scoring survey responses in the three focus areas; college going-culture, college application support, and financial aid support were selected for interviews. Interviews were
conducted with high school employees who completed the information section of the survey and identified themselves as a key leader in promoting the college-going culture/enrollment at the high school.

The schools chosen for this study demonstrated an accomplishment, therefore the nature of this study was to research the positive work the schools were doing to promote college-going culture and college enrollment supports. The risk to the subject was minimal and all identifying data was confidential. No high school or survey participant was identified by name, Identification Retrieval Number (IRN), or any other personally identifiable information. Candidates selected for an interview were audio recorded to maintain anonymity.

**Instrumentation & Data Sources**

A closed-ended questionnaire (survey) was used to gather data (Appendix G). The survey was broken into three areas based on research findings in Chapter 2, specifically the GO Centers (Stillisano, Waxman, Brown, and Alford, 2014). The three areas the researcher wanted to specifically investigate were: Area 1-College-going culture, Area 2-College enrollment supports, and Area 3-Financial aid supports.

Closed-ended questions were written to make the survey clearer to the respondent. This type of question also allowed for better facilitation of comparisons among the respondents since the answer choices were uniform (Rea and Parker, 2005). The survey’s questions were also designed to collect descriptive, behavioral, and attitudinal data about the participating high schools’ college enrollment practices. In their book, Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide, Rea and Parker believed the effort to fully understand the phenomena being studied was accomplished by using survey questions which solicited descriptive, behavioral, and attitudinal data (Rea and Parker, 2005).
The content of the questions on the survey was developed from high school college access programs and other research discussed in the Chapter 2. For example, Hoxby and Turner (2013) found providing intervention programs that included college application guidance, financial information, and application fee waivers resulted in significantly expanding college opportunities for underrepresented students. These findings were used to develop questions in Area 2 and 3 of the survey. Questions for Area 1-College-going culture, were developed from the findings of Hooker and Brand (2010). These researchers found attending a high school with a strong college-going culture was the most consistent predictor of whether students took steps to enroll in college (Hooker and Brand, 2010). The survey questions reflected the effective practices implemented in successful high school college access programs. Many of the successful college access programs used mentors, early visits to colleges, application support, and hands-on guidance when navigating the college application and the financial aid process. These practices became topics for survey questions.

The survey began with general identifying information followed by several questions grouped in three areas: Area 1-College-going culture, Area 2-College enrollment support, and Area 3-Financial aid support. Examples of the types of questions follow (full survey is found in Appendix G):

Area 1: College-going culture:

- On a scale of 1-4, 4 being the best, how would you rate the high school's college-going culture? (1-4)

- The high school identifies all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams. (Strongly disagree-Strongly agree)

- The high school publicly celebrates college-going successes (Rarely-Always)
• Teachers reach out to all students, especially underrepresented students to build college aspirations. (Strongly disagree-Strongly agree)

Area 2: College Enrollment Supports

• The high school utilizes the teaching staff to mentor students through the college application process. (Strongly disagree-Strongly agree)

• Hands-on assistance in completing college applications for underrepresented students is available. (Strongly disagree-Strongly agree)

• The high school regularly monitors students’ progress on their college enrollment timeline. (Does not monitor-More than 3 times/year)

Area 3: Financial Aid Supports

• Students understand college costs and financial aid available to them. (Very few-all, including underrepresented)

• The high school offers hands on assistance in completing financial aid forms especially for underrepresented students. (Strongly disagree-strongly agree)

• The high school teaches students how to complete a fictitious or actual FAFSA to assist their parents. (No-Yes)

For the purpose of data analysis, each response for survey questions was assigned a weighted scale ranging from 1 point to either 3 or 4 points (depending on the number of possible responses for each question). The 3 or 4 points were designated as being the most responsive to increasing college enrollment. The weighted responses for each of the three areas of the survey were totaled. From these three totals, a composite score was also derived by adding the totals from Areas 1, 2, and 3 of the survey. Questions having only two possible responses were assigned a value of 1 and 2 points. The survey also contained one short response question in each
area. The short response questions required the respondent to cite the schools most influential factor in creating a college-going culture, college enrollment support, and financial aid support. The open-ended questions helped add narrative when discussing the survey responses in Chapter 4.

Interviews of schools were requested based on the highest scores on the survey responses. The interview consisted of mostly open-ended questions, which delved deeper to identify specific practices, personnel, and resources the schools were using to promote college enrollment (Appendix H). The interview techniques were reproducible with an identical question bank used during each interview, and systematic in that the researcher interviewed the person identified on the survey as the interviewee. The interview was credible due to the consistent and reflective manner used to ask questions and solicit responses in an effort to generate truthful accounts of the high school’s efforts toward college enrollment. The researcher knew it would not be possible to use the exact follow-up questions for each interview since each interviewee’s experience and story was specific to his/her high school. Finally, the methods of how the interview data were collected were transparent to the interviewee and the reader of this study (Patton and Cochran, 2002). The researcher began each interview by providing background information of the study, its title, its purpose and the interviewees’ survey score that placed them in the category to be interviewed. Prior to beginning the actual interviews, the researcher explained the interview process, anonymity, and how the data would be analyzed.

The following is a sample of the types of questions used in the interview (full set of interview questions is found in Appendix H):

- What specific work is done with parents and families of underrepresented students to promote college enrollment? How is this work carried out?
• What role does the school leadership play in promoting college enrollment?
• What barriers has the school identified to increasing college enrollment and have these been overcome? How?

Data Collection Procedures

The three-page survey was stapled and mailed March 2015 to the 24 selected Ohio high schools using the U. S. Postal Service. An accompanying cover letter explained the survey and congratulated the school’s college enrollment efforts (Appendix I). The cover letter sought to answer several of the 12 questions cited by Alreck and Settle as important information to include in the cover letter explaining the survey. These questions were, “What is the survey about? Who wants to know? Why do they want to know? Why was my school chosen? How important is this? Will this be difficult? How long will this take? Will it cost anything? Will I be identified? How will the information I provide be used? Is there anything in it for me? When should the survey be completed?” (Alreck and Settle, 2004).

Respondents were allotted approximately one month to return the survey. Pre-paid return envelopes addressed to the researcher were provided for ease of returning the survey. A reminder email with the attached survey was sent one week prior to the April 20, 2015 deadline to all high schools whose survey had not been returned. A follow up email was sent after the deadline. The researcher made phone calls to each school who did not respond to emails to encourage completion of the survey. The researcher either left a voice message or spoke directly with the principal. Two final emails were sent to principals and school counselors to solicit interest in completing the survey. The researcher also created the survey in an online format hoping for further participation by non-responding districts. These districts were sent the online link. Once all respondents completed the survey, declined participation in the study, or did not respond at
all, the researcher collected and compiled the responses (described previously) of each survey to identify the high schools’ responsiveness to college-going culture, college enrollment supports, and financial aid supports (Appendices J and K).

Using the survey data as a screener, the schools with the highest scores totaled from all of the survey responses were invited to participate in an interview to more deeply identify their key practices, personnel, and resources related to the college-going culture, enrollment, and financial aid support. The researcher conducted the interviews accommodating the schools’ personnel availability. Face to face interviews were preferred but if the school wished, a phone interview was offered too. All interviews were recorded for accuracy in analyzing the information gathered in the interview, and all were face to face. The interviews took place in the interviewees’ offices. The interviewee was given time before recording the actual responses to review the questions and was informed of the study, its purpose, the interview format, and how the results would be analyzed and presented. He/she was informed that the responses were being recorded to ensure accuracy of the responses. The total time investment of each participant: high school leaders, school counselors or other personnel: 45 minutes to complete survey. Those participating in the survey and interview had a maximum time commitment of two hours.

Research Questions

1. What strategies, classes, or programs does the high school use to intentionally promote college aspirations, especially for underrepresented students?

2. What strategies, classes, or programs does the high school use to intentionally support students through the college enrollment process, especially for underrepresented students?
3. What strategies, classes, or programs does the high school use to intentionally support students through the financial aid process, especially for underrepresented students?

4. What do the leaders in the school do to promote a college-ready environment and pathway to college, especially for underrepresented students?

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis can be defined as “working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p.153). Using survey and interview responses, the researcher looked for patterns, concepts, and themes to determine links between the high schools’ practices and college enrollment.

Survey responses were summarized using descriptive statistics to report similarities, differences, and frequency of responses. Coding was used to analyze the three interviews. According to Saldaña, qualitative coding; a cyclical process, seeks to identify the codes that capture the essence of the research story. The codes, when similarly and regularly clustered, become categories which portray the codes connectedness (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher used descriptive, in vivo, and simultaneous coding when analyzing the transcripts from the three interviews. Descriptive codes summarize the primary topic of the excerpt. In vivo codes are so salient in thought the researcher does not wish to summarize the thought and instead uses the participant’s own language. Finally, simultaneous coding is the action of applying multiple codes to the same body of text.

By coding and categorizing the interview responses, the researcher compared and contrasted the high schools’ responses, and reflected on specific threads of data to deeply understand the practices, programs, and personnel supporting college enrollment in each of the
interviewees’ high schools. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into narrative written format. Multi-phased readings were conducted on the transcripts for the purpose of thematic analysis (Appendix J). A first reading provided the researcher an overview of the interview responses and a cursory idea of descriptive, in vivo, and simultaneous codes. Subsequent readings analyzed the text for categories in which themes emerged by categorizing the coded phrases.

Assumptions

Participants in this study had been purposely selected due to the positive performance with college enrollment of their graduates, therefore the researcher assumed the responses reflected an overall positive attitude. The participants responding to the survey were a the persons most embedded with the college enrollment rate in each high school and therefore had honest and accurate responses to the survey and interview questions. The respondents’ extreme pride in their school and profession may generate personal bias toward their work when responding to the survey.

Another assumption was the most knowledgeable person regarding college-going culture, college enrollment support, and financial aid support was the same person completing the survey.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This study sought first to identify practices in Ohio high schools whose college enrollment rate and demographics suggested intentional efforts toward supporting underrepresented students’ college aspirations, college enrollment, and financial aid applications. All of the high schools in the study reported a better than average college enrollment rate while serving greater than 50% low SES students, who might also represent minority and/or first-generation college students. Once the schools were selected for the study, specific and/or general programs, practices, and personnel in the selected Ohio high schools were examined using a close-ended question survey (Appendix G) which focused on three areas:

Area 1, College-going culture
Area 2, College enrollment supports
Area 3, Financial aid supports.

The survey was used as a screening tool to select schools for interview too. The researcher wanted to further understand and identify practices that supported and/or increased college enrollment. The schools selected to be interviewed responded with a higher level of intentional practices, programs, and/or personnel dedicated to increasing college enrollment than other survey respondents. The degree of intentional practices was derived from analysis of the survey responses explained later in this chapter and shown in Appendices K and L.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample used in this study consisted of 24 Ohio public high schools who met the following criteria: an average poverty enrollment of 50% or greater during 2011-2013, an average of 50 graduates or greater over the same years, and an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s public two and four-year colleges from 2011-2013. These 24 schools
demonstrated an equal to or greater college enrollment rate than the state’s average yet, did so with greater than 50% poverty. It is important to note the 24 schools may have had a higher college enrollment rate due to enrollment in out-of-state and private universities and the difference in college enrollment data collection from high schools and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (as discussed previously in Research Design, Chapter 3).

Once the 24 schools were selected for the study, a survey attached to a letter of explanation was mailed to each principal. An electronic communication was sent to the superintendents of the districts to inform the district leader of the invitation to participate in the study. Eight high schools completed and returned the survey. The researcher communicated with the other 16 high schools via email, phone messages, and created an online version of the survey for convenience. No other surveys were returned to the researcher although multiple forms of encouragement to participate were provided to the non-responding schools. One high school required the researcher to submit an application to conduct research. This application was denied approval for the reason that all of the high school’s juniors and seniors were already enrolled in college courses full-time. Therefore, the review committee of this particular high school felt Early College practice would skew the researcher’s data. Another high school declined participation via email citing no specific reason. The remaining 14 high schools never responded. Nonetheless, the overall return rate of the survey was 33%

The 24 high schools selected for the study came from various typologies. The Ohio Department of Education synthesizes demographic information of each Ohio school district to categorize them into a typology as listed in Table 1. The 24 high schools selected for the study are listed in the far right column according to their typology.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Grouping</th>
<th>Full Descriptor</th>
<th>Districts Within Typology</th>
<th>Students Within Typology</th>
<th>Schools Selected for the Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural - High Student Poverty &amp; Small Student Population</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>8 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural - Average Student Poverty &amp; Very Small Student Population</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>Small Town - Low Student Poverty &amp; Small Student Population</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>Small Town - High Student Poverty &amp; Average Student Population Size</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>5 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban - Low Student Poverty &amp; Average Student Population Size</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban - Very Low Student Poverty &amp; Large Student Population</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>240,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban - High Student Poverty &amp; Average Student Population</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>210,000</td>
<td>2 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban - Very High Student Poverty &amp; Very Large Student Population</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>9 Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Typologies allow schools to compare their student achievement, discipline, attendance, graduation, and other measures with similar districts (same typology). Of the 24 high schools’ districts, nine were urban with a very high student poverty and a very large student population. Two districts were urban with high student poverty and an average student population. Five schools’ districts were designated as small town with high student poverty and an average student population size. Eight of the schools’ districts were designated as rural schools with high student poverty and a small student population.

Table 2 shows the typologies of the eight schools who responded to the survey and included in this study. Of the eight high schools responding to the survey, three of the districts were categorized as urban with a very high student poverty and a very large student population. Two of the schools’ districts were urban with high student poverty and an average student population. One was designated as small town with high student poverty and an average student population size. Two of the eight districts were categorized as rural schools with high student poverty and a small student population. One district whose high school participated in the interview process was categorized as urban with very high student poverty and a very large student population. The other two districts whose high schools participated in the interview portion of the study were categorized as rural with high student poverty and a small student population.
Table 2

Typology of Districts whose high schools participated in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Grouping</th>
<th>Full Descriptor</th>
<th>Eight Schools in Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural - High Student Poverty &amp; Small Student Population</td>
<td>2 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>Small Town - High Student Poverty &amp; Average Student Population Size</td>
<td>1 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban - High Student Poverty &amp; Average Student Population</td>
<td>2 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban - Very High Student Poverty &amp; Very Large Student Population</td>
<td>3 Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the demographics of the 24 high schools selected for the study. These schools met the criteria selected by the researcher to create a purposive sample. The criteria included: an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s two and four-year public colleges, an average of 50% or greater poverty rate (designated as Economically Disadvantaged in Table 3), and an average of 50 or more graduates from 2011-2013. The average number of college enrollees and graduates for each of the 24 high schools is shown in Table 3. The average percentage of college enrollees and economically disadvantaged in each of the high schools is also shown in Table 3. It is important to note the actual number of college enrollment and percentage of college enrollment for each of the high schools may not be accurately reflected in Table 3 since the college enrollment data only identifies college enrollment in Ohio’s public two and four-year university system as reported by the Ohio Board of Regents.
### Table 3

Demographics of 24 High Schools Selected for Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 B</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 C</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 D</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 E</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 F</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 G</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 H</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 I</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 J</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 K</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 L</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 N</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 O</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 P</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Q</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 R</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 S</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 T</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 U</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 V</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 W</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 X</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a closer look at the demographics which define each of the eight schools responding to the survey, Table 4 outlines the actual average percentage of poverty (designated as Economically Disadvantaged), the college enrollment in Ohio’s two and four-year public universities, and the average number of graduates from each high school from 2011-2013. It is important to note the actual college enrollment of the eight high schools may not be accurately reflected in Table 4 as described previously. During the interviews, each of the three high schools indicated having a higher percentage of college enrollment and poverty. The interview participants cited a higher college enrollment due to enrollment in out-of-state and private universities and colleges, and of their tracking of admission rates rather than the actual enrollment rate. The interviewees also noted the poverty rate was higher than the data provided by the Ohio Department of Education due to the fact that some students do not apply for free or reduced lunch benefits when they get to the high school.

Table 4
Demographics of Eight High Schools Responding to the Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>AVG # Graduates 2011-2013 as reported by Ohio Department of Education</th>
<th>AVG % College Enrollment 2011-2013 as reported by Ohio Board of Regents</th>
<th>AVG % Economic Disadvantaged 2011-2013 as reported by Ohio Department of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C High School</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F High School</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I High School</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K High School</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M High School</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P High School</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R High School</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X High School</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data analyzed from survey responses served as a screener to select participants to be interviewed from the eight responding high schools, and provided rich information about the practices of the eight high schools who served minority, and low SES students, many of whom were also first-generation college students.

By assigning a consistent value (described below) to each school’s responses on the survey, composite scores were calculated and compared among all eight of the schools. This data informed the researcher of which high schools to select for participation in the interview portion of the study. The totals of the scoring are displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5**

Survey Results by Area 1, 2, and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>Area 1 College-going Culture</th>
<th>Area 2 College Enrollment Supports</th>
<th>Area 3 Financial Aid Supports</th>
<th>Composite Total</th>
<th>Composite %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>27/46 59</td>
<td>17/31 55</td>
<td>8/14 57</td>
<td>52/91</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>28/46 61</td>
<td>16/31 52</td>
<td>5/14 36</td>
<td>49/91</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>21/46 46</td>
<td>17/31 55</td>
<td>10/14 71</td>
<td>48/91</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K/Derek</td>
<td>27/46 59</td>
<td>24/31 77</td>
<td>5/14 36</td>
<td>56/91</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/Thomas</td>
<td>26/46 57</td>
<td>21/31 68</td>
<td>9/14 64</td>
<td>56/91</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>20/46 43</td>
<td>19/31 61</td>
<td>9/14 64</td>
<td>48/91</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R/Laura</td>
<td>36/46 78</td>
<td>24/31 77</td>
<td>13/14 93</td>
<td>73/91</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X/No response</td>
<td>36/46 78</td>
<td>19/31 61</td>
<td>6/14 43</td>
<td>61/91</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eligibility for selection in the interview process was based on the highest overall points on the survey; a composite score. Table 5 shows this data (schools selected for the interview are
in bold type; K, M, R, and X). These four schools had the highest composite score from the analysis and were chosen to be interviewed in an effort to further identify the practices that supported students through college aspirations to completed applications. Three interviews were conducted. School X did not respond to repeated requests (voice and electronic) to be interviewed.

To calculate each high schools’ level of effort for creating a college-going culture-Area 1, college enrollment supports-Area 2, and financial aid supports-Area 3, and a composite score a value was assigned to each possible response on the 36 question survey. The efforts in promoting college enrollment were weighted least to most for each answer on the survey, an example is seen in Appendix K. As an example, a question requiring a strongly disagree to strongly agree response was weighted as follows:

- Strongly agree = 2 points
- Agree = 1 point
- Disagree and strongly disagree = 0 points.

Likewise, if the question required a simple yes or no, points were assigned as follows:

- Yes response = 1 point
- No response = 0 points

The three open-ended questions were not assigned any point value but provided contextual data reported in the narrative of Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Once point values were assigned for each close-ended question, the researcher totaled possible points for Area 1, College-going culture, Area 2, College enrollment supports, and Area 3 Financial aid supports and compared the possible points to the high school’s actual points for each area. The high schools’ actual points and possible points for each area are reported as a
fraction in the columns marked Area 1, Area 2, and Area 3 (Table 5). The actual points are represented in the numerator and the possible points are shown in the denominator.

Next, to easily compare the high schools’ responses for each area, a percentage (as shown in columns marked (%) in Table 5) was determined by dividing each school’s total points for Area 1, 2, and 3 by the possible points in each area. For example, Schools R and X’s responses for Area 1-College-going culture were calculated to be 78%. For clarity in what this percentage means, Schools R and X’s responses designated their level of effort in creating a college-going culture and were the highest among the eight schools responding to the survey. Whereas, School I’s responses in Area 3-Financial aid supports measured the highest among the eight schools at 71%. School I ranked highest in its efforts to provide financial aid supports.

Finally, the composite column of Table 5 was derived by the adding the actual points for each school in Area 1, 2, and 3 and dividing it by the total possible points of Area 1, 2, and 3. As an example, the composite total of School C is 52. The total points possible for the composite is 91, giving School C a 57% overall measure of its efforts at supporting and promoting its students’ college aspirations to completed applications.

In a deeper look at Table 5, the overall college-going culture of the eight schools in Area 1 was as follows: two schools’ responses ranged from 43-46% effort to promote a college-going culture; four schools’ responses ranged from 57-61%, while two schools’ responses were a solid 78% effort in promoting a college-going culture. Further descriptions of eight schools efforts toward promoting a college-going culture is discussed using Table 6 and a narrative following Table 6.

Five schools’ responses ranged from 52-61% effort toward practices for providing college enrollment support, while three schools’ responses ranged from 68-77% effort in Area 2-
College Enrollment Supports. Further descriptions of eight schools’ efforts at offering college enrollment supports is discussed using Table 7 and a narrative following Table 7.

Finally, the breakdown of ranges reflecting the eight schools’ efforts toward practices dedicated to financial aid supports was as follows: three schools’ responses ranged from 36-43%; three schools’ responses ranged from 57-64%; and two schools’ responses ranged from 71-93%. Further descriptions of eight schools’ efforts toward promoting a college-going culture is discussed using Table 8 and a narrative following Table 8.

Beyond providing information of which schools to select for interviewing, the analysis of each response from the survey provided the researcher with important patterns and trends of the eight participating high schools as a collective group. The researcher also wanted to determine the collective group’s level of efforts by question, and in each of the three areas of the survey. By analyzing the collective responses for each question and then the areas, the researcher was able to identify strengths, weaknesses, and patterns present in the Ohio high schools participating in the study. The survey questions and responses are shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

The text of the question along with the range of possible responses is included for the reader’s convenience and are located in the far left column of Tables 6, 7, and 8. The eight high schools are designated in columns A-H. The maximum point value a school could earn for each question is written in the column labeled Total Points. The point value of the eight schools’ responses for each question is reported in each row under the respective high school shown in columns A-H of Tables 6, 7, and 8. The reader can also view preliminary work of this analysis of the group’s responses by questions in Appendix L.

To determine the level of efforts toward promoting college enrollment as a collective group (the eight schools) for each question, the researcher tallied the greatest and second greatest
responses for each survey question from the eight high schools. Responses for each close-ended question were assigned a range of:

- 0-1
- 0-2
- 0-3
- 1-4

The higher number in each of these ranges signified a higher degree of intentional practices/effort toward promoting college enrollment and the total possible points for that question.

Once the ranges were set for each question, the researcher selected the greatest and second greatest number for each question to calculate the collective group’s responses. For example if a question was assigned a range of 1-4, the researcher considered any schools responding with a 3 or 4 in the calculating the results. This result was divided by eight (total number of schools) to determine the percentage recorded in the final column of Tables 6, 7, and 8. If questions required a simple yes or no, the researcher counted the number of yes responses and divided the number of the yes responses by eight to determine the percentage recorded in the final column. To clarify what the final column (%) represents, the researcher determined it was important to analyze each question by the collective group’s (eight schools) responses to identify specific areas of strength, weakness, and commonalities and differences in how the schools promoted college enrollment especially for their underrepresented students.

The researcher then used (*) in the final column to designate levels of intentional practices for increasing college enrollment for each question. This is coded as:

* - least
**- moderate
***- most.

The level of least, moderate, and most was assigned after the survey responses were analyzed and compared among all of the questions on the survey. The percentages for all of the questions ranged from 13% to 100%, therefore, the researcher assigned 13-49% as having least (*) efforts or practices for promoting college enrollment, 50-74% as moderate (**), and 75-100% as having the most (***) effort or practices for increasing college enrollment.

As an example of the calculations used for each survey question, the researcher used question seven in Table 6. Question 7 reads: The high school identifies all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams (strongly disagree—strongly agree). The highest score a school could have earned from its response was two points by responding ‘strongly agree’. The next highest score a school could have earned from its response to Question 7 was one point by responding ‘agree’ (see total points column for question seven). The schools’ responses for question seven were as follows: 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, and 0 (see schools A-H for question seven). Therefore, the researcher counted any twos or ones; there were no twos. Four schools responded ‘agree’ which was the second greatest possible response. There were four schools who responded either disagree or strongly disagree and earned a 0 for this response. Thus, the calculation was four high schools who responded agree divided by total number of high schools completing the survey which was eight to determine 50% level of effort or practices in identifying all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams. This process of calculating was done for each question of the survey except the three open-ended questions.
### Table 6

Survey Responses by Question-Area 1, College-Going Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College-going culture question</th>
<th>Total possible</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>Level of Intentionality %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. On a scale of 1-4, 4 being the best, how would you rate the high school's college-going culture?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>63%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The high school tracks the college enrollment rate for all students. No enrollment data - more than 3 years of data.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>63%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The high school assists students develop and sustain college aspirations throughout high school. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>***100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students understand the connection between earning a post-secondary degree or certification and future earnings. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>***100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. All high school guidance and administrative staff believe students should attend some sort of post-secondary education. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>***100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The majority of the high school's teachers believe students should attend some sort of post-secondary education. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>***100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The high school identifies all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The high school publicly celebrates college-going successes. Rarely - Always.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>***100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Guidance for college and a career are mostly conducted by guidance counselors (GC), administrators and GCs, teachers and GCs, or all of the above.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>***100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Who would you say has the most responsibility in promoting a college enrollment in the school? Check all that apply: Students, Teachers, GCs, &amp; Administrators.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In the past few years, participation in college entrance exams is best described by: some eligible students take the exam, all eligible students take PLAN and PSAT, all eligible students take the ACT or SAT, or all eligible students take both the PSAT/PLAN and the ACT/SAT.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Teachers are aware of underrepresented students' performance on college admission exams (PLAN, PSAT, ACT, SAT). Teachers do not have this data - Each teacher is aware of students' performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Teachers reach out to all students, especially underrepresented students to build college aspirations. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.

14. Staff members actively advocate for parents and families to help support their child's college aspirations and career goals. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.

15. Each grade has programs or practices which promote post-secondary education planning. Only 9/10 grade, only 11/12 grade, all high school grades, or all high school grades and 8th grade.

16. All students have a post-secondary plan which is reviewed and monitored. Plans do not exist - Plans are reviewed and monitored more than 1 time/year.

17. The school offers many workshops (day/night) to help parents with financial aid, applications and college searches. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.

---

**Area 1, College-Going Culture**

This area of the survey (Table 6) investigated high school practices designed or implemented to promote a culture of high expectations, support, and sustainability of students’ post-secondary aspirations. All eight of the schools either strongly agreed or agreed their high
school assisted students to develop and sustain college aspirations throughout high school, and that teachers, school counselors, and administrators believed students should attend some type of post-secondary education. The participating high schools responded they almost always or always publicly celebrated college-going successes in a public manner at the school. Seven of the eight schools responded that school counselors, teachers, and administrators (all three groups) were important stakeholders in guiding students for college and career. Yet thirty-eight percent of the respondents identified more than two of these same stakeholders (school counselors, teachers, and administrators) as having the most responsibility in promoting college enrollment in the school.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated agreement to strong agreement that teachers reached out to all students, especially underrepresented students, to build college aspirations. Only thirteen percent responded the teachers were aware of their underrepresented students’ performance on pre-college and college entrance exams. Twenty-five percent stated all eligible students took both college pre-entrance exams and entrance exams. Fifty percent of the eight schools identified all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams. The majority of the schools tracked the college enrollment rate for all of their students, citing they had at least three years of enrollment data. Seventy-five percent of the schools stated they had programs or practices promoting post-secondary planning in all high school grades (9-12). Only 38% stated their students had post-secondary plans that were monitored. Every school indicated the staff actively advocated for the parents and families to help support their children’s college aspirations and career goals. This aligns to the majority of the schools responding they had a strong college-going culture. The majority of the schools agreed and strongly agreed they offered many workshops (day and night) to help parents with financial aid, college applications,
and college searches. All of the respondents believed their students understood the value of post-secondary education for future opportunities and earnings.

In the final question of Area 1, College-going culture participants were asked to identify the single most important practice their high school did to create a college-going culture. Their responses were varied and focused. The common thread through each of their responses was three-fold: students were expected to have post-secondary experiences while in high school, students were given opportunities to explore the college world and its requirements, and programs or people were designated to help them plan for college throughout their high school experience.

Table 7
Survey Responses by Question-Area 2, College Enrollment Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Enrollment Supports Questions</th>
<th>Total possible</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>Level of Intentionality %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. To inform students and families of college-going events and deadlines the school uses...check all that apply: Paper newsletters, local newspaper, school website, online newsletters sent to students and families, social media.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>63%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The high school hosts annual college and career fairs for all students. Seniors only, juniors and seniors, open to all high school students, or open to all high school students and 8th grade students.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The high school sponsors college visits for underrepresented students. Does not sponsor visits - Sets more than one sponsored visit.</td>
<td>2 2 0 2 2 2 0 2 0</td>
<td><strong>63%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. The high school utilizes the teaching staff to mentor students through the college application process. No - Yes.</td>
<td>1 1 0 0 0 0 0 1 0</td>
<td>*25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The high school utilizes community organizations to mentor students through the college application process. No - Yes.</td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>***100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Underrepresented students understand college eligibility, the application process, and deadlines for admission. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.</td>
<td>2 2 0 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>***88%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Timelines for the college enrollment process are communicated clearly and frequently with all students. Very few have timelines - All students have college timelines.</td>
<td>4 3 2 2 4 3 2 3 2</td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Websites, classes and/or programs are used to help all students with college planning. Check all that apply: websites, workbooks, classes, &amp; programs.</td>
<td>4 1 2 1 2 2 2 3 1</td>
<td><strong>13%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. The high school offers intervention for underrepresented students when...Check all that apply: writing application essays, completing applications, completing financial aid forms, selecting colleges.</td>
<td>4 3 3 2 4 4 2 4 4</td>
<td>***75%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
28. Hands-on assistance in completing college applications for underrepresented students is available. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree. 2 1 1 1 1 2 1 2 2 ***100%

29. The high school regularly monitors students' progress on their college enrollment timeline. Does not monitor - Monitors more than 3 times/year. 3 2 2 0 3 3 3 3 3 ***88%

---

**Area 2, College enrollment supports**

This area of the survey (Table 7) investigated practices supporting students throughout the college selection and application process. Every school stated it used community organizations to mentor students through the college application process, only two of the eight schools used staff as mentors. Along with mentorship, the underrepresented students in these eight schools received hands-on assistance in completing college applications. Three-fourths of the responding schools offered intervention for underrepresented students when writing application essays, completing applications, financial aid forms, and selecting colleges. Eighty-eight percent of the schools agreed or strongly agreed their students understood college eligibility, the application process, and deadlines for admission. This same percent of schools monitored all of their students’ progress toward college enrollment more than once each year.

Understanding the demographics of their students, 63% of the schools sponsored college visits for underrepresented students. Seven of the eight schools indicated they used more than one source of media to inform students and parents of college deadlines and events. Many respondents indicated they used local newspapers, social media, the school website, and electronic and paper communication. Only half of the schools reported that students had
timelines dedicated to the college enrollment process. All of the schools reported using at least one or two resources to assist the college enrollment process such as software, classes, workbooks, or websites.

The single most important practice the high schools cited in Area 2, College enrollment supports included educating students and parents about post-secondary choices though college visits and building relationships with college admission representatives. Communication to both students and parents, along with expectations were also cited as important to supporting students through the application process. A final commonality among the eight respondents was the focus on matching and monitoring coursework to prepare the students for post-secondary eligibility.

**Table 8**

Survey Responses by Question-Area 3, Financial Aid Enrollment Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Aid Supports Questions</th>
<th>Total possible</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>Level of Intentionality %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. The high school tracks data of financial aid related to student need. No data exists - School has more than 3 years of data.</td>
<td>3 0 0 1 0 3 0 3 0</td>
<td>3 0 0 1 0 3 0 3 0</td>
<td>*25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Students understand college costs and financial aid available to them. Very few students - Almost all students, including underrepresented students.</td>
<td>4 4 2 3 2 3 3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 2 3 2 3 3 3 3</td>
<td>**63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
33. The high school organizes workshops for parents and students to inform them of college affordability for: seniors, juniors and seniors, sophomores, juniors and seniors, or all high school students.

34. The high school offers hands on assistance in completing financial aid forms especially for underrepresented students. Strongly disagree - Strongly agree.

35. The high school teaches students how to complete a fictitious/or actual FAFSA to assist their parents. No - Yes.

36. Total responsiveness toward financial aid supports.

---

Area 3, Financial Aid Supports

This final area of the survey (Table 8) investigated the amount of financial aid support each school was intentionally practicing. Aspirations and applications cannot be realized by students, especially low socio-economic students unless there is financial aid available. Stephan and Rosenbaum (2009) found even though the FAFSA application process had issues with complexity and due dates, students who completed the financial aid application had a 77% enrollment in college. Those who did not complete the aid application had a 40% enrollment (Stephan and Rosenbaum, 2009). Schools in this survey did not typically track financial aid data related to student need, with only two of the eight schools citing their compilation of more than three years of financial aid data. Financial aid information and support for students and families was mostly directed at seniors and juniors. The majority of schools believed their students,
including underrepresented students, understood the cost of post-secondary education and available financial aid. All but one school agreed or strongly agreed their schools offered hands-on assistance in completing financial aid forms, especially for underrepresented students. Three-fourths of the schools responded they actually taught students how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

When asked what the single most important practice the high school did to support the financial aid process the emerging practices included teaching students at school how to complete the FAFSA, utilizing outside agencies and colleges to assist students and parents, and hosting meetings for information and support on financial aid.

The surveyed completed by the eight participating schools offered much insight as to what the high schools could do better and what they could celebrate. The survey questions probed into their efforts and practices at promoting college enrollment, and were researched based practices shown to positively impact college enrollment especially for underrepresented students. The data from each high school’s responses found in Table 5 and the question analysis found in Tables 6, 7, and 8 provided insight for high schools to evaluate current practices of which they did not score as high, and continue their efforts in areas where they fared well.

**Interviews**

Interviewed participants were selected based on their responses on the 36-question survey. Their responses indicated a higher degree of effort in promoting college enrollment compared to the responses of the other high schools described earlier in this chapter. High schools K, M, R and, X were selected for the interview portion of the study. High School X did not respond to multiple requests for an interview. Pseudonyms for all participants and their schools were assigned. No identifiable information from these participants was revealed in the
discussion. The school counselor from High School K was identified as Derek. The principal from High School M was identified as Thomas, and the school counselor from High School R was identified as Laura.

Consent to be interviewed was obtained by responding with signatures to statements on the survey: consent to participation in this study, and consent to participate in further research on this topic through an interview (Appendix G). Upon completion of the recorded interview sessions, the researcher transcribed each of the three interviews verbatim (Appendix J). It is important for the reader to understand that due to the relaxed conversational tone of the interviews, some of the written quotations are grammatically incorrect. The researcher wished to capture the participants’ message by transcribing verbatim and did not want to change the meaning by manipulating the conversational words into written words. The three participants are further explored.

Derek

Derek is the only school counselor of a small rural Ohio high school, identified as High School K. He provided guidance services to freshmen through seniors with a case-load of nearly 400 students. He was a veteran educator and held various positions in public schools. Derek has a Master of Science in Education and Allied Professions, and holds a professional license through the Ohio Department of Education. Derek taught 11 years and served as school counselor the past four years. Derek also coached 12 years. Those sports included football, basketball and track. Derek shared his belief that coaching and teaching experiences have helped him adjust to being a relatively new school counselor. Derek believed his student population is nearly 70% poverty which reflected a higher percentage than the 54% poverty as reported by Ohio Department of Education. He attributed the lower percentage of lunch program students as
reported by Ohio Department of Education to high school students not taking advantage of the school lunch program due to the stigma attached to being on the program. Derek stated half of his students would fall under the first-generation college student category. These two groups at Derek’s high school, low socioeconomic and first-generation college students, are considered underrepresented students in colleges. The high school typically graduates 100 students for a 94% graduation rate. Of these graduates, approximately 49% were college bound.

Derek is a very reflective person who often shared examples of changing his opinions or ways of approaching students due to reflecting and assessing the effectiveness of his messages, means of getting through to students, school sponsored events designed to promote college aspirations, and the students’ efforts toward successful enrollment. During the interview, Derek shared his principal uses a Twitter account with parents, community, and high school students. He would like to start using tweets to inform parents, community, and students of the college acceptance letters when the seniors receive them (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015). His ability to reflect on his role and responsibilities of promoting college aspirations, and supporting all students through the college application and financial aid process enabled Derek to continuously improve the college enrollment process at High School K.

Laura

Laura is a veteran educator and current school counselor of an urban high school, identified as High School R. The high school’s population is 650 students with a poverty rate greater than 95%, and nearly 99% African American. Again, the Ohio Department of Education reported an 85% poverty rate yet Laura’s explanation echoed Derek’s explanation of high school students not as likely to take advantage of the free and reduced lunch program at their schools. Laura is responsible for juniors and seniors while her colleague provides guidance services for
Laura clearly stated that 100% of the graduates were expected to go to college, were accepted at a college, and were ready to go to college. However, 80% of the graduates follow through during the summer and are post-secondary bound. She shared that quite a few of the students attend private colleges with a large number of these (15%) attending a small private local university. She shared this large number of students attending the same university created the feel of a cohort, and attributed their staying all four years to this cohort connection (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

Laura has been the school counselor for four years at High School R located in a large urban city. She holds many diverse licenses from the Ohio Department of Education: pupil services, vocational education, middle and high school principal and comprehensive high school teaching license in business education. She has college hours well beyond her master’s degree and at one point began her doctoral studies. Laura wears her job on her sleeve. She is direct, adamant, and persistent when corralling her juniors and seniors to be college ready. Laura gave students her cell phone number and worked extra days in the summer to assure a smooth transition from the application process to the actual enrollment. She shared a story from her summer.

I’m still dabbling around in some scheduling and things. But the kids come back to me; where they plan to go to WU. They have their scholarship but whatever, don’t follow through and they want to talk to me. I would say most of the graduating seniors have my phone number and if they don’t they know who does. So, I’ll get cell phone calls all the time, all weekend. Whatever, just with the questions asking; how do I do this? What happens if I don’t have enough money for dorm room deposit? Then we solve that. I feel
comfortable answering all hours, whenever you want to call me; it’s fine. But they (students) want to know (answers to their questions and how to take care of enrollment issues that arise). I think it’s a matter of being available (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

Laura is tired when she gets home but feels as though she is making a difference one child at a time (Laura, personal communication, June 2015).

Thomas

Thomas is the high school principal of a small rural Ohio high school, identified as High School M. He does not have an assistant principal but relies heavily on a newly selected school counselor whom he worked with at a previous district. Thomas holds a master’s plus 30 hours, an elementary teaching and principal license, and a superintendent license through the Ohio Department of Education. Thomas taught for three years and has been an administrator for the past 15 years. Thomas also served in the United States Army for 13 years. He serves on the Children Services board, is a volunteer firefighter, and a 4H advisor in his community. He holds certification as a Master Sheet Metal Fabricator. Thomas is very proud of his family’s military service and his office reflects this pride. There are military photos of his grandfather, father, and brother prominently hanging on the wall. He shared his military experience with his junior and senior students and expressed to his students that his college degrees were possible because of his military service.

Thomas is a first-generation college graduate and a second-generation high school graduate. He shared his passion for helping students sustain college aspirations and become college bound came from his own background, “Being a person who grew up in poverty and
being a first-generation college student means a lot to me to let these kids know they can do it. It’s possible if they want to go to college” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Thomas formerly worked at a high school which used the GEAR UP program and although he missed the opportunities and financial support afforded by the GEAR UP program, he used his knowledge of GEAR UP at his current high school to focus on college aspirations to completed applications for his students. This program, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) provided individual counseling on college preparation, college fairs, career awareness activities, 8th grade visits to college campuses, and parent institutes in an effort to increase the college-going rate for underrepresented students. High School M’s enrollment of freshmen to seniors was approximately 450 students. The students Thomas served are 50-60% poverty. The range in these percentages was the same reason as Derek and Laura’s explanation; he believed high school students were reluctant to apply to receive the federal lunch program. The school graduated approximately 89% of its students with 60-65% of the graduates entering some type of post-secondary education. Three to five percent of the graduating seniors entered the military.

**Instrument Validity and Reliability**

Considering the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher addressed the reliability and validity of the research using the four criteria of Trustworthiness: Credibility, Dependability, Conformability and Transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) which have become accepted criteria for qualitative research. According to Seale (1999), reliability in qualitative research is dependent on trustworthiness. As Leininger wrote of qualitative research (as cited by Brink, 1993), one important means to establish trustworthiness is for the researcher to be trusted by the participants (Brink, 1993). The researcher believed this was easily achieved
due to the nature of the study; participants were selected for their positive impact on promoting college enrollment.

Credibility is a reflection of the accuracy of data interpretation. Credibility was addressed using triangulation, what Creswell (2013) called, “corroborating evidence from different sources” (p. 251). Triangulation ensured at least two components of data were represented in the study. The researcher used individual interviews, a survey, and supporting data reported by ODE and ODHE. By analyzing the results of the surveys in relation to the interviewees’ responses, and the data sets from ODE and ODHE, the researcher was able to build a body of evidence which reflected the study’s purpose of identifying practices, programs, and/or personnel employed by Ohio high schools’ whose college enrollment rate suggested intentional efforts in promoting college enrollment. The researcher also used member checking to further the study’s credibility. Lincoln and Guba, (1985) referred to member checking as a critical technique to establish credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher used some of the answers from the respondents’ survey during the interview of the participants as a means to member check prior survey responses to interview responses. As an example, in his interview, Derek repeatedly discussed the role of the entire school staff in supporting the students’ college aspirations to completed applications. His survey response reflected this same practice. On his survey he responded that students, teachers, school counselors and administrators had the most responsibility in promoting college enrollment in the school…he checked them all. Laura talked a lot about the strong college culture in her high school during the interview. Her survey responses mostly strongly agreed with the questions in Area 1-College-going culture. Finally, during Thomas’ interview, he spoke of his students explicit needs due to their generational poverty. Thomas responded on his survey that his high school offered intervention for its
underrepresented students when writing application essays, completing college applications and financial aid forms, and selecting colleges...he selected them all. The researcher also used paraphrasing to verify the content of some of the interviewees’ response during the interviews. The researcher did not ask the participants to review their transcribed interviews to ensure accuracy which would have provided another layer of credibility.

Credibility was also established through peer scrutiny. Experts examined the researcher’s overall plan for the study, the selected data collection tools, and the content of the questions for the interviews and survey. These experts have terminal degrees in education and provided several perspectives challenging the researcher’s assumptions and analysis strategies. Finally, credibility was addressed from the researcher’s choice of content of the questions. Content was taken from the researcher’s findings of successful high school college access programs, and other research discussed in Chapter 2. Likewise the 13 open-ended questions used for the three interviews were taken from the researcher’s findings and knowledge of successful programs implemented by high schools to promote a college going culture, supporting students through the application process, and offering assistance through the financial aid process. Components of Talent Search and GO Centers, and other successful college access programs described in Chapter 2 were specifically woven into the survey and interview questions to identify the intentional practices of Ohio high schools toward promoting college enrollment especially for their underrepresented students.

Dependability involved determining how faithfully the data analysis reflected actual survey responses on the survey and what was said during the interviews, how faithfully the explanation of the research method reflected the actual methodology, and how faithfully the researcher assimilated advice and perspectives of peers when conducting the study and analyzing
data. The researcher used peer debriefing to address dependability. As the study progressed, peers (experts in the field of education all holding terminal degrees) reviewed the methodology, the data, and the analysis of the data. Additionally, an audit trail (see Appendices J, K, L, M and N) ensured the data collection, the researcher’s thinking about the data, and the original data was preserved. Whereby, an outside evaluator could trace the data from the beginning (as it was exactly reported or stated by the participants) to the end (as it was analyzed and interpreted by the researcher) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability seeks to determine if the data and the analysis thereof was authentic. This was established through the use of direct quotes, assigning consistent point values to each survey response among the eight respondents, and sorting and organizing the codes to establish patterns and frequencies of the codes (Appendices M and N). Direct quotes were frequently used in an effort to highlight the passion of the interviewees’ work and commitment to their students. They were also used to ensure as much as possible that the findings from the study were in fact the result of the thoughts, knowledge, and experiences of Derek, Laura, and Thomas, rather than the preferences of the researcher.

Another aspect of confirmability is the ability of the reader to follow the research and the paths taken by the researcher throughout the study. A detailed methodology should allow the reader to determine the acceptance of the data and the constructs emerging from the data. An audit trail, also allowed the reader to trace the research step-by-step, which should add to the trustworthiness of the study (Shenton, 2004). This trail offered the reader a picture of the data collection process, the researcher’s thinking about the data, and the preservation of the original data (Appendices K, L M and N).
Finally, the last criterion for measuring trustworthiness of a qualitative study is transferability. Transferability establishes the extent to which the study and findings transfer to other settings (Creswell, 2013). Through the use of rich, thick description of the schools’ demographics and the participants, readers can determine if the information from the study would transfer to other situations (Creswell, 2013). More importantly, as the reader poured through the rich, thick descriptions of the interviews, the reader might determine a confidence level in transferring the results and conclusions to his/her own high school. The results and conclusions might also provide sufficient description of practices and efforts toward promoting college enrollment especially for underrepresented students. This may allow the reader to understand and enable him/her to compare the practices and efforts described in the research with those he/she has used in his/her own high school; allowing the reader to draw his/her own assessment of the significance of the findings and their potential impact on his/her school’s efforts to promote college enrollment.

**Categories and Theme**

Qualitative coding was used to analyze the three interviews. Using descriptive, in vivo and simultaneous coding the researcher sought to capture the essence of the participants’ thoughts about creating a college-going culture, and college enrollment and financial aid supports. After several cycles of coding, 63 codes were identified (Appendices M and N). Some of these codes included parent education, campus visits, the importance of choice, community support, relationships, hope, ‘it’s the dream’, ‘snag them’, poverty, exposure, mindset of going to college, poverty, fear, accessibility, barriers, ‘making it real’, educating students, persistence, flexibility, and knowing students. The researcher used the advice from Richards and Morse, “If it moves, code it” (Richards and Morse, 2007, p. 146).
The similar and regularly occurring codes were then clustered to become the following categories:

- Various exposure opportunities to choices and post-high school opportunities
- Multiple opportunities for education about post-secondary options for students and parents
- Frequent reflection on the school’s college enrollment processes and students’ needs
- Availability and persistence of personnel to assist students
- High expectations-expecting all students to attend post-secondary education and take ownership of their enrollment journey
- Self-efficacy through support, helping students and parents believe that college is attainable and the process of enrollment is manageable

As the researcher distilled the categories further, it became apparent that each high school engaged in strategies to address and support the readiness of individual students and their parents along the college pathway. The emergent theme was differentiation: differentiation in the practices to promote a college-going culture, differentiation in the practices to support the college application process, and differentiation in the practices to support students through the financial aid application.

Differentiation is a commitment to a way of engaging students by understanding where they are in any learning event and creating an environment where what they need for success is available and accessible (Tomlinson, 2014). Carol Ann Tomlinson is a national expert on the differentiated classroom. In a differentiated environment, the educator tries to address each student’s readiness needs, interests, and preferred way of mastering tasks/learning. According to Tomlinson, “Differentiated instruction assumes a more positive mindset: Let’s assume they can
all do good work, and let’s attend to the way that they need us to teach them in order to get there.” (Rebora, 2008). In aligning this quote to the three high schools’ efforts toward promoting college enrollment, the researcher offers an amended Tomlinson quote, “Differentiation assumes a positive mindset: Let’s assume they (students) can all go to college, and let’s attend to the way they need us to support them in order to get there” (Riepenhoff, 2016). The researcher discovered through the coding process that Derek, Laura, and Thomas were in essence discussing differentiated approaches to creating and sustaining a college-going culture, and supporting the college application and financial aid process. The schools held a positive mindset about their students’ ability to go to college. They were committed and felt responsible to attend to the ways students need support to successfully gain college enrollment. As an example, Thomas offered this comment when describing a student’s wonderment about choosing a college.

How would I know the best match for me isn’t a different university than a local? The visits; we pull from all over... When they express the desire we try to get them the information they need, we will help them make it happen (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

In the differentiated environment created by the three high schools, the entire college process was broken down into steps to support students individually. The students’ progress on the steps was closely monitored by all three high schools. Derek used a checklist taken from Peterson’s (a comprehensive guide for getting into college) to monitor the students’ progress. He checked their progress regularly throughout the year. Laura used a software program from which reports were run to assess student progress on enrollment while Thomas used a junior and senior seminar (required semester courses) to move the students along their enrollment pathway;
teaching the college enrollment process, career options, life skills, financial literacy, etc. The importance of the high schools’ monitoring was supported by the findings of Klasik. Completing the nine steps identified for college aspirations to completed applications by Klasik is a strong predictor of gaining college enrollment. Between 86% and 93% of the students’ tracked in Klasik’s study had college aspirations, took entrance exams or had minimal qualifications, yet only 48% ultimately enrolled in a four-year college. If students completed five of the nine steps (aspirations in 10th and 12th grade, taking entrance exams, had minimal academic qualifications and completed applications), then college enrollment was likely. As the application process progresses through the nine steps, low SES and minority students began to drop out of the ‘application gauntlet’ creating a growing gap in the underrepresented students and wealthy and white students (Klasik, 2012). Yet, the ability to meet the students where they are in their college-going process using programs and monitoring was only as effective as the expectations the teachers and administrators had of the students, and the relationships the school staff developed with the students and their families.

All three of the interviewees repeatedly discussed the importance of high expectations for all students. Laura’s school did not allow students to think anything but a post-secondary education was the reason they attend high school. She shared a story about a discussion her principal had with her about this expectation:

With teachers and administration, and guidance, we promote everybody goes on to post-secondary education. We will say you can go to trade school or military, but if you are going to military, you’re going for college education. No arguments, nothing. Never a break in my constantly on-it for post-secondary education. I relate that to the principal, who it doesn’t matter if the kids are going to college to play basketball or football, it is
always college education; academics. Period. And I get corrected so, if I am
complimenting one of our sports stars and I say wow I’m really excited that you are
going to Michigan, I will be corrected that he is going to Michigan for academics and is
playing basketball on the side. She corrects it. The principal corrects that. This is my
fourth year here, principal makes it very clear, she says, mince no words all our kids go to
college. Period (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

This principal’s comments aligned closely with a successful college access program studied by
Dyce, Albold and Long (2013). This program focused on student and parent aspirations. “From
the moment students are accepted into the program, the staff begins by saying, “When you go to
college and when you are awarded that scholarship…” Students do not hear the word if.” (Dyce
et al., 2013, p.162).

Expecting college did not necessarily translate to attending college so Derek, Laura, and
Thomas communicated expectations often with the students. Each of them cited the importance
of seeing the student and talking with him/her one-on-one to provide support. They found out
what might be getting in the student’s way of completing tasks toward college readiness. Laura
checked grades and found students whose grades were slipping and reminded them of the
relationship between grades and college choices. Thomas said about students’ college
aspirations, “Just communicating expectations, providing support and forming relationships with
the kids and parents…getting that trust built up” (Thomas, personal communication, September,
2015).

All of the different practices employed in Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high schools were
reflective of their knowledge and understanding of the students, parents, and community. This
knowledge and understanding added another layer to the differentiation of approaches and were described in reference to the following research questions.

**Research Question 1**

The strategies, classes or programs the high schools used to intentionally promote college aspirations, especially for underrepresented students were clearly the pinnacle of importance for all the interviewees. Supporting students’ college aspirations sustained by a strong college-going culture was evident in each of the interviewees’ high schools.

Creating and sustaining college aspirations seemed second nature to the three high school interviewees. Their efforts in promoting a college-going culture was continuously iterated and reiterated throughout most of their responses to the interview questions. Each high school gave special and different attention to students’ interests and background as post-high school options were explored, discussed, taught, hammered, and delivered. This is an important aspect of differentiation. Students, who were known by their teachers, school counselors and principals were given what they need in the time they need it to be successful.

As an example, all three high schools were keenly aware what their students and parents did not know or understand about college. The majority of their parents did not attend college therefore, the majority of the students were first-generation college students. The high schools provided multiple opportunities for exposure to college, and regularly monitored their students’ progress during the college enrollment process which allowed school personnel to assist each student at the level he/she required. Derek shared a very revealing story, which stayed with him.

A lot of kids don’t know what they can do, the choices available. I’ll never forget this, I have a senior girl and when she was a freshman and we were going through this stuff, she raised her hand and asked, “Can kids from High School K go to OSU (Ohio State
University)? She was dead serious. I knew right then where I had to start with these kids and I will keep that with me forever. I answered yes, you can go there (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

There was a focus on the education in the three high schools to develop college knowledge. The importance of college knowledge was emphasized by Hooker and Brand, (2010) when they discussed the lack of knowledge underrepresented students and their families had of the college enrollment process (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Courses (junior and senior seminar), lunch dates with admissions representatives, classroom instruction; all of the students in the three high schools received an abundance of education and monitoring about how to go to college.

Thomas shared, “It (junior and senior seminar) gets them in the mindset, familiar with how to fill out college applications, familiar with Common App (Common Application)” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

The schools began with the aspiration of going to college and the mindset was forged. Laura’s high school posted every acceptance letter. This simple action served three purposes; it validated the graduating senior’s past work and future dreams, it caught students late to the process and, was a visible college-going expectation for the underclassmen.

Thomas relied on a local organization of business leaders to promote a college-going culture at High School M.

We have Leadership ABC (pseudonym); an organization of local businessmen, leaders of the community, and local politicians that are natives of this county, and are back here using their talents. They come in the schools and speak to students. It’s their way of showing kids, hey, I’m just like you and this is what I did. A lot of real life experiences for kids especially in rural Ohio. They can see governors and leaders that don’t have
relevance to them. But, they see local Judge Jones (pseudonym) who grew up on a farm, went to OSU (Ohio State University), and is now a county judge. The local chiropractor went to this high school. They can relate to that. My son graduated from here and is now working at the college level. Just having these examples that have achieved success gives these kids a lot of confidence and hope (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Students explored careers through interest inventories, discussions with teachers, community mentors, and in their coursework. Derek shared the interest inventories at his school used to be stored on the shelf and never looked at after eighth grade, now his high school revisits this data to help students focus on the best fit. The best fit/college match was not always the closest college or university. Therefore, especially for underrepresented students, exposure to and education of options was extremely important.

The exposure and becoming knowledgeable of college was also extremely important for the parents of the Derek, Laura and Thomas’ students. All three interviewees cited parents’ lack of knowledge about college and their fears of a child going away as barriers to college for some of their students. Knowing this was real for the students and parents; parents are given careful attention to help their child make post-secondary choices. Face-to-face meetings, education about job availability, career choices, the college enrollment process, admission representatives making home visits, and the availability of the school personnel calmed the fears and educated the parents of the low SES, FGC, and minority students.

College fairs, college panel nights, campus visits are routine practices for most high schools’ ability to add to the knowledge of students and their parents, but these three high schools made sure there were multiple offerings to accommodate busy work schedules of parents
and students. When students or parents missed the school-sponsored events for college information, the school counselors reviewed the information with the students the next day.

When Derek noticed low attendance at an informational meeting, in an effort to catch up all of the students who missed it, teachers allowed him to review the information in class the next day.

If parents had confusion or questions regarding the enrollment process, Laura shared her personal cell phone number. All of the high schools made sure parents know they were available to help either in person or on the phone. Derek encouraged his students to bring their parents to the school during the day to sit down, and discuss college and career options for their children. He stated, “I invite parents of underrepresented kids in, I tell kids get your mom in here, call me, let’s set up an appointment” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Varied and frequent exposure to college and career choices was extremely important to high schools’ ability to sustain college aspirations of their students. Campus visits are typical practices in most high schools, in fact most seniors are afforded two or three days to visit colleges. However, High School K, M, and R loaded students on buses to guarantee campus visits occurred; another example of differentiating due to the knowledge of the students and their needs. By the time a student was a senior at Derek’s high school, he/she would have visited three campuses organized by the high school. Because the majority of the students at these high schools did not have the resources to take college visits, Thomas’ school brought the college to the students using the junior and senior seminar. During this time, college admissions representatives had the opportunity to form relationships with students, help students explore post-secondary options, and just talk about the college experience.

All three understand the value of starting the college-going identity early in a student’s high school career and agreed that being college-ready was at least a four-year process. So, the
schools devoted attention to increasing the college experiences for their students and built on the experiences each year. Derek shared his revelation about the need to start early and support the students throughout their college-ready journey.

When I first started I was really hard lined, this is only my fourth year, but I’ve taught and coached so that helps. But I tried to keep it (college exposure) special until they were seniors, I learned very quickly that that’s not a good idea because it is a process. Anymore, it’s a 4 year process essentially and as they look and think about not just college but maturing overall, it takes a long time to make that right decision (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Laura shared that every student in the high school was required to apply to at least one historically black college or university (HBCU), a testimony to the expectation that all students will go to college. Students were encouraged to discuss their aspirations. Derek summed up the need to get students talking about college and building their experiences/exposure each year.

Talk to your teachers, make connections with them, make connections with adults and not every kid does, but I think it is important, and then start building at each level. The same way you build a team, you start with the young kids and then by the time they are seniors, it should be taken care of. At least that has been my philosophy so far…talk to me in 5 years, it may be different. (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Creating and sustaining a college-going culture in the high school was not one person’s responsibility. All three of the interviewees spoke about their staff’s willingness to help Derek, Laura, Thomas, and the students. Derek shared the English teachers helped students with college applications and the required essays. He gave the English teachers the essays from college applications to use as writing prompts in the spring of the students’ junior year so students had
practice writing responses. The teachers were flexible when Derek felt the need to go into the classrooms. They supported his efforts by posting due dates and reminders in their classrooms. Derek stated, “Every teacher we have will review the application essay.” He fully believes in involving everyone in the school setting when it comes to getting students ready for college. He shared, “…it’s a team effort, the more people on board makes it (college process) better and more fun” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Thomas knows he was not solely responsible for creating the college-going culture in the high school. He said, “I’d like to take credit for it (college-going culture), but it’s a lot of intrinsic motivation of the staff to help these kids, and form the relationships to help them get ready for college or trade school” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015). Thomas knew his expectations of the staff helped sustain the college-going culture, and shared his staff believed ‘whole-heartedly’ in the students. The staff wanted the students to be successful after high school. He referred to his teachers as mentors who helped students set goals, but admitted the high school needed to continue its focus on changing the culture. Thomas reflected on his high school, “…it’s not that it was a negative culture toward college it was just never really pushed with all kids. In the past. If they (teachers and administration) saw a kid they knew was college material he/she was supported” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

The English teachers in Laura’s school allowed her to come into the class to help the students complete their college applications. She described a very real barrier for her students of high poverty, “It’s not reasonable to think our kids have access (outside the school) to fill out the online Common Application, it happens in the Language Arts department and in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) class, it will be an assignment” (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). If she found students were late in completing applications, the
teachers were supportive of her ‘snagging them’ (students) from class to finish. Laura believed the number one thing her high school did to support the students’ aspirations was to assign authentic assignments and offer continual encouragement to the students (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). When students lagged in their application process, teachers understood the need for them to be pulled from class.

The teachers of all three high schools were proactive in getting kids ready for college. Teachers asked students about their progress. English teachers at Laura’s high school especially helped students review ACT scores. Teachers were cited again and again as having great influence on the college-going culture. In all three schools not only did key staff members such as Derek’s go-to teachers (four to five teachers willing to assist at any time with anything student-college related) participate in the culture; all of the interviewees stated there was not one teacher in the school who did not engage students in discussions about post-secondary opportunities and who did not demonstrate a willingness to help.

Understanding the needs of the students and their families helps the high schools develop trusting relationships with their students and families. There was an intentional effort made to know where students were in their aspirations and application process in the three high schools. Several comments came from Derek, Laura and Thomas regarding pulling kids in, catching them up, and keeping them on track. They used the change of classes to catch them in the halls, and Thomas’ school assigned mailboxes to the students who are off campus for career-technical or college classes to keep them informed and connected (Figure 1).
Derek, Laura, and Thomas expertly utilized the college admission representatives, military recruiters, and trade school representatives to support the students and parents, and themselves. The three interviewees realized the need for a team approach to supporting the students from college aspirations to completed applications as well as the need to expose
students to as many options as possible. At Thomas’ school, students were encouraged to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) even if they were not interested in a military option because students received individualized support from recruiters when the test results became available. Thomas felt the ASVAB was good practice for the ACT exam (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015). College admission representatives provided different venues and resources to establish relationships with students from High School K, M and, R. Some hosted icebreakers and lunch meetings to facilitate a relaxed query of the students’ interests and aspirations, while imparting college information.

**Research Question 2**

The strategies, classes or programs the high school used to intentionally support students through the college enrollment process, especially for underrepresented students were as varied and differentiated as the students the three interviewees served.

One of the rules here is the kids have to apply to one historically black college or university (HBCU). At least one, the affordable one is Central State which is not very far, but many apply to Alabama State and Alabama A&M. We have quite a few kids going to Alabama A&M this year. But everybody has to apply to at least one HBCU and show they have applied….But during class, that’s your assignment, to apply to a HBCU (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

This expectation at Laura’s high school demonstrated the high school’s commitment in supporting the application process. Although the other two high schools did not require an application from every student, every student was exposed to the process. Derek and Thomas’ schools used class time and individual meetings with students to teach the student about the application process, and walked them through the Common Application. The three interviewees
understood they could not do every application for every student so once again they offered different supports according to the students’ needs. When the researcher asked Derek if the high school targeted underrepresented students, he shared a revealing comment echoing the differentiation theme.

I think it is unfair to target, to me every kid we have here is important. Now there are some I may pester a little more than others, but those are the ones who might be lazy, so I guess that is who I’m going to target. But if a kid seems uninterested, then I back off, and then I will try again later. It’s a give and take thing, and you got to read each kid differently. (Derek, Personal communication, September, 2015).

School counselors made sure every underrepresented student was given what was needed to successfully complete college applications. They (school counselors) identified low SES for waiver of fees on the ACT and college applications. They took advantage of Ohio’s College Application Month which occurs in November, but all three explained they used the month-long focus to meet individually with the few students who had not yet completed their applications. According to their school’s timeline, they felt November was too late, but it served as a warning bell for the lagging students.

Each high school made use of other resources too. The teachers played an important role in helping students to complete their college applications. They read essays, practiced essay prompts in class, and made themselves available to students. Software was available at one school to track the application process. Using the software, reports were run to assess students’ application progress. However, the ability of all three interviewees to offer different supports to students came as a result of tracking, monitoring, and persisting through the application to acceptance process. Derek, Laura, and Thomas did not give information or tasks to students and
then leave them to figure it out. They taught the students how to complete applications. They were in classrooms or students were in their offices working through the applications.

   The kids are very comfortable calling college-admission offices (I hate to tell you this). It probably drives colleges crazy but when kids haven’t heard anything in a couple weeks, then the kids will call. The ones nervous about calling, I have them listen to another student do it. (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

   Ohio Means Jobs has been used lightly by the staff and students, but was being investigated this year as a possible tool to help students and teachers track students’ college and career-ready status. All three interviewees were familiar with the website and spoke of professional development opportunities to learn more of its capabilities with the career and college search.

   Along with the application support, all three high schools supported the preparation for college entrance exams; namely the ACT. One after school preparation program was incentivized with pizza. The students who participated in the two-week program realized an average three point gain from their previous ACT score. Community support was used to facilitate the students’ college application process in Derek and Thomas’ high schools. One of the programs provided mentors to meet with students two times a month from February through April. The focus was not always on college paperwork; rather the goal was to help students sustain their aspirations, whether they were college, career, or military.

   **Research Question 3**

   The strategies, classes or programs the high schools used to intentionally support students through the financial aid process, especially for underrepresented students were numerous and specific to the students’ needs in each of the three high schools interviewed.
Differentiation once again was the common thread throughout the discussions with Derek, Laura and Thomas regarding supports for the financial aid process. Although each of their schools sponsored events for parents and students to gain awareness of financial aid and scholarship opportunities, each of the schools ensured individual assistance for their students and parents. Derek, Laura, and Thomas knew their students and families. They understood there is a lack of knowledge about financial aid; therefore, they put resources and supports into action. Calling parents, setting up appointments, giving students the phone numbers of support people, and developing plans to use the district’s One Call system to push out reminders and information regarding financial aid requirements were all practices the high schools in this study used or plan to use to support the financial aid process.

A key principle of differentiation is the ability to meet the needs of the learner at his readiness level. Since the majority of the students served by Derek, Laura, and Thomas were first-generation college students; Derek, Laura, and Thomas sought first to teach the students about financial aid. They front-loaded the students, meaning they taught them about scholarships, actual college costs, and the FAFSA prior to meeting with admission representatives and college nights at school. The teaching was done in seminar time, teachers’ classrooms, and one-on-one. The front-loading strategy had three benefits; it gave students a sense of self-efficacy because they better understood the financial aid arena, the students could communicate with their parents about financial aid using their language, and the students were prepared with information so they knew what to ask of the admissions personnel during visits to the high school or colleges. Front-loading was an efficiency tool. Students knew what to ask and how to ask it when they met with admission representatives because of their prior knowledge
about financial aid. Laura depended on an outside expert to help the students complete the FAFSA.

When she is here, I have a list of students who want to see her. I go into the hall and get the kids; because I don’t want to interrupt classes. But there will be kids in a waiting room to see her. If you leave, I’m not getting you. This is your opportunity, your future and here is our expert to help you” (Laura, personal communication, September, 2015).

Each of the three schools approached financial aid supports differently.

Laura’s high school utilized a designated person from the federal government whose sole responsibility was to aid and assist students and families in completing federal financial aid forms such as the Pell Grant and FAFSA. This person came to the high school each week from January through April and met with students. Laura referred to her as the ‘FAFSA Lady’. The FAFSA Lady was given the attribute as being the single most important support Laura’s high school used to assist students through financial aid process, especially because the parents of her students expected the school to take care of the forms and deadlines. Derek relied on a local university’s director of financial aid. She was available to walk parents and students through the FAFSA at the school-sponsored college night. Along with the parent/student financial aid night, Derek’s students were taught in the spring of their junior year about FAFSA and scholarships during class time. He attributed these two efforts as the most important work the high school did to support the financial aid process. Thomas shared his school was small enough; they (school personnel) got everyone done (with financial aid and scholarship applications). He attributed the Economic Opportunity Center (EOC) personnel who was employed by one university but assisted any student with college enrollment paperwork for any colleges. The EOC staff member was a relative of Thomas and visited the high school two times per week just to help students
with applications for financial aid, scholarships, and other college enrollment paperwork. This person also went to student homes to assist the families with the FAFSA forms, and extended his support throughout the student’s college career. All of the high schools taught their students how to complete the FAFSA using rough drafts.

Although each high school incorporated different strategies to support students and their families through the financial aid process, they all realized the importance financial aid and scholarship awards had on the students’ follow through with actual enrollment. As Laura expressed, the financial award “makes it real” for students; the opportunity becomes real (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). Laura believed the state’s focus on college through the College Application Month and the FAFSA Challenge equipped parents with confidence and competence who may have been hesitant to contact the school for assistance. Derek and Thomas did not engage their students in the College Application Month or the FAFSA Challenge citing their smaller student population afforded them the ability to work with each student.

**Research Question 4**

The leaders in the school promoted a college ready environment and pathway to college, especially for underrepresented students. Laura explained.

‘It’s the dream’. The principal sees the best and worst of kids. She sees kids being praised and disciplined. So when the kids are called on the line for misbehavior, it’s always the focus for college. You can’t get to college with behavior like this. If you are out in the hall you’re not learning. So zero tolerance on that. I think it’s that top down when administration. I know opportunities in education mean more choices and higher chance of being employed. So she tells the kids this. If you have a degree, you have choices; and chances are, you will not stay unemployed so you can help yourself and your
family…There is zero tolerance on pigeonholing a kid and saying he won’t do anything or be anything (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

The schools’ leadership had high expectations of all students being prepared and able to attend college. This was abundantly apparent in the discussions with Laura, Derek, and Thomas. Leadership to them was not simply the principal or school counselors; it was a vision and the expectation of staff support for the students, no matter the student’s background or chances of gaining college enrollment. Derek believed that it was everyone’s responsibility to prepare the graduates for a bright future. The vision of bright futures came from knowing the students, their families, and their community. All three interviewees knew their students’ backgrounds, their family structures, and the community resources available to assist the students along their path to college enrollment. This knowledge was evident in the multiple efforts to support and assist the students and their families when completing applications and financial aid forms as discussed in Research Questions 2 and 3. The interviewees knew their students so well; they spoke of knowing when to push and when to pull individual students through the college enrollment process. Derek shared he knew students did not always tune in to his messages, lessons, or announcements so he made personal contact with them. He also utilized what he calls his ‘go-to’ teachers to help him support the students’ college enrollment (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

The interviewees used similar language when they expressed the sentiment of helping all underrepresented students with all their resources in gaining access to post-secondary opportunities; this was a leadership driven vision. The high school staff at Thomas’ school worked on generational poverty every day. The staff engaged in a book study to better understand the challenges and dynamics of families from poverty. Understanding the students
and their backgrounds made it imperative for Thomas to communicate his vision to his staff. He met with the staff regularly, monitored the progress toward the vision, and followed through with actions utilizing teacher-based teams to support the high school’s effort toward college enrollment (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

The staff and supervisors at each school played important leadership roles in supporting the vision. Principals celebrated successes; admissions to colleges were announced, and acceptance letters were hung in halls. Laura shared the English department and the STEM teacher helped students wade through college applications and essays, and the principal’s unrelenting expectation of college for all. Derek spoke of the superintendent and transportation director rerouting bus schedules and amending school schedules to accommodate campus visits.

We can make things happen for our kids but it’s got to be the High School K way. And our principal does a great job with this. She lets our staff know they are doing a great job. The overall atmosphere helps. It’s great to work here (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

The interviewees discussed teachers connecting the curriculum to real world experiences and taking time to speak to the students about college and careers. Both Derek and Thomas shared stories of teachers who invited former students whom they are friends with on Facebook into their classes to talk with the juniors and seniors about college life; real world experiences. Laura bragged about authentic assignments and continuous encouragement from the staff as an important aspect of sustaining a college-going culture.

The leaders of these high schools have developed strong relationships with area college-admission representatives. They worked closely with college admission departments to set up campus visits and create college explorations. The leaders utilized community resources to
support their work of promoting college education. Although, Derek, Laura, Thomas, and the staffs of their high schools helped students find the right college match, they understood the ties that bind first-generation college students to their home. Therefore, all three interviewees established strong relationships with admission representatives from local universities and colleges. Derek built rapport with every college admission office within four hours of the high school; advice he took from his mentor-a retired school counselors who helped Derek get to college. Thomas’ relative works for a local Economic Opportunity Center (EOC) housed at a nearby university. He is employed by one university but Thomas was clear in his message; his relative provided assistance to any students with college enrollment paperwork for any college the students expected to attend. The EOC staff member visited Thomas’ students one to two times per week in the spring. Laura harnessed opportunities from a local community college and many private colleges to support her students. One of the college admission representatives in Laura’s city is African American. Laura believes this helped her African-American students visualize their college plans. She shared, “People who look like our kids helps” (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). Yet, she also shared the students’ frustration with another admission representative’s story telling of college glory days rather than helping them.

…all he wanted to talk about was his football career at the university. No that’s not what these kids want to hear. They kept reeling him back to answer their questions that he really should have known as a recruiter” (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

These three leaders were so acutely queued to what their students need, and were capable of setting the stage using teachers, college admission representatives, administration, community members, and parents to support the students through the college-going pathway.
Another leadership quality in common with Derek, Laura, and Thomas was their flexibility, availability, and persistence with students, parents, and admissions representatives. All three take advantage, as did Derek and Laura’s principals, and Thomas’ school counselor to talk with students and parents about the students’ college enrollment progress. Conversations at ball games and community events were seen as opportunities to communicate and monitor the students’ progress. Setting protocols of students and parents attending school-sponsored college events together, knowing where students fall on the enrollment continuum, and expecting students to have conversations at home about college aspirations and planning were practices to which Derek attended. No matter the income level, when parents engaged in college aspirations and college preparations, communication was enhanced between parents and their children, and when serious discussions happened between high schools and homes the student’s chances of enrolling increases (Myers & Myers, 2012; Plank and Jordan, 2001).

‘Snagging’ students in the halls was commonly used to catch-up and check the progress of the students. Laura shared she sometimes wondered if the students say, “She’s been nagging me” (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). Thomas sent a letter to every senior and his/her parent before the year began which listed important dates for graduation and college enrollment. Derek constantly “bugged” the seniors in an effort to understand where each student was in his/her progress toward college enrollment (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015). When college admission representatives needed to change schedules or come at atypical times, the high schools made sure students were aware of the changes, and leadership prepared for their arrival; all important efforts to differentiate the delivery of supports to the students.

These leaders understood just as their availability to students was necessary throughout the college-going pathway, their availability to parents had key importance.
It’s ok if your parents don’t understand how to do that or they are scared about the paperwork, that’s ok, we will get the people here to make it happen for you. Just communicating expectations, providing support and forming relationships with the kids and parents…getting that trust built up (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Thomas also shared if parents could not keep their child on schedule with the timelines, due dates, paperwork, applications, etc., then the school would do that for them (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015). Laura believed most of the graduating seniors had her cell phone number. She felt comfortable with students calling her anytime and her students know this about her availability. All three of the interviewees were clear about their availability to the parents. They spoke of many appointments, one-on-one meetings and conversations, and even meetings to talk parents into allowing their child to go to college. Thomas shared a heart-breaking story when the researcher asked who handled the difficult parents.

We had one last year, bright kid, very savvy. He wanted to go to a trade school to learn to build racing engines and would have been successful at it. I envisioned that he wouldn’t be the builder, he would be the seller because this kid could sell a Popsicle to an Eskimo. But dad wanted him to go to this college not that college. If he didn’t pick the college his dad wanted then no going to college. You are going to go to work for me and that was the end of it. It was heart breaking, we tried and tried and tried. The guidance counselors had several meetings with parents, and the kid is working, making money but thought so much of his dad that he would not go against him. He could have probably paid for his college himself, but wouldn’t go against his dad (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).
Reflection played a large part in Laura, Derek, and Thomas’ leadership style. Thomas thought deeply about his own background as a child of poverty and a first-generation college student; he could relate to his students’ struggles. "Being a person who grew up in poverty and being a first-generation college student means a lot to me to let these kids know they can do it. It’s possible if they want to go to college” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Laura talked about food being a relationship builder with many of her students. She kept loaves of white bread and good peanut butter in her office cupboard. Students came before, during, and after school, and were allowed to make one sandwich. This dedication to her students took a toll on Laura and was evident when she shared, “I’m tired when I get home, but I feel like I’m making a difference one child at a time” (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

School sponsored college events, interactions with students and parents, and lessons weighed heavily on Derek’s mind. When turnout for school sponsored events was low, when his classroom lessons did not seem successful, when he became frustrated at a student’s indecisiveness; he began searching for the reason. He did not blame the parents, the school, or the students, rather Derek reflected on his own actions. He realized through this reflection process, the school and his office could do a better job of advertising school sponsored college events by using local radio, local TV, social media. He even wanted to start Tweeting. Derek and his principal examined how to target the populations they desired to be in attendance at the college events. When the researcher asked who is targeted, Derek responded, “We target every student” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

All three interviewees shared confessions of not always having successful approaches, but what all of them participated in was a reflection of why the approach did not work and how it could be improved, this aspect of review and revise is a core aspect of differentiation.
When I first started I was really hard lined, this is only my fourth year, but I’ve taught and coached so that helps. But I tried to keep it (college exposure) special until they were seniors, I learned very quickly that that’s not a good idea because it is a process.

Anymore, it’s a 4 year process essentially and as they look and think about not just college but maturing overall, it takes a long time to make that right decision (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

In another reflection, Derek said, “Before I would say no, if you don’t come (to college information meetings) you don’t get the handouts, now I realize, you know something, you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Along with reviewing and revising, a differentiated approach entails the ability of the teacher to gradually release the student to his/her ownership of learning, but a highly skilled teacher knows when and how much to release. There were a few indignant responses throughout the interviews mostly out of frustration over students not taking ownership of their futures. Yet, after every indignant response, the follow-up comments indicated the interviewees went above and beyond to help and support the student who did not have college aspirations or was not progressing on his/her college enrollment path. Derek commented, “It’s either important to you or it isn’t” and, “At the end of the day, it has to be important to you” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015). Laura told her students, “I’m not getting you. This is your opportunity, your future and here is our expert to help you” (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). She also showed frustration with this thought.

We had kids journal about the ACT prep and the one kids goes, I was afraid to try. All I could think, you mean I get you an ACT waiver and I explain how to go online and do it
and encourage you to sit outside my office and sign up for the ACT but then you don’t show up for the test because you are afraid to try? (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

Thomas got real with his students and told them, “It’s not just your GPA and ACT score, you have to show colleges what you have done and that you can handle being a busy person, able to do something productive along with the academics” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

On the other hand, each of the interviewees repeatedly moved their line in the sand. At times, Derek, Laura, and Thomas stated they would only go so far in helping students complete applications for financial aid or admission to college, yet when they got back to discussing the students, exceptions were added to their comments.

I just had a senior come last week and said he didn’t know what he was going to do, and that irritated me, because I thought well if you were off your cell phone during all the visits I made to class since you were a freshman. Because this is one of those kids that didn’t pay attention to the information and now here he is. He’s a senior and life is a little different and he knows that. That’s ok, I’m still going to help him. So I work differently with him than I do with the kid who knows exactly what he was going to do since he’s been a freshmen (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

**Barriers**

Each interviewee shared barriers they believed their school faced in promoting college aspirations to completed applications. Thomas quickly responded.

Generational poverty. The financial part of college, the fear of the unknown by the parents and kids about I don’t know how to fill out the FAFSA, how do you apply for
college. Myself, I was a second generation kid to graduate from high school and first-generation to graduate from college... Barriers: unknown, poverty and fear of kids leaving (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Derek spoke of a disconnection between parents’ knowledge of workforce readiness and the need for further education. He cited the number one barrier: parents did not think their kids needed to attend college. He further explained other barriers. “One problem we also have is college mismatch. Just because it is right here doesn’t make it the best fit for that kid. We have not overcome this barrier to mismatching kids. Kids are picking colleges for wrong reason. Their choice has to be investigated for the best fit (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Laura spoke mainly of financial barriers but was grateful for the FAFSA Lady who helped her students and parents complete financial aid forms.

Summary

This qualitative study examined the intentional practices of selected high schools which promoted and worked to increase college enrollment, especially for underrepresented students. The study identified 24 high schools meeting the criteria of: an average poverty enrollment of 50% or greater during 2011-2013, an average of 50 graduates or greater over the same years, and an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s public two and four-year colleges from 2011-2013. Of the 24 high schools, eight responded to a 36 question survey designed to assess the degree of intentional efforts and practices which promoted college enrollment in three areas; Area 1-College-going culture, Area 2-College application supports, and Area 3-Financial aid supports. After the survey responses were analyzed, four high schools were selected to be interviewed for further examination to identify the intentional practices and efforts in each of the high schools. Three high schools were available for interview. One of the high schools was urban
with very high student poverty and student population, the other two were rural with small student population and high student poverty.

After data analysis, using Saldaña’s (2013) coding procedures for qualitative data, the emerging themes were: differentiation in the practices to promote a college-going culture, differentiation in the practices to support the college application process, and differentiation in the practices to support students through the financial aid application. Answers to the four research questions and a discussion of the themes’ connection to the questions guided the reader through a discussion of the results.

The researcher found the high schools in this study did not have a silver bullet: there was not one or even a few specific practices which promoted a college-going culture, or supported the college application and financial aid processes, instead High School K, M and R did whatever each student needed to find success along the college-going path. They differentiated. As important as differentiation is; leadership too played an important role in the high schools’ ability to promote and support college enrollment. In summary, just as the pool of college ready graduates must increase to meet state and national benchmarks, high schools must develop and designate the implementation of different strategies, resources, and people to support the different needs of their students, specifically, underrepresented students as they navigate through the college aspirations to completed applications pathway.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of the Study

This study, College Aspirations to Completed Applications: a study of intentional high school practices designed to increase post-secondary enrollment sought to identify Ohio high schools’ efforts toward answering the state and national call of increasing students’ opportunities for post-secondary education. The high schools selected for the study met three criteria: an average poverty enrollment of 50% or greater during 2011-2013, an average of 50 graduates or greater over the same years, and an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s public two and four-year colleges from 2011-2013. There were two data collection instruments used; a survey sent to all high schools meeting the three criteria, and an interview of participants selected from an analysis of their responses as described in Chapter 4. The survey had a 33% response rate, and of the four high schools selected for the interview, three agreed to be interviewed for a 75% response rate. This chapter will discuss the findings of the study in relation to each of the four research questions, differentiation, and a discussion of those findings relative to the supporting literature which guided the study. The chapter includes a discussion of what is known about intentional practices promoting college enrollment, the findings as they relate to each research question, an examination of the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The call to increase college enrollment has been in the state and national spotlight for the past several years. With benchmarks of leading the world in college graduates by 2020, and preparing more Ohio high school students to be college and career ready for a strong Ohio workforce, as well as achieving a better national standing of the number of college graduates in
Ohio, high schools must be intentional in their efforts, practices, and strategies to promote college enrollment. The desired goal of increasing the numbers of college graduates in Ohio and nationally will require high schools to reach deeper into their student populations. This reach will net students who typically are underrepresented in college enrollment demographics. Underrepresented students are low socio-economic status (SES), minority, and/or first-generation college (FGC) students who need assistance to enroll successfully in post-secondary education. The researcher wanted to know what the selected schools were doing to support underrepresented students’ college aspirations all the way to successful college enrollment. All of the high schools selected for the study had greater than 50% of their student populations categorized by the Ohio Department of Education as low SES. If schools with more than 50% poverty reported a minimum of 41% college enrollment, they must be supporting their low SES, minority and FGC students through the college enrollment process since these students were typically underrepresented in college demographics.

The researcher found many practices implemented by Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high schools that supported underrepresented students as they moved along the college enrollment path. Differentiation in the practices became an evident theme throughout the coding process. All three of the high school personnel interviewed cited the importance of supporting the diverse needs of their students which led them to implement differentiated practices which supported their students through the college enrollment process. Thomas discussed the importance of honoring parents’ sense of loss when their child left home. Laura discussed the cat and mouse game she played to keep her students on track for college enrollment, and Derek’s discussion of balancing students’ ownership of their future while supporting them through the enrollment
process was a real source of frustration leading to Derek’s differentiated approach for each student.

Reflecting on the body of research in Chapter 2 and the results in Chapter 4, the researcher recognized differentiation as the approach used by the three interviewees to support college enrollment which aligned closely with the researched practices found most effective especially for underrepresented students. Pham and Keenan (2011) cited a critical practice to address equal access to college for underrepresented students. They believed the high schools must identify students early in their high school career for differentiated college counseling (Pham and Keenan, 2011). A study of the impact of school counselors on college enrollment by Malone (2013) reinforced the importance of differentiated supports. He recommended high schools target underrepresented students for more customized services which would lead to successful post-secondary enrollment (Malone, 2013).

The literature was clear; underrepresented students required support and guidance throughout their high school years to sustain college aspirations, and complete the college and financial aid application processes. Attending a high school with a strong college-going culture was the most consistent predictor of whether students took steps to enroll in college (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Derek, Laura, and Thomas gave examples of how their high schools have developed a strong college-going culture. Laura was corrected when she congratulated a student on his athletic scholarship. Derek targeted all of his students for post-secondary opportunities, and Thomas implemented junior and senior courses specifically designed to support college aspirations to completed applications.

In Roderick et al.’s (2011) study, the importance of the high school’s role in helping underrepresented students and their families gain access to expectations, information, and
support were needed to sustain the students’ aspirations all the way to enrollment (Roderick et al., 2011). Underrepresented students and their families lacked the knowledge and social capital to navigate the college enrollment process; therefore high schools became the vehicle for gaining college knowledge. This knowledge for students and parents included the acquisition of practical information of the enrollment process, as well as developing a college-going identity (Hooker and Brand, 2010). The researcher found Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ schools, and the five other schools completing the survey offered hands-on assistance in completing college applications, especially for underrepresented students. The interviewees, Derek, Laura, and Thomas provided many examples which demonstrated their high schools’ commitment to being the vehicle. Practical information about the enrollment process, practice at essay writing and completing FAFSA forms, accessibility at public events, and maintaining an open-door to foster communication with parents were discussed by all three.

The ability of high school to become the vehicle which promoted college enrollment was evident from the success of many college access programs. The 21st Century Scholars Program specifically assisted low SES students, and has demonstrated a positive relationship between 21st Century Scholars and college enrollment. The program cited the importance of supporting students through steps to ensure successful enrollment in college; aspirations, academic preparation, entrance exams, college application, financial aid, admission and enrollment. The Affirmed Scholars and their parents received support and encouragement as they developed a college-going identity. The Affirmed Scholars in high poverty were 5.3 times more likely to enroll in college than students of high poverty not enrolled in the program (St. John et al., 2004). Eighty-eight percent of the schools surveyed by the researcher stated they monitored students’ college-going plans at least on a yearly basis. Laura and Thomas specifically shared their high
schools’ programs that monitored and guided students’ college plans throughout their high school career. Thomas’ high school used the junior and senior courses to support and monitor his students. Laura used Naviance (software) which tracked student progress with college enrollment.

Hoxby and Turner (2013) found providing low SES, high academic seniors interventions while completing college applications, financial aid forms, and application fee waivers expanded their college opportunities. Students were given application guidance packets with tables of deadlines for applications, and graduation rates of local colleges, state colleges and selective colleges. The financial information showed the actual costs of attendance in different colleges. Overall, students who received the intervention studied by Hoxby and Turner (2013) completed more applications and were admitted to more colleges than students in the comparison group (Hoxby & Turner, 2013). Likewise, the researcher found practices in each of the interviewees’ high schools aligned with Hoxby and Turner’s findings. At least one completed application to college was mandatory in Laura’s high school. Derek front-loaded his students with financial aid awareness and knowledge so they were prepared to meet with college admission representatives. Thomas’ junior and senior courses specifically addressed due dates, checklists, explorations of the local universities, and formed relationships with college-admission representatives.

Many of the practices discussed during the interviews in this study could have been taken from GO Centers’ play book. GO Centers are in-house college access centers assisting high school students with college preparation, and building a school-wide college culture following these three components:

- GO Center staff understands how students develop college aspirations
• GO Center’s comprehensive services are available to students and parents including guidance and support in applying to college and financial aid.

• GO Centers involve all stakeholders within the school, community, and family to promote college enrollment (Stillisano et al., 2014).

The survey responses from the eight schools also aligned to the GO Centers’ three basic components. A common thread through each of the eight schools’ short answer responses was three-fold: students were expected to have post-secondary experiences while in high school, students were given opportunities to explore the college world and its requirements, and programs or people were designated to help them plan for college throughout their high school experience.

The centers implemented a variety of strategies designed to attract students and their parents to the schools’ college resources. Like Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high schools, GO Centers arranged visits to and from colleges, and facilitated college information nights and FAFSA supports. The personnel at GO Centers assisted students in completing Texas’ common application and teachers assisted students in writing college application and scholarship essays.

All three high schools who participated in the interview portion of the study used the Ohio Common Application. The Common Application is accepted at 17 Ohio post-secondary institutions and many other institutions nationwide. Derek, Laura, and Thomas all commended the work of their staffs in supporting students in the college enrollment process, especially in completing college applications and essays. Derek shared, “…it’s a team effort, the more people on board makes it (college process) better and more fun” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015). Just like the interviewees, GO Center personnel presented in classrooms and were allowed to pull students from class to complete applications; teacher and administrator
support was evident in all of the sites studied (Stillisano et al., 2014). Derek and Laura ‘snagged’ students in the halls to present information from evening events or get the student moving on his/her college enrollment path. The researcher found all eight high schools in the study responded they agreed or strongly agreed that staff actively advocated for families and students to receive college enrollment supports, and the majority of staff believed all students should have some type of post-secondary education. This belief mirrored a college access program studied by Dyce et al. (2013). Every activity the student and parent experienced tapped into the student’s aspirations. Program personnel stated, “From the moment students are accepted into the program, the staff begins by saying, “When you go to college and when you are awarded that scholarship…” Students do not hear the word if.” (Dyce et al., 2013, p.162).

In a practice-guide for high schools, Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do created by The Institute of Education Sciences in 2009, the guide’s authors cited two recommendations found to have moderate impact in gaining college access, especially for underrepresented students. The study’s authors suggested high schools assist students in completing the critical steps for college admission; specifically, one-on-one assistance in registering students to take college entrance exams, searching for colleges, visiting colleges, and completing applications. The recommendation cited the importance of high schools, parents and community members assuming an integral role in assisting students through the college enrollment process. Reflecting on the three interviews, Derek, Laura, and Thomas shared stories of their dependence on community organizations and/or representatives to support the work of getting students to college. They also shared examples of one-on-one assistance to students and families through the enrollment process. Laura shared her cell phone number with students and parents, and worked well into the month of June to tie up loose ends or problem
solve enrollment glitches of her students. Laura and Derek both ‘snagged’ students in the halls to get them back on track with their college aspirations, and to complete the necessary work for enrollment ready.

The other recommendation having moderate impact of increasing college enrollment challenged high schools to increase financial awareness, and help students apply for financial aid. The authors suggest workshops sponsored by high schools should help students and parents understand the true costs of different colleges, the availability of financial aid, and how the aid impacts college affordability. Furthermore, hands-on assistance with completing the financial aid forms was especially beneficial for low SES, minority, and FGC students (Tierney et al. 2009). From the survey responses and the interviewees’ discussions, it was clear the high schools in this study implemented many of the practices cited in the study by Tierney, et al. (2009) garnering their better than average college enrollment rate while serving a majority of underrepresented students. The researcher recalls Laura’s comment about students being awarded financial aid, “it makes it real” for them (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015).

The findings from this study are discussed for each research question and its relationship to the theme of differentiation.

**Research Question 1**

The strategies, classes or programs Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high schools used to intentionally promote college aspirations, especially for underrepresented students included implementing practices promoting college aspirations. Derek, Laura, and Thomas cited differentiated approaches to creating and sustaining a college-going culture. The schools held a positive mindset about their students’ ability to go to college. They were committed and felt responsible to attend to students’ needs, and supported them to successful college enrollment.
One regularly occurring practice was the permeation of the school’s core expectation of developing a college-going identity throughout the teachers, administrators, and school counselors; it was important for all students to attend some type of post-secondary education. This core expectation which supported and sustained the college-going culture was foundational in each of the three high schools the researcher interviewed; they lived and practiced what they believed about a student’s post-secondary future.

The three high schools in the study served students who are underrepresented in the college arena, therefore Derek, Laura, and Thomas knew that creating a college-going culture could not be accomplished in a one-size-fits-all delivery system. Understanding the unique needs of the low SES, FGC, and minority students required the three high schools to differentiate the experiences that provided exposure, equal access, and regular monitoring of students as they turned college aspirations into completed applications.

Exposure to college is important for sustaining college aspirations, therefore the schools who were interviewed provided different opportunities for students to be exposed to college. This exposure included: school sponsored campus visits during the school day and frequent meetings with college-admission representatives allowing a relationship to be forged between students and the admission representatives. “College knowledge comes from acquiring practical knowledge about how to plan for and enroll in college, as well as developing a college-going identity through exposure to the world of post-secondary education” (Hooker and Brand, 2010, p. 78). The high schools were diligent in offering repeated communication and education (from teachers and administration) about the college enrollment process early in the student’s high school career. Knowing their communities and families, Derek, Laura, and Thomas provided frequent communication and education to their parents and students. The high schools’ public
acknowledgement of their students’ acceptance to college, and an increase in the exposure to college from freshmen to senior year were intentional practices and programs established to create and sustain a college-going environment. Derek and Thomas knew they needed to improve in this area of developing a strong college-going culture, whereas Laura proudly shared examples of hanging every acceptance letter, and hosting ACT prep with pizza. The knowledge of starting as early with freshmen to develop the college-going identity was a dominant thought in each of the interviewees’ discussions. Derek used to hold information to make college-planning special for seniors. He admitted he quickly realized college planning is a process (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015). Thomas echoed this thought, “Now a days, it’s a very complicated, very in-depth process of getting a kid ready to go to college; this is the reason for our junior and senior seminars, and partnership with colleges” (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Accessibility to information and personnel were also important in sustaining college aspirations. The schools implemented highly accessible practices. Accessibility was demonstrated by targeting all students when presenting information and education about post-secondary opportunities. Students and parents were taught and counseled, and accessibility through communication and open doors to school personnel were expected. One of the three tenets of the GO Centers provided comprehensive services to students and parents including guidance and support in applying to college and financial aid (Stillisano et al.2014). Thomas understood, as did Laura and Derek the importance of educating the parents when he shared, “We need to get them (families) in here to educate kids about college and provide support to them and their families. Not only just getting them (parents) used to the fledging leaving home
but also getting them (parents) support to get through the college application process (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

Students who missed college information meetings were personally provided the information the next day at school. The high schools set up campus visits and provided students with transportation to and from the campus visit. Community mentors helped students connect the value of a post-secondary education to the opportunities within the community. Derek, Laura, and Thomas repeatedly communicated their willingness to assist parents through the college enrollment process. Different means to deliver information to students and parents were utilized such as: hard copy, digital information, phone calls, home visits, evening meetings, and one-on-one meetings. All of these practices discussed by the interviewees demonstrated their ability to offer differentiated services. Whether they knew they were differentiating the college enrollment process or not, they mirrored Carol Ann Tomlinson’s description of differentiation: a way of engaging students by understanding where they are in any learning event and creating an environment where what they need for success is available and accessible (Tomlinson, 2014).

Monitoring a student’s pathway throughout the enrollment process was important to sustaining college aspirations too. The three high schools employed systems keeping students on track. These systems included software to monitor and track students’ progress with college enrollment, and ‘snagging’ students in the halls to complete tasks or receive information (the researcher believes this is a system because the staff understood a student’s lateness to class from the guidance office, and students knew what was expected if they got snagged by the school counselors). Interest inventories and checklists were provided to help students monitor their own aspirations and pathway to college. Teachers, outside support personnel, and parents were expected to assist the enrollment process. This practice reflected efforts of successful college
access programs who partnered students with adult mentors guide the students’ admission process, and assisted them in seeking financial awards (Hooker and Brand, 2009; Tierney et al., 2009). While one-on-one mentors were not the regular practice in the three high schools, mentors were used for college enrollment supports. Thomas and Derek used community organizations and representatives, and college admission representatives to guide students in career and post-secondary planning. Laura linked students with each other, a financial aid expert, and teachers to offer guidance.

The importance of the high schools’ college enrollment monitoring systems was supported by the findings of Klasik who identified nine steps in the ‘application gauntlet’ as important to increasing college enrollment. If students completed five of the nine steps (aspirations in 10th and 12th grade, taking entrance exams, had minimal academic qualifications, and completed applications), then college enrollment was likely. As the application process progressed through the nine steps, low SES and minority students began to drop out of the ‘application gauntlet’ creating a growing gap in the underrepresented students, and wealthy and white students (Klasik, 2012). Although they were frustrated when they found students who lagged in completing necessary steps in the college enrollment process, Derek and Laura’s diligence in monitoring their students’ progress was exactly what enabled them to differentiate the supports and identify the students who needed to be caught up. Laura used the software to monitor the students’ progress and pulled them into her office to move them along.

Finally, the students’ peer and parent interaction and discussion about college plans were important in sustaining college aspirations, the three high schools implemented practices that fostered peer and parent interaction, and discussion with the students. This was demonstrated by regular lunch meetings with college admission representatives who forged relationships with
juniors and seniors, modeling phone conversations to help each other check the status of their college applications, and after-school ACT prep class with pizza. In a study of student characteristics which influenced enrollment in two or four-year post-secondary institutions the aspirations of peers, just like the family, highly impacted the likelihood of the student enrolling in post-secondary education (Engberg and Wolniak, 2010). The efforts of Derek, Laura, and Thomas to create opportunities for peer interaction not only supported the college-going culture at their schools, but may also have bolstered the likelihood of the underrepresented students enrolling in college.

**Research Question 2**

The strategies, classes or programs Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high school used to intentionally support students through the college enrollment process, especially for underrepresented students included implementing practices which supported the college application process. Derek, Laura, and Thomas cited differentiated approaches of supporting the college application process. The schools held a positive mindset about their students’ ability to go to college and therefore understood the need to provide hands-on assistance in completing college applications.

The three high schools in the study served students who are underrepresented in the college arena, therefore Derek, Laura, and Thomas knew that college applications did not get completed using a one-size-fits-all delivery system. Understanding the unique needs of the low SES, FGC, and minority students required these high schools to differentiate the experiences of which provided support and guidance as they turned college aspirations into completed applications. Regularly occurring practices included using community organizations to mentor students through the process, intervention and education opportunities for lagging students and
unknowing parents, and monitoring the application process. These practices which supported the application process were foundational in each of the three high schools interviewed; they lived and practiced what they believed about a student’s post-secondary future.

Completing the application process has shown to be an indicator of future college enrollment. In a senior exit survey conducted by Stephan and Rosenbaum (2009), low SES urban students from one district were asked about their college going plans in an effort to determine effectiveness of college promoting programs in different high schools within the same district. Sixty nine percent of students who completed at least one college application enrolled compared to 36% who did not (Stephan and Rosenbaum, 2009). Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high schools expected every student to learn and understand the college application process, and expected every student to practice completing college application essays. Laura’s high school required every student to complete an application to at least one historically black college or university (HBCU). This expectation/practice was found to have profound effect on enrollment of underrepresented students discussed in a study by Cabrera and La Nasa, (2001). In the schools they studied, they found once the lowest SES students applied to a four-year college, their chances of enrollment compared closely to the national average enrollment rate and to high SES students (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001). Their high schools used teachers and community mentors to assist students through the application process, provided intervention for students who fell behind in the application process, monitored students’ academic and post-secondary progress throughout the application process and, promoted, and supported the college entrance exam preparation.
Research Questions 3

The strategies, classes or programs Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ high schools used to intentionally support students through the financial aid process, especially for underrepresented students included implementing practices in assisting with the financial aid process. The researcher discovered through the coding process that Derek, Laura, and Thomas were in essence discussing differentiated approaches to supporting the financial aid process. The schools held a positive mindset about their students’ ability to go to college and were therefore, committed to attend to the support needed to successfully complete financial aid forms. The three high schools in the study served students who were underrepresented in the college arena, therefore Derek, Laura, and Thomas knew that financial aid applications did not get completed using a one-size-fits-all delivery system. Understanding the unique needs of the low SES, FGC, and minority students required these high schools to differentiate the experiences providing support and guidance as they turned college aspirations into completed applications.

Regularly occurring practices included hands-on instruction in completing the FAFSA, and reliance on outside people to assist students and parents in the financial aid process. These practices assisting students through the financial aid application process were foundational in each of the three high schools the researcher interviewed. High schools K, M and R understood the likelihood of the majority of their students attending college was greatly diminished if financial aid was not made possible.

Therefore, because completing financial aid “makes it real” for the students (Laura, personal conversation, June 2015), and was shown in research to increase the likelihood of actual enrollment (Stephan and Rosenbaum, 2009); the high schools in this study taught students and parents about college costs and affordability. Their tools were one-on-one and face-to-face
meetings, software/internet to show college comparisons, and hands-on approach to teach students and parents how to complete the FAFSA. All three high schools cited examples of front-loading students with information and education about financial aid and scholarships so when they met with college admission representatives, students knew what to ask and were able to understand financial aid. All three interviewees used outside organizations and colleges to assist parents and students complete financial aid and scholarship applications.

**Research Question 4.**

The leaders in the three high schools promoted a college ready environment and pathway to college, especially for underrepresented students by having strong leaders who promoted a college-going culture. Regularly occurring leadership practices included repeated communication of the vision; all students were prepared for some type of post-secondary education. Sustaining this vision was difficult in light of the barriers all thee interviewees discussed. Derek, Laura, and Thomas all cited poverty as a barrier. Thomas’s staff participated in a book study to understand students and families of generational poverty so they could better serve the students. Derek expressed frustration at parents’ inability to see the need for post-secondary education. Laura spoke of the high cost of college and many parents believing it was not attainable due to the cost. This is what made her comment about financial aid awards so salient. Completing the FAFSA and receiving tuition assistance is what “makes it real” for Laura’s students (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). The financial barrier to successful college enrollment was cited throughout the research. Tierney et al. (2009) found that hands-on assistance with completing the financial aid forms is especially beneficial for low SES, minority, and FGC students (Tierney et al., 2009). The Ohio Department of Higher Education’s report to the governor concluded that Ohio must take “bold actions” (p. 11) to overcome barriers
of college enrollment such as academic preparedness, financial issues, college knowledge supports, and cultural preparedness for low SES, FGC, and minority students (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2011).

The leaders built strong relationships with students, parents, and local universities to support the vision. They created a positive environment of high expectations and support, and remained flexible, available, persistent, and reflective. These leadership practices which supported college aspirations to completed applications were foundational in each of the three high schools interviewed; they lived and practiced what they believed about a student’s post-secondary future.

Therefore, because attending a high school with a strong college-going culture resulted in higher college enrollment (Hooker and Brand, 2010), the leaders of the schools exemplified the following qualities: leaders expected all staff to hold high expectations of all students and to believe all students should participate in some type of post-secondary education opportunity. The schools’ leaders expected all staff to support students’ college aspirations. They utilized community resources to assist the students and families through the college enrollment process, and built strong relationships with local colleges. Derek, Laura, and Thomas expected the college admission representatives to know and understand their students’ needs. The leaders provided opportunities for students to connect their college aspirations to local possibilities, and remained flexible, available, persistent, and reflective of the college enrollment process.

Two of the interviewees were school counselors, and Thomas made it clear that he just finished his first year with an outstanding school counselor whom he specifically selected. Fortunately, for the students and parents of their high schools, the three interviewees worked against the daunting research of student interaction with school counselors discussed in Chapter
4. In schools where low SES students did not see the school counselor for college information, these students’ college enrollment was negatively impacted. In the same study of school counselor’s impact on college enrollment, a positive impact resulted from school counselors who targeted students with the most need and continued to communicate aspirations for their students (Bryan, et al., 2011). Derek, Laura, and Thomas understood the importance of their role in supporting the students’ aspirations and post-secondary planning and the researcher was left with no doubt that, all three of the interviewees communicated their aspirations for their students frequently. They also believed in gradual release; allowing students who needed support to eventually take responsibility for their future. Derek summed this concept up with heartfelt concern.

I want our kids leaving here with prospects and a bright future. It worries me just as much when I see a kid who is walking down the graduating aisle and knowing he is going to wake up the next morning and doesn’t have a clue as it does the kid who is the valedictorian who is heading off to pre-med. It equally worries me the same. So, I want every kid to leave with a bright future and I realize that’s a lofty goal but we can strive for that (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

**Conclusion**

High School K, M, and R harnessed many different practices, people and programs to meet the college enrollment process needs of their high poverty, first-generation, and/or minority students. They did not select one pathway or plan expecting all students to fit that pathway or plan. Rather, the three high schools understood there were specific and different needs which supported underrepresented students’ college aspirations to completed applications. This
understanding allowed the schools to implement many different practices according to the students and parents’ level of knowledge, aspirations, and progress toward college enrollment.

The high schools in the study were intentional in their efforts and practices which created a college-going culture. The culture was sustained by focusing efforts to expose students to the world of college. There was deliberate effort to make information and support personnel accessible to every student. As Derek stated, “We target every student” (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015). Monitoring was critical to supporting underrepresented students as they progressed through the enrollment gauntlet. High Schools K, M, and R found many means to monitor students in an effort to ‘snag’ students who were not on track with college enrollment. The high schools fostered peer and parent interaction, and discussions with students: understanding the importance of family and friends to underrepresented students.

The high schools in the study were intentional in their practices to support underrepresented students and their parents throughout the college application process. They understood the need to provide intervention and education to students and parents because a completed application was an important indicator of future college enrollment. Derek, Laura, and Thomas understood helping parents and students build social capital through support, networks, and resources was necessary to navigate the college application process. They created ways to make up for the differences in their students and parents’ lack of social capital and lack of college knowledge by offering home visits, scheduling several opportunities to learn about college, and frequently communicating their open-door, willingness-to-help policy (Hooker and Brand, 2010, Lareau, 2006; Plank and Jordan, 2001).

Intentional practices to support underrepresented students and their parents in completing financial aid applications were also practiced in High Schools K, M and R. As Laura shared,
receiving financial aid “makes it real” for students (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). Laura, Derek, and Thomas also understood the majority of their students attending college was dependent on a financial aid award. Therefore, the three high schools offered hands-on instruction, and relied on outside people to assist students and parents in completing financial aid applications. Their actions reflected the research finding: students who completed the financial aid application had a 77% enrollment in college while those who did not complete the aid application had a 40% enrollment (Stephan and Rosenbaum, 2009).

Finally, each high school interviewee and their principals or school counselors exhibited strong leadership in setting the standard of support offered to students and parents. These leaders used the community, parents, peers, and school staff to support the students through the college enrollment process; the leaders knew they could not do it alone. The interviewees took responsibility in creating and sustaining the college-going culture. They frequently communicated the expectation: all students would learn to enroll in some post-secondary education. Their qualities of being visionary, reflective, available, persistent, and flexible promoted a culture of doing whatever was necessary, whenever it was necessary to support their students’ college aspirations.

High School K, M, and R did not rely on one system or one person to support their students in the college enrollment process. Nor did they target some students for support or post-secondary opportunities; they targeted them all. These high schools did not do any one thing another high school could replicate; rather they did everything high schools could replicate. The focus on differentiating their supports and strategies according to the needs of their students was evident in creating and sustaining a college-going culture, and supporting students through the college application and financial aid process. The practices to promote college enrollment of the
high schools in this study were numerous and intentional. Students do not make their way through the college application gauntlet by chance at Derek, Laura, and Thomas’ schools. Monitoring, persisting, and supporting students throughout their high school careers bolstered the high schools’ college enrollment rates above the average enrollment rate in Ohio’s two and four-year public institutions while serving populations where the majority of students are low SES, first-generation college, and/or minority students.

**Recommendations**

This study added to the body of literature regarding successful college enrollment especially targeted at underrepresented students in college demographics, and it offered practical strategies and practices for promoting college enrollment. Although the findings from this study were specific to a few Ohio high schools, the intentional practices are transferrable to any high school wishing to increase its college enrollment, especially of its underrepresented students. None of the practices Derek, Laura, and Thomas discussed in their interviews seemed difficult for any high school to implement. There were costs associated with school-sponsored campus visits and software, and there was additional time required to harness community support and relationships with college admission representatives. However, there was monumental commitment to the vision of building a strong college-going culture. Thomas shared his feeling of responsibility to communicate the vision, and monitor his staff’s understanding and practice of the vision. Laura’s principal called her out for waning from the vision when she congratulated a student on his athletic scholarship. Throughout Derek’s interview, he constantly reflected on improvements to what his school already did and what more it could do.

As the researcher wove the literature and the study’s results, numerous specific actions and recommendations emerged which should serve as a template for high schools to assist their
underrepresented students: low SES, FGC, and minority students, and all students. The researcher imagined a three-legged stool as a visual to demonstrate the importance a strong college-going culture, hands-on assistance in completing college applications, and hands-on support in completing financial aid applications; where all three were necessary for the stool to stand; the student to successfully take his college aspirations to completed applications (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Three Legged Stool: College Going Culture, College Application Support, Financial Aid Support**
A critical leg of the stool was to create a strong college-going culture. Since this was a key indicator of a student’s successful college enrollment, it was imperative for the entire high school to embrace the culture and belief that every student should be prepared and supported to successfully gain enrollment in post-secondary education. The Consortium of Chicago School Research found attending a high school with a strong college-going culture was the most consistent predictor of whether students took steps to enroll in college (Hooker and Brand, 2010). Figure 3 shows one very simple visible way to promote a college-going culture. The signage at this school (not in the study) posted the teacher’s name (pseudonym) and his/her university outside every classroom. It served as a reminder every day and every period that college is important and recognized.

**Figure 3: Signage Promoting College-Going Culture**
The leader of the high school must communicate the importance of post-secondary education to the students, staff, and community. Laura’s principal was clear in her message to the students by making it mandatory to apply to at least one HBCU. Thomas developed courses for every junior and senior to learn about careers, college, and practice college enrollment activities.

When faced with a high percentage of low SES, FGC, and minority students, high schools must identify these students to provide early and continuous support in sustaining their college aspirations through completing the applications (college and financial aid). Demographic information to identify underrepresented students is readily available to school counselors and administrators. By identifying the underrepresented students in the high school, the school staff may help them develop a college-going identity using peers, exposure, support and encouragement, monitoring, and pervasive messaging about post-secondary opportunities.

Creating a strong college-going culture began with starting a college-going identity early in high school. Tracking student data which included demographic information (are they first-generation, can they afford college, does their family structure or culture discourage college), ACT participation, and career interests can help the high school staff focus on the specific needs of their students, enabling a differentiated approach. All three interviewees were very aware of their students’ needs. Derek spoke frequently about the effort he took to know his kids, their parents, and the community. He shared.

...not being afraid to be us. We don’t get caught up in trying to emulate other high schools, we borrow good ideas but at the end of the day you are still who are. We aren’t going to pit our kids against a Dublin Coffman and say ok, perform. That is not fair to our kids. We know them and we can make things happen for our kids but it’s got to be the K High School way (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).
Thomas shared his ability to know the students’ struggles and fears since he too was a first-generation college student. First-generation college students believed their parents felt a sense of betrayal by the student to his roots, family, community, and even self (Hurst, 2009). Hurst also found that underrepresented students resisted labeling of academically achieving due to the higher interest in remaining loyal to their peers and family. Thomas had the same problem at his high school. He shared.

The best professional development I had as a teacher/administrator working in a district with high poverty was learning about/understanding was Ruby Payne’s framework for understanding poverty. We had her come here to deliver the professional development, we did a book study. Understanding the framework, the family unit and belief system and culture of people in poverty and then schools will know how to combat it…forming relationships. It’s ok if your parents don’t understand how to do that or they are scared about the paperwork, that’s ok, we will get the people here to make it happen for you. Just communicating expectations, providing support and forming relationships with the kids and parents…getting that trust built up (Thomas, personal communication, September, 2015).

High schools with strong college-going cultures created opportunities for students to learn about college during the school day. They made college knowledge accessible to every student, regardless of their demographics or interest. If their interest waned or lagged behind important timelines and due dates, the leaders of High School K, M, and R were knocking on that student’s door.

The study demonstrated the importance of high schools’ commitment to implementing practices meeting the individual needs of their students. Again, this requires identifying those
students, their needs, and the intentional actions necessary to help them sustain their post-secondary aspirations. The high school must take the responsibility for creating and scheduling exposure opportunities for their underrepresented students. As Derek stated, “…I tried to keep it (college exposure) special until they were seniors, I learned very quickly that that’s not a good idea because it is a process (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

High schools must intentionally assist students and parents throughout the college application process in order to keep the stool balanced. This cannot be the sole responsibility of the school counselors. The high schools interviewed in the study were specific about the importance of the staff assisting the students. The staff buy-in started with a strong college-going culture and the commitment to help students as they needed it; even if they missed college nights or deadlines. The high schools in the study persisted even when students wanted to give up. The Common Application was used in all three high schools and college essay writing was practiced in each of the high schools’ English classes.

Equally important to the post-secondary enrollment; high schools must physically and intimately assist parents and students through the financial aid process. This third leg of the stool is, as Laura stated, is what “makes it real” for the students (Laura, personal communication, June, 2015). Many underrepresented students do not see college as an option because of the cost; therefore, high schools must design ways to specifically assist their underrepresented students and parents early in their high school career by educating them about the costs, Federal Pell Grant, and scholarship availability based on their family income.

President Obama recently ordered a change in the FAFSA application process for the 2017-2018 award year. The change allows a family’s eligibility to be based on the Prior-Prior Year income (PPY). This change is especially important for underrepresented students since they
will now be able to complete the FAFSA application much earlier in their high school career rather than waiting until their senior year when income taxes are filed from the families’ prior year. Yet, unless high schools have a structured system to help students and their families learn how to complete the FAFSA, underrepresented students may not be represented in the graduates planning to enroll in college. Successful practices included using college admission representatives to walk students and parents through the FAFSA. Laura’s school was eligible for a specific person who assisted students and their parents. All three high schools tracked and monitored the students’ progress throughout the financial aid process as well as the college entrance exam, and college application. All eight of the schools in the study reported monitoring their students’ college enrollment process at least once a year. Some of the schools reported multiple monitoring events. The researcher did not ask for specification of what monitoring entailed during each interview. The wide array of what high schools specify as monitoring students’ college enrollment path could be a focus for further research.

Beyond recommendations for high schools, the researcher recommends creating better data sets that can track students between high school graduation and post-secondary education enrollment. If high schools are purposeful about increasing their college enrollment especially for underrepresented students, they will need better data. The researcher merged two data sets, one from Ohio Department of Higher Education which reports enrollment (by high school-with no student demographic information available) in Ohio’s two and four-year public universities and the other from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). ODE reports provided graduation count, high school enrollment, and number of low socio-economic students; three separate reports. High schools typically lose contact with their students after graduation and find it very difficult to maintain tabs on the students after their first year of college. A data bank which
merges a high school’s graduates by demographics and their enrollment in any post-secondary education opportunity (not just public two and four-year) would be helpful for high schools and colleges wishing to enhance their college-going practices for specific groups of students enrolled in specific post-secondary experiences. Quite simply, if better data was available, high schools could disaggregate the high school graduation and the post-secondary enrollment by subgroups. The focus on subgroups’ performance on state and national assessments has resulted in many differentiated practices in schools today, therefore the researcher believes this same focus on underrepresented students’ post-secondary enrollment would result in differentiated practices to improve the college-going rate of high schools. The Prepared for Success component of Ohio’s Report Card is a good start to helping high schools identify and focus efforts on underrepresented students’ college and career readiness. However, unless the data is tracked beyond the high school walls, high school personnel will not know the true picture of college enrollment demographics nor the effectiveness of the programs and practices dedicated to supporting underrepresented students.

**Future Research Opportunities**

Since this study was based on three very specific criteria, an average of 41% or greater college enrollment in Ohio’s two and four-year public colleges, an average of 50% or greater poverty rate, and an average of 50 or more graduates from 2011-2013, the researcher would expand it to include any Ohio high school with greater than 50 graduates. The poverty criteria would be deleted because the nature of a best practice is that it is transferrable to other scenarios. Deleting the poverty criteria might garner many more transferrable practices. There is an educational expression that goes ‘what is best for the best is also best for the rest’. Therefore, the
researcher would like to examine the best practices of any high school with a boasting a better than average college enrollment rate no matter their poverty rate.

With the current emphasis on college and career readiness, Ohio Means Jobs, and career connections in Ohio schools research on what Ohio’s middle or junior high schools are doing to identify underrepresented students and develop a college-going identity with their students would be an excellent research opportunity. As Derek discussed, college aspirations to completed applications is a process, not something a school can start junior year of high school (Derek, personal communication, September, 2015).

Another research topic the researcher believes could help schools when implementing practices and efforts which promote college enrollment would be to establish what high schools cite as monitoring the enrollment process. Although this topic seems singular in nature, different monitoring techniques, frequency, and personnel dedicated to assuring the monitoring of the students’ college aspirations to completed applications might offer sound practices for other high schools to mimic. For example, summer nudging via text messaging was found to be effective in helping underrepresented students take their final steps to actual enrollment (Castleman and Page, 2013). Just like Laura’s summer days to tie up loose ends for students’ enrollment, the text messages are a means of monitoring.

The researcher believes it would be interesting to examine further the other schools in the study. The researcher selected the four highest composite scores found in Table 5 to conduct interviews. High School I had a 71% in Area 3-Financial aid supports, just second to Laura’s school. It would be helpful to other schools to identify the actual work happening at High School I in supporting its students in the financial aid area. Likewise, High School P had the 4th highest
score in Area 2-College enrollment supports. High School F ranked third in its responses to creating a college-going culture, Area 1.

A final research opportunity would be to triangulate identified intentional practices described by the three interviewees by conducting interviews with staff, students, and/or parents to gain perspective of the pervasiveness and effectiveness of the practices.
REFERENCES


Carnevale, A., (2013). “Prepared testimony before the senate budget committee hearing on the impact of federal investments on people, communities, and long-term economic growth, as released by the committee”. Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University.


projects. *Education for information*, 22(2), 63-75.


Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). Differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners. ASCD.

Increasing college opportunity for low-income students: promising models and a call to action / The Executive Office of the President. (2014).
Appendix A

Acronyms

ACAC-American College Application Campaign
ACT-American College Testing
ASVAB-Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
AVID-Advancement via Individual Achievement
CGC-Continuing Generation College
CPA-College Preparatory Advisor
EOC-Economic Opportunity Center
ESEA-Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FAFSA-Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FCG-First-generation College
GEAR UP-Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
GPA-Grade Point Average
HBCU-Historically Black College or University
IRB-Institutional Review Board
IRN-Identification Retrieval Number
IRS-Internal Revenue Service
ODHE-Ohio Board of Regents
ODE-Ohio Department of Education
OMJ-Ohio Means Jobs
ORC-Ohio Revised Code

RttT-Race to the Top

SES-Socio-Economic Status

STEM-Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

U. S. DOE-United States Department of Education
Appendix B

National School Lunch Program

or by phone to respond. It is envisioned that the contractor would then conduct the web based survey and interviews thereafter.

Estimate of Burden: NIFA used burden estimates administered through contractor led web based survey to estimate the burden for SBIR, but anticipates the transactions for project initiation may be reduced because grant application information will be used to prepopulate many fields. The total annual burden for the SBIR Program collection is 2500 hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of respondents</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
<th>Average time per response hours</th>
<th>Annual burden hours requested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USDA SBIR Phase II Grantees</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency’s estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request to OMB for approval. All comments will become a matter of public record.

Obtaining a Copy of the Information Collection: A copy of the information collection and related instructions may be obtained free of charge by contacting Robert Martin as directed above.

Done at Washington, DC, this 23rd day of March, 2015.

Catherine E. Woteki,
Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics.
[FR Doc. 2015-07737 Filed 3-30-15; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3410-23-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Child Nutrition Programs—Income Eligibility Guidelines

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the Department’s annual adjustments to the income Eligibility Guidelines to be used in determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk for the period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. These guidelines are used by schools, institutions, and facilities participating in the National School Lunch Program and Commodity School Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program. The annual adjustments are required by section 9 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. The guidelines are intended to direct benefits to those children most in need and are revised annually to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index.

DATES: Effective Date: July 1, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Vivian Loes, Branch Chief, Operational Support Branch, Child Nutrition Programs, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), USDA, Alexandria, Virginia 22332, or by phone at (703) 325-2022.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action is not a rule as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601-612) and thus is exempt from the provisions of that Act.

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3507), no recordkeeping or reporting requirements have been included that are subject to approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

This notice has been determined to be not significant and was reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget in conformance with Executive Order 12966.

The affected programs are listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 16.553, No. 10.555, No. 10.556, No. 10.558 and No. 10.559 and are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. (See 2 CFR 415.3-415.6).

Background

Pursuant to sections 9(b)(1) and 17(c)(4) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1756(b)(1) and 42 U.S.C. 1766(c)(4)), and sections 3(a)(6) and 4(e)(1)(A) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1772(a)(6) and 1773(c)(1)(A)), the Department annually issues the Income Eligibility Guidelines for free and reduced price meals for the National School Lunch Program (7 CFR part 210), the Commodity School Program (7 CFR part 210), School Breakfast Program (7 CFR part 220), Summer Food Service Program (7 CFR part 225) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (7 CFR part 226) and the guidelines for free milk in the Special Milk Program for Children (7 CFR part 215). These eligibility guidelines are based on the Federal income poverty guidelines and are stated by household size. The guidelines are used to determine eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk in accordance with applicable program rules.

Definition of Income

In accordance with the Department’s policy as provided in the Food and Nutrition Service publication Eligibility Manual for School Meals, “Income,” as the term is used in this notice, means income before any deductions such as income taxes, Social Security taxes, insurance premiums, charitable contributions and bonds. It includes the following: (1) Monetary compensation for services, including wages, salary, commissions or fees; (2) net income from nonfarm self-employment; (3) net income from farm self-employment; (4) Social Security; (5) dividends or interest on savings or bonds or income from estates or trusts; (6) net rental income; (7) public assistance or welfare payments; (8) unemployment compensation; (9) government civilian employee or military retirement, or pensions or veterans payments; (10) private pensions or annuities; (11) alimony or child support payments; (12) regular contributions from persons not living in the household; (13) net royalties; and (14) other cash income. Other cash income would include cash amounts received or withdrawn from any source including savings investments, trust accounts and other resources that would be available to pay the price of a child’s meal.

“Income,” as the term is used in this notice, does not include any income or benefits received under any Federal programs that are excluded from consideration as income by any statutory prohibition. Furthermore, the
The following are the Income Eligibility Guidelines to be effective from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. The Department’s guidelines for free meals and milk and reduced price meals were obtained by multiplying the year 2015 Federal income poverty guidelines by 1.30 and 1.85, respectively, and by rounding the result upward to the next whole dollar.

This notice displays only the annual Federal poverty guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services because the monthly and weekly Federal poverty guidelines are not used to determine the Income Eligibility Guidelines. The chart details the free and reduced price eligibility criteria for monthly income, income received twice monthly (24 payments per year), income received every two weeks (26 payments per year) and weekly income.

Income calculations are made based on the following formulas: Monthly income is calculated by dividing the annual income by 12; twice monthly income is computed by dividing annual income by 24; income received every two weeks is calculated by dividing annual income by 26; and weekly income is computed by dividing annual income by 52. All numbers are rounded upward to the next whole dollar. The numbers reflected in this notice for a family of four in the 48 contiguous states, the District of Columbia, Guam and the territories represent an increase of 1.7 percent over last year’s level for a family of the same size. The income eligibility guidelines table follows below.

### INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

[Effective from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th></th>
<th>Reduced price meal—150%</th>
<th></th>
<th>Free meals—130%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>guidelines</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Twice per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11,770</td>
<td>21,775</td>
<td>1,815</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>29,471</td>
<td>2,469</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>1,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20,090</td>
<td>37,167</td>
<td>3,098</td>
<td>1,549</td>
<td>1,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>24,250</td>
<td>44,603</td>
<td>3,729</td>
<td>1,870</td>
<td>1,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>28,410</td>
<td>52,859</td>
<td>4,380</td>
<td>2,190</td>
<td>2,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>32,570</td>
<td>60,955</td>
<td>5,022</td>
<td>2,511</td>
<td>2,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>36,730</td>
<td>67,951</td>
<td>5,636</td>
<td>2,832</td>
<td>2,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>40,900</td>
<td>75,647</td>
<td>6,304</td>
<td>3,152</td>
<td>2,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For each additional family member added</td>
<td>4,160</td>
<td>7,662</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Alaska

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th></th>
<th>Reduced price meal—150%</th>
<th></th>
<th>Free meals—130%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>guidelines</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Twice per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14,720</td>
<td>27,232</td>
<td>2,270</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>1,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19,020</td>
<td>36,952</td>
<td>3,071</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>1,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25,120</td>
<td>49,422</td>
<td>3,873</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>1,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>30,320</td>
<td>56,992</td>
<td>4,675</td>
<td>2,398</td>
<td>2,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>35,520</td>
<td>65,712</td>
<td>5,478</td>
<td>2,738</td>
<td>2,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40,720</td>
<td>75,302</td>
<td>6,278</td>
<td>3,139</td>
<td>2,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>45,920</td>
<td>84,952</td>
<td>7,080</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>3,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>51,120</td>
<td>94,572</td>
<td>7,881</td>
<td>3,944</td>
<td>3,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For each additional family member added</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>9,620</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hawaii

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th></th>
<th>Reduced price meal—150%</th>
<th></th>
<th>Free meals—130%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>guidelines</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Twice per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13,950</td>
<td>27,988</td>
<td>2,089</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18,300</td>
<td>35,911</td>
<td>2,626</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>1,305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23,650</td>
<td>43,775</td>
<td>3,198</td>
<td>1,782</td>
<td>1,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28,950</td>
<td>51,397</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>1,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>34,200</td>
<td>59,440</td>
<td>4,527</td>
<td>2,519</td>
<td>2,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>39,450</td>
<td>69,283</td>
<td>5,274</td>
<td>2,947</td>
<td>2,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>44,700</td>
<td>78,126</td>
<td>6,011</td>
<td>3,268</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>50,010</td>
<td>86,969</td>
<td>6,748</td>
<td>3,624</td>
<td>3,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For each additional family member added</td>
<td>4,790</td>
<td>8,843</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

#### Food and Nutrition Service

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): Income Eligibility Guidelines**

**AGENCY:** Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), USDA.  
**ACTION:** Notice

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture ("Department") announces adjusted income eligibility guidelines to be used by State agencies in determining the income eligibility of persons applying to participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC). These income eligibility guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the WIC Regulations.

**DATES:** Effective Date July 1, 2015.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Economic Disadvantage Flag</th>
<th>2012-2013 School Year</th>
<th>Pct. of Total Enrollment</th>
<th>2011-2012 School Year</th>
<th>Pct. of Total Enrollment</th>
<th>2009-2010 School Year</th>
<th>Pct. of Total Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen County ESC</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>&gt;95%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>&gt;95%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>&gt;95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen East Elementary School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>59.40%</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>58.00%</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>69.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen East Elementary School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>40.60%</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>42.00%</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>30.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen East High School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>65.40%</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>68.30%</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>85.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen East High School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>34.60%</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>31.70%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>14.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollo Career Center</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>58.40%</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>58.00%</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>63.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollo Career Center</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>42.00%</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>36.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auglaize County Educational Academy</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55.50%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>57.70%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auglaize County Educational Academy</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44.50%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42.30%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Elementary School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>46.60%</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>41.40%</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>46.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Elementary School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>53.40%</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>58.60%</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>53.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath High School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>56.30%</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>59.10%</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>64.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath High School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>43.70%</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>40.90%</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>35.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Middle School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>42.90%</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>53.40%</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>57.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Middle School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>57.10%</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>46.60%</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>43.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluffton Elementary School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>78.30%</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>82.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluffton Elementary School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>21.70%</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>17.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluffton High School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>78.80%</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>79.30%</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>82.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluffton High School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21.20%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20.70%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluffton Middle School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>77.90%</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>77.70%</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>76.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluffton Middle School</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22.30%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>23.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Elementary School</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>46.30%</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>39.00%</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>45.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
Ohio Department of Higher Education College Remediation Report (Sample)

Remediation of Ohio High School Graduates Going Directly to a University System of Ohio College
High School Graduates in 2014 Enrolling as First-Time College Students in Fall 2014
Results by High School of Graduation

Note: For confidentiality purposes, results are omitted in cases where the value of the denominator is less than 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>High School by County</th>
<th>IRN</th>
<th>Number of First-Time College Students at a USO College</th>
<th>% of Entering Students Enrolling in a Public University or University Regional Campus</th>
<th>% of Entering Students Enrolling in a Community College</th>
<th>% of Entering Students Taking Developmental Math or English</th>
<th>% of Entering Students Taking Developmental Math</th>
<th>% of Entering Students Taking Developmental English</th>
<th>% of Entering Students Taking Developmental Math and English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Allen East High School</td>
<td>000364</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Bath High School</td>
<td>001750</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Bluffton High School</td>
<td>003038</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Elida High School</td>
<td>010199</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Lima Central Catholic</td>
<td>053165</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Lima Senior High School</td>
<td>008298</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Perry High School</td>
<td>029694</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Shawnee High School</td>
<td>034272</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Spencerville High School</td>
<td>035345</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>St John Elementary and High School</td>
<td>053645</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Temple Christian School</td>
<td>008071</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Total | 48,749 | 74% | 26% | 32% | 28% | 13% | 10% |
Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board

Date: March 23, 2015

To: Dr. Rahman Dyer

CC: Mary Riepenhoff

RE: College Aspirations to Completed Applications: A Study of Intentional High School Practices Designed to Increase Post-secondary Enrollment

Project Expiration date: March 23, 2016

The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board (IRB) has completed its review of your project utilizing human subjects and has granted authorization. This study has been approved for a period of one year only. The project has been assigned the number 878.

In order to comply with UF policy and federal regulations, human subject research must be reviewed by the IRB on at least a yearly basis. If you have not completed your research within the year, it is the investigator’s responsibility to ensure that the Progress Report is completed and sent to the IRB in a timely fashion. The IRB needs to process the re-approval before the expiration date, which is printed above.

Understand that any proposed changes may not be implemented before IRB approval, in which case you must complete an Amendment/Modification Report.

Following the completion of the use of human subjects, the primary investigator must complete a Certificate of Compliance form indicating when and how many subjects were recruited for the study.

Please refer to the IRB guidelines for additional information. This packet can be obtained within blackboard under community section. Please note that if any changes are made to the present study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please include that number on any other documentation or correspondence regarding the study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (419) 434-5442 or email irb@findlay.edu.

Sincerely,

Susan W. Stevens, EdD. AT
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Cc: IRB Office
Appendix F

Communication to Superintendents

Dear Superintendent (Name),

Congratulations on the (Name) High School’s solid college enrollment rate! As a University of Findlay doctoral student, I have compiled college enrollment data compared to high school graduation data and have found that (Name) High School has met the average post-secondary enrollment rate in two and four-year Ohio public colleges of 41% for 2011-2013. While your high school’s college enrollment rate may be higher due to students enrolling in private and/or out of state colleges, your school met or exceeded 41% college enrollment while serving an average of at least 50% economic disadvantaged students, and an average of at least 50 graduates from 2011-2013. Your efforts to maintain an average or better than an average college enrollment rate in Ohio’s two and four-year public colleges is worthy of celebrating and studying!

As a former superintendent and current Race to the Top regional specialist, I understand the importance of college and career readiness. Therefore, this study, College Aspirations to Completed Applications: A study of intentional high school practices designed to increase post-secondary enrollment seeks to identify practices, programs, policies and personnel resources aimed to promote college enrollment. In an effort to identify and deeply study the intentional practices in the high school, I have requested the high school leader to have the most knowledgeable person of the high school’s college enrollment complete the enclosed survey by April 20, 2015.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Rahman Dyer at dyer@findlay.edu or 419-434-6901. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mary Riepenhoff
riepenhoff@findlay.edu
419-236-4672
Appendix G

Survey

College Aspirations to Completed Applications:
A study of intentional high school practices designed to increase post-secondary enrollment
The University of Findlay
Research Study Survey

If Ohio high schools of 50% or greater poverty have a college enrollment rate of 42% (Ohio's college enrollment rate) or greater or have an increase in college enrollment, what are the key factors contributing to these schools' college-going culture, college enrollment supports and/or financial aid supports?

Definitions:
College-going culture-embedded beliefs and practices which develop college aspirations and assist students through completed college applications.
Underrepresented students-minority, low socio-economic and/or first-generation college students.
Post-secondary-any formal education, in any institution which leads to a license, certification, associate or bachelor's degree.

1. ________________________________ High School

2. ________________________________ Name of person completing survey

3. ________________________________ Position of person completing survey

4. ________________________________ email of person completing survey

5. ________________________________ Phone number of person completing survey

6. ________________________________ Signature of consent to participation in this study

7. ________________________________ Signature of consent to participate in further research on this topic through an interview

THANK YOU!

COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

1. On a scale of 1-4, 4 being the best, how would you rate the high school's college-going culture?
2. The high school tracks the college enrollment rate for all students.
   a. No enrollment data
   b. 1 year of enrollment data
   c. 2-3 years of enrollment data
   d. More than 3 years of enrollment data

3. The high school assists students develop and sustain college aspirations throughout high school.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

4. Students understand the connection between earning a post-secondary degree or certification and future earnings.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

5. All high school guidance and administrative staff believe students should attend some sort of post-secondary education.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

6. The majority of the high school’s teachers believe students should attend some sort of post-secondary education.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

7. The high school identifies all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

8. The high school publicly celebrates college-going successes
   a. Rarely
   b. Sometimes
c. Almost always
d. Always

9. Guidance for college and a career mostly conducted by
   a. Guidance counselors
   b. Guidance counselors and administrators
   c. Guidance counselors and teachers
   d. Guidance counselors, teachers and administrators

10. Who would you say has the most responsibility in promoting college enrollment in the school?
    **Check all that apply**
    a. Students
    b. Teachers
    c. Guidance counselors
    d. Administration

11. In the past few years, participation in college entrance exams is best described by:
    a. Some eligible students take exams
    b. All eligible students take the PLAN or PSAT
    c. All eligible students take the ACT or SAT
    d. All eligible students take both the PSAT/PLAN and ACT/SAT

12. Teachers are aware of underrepresented students' performance on college admission exams (PSAT, PLAN, SAT and ACT).
    a. Teachers do not have this data
    b. Data is shared as general information not related to specific students
    c. Each teacher is aware of underrepresented students' performance
    d. Each teacher is aware of all students’ performance

13. Teachers reach out to all students, especially underrepresented students to build college aspirations.
    a. Strongly disagree
    b. Disagree
    c. Agree
    d. Strongly agree

14. Staff members actively advocate for parents and families to help support their child’s college aspirations and career goals.
    a. Strongly disagree
    b. Disagree
    c. Agree
    d. Strongly agree
15. Each grade has programs or practices which promote post-secondary education planning?
   a. Only 9th and 10th grade
   b. Only 11th and 12th grade
   c. All high school grades
   d. All high school grades and 8th grade

16. All students have a post-secondary plan which is reviewed and monitored.
   a. Students’ post-secondary plans do not exist
   b. Students’ post-secondary plans are exist but are not reviewed and monitored
   c. Students’ post-secondary plans are reviewed and monitored yearly
   d. Students’ post-secondary plans are reviewed and monitored more than 1 time a year

17. The school offers many workshops (day and/or night) to help parents with financial aid, applications, and college searches.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

18. What is the single most important thing your high school does to create a college going culture?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT SUPPORTS

19. To inform students and families of college-going events and deadlines the school uses (check all that apply)
   a. Paper newsletters, news releases, local newspaper
   b. Postings on school website
   c. Online newsletters sent to students and families
   d. Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

20. The high school hosts annual college and career fairs for all students
   a. Seniors only
   b. Juniors and Seniors
   c. Open to all high school students
   d. Open to all high school and 8th grade students
   e. 
21. The high school sponsors college visits for underrepresented students
   a. Does not sponsor these visits
   b. Sets one sponsored visit
   c. Sets more than one sponsored visit

22. The high school utilizes the teaching staff to mentor students through the college application process
   a. No
   b. Yes

23. The high school utilizes community organizations to mentor students through the college application process
   a. No
   b. Yes

24. Underrepresented students understand college eligibility, the application process and deadlines
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

25. Timelines for the college enrollment process are communicated clearly and frequently with all students
   a. Very few students have a developed college timelines
   b. Some students have developed college timelines
   c. The majority of students have developed college timelines
   d. All students have developed college timelines

26. Websites, classes and/or programs are used to help all students with college planning
   **Check all that apply**
   a. College planning websites
   b. College planning workbooks
   c. College planning classes
   d. College planning programs

27. The high school offers intervention for underrepresented students when (check all that apply)
   a. Writing college application essays
   b. Completing college applications
   c. Completing financial aid forms
   d. Selecting colleges
28. Hands-on assistance in completing college applications for underrepresented students is available
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

29. The high school regularly monitors students’ progress on their college enrollment timeline
   a. Does not monitor this
   b. Once a year
   c. 2-3 times a year
   d. More than 3 times a year

30. What is the single most important thing your high school does to support college enrollment?

______________________________

FINANCIAL AID SUPPORTS

31. The high school tracks data of financial aid related to student need
   a. No data exists
   b. School has only last year's data
   c. School has up to 3 years of data
   d. School has more than 3 years of data

32. Students understand college costs and financial aid available to them
   a. Very few students
   b. Some students
   c. Almost all students
   d. Almost all students, including underrepresented

33. The high school organizes workshops for parents and students to inform them of college affordability for
   a. Seniors
   b. Juniors and Seniors
   c. Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors
   d. All high school students
34. The high school offers hands on assistance in completing financial aid forms especially for underrepresented students
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

35. The high school teaches students how to complete a fictitious/or actual FAFSA to assist their parents
   a. No
   b. Yes

36. What is the single most important thing your high school does to support the financial aid process?
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
Appendix H

Interview Questions

College Aspirations to Completed Applications:
A study of intentional high school practices designed to increase college enrollment
The University of Findlay
Research Study Interview

1. What is the college enrollment rate for the high school?

2. You stated ________ is the single most important thing your high school does to create a college-going culture. Please explain why this is so important.

3. You stated ________ is the single most important thing your high school does to support college enrollment. Please explain why this is so important.

4. You stated ________ is the single most important thing your high school does to support the financial aid process. Please explain why this is so important.

5. Are you currently using a specific program to support the college enrollment? Explain this program further: commercial product, school created, community or college related program, etc.

6. How does the school assist students to develop and sustain college aspirations?

7. What barriers has the school identified to increasing college enrollment and have these been overcome? How?

8. What advice would you give to other high schools wishing to increase their college enrollment rate?

9. What role does the school leadership play in promoting college enrollment?

10. You stated ________ has the most responsibility in creating and sustaining the college-going culture in the school. Please explain why?

11. What specific work is done with parents and families of underrepresented students to promote college enrollment? How is this work carried out?

12. Do you use common application and/or Ohio Means Jobs?

13. Did your school participate in College Application Month or the FAFSA Challenge?
Appendix I
Letter of Introduction and Request for Participation

March 20, 2015

Dear (Name of High School Principal),

Congratulations on the high school’s solid college enrollment rate! As a University of Findlay doctoral student, I have compiled college enrollment data compared to high school graduation data and have found that (Name) High School has met the average post-secondary enrollment rate in two and four-year Ohio public colleges of 41% for 2011-2013. While your high school’s college enrollment rate may be higher due to students enrolling in private and/or out of state colleges, your school met or exceeded 41% college enrollment while serving an average of at least 50% economic disadvantaged students, and an average of at least 50 graduates from 2011-2013. Your efforts to maintain an average or better than an average college enrollment rate in Ohio’s two and four-year public colleges is worthy of celebrating and studying!

The title of this study, College Aspirations to Completed Applications: A study of intentional high school practices designed to increase post-secondary enrollment seeks to identify practices, programs, policies and personnel resources aimed to assist students attain knowledge about college options, and assisting them with entrance requirements, the application process, essays, recommendations, financial aid forms, acceptance, and finally enrollment. Although academic preparation is critical to college readiness too, this study will only target
what high schools are doing to promote a college-going culture and assisting students through the mechanics of getting to college beyond their academic preparation.

In an effort to identify and deeply study the intentional practices in the high school, please have the most knowledgeable person on the topic of college enrollment in the high school complete the enclosed survey. Please return the responses in the enclosed envelope by April 20, 2015.

Your return of this survey is implied consent. Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Rahman Dyer at dyer@findlay.edu or 419-434-6901. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mary Riepenhoff

riepenhoff@findlay.edu

419-236-4672
Appendix J

Transcripts from Interview Participants

Laura/School R

1. **What is the college enrollment rate for the high school?** 650 students, go to the max. Dayton public school. Grad rate is 73% in 2014. College enrollment rate is 80%. Have quite a few in private, lots of W scholarships-15% of college enrollees go to W-offer good scholarships, create a cohort comradery. Usually W kids stay all 4 years.

2. **You stated high expectations of all students being college bound is the single most important thing your high school does to create a college-going culture. Please explain why this is so important.** With teachers and administrators and guidance, we promote everybody goes on to post-secondary education. We will say you can go to trade school or military, but if you are going to military, you’re going for college education. No arguments, nothing. Never a break in my constant on it for post-secondary education. I would say, I relate that to the principal, who it doesn’t matter if the kids are going to college to play basketball or football, it always college education, academics. Period. And I get corrected so, if I am complimenting one of our sports stars and I say wow I’m really excited that you are going to Michigan and I will be corrected that he is going to Michigan for academics and is playing basketball on the side. She corrects it. The principal corrects that. My fourth year here, principal makes it very clear, she says, mince no words all our kids go to college. Period. Now when I say an 80% college rate, everybody left here with plans to go to Sinclair community college. 100% of grades are expected to go, but 80% probably follow through and that’s one of the reasons I stay so long into June. I’m still dabling around in some scheduling and things. But the kids come back to me where they plan to, say, go to OU and they have their scholarship but whatever don’t follow through and they want to talk to me. I would say most of the graduating seniors have my phone number and if they don’t they know who does. I get cell phone calls all the time with the questions how do I do this, what happens if I don’t have enough money for dorm room deposit. Then we solve that, I feel comfortable answering all hours, whenever you want to call me its fine. But they want to know and I think it’s a matter of being available. We offer ACT prep on Monday nights, we run into problems with this because so many kids are in sports. Sports are very important here (goes into many D-1 athletes come out of R High School) but how do we get the kids to go to ACT prep so district hired Mastery Prep and they slammed our juniors for 2 weeks after school and one whole day. Fifty kids were expected to come after school and coaches were aware of this. Expected to come after school for 2.5 hours and we fed them and there is something about food. Even if they got one piece of pizza and a drink, something motivational about food, so you have to feed them, something about food. I won’t tell you that times are so hard at home that there is no food, but I think it’s a treat, so literally for 2 weeks it was pizza every night. But I couldn’t believe it, we have a baseline ACT. And I know that regular public high schools a 13-15 for a junior is not very good but ours was 16, but most kids don’t want (notice the word want) to take the ACT until senior year. So, I would say most of our kids raised their score by 3 points. So the kids who were in the 20s went up 3 with ACT tutoring. Then we had kids’ journal about the ACT prep and the one kid goes, I wasn’t afraid to try. All I could think, you mean I get you an ACT waiver and I explain how to go online and do it and encourage you to sit outside my office and sign up for the ACT but then you don’t show up for the test because you are afraid to try? And I feel that’s
it, because all of the sudden, they are running a decent GPA, working hard but they can’t score well on that standardized test, so they quit. They don’t do well and quit or don’t follow through and take it. That harms a lot of our kids. So how do you reel them back in to test taking? Experiment with juniors this year was interesting because when they took the test in April and didn’t get the score they thought they would get or wanted then they started going to Monday night tutoring— that free session that very few students attend. A gentleman on the side who tutors. I will tell you probably 90% of 50 kids who took the ACT retook it in June, so I am waiting to see what happens to the scores. Another thing, we bring in college recruiters. We have a questionnaire that I give out to the kids that way if the recruiter goes off on a tangent, you want to narrow them down, how much is it to attend UF, how much is room and board, can I have a car the first year, what are dorms like, do I room with someone, Are there cohorts, multicultural organizations I can join. What is your retention rate? What is you grad rate, what is you most popular programs? The kids will go through the list and piggy back on each other. So that way, we had one university HBCUs, compared to what we had seen from OU, OSU, ONU, the recruiter was pretty poor, all he wanted to talk about was his football career at the university No that’s not what these kids want to hear and they kept reeling him back to answer their questions that he really should have known as a recruiter. That’s another way, they are actively involved with recruiters, we have recruiters who will mentor kids and help them with the process when they stay in touch with them. Are kids specifically assigned to mentors? What about kids who don’t know how to do the college process? The teachers are very proactive in getting the kids ready for college. So they will also go to the teachers and the teachers will ask about their progress, how they scored on the ACT, let’s look at where you scored low, especially the Lang arts teachers.

3. You stated continual encouragement and authentic assignments in class is the single most important thing your high school does to support college enrollment. Please explain why this is so important. I would say 99.5% of our students are minority-African American, a few Hispanics. One of the rules is here is the kids have to apply to one HBCU (historically black college/university). At least one, the affordable one is C State which is not very far, in Ohio, but many apply to A State and A A&M. We have quite a few kids going to A A&M this year. But everybody has to apply to at least one HBCU and show they have applied. We would like them to apply to 5-10 colleges and then we weigh the financial packages for affordability. But during class, that’s your assignment, to apply to a HBCU. Through Naviance, they can go online and explore what the colleges offer. So that way they aren’t applying to CW when you only have a 2.5. So we don’t’ time waste. A fantastic teacher in the STEM class, like a teacher academy class. 90 minutes a day for juniors and seniors, must maintain a certain grade or dismissed from the class. Teacher is getting PhD and I know the books you’ve read for my PhD and it amazes me from what I read at PhD in Cleveland state was almost identical to what he is reading. So its education right now at the doctoral level. But he puts it in practice so any given day I can walk into his classroom and I know what he is doing; I recognize the process and the kids are actively involved. A rare day to get an A, it’s usually a b or c. If you get below a c then asked to leave. Intense reading, they are always reading something. I would say a lot of the books the kids are reading are similar to the PhD program. If a teacher finds there are 5 kids in English 11 class that has not applied to the HBCU, what happens. We snag them, they meet with me. When kids apply, they need transcripts sent, so I am notified so I know who has applied and who has not. I know who is not active, like do it and then there is no follow through. It’s easy to pick up inactivity in Naviance or in conversation with the kid. I only have 120 juniors and 120 seniors, so 240 kids with emphasis on seniors, moving them through and out the door, I pretty much
know who is not active and it’s constant. You’re on them, you see them in the hall, you ask them, how is it going, have they heard anything. The kids are very comfortable calling college admission offices (I hate to tell you this). It probably drives colleges crazy but when kids haven’t heard anything in a couple weeks, then the kids will call. The ones nervous about calling, I have them listen to another student do it. Like you actually, oh there’s one guy who was interested in like 4 different colleges and couldn’t decide so he did an authentic experience and called the 4 colleges and had paper and pencil to take notes. We also practice in my office. If we need to shut doors and call in my office we do that. Do applications get done at home? NO, no we have a delusion that kids have access to computers at home. It is real that they go to the public library and have one hour and when their hour is up, and the guy who wants to play video games gets his hour so it is not reasonable to think our kids have access to fill out the common application. The common app is a thorn in my side because it is not fast to get through. And kids don’t finish it and I go back and work on it with them. 17:38. It’s time consuming. But it mostly is for the higher scoring kids like the 3.0s and up, but it is time consuming. Others that help with filling out apps? I would think in the Language Arts department. yes, definitely in teacher STEM class that will be an assignment to fill out the common app. He has 25 kids, so I know of my 120, 25 are done. Then Language Arts teachers lets me come into the class and let me do it (fill out apps).

4. You stated a weekly expert is on campus Jan-Apr for financial aid and supports is the single most important thing your high school does to support the financial aid process. Please explain why this is so important. Federal government hires this lady and others to come into our school and help with FAFSA. If it wasn’t for her it would be extremely difficult. But it’s tricky, you know with the parents like give me your financial information. I’m very private about that. I feel the expert comes in; she gives the students her business card. They are called her client. So, I tell them this costs you nothing, the fed gov. is paying for it. Do not hesitate to call her on a weekend. She’s there like every Monday or whatever for the day. I will canvas classrooms to find out who isn’t finished with FAFSA and pull them in to sit there. I got to tell you something, that Pell grant is beyond belief, our kids are low income. Pell gives 5700; our kids can go to SC for free. When there is a hesitant parent, I will get on the phone or meet with them in person and say this is what the FAFSA is all about, it’s not just about student loans. But your child can go to SC, which is really inexpensive for anyone living in M County; literally they will have money left over. They can buy a netbook. I tell them you can do 2 years at SC, pick up associate or certificate then you can go to WSt. I hesitate to say UD because it is so expensive. But you can afford to go elsewhere because your first 2 years were free. I encourage it. The benefit of the Pell grant helps overcome fear of filling out FAFSA. The free FAFSA lady, always patient. I do not waste her time. When she is here, I have a list of students who want to see her. I go into the hall and get the kids, because I don’t want to interrupt classes. But there will be kids in a waiting room to see her. I tell the kids, if you leave, I’m not getting you. This is your opportunity, your future and here is our expert to help you. I canvas to get these kids. If you read the stats about the FAFSA applications that were approved through them, the stats are off. Our lady reports the FAFSA she does with our kids, some kids do this at home without her help. I’m competitive, there are more kids on this list. Is there any teaching about FAFSA? Yes, they do a rough draft of FAFSA in November and are aware Jan 1 it’s open. Very important you fill out the form immediately. They have the rough draft already filled out by hand and they are ready to roll. Lady does the hard copy with kids.
5. Are you currently using a specific program to support the college enrollment? Explain this program further: commercial product, school created, community or college related program, etc. Naviance-profiles colleges, tuition costs, opportunities, what they are known for. Students take an interest inventory where it kicks up your areas of interest. It doesn’t track the kids’ GPA but it helps kids know the GPA needed for programs. If you are a 2.5 limits your choices. It’s like money; a 4.0 will get you more choices. The school purchases Naviance, it is expensive. It reports how many kids are using it. Freshmen get a user name and password. Counselor doesn’t have a lot of time to get on it. Lots of meetings with lower 25% of each class. Just busy. I kind of like it when a kid comes and asks me to send a transcript to a university, it gives me 5 minutes to ask what program they want, find out how deep they really are, not going for athletics, you want to be a teacher, lawyer. Naviance has reports that can be run to see student progress, guidance runs the reports.

6. How does the school assist students to develop and sustain college aspirations? The way that we are cut up here. There is a 9-10 guidance counselor and I’m the 11-12 guidance counselor. I can speak for myself; I meet with them I ask what their plans for after high school. I don’t like that I can’t make comments on e-school reports. Unfortunately I am doing it by paper pencil. So when kids come in and want to drop a teacher or STEM, I thought you were planning to attend UC, I know that from my paperwork. If you want to be an engineer, you need to stay in pre-calculus and I see you aren’t doing well, so what can you do to raise your grade? Tutors every morning available. Besides the academics are there steps kids go through towards college enrollment? Yes, I think it is all that personal contact. Guidance counselor’s conversations with students about coursework is college directed. Our kids want to communicate with us personally. Kids are expected to be on Naviance 9-12 and it is tracked. Do you jump in when 6 sophomores haven’t gotten to Naviance? The guidance counselor gets the kids to the media center to work on it.

7. What barriers has the school identified to increasing college enrollment and have these been overcome? How? FAFSA representative is extremely helpful because it gives them money, it gives them opportunity. Makes it real for them. And the big push by the state this year where parents were hesitant it kind of made the parent contact us. We can call parents (stopped interview to take phone call).

8. What advice would you give to other high schools wishing to increase their college enrollment rate? Did not record this response. Technology error on part of researcher.

9. What role does the school leadership play in promoting college enrollment? Did not record this response. Technology error on part of researcher.

10. You stated GC and admin have the most responsibility in creating and sustaining the college-going culture in the school. Please explain why? Why does this rest in these two offices mostly? It’s the dream. The Principal sees the best and worst of kids. She sees kids being praised and disciplined. So when the kids are called on the line for misbehavior, it’s always the focus for college. You can’t get to college with behavior like this, if you are out in the hall you’re not learning. So zero tolerance on that. I think it’s that top down when administration and I know opportunities in education more choices and higher chance of being employed. So she tells the kids this: If you have a degree, you have choices and chances are you will not stay unemployed
so you can help yourself and your family. Does she expect teachers have same message to kids? Yes, there is zero tolerance on pigeon-holing a kid and saying he won’t do anything or be anything. Always pro-academic. I’ll tell you what is hard though, its tough district when you have high poverty transients. Transients happen between 9-10 grades, by the time kids are in 11-12 grade we have half the kids. So if there are 250 kids in fresh year, there are 125 by junior. Kids will finish out 11-12 they don’t leave, not that 9-10 grade flight. We lose the continuity which we know really works to get those kids to college. It really does. Creates the cohort feeling. Why do you leave, our kids don’t live close. They may come ½ hour on a bus. Maybe we need to limit numbers in 9-10. Our classes are packed (35 students in math). Students are here by choice-not assigned to this high school. 9-10 guidance counselor will go out to 8th grade and recruit. But I know it was a dilemma, we had 200 freshmen scheduled but 270 showed up on our doorstep. Slammed us, threw us into turmoil. Hard on teachers.

11. What specific work is done with parents and families of underrepresented students to promote college enrollment? How is this work carried out? Meetings, conversations, coming in. Whenever you would like to come in to discuss something about your kid. Personal approach. Do you feel the big fairs are helpful? Yes, they need to hit both fairs and recruiters. That way you go ahead and collect information. I don’t think brochures are bad. Pictures of campus are good. I remember someone saying Miami is in the woods. Felt it wasn’t urban. They need the literature to dream. Any teaching to the parents? Yes, like a seminar. Do parents feel this is role of R High School to get kids to college? Yes. But they want to be informed. One hour meetings. Break out seminars-speaker from SC who speaks as a parent and what he learned about sending his own kids to college and he was African American. People who look like our students helps but I will tell you never once have I felt white to my kids. Hugged, greeted, questions. Never walk down the hall without kids asking something, like when is Findlay coming, I have my name on the board. It is very family oriented here. We have breakout evenings to parents have 15 minutes to learn about FAFSA, 15 minutes for help child prepare for ACT, 15 minutes on how to help child prep for OGT, etc. Big picture of the things you do here, who/how did you get so smart toward college enrollment? OK, I will tell you the first couple years I was here the other guidance counselor did not partner with me. This past year is the first year I have close relationship with other guidance counselor. My guidance counselor training, my own college experiences, my reading, my PhD program, got to go in with a heart. Living what you believe in. Not a high paying district, but it is rewarding. I’m tired when I get home but I feel like I’m making a difference one child at a time. Are other public or charters looking at what you are doing for college enrollment? No, everyone is very private. Poverty 99.5%. I also do, I started this early, if there is food, they will come to the meeting. Kids would come and ask for $$, so I told them I never have $$. If you are hungry, I will buy 2 loaves of bread and peanut butter, I will buy the kind I eat, not the cheap stuff. Kids come in if they are hungry and make a sandwich. I get the kids who are late in the morning and miss school breakfast and kids at end of day who are staying for sports. There is need even though there is free lunch. I talk to them about the perception they give when they ask for money. I can’t tell you need a bus token, so school gives out free bus tokens at end of day until they run out. My little niche is the food niche. Only can take one sandwich. Poverty is real, lot of foster kids here; they don’t talk about it much. I found you can negotiate with university with foster kids. I found one university, gave my kid a full ride. She was a 3.5, good ACT, and in foster care. She’s out of foster care in July-what happens to her until school, won’t go back home with mom and dad-WSt met her award and agreed to let her come early. WSt will keep foster kids through the holidays.
12. **Do you use common application and/or Ohio Means Jobs?** Looking at that we think we can use OMJ rather than Naviance. Naviance is time consuming. Doggone it; colleges make us send more than one transcript. Kids get email saying we need another, but kids see in Naviance the transcript has been sent, so we send a hard copy so kids know it has been done. I make the kids walk to the mail bag so they know the transcript has been sent. Kids run in with acceptance letters, we laminate and post college acceptance letters, tally financial aid packages. We post the acceptance letters all over bulletin boards. Serial rippers—not who we are, wishes they could find who the rippers are.

13. **Did your school participate in College Application Month or the FAFSA Challenge?** Participate in College Application month in November—Yes, Recognizing scholarship at BG, posting anything—someone was accepted. Others think Oh I haven’t done anything, she’s been nagging me. Did you notice the focus in November helped? We were already done, that focus month to us helped us pick up the kids who were behind. It was good advertisement for the next group. Did the FAFSA challenge too. Did better on FAFSA this year because of the parents. What I have to do this year and it’s going to be real tricky because I have gotten real good at minority scholarships and colleges and opportunities. But Number 1—is white, a minority, wants to do cancer research. 4.0, extraordinary, pharmacy camp at UT this summer. She’s minority here, we have 2 Gates scholarships. Do you realize the extent of this in the minority world? This principal has had 7 in her tenure. The school tracks who is going, how much money they are getting. We compete with S High School (interview-acceptance) which is our showpiece high school and P High School (interview-acceptance) is our career technical. We are 3rd but we take whoever shows up, I think we do pretty darn well.

Derek/School K

1. **What is the college enrollment rate for the high school?** 4:30—Poverty not all high school kids turn in paperwork for lunch therefore I believe it’s more like 70%-similar to elementary. But 65% is fair enough. Half are first-generation. What I’ve found is that kids whose parents went a year or two but did not finish. Or parent did first semester, no degree so I count those kids as first gen too. It varies by grade level too, probably half. Typically we graduate 100 students, average, and 94% graduation rate. College enrollment around 49%

2. **You stated exposing students to choices, class visits to campuses, 1-1 campus visits, admission visits to our school is single most imp thing the school does to create a college going culture. Please explain why this is so important.** It's exposure, just like anything else in society whether it buying a pair of shoes or buying a home, it’s all about visiting, trying out. I look at our kids and some have gone their whole life and never been given the opportunity to try anything. We have always forced upon them from what sports they play to pretty much limiting their choices. Then here they are 16-17 yrs. old and all these freedoms come their way and I think it’s difficult to them to know what is best for them. Therefore getting them on campuses, getting them to meet with college admission reps is all about learning and exposing them to options and letting them test drive. 8:45 Sophomore year begins the college exposure. When I first started I was really hard lined, this is only my 4ht year, but I’ve taught and coached so that helps. But I tried to keep it (college exposure) special until they were seniors; I learned very quickly that
that’s not a good idea because it is a process. Anymore, it’s a 4 year process essentially and as they look and think about not just college but maturing overall, it takes a long time to make that right decision. So it think exposure early is good but as freshman they would be overwhelmed, these are kids are 2-3 years removed from playing with Legos so I if throw them in there with colleges, it would be kind of a waste of their time, let them experiment more with learning how to do higher level thinking and then later on make it a step by step thing. We took, past spring, 30 kids to OSU on a bus. Great experience, something we want to continue, my principal and I want to include Capital U. to the trip but I’m worried about overload. The admissions counselor from Capital and I talked about the overload, it makes a long day. Kids are selected by who turns in permission slip. Open to all sophomores. Announce and put on website. It’s either important to you or it isn’t. Some kids don’t listen to announcements so I also go into classes and talk to kids about the trip. More than 30 signed up so it came down to getting permission slips in. The kids who the trip was a priority got their stuff turned in. 1-1 campus visits means promoting kids doing stuff on their own-Some of my 4-5 go-to teachers (and I am sure there are other) and I talk to kids about the importance of getting on campuses and visiting. Staff and admin have been very supportive of kids visiting campuses. Plans-Sophomore year we are going to OSU on a bus that is not going to change. Kids need to see the best. Junior year, visit in the spring maybe a Washington State (2 years) and Marietta. This senior group visited Capital, last spring. This year we (seniors) are going to Shawnee state in November. We have always done something since my first year here, but we never expanded it to different grade levels. We have built on it each year. That way when they graduate we will have visited at least 3 campuses with us.

3. You stated educating students and parents about all aspects of post-high school choices is the single most important thing your high school does to support college enrollment. Please explain why this is so important. My own philosophy I had and have developed by speaking with other guidance counselors and going to conferences and my own HS experience. I had a wonderful guidance counselor in high school and fortunately he is retired so I can call him and talk to him. But I think it’s like anything, it’s unfair for any adult whether it’s a parent or me to say ‘you are doing this’. I think that is wrong. I think kids need to be told they can go do stuff. I think sometimes from them being told what to do all the time, they don’t know they can be a doctor in the Marines; they don’t know they can be an airplane mechanic. I sometimes the exposure of career choices for students and even as a parent they are unaware of what is out there. We do Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) testing. Military, if Navy cooperates, we are doing a military meeting with all juniors and seniors during the school day. We have people with our administration, transportation, superintendent, everyone buys in. 16.01. We pitch it to everyone not just those interested in the military because it is free and is a good ACT practice. And someone from military will come in and interpret scores with student and review the career component with them which to me is more important than anything else. Juniors and seniors would take that test. We’ve looked at doing a second round and allowing Sophomores and any retakes in the spring but I think there is over testing so I don’t know if that will happen, it’s a thought. How do you educate parents about post-high school choices? That is something we do with meetings, and posting campus visits on website. One thing we’ve done this year, we did a college panel night for a couple years, we may do this every other year. Where parents come listen to admission counselors from random schools talk about the process, but not just colleges, we have performance training solutions-heavy equipment school. Reaching the parents is difficult for a variety of reasons. Availability is key, parent-teacher conferences, me being
around to talk with parents about career options but also talking to kids about talking to their parents. Making this a conversation between them. I’m not the one paying the college bill and I’m not the one making the career choice. So I really push kids to communicate with their parents. I would like to use the call system to get information out to parents about financial aid night and those types of things. Which I need to do a better job. We have a radio station in town. I need to make sure I use those assets. 19:20 Last year, I say we but it’s me, we broke them up with kids who were going to OU, kids who were commuting or going to a branch, and kids who were going away-anyone living on campus. We met with them and talked with the groups about what they would need to do orientation, classes, and that type of thing. And then I have a checklist for each group that I go over periodically with them and each grade level. I met with each senior group. Checklist comes from Peterson’s (college manual for HS). I’m old school; I use the book rather than the Peterson site. I like it.

4. 20:51 You stated hosting financial aid night and educating students about financial aid in the classroom setting is the single most important thing your high school does to support financial aid process. Please explain why this is so important. When I go over with juniors in the fall, I meet with them and go over all the acronyms like FAFSA and really how the financial aid stuff works. When people say this school awards X amount in financial aid that is also student loans. So I tell that kind of stuff, so when they are seniors when I use FAFSA and financial aid, they are not confused, no deer in the headlights so it helps to get with the kids early. Also when they talk with admissions representatives, they start talking financial aid and our kids already know what merit based means, what a loan is. When you look at a school whose tuition is $47,000.00 what does that really mean. What will that actually cost me, that kind of stuff. Financial aid night is great, OU is tremendous with sending director of financial aid to our school and she walks them through the FAFSA. It’s a power point done in December. It is open to anyone-this is first year of being open to anyone, not going to push for lower grades, but if you are junior parent. Attendance has gotten better each year. I think it’s important that I request students come ever since my first year here. In the past it has always been a parent-thing, I think that is unfair to the parents and the students. So they come, it has increased each year. I tell them it doesn’t matter what school you are going to, the federal government doesn’t care. Kids know most schools won’t say you are accepted unless FAFSA is completed. So I tell them if they want to make sure they are getting their best value, they need to do the FAFSA. 26:00 Do you do anything specifically for the kids that you know whose parents won’t be able to help them at home with fin aid forms? Here is where I am at. I know the kids who are poor and I use that for waivers for ACT and application fees. I don’t do anything specific, a teacher might. Now I will help if a kid runs into problems. But again it is something I’ve kicked around, I know like November is college application month, I think that is wonderful, but at same time, I met with kids. I feel like if I help one kid with a college application who comes through that door, you better help them all and that is not fair because I need to give each student maximum attention my job cannot be all college enrollment. More than willing to help. Our teachers do too. Our English teachers are phenomenal, I gave them the college app information on essays for to use as writing prompts in May. They do a great job with that. Our math teachers are great at looking at stuff for kids-matching skills with colleges. I can pick out any department in the high school that works with our students on college. So I try to give them enough, but I can’t do all of them and I feel it needs to be important to the student to take the lead too.
5. **23:42** Are you currently using a specific program to support the college enrollment? Explain this program further: commercial product, school created, community or college related program, etc. We have looked at commercial programs to help with the enrollment process but going back to old school, I am still person to person. I’d rather talk on the phone or see somebody. I think it’s too invasive. We use the Board of Regents. We looked into programs last spring and talked with other counselors who like the programs for ease of transcripts and tracking and then I thought about it and priced it and talked with our curriculum director and I felt it was too expensive for how much I would use it. And I think it would not have been enough person-to-person. Yeah it would be great to know if a kid applies to each college but I want that kid to come tell me to send my transcripts. So I can see them and we can communicate. So we have looked into programs but I don’t think we need to spend the money. Being at 70% poverty rate, I don’t think it’s fair to ask our taxpayers to pay for something that really doesn’t fit my philosophy, I don’t really like it. Area connections to colleges? I do my best, my guidance counselor told me to make sure I do this. He said that connection is your one way ticket to making sure your kids are going to school-the connection with admissions counselors. So that is really something I have tried to do more than anything else.

6. **28:48. How does the school assist students to develop and sustain college aspirations?** I try to find out early what things are getting in the way of kids’ college aspirations. I want kids to come see me and I tell kids when they are freshmen, I can’t help if I don’t know. And by me and teachers knowing, and I tell them to talk with their teachers about career aspirations whether it is laying pipeline or doing open heart surgery. Talk to your teachers, make connections with them, make connections with adults and not every kid does but I think it is important and then start building at each level. The same way you build a team, you start with the young kids and then by the time they are seniors, it should be taken care of. At least that has been my philosophy so far…talk to me in 5 years, it may be different. Is it evident at the school about college successes? One of the things I want to start doing is Tweet out when a kid is accepted. Our principal has a twitter account. We are going to start putting it out there. How is belief that all kids should go to college communicated? **30:33.** Our teachers talk about college in their classrooms, teachers post things in their classroom. 21 credit hours to graduate-posters. We post the ACT career wheel. Our teachers are wonderful at posting information but they talk to the kids, they tie it in, stressing the importance of explaining why they are learning things, this is why you are in algebra. This is where you will use this stuff, they do a great job. Graduate day-college students who graduated from K High School come back and talk to current seniors. Senior English teacher in on Facebook and invites the kids back for graduate day.

7. **31:24. What barriers has the school identified to increasing college enrollment and have these been overcome? How?** Barriers. Number one-parents don’t think their kids need to go to college. One problem we also have is college mismatch. Just because it is right here doesn’t make it the best fit for that kid. We have not overcome this barrier to mismatching kids. Kids are picking colleges for wrong reason. Their choice has to be investigated for the best fit. Just don’t pick it because it’s accessible. Do you counsel kids into another choice or have you not overcome this barrier? I have gotten better at it. Each student has to be approached differently. Since I’ve been here longer, I’ve gotten to know the kids more. I can’t help if I don’t know. I just had a senior come last week and said he didn’t know what he was going to do, and that irritated me, because I thought well if you were off your cell phone during all the visits I made to class
since you were a freshman, cause this is one of those kids that didn’t pay attention to the information and now here he is, he’s a senior and life is a little different and he knows that. That’s ok; I’m still going to help him. So I work differently with him than I do with the kid who knows exactly what he was going to do when he’s been a freshman. There have been a lot of myths about college and career stuff and I think there are a lot of things which are more accessible now. What are some of the myths? 34:58. Price, how much you spend, that’s the number one. You need to get into health care and unrealistic expectations, those are the big 3 and no matter where you are, you are going to fight that. Price tag thing, what is best fit. Find a major first, then we can work from there. You wouldn’t pick a 1985 Yugo to drive because of 800.00. What are some things you encourage them to choosing a major. We do interest inventories freshman year but what I found is that we do it but didn’t come back and visit so we went back to them sophomore year and looked at the top 50 jobs and salary in the area from their interest inventory. So we did a better job there and I tied in goals, I did a lesson on goals. Flexibility of teachers letting me helps a ton. Also, in sophomore year, we go over Michigan State and BYU steps to choosing a major. We break that down. It’s teaching a lesson in the classroom and then we look at choosing a school from the major they selected. We do this in the spring before our campus visit to OSU, I think it ties in well.

8. 38:15 What advice would you give to other high schools wishing to increase their college enrollment rate? Advice to others. Would like their college and military rate of enrollment to be higher. I want our kids leaving here with prospects and a bright future. It worries me just as much when I see a kid who walking down the graduating aisle and knowing he is going to wake up the next morning and doesn’t have a clue as it does the kid who valedictorian who is heading off to pre-med. It equally worries me the same. So, I want every kid to leave with a bright future and I realize that’s a lofty goal but we can strive for that. My professor in college, said Jesus was the greatest teacher of all time and he only had 11 of 12 disciples, so that helps me keep it in perspective that I know we have 100 kids graduate and I won’t get to all 100 of them but I can work toward that. So my advice is know you may not get them all, but work for it. No matter the size of the school because there are more guidance counselors in larger schools so wherever you alphabet breaks down, work with those kids. Also make it fun. Make it neat. Marshall is coming tomorrow and that’s great but Hocking is coming next week and they are right down the road and that is neat too. But it comes from here (himself). When colleges visit, do they come during day? The policy in place that I thought was weird when I came here is that colleges come during lunch time so kids are showing up to college reps to duck out of class. I’m flexible though, if colleges need to come at 8am, they can. But I would say 90% of our representatives come during lunch. Or some may come in afternoon after most of our heavy college prep courses are over. So we try to work it out. Then they do the lunch meetings in the classroom, senior English classroom. I think it allows them more freedom to talk. We have anywhere from 12-20 college admissions rep visits/yr. mostly in the fall. I’m interested in setting up representatives in the spring too. OSU representative would rather get a kid in the spring of 10th grade rather than senior. Pretty much by senior year, they are pretty much one of 4 schools. I’ve also learned quality is important so I’ve built a rapport with every college within 4 hours. This has gotten better. Any other advice? Know what your kids’ needs are. I’ve tried to write a needs’ assessment on my kids each year and it’s still on my list. So I talk with the kids, teachers and parents. Get to know your area, community, know your kids where they come from.
9. **What role does the school leadership play in promoting college enrollment?**

Leadership. Tremendous role, everywhere from super allowing us bus trips 2 hours away, to transportation director getting us there and adjusting bus schedules so we can leave early. Team effort. Our principals are phenomenal with supporting hair-brained schemes I come up with. Or they tell me lets this instead, you have to be willing to accept criticism. It is a team effort and the more people on board makes it better and more fun. Our principal does so much to celebrate our successes. We’ve been ranked in US News and World Reports as a bronze star, she celebrates everything we do. We have a superintendent that we can tease. Not being afraid to be a “us”. We don’t get caught up in trying to emulate other high schools, we borrow good ideas but at the end of the day you are still who are. We aren’t going to pit our kids against a Dublin Coffman and say ok, perform. That is not fair to our kids. We know them and we can make things happen for our kids but it’s got to be the K High School way. And our principal does a great job with this. She lets our staff know they are doing a great job. The overall atmosphere helps. Great to work here.

10. **You stated teachers, administrators, and students have the most responsibility in creating and sustaining the college-going culture in the school. Please explain why.** Teachers, students and administrators all have most responsibility with creating and sustaining college aspirations because they talk to the kids, they are interested. You know, it’s not uncommon for our principal to be at a softball game talking to a current senior about where they are going to school. They know the kids; I think it’s important for them to know the kids. It just comes to that, know your community, know your people, know what their needs are. Know that when you have financial aid night and only 20 parents show up, don’t take it personally. Dad is probably working a double shift at the coal mine and mom’s working at a waitress ’til close, don’t take it like they don’t care, there is other stuff going on. You got to keep that in mind. Knowing your people. So I know that then how do you get to the kid then to help? Letting the kid know you are there, giving them outlines. Again this is something I learned. Before I would say no, if you don’t come you don’t get the handouts, now I realize, you know something, you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. I can still be flexible and make it a priority. What do you specifically do when you notice people are in attendance at college events you host for parents and students? We first ask “Why”. What went wrong?? That to me is the biggest; to me it is like coaching a team, why didn’t we win, that’s what you ask yourself. Ok that didn’t work what do we do next time? And then our Senior English teacher deals with me constantly and invites me in to share the information to kids who weren’t there to make up the missed information. Or if there is a kid I know, it goes back to knowing the kids, I will go hunt him down at lunch or pull out of class to get him the information. Any whys that the school has learned from? The biggest one was our college panel last year. We evaluated how we advertised it. Who we targeted, and what we can do to make it more useful. We postponed it for this year and will do it next year. We will advertise on radio, website, the all call. Also the TV channel, we will use these better. Targeted who? Every student. I’m not saying one approach is better but I work on knowing every kid. When I make excuses for other schools and what they do or don’t do, I think wait a minute, they have more guidance counselors but 400 kids too, I think it is important to build the 1-1 rapport. I think they will come to you so I target everyone. Again I think it is unfair to target, to me every kid we have here is important. Now there are some I may pester a little more than others, but those are the ones who might be lazy, so I guess that is who I’m going to target. But if a kid seems uninterested, then I back off, and then I will try again later. It’s a give and take thing and
you got to read each kid differently. And that’s why I made an announcement to the senior that we weren’t going to do the college application month because I told them that if they want to go to OSU, since the spring, I’ve shown you the common application site, go there fill it out, the deadline is November 1. And I will constantly remind you and if it is that important to you will get it done and I coached for a long time and I believe that. It’s working with kids. Kids know where to find common application, went over it with them in spring of junior year. Junior year I went into classes. I don’t say it’s the common application; go figure it out, you got to teach. I feel like I need to do to every junior class and my lesson gets better-how I teach it. We get on the common application website. I don’t mind the common application; I like the questions it asks. It makes it easier for the kids.

11. 55:10 What specific work is done with parents and families of underrepresented students to promote college enrollment? How is this carried out? Specific work with parents of underrepresented kids. I invite them in. I tell every kid get your mom to come in. set up a time, and I tell them that at freshmen orientation. Call me, let’s set up an appointment, tell kids that, come see me, tell your parents that too. Each year it has gotten better with parents. The outcome of the meeting may not always be what I wanted or what I think it should have been but at least we met. At least that parent is coming in and I might be meeting more with kids who are credit deficient than the kid is going to case western. How do you help the kid who wants to go but doesn’t know how? 56:38. We are going to start by picking a major before we worry about that price tag stuff. While we are doing that we are going to explore different options because mainstream jobs are no longer mainstream. That’s why I have the occupational outlook handbook. We are going to look at schools that are your best fit, What you want and a lot of kids don’t know what they can do, the choices available. I’ll never forget this, I have a senior girl and when she was a freshman and we were going through this stuff, she raised her hand and asked can kids from K High School go to OSU. She was dead serious. I knew right then where I had to start with these kids and I will keep that with me forever. I answered yes, you can go there. At the same time you have to pull back and may have to say yes you can go to OSU but probably not OSU for pre-med. Ok, yes you can go to OSU pre-med. Next thing is to get the parents in. if they can’t come in, I will call them. Sometimes that happens and sometimes it doesn’t, sometimes I will never see that kid again. And then I go back and say, hey where have you been? Every teacher we have will review the application essays. Our math teachers pour over ACT scores, he wants to know how our kids do on the ACT. Teachers have to come get the ACT data, I will pull the file.

12. 59:22 Do you use the common application and/or Ohio Means Jobs? We use common application. I am going to a meeting on career advising and have not used Ohio Means Jobs much yet, it’s an access thing. Used it a little bit. I have not put it on the website as a link yet because the principal felt there was a confidentiality issue when kids put in information. I’ve used it a little.

13. 61:22. Did your school participate in College Application Month or the FAFSA Challenge? Did not do college application month and never heard of FAFSA challenge. At end of day, it’s got to be important to you. Community organization, RB has a mentor program for juniors, started as a program to help underrepresented students but has shifted because more than
those parents wanted their kids to participate. February through April kids meet 2 times/month and mentor meets to go through college and career. Neat program.

14. Additional comments. Timelines-the Peterson checklist from freshman to senior. Every change of season, guidance counselor goes into classes and has students update their progress on these checklists. Where are we, what do we need to do. I also go in and bug the seniors constantly until about January. Knowing where they are, reminding them.

Interventions for underrepresented students in college enrollment, whenever we know who needs help, we will help one on one. I won’t sit and fill this out but I everything else you need.

Thomas/School M

1. What is the college enrollment rate for the high school? Poverty 50-60%, 60 students per class, 89% graduation rate, 60-65% go to college/post-secondary, 3-5 % go to military.

2. 16:00 You stated career information and junior and senior seminar is the single most important thing your high school does to create a college-going culture. Please explain why this is so important. It gets them in the mindset, familiar with how to fill out college applications, familiar with common application. Brings colleges in for students who are undecided about their program. Military and trade schools come. Principal who was military will even speak to seniors about his experiences in the military and his education from the military. You don’t have to do the military as a career, but you can get your education paid for. A lot of career choices is being explored in the 9/10 grade through the new state curriculum it has been embedded. Allowed 3 days for seniors to visit colleges. ShS is doing a job and career fair and will take a bus load of seniors. No earlier visits through the school, visits are usually on the parents. Another program at the M High School that does a lot with career prep is Ag. Science and FFA. They do a phenomenal job with agri-business career exploration. I was a big aggie, and I went to the FFA conference with my students 2 years ago, it has changed so much since I went as a student 30 years ago. It’s a neat thing because they really do push higher education and careers. Kids are in this program are getting even more career and college option supports. Even as a freshman

3. You stated partnerships with local colleges and personnel is the single most important thing your high school does to support college enrollment. Please explain why this is so important. This is what my son does. He will be here in the spring 1-2x/week just to help students. If they bring their information he will do their whole FAFSA with them and help them set up schedules. Staff helps but high school guidance counselor is mainly responsible for helping students. And rely on partnerships with local colleges to offer individual support to the students.

4. You stated college employed personnel that assist with FAFSA and financial aid is the single most important thing your high school does to support the financial aid process. Please explain why this is so important. Your son’s job again? Yes. His position is hosted through the local college. He will do open houses at the college, he will come to M High School’s college nights, he goes to each senior seminar class to share what he can offer. He does ice-breakers and
mixers with the seniors to develop relationship. He tells them he doesn’t care what college they plan to attend, he will help them. It’s not just to bring the student to the college which he is employed; he’s there to help get them financial aid. Either students contact him or the guidance counselor gives him students’ names. How many students does he specifically hands-on help? 15-20 every year. Counselors may give him information about kids who are underrepresented who he is helping. Kids flat out call him for help.

5. Are you currently using a specific program to support the college enrollment? Explain this program further: commercial product, school created, community or college related program, etc. No. all of our special education teachers have been trained to use Ohio Means Jobs for their goal and career setting with their students and now with career advising curriculum we will be using Ohio Means Jobs in high school English and seminar courses.

6. How does the school assist students to develop and sustain college aspirations? Teachers mentor students that help them set goals once they find out what the students strengths and interests are. One of the things we do curriculum wise is a focus on improving writing skills. That process is getting better here. Writing skills have to be above board if they are going to succeed in college. Reading, math and science are important but students have to be able to articulate themselves. We really push vocabulary acquisition and content vocabulary. Our high school classrooms look like elementary classrooms with word walls. Writing across the curriculum is very important along with the career and college options education and advice on course selection. We do a lot of counseling with students on course work when making high school schedules based on the interests of the students.

7. What barriers has the school identified to increasing college enrollment and have these been overcome? How? We work on it every day. Generational poverty. The financial part of college, the fear of the unknown by the parents and kids about I don’t know how to fill out the FAFSA, how do you apply for college. Myself, I was a second generation kid to graduate from high school and first-generation to graduate from college. There are a lot of people out there like me in this particular area. Even though they are good people, hard-working people, they got their high school diploma and went to work. They are very productive members of society but never went to college. Now a days, it’s a very complicated, very in-depth process of getting a kid ready to go to college; this is the reason for our senior seminar and partnership with colleges. We need to get them in here to educate kids about college and provide support to them and their families. Not only just getting them used to the fledging leaving home but also getting them support to get through the college application process. We have a lot of service organizations here; beta, national honor society, FFA, do a lot of public service. Today we have to tell kids that it’s not just your GPA and ACT score, you have to show colleges what you have done and that you can handle being a busy person, able to do something productive along with the academics. Who pushes that message here? Principal-me, I’m the instructional leader, the teachers and guidance counselor. Barriers: unknown, poverty and fear of kids leaving. We are getting better at overcoming these by showing kids what they need to do. It’s not impossible to do the work. I send out a letter to seniors every August about the deadlines-send it in mail to homes to students and parents-see letter. Letter to all seniors congratulating on getting to senior year, importance of
attendance, due dates for scholarships, keep a date book/calendar in case their parents are able to keep them on schedule, we are going to do that for them. It’s our job to educate these kids and give them a good start to becoming productive members of society.

8. **30:21. What advice would you give to other high schools wishing to increase their college enrollment rate?** The best professional development I had as a teacher/administrator working in a district with high poverty was learning about/understanding was Ruby Paine’s framework for understanding poverty. We had her come here to deliver the professional development, we did a book study. Understanding the framework, the family unit and belief system and culture of people in poverty and then schools will know how to combat it…forming relationships. Its ok if your parents don’t understand how to do that or they are scared about the paperwork, that’s ok, we will get the people here to make it happen for you. Just communicating expectations, providing support and forming relationships with the kids and parents…getting that trust built up.

9. **32.01. What role does the school leadership play in promoting college enrollment?** I communicate my vision with staff and students. My meeting with staff, following through with it, checking up on it, using building and teacher teams to continue to put frameworks in place to reach the goals and vision we have. Communicating these with parents at school meetings or school events. Anytime I can sit down or talk with someone about college plans and expectations I have of the kids, I do that. It’s a lot of off the cuff conversations I use. When you have someone’s undivided attention, you make sure you get that point across to them. How do you celebrate college successes? During winter break, we have a lot of kids come back from college and teachers make time for them to talk with our students. Guidance counselor will use these kids in senior seminar and college kids will share experiences, give in their own words what the kids need to do to be successful in college. We have Leadership A, an organization of local businessmen, leaders of community, local politicians that are natives of this county and are back here using their talents—they come in the schools and speak to students. It’s their way of showing kids, hey, I’m just like you and this is what I did. A lot of real life experiences for kids especially in rural Appalachia. They can see governors and leaders that don’t have relevance to them but they see local Judge A who grew up on a farm, went to OSU and is now a county judge, the local chiropractor went to this high school. They can relate to that, my son-graduated from here and is now working at the college level. Just having these examples that have achieved success gives these kids a lot of confidence and hope. As kids are accepted anything you do to publicize—we don’t do that here, but I would like to get something started. We do a scholarship awards night for students and parents. We share colleges and scholarships of the kids. At commencement, we have note card on each kid and as they come across the stage, we tell everyone about graduates’ plans after graduation. Every adult here is helping, what are doing as the leader to get everyone in the school on board with this vision? It’s partly me with getting out the expectation to the staff, but I am very fortunate that here this staff believes wholeheartedly in the education and the kids and wants to see the kids have opportunities. I’d like to take credit for it, but it’s a lot of intrinsic motivation of the staff to help these kids and form the relationships to help them get ready for college or trade school. Our varsity basketball coach who is American history teacher works really hard to get kids to college on athletic scholarships but he works hard with them to make sure they can do it academically too.
10. You stated the guidance counselor has the most responsibility in creating and sustaining the college-going culture in the school. Please explain why? You feel the guidance counselor has the most responsibility of getting the kids prepared—she is where the rubber meets the road. She has to be the one who gets transcripts where they need to be, when, correct transcripts, senior seminar deadlines. Final decisions and plans are done with her and each student. She’s the final filter. $500,000 in scholarships for 50 kids is pretty impressive. How would I know the best match for me is a different university than local? The visits—we pull from all over…OSU, OU, Marshall. When they express the desire we try to get them the information they need, we will help them make it happen.

11. What specific work is done with parents and families of underrepresented students to promote college enrollment? How is this work carried out? We help all of the underrepresented students with all our resources. The guidance counselor makes sure these students have what they need; we will sit down with them on the common application and help them go through it. Colleges and my son will come down to help the students. I’ve sat down and helped kids. The special education teachers are phenomenal with making sure parents and students are working on transition plans and options beyond high school. Being very consistently in communication with the parents. Making sure the parents feel trusting of the school working with their child and the parents feeling welcome to come in and sit down to work with us to get their child where they want them to be—trade school, college. This is the general culture of our high school, I promote it and try to intensify it but this school has a very good culture of wanting to see kids succeed. Who tackles the difficult parent who does not want the child to go to college? We had one last year, bright kid, very savvy. He wanted to go to a trade school to learn to build racing engines and would have been successful at it. I envisioned that he wouldn’t be the builder; he would be the seller because this kid could sell a Popsicle to an Eskimo. But dad wanted him to go to this college not that college and if he didn’t pick the college his dad wanted then no going to college, you are going to go to work for me and that was the end of it. It was heart breaking; we tried and tried and tried. The guidance counselor had several meetings with parents and the kid is working, making money but thought so much of his dad that he would not go against him. He could have probably paid for his college himself, but wouldn’t go against his dad.

12. Do you use common application and/or Ohio Means Jobs? Yes, and yes. Common application is better this year; first couple years had some glitches. Kids do common application during senior seminar. There is also a computer outside the guidance counselor office for kids to work on them there too.

13. Did your school participate in College Application Month or the FAFSA Challenge? Have not heard of these. We are small enough to get everyone done; I can see if you have a school of 1500 kids, you would need initiatives such as those.

14. Additional comments. EOC-Economic Opportunity Center-financial aid support, 2 local universities Southern State Community College and Shawnee State have an EOC has a representative who comes to high school, meets with kids at home, sits down with kids to fill out FAFSA with them, other supports and then continues the support once they enter college. Even
more fortunate because the EOC representative is my son. He’s been first in state for getting kids financial aid and keeping them in college 3 years.

We are working on changing the culture here and not that it was a negative culture toward college it was just never really pushed with all kids. In the past if they saw a kid they knew was college material he/she was supported. It’s hard to explain, my first year the guidance counselor was an elementary counselor for 25 years and put into the high school. She was learning and not really up on things but last year, I was fortunate to get my former career tech counselor here as the high school counselor and we are trying to change the culture. Last year when new counselor and I started the year, we had seniors who hadn’t taken the ACT yet. Teamwork together, we are getting more kids in 10-11 grade getting ACT started and awareness. We do a junior and senior seminar. Senior seminar is in the fall. It only focuses on careers curriculum and Ohio Means Jobs opportunities but get final ACT taken before Nov/ Dec. Making sure college applications are completed and turned in. We do a career passport as a graduation requirement. In the spring we do the junior seminar and begin prepping them for summer and fall of senior year. Senior seminar we do college visits from admission representatives. Marshall there today, yesterday Shawnee state. All branches of the military come to senior seminar so do trade schools come too. Semester course for all seniors and juniors.

Jr and senior seminar district wide 10 years ago and it fell off to just senior seminar and then last year we added junior. It has always had a career exploration focus.

54:00. If you could have everything in place for next year, what would you do? More ACT prep-we have a class that prepares for writing, we need one for math. Like to see junior seminar whole year-for more preparation for being ready senior year, especially around ACT. Using more college visits in the spring of junior seminar for early exposure. I’m excited to see where the career pathways curriculum mandated by the state is going to help schools start with their career planning. Mike Rowe foundation links kids to trade school scholarships-I’ve shared this with CTE administrators.

59:04. Post-secondary planning—we did nine week rotation with 8th graders on financial literacy and career exploration.

59:45. Timelines monitoring-pertains to seniors and now will trickle down to juniors now that they have seminar. GC has a revolving door from Jan-jun. our post-secondary and college credit plus kids have their own mailbox outside of guidance counselor office. Guidance counselor puts information in them about deadlines, local-state and national scholarships-see pic. Being a person who grew up in poverty and being a first-generation college student means a lot to me to let these kids know they can do it. It’s possible if they want to go to college.

63:00. Kids see that the jobs of the 80s are not here anymore, the parents see it and are telling the kids.
Appendix K

Example of Survey Question Scoring Method

4. Students understand the connection between earning a postsecondary degree or certification and future earnings.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

5. All high school guidance and administrative staff believe students should attend some sort of post-secondary education.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

6. The majority of the high school’s teachers believe students should attend some sort of post-secondary education.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

7. The high school identifies all students for future college eligibility based on college entrance exams.
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Agree
   d. Strongly agree

8. The high school publicly celebrates college-going successes
   a. Rarely
   b. Sometimes
   c. Almost always
   d. Always

9. Guidance for college and a career mostly conducted by
   a. Guidance counselors
   b. Guidance counselors and administrators
   c. Guidance counselors and teachers
   d. Guidance counselors, teachers and administrators

10. Who would you say has the most responsibility in promoting college enrollment in the school?
    Check all that apply
    a. Students
    b. Teachers
    c. Guidance Counselors
    d. Administration

11. In the past few years, participation in college entrance exams is best described by:
    a. Some eligible students take exams
    b. All eligible students take the PLAN or PSAT
    c. All eligible students take the ACT or SAT
    d. All eligible students take both the PSAT/PLAN and ACT/SAT
Appendix L

Excerpt of Question Tallies per Survey Question

| Question | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 |
| 1        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10| 11| 12| 13| 14| 15| 16| 17| 18| 19| 20| 21| 22| 23| 24| 25| 26| 27| 28| 29| 30| 31| 32| 33| 34| 35| 36| 37| 38| 39| 40| 41| 42| 43| 44| 45| 46| 47| 48| 49| 50| 51| 52| 53| 54| 55| 56| 57| 58| 59| 60| 61| 62| 63| 64| 65|
Appendix M

Initial Coding
Appendix N

Codes

1 exposure 39 leadership
2 choices 40 team effort
3 campus visits 41 know community and parents
4 opportunity to try new things 42 believing in students
5 relationships with colleges 43 teach them
6 timelines 44 parent support
7 people trying whatever it takes 45 community support
8 process 46 programs
9 time to decide 47 mindset of going to college
10 all included 48 making kids feel familiar with college
11 advertise-publicize 49 goal setting
12 student ownership 50 college going skills
13 person to person 51 poverty
14 staff accessible 52 empathy
15 staff and admin support 53 fear
16 educating parents 54 relationships with students
17 educating students 55 relationships with parents
18 access during school day 56 expecting kids to go
19 career interest 57 college kids coming back
20 trade and military exposure 58 hope
21 barriers 59 confidence
22 available 60 requirements
23 off the cuff conversations 61 modeling
24 reflection 62 snag them
25 resources 63 It’s the dream
26 knowing students
27 students come for help
28 communication
29 celebrations
30 relate coursework to college
31 relevance
32 making it real
33 parent disconnect with kids going to college
34 best fit for kids
35 passion for student success
36 persistence with kids/monitoring
37 find major 1st
38 flexible staff and schedules