

Counselor Talking Points: Identifying Student Plans for College

Reaching out to middle school students about their future can be a challenging endeavor. As counselors, you provide students with guidance in choosing an educational path that works best for them.

Although your students are far too diverse to be truly categorized, we've identified three common reactions students might have to attending college:

- ✓ I'm going to college!
- ✓ I might go to college.
- ✓ Am I really college material?

Consider using the following lists of talking points to help identify fears, expectations and misconceptions students may face regarding college. The questions provided will help students open up and talk about their wants and needs related to higher education.



I'm going to college!

Some students know they'll continue their education after high school. Here are some ideas to assist students in their decision-making process.

- ✓ What are your interests?
- ✓ What careers have you thought about pursuing?
- ✓ What kind of school are you and your parents looking for?
- ✓ Discuss classes and activities the student is currently involved in to see if they're a good fit for his goals. Be ready to suggest any options that you believe would support his plans for college.
- ✓ Encourage the student to give her parents information about the Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan. Details can be found and brochures ordered at OK4Saving.org.
- ✓ Discuss eligibility requirements for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Encourage him to talk to his parents about the program.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of developing good study habits now to help her prepare for more challenging classes in high school.
- ✓ Encourage your student to visit OKcollegestart.org to explore information about schools in Oklahoma.
- ✓ Advise your student to ask questions and gather as much information as possible. UCanGo2.org is a great source of information about planning, preparing and paying for college.

Resources to hand out:

- » *Do You Have a Plan for College?* booklet, Grades 8-10
- » *Invest Today for a Brighter Tomorrow: Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan* brochure (Visit OK4Saving.org for contact information.)
- » *Oklahoma's Promise* flyer (Visit OKPromise.org for contact information)

I might go to college.

Some students are considering college after high school, but may be hesitant to make a definitive choice. As their counselor, you can help them identify their concerns and create a more positive impression of higher education.

- ✓ What are your interests?
- ✓ What do you want to do in life?
- ✓ What are your goals after high school?
- ✓ What might keep you from going to college?
- ✓ Are you concerned that you may not be able to afford college?
- ✓ Do you think it's too early to talk about going to college?
- ✓ Discuss eligibility requirements for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Encourage your student to talk to her parents about the program, and emphasize that she can enroll in the program in the 8th grade.
- ✓ Encourage the student to give his parents information about the Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan. Details can be found and brochures ordered at OK4Saving.org.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of developing good study habits now to help her prepare for more challenging classes in high school.
- ✓ Encourage your student to visit OKcollegestart.org to explore information about schools in Oklahoma. Tell him he can use this website to research different schools and see which one(s) might be a good fit.
- ✓ Advise your student to ask questions and gather as much information as possible. UCanGo2.org is a great source of information about planning, preparing and paying for college.

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- » *Degree vs. On-the-Job Training* chart (from Student Workbook and supplemental counselor CD)

Am I really college material?

Many middle school students have never considered attending college. There are many influences that can discourage a college-bound mindset, and three of the major influences are listed below:

- » They may be struggling in school and believe they're not smart enough to go to college.
- » They may have been told by friends or family members they're not "college material."
- » They may be "first generation" college students and may believe their paths will be the same as their parents'.

Fortunately, there are many options for higher education, such as four-year universities, two-year colleges, technical schools and proprietary or trade schools. Help students explore all the possibilities for education after high school.

- ✓ What are your interests?
- ✓ What do you want to do in life?
- ✓ How will you reach your goals without a degree or certificate?
- ✓ What are your skills? How can you use those skills in a job or career?
- ✓ Think about some schools that might offer courses or certificates associated with the student's interests and skills. Offer suggestions for researching how these schools might help him meet his future goals. Encourage him to keep track of schools that are of interest to him.
- ✓ Ask the student if she's talked to her parents about going to college. What are their thoughts or concerns? Would they be supportive if she enrolled in school?
- ✓ Advise him that financial aid is available to everyone, no matter what income a family makes. Suggest he visit UCanGo2.org for information about planning, preparing and paying for college.
- ✓ Discuss eligibility requirements for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Encourage your student to talk to her parents about the program, and remind her she can enroll in the program in the 8th grade.
- ✓ Encourage the student to give his parents information about the Oklahoma 529 Savings Plan. Details can be found and brochures ordered at OK4Saving.org.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of developing good study habits now to help her prepare for more challenging classes in high school.

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