

Coaching Guide

At Contigo Ed, aligned with the American School Counselor Association, we strongly believe that school counselors must “collaborate with families /teachers /administrators /community for student success”. That is precisely why we want you, as a school practitioner /coach /administrator, to be equipped with great questions to facilitate learning and development with your school counselors. Even if your background and experience is not in school counseling, you bring a wealth of knowledge and skill that is required for these collaborative efforts to be successful and impactful for students and families.

We have a blog that complements this guide: [“Coaching College Counselors & Advisors”](#)

Our resources are anchored in these fundamental beliefs:

- You, your scholars, and their communities are inherently worthy, apart from any metric or measurement of achievement.
- Building a college- and career-going identity is a developmental process.
- College and career advising is both an art and a science.
- Post-high school credentialing is important, and there are many different available programs and institutions for everyone.

Coaching and Conversation Guide

For each of our Microcourses there are Summary Sheets provided in the Course Overview Section. Encourage your school counselor to download and share with you.

The following tables contain objectives for each of our Microcourses and questions that are posed to the school counselor during reflection and practice activities. We encourage the school counselor to work collaboratively with other school practitioners and administrators to locate relevant school data, policy or information that could guide their practice.

After each question, consider asking these to dive deeper:

- How is this program / policy / practice benefiting students and families?
- Is this leading to more equitable outcomes?
- How has it evolved over time?
- Is this something we want to keep doing, modify or stop doing all together?



Postsecondary Opportunities Content Bundle

Postsecondary Pathways

Microcourse Objectives

- Identify viable postsecondary pathways that lead to early career opportunities.
- Locate postsecondary opportunities in your state, county, or city.

Questions for Conversation

- What do students typically do once they graduate from our school? Write down all of the most popular postsecondary pathways for students from our campus.
 - Where do we capture this data? Who do we capture this data from? How often do we capture it?
 - How can school counselors look up matriculation and enrollment data for former students from your campus?
- What current programs or institutions are popular with current or former students?
 - 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities
 - Military branches or other service opportunities
 - Vocational or trade programs
 - Apprenticeship
 - Job training programs
 - Gap Year programs

College Match or Fit First?

- In your opinion, do you, as a school practitioner, want to talk with students about college match or college fit first?
- What might be some of the benefits of talking about match first? Some of the drawbacks? Does a student's grade level matter at all?
- What might be some of the benefits of talking about fit first? Some of the drawbacks? Does a student's grade level matter at all?

College Match and College List Building

Microcourse Objectives

- Define college match and college fit.
- Explain how college wish lists are created, with an emphasis on match.
- Compare college and university admission criteria to academic credentials to determine eligibility.

Questions for Conversation

- What are all of the preferences students might have when selecting colleges for their college application wishlist?
- What current programs or institutions are particularly popular with our current or former students?
- What current aspects of college affordability are important for our current or former students and their families?
- What opportunities are available on or through our campus programming that allow for students to explore or experience different types of institutions and their academic and co-curricular offerings?



College Fit and College List Building

Microcourse Objectives

- Define college fit.
- Explore various aspects of college fit.
- Evaluate colleges for individual fit.

Questions for Conversation

- What terms do we currently use to categorize college match schools? (i.e. reach, target, solid/safety/secure)
- When determining our college match categories, are there any other factors other than a student's GPA and test scores that we want to consider?
- In the case of test optional admissions, how does our high school campus determine whether or not to send college entrance exam scores along with a college application?
- What is our district / campus policy of ranking students? How might this policy impact admissions?

College Application Content Bundle

Understanding Transcripts

Microcourse Objectives

- Read a transcript, identifying critical elements of the transcript along the way
- Identify trends in students' grade point averages (GPAs), which can affect college admissions decisions
- Connect a transcript to the "5Ps of College Admissions"

Questions for Conversation

- What types of GPAs are currently available on our students' transcripts?
- Looking at our campus' School Profile, do we have updated:
 - o Contact information;
 - o Information about our campus and community profile;
 - o Data about our Seniors and the rest of the school community
 - o Information about our academic program, including but not limited to, a message about curriculum, list of grad requirements, relevant school policy that might limit participation any given year, list of all courses, curricular highlights;
 - o Grading and ranking tables and policies;
 - o Tables or charts with middle 50% college entrance exam scores for current senior class;
 - o List of college acceptances and/or colleges attended by alumni;
 - o Information about policy during the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent lockdowns.
- What is our school policy on including college entrance exam scores on individual student transcripts? What are our personal opinions on this? Is this current policy working for our students and families?



Utilizing Transcripts

Microcourse Objectives

- Ask probing and clarifying questions that illuminate student strengths.
- Explore career resources that help students link academic strengths and interests to possible careers and/or fields of study.

Questions for Conversation

- How do students learn about themselves, their interests and their strengths at our school?
- What opportunities are available during the school day that allows for school counselors to build stronger relationships with students?
 - How does our campus feel about school counselors collaborating with content teachers for time with or in front of students?
 - Are there opportunities in our school calendar (i.e. all school testing days, etc) where school counselors can schedule time with students and families during the school day?
 - How does our campus feel about school counselors conducting advising virtually like using Zoom or Teams to communicate with students and families? Can school counselors conduct online questionnaires to gather information from students?
- There are some really great free and paid-for career exploration resources out there. What are current resources our students use or have access to? Do we have a budget for paid-for services, and if so, are there any we would like to pilot or purchase?

College Entrance Exams

Microcourse Objectives

- Connect college entrance examinations to the 5 Ps of college admissions.
- Explain the structure and format of the SAT & ACT.
- Sketch out a testing roadmap, including registering for exams, and figuring out when and where students should take them.
- Activate free test preparation resources.

Questions for Conversation

- How are we communicating out to colleges the disruption in standardized testing, if any, our students faced during the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent lockdown?
- Are any of the colleges and universities that are most popular with our current and former students requiring college entrance examination scores for admissions purposes from our current senior class? If so, do these students have scores available?
- There is a growing test blind / test optional movement among some of the top colleges and universities in the country. How do school counselors use this information and knowledge to suggest schools and build college lists with students and families?
- How do students select which college entrance examinations to take? When do they take them? How do they prepare for them?
- What other stakeholders on our campus and in our district likely have expertise and opinions about the type of test(s) that are best for our students?
- How do our students learn about and access free test prep resources?



- What are our own personal experiences with standardized testing and college entrance examinations? How do we think this impacts our work with students and families?

College Essay

Microcourse Objectives

- List general personal attributes that colleges ask about in essays and personal insight type questions.
- Match general personal attributes with particular essay and personal insight type questions.
- Generate specific examples linked to personal attributes.
- Visualize student attributes to create a narrative that forms a story relevant to their identity.

Questions for Conversation

- What types of college applications are most popular with our students?
- Are there other places and spaces (i.e. core classes, enrichment activities, etc) where our students have the opportunity to brainstorm and write about ways they demonstrate their uniqueness, persistence, inquisitiveness, problem-solving skills, curiosity and ability to influence others?
- How do we talk about and recognize the value of things like emotional or invisible labor as a campus community?
- How do staff members at our school model these attributes in their own practice, and how can it be used to build deeper relationships with students and families?

Resume / List of Involvement

Microcourse Objectives

- Connecting co-curricular involvement to the 5 Ps of college admissions.
- Explaining the depth, breadth, and impact of co-curricular involvement.
- Identify strategies for assisting groups of students in mining for co-curricular involvement.

Questions for Conversation

- A big challenge building a resume / list of involvement is that students often forget what they participated in and when. Group brainstorms and scheduled resume updates can be incredibly helpful. When could school counselors use these strategies? Where would be the best place to implement them? When could they happen?
- Does our School Profile describe any relevant policies that would impact participation in co-curricular activities in favorable and unfavorable ways?
- Aside from the School Profile, how do college admissions representatives know about and learn about our campus community?

Counselor Letters of Recommendation

Microcourse Objectives

- Discuss the purpose of the counselor recommendation.
- Contrast the purpose of the teacher recommendation with the counselor recommendation.
- Identify effective elements of counselor recommendations.

Questions for Conversation

- Counselor and teacher letters of recommendation should have different areas of focus. What are the current opportunities for school counselors to train and support teachers writing letters of recommendation?
- The counselor letter of recommendation really exists to discuss individual students in relation to their peers within the entire school community. It serves to provide context and a holistic portrait of a student.



- Develop approaches and strategies for writing effective letters.
- How would we describe the rigor of our academic program? If we were to determine classification bands for rigor (“most demanding”, “very demanding” and “demanding”, for example) what are the parameters and who falls into those bands?
- What opportunities exist for school counselors to gather and capture stories and anecdotes about students from other staff members?
- How and where do we capture results from things like personality assessments, career interest inventories, etc?
- How would we describe the selectivity of our co-curricular offerings? If we were to determine classification bands for selectivity (“most selective”, “very selective” and “selective”, for example) what are the parameters and who falls into those bands?
- What is our district and/or campus policy on disclosing and explaining disciplinary infractions?

Transition Content Bundle

Transition & Summer Melt

Microcourse Objectives

- Identify common, potential challenges to college matriculation.
- Address challenges with research-based strategies to promote matriculation.
- Match challenges from case study students with high-impact strategies.

Questions for Conversation

- What do students typically do once they graduate from our school? Write down all of the most popular postsecondary pathways for students from our campus.
 - Where do we capture this data? Who do we capture this data from? How often do we capture it?
 - How can school counselors look up matriculation and enrollment data for former students from your campus?
- Do we currently offer any transitional programming or support to students after they graduate from our school?
- Are there local schools or organizations we can work with to support transitioning students?

Keeping Financial Aid: Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Microcourse Objectives

- Define Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).
- List the requirements to keep financial aid once securing it.
- Explain the connection between academic achievement and keeping

Questions for Conversation

- What is our responsibility as a campus/district to provide this information to students/families?
- For our highly enrolled schools, do we know their current SAP policies and when they evaluate SAP?
- As part of our financial aid conversations with students and families, do we make them aware of the requirements to maintain their financial aid while in college?



financial aid when enrolled in college.

- Determine reasons why students might be in danger of losing their financial aid.

Keeping Financial Aid: Strategies for Success

Microcourse Objectives

- List proactive strategies to maintain financial aid eligibility.
- Identify reactive strategies to maintain aid once SAP or other financial aid policies have been violated.

Questions for Conversation

- What is our responsibility as a campus/district to provide this information to students/families?
- For our highly enrolled schools, do we know their current SAP policies and when they evaluate SAP?
- As part of our financial aid conversations with students and families, do we make them aware of the requirements to maintain their financial aid while in college?