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LAERI
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College Readiness Supports In LAUSD High Schools: A First Look

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LAERI is a Los Angeles-based research-practice partnership that uses a cumulative program of research and a collaborative inquiry process to inform policy and practice, with the ultimate goal of contributing to improvements in students' educational success.

The research described in this report represents a collaboration among researchers from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Claremont Graduate University (CGU), and LAERI, with consultation and advisement from central office staff from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

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Disclaimer

This report reflects the analyses and interpretations of the authors. Readers should not attribute the report's findings or interpretations to the Los Angeles Unified School District, the funders of the work, or others who reviewed drafts or contributed to the project.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most U.S. high school students expect to attend college.[i] Yet many seniors who plan to attend a four-year college do not apply, and some who apply, and are accepted, do not enroll.[ii] The college expectations-enrollment gap is widest for low-income students, who often face more barriers than their socioeconomically advantaged peers in navigating the college application and enrollment process, and are less likely to complete important steps such as taking the SAT, submitting a college application, or applying for financial aid.[iii] Given the increasing importance of college completion for individuals' economic and social well-being[iv] and growing socioeconomic disparities in students' college enrollment and completion,[v] public schools play a critical role in ensuring that students are well prepared to succeed in college and have the college knowledge necessary to bridge the college expectations-enrollment gap.

This report describes the prevalence of college readiness supports for high school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Our findings draw primarily on analyses of survey data reported by high school counselors who worked in LAUSD's traditional and affiliated charter high schools in the 2015-16 school year. We supplement those data with information from interviews with district and school staff, survey data collected from external service providers, and selected student, teacher, and administrator data from LAUSD's districtwide School Experience Survey (see the Appendix for details).

We begin by describing the evolution of district policies focused on helping students prepare academically for college. We then describe supports related to building students' college knowledge, such as learning about colleges, preparing for college entrance exams, completing college and financial aid applications, and registering for

and enrolling in college. We conclude with a discussion of the challenges schools face in fostering college readiness, and implications for policy and practice.

Key Findings

Our analyses yield several important findings that are relevant to improving college readiness supports in LAUSD:

1. Nearly all LAUSD high schools provide students with information about the course requirements for high school graduation and college eligibility as well as support during the college application, financial aid, and college enrollment process.

2. Despite available supports, some students lack sufficient information and assistance. For example, about a quarter of students say they need more information about course requirements and do not feel they have an adult at their school to whom they can go for help with the college application process.

3. Because of large caseloads and competing demands on their time, many counselors feel they lack sufficient time to give all students the assistance they need. Moreover, counselors in about a third of schools say their schools need additional college-related supports and resources, such as workshops, college tours, and technology.

4. Some schools have integrated college information and tasks into the school day to ensure that all students, even those who might be reluctant or unable to seek out help, receive college-going support.

5. Most LAUSD schools also rely on external service providers to assist students with the college application process. While external service providers offer valuable support to schools, they typically reach only some students at each school and often require additional coordination, both among the providers and with the services provided by school staff.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Although LAUSD high schools offer college readiness supports, our findings suggest that existing supports are insufficient to provide students the assistance they need. To reach more students, and to provide the individualized counseling that research suggests is helpful for college access,[vi] our findings point to several strategies that LAUSD may want to consider. We list these strategies as a holistic set of recommendations emerging from our research, and do not order them in terms of importance because research in this area is too incomplete to prioritize particular strategies over others. We suggest that LAUSD consider the following recommendations:

1. Set consistent, districtwide expectations for the college access-related resources available to students, the level of individualized support families can expect, and the college-related topics that will be covered at each grade level.[vii]

2. Encourage schools to consider how staff might work together as a team to ensure that all students complete key college application and enrollment tasks. Perhaps with an assistant principal or lead or college counselor coordinating this team effort, staff could, for example, assist counselors with registering students for the SAT and ensuring eligible students receive fee waivers, following up on recommendation letters, supporting families' FAFSA completion and verification, or reminding students of college enrollment tasks over the summer following senior year. A team planning process might also help identify tasks that administrators or other staff might be able to take on, to free up counselors' time during particularly critical periods during the college application process (such as the fall of students' senior year). Distributing staff responsibilities for college readiness more broadly may also help nurture the development of a college-going culture in schools, which research suggests is important for enhancing students' college enrollment.[viii]

3. Provide additional college-counseling related professional development to school staff responsible for college counseling tasks, particularly in areas of need identified by counselors, including college eligibility and college application requirements, use of online college planning tools and resources to track student progress, and financial aid applications and awards.

4. Deliberately implement a select set of strategies that are already used by some schools, and that seem promising, and rigorously evaluate their influence on important outcomes such as college application, enrollment, persistence, and completion. These strategies might include the following practices:

a. Adopting a common checklist throughout the high school years, or using online tracking and college resource tools, to support counselors and other school staff, parents, and students themselves in tracking students' progress toward important college milestones (e.g., all students take the SAT/ACT, complete the FAFSA by the Cal Grant deadline, apply to a certain number of colleges, etc.)[ix] and

b. Using time during the instructional day to focus on a sequenced curriculum related to the college application and financial aid process throughout the high school (and possibly middle school) years. By building college-related tasks into class assignments or class time (e.g., working on essays or other college application writing assignments in English class), schools may more systematically reach students who might not otherwise seek out assistance.

5. In addition, to help school staff ensure that students receive quality support, reduce duplication of services, and mitigate students falling through the cracks, the district could maximize the effectiveness of existing partnerships with external service providers by:

a. Recognizing that school counselors and other school staff who connect schools and students to external providers play a critical liaison and relationship-management role, for which staff may need information and resources;

b. Asking external service providers to contribute to a common system for keeping track of which students have received which college-related services, and with what regularity and intensity, so that the district or individual schools can determine which students are not receiving sufficient help;

c. Working with external service providers to understand which types of information about students' needs and academic preparation would help providers serve their students well, and providing this information, as appropriate; and

d. Evaluating the effectiveness of the college-related services students receive from external providers.

Optimizing the college readiness resources available throughout the system and matching them to students' individual needs requires coordination and time. School staff, particularly counselors, are at the center of this challenge. And yet counselors vary in their training and experiences in college counseling. Counselors will continue to need additional support to bring the promise of widespread college access to fruition, whether from the district and its centralized efforts to ramp up counseling services, from external service providers and the programs and supports they offer, or from additional school staff incorporating college readiness responsibilities into their existing roles and activities.

Our findings suggest that the system of college readiness supports and resources available to students in Los Angeles is broad, in the sense that school and district staff and a diverse array of providers support students at key points during high school. Yet, this collective system also appears to be somewhat thin, in terms of the proportion of students served and the intensity of support they receive. Improving students' access to college readiness supports

and completion of college access milestones will require a consistent commitment in Los Angeles—among leaders on the school board and in the central office, school staff and students, external providers, community and civic organizations, and philanthropists and funding agencies. LAUSD's collaboration on identifying strategies for data collection for this report—for example, by adding counselor survey questions to the School Experience Survey—and the College Futures Foundation's support of this type of research, were essential for taking this first step in gathering information to inform decision-making. In upcoming work, our ongoing researcher-practitioner collaboration will explore college counseling supports in LAUSD in more depth, after talking with counselors and observing professional development meetings focused on counseling; examine differences among schools in their college access supports; and describe recently-collected survey data on whether and where LAUSD twelfth graders applied to college. We are hopeful that Los Angeles can sustain this commitment to using research to inform our understanding of students' educational experiences at key transition points on the path to their postsecondary futures, and how those experiences can be improved.

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[i] Horn, Chen, & Chapman, 2003; Ross et al., 2012.

[ii] Castleman & Page, 2014a; Roderick et al., 2008.

[iii] Klasik, 2012; Plank & Jordan, 2001.

[iv] Hout, 2012; Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013.

[v] Bailey & Dynarski, 2011.

[vi] See, for example, Avery (2013), Bos, Berman, & Kane (2012), Carrell & Sacerdote (2017).

[vii] Although we recommend that the district adopt consistent districtwide expectations to ensure equitable access to essential college readiness resources throughout the district, schools vary in their needs, both within and across local districts. Therefore, we encourage the district to work with each Local District to identify barriers to meeting districtwide expectations as well as supports that may be available (e.g., external service providers that might be able supplement school services where necessary).

[viii] See Corwin & Tierney (2007), Engberg & Gilbert (2014), Hill (2008), McDonough (1997, 2008), Robinson & Roksa (2016), Roderick, Coca & Nagaoka (2011).

[ix] Studies suggest that checklists are effective in other fields, like medicine (for a recent review see Bergs et al., 2014). Checklists increase the likelihood that individuals will complete all of the steps in both simple and complex processes (Wetmore et al., 2016). For example, a counselor may only have a handful of students who need to take SAT II exams, so that step might be overlooked unless the counselor or students are prompted to check all exams that might be required for admission. Checklists may also help keep other school community members, such as teachers, administrators, parents, and students, apprised of important college tasks and deadlines (Haynes et al., 2011). Checklists' effectiveness declines when checklists are only partially completed or used in a limited number of cases (van Daalen et al., 2017). Thus, inconsistent use of checklists, or completing checklists with only some students, may reduce the potentially positive effects of checklists. Moreover, checklists may be less beneficial or may have negative unintended consequences if they come to be viewed as yet another exercise required for compliance rather than an opportunity to ensure that students' needs are met. For example, systems that require that all students apply to a set number of four-year colleges may skew efforts toward ensuring students submit a given number of applications, rather than having each student apply to the mix of colleges that is a good match for that student.

COLLEGE READINESS SUPPORTS IN LAUSD HIGH SCHOOLS: A FIRST LOOK

Most U.S. high school students expect to attend college.[1] Yet many seniors who plan to attend a four-year college do not apply, and some who apply, and are accepted, do not enroll.[2] The college expectations-enrollment gap is widest for low-income students, who often face more barriers than their socioeconomically advantaged peers in navigating the college application and enrollment process, and are less likely to complete important steps such as taking the SAT, submitting a college application, or applying for financial aid.[3] Given the increasing importance of college completion for individuals' economic and social well-being[4] and growing socioeconomic disparities in students' college enrollment and completion,[5] public schools play a critical role in ensuring that students are well prepared to succeed in college and have the college knowledge necessary to bridge the college expectations-enrollment gap.

Translating high educational expectations into college enrollment and completion requires that students are college ready, meaning they have the skills and knowledge to meet college eligibility requirements, navigate college application and enrollment processes, successfully transition to college, and complete college level coursework. School staff play a critical role in fostering college readiness and can be especially important sources of information for low-income students and their families.[6] However, large counselor caseloads[7] and competing demands on counselors' time[8] can make it difficult for students to receive the help they need.

This report explores the prevalence of college readiness supports for high school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). LAUSD, like the nation, faces its own college expectations-enrollment gap. During the 2013-14 academic year, nearly 75% of LAUSD high school students expected to complete college, and most students (roughly 68%) expected to complete a *4-year degree or higher*; however, only 70% of those who *graduated* from an LAUSD high school in 2014 enrolled in any type of college within one year, and only 27% enrolled in a *4-year college*.[9] For this report, we use survey and interview data from district and school staff, and survey data from external service providers, to describe the types

of college-related resources available to high school students and the barriers to providing those resources to all students. We also highlight promising practices that some schools have adopted.

We draw primarily on data from our high school counselor survey, administered as part of LAUSD's School Experience Survey during the 2015-16 school year.[10] Our analytic sample includes counselors from 90% of traditional high schools and 100% of affiliated charter high schools.[11] It does not include counselors from independent charters located in LAUSD boundaries or counselors from continuation, special education, community day, or opportunity schools (see Appendix Table 1 for a detailed description of the sample). We supplement the counselor survey data with information from interviews with district and school staff, survey data we collected from external service providers, and selected student, teacher, and administrator data from LAUSD's districtwide School Experience Survey. Although we do not have survey data for independent charter schools, we included charter organizations in our qualitative interviews to begin to learn about the practices some local charters are using that could inform broader community conversations about college readiness and access supports. See the Appendix for a detailed description of each data source.

We begin by describing the evolution of district policies focused on helping students prepare academically for college through the coursework required for high school graduation and state university admissions. We then describe supports related to building students' college knowledge, such as learning about colleges, preparing for college entrance exams, completing college and financial aid applications, and registering for and enrolling in college. We conclude with a discussion of the challenges schools face in fostering college readiness, and implications for policy and practice.

Increasing College Readiness through Districtwide Policy: LAUSD's Adoption of a College Preparatory Curriculum for All Students

Over the last twelve years, the LAUSD Board of Education has adopted a series of resolutions intended to increase the college readiness and four-year college eligibility of the district's graduates. In 2005, the LAUSD Board of Education adopted the "Resolution to Create Educational Equity," which modified the district's graduation requirements to include a series of fifteen college preparatory courses, referred to as the A through G course series ("A-G").[12] The California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses require that California residents complete A-G courses with a grade of "C" or better to meet UC/CSU eligibility requirements.[13] By incorporating the A-G course series into the district's

graduation requirements, the Board began to align high school graduation and four-year college eligibility requirements, with the intention of increasing the number of college-eligible high school graduates. The 2005 resolution required that the district implement the change in graduation requirements over the course of ten years, phasing in the new requirements incrementally, with the class of 2016 being the first class required to pass the A-G courses (with a "D" or better) to graduate.

In 2012, the Board of Education voted to reduce the number of credits required to graduate, providing increased flexibility in students' schedules for A-G coursework and credit recovery, as well as to change the graduation requirements for the class of 2017 and beyond by increasing the passing grade for A-G coursework from a "D" to a "C," which further aligned district graduation and state college eligibility requirements.[14] In 2015, the Board of Education temporarily changed the graduation requirements for the classes of 2016 through 2020 back to completing the A-G requirements with a "D" or better, rather than a "C."[15] This change removed the stronger alignment with college eligibility requirements built into the 2012 resolution but made it possible for more LAUSD students to graduate from high school. A separate board resolution in 2015 increased credit recovery options in the school district, with the goal of providing more opportunities for students to pass their A-G courses and decreasing the number of dropouts.[16]

In 2015, the district also adopted The College and Career Readiness Plan, outlining the district's approach to increasing students' academic skills and overall college and career readiness during the PK-12 years.[17] The College and Career Readiness Plan identifies six academic goals (e.g., meeting academic benchmarks at particular grades) and eight key focus areas to help students meet those goals (e.g., supports for students, teacher professional development, and parent engagement).

These recent local policy changes, in concert with state policy shifts toward facilitating additional dual enrollment partnerships between community colleges and high schools[18] and the Los Angeles College Promise[19]—which offers LAUSD graduates one year of free tuition at a local community college—provide the backdrop for the implementation of the district's College and Career Readiness Plan.[20] In addition, the district has been working with external service providers and community partners to advance efforts throughout the P-20 system, from pre-kindergarten to adult/postsecondary education. These policies and partnerships have shaped the current landscape of college readiness supports in the district. This report aims to describe some of the contours of this landscape in district high schools.

Emphasis on Completing Rigorous, College Preparatory Coursework

LAUSD's adoption of the A-G course sequence as a high school graduation requirement, with the intent of aligning graduation requirements with four-year college eligibility requirements, has helped emphasize the importance of ensuring that all students complete rigorous, college preparatory coursework. Students need to complete a college preparatory curriculum not only to meet high school graduation and college eligibility requirements but also to build the academic skills necessary to place into and succeed in college level courses. Students who enter college with strong academic skills and without the need to take remedial or developmental courses are more likely to persist in college and complete a four-year degree.[21]

Students and families need information about which courses are required for high school graduation and college eligibility, to ensure that students start and remain on track to complete the A-G requirements and succeed in college. Counselor reports indicate that nearly all LAUSD high schools provide information about the A-G requirements to students and parents through printed materials, in group settings, and in individual counseling sessions (see Table 1).

Table 1: All schools provide some information about the A-G requirements to students and parents

	Percent
Printed Materials Related to A-G	
Flyers, handouts, or posters	97
Parent newsletters	81
A-G Meetings for Students or Parents	
Assemblies for students	94
In-class presentations for students	97
Workshops or seminars for students during the school day (e.g., during lunch or nutrition)	81
After-school workshops or seminars for students	68
Workshops or seminars for parents	95
Individual A-G Counseling Sessions for Students or Parents	
Individual counseling sessions for students	100
Individual counseling sessions for parents	96

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers in the table are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the school offers the specific resource or support. N=112.

We had not anticipated that such a high percentage of schools would provide individual counseling sessions for students or parents about the A-G requirements, given that, nationally and in LAUSD, high school counselors report having many competing responsibilities and spending limited time on course placement and planning.[22] However, during the year of our study, LAUSD required counselors to meet annually with secondary students to discuss their Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP), which may account for some of the individual meetings counselors report on the survey.[23]

Students receive information about the A-G requirements not only from counselors but also from teachers and principals. A large majority of teachers and principals in our sample of schools report being knowledgeable about the A-G requirements and comfortable communicating those requirements to students and parents (see Table 2).

Table 2: Teachers and principals feel knowledgeable about and are comfortable communicating the A-G requirements

	Teachers (N=4,734) % strongly agree/agree	Principals (N=101) % strongly agree/agree
Knowledge about the A-G Requirements		
Determining student progress on A-G requirements	87	99
How my courses fit into the A-G course sequence	95	N/A
Comfort Communicating the A-G Requirements		
Communicating A-G requirements to parents and students	89	99
Suggesting the next classes in the A-G course sequence to parents and students	85	98

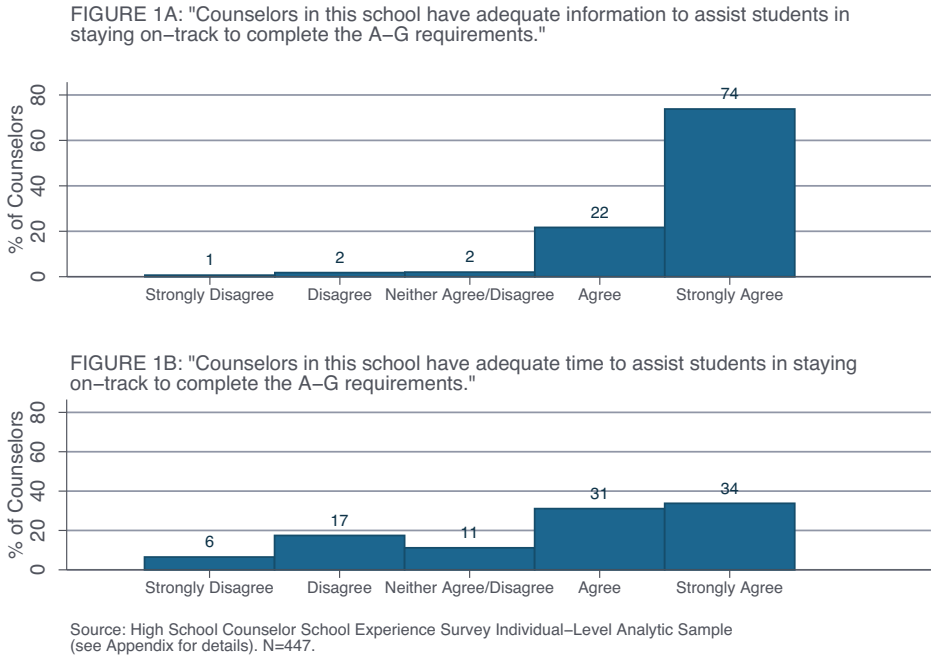
Source: Teacher and Principal School Experience Survey Analytic Samples (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers in the table are percentages. Ns represent individual teachers or principals.

Similarly, nearly all *counselors* (96%) report that they have adequate *information* to assist students in staying on track to complete the A-G requirements. However, about a third of counselors report that they do not have enough *time* to assist students with staying on track to complete the A-G requirements (see Figure 1).

While most teachers, principals, and counselors feel they are knowledgeable about the A-G requirements, and most schools report that they offer individual meetings for students about A-G, *students* are not as universally confident about their own understanding of the A-G requirements. About a quarter to a third of high school students report that they do *not* know which A-G courses they need to take to get into college and do *not* know their progress toward completing the A-G requirements (28% and 31%, respectively).[24] The substantial proportion of counselors who feel they do not have enough time to assist students with staying on track to complete

the A-G requirements may indicate that counselors have inadequate time to reach all students, leaving a subset of students feeling unaware or uninformed.

Figure 1: Counselors agree they have the information they need, but not the time, to help students with A-G requirements



Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Individual–Level Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). N=447.

In addition to providing information about the A-G requirements to students and parents, schools need mechanisms or indicators to alert school staff when students begin to fall off-track for completing the A-G requirements or meeting other important benchmarks. According to the counselor survey data, a large majority of schools use a systematic method to identify whether students are at risk of not earning a "C" or better in an A-G course (85%), the minimum grade required for college eligibility.[25] Given LAUSD high schools' widespread use of mechanisms to identify students at risk of not completing A-G requirements, an important next step may be to understand the types of indicators schools use, how accurately they predict A-G completion, and how early they alert staff.[26]

Opportunities for College Course-Taking during High School

Another way to encourage students to take college-preparatory courses is to provide the opportunity to earn college credits through dual or concurrent enrollment programs. Nearly all high schools (95%) report offering some type of dual enrollment program. Virtually all of the schools in the sample that offer dual or concurrent enrollment partner with a community college (99%).[27] Most schools allow students to recover high school credits or earn college credits through this program, while less than half of schools have a dual enrollment program in which high school students can complete an associate degree or certificate (see Table 3).

Table 3: Nearly all schools offer dual enrollment programs

	Percent
Students can recover high school credits	95
Students can earn college credits	80
Students can complete the requirements for a certificate program	46
Students can complete the requirements for an associate degree	40

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers in the table are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the support was present in his/her school. N=111. In 1 of the 112 schools in the sample, all respondents indicated that they did not know whether their school offered dual enrollment programs, so we excluded that school from this table.

The structure of dual enrollment programs varies across schools. For example, some schools offer college courses on their high school campuses, while others facilitate students taking courses at neighboring community colleges. At least one example, from our interview data, suggests that some schools require that students complete college courses as a part of their high school graduation requirements.

> ***"Every student has [to have] 15 college credits, basically the equivalent of five college classes, passed before he or she graduates from high school."*** **–Charter Leader**

Programs and Supports to Promote College Access

To facilitate college readiness, schools not only need to ensure that students have completed coursework that prepares them to succeed in college, but they also need to provide encouraging college-going environments and sufficient college knowledge to help students navigate a series of steps in the college application and enrollment process. Many of these key steps are time sensitive and students who fail to complete early steps, such as taking the SAT, are less likely to continue in the application process and enroll in a four-year college.[28] Low-income students, in particular, tend to complete fewer steps in the college application process than their more affluent peers.[29] Specifically, low-income students are less likely to take the SAT or ACT,[30] submit fewer college applications,[31] often do not apply for financial aid or miss key financial aid deadlines,[32] and face challenges in navigating college enrollment processes.[33] Schools with strong college-going cultures and supports (e.g., schools with expectations that all students will attend college and comprehensive college planning and application assistance) can help foster college knowledge and may increase the likelihood that students apply to a four-year college.[34]

College-Going Climate and Expectations

Nearly all adults in LAUSD high schools expect students to go to college (see Table 4). In addition, almost all teachers (97%) and

counselors (97%) report that they encourage students who might not be considering college to do so, and feel that it is part of their job to prepare students academically to succeed in college (98%). Students also have high expectations for themselves, with almost 80% of students planning to attend college, and most of those expecting to attend a four-year college.[35] Students are less sure of adults' expectations for them, however, as slightly more than a quarter (27%) of high school students disagree that teachers at their school expect them to attend college.[36]

Table 4: At a majority of schools, adults encourage students to attend college

Survey question	Teachers (N=123) % strongly agree/agree	Counselors (N=112) % strongly agree/agree	Principals (N=101) % strongly agree/agree
Adults at this school expect students to go to college.	95	97	100
Counselors in this school encourage students who might not be considering college to do so.	N/A	97	N/A
Teachers in this school encourage students who might not be considering college to do so.	97	N/A	N/A
Teachers in this school feel that it is a part of their job to prepare students academically to succeed in college.	98	N/A	N/A
Teachers in this school feel that it is a part of their job to help students with the college application process.	87	N/A	N/A

Source: Teacher and Principal School Experience Survey Analytic Samples and High School Counselor Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: For teachers and counselors, the percentages represent the sample average of the percentage of teachers or counselors at each school who agreed or strongly agreed with a survey item. For principals, the percentages represent the percentage of principals who agreed or strongly agreed with a survey item.

In addition to providing a climate of high expectations for college-going, schools and other organizations can provide explicit college access supports to reduce some of the barriers that low-income students face in navigating the college application process.[37]

College Access Services: Schools and External Service Providers Working Together

Our high school counselor survey asked about the prevalence of key college access services in LAUSD schools, particularly those that assist students with learning about colleges, preparing for the application process by taking the required exams, completing college and financial aid applications, and registering for and enrolling in college once accepted. We also surveyed external service providers about the types of college access services they provide to

schools in LAUSD. This section uses data from both surveys, supplemented by qualitative data, to describe the prevalence of college access supports.

Virtually all of the high schools in our sample offer a variety of college access services. The majority of schools either offer these services themselves (via the school or district) or in collaboration with external service providers. No schools in the sample rely entirely on external providers to provide all of their college access services but a small percentage of schools, approximately one to seven percent, rely solely on external service providers to offer selected college access services (e.g., SAT or ACT preparation or financial aid workshops). Counselors report that, on average, they have five external service providers or college access programs offering services at their school. External service providers report serving nearly all (92%) of the schools in our sample, and we calculate from the external service provider data that schools are served by an average of four of the external service providers in our sample.[38] Appendix Table 4 shows the various services offered by the external service providers that participated in our survey.

Our qualitative data suggest that counselors are typically grateful for the assistance external organizations provide to students. As one counselor noted,

> ***"By the time they [students] are in the twelfth grade, there are a lot of different programs [external service providers]...they help us a lot, especially with the seniors. They do application workshops, talk about the nuances of college life, and just sort of help us throughout the whole process."*** **–Counselor**

Yet counselors also encounter challenges in working with providers. For example, counselors sometimes do not know which students, if any, are receiving services from providers. That challenge aligns with findings from our provider survey indicating that some do not share lists of participants with school staff even when those providers offer services on a school campus.[39] Counselors working in schools with several programs or providers can also face scheduling and coordination challenges in managing the various providers that serve their students. For example, counselors may limit the number of providers that visit their campus each day to manage competing needs for limited physical space and coordination difficulties. As one counselor put it,

> ***"I get their [providers'] schedules, in terms of how many times they plan to be here every week, and I try to coordinate it so that we have only one or two programs a day. I do that so that there won't be three programs here on the same day because that***

can be unwieldy… I find having the programs come in on different days is the best way to keep things organized." -Counselor

Some counselors also worry about differences or inconsistencies in the services provided by different organizations. For example, a counselor at a large traditional high school mentioned that her school had to institute training for the external providers to ensure that all providers were delivering consistent and accurate information to students. Other counselors worry that external programs sometimes serve many of the same students at their school, while other students at the school receive fewer services. As one counselor described,

"We have some students that are so involved, so motivated, so active that they are involved in several of the different programs that we have here. You can't deny a student the opportunity to be involved in a particular program but sometimes you have students that are so involved with the different programs that it doesn't allow other students who might benefit [to participate]." -Counselor

Despite these potential coordination challenges, however, the collective contributions of external service providers and counselors help ensure that most schools offer the main types of college access services students need: SAT/ACT information and preparation, college and financial aid application assistance, and college enrollment and registration assistance.

SAT/ACT Information, Assistance, and Preparation

Nearly all schools provide information about the SAT or ACT, offer students assistance with obtaining fee waivers and registering for the exams, and provide some form of preparation for the SAT or ACT, though providing study materials is more common than providing tutoring or test prep classes (see Table 5).

Table 5: Nearly all schools provide SAT/ACT information and the majority offer some form of test preparation

	Both school/ district & external providers	Only school/ district	Only external providers	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
SAT/ACT Information				
Information about when and where exams are offered	56	41	0	96
Registering for the SAT/ACT				
Help with exam registration	48	51	0	99
Help obtaining fee waivers or paying exam registration fees	43	54	0	96
SAT/ACT Study Materials/ Preparation Classes				
Study materials to help students prepare for exams	51	40	2	93
Test preparation during regular instructional time	29	50	2	81
Test preparation in afterschool, weekend, or summer classes	46	29	7	82

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers in the table are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the support was present in his/her school. Percentages may not sum to total across columns because of rounding error. N=108. In 4 of the 112 high schools in the sample, all respondents indicated that they did not know whether the school/district/or an external service provider offered SAT/ACT information or preparation, so we exclude those schools from this table.

Schools are equally likely to provide assistance registering for exams or obtaining fee waivers *internally* as they are *in partnership with external service providers*. One of the counselors we interviewed described the SAT registration process at her school as a relatively short but important meeting during which the counselors and peer counselors call in a group of twelfth graders and provide individualized assistance with test registration,[40]

> ***"We [counselors and peer counselors] individually summons students to come in and register for the test [SAT/ACT]. There are little nuances where, if they make a mistake, it can cost them money later on down the road and we want them to get everything for free that they can. In most cases, we have them come in and it takes about 20 to 30 minutes to have them actually create the account, register, send their scores to whatever school they are going to go to. We basically go from the top GPA down. Ideally, anyone who wants to take the SAT can take it, so we try to call everyone in here at least once to do that."*** **–Counselor**

While most schools (93%) and external service providers (87%) offer some form of SAT or ACT preparation to at least some students, we do not know from the survey what percentage of students in each school receives these services.[41] Our qualitative data suggest, however, that while SAT preparation classes are common, only a small percentage of students participate.

> ***"I would love for every student to participate in an SAT prep course, but the reality [is] that only a handful actually end up doing it."*** **-Counselor**

> ***"We need SAT prep programs offered for free at our school sites - and these need to be high quality programs - not large group sessions. Programs like GEAR UP for LA are great, but they do not have spots for all students on all campuses. At this point, they only have 10 of our juniors in SAT prep, but there are 95 juniors."*** **-Counselor**

College Application Assistance

Nearly all schools (99%) also provide general college information (see Table 6). Schools provide this information using a variety of strategies, such as assemblies (95%) and college tours (95%), and virtually all schools employ many strategies. Nearly all schools (98%) also assist students with college applications in a variety of ways. At two-thirds of schools, counselors report that both school and external staff provide college application help; just less than one-third of schools rely solely on school or district staff.[42]

Our interview data indicate that some counselors draw on a variety of school community members to assist students with the college application process. For example, some counselors train and/or collaborate with peer counselors, teachers, and external service providers to reach more students, as the following quotes illustrate:

> ***"I have a class of students that I see every day called peer counselors...I train them, and they are the first ones to fill out the Cal State application and UC application in the College Center. We show them how to do it because part of their grade for the class is to go out and help five other seniors with the same process."*** **–College Advisor**

> ***"We do almost everything [related to college applications] through that [advisory] class...it [advisory class] is taught by teachers and we [counselors] support the teachers in the implementation."***
> **–Charter Counselor**

As the second quote suggests, teachers sometimes play an important role in helping students with college applications. Not only did the results in Table 4 indicate that more than four out of five teachers feel that helping students with their college applications is a part of their job, but in more than 90% of schools, teachers report using time outside of class to help students with their essays and college applications (see Table 7). Teachers are somewhat less likely, however, to use class time to assist students with essays and applications, which may make it more difficult for all students to receive help.

Table 6: Nearly all schools provide college information and assistance completing college applications

	Both school/ district & external providers	Only school/ district	Only external providers	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
General Information About College	**74**	**25**	**0**	**99**
Assemblies				95
College fairs				94
College tours				95
In-class presentations to students about college				99
Workshops or seminars during the school day				96
Workshops or seminars after school				96
Help with Completing College Applications	**66**	**31**	**1**	**98**
Reminders about application deadlines				98
Help selecting which colleges to apply to				98
Help with obtaining application fee waivers/ paying application fees				98
Help with application forms for college admission				98
Feedback on essays for college admission				98
Help with Choosing a College to Attend	**64**	**33**	**1**	**98**

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the support was present in his/her school. Counselors were asked whether the services bolded in the table were provided by both the school/district and external service providers, only the school/district, or just external service providers. If the school provided the bolded service, the counselors were asked follow up questions about the specific services the school offers and whether those services are provided to students, parents, or both students and parents. The percentages in the total column for the non-bolded services represent services that may be offered to students, parents, or both students and parents. N=112.

Table 7: Teachers' help with college applications is slightly more common outside of than in class

	% of teachers who agree/ strongly agree (N=123)
In-Class Help with Essays and Applications	
Use class time to help students prepare their college essays	84
Use class time to help students complete and submit college applications	77
Out of Class Help with Essays and Applications	
Use time outside of class to help students prepare their college essays	91
Use time outside of class to help students complete and submit college applications	90

Source: Teacher School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: The percentages represent the sample average of the percentage of teachers at each school who agreed or strongly agreed with a survey item.

Financial Aid Application Assistance

As with college application assistance, nearly all schools in the sample provide information about financial aid and college costs, and nearly all schools help students and families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA (Table 8). According to counselors, at the majority of schools, both school or district staff and external service providers assist students with the financial aid process and nearly all schools offer individual counseling sessions related to financial aid.

Counselors described helping students with their FAFSA forms, in individual or group settings, and also advising families once they have heard from colleges about their financial aid packages.

> *"We have a FAFSA meeting in January to help students and parents. Cal-SOAP comes in to make sure that all of the students have completed their paperwork."* -Charter Counselor

> *"I meet with every parent and student one-on-one in April to help them make the college decision and to help them understand the financial aid packages that they received from every school. That's one of the bigger pieces around financial aid that we do. I put it together on a table for them so that we can compare every single piece of it. We have a conversation about which one is the most financially smart but at the same time also thinking about which is going to be the best cultural fit for a student and academic fit."* –Charter Counselor

"I probably did about 80% of every kid's FAFSA. The parents would bring in their income taxes, or the kid would bring them in, but usually the parents would bring them and we would do it online with them." –Counselor

Table 8: Nearly all schools provide financial aid information and individual counseling sessions

	Both school/ district & external providers	Only school/ district	Only external providers	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Online or printed information about financial aid	**78**	**20**	**0**	**98**
Financial aid application and/or scholarship deadline reminders	**73**	**25**	**0**	**98**
Meetings, workshops, or assemblies about financial aid	**75**	**24**	**0**	**99**
Information about college costs				97
Information about the FAFSA				98
Information about scholarships/loans/grants				97
Information about California Dream Act financial aid				98
Information about non-profit organizations/programs that provide financial aid information/services				97
Individual counseling sessions about financial aid	**65**	**29**	**1**	**96**
Help understanding college costs				96
Help identifying possible sources of financial aid				97
Help completing the FAFSA				96
Help understanding financial aid award letters				94

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the support was present in his/her school. Counselors were asked whether the services bolded in the table were provided by both the school/ district and external service providers, only the school/district, or just external service providers. If the school provided the bolded service, the counselors were asked follow up questions about the specific services the school offers and whether those services are provided to students, parents, or both students and parents. The percentages in the total column for the non-bolded services represent services that may be offered to students, parents, or both students and parents. Percentages may not sum to total across columns because of rounding error. N=112.

Although nearly all schools offer assistance with the college and financial aid application process, both the survey data and our qualitative data indicate that counselors feel they need more time, to provide adequate help to students. A majority of counselors (56%) say that they would like more training on the college application process and nearly half (44%) would like more training on financial aid.[43] And while over three-quarters of counselors feel they have adequate information to assist students with the college application and financial aid processes, less than half feel they have enough time to provide students with the college application assistance they need (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Counselors have the information they need, but not the time, to help students with college and financial aid information

FIGURE 2A: "I have adequate information to assist students in completing college and financial aid applications."

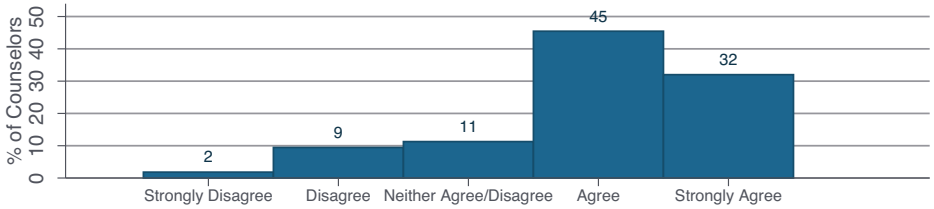
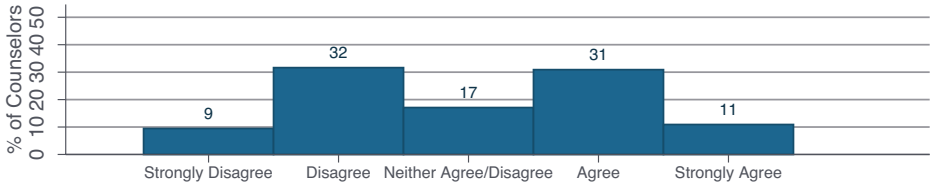


FIGURE 2B: "I have adequate time to assist students with the college and financial aid application process."



Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Individual–Level Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). N=275.

As counselors lamented in the qualitative interviews and open-ended survey questions,

> ***"[Students need] more individualized help that I do not always have the time to provide."*** **-Counselor**

"The majority of my students need plenty of one-on-one direct help with every component [of the application process]. As a college counselor, I have other responsibilities that take me away from my students at crucial times in the application process. For example, I coordinate the PSAT exams in the fall and Advanced Placement exams in the spring. PSAT coordinating takes my time during crucial moments in the application process in the fall. In the spring, the Advanced Placement coordinating takes my time from reviewing financial aid awards, helping students with housing application forms, enrolling students in college, and assisting them through matriculation. Students need more than just one person in the college center assisting them with their daily needs." -Counselor

As illustrated by the following quotes, some counselors suggested that additional assistance from external service providers would improve counseling services at their school.

"I would like to have a representative from one of the community colleges here two or three days a week to manage the college applications, financial aid, and class registration. This is very time consuming for me but very important to the students." –Counselor

"Most of my students would benefit from one-on-one counseling sessions during each stage of the college process. Since I am one person and can't do it all, I would love to attract more college access organizations." –Counselor

College Enrollment and Registration Assistance

Once students have been admitted to college, another hurdle is ensuring that students actually enroll in the college they have selected. The college enrollment process typically includes paying necessary deposits (e.g., enrollment and housing), completing required paperwork (e.g., health and information forms), paying tuition and fees, attending orientation programs, and taking placement exams. Some students, particularly low-income students, face challenges in completing college enrollment processes during the summer following graduation, when school-based supports are no longer available and, as a result, do not enroll in their selected college (experiencing what researchers refer to as "summer melt.").[44]

As was the case with college application and financial aid processes, nearly all schools (94%) help students with the college enrollment process (Table 9). It is more common for schools to provide supports for college enrollment during the twelfth-grade academic year (roughly 91%) than in the summer after high school graduation (just over three-fourths).

Table 9: Nearly all schools provide assistance with the college enrollment process

	Percent
Help with completing college enrollment processes	94
Assistance During the Academic Year	
Completing college course registration	92
Completing enrollment paperwork	90
Assistance During the Summer After Graduation	
Completing college course registration	77
Completing enrollment paperwork	78

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the support was present in his/her school. N=112.

Our qualitative data suggest that counselors' nine-month employment makes it more difficult for them to assist students over the summer, though some counselors help students nonetheless.

> *"The programs that we have here are very helpful for the big things, big ticket items, like the application, talking [to] students about what college they should end up selecting, and financial aid. Some of this nitty gritty stuff and some of the things you are talking about [college enrollment], a lot of that ends up on me and it is a little difficult to help everyone. A lot of times during the summer I will be available. I mean I am available to the students, they can text me and stuff like that, but even during the summer, sometimes students will have to come in and we have to go over some stuff...on my own time."* -Counselor

> *"We need more supports around the matriculation process and the transition to college. We need funding for counselors to work in the summer to ensure that students go to the colleges they have signed up for. We also need support for helping our alumni once they get to college. They often return to our site for help and we help them along with the current student loads we have."* –Counselor

The survey data confirm that counselors feel they lack the time to help students with college enrollment and registration. Figure 3 shows that although over two-thirds of counselors feel they have adequate information to help students with enrollment and registration, less than half feel they have adequate time.

Figure 3: Counselors have the information they need, but not the time, to help students with college enrollment processes

FIGURE 3A: "I have adequate information to assist students in the college enrollment and registration process."

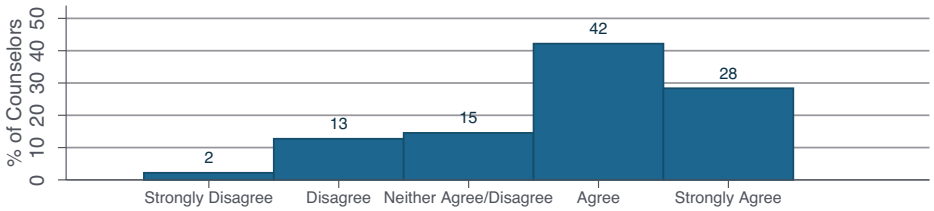
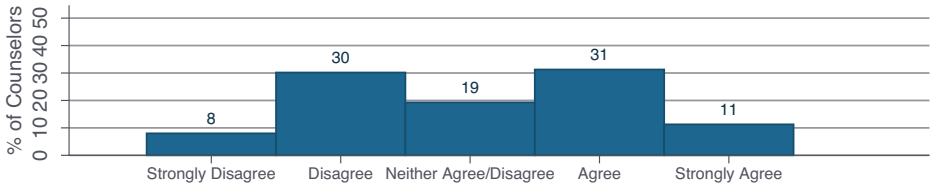


FIGURE 3B: "I have adequate time to assist students with the college enrollment and registration process."



Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Individual–Level Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). N=275.

A majority of schools (57%) work with external service providers to assist students with the college enrollment process. Yet slightly less than two-thirds (64%) of the external service providers we surveyed report offering assistance with the college enrollment process as a part of their services—the least common college access support external service providers offer.[45] Nonetheless, external service providers assist with many of the same college enrollment and registration tasks as college counselors.

> *"We provide assistance with financial aid award letters, housing applications, and general help with the [college] transition."*
> – External Service Provider

> *"We help with admissions appeals, finding college programs and services, and filling out required paperwork for financial aid, housing, scholarships, or early start programs."*
> –External Service Provider

Given that college enrollment and registration support is the least common college access support offered by external service providers, and often occurs outside counselors' nine-month contract, building in systematic supports to ensure that students make it through the doors of their college of choice, once they have been admitted, seems an important priority. Addressing the expectations-enrollment gap requires that students receive supports not only throughout high school, but also following graduation, to ensure that they successfully enroll in and persist in college.

Students' Needs and Barriers to Meeting Them

Despite the prevalence of college readiness and access supports in LAUSD high schools, counselors at three-quarters of high schools report that students at their school need more college-related assistance than they are currently receiving.[46] Similarly, on the 2014-15 districtwide School Experience Survey, about a quarter of high school students reported that they did not feel that they could go to an adult at their school to help them prepare for college and about a third reported that adults at their school had not helped them learn the details of getting into college.[47]

When asked which types of students especially need more college-related assistance, counselors in over a quarter of schools indicate that all students need additional support (see Table 10). Counselors also identify English language learners, students with low grade point averages (GPAs), and undocumented students as particular groups in need of additional assistance.

Table 10: Counselors report that students need more help with college application, financial aid, and enrollment processes

	Percent
Students Who Need Additional Support	
All students	27
English Language Learners	23
Students with low GPAs	22
Undocumented students	16
Areas in Which Students Need Additional Support	
Financial aid information and applications	65
College information and applications	55
College enrollment processes	51

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the need was present in his/her school. Response categories were not mutually exclusive. N=112.

In nearly two-thirds (65%) of schools, counselors indicate that students need more help completing the financial aid process and in slightly over half of schools, counselors indicate that students need more help with college applications and enrollment. These findings suggest that while college readiness and access services are present in nearly all high schools, not all students are getting the help they need. As various counselors put it,

> *"Our college counselor and peer counselors do their best to meet with all of the students and to visit classrooms to provide [college] information. But if a student is not proactive and doesn't visit the college center to get the information they need, they very often slip through the cracks and don't realize that they have a chance to apply to a Cal State or UC, or how soon they need to apply for community college."* –Counselor

> *"Our students need more support...They can receive help in the college office, but our College Counselor is overloaded."* –Counselor

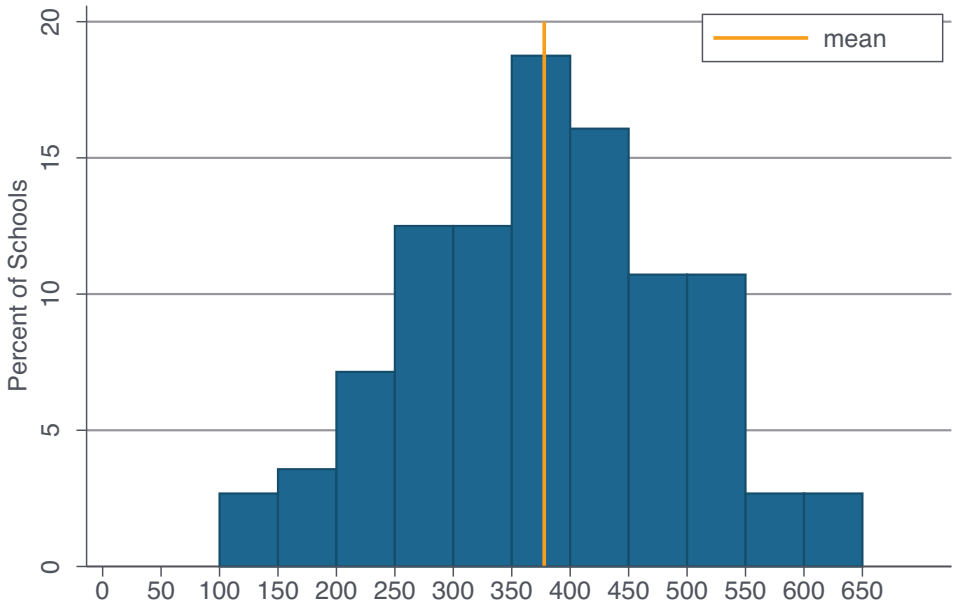
> *"Our students need more hands-on help with college applications, financial aid, and college enrollment supports... It seems like our college-bound students need to go out of their way to get the help they need with college access services."* -Counselor

> *"Our students need more one-on-one help with the financial aid and college enrollment process."* – Counselor

What barriers or challenges do counselors face in supporting students' college readiness?

Counselors identified large caseloads, disparate demands on their time, and the need for additional resources and training as barriers that impede their ability to support all of the students at their school who need help.

Figure 4: Average high school counselor caseload



Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). N=112. Mean=378.

Large Caseloads

Similar to national trends, LAUSD counselor caseloads are relatively large and counselors face multiple demands on their time.[48] Figure 4 shows that counselor caseloads at the schools in our sample range from 100 to 625, with an average of 380 students.[49] The subset of counselors who specifically provide college counseling reported a twelfth-grade caseload range of 15 to 407, with an average of 130 twelfth graders.[50] In our qualitative data, counselors said that large caseloads limited their ability to work individually with students and to provide college-related services to students before their senior year.

> ***"[We need] more college counselors who are personally responsible for the student applying. This would allow for counselors to assist students from the beginning of their high school career versus trying to do everything during their senior year."*** **–Counselor**

> ***"If we didn't have such large caseloads, there would be more time to spend with individual students regarding these [college application, financial aid, and enrollment] issues."*** **–Counselor**

> ***"It would definitely help to have more counselors to lighten our caseloads and to be able to give students more personalized attention…Students need to know whether or not they are qualified and should apply. Some of our students that are eligible don't apply. If they do apply, we need to make sure they stay on top of their applications and fill out the financial aid application or scholarships."***
> -Counselor

> ***"They [students] need more time and attention, but with high caseloads, it is next to impossible to properly manage helping every student that needs it."*** -Counselor

> ***"We need more time with students in every grade level to provide in-depth college preparation."***
> –Counselor

In contrast, counselors who worked in schools with smaller caseloads reported that they were able to provide more individualized assistance to students.

> ***"I think the fact that our caseloads are so manageable allows us to meet individually with a lot of the parents and students…I think the process of sitting a student in front of a computer and saying 'you're taking the SAT or ACT,' or, 'you're going to apply to at least 4 colleges; you're going to do the FAFSA'. I think that there are a lot of students that in a larger [school] would have opted out of these tasks."***
> –Charter Counselor

Disparate Demands on Counselor Time

Counselors overall (including both college counselors and non-college counselors) report spending 15% of their typical work week assisting students with college application and financial aid processes. Table 11 shows that counselors generally spend most of their time addressing attendance, discipline, or other school and personal problems; scheduling courses or managing enrollment; and helping students select high school courses. Notably, counselors spend nearly the same amount of time coordinating academic testing and performing non-counseling activities (e.g., lunch or hall duty) as they do advising students about college and financial aid. Counselors who specifically indicated that they regularly provide *college counseling* report spending more of their time helping with the college and financial aid process; however, even those counselors spend less than 20% of their time helping students with college and financial aid.[51]

Table 11: Counselors split their time among many tasks. Even counselors who provide college counseling spend only a fifth of their time on college and financial aid counseling

	Counselors who provide college counseling (N=258)	Counselors who do not provide college counseling (N=160)	All Counselors (N=418)
Percent of time per week:			
Addressing attendance/discipline/school/ personal problems	17	36	24
Scheduling courses or managing enrollment	24	21	23
Helping students choose high school courses	19	18	19
Helping with the college and financial aid process	19	6	15
In non-counseling activities such as hall or lunch duty	9	11	10
Helping students with career planning	9	7	9
Coordinating academic testing	7	5	6

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Individual-Level Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). Note: Counselors were asked what percentage of their workweek, on average, they spend on each task. Note that the survey did not ask counselors if they were full-time college counselors.

As one counselor described the consequences of these myriad responsibilities,

> ***"Everything we do we can never do wholeheartedly because we are pulled in too many directions."***
> **–Counselor**

Additional Resources

In addition to students needing more college counseling assistance, counselors also report that students would benefit from additional college counseling information, counseling support staff, and technology (see Table 12).

Table 12: Additional college counseling resources needed by schools

	Percent
College counselors	71
College workshops and seminars for students	42
More time for college counseling	38
A college center or college literature/resources	38
College tours and trips	37
More counseling support staff	29
Workshops and seminars for parents	29
Technology	29

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). Note: Numbers are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the school needs the specific additional support. N=112.

Professional Development

Counselors who provide college counseling services also identified areas in which they would like additional professional development (PD). Despite receiving some PD—75% of these counselors report receiving PD at least annually—counselors want additional training on college-related topics (see Table 13). Counselors most frequently indicate that they want to learn more about college eligibility (59%) and application requirements (56%), using online college planning tools and resources (44%), and the financial aid process (44%).

Table 13: Most counselors who provide college counseling services participate in annual PD on college/postsecondary counseling but would like additional training

	Percent
Participate in professional development on college/postsecondary counseling at least annually	75
Topics on Which Counselors Want More Training	
College academic eligibility requirements	59
College application requirements and processes	56
Online college planning tools and resources	44
Financial aid requirements and processes	44
Advising students on deciding where to apply	44
Advising students on deciding where to enroll	42
College enrollment and registration processes	42
Don't need additional training in any of these areas	9

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Individual-Level Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details).
Note: Numbers are percentages. Percentages calculated using sample that includes only counselors who assist twelfth graders with college tasks. N=275.

Strategies Schools Use to Mitigate Counseling Resource and Time Constraints

Some schools try to ensure that more students receive college counseling help by integrating that help into required course periods during the school day and collaborating with external service providers.

Advisory Classes with College Counseling Curricula

At some schools, required advisory classes provide a systematic way to integrate college information and tasks into the school day and engage students who might not proactively seek out help with the college-going process. Almost three-quarters of schools offer advisory classes, and nearly half of those schools provide college readiness information during advisory (see Table 14).

Table 14: At some schools, advisory classes provide academic supports and college readiness information

	Percent
Advisory, seminar, or advisement class offered during the school day	74
Topics Covered in Advisory Class	
Academic supports or interventions	53
College readiness information	48
Social emotional learning	44

Source: High School Counselor School Experience Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details). Note: Numbers are percentages of schools in which at least one counselor reported that the school either provides an advisory class (top row) or covers a particular topic during advisory class (remaining rows). N=112.

School staff describe how some teachers and counselors use advisory periods to provide college information; assist students with completing college applications, writing college essays, and completing the FAFSA; and discuss college registration and enrollment.

> *"We pull them out of their Advisory Classes in full groups and we get them on to the CSU Mentor and start the application process. Like for these upcoming 10th graders, we'll have them go on CSU Mentor, and since it's a rollover process now, we'll just have them start loading up their freshman year classes and grades and just kind of get that process going. So by the time they're seniors, applying will be very simple, and they'll just need to do the extra information."*
> –Charter School Counselor

> *"We have an advisory class two days a week for one hour. During some of that advisory time, the teachers will go over some college-related information or give the kids some time to work on some things as well."* -Counselor

> *"...the day the lowerclassmen took the PSAT, all of the senior advisory teachers sat with their students...We have a lot of computers...so that they could fill out a college application. On that particular day, we just emphasized that they had their transcripts in front of them and that they had all of the right information while they filled out the applications."* -Counselor

One charter school in our sample uses a structured ninth through twelfth grade curriculum in their advisory class. The curriculum includes a focus on foundational college information (e.g., types of colleges) and career exploration in ninth grade; public and private colleges, SAT preparation, and career exploration in tenth grade; ACT preparation, college applications, and college life in eleventh grade; and the college application process, financial aid, college choice, and the college transition in twelfth grade.

Integrating College Information into Other Classes

While some schools deliver college counseling information through advisory classes, counselors at other schools perceive a need for other types of structured opportunities during the school day to provide college counseling.

> ***"It is difficult to reach all of the students with all of the necessary information. Students need to be in a dedicated senior seminar class to help with this."*** -Counselor

> ***"Students need ongoing events for each aspect of the college going process. They need a routine class period or amount of time to complete applications."*** -Counselor

> ***"Seniors need a specific senior seminar class where they receive information about and assistance with the college and financial aid application process. Every senior should be enrolled in this class and teachers could be trained. Counselors would then have a dedicated space in which to go and help the senior students."*** –Counselor

We suspect that the advantages of integrating college planning and application-related content into required coursework outweigh any disadvantages in terms of interfering with course curricular coverage or students' academic progress. Nonetheless, we would recommend studying schools that currently integrate college access tasks into required coursework to understand how they avoid negative impacts on academics. We would also recommend rigorously evaluating the effects of any efforts to incorporate college advising into courses.

Drawing on the Support and Resources of External Service Providers

Many LAUSD high schools also try to supplement counseling resources by relying on external service providers. In our survey of these providers, over three-quarters serve the types of students who make up a substantial portion of the district's enrollment, including low-income students, first-generation students, and underrepresented minorities (see Table 15). Nearly two-thirds (62%) of external providers target students with "high academic potential" while over half (55%) target students who are struggling academically. Providers also report that they serve students across the GPA distribution, with the exception of students with the lowest GPAs, which is also the group of students that counselors specifically identified as needing more help.

Table 15: External service providers primarily target low-income and first generation students and provide services to students with a range of academic skills

	Percent
Populations Targeted for Services*	
Low-income students	96
First-generation students	93
Underrepresented minorities	88
Students with high academic potential	62
Students who are struggling academically	55
Academic Performance of Students Served	
Student GPAs are equally distributed	29
Students with above 3.0 GPAs	28
Students with 2.0 to 3.0 GPAs	24
Students with GPAs below 2.0	5

Source: External Provider Survey Analytic Sample (see Appendix for details)
*Categories were not mutually exclusive. N=76.

Many external service providers offer their services free of charge (39%) and on a first-come-first-served basis (59%). Over a quarter of providers require that students provide demographic information (34%) or information about their academic performance (29%) to receive services; requiring teacher recommendations (21%), financial information (21%), or test scores (17%) is slightly less common.[52]

While external providers assist many LAUSD high schools, these providers sometimes face barriers serving students during out-of-school hours. As one provider explained,

> ***"...afterschool programs are at times difficult to provide...Students struggle with Saturday school but it is the only time we can meet with the students. Our students have family and economic obligations on the weekends. Parents also work up to two jobs and it is difficult for them to attend our workshops..."*** **–External Service Provider**

Moreover, external providers typically serve a relatively small number of students. About a quarter (23%) of external providers serve fewer than fifty students, total, across the entire district, and half (51%) serve fewer than two hundred district students. External providers report that limited time, funding, and staffing— barriers similar to those reported by counselors—make it challenging to serve more students.

> ***"The biggest barriers [to providing services] are time and resources. Each year, we only work with our students one Saturday per month throughout the school year, a total of eight Saturdays over eight or nine months. Our time with the students is very limited and we find ourselves not having enough time to provide all the workshops we would like to provide. We also lack the staff to be able to provide more individual counseling and support to our students."*** **–External Service Provider**

Summary and Implications for Policy and Practice

The data that we have presented indicate that college readiness supports are very prevalent throughout LAUSD high schools; nearly all schools offer A-G information, dual enrollment opportunities, SAT or ACT information or preparation, college information and counseling, financial aid information and counseling, and college enrollment support. Yet, despite the prevalence of these supports, counselors at most high schools report that some students are not receiving the help they need and about a third of high school students indicate that they lack college-related information and assistance.

Many counselors perceive their lack of time for college-related tasks and large caseloads as considerable barriers to reaching all students at their school. While external service providers offer most schools some support, these providers tend to serve only a subset of students at each school. And although the types of students that external service providers target for services mostly overlap with the students that counselors say need more help, students must

know about, and proactively participate in, activities offered by external service providers—which often happen outside of regular class time.

To reach more students, and to provide the individualized counseling that research suggests is helpful for college access,[53] our findings point to several strategies that LAUSD may want to consider. These strategies vary in the resources they require and in the trade-offs they present (that is, what might need to be given up to implement the strategies). We list these strategies as a holistic set of recommendations emerging from our research, and do not order them in terms of importance because research in this area is too incomplete to prioritize particular strategies over others. Thus, the adoption of any of these strategies should be accompanied by strong evaluations[54] to assess their implementation and impact, to contribute to our collective understanding of effective strategies for improving students' college readiness in Los Angeles and across the nation.

We suggest that LAUSD consider the following recommendations:

1. Set consistent, districtwide expectations for the college access-related resources available to students, the level of individualized support families can expect, and the college-related topics that will be covered at each grade level.[55]

2. Encourage schools to consider how staff might work together as a team to ensure that all students complete key college application and enrollment tasks. Perhaps with an assistant principal or lead or college counselor coordinating this team effort, staff could, for example, assist counselors with registering students for the SAT and ensuring eligible students receive fee waivers, following up on recommendation letters, supporting families' FAFSA completion and verification, or reminding students of college enrollment tasks over the summer following senior year. A team planning process might also help identify tasks that administrators or other staff might be able to take on, to free up counselors' time during particularly critical periods during the college application process (such as the fall of students' senior year). Distributing staff responsibilities for college readiness more broadly may also help nurture the development of a college-going culture in schools, which research suggests is important for enhancing students' college enrollment.[56]

3. Provide additional college-counseling related professional development to school staff responsible for college counseling tasks, particularly in areas of need identified by counselors,

including college eligibility and college application requirements, use of online college planning tools and resources to track student progress, and financial aid applications and awards.

4. Deliberately implement a select set of strategies that are already used by some schools, and that seem promising, and rigorously evaluate their influence on important outcomes such as college application, enrollment, persistence, and completion. These strategies might include:

a. Adopting a common checklist throughout the high school years, or using online tracking and college resource tools, to support counselors and other school staff, parents, and students themselves in tracking students' progress toward important college milestones (e.g., all students take the SAT/ACT, complete the FAFSA by the Cal Grant deadline, apply to a certain number of colleges, etc.) and[57]

b. Using time during the instructional day to focus on a sequenced curriculum related to the college application and financial aid process throughout the high school (and possibly middle school) years. By building college-related tasks into class assignments or class time (e.g., working on essays or other college application writing assignments in English class), schools may more systematically reach students who might not otherwise seek out assistance.

5. In addition, to help school staff ensure that students receive quality support, reduce duplication of services, and mitigate students falling through the cracks, the district could maximize the effectiveness of existing partnerships with external service providers by:

a. Recognizing that school counselors and other school staff who connect schools and students to external providers play a critical liaison and relationship-management role, for which staff may need information and resources;

b. Asking external service providers to contribute to a common system for keeping track of which students have received which college-related services, and with what regularity and intensity, so that the district or individual schools can determine which students are not receiving sufficient help;

c. Working with external service providers to understand which types of information about students' needs and academic preparation would help providers serve their students well, and providing this information, as appropriate; and

d. Evaluating the effectiveness of the college-related services students receive from external providers.

Optimizing the college readiness resources available throughout the system and matching them to students' individual needs requires coordination and time. School staff, particularly counselors, are at the center of this challenge. And yet counselors vary in their training and experiences in college counseling. Counselors will continue to need additional support to bring the promise of widespread college access to fruition, whether from the district and its centralized efforts to ramp up counseling services, from external service providers and the programs and supports they offer, or from additional school staff incorporating college readiness responsibilities into their existing roles and activities.

Our findings suggest that the system of college readiness supports and resources available to students in Los Angeles is broad, in the sense that school and district staff and a diverse array of providers support students at key points during high school. Yet, this collective system also appears to be somewhat thin, in terms of the proportion of students served and the intensity of support they receive. Improving students' access to college readiness supports and completion of college access milestones will require a consistent commitment in Los Angeles—among leaders on the school board and in the central office, school staff and students, external providers, community and civic organizations, and philanthropists and funding agencies. LAUSD's collaboration on identifying strategies for data collection for this report—for example, by adding counselor survey questions to the School Experience Survey—and the College Futures Foundation's support of this type of research, were essential for taking this first step in gathering information to inform decision-making. In upcoming work, our ongoing researcher-practitioner collaboration will explore college counseling supports in LAUSD in more depth, after talking with counselors and observing professional development meetings focused on counseling; examine differences among schools in their college access supports; and describe recently-collected survey data on whether and where LAUSD twelfth graders applied to college. We are hopeful that Los Angeles can sustain this commitment to using research to inform our understanding of students' educational experiences at key transition points on the path to their postsecondary futures, and how those experiences can be improved.

[1] Horn, Chen, & Chapman, 2003; Ross et al., 2012.

[2] Castleman & Page, 2014a; Roderick et al., 2008.

[3] Klasik, 2012; Plank & Jordan, 2001.

[4] Hout, 2012; Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013.

[5] Bailey & Dynarski, 2011.

[6] See, for example, Kim & Schneider (2005) and Plank & Jordan (2001).

[7] National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012.

[8] Walton Radford, Ifill, & Lew, 2014.

[9] Data on LAUSD students' high school expectations are from the 2013-14 LAUSD School Experience Survey public use, school-level data; percentages are weighted by the number of students in each school to yield the overall percentages. Data on LAUSD graduates' college enrollment are from Phillips, Yamashiro, & Jacobson (2017).

[10] Our research team drafted the survey questions and LAUSD included those questions in the "counselor" section of the School Experience Survey, which was administered to counselors who indicated that they provide counseling to high school students. See the Appendix for more details.

[11] We classify high schools as "traditional" if they are not continuation high schools, community day schools, opportunity schools, or special education centers. LAUSD classifies charter schools as independent or affiliated. Affiliated charter schools are analogous to dependent charter schools in the rest of the state of California, in that they have some autonomy in areas such as curriculum and professional development, local governance and control over local funds, and some aspects of employee selection, but are still governed by the LAUSD Board of Education and many of its policies and agreements (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2011). While LAUSD has 80 independent charter high schools, there are only three affiliated charter high schools in LAUSD.

[12] Los Angeles Unified School Board, 2005.

[13] California State University, 2017; University of California, 2017.

[14] Los Angeles Unified School Board, 2012.

[15] Los Angeles Unified School Board, 2015a; The board extended the "D" policy through the class of 2020 with the adoption of Policy Bulletin 6778.0 (LAUSD, 2016a).

[16] The Board adopted the "Zero Dropouts in LAUSD" resolution, which required that the district increase supports for students at risk of dropping out of high school (Los Angeles Unified School Board, 2015b).

[17] Los Angeles Unified School Board, 2015c.

[18] Assembly Bill 288, 2015.

[19] LA College Promise is a partnership between Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), City of Los Angeles, LA Chamber of Commerce, UNITE LA and private philanthropy (Los Angeles College Promise, 2017).

[20] In addition, concurrent developments at the federal policy level (with the Every Student Succeeds Act), and at the state level, with the changes to the state accountability framework, incorporate college and career readiness

goals.

[21] Adelman, 2006; Attewell & Domina, 2008; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011.

[22] For national data, see Walton Radford, Ifill, & Lew (2014); for LAUSD data, see later sections in this report.

[23] During the time period of our study, counselors were required by policy to meet with each student annually, starting in sixth grade, to review their Individualized Graduation Plan. Counselors were required to meet biannually with students who were at risk of not promoting to the next grade (LAUSD, 2016b). We do not have quantitative data on how frequently IGP meetings occurred, how many individual counseling sessions each student or parent received, or the percentage of students who met with a counselor at least once.

[24] LAUSD collected student survey responses through their annual student School Experience Survey. Our sample includes students who attend traditional high schools and affiliated charter schools offering or serving high school grades (for more details, see the Appendix). Specifically, 72% of students report that they know which A-G courses they need to take to get into college and 69% report that they know their progress toward completing the A-G requirements.

[25] In addition to using systematic methods for identifying students who fall off track for completing the A-G requirements, slightly more than half (56%) of schools indicate that they identify students who are at risk of being placed into remedial-level college courses.

[26] See Phillips et al. (2015) for analyses of late middle school and early high school "on track" indicators for A-G completion in LAUSD.

[27] Just over 17% of schools partner with two- *and* four-year colleges.

[28] Klasik, 2012.

[29] Klasik, 2012; Plank & Jordan, 2001.

[30] Goodman, 2016.

[31] Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Smith, 2013; Smith, Pender, & Howell, 2013.

[32] Feeney & Heroff, 2013; King, 2004; Romano & Millard, 2006.

[33] Castleman & Page, 2014a, 2014b.

[34] See Corwin & Tierney (2007), Engberg & Gilbert (2014), Hill (2008) McDonough (1997, 2008), Robinson & Roska (2016), Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka (2011).

[35] Percentages are weighted means derived from the percentage of students at each school that expect to complete a two or four-year degree. In our analytic sample, 77% of students report planning to go to college, including 71% planning to go to a four-year college, 6% planning to go to a two-year college, and 13% reporting they "didn't know" their future plans.

[36] Data on LAUSD students' perceptions of adults' expectations are from the 2015-16 LAUSD School Experience Survey public use, school-level data (see the Appendix for details); percentages are weighted by the number of students in each school to yield the overall percentages. We excluded analogous 2015-16 parent School Experience Survey items related to adults' expectations, due to low high school parent response rates (38%).

[37] For a recent review, see Page & Scott-Clayton (2016).

[38] Based on the counselor survey, the mean of providers/programs reported by schools is 5, the median is 4, and the range is zero to 14. Based on the external service provider survey, both the mean and median number of providers serving schools is 4, with a range from zero to 15. Note, however, that counselor reports of the number and names of the programs/providers serving a school and external service provider reports of which schools they serve do not always agree. Schools tend to indicate that they have slightly more programs supporting their school, and that may be because some external service providers offer more than one program at a given school. Schools reportedly receiving services from a smaller number of programs/providers (i.e., less than the mean) have higher levels of agreement between counselor and external service provider reports on the number of programs/providers present at the school. Schools that report receiving support from programs that are offered by multiple providers (e.g., multiple higher education institutions operate Upward Bound programs) also have higher levels of agreement between counselor and external service provider reports. All of the external service providers listed on the counselor survey were included in the sampling frame for the external provider survey. However, not all of those providers completed the external provider survey—84% of the programs/providers listed on the counselor survey are in the external service provider analytic sample.

[39] Twenty percent of external service providers that offer their services at a school site indicate they do not share a list of participating students with the school staff and over 63% of organizations that serve a specific school community but provide their services off-site (e.g., at a nearby community center or college campus) do not share information about participants with the schools they serve.

[40] Peer counselors are students, typically twelfth graders, who are trained to work in the college counseling center or to assist the college counselor during a regular class period.

[41] In a subsequent iteration of the survey, we included questions designed to yield this information and plan to analyze those data in a subsequent report.

[42] According to our external service provider survey, all of the external service providers in our sample provide some form of college information or counseling services using a variety of approaches (e.g., printed information, workshops and seminars, and individual counseling sessions)—results not shown.

[43] Percentages calculated from our counselor analytic sample (see the Appendix for more details).

[44] Using the nationally representative Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), Castleman and Page (2014a) estimate that approximately 15% of low-income, college-intending students and 10% of all college-intending students melt during the summer months, meaning that although they have been admitted to college they do not enroll during the fall following high school.

[45] Results not shown but available on request.

[46] That is, in 75% of schools, at least one counselor reported that there were students at the school who were not receiving enough college and financial aid support. Note, however, that only 39% of all of the counselors in the analytic sample indicated that students in their school need more support. Stated another way, approximately 40% of all counselors feel that there are students at their school that need more help; those counselors are distributed across 75% of the high schools in the analytic sample.

[47] We calculated these percentages from our student School Experience Survey analytic sample (see the Appendix for more details). A smaller percentage of twelfth graders (about a fifth) feel that adults at their school have not helped them learn the details of getting into college, which makes sense since twelfth grade is the year that students submit college and financial aid applications.

[48] The American School Counselor Association recommends a student to counselor ratio of 250:1 (ASCA, 2017); however, the most recent NCES School and Staffing Survey (2012) indicates that in public high schools nationwide the ratio is 370:1 (NCES, 2012); For additional information on counselor ratios, responsibilities, and time use, see Parsad, Alexander, Farris, Hudson, & Greene (2003) and Walton Radford, Ifill, & Lew (2014).

[49] The survey asked counselors to report the average caseload for a counselor at their school. We recoded this categorical variable from caseload ranges to the mid-point of each caseload range and then averaged counselor responses for each school. For additional details about how we aggregated individual counselor responses to the school level, see the Appendix.

[50] This statistic includes all counselors who indicated they provide college counseling. Only some of these counselors are full-time college counselors.

[51] We suspect that full-time college counselors devote a larger percentage of their time to college and financial aid advising than part-time counselors but we cannot distinguish among college counselors with the available data. In a later iteration of the survey, we included questions designed to distinguish between full- and part-time counselors and plan to analyze those data in a subsequent report.

[52] Data are from the External Provider Survey Analytic Sample (see the Appendix for details). Results not shown.

[53] The research literature suggests that individualized assistance with various tasks during the college application process can improve college-going outcomes. For literature on the effects of school counselors, see Belasco (2013), Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy (2011), Hurwitz & Howell (2014); for literature on the effects of coaches and non-school personnel (e.g., advisors from outside organizations placed in schools), see Avery (2013) Bettinger et al. (2012a), Stephan & Rosenbaum (2012); for literature on the effects of near-peer counseling, see Bos et al. (2012), Carrell & Sacerdote (2017), Sherwin (2012). Research also indicates that individualized assistance with tasks such as completing financial aid applications (Bettinger et al., 2012b) and completing college enrollment processes (Castleman & Page, 2014a) can have positive effects on college enrollment.

[54] In principle, these evaluations could be done by researchers who are internal or external to the district; it seems most important to plan deliberately in advance how to implement the strategies so as to facilitate the strongest evidence about their effectiveness. Given the relative dearth of causal evidence about the effectiveness of college readiness interventions, and the likely utility of this knowledge in other urban school districts, we suspect that funding agencies would be interested in supporting efforts to understand which strategies are most cost-effective in improving students' college readiness, enrollment, and success.

[55] Although we recommend that the district adopt consistent districtwide expectations to ensure equitable access to essential college readiness resources throughout the district, schools vary in their needs, both within and across Local Districts. Therefore, we encourage the district to work with each Local District to identify barriers to meeting districtwide expectations as well as supports that may be available (e.g., external service providers that might be able supplement school services where necessary).

[56] See Corwin & Tierney (2007), Engberg & Gilbert (2014), Hill (2008) McDonough (1997, 2008), Robinson & Roska (2016), Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka (2011).

[57] Studies suggest that checklists are effective in other fields, like medicine (for a recent review see Bergs et al., 2014). Checklists increase the likelihood that individuals will complete all of the steps in both simple and complex processes (Wetmore et al., 2016). For example, a counselor may only have a handful

of students who need to take SAT II exams, so that step might be overlooked unless the counselor or students are prompted to check all exams that might be required for admission. Checklists may also help keep other school community members, such as teachers, administrators, parents, and students, apprised of important college tasks and deadlines (Haynes et al., 2011). Checklists' effectiveness declines when checklists are only partially completed or used in a limited number of cases (van Daalen et al., 2017). Thus, inconsistent use of checklists, or completing checklists with only some students, may reduce the potentially positive effects of checklists. Moreover, checklists may be less beneficial or may have negative unintended consequences if they come to be viewed as yet another exercise required for compliance rather than an opportunity to ensure that students' needs are met. For example, systems that require that all students apply to a set number of four-year colleges may skew efforts toward ensuring students submit a given number of applications, rather than having each student apply to the mix of colleges that is a good match for that student.

For this report, we present survey data from the Los Angeles Unified School District's annual School Experience Survey (SES), including a new high school counselor module developed by our team and implemented by LAUSD as part of the SES, and from a survey we developed and administered to organizations that provide college access services to Los Angeles students. We also present interview data from interviews our research team conducted with school district and charter leaders and school counselors. This appendix describes each of these data sources and our analytic samples.

LAUSD'S School Experience Survey (SES)

LAUSD administers its School Experience Survey (SES) annually to staff, students, and parents. For the 2015-16 school year, we drafted a new high school counselor survey module and a short set of college-related questions for teachers, which LAUSD incorporated into its annual SES staff survey. On the staff survey, all staff answer general questions and then principals and teachers have historically branched off to answer additional sets of questions that are pertinent to their respective roles. For this project, our high school counselor survey module provided an additional set of survey questions for counselors. This report draws most heavily on data from the new high school counselor survey module, though we also present data from the teacher and principal sections of the staff survey, as well as from the student surveys, for a subset of questions relevant to college access.

SES Survey Administration and Data Cleaning

In 2015-16, LAUSD administered the staff SES survey online, via a publicly available LAUSD web page. To ensure that staff felt comfortable revealing their opinions, staff did not have to log in to take the survey, nor were they assigned a unique identifier. As a result of not having a survey record unique to each staff member, staff members were not able to begin the survey and save what they had completed to continue later where they had left off. In addition, staff members could (either intentionally or unintentionally) take the survey more than once, and people who were not LAUSD staff could, in theory, take the survey posing as school staff. We did not see evidence in the data that the survey had been compromised by non-LAUSD staff taking the survey. We did, however, see multiple survey records that could have belonged to the same staff member. This pattern seemed to be most commonly generated when staff started the survey in multiple browser tabs or used the refresh or back button on their browser, because in those instances, the survey software would

spontaneously generate an additional survey record.

Without unique identifiers for each staff member, we could not definitively identify which records were duplicates (i.e., multiple records from the same respondent). To try to detect potential duplicate records, we identified individuals from the same school whose responses were identical or similar on select questions.[58] Three members of the research team conferred about possible duplicates in each sample and identified likely duplicates. We then kept each individual's most complete survey record and dropped the others.

SES Survey Analytic Samples

We restricted the staff and student survey analytic samples used in this report to include only traditional schools and affiliated charter schools that serve 9th-12th grade students. We focused on schools that serve high school students because our study focuses on high school supports and we designed the counselor survey module for high school counselors.[59] We excluded survey responses from "non-traditional" high schools, including continuation, home & hospital, special education, opportunity, and community day schools because we suspected that approaches to college readiness in those schools would differ considerably from approaches in more typical LAUSD high schools.[60] And we did not include survey responses from independent charter schools because most independent charter schools do not opt to take the LAUSD surveys, and counselors from only two (out of 80) independent charter high schools participated in the counselor module of the SES survey.[61]

To ensure that the counselor data had adequate coverage across our topics of interest, we included counselors in our analytic sample only if they answered at least 80% of the required questions on the counselor survey. We also included schools in our counselor analyses that had at least one counselor respondent.

For analyses of the teacher and principal SES data, we included teachers and principals if they answered all of the specific questions of interest for this report (14 survey questions for teachers, 9 for principals). We then excluded schools from our teacher and principal analyses if no teachers or principals responded from that school.[62] For data from the student SES survey, we used publicly-available, school-level data from 2014-15 as well as student-level data from the 2015-16 school year.

Appendix Table 1 shows how the schools in our four analytic samples differ from 1) all schools in LAUSD boundaries that serve high school students and 2) all "traditional" non-charter and affiliated charter schools that serve high school students. According to the California Department of Education, in 2014-15 there were 268

schools in the LAUSD boundaries that served high school students. Of those schools, 124 were senior high schools, span schools, or affiliated charters. Our analytic sample of counselor data includes 112 (or 90%) of those schools.[63] Our analytic samples of teacher, principal, and student data include 99%, 81%, and 93% of those schools, respectively. Appendix Table 1 shows that our analytic samples are very similar, in terms of demographics and academic indicators, to the set of traditional non-charter and affiliated charter schools in the district.

Appendix Table 2 describes the counselors included in the analytic sample. Most of the respondents in our sample (84%) listed their primary staff role as "counselor," though our sample also included staff who listed their primary roles as teachers or principals but also reported that they provided counseling services.[64] Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) said that they provided at least some college counseling. Most of the counselors identified as Hispanic/Latino/a (43%) or white (23%), with 12% identifying as African American, 11% as multi-ethnic, and 10% as Asian Pacific Islander.[65] Four out of five counselors reported having at least three years of experience in their current position, with nearly half (45%) reporting over ten years of experience. Counselors had shorter tenures at their current schools, however, with 17% at their current school for less than a year and another 20% for one or two years.

Appendix Table 1: Comparison of all high schools in LAUSD boundaries, traditional schools and affiliated charter schools, and analytic samples of schools

School Characteristics	All schools serving HS students (N=268)	All trad'l non-charter and affiliated charter schools serving HS students (N=124)	Analytic Samples			
			Counselor SES school level sample (N=112)	Teacher SES school level sample (N=123)	Principal SES school level sample (N=101)	Student SES school level sample (N=115)
% Free or reduced price lunch eligible	75	75	75	75	76	75
% African American students	10	8	8	8	9	8
% Hispanic students	78	79	80	80	79	80
Avg # of 9th-12th graders	733	1,114	1,169	1,123	1,075	1,155
Cohort graduation rate	82	80	80	80	79	80
A-G completion rate	43	43	44	43	43	44
School Type						
% Senior high school (non-magnet)	58	78	79	79	77	79
% Span (Non-magnet)	12	9	8	8	9	8
% Senior high school (magnet)	4	9	9	9	9	9
% Span (magnet)	2	4	4	4	5	4
% Continuation high school	15	0	0	0	0	0
% Special education center	4	0	0	0	0	0
% Community day school	3	0	0	0	0	0
% Opportunity school	2	0	0	0	0	0
Charter Type						
% Independent	30	0	0	0	0	0
% Affiliated	1	2	3	2	3	3
Grade Configuration						
% K-12	5	4	4	4	5	4
% 6-12	8	5	4	5	6	4
% 9-12	72	84	86	85	82	84
% Other	14	7	6	7	7	7

Appendix Table 2: Characteristics of counselors included in analytic sample

	Percent
Primary Role at School	
Counselor	84
Principal	2
Teacher	9
Other administrator	4
School administrative assistant	0
Provide college counseling	63
Race	
African American (not Hispanic)	12
American Indian or Alaska Native	0
Asian or Pacific Islander	10
White (not Hispanic)	23
Hispanic or Latino/a	43
Other/Multi-ethnic	11
Years in Current Position at Any School	
Less than one year	7
1-2 years	14
3-5 years	10
6-10 years	25
Over 10 years	45
Years in Any Position at Current School	
Less than one year	17
1-2 years	20
3-5 years	21
6-10 years	16
Over 10 years	26

N=447. Sample restricted to counselors in traditional and affiliated charter schools that serve high school students. These 447 counselors represent the 112 schools included in the school level analytic sample.

External Service Provider Survey (ESPS)

The purpose of the external service provider survey was to collect information about the types of organizations that provide college access services to K-12 students who live and/or attend school within the LAUSD attendance boundaries, and about the types of services these organizations provide.

ESPS Survey Administration and Data Cleaning

To construct a sampling frame for the ESPS survey, we tried to identify all organizations that seemed to 1) serve K-12 students within the LAUSD attendance boundaries, and 2) provide college access services. Appendix Table 3 shows the sources we used to create this sampling frame.

Appendix Table 3: Sources used to construct sampling frame for external service provider survey

Source	Years Included
NCAN and SoCal CAN members	2015
Education Policy Institute's Handbook of Pre-College Outreach Programs	2012*
Federal TRIO, GEAR UP, and College Access Challenge Grant grantees	2008-2015
Partnering organizations listed in federal GEAR UP grantee project abstracts	2010-2015
LAUSD Beyond the Bell partner organizations	2015
Current LAUSD college access related vendors	2015
College community outreach programs	2015
Publicly listed student college outreach organizations on local university websites**	2015

*EPI's Handbook was published in 2012 and was the most recent edition.
**We reviewed the websites of any university whose zip code (per IPEDS) matched the Los Angeles County master zip code directory.

We attempted to contact each organization in the frame to obtain contact information for a specific staff member. If we were unable to obtain contact information for a staff member after three attempted calls over the course of a month, or if there was no identifiable staff person to answer questions related to the college access services the organization was meant to provide, we removed the organization from our sampling frame. We also discovered, in the course of conducting the survey, that a few organizations were no longer functioning and removed those organizations from the sampling frame. The final sampling frame included 127 organizations.

We administered the survey online and followed up with potential respondents by phone. We contacted each organization at least three times by phone to request their organization's participation. Eighty-six organizations participated in the survey, for a response rate of 68%.[66]

ESPS Analytic Sample

For the ESPS sample used in this report, we excluded organizations that participated in the survey but did not serve students in the LAUSD attendance boundaries (4 organizations).[67] We also excluded organizations that did not provide college access services (which we defined as preparation for or information about the SAT or ACT, college information or counseling, financial aid information or counseling, services related to college readiness or enrollment during the summer between high school graduation and college, or services intended to improve college persistence) during

the 2015-16 academic year (5 organizations). We also excluded organizations that provided services *only* to college students or did not provide direct services to students, parents, or school staff (1 organization).[68] Our final analytic sample includes 76 organizations.

Appendix Table 4 describes the organizations included in the ESPS analytic sample. About three-quarters (74%) of organizations identified as non-profits and 30% as higher education institutions.[69] The majority of organizations (82%) offer their services at schools, while about half (49%) offer services on college campuses. The majority of organizations provide academic supports (83%), SAT or ACT information or preparation (87%), college information or counseling (100%), and/or financial aid information or counseling (95%). About half provide assistance during the summer between high school and college (51%) and provide supports to college students (53%). Nearly all of the organizations serve high school students (95%) and target low-income (96%) and first-generation students (93%).

Appendix Table 4: External provider survey analytic sample

	Percent
Organization Type	
Non-profit	74
Higher education institution	30
For-profit company	4
Foundation	1
Operates a TRIO Program	22
Talent Search	3
Upward Bound	14
Gear Up	8
Where Services are Provided	
School sites	82
College campus	49
Organization's office/facility	39
Community center	14
Services Offered	
Academic services	83
SAT/ACT information or preparation	87
College information or counseling	100
Financial aid information or counseling	95
Summer services between HS graduation and college enrollment	51
Services while students are enrolled in college	53
Grade Levels Served	
Elementary grades	4
Middle school grades	37
High school grades	95
Populations Served	
Gifted and talented students	37
Students with high academic potential	62
Students who are struggling academically	55
Low-income students	96
First-generation students	93
Underrepresented minorities	88
Undocumented students	61
English language learners	53

Data from ESPS survey. N=76. Percentages are not mutually exclusive.

District and Charter Leader Interviews

To gather general information about district and charter management approaches related to college readiness, and in preparation for our survey development process, we interviewed district level staff from a range of local districts and central office departments, and leaders from charter organizations. These interviews were not intended to provide a comprehensive picture

of college readiness efforts in LAUSD and charter schools, but rather to highlight general approaches for further exploration in our surveys and school visits. Our sample included twelve central office staff members, four local district leaders, and five individuals affiliated with charter organizations. The interviews lasted an average of forty-five minutes and covered the college readiness topics most applicable to each participant's area of responsibility (e.g., if the participant primarily worked on instructional efforts we focused our interview questions on academic supports or strategies). Given that we only interviewed a small, volunteer sample of staff whose roles involved circumscribed aspects of college readiness, our interview data may not be representative of all district and charter leaders' perspectives. We selected quotes and other examples from our district and charter leader interviews to illustrate trends we found in the quantitative survey data.

Qualitative Counselor Data

To understand school counseling in more depth, we used survey data and district and charter leader interview data to identify high schools that had a range of internally or externally provided college readiness services and varied in their school size and demographic characteristics. We selected four traditional and two charter schools and interviewed nine counselors, including one college advisor, from those schools. Our interviews typically lasted about an hour and focused on the services offered at the school, how counselors collaborate with and coordinate external service providers, best practices, and challenges counselors face in supporting students through the college application and enrollment process. Given that we interviewed a small sample of counselors, within the small sample of schools we selected, the interview data are not intended to be representative but rather to help elaborate our findings from the counselor survey. We selected quotes and other examples from our school counselor interviews to illustrate trends we found in the quantitative survey data.

Counselors' responses to open-ended questions in the districtwide SES counselor survey provided additional data for our analyses and quotes that were used to illustrate patterns. See Appendix Table 2 for information on the sample of counselors who participated in the survey.

[58] We identified records from the same school with identical responses on a subset of questions about demographics, position, and school environment. We then reviewed open-ended responses, where variation might suggest different respondents but identical or nearly identical responses might suggest duplication. We kept the most complete version of records identified as duplicates.

[59] If staff members indicated that "counselor" was one of their roles and that they provided counseling services to high school students, the survey prompted them to answer the questions in the new high school counselor module.

[60] In 2014-15, 9.2% of 12th graders who attended school within the LAUSD attendance boundaries, and 5.6% of 9th-12th graders, attended continuation, home and hospital, special education, opportunity, and community day schools. We suspect that the approach to college readiness used in these schools differs from more typical high schools in part because they allocate counseling staff using a different metric than in traditional schools and in some cases are governed by different academic policies (LAUSD, 2016c). The extent to which continuation, community day, opportunity, and home and hospital schools differ in their college readiness practices from more traditional high schools warrants further investigation.

[61] LAUSD encourages staff at its schools, and at affiliated charter schools, to participate in the survey. In contrast, independent charter schools must opt in to participate in the survey and most do not.

[62] We cannot estimate a counselor response rate for the survey because we do not have data on the population of LAUSD staff who counsel high school students. We estimate that the individual-level teacher response rate for our analytic sample is 81% of all teachers in non-charter and affiliated charter high schools (based on CDE 2014-15 staffing data).

[63] Of the twelve traditional schools not included in our analytic sample, nine had no counselor respondents and three had partial counselor respondents whom we excluded because those counselors completed less than 80% of the applicable required survey questions.

[64] The beginning of the survey asked respondents what position they held at the school and then directed them through modules associated with those roles (i.e., teacher, principal, etc.). Later in the survey, respondents were asked if they held any additional roles at their school. Teachers or principals who also provided counseling were then directed through the counselor module along with staff who primarily identified as counselors.

[65] Note that the school experience survey did not ask respondents to report their gender, so we are not able to describe the gender distribution of high school counselors in Appendix Table 2.

[66] We counted an organization as participating in the survey if the survey respondent for that organization answered more than 80% of the applicable required questions.

[67] Because we used publicly available information to identify the population of external service providers, a small number of organizations that we thought served students living in the LAUSD attendance boundaries or provided college access services told us on the survey that they did not. We were able to confirm this only after they completed portions of the survey.

[68] For example, we excluded organizations that provided general online resources such as FAFSA information or SAT practice questions. We did not exclude organizations that provided personalized services that were administered online.

[69] Note that organization types are not mutually exclusive.

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