

Understanding the Role of Post-secondary Coaches in High Schools

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SFARN Conference
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Indianapolis, IN

Center for the Study of Education Policy

Illinois State University

- Collect and publish *Grapevine*: data on state funding for higher education
- P-20 research and policy studies for state and national stakeholders
- Policy analysis and advisement
- Grant-funded research and service projects
 - Lumina Foundation
 - Wallace Foundation
 - McCormick Foundation
 - U.S. Department of Education
 - Others

Insights from SFARN 2009

- Students indicate that they expect a baccalaureate degree, but don't have a firm plan to attend college
- Some families are reluctant to disclose incomes; FAFSA is complex
- High school counselors are overburdened
- Low income students are late to file FAFSA
- Information and access to financial aid information is essential, especially for low income students, but this information is hard to disseminate
- Key factors determining college access and success trace back to middle and high school experiences

The General Problem: College Readiness

- Global economy demands higher skills
- College is being perceived as a universal need
- College preparation is essential:
 - academic, social, logistical, financial
- ELS 2002: 72% of students expect a baccalaureate degree or higher, BUT
 - Less than half are taking college prep courses
 - Less than 2/3 are getting college advisement from school personnel or parents
 - Ingels, Burns, Charleston, Chen & Cataldi, 2005



Knowing How to Go

- Academic Preparation
- Family Knowledge and Support
- Peer Knowledge and Support
- School Personnel Knowledge and Support
- Financial Preparation
- Process Logistics

What about High School Counselors?

- National student-to-counselor ratio is 475:1
- In some states, the ratio is 900+:1
- Counselor focus is mostly academic (scheduling, course-taking) and interventions (individual student problems)

The Specific Problem: Understanding the Role of Post-Secondary Coaches in High Schools

- A relatively new and rare role
- Operate outside of traditional teaching and guidance counseling
- Specifically work to improve students' college readiness

....How do they “put the pieces together” for students?



Research Basis: College Readiness

Four Units of Analysis

- Student
- School
- System
- Society



Students

Predictors of College Readiness and College Attainment

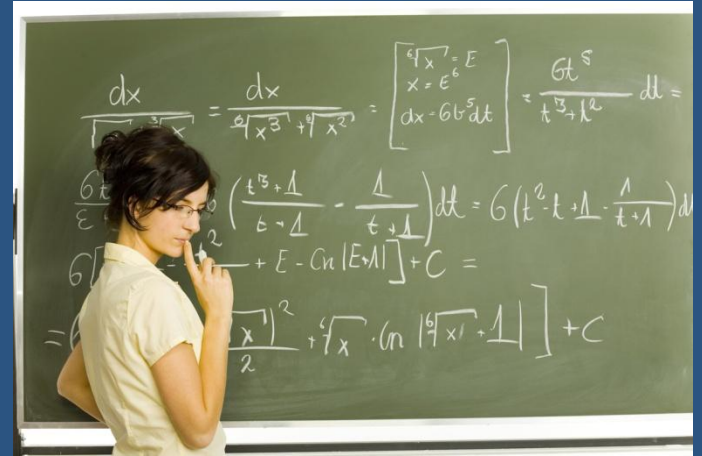
- **Academic Factors**
 - Course taking, course rigor, GPA, test scores
- **Social Factors**
 - Family influence
 - Peer influence
 - Engagement, motivation, social connections



Schools

■ Academic Factors

- Curriculum & Assessment
- College prep policies
- Tutoring
- Teacher Training



■ Social Factors

- Personalization
- Access to college information
- Guidance/Advisement
- Parental Involvement



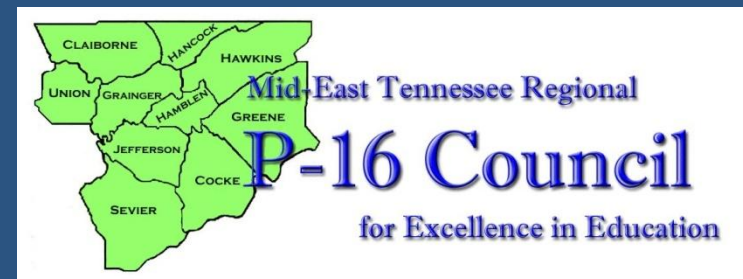
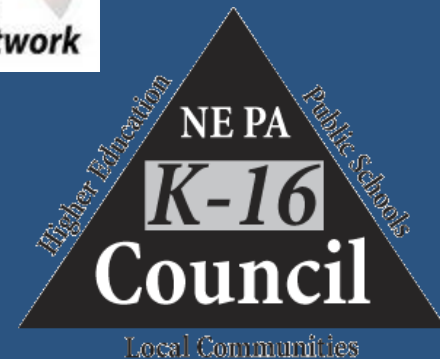
The "P-20" System

- **Thin Empirical Research**
 - Expository writing
 - Policy reports
 - A few case studies (state and regional examples)
 - Transition studies/disconnects
- **Recommended Policies**
 - Alignment (curriculum, assessments)
 - Dual enrollment/AP
 - Joint accountability
 - Shared governance & funding

Save the Date

*Inaugural K-16 Leadership
Conference*

9:00 am - 4:00 pm, with reception to follow
Thursday, September 21, 2006



Society

■ Social Class

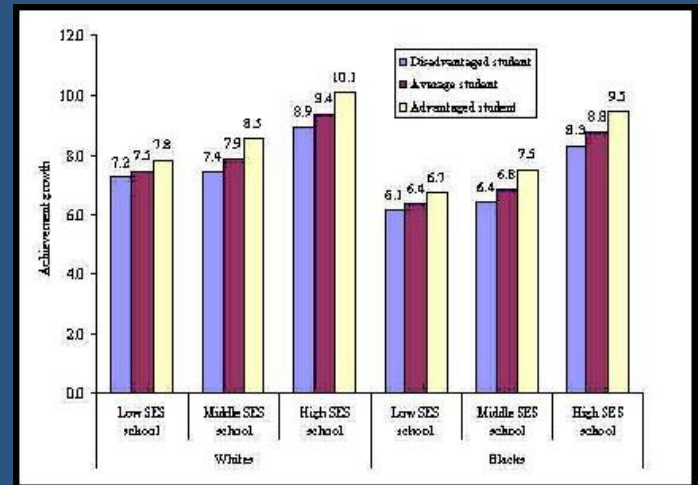
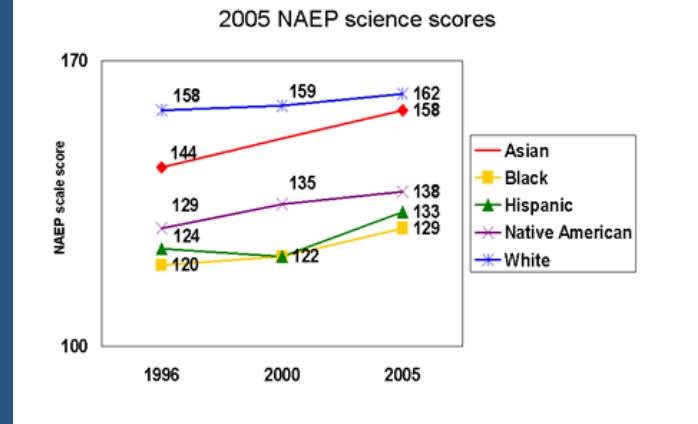
- 75% of children from families earning >\$80K complete a baccalaureate degree; 9% of children from families earning <\$25K complete the degree

■ Race

■ Gender

Conclusion: Most K-12 schools and higher education institutions reproduce society's inequities

4th-graders improve in science, and achievement gaps narrow



So, who do we blame?

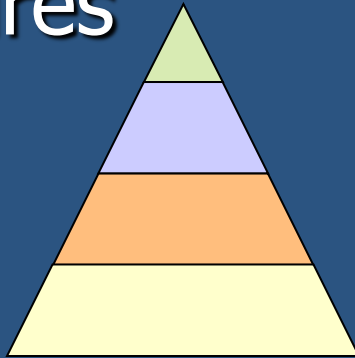
- Everyone and no one!
- Difficult to “fix” all four levels at once

Is there another way to look at this problem?

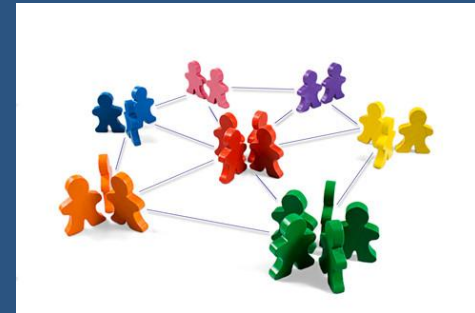


Operating Elements of Social Systems

- Structures



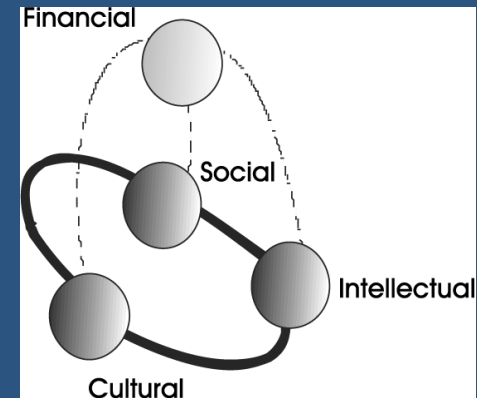
- Relationships



- Actions



- Resources



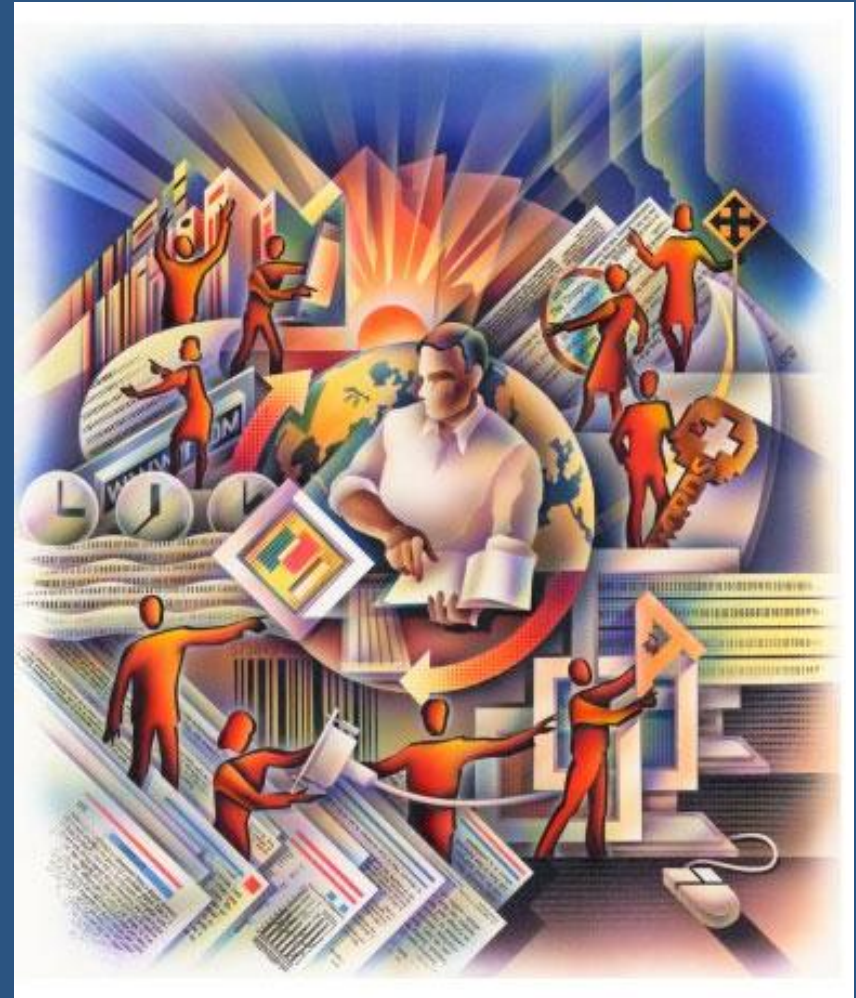
What if a school could **mobilize all four factors** to get students and families the academic, social and financial support they need for college?



Social Capital

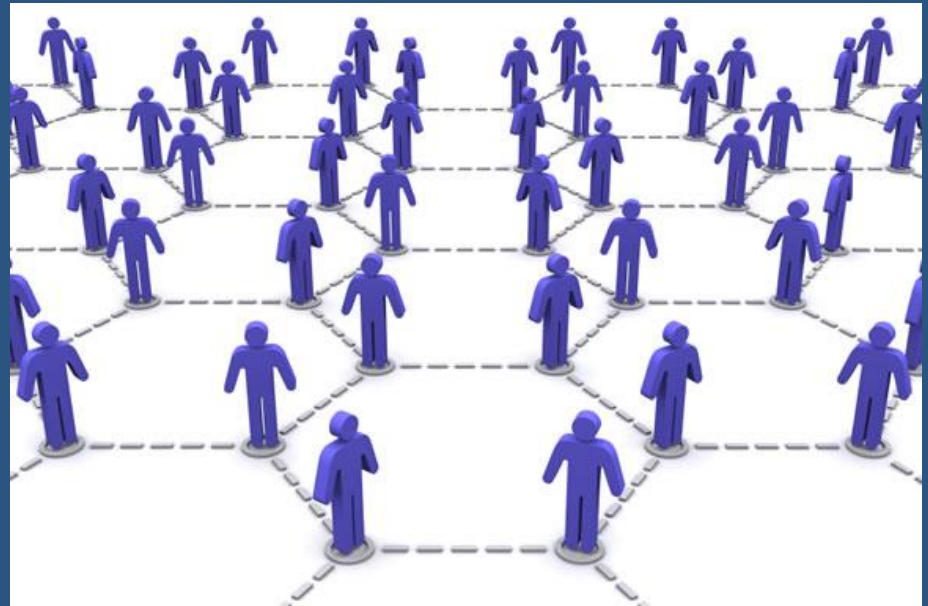
“By making connections with one another, and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things that they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty.”

Field (2003)



Network Theory

- Strong & weak ties
- Structural holes and bridges
(boundary spanners)
- **Networks connect structures, actions, relationships and resources – all four social factors**



Research Questions

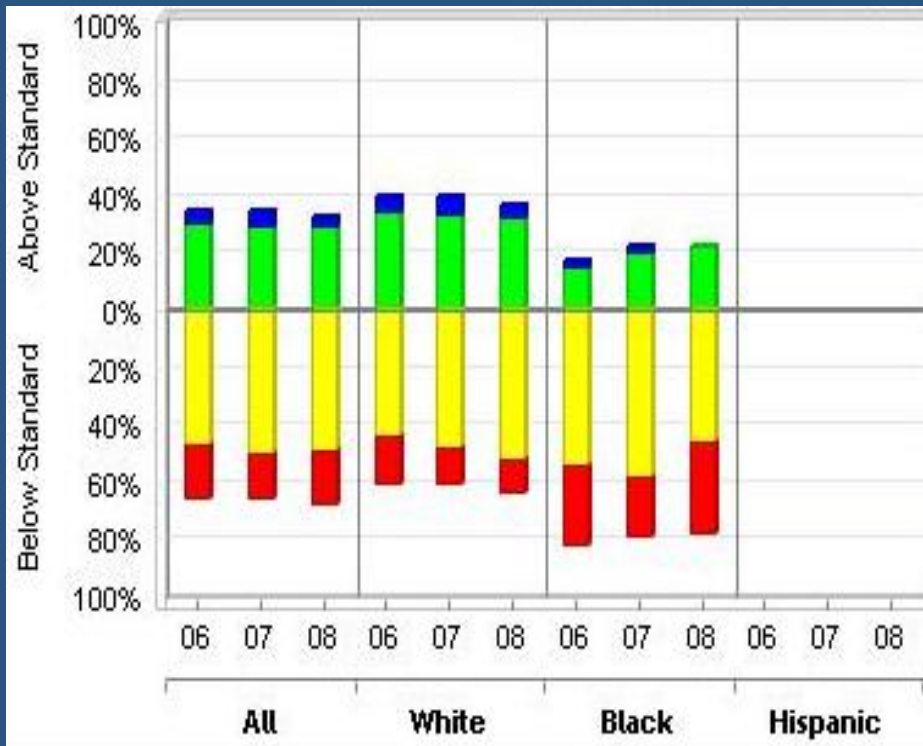
- Where do post-secondary coaches “fit” within the schools’ **structures** and processes?
- In what **activities (actions)** and **relationships** do the coaches engage?
- What **resources** do coaches access, mobilize or confer for students or others?

Alpha & Beta High Schools

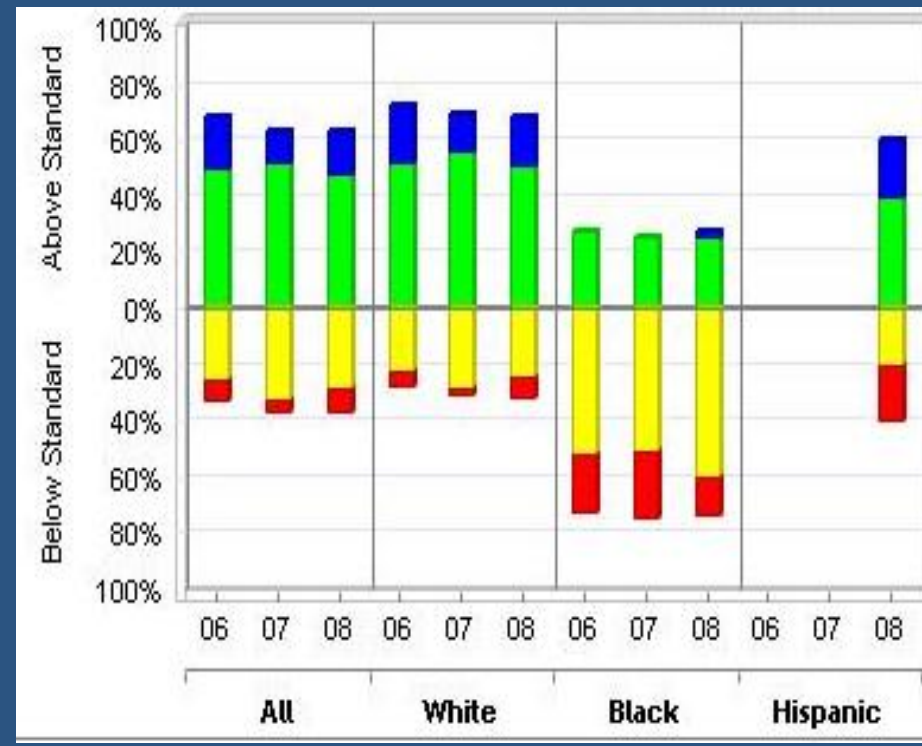
	<u>Alpha High School</u> GEAR UP SCHOOL	<u>Beta High School</u>																																				
Students served	1300	1700																																				
Attendance rate	87%	93%																																				
Teacher Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average experience Average salary 	13 years \$54,000	13 years \$53,000																																				
Student Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low income Black White Hispanic Multiracial 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th><u>1999</u></th> <th><u>2008</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Low income</td> <td>45%</td> <td>62%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black</td> <td>23%</td> <td>39%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White</td> <td>75%</td> <td>58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hispanic</td> <td>1%</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multiracial</td> <td>1%</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>1999</u>	<u>2008</u>	Low income	45%	62%	Black	23%	39%	White	75%	58%	Hispanic	1%	1%	Multiracial	1%	1%	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th><u>1999</u></th> <th><u>2008</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Low income</td> <td>11%</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black</td> <td>7%</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White</td> <td>89%</td> <td>79%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hispanic</td> <td>2%</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multiracial</td> <td>1%</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>1999</u>	<u>2008</u>	Low income	11%	24%	Black	7%	14%	White	89%	79%	Hispanic	2%	3%	Multiracial	1%	3%
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Student Performance (2008) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Mathematics 	33% meet/exceed standards 30% meet/exceed standards	63% meet/exceed standards 63% meet/exceed standards																																				
Instructional Expenditure per Pupil	\$5,500	\$5,000																																				

High School Test Performance

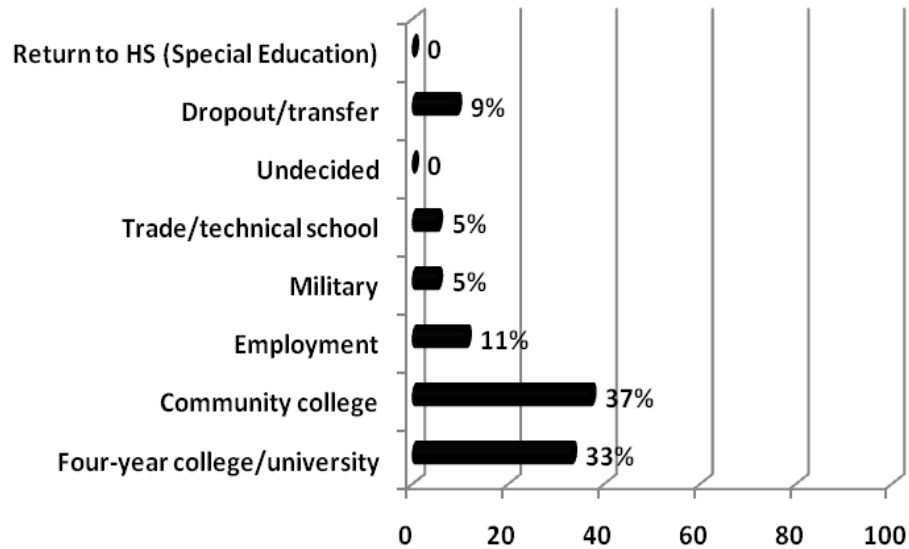
Alpha



Beta

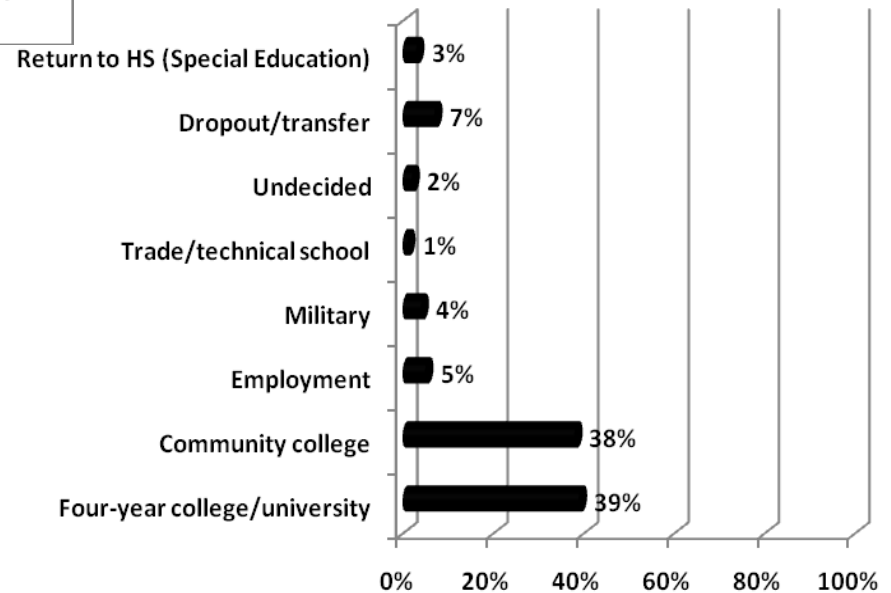


Post-Secondary Plans

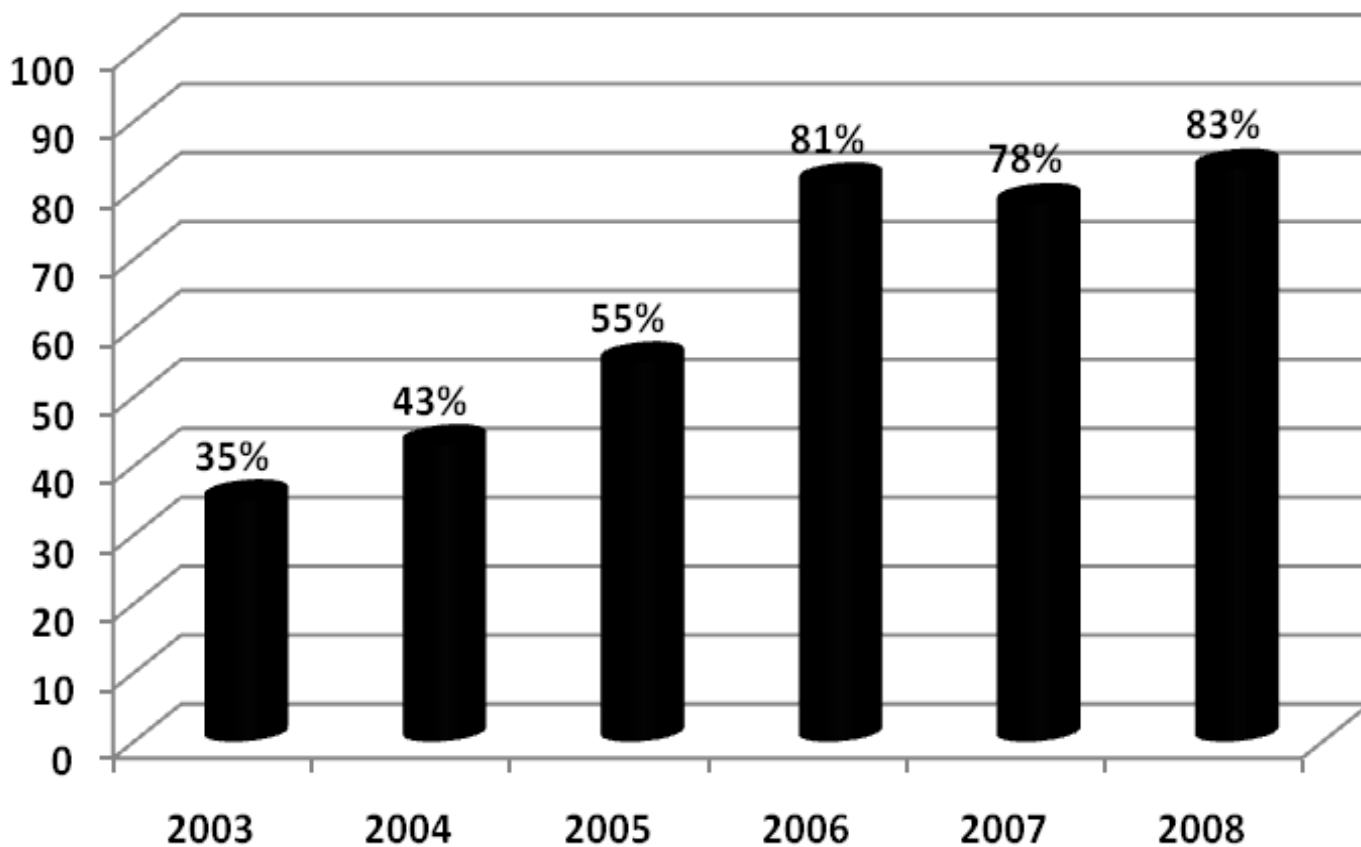


Alpha

Beta



Alpha HS Graduates- College Enrollment Trends



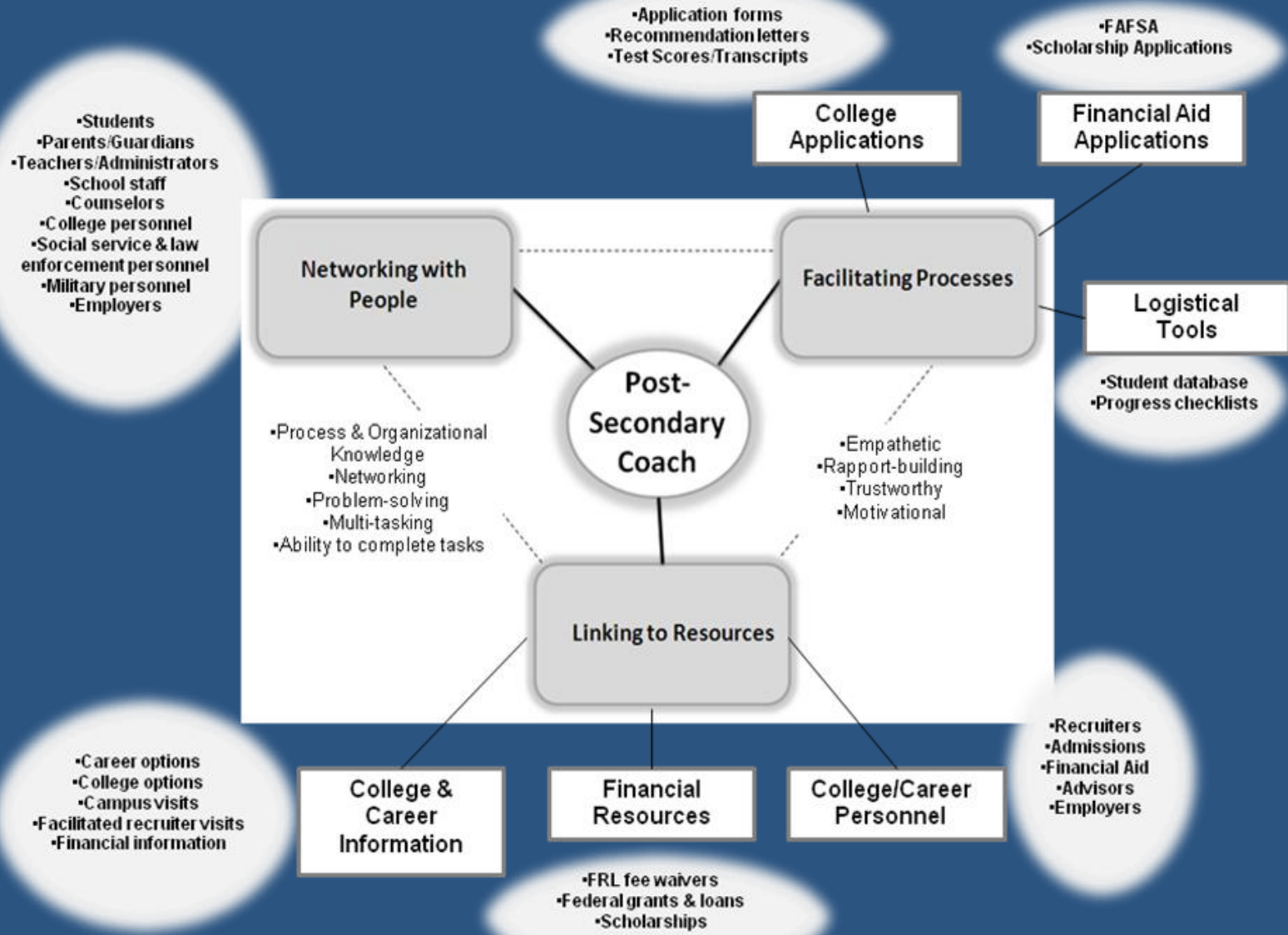
Data Collection

- Semi-structured interviews with post-secondary coaches, principals, counselors and teachers
- Coaches' written descriptions of their work
- Observations with field notes
- Documents, websites, and other extant artifacts

Data Analysis

- Open coding: ID natural categories & themes
- Social capital coding
- Triangulation among data sources (reliability)
- Comparison between coding methods
- Comparison across cases

Findings – Open Coding



Findings – Social Capital Coding

- (1) Structural positioning matters:** a permanent, full-time and board-sanctioned salaried position in a flexible, non-bureaucratic school produces more resources for more students
- (2) Extensive network ties** for a coach in a central network location, including both strong (internal) and weak (external) ties, providing access to more resources for students. **External ties include college admissions officers, financial aid officers, and recruiters.**
- (3) A wider variety of instrumental actions** on the part of the coach will benefit a larger number of students. These include facilitated recruiter visits, financial aid assistance for parents, and individual interventions.

Conclusions

- Much research and many state and federal interventions focus solely on academic performance, ignoring students' personal and social needs.
- Social support in the form of a post-secondary coach can represent a cost-effective solution to overburdened guidance departments and help students access necessary information, financial resources and social contacts for college-going.
- Post-secondary coaching positions can be supported through school-university partnerships that cultivate social networks among school and college professionals, students and families.

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