

Counselor Talking Points: Working With Parents

As a guidance counselor, you have a very important job! You know what it takes to get your students ready for and excited about college, and you serve as a trusted source of information for them and their parents.

Parents have unique concerns about sending their child to college. Whether it's a financial or personal concern, you can empower parents with the tools they need to make college a reality for their child.

As you visit with their parents you may find a few obstacles. Some may feel uncomfortable speaking with you or are unsure what types of questions to ask about college planning. To break the ice, you may want to start by asking if the parent went to college or wanted to go to college. Start from there to get some discussion going about the possibility for their child. If other obstacles come up, we've listed some information below that might help.

- » The parent might state their child has a job and without that income the family would have a hard time making ends meet. You might be able to calm those fears by stating:
 - ✓ It can be hard for families who depend on money from a child's job to help support the family; however, the rewards of a college education can mean more for the family in the long run. Parents should be aware that a college education can help in a variety of ways with a family business. The knowledge a student gains in school can help provide valuable input on expanding, growing and managing a business to make it more successful.
 - ✓ Statistics show college graduates earn over hundreds of thousands more in their lifetime than high school graduates.
- » You may hear a parent state their child will not fit in at college. You may be able to provide some personal input to help them change their mind; your interaction with the students may give you some insight. You can offer the following tips to possibly help ease them out of this mindset:
 - ✓ Some schools make support groups available to college students. There are several associations made up of students with similar faiths, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds that are there to help. Advisors and counselors are available on-campus to help students find these groups.
 - ✓ Parental support is extremely important to the success of students in college.

- ✓ People with a college education have been shown to live happier, healthier lives. Research has shown that college graduates usually live longer, are smarter consumers and have more varied interests than those who don't go to college.
- ✓ College provides the satisfaction of personal growth. Students can explore new subjects, meet different people and participate in activities they might not otherwise experience.
- » Some parents may not see a need for college. There are many reasons to combat a comment like this. The following points may give you some ammunition.
 - ✓ A college degree will make it easier to get a job. Most companies want workers who have college degrees. There are more jobs available for college graduates than for those without a degree or certificate.
 - ✓ People without college degrees are more likely to be unemployed at some point in their lives.

You may wish to provide parents a list of college terms to shed some light on the information they see when reviewing college catalogs or pamphlets. Make copies of the Glossary contained in the Student Workbook.

