



# HOW HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES CAN TEAM UP TO USE DATA AND INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the rapid proliferation of data about our nation's public schoolchildren, student information remains surprisingly underutilized in efforts to address one of the most critical educational and economic issues of our time—improving college readiness and completion.

This report is part of a series that encourages high schools and higher education to share responsibility for increasing the number of students who are prepared to enter college and earn a postsecondary credential, by co-designing, co-delivering, and co-validating supportive experiences for all students from senior year through the first year of college. The effectiveness of those interventions rests in no small measure on the quality of data use that informs the work.

Author Michael Grady of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University argues that collaboration by K-12 and postsecondary educators can significantly improve data use, research, and analysis, and thus enhance the cooperative activities proposed in this series for a “shared transition zone.”

Grady draws on the work of several national initiatives that have yielded new models of data-based research collaboration focused on improving different aspects of the high-school-to-college transition. He also calls on his own experience co-leading a research collaborative known as the College Readiness Indicator System initiative, which

was aimed at building the capacity of K-12 schools and systems to use data in ways that enhance college readiness and success.

Grady proposes four essential elements for implementation of effective cross-sector data collaboration to increase college readiness and success, and provides examples of promising practices for each:

- 1. Secure broad-based leadership support:** For example, Lumina Foundation's Community Partnership for Attainment has brought together civic leaders from 60 organizations in Providence, RI, to improve college completion rates since 2013. Their focus is on the city's Latino population, which as a group lags behind other citizens in college attainment.
- 2. Build cross-sector data infrastructure:** For example, the New York City Department of Education and their counterparts at the City University of New York established a two-way data-sharing agreement in 2008. Their partnership later expanded and resulted in development of a new system of academic indicators that predict strong performance in college.

### 3. Strengthen staff capacity to use data

**effectively:** For example, the Citi Foundation's Postsecondary Success Collaborative, which operated from 2008 through 2013, built internal capacity and external partnerships to better prepare students for postsecondary success. Philadelphia developed a collaboration between high school teachers and college faculty at Temple University and The Community College of Philadelphia to improve writing instruction for high school students.

### 4. Forge strategic partnerships among K-12, higher education, and community organizations:

For example, a New York City-based partnership between New Visions for Public Schools, CUNY, and other educational organizations teamed up to form LINCT to Success (created as the At Home in College program in 2008), which offers academic and other key college access supports for high school seniors and first-year college students.

The paper offers specific recommendations for developing the momentum necessary to establish durable secondary-postsecondary research collaboratives. While both high schools and higher education will need to step up, the main focus is on encouraging change at the postsecondary level, which generally has been reluctant to look beyond their campus boundaries. The recommendations are:

#### ► **Promote long-term leadership commitment:**

College presidents, provosts, school superintendents, and other civic leaders can increase chances of success by making long-term public commitments of support. For example, they can remove bureaucratic barriers to sharing data; devote staff time to research, analysis, and implementation of interventions; and give serious consideration to policy implications.

► **Invest in core operating capacity:** Initial investments of funding, staffing, and time are required to connect data systems, provide training, and set up a research partnership. Ongoing needs include data management, sharing, and analysis; design, delivery, and validation of evidence-based reports; and communications to convey lessons learned.

► **Develop incentives for faculty participation:** Postsecondary institutions can offer incentives for participation in cross-sector research collaboratives, such as short-term fellowship appointments that allow faculty to reduce their teaching load and commit meaningful time to the effort.

► **Expand partnerships to engage other agencies and community representatives:** Community-based nonprofit organizations play a growing role, particularly for traditionally underserved students they work with regularly. They provide vital supplemental college access and success supports that help thousands of young people make it to and through college, and can be valuable partners.

With 21 million students currently enrolled full or part time in U.S. degree-granting institutions, a gain of just one percentage point in completion rates would place several hundred thousand more Americans on a path to more fulfilling, prosperous, and productive adulthoods. Strong transition learning opportunities that depend on robust data systems to target student supports are an essential piece of the solution.

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For more information about JFF services to build educational pathways that prepare all young people for college and careers, contact Joel Vargas, Vice President, School and Learning Designs, [jvargas@jff.org](mailto:jvargas@jff.org).



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