



The College Board National Office for School  
Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA)

# School Counseling in Texas

A College Board 2011 National  
Survey of School Counselors  
State Brief

A brief for the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center's  
National Office for School Counselor Advocacy  
by Civic Enterprises with Hart Research

John M. Bridgeland  
Mary Bruce



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# School Counseling in Texas

## A College Board 2011 National Survey of School Counselors State Brief

America is facing a high school and college completion crisis. The most recent data reveal the important linkage of a strong college and career readiness agenda in secondary school to later college enrollment and completion. One in four public high school students and 65 percent of students of color fail to graduate from high school with their peers. During high school, many students do not have the resources they need to succeed in college, including access to college preparatory courses. This is particularly true in schools serving populations with traditionally low college enrollment rates: Fewer than a third of high schools serving the most Hispanic and African American students offer calculus and only 40 percent offer physics. Of all students who do complete high school, only a quarter (28 percent) complete an associate degree within three years and only half (57 percent) complete a bachelor's degree within six years.

As a nation, we are falling far short of the College Board's goal of increasing the proportion of 25- to 34-year-olds with an associate degree or higher to 55 percent by 2025, with fewer than half (41.1 percent) with such a degree as of 2009. In order to support students in college and career success, and to regain our status in having the highest college attainment rates in the world, we must use all of the tools in our education toolkit — including our nation's counselors. School counselors are uniquely positioned to support student success due to their ability to understand the entire picture of individual students — their family circumstances, social and emotional development, academic progress and other issues related to their success in school. They also have the ability to follow students over time, unlike teachers who have them for just one year and are often focused only on their academic progress in a single subject. Research indicates that a counselor's unique role coordinating expectations, academics and support systems across secondary and postsecondary programs helps to improve academic readiness and persistence for students.

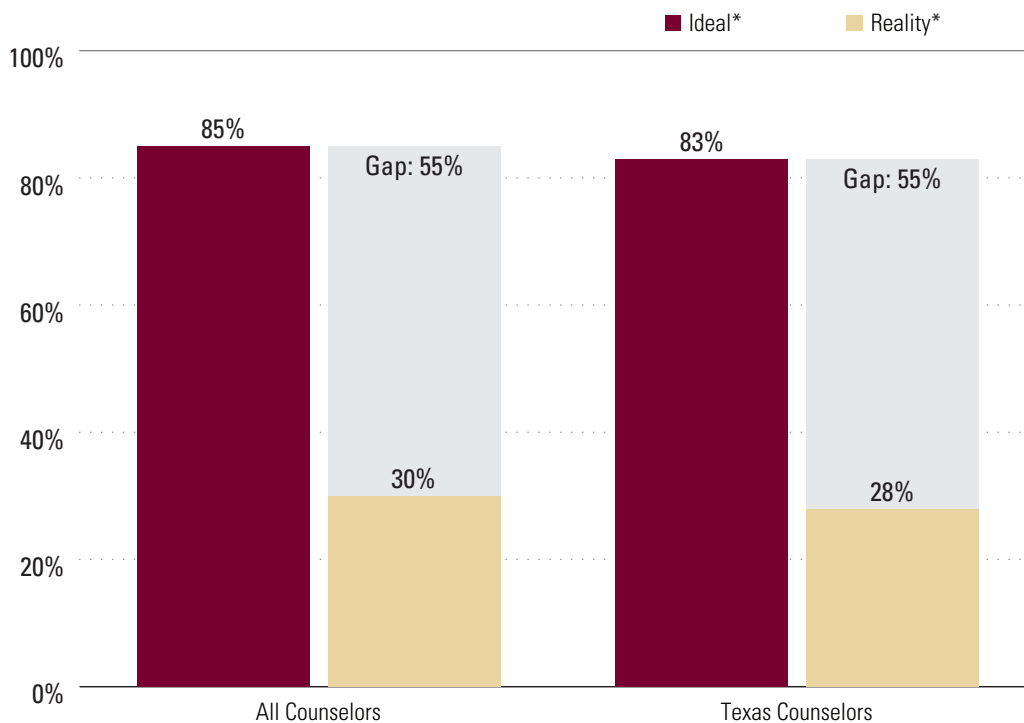
Texas, like the nation, is facing a high school and college completion crisis. This brief, *School Counseling in Texas*, focuses on the unique challenges and opportunities facing school counselors in the Lone Star State. It is a supplement to the 2011 National Survey of School Counselors: *Counseling at a Crossroads* report commissioned by the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy. The findings are based on one of the largest surveys of school counselors: a nationally representative sample of more than 5,300 middle school and high school counselors. The survey revealed deep concerns within the profession and shed light on opportunities to better utilize these valuable leaders in America's schools.

**Key Finding:** School counselors in Texas share the same view as counselors across the country that the mission of schools and counselors should be college and career readiness, but few see it as a reality in their schools and profession.

*Like their peers around the country, Texas counselors report a large gap between the ideal mission of schools and their reality.* Counselors in Texas and nationally do not see college completion and career readiness as the mission of their schools (see Figure 1). (Twenty-eight percent in Texas compared to 30 percent nationally rate their school as a 9 or 10 on a 0-to-10 scale.) More than eight in 10 Texas counselors (83 percent) believe it should be the mission of their school, but only 28 percent believe it is the reality, resulting in a 55-point gap. This gap matches the national trend, which also has a 55-point gap (85 percent ideal compared to 30 percent reality).

*Counselors in Texas report a larger gap than counselors nationally between the ideal mission of the school counseling profession and its reality.* When asked to reflect on the ideal and reality for the mission of the school counseling profession, Texas counselors expressed a larger gap (43 points) than counselors nationally (38 points). Fewer counselors from Texas (44 percent) say that ensuring students graduate from high school, college and career ready is the mission of counselors in their school in reality, compared to counselors nationally (46 percent).

**Figure 1:** Counselors in Disadvantaged Schools See Greater Gaps in the Mission of Success in College and Careers in their Schools



\*Counselors Rating “To ensure all students complete the 12th grade ready to succeed in college and careers” as a 9 or 10 for their school system’s mission statement in the ideal and in reality.

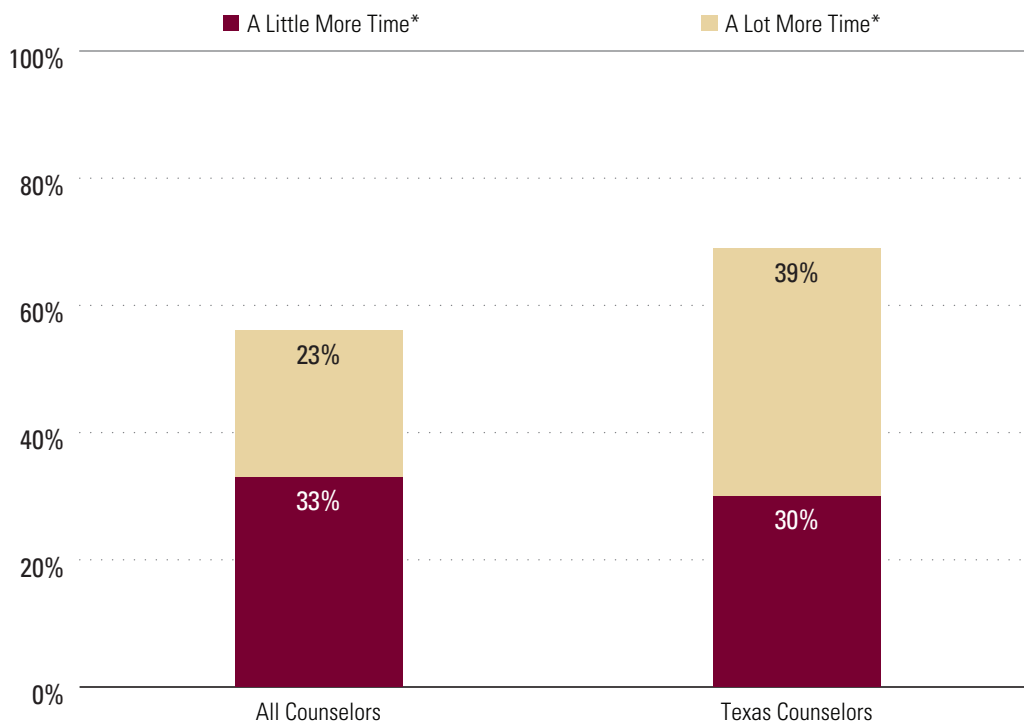
**Key Finding:** School counselors in Texas are less likely to believe their school generally takes advantage of their unique role and abilities. Nevertheless, in many cases, Texas counselors are more willing to put in extra time to improve student success.

***Counselors in Texas believe their schools take less advantage of their abilities.***

Counselors in Texas rate their schools lower when asked if their school takes advantage of their unique role as student advocates (7.1 in Texas compared to 7.6 nationally).

***Counselors in Texas are more likely than counselors nationally to want to spend time on improving student success — and spend their own time to strengthen their ability to support students.*** Figure 2 shows that 69 percent of counselors in Texas say they would spend more time building a college-going culture (including 39 percent saying a lot more time), compared to 56 percent of counselors nationally (including 23 percent saying a lot more time). More than three in four counselors in Texas received additional training in the use of technology (77 percent compared to 75 percent nationally), college and career readiness counseling (78 percent compared to 68 percent nationally), and special education regulations (77 percent compared to 58 percent nationally). Texas has higher training rates in almost every category, including reducing dropouts (43 percent compared to 34 percent nationally), engaging community resources (49 percent compared to 38 percent) and academic planning (67 percent compared to 54 percent).

**Figure 2:** Texas Counselors Want to Spend More Time on Building a College-Going Culture



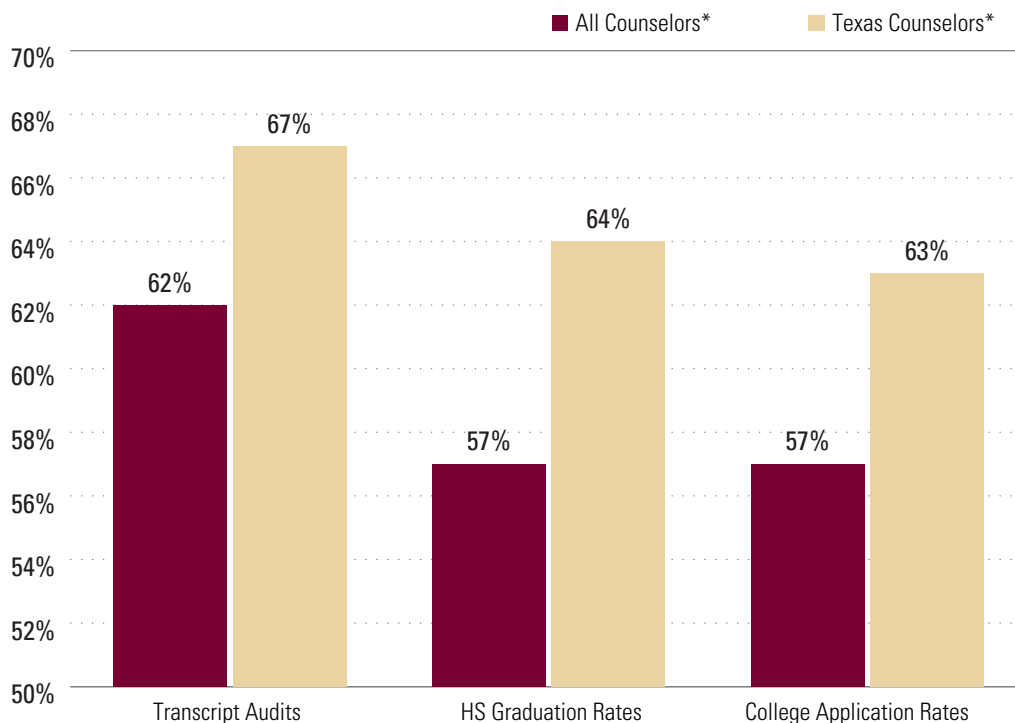
\*Counselors Rating “Building a College-Going Culture” as “A Lot More Time” or “A Little More Time”

**Key Finding:** School counselors in Texas schools see a need for major reforms in the education system. They are also more likely to support certain accountability measures of counselor effectiveness and more highly support key elements of a framework for advancing college and career readiness.

*School counselors in Texas are more likely to support education reform and believe certain accountability measures are fair and appropriate.* In order to improve student success, 55 percent of all counselors and 61 percent of counselors in Texas say major changes of the education system are needed.

*Compared to all counselors, Texas counselors are more likely to see certain measures of accountability as fair or appropriate.* Nationally, the majority of high school counselors endorse certain accountability measures, with more than half agreeing with five of 16 effectiveness measures as being “fair and appropriate” in assessing counselor effectiveness (rating them at least 6 to 10 on a 0-to-10 scale (see Figure 3)). In Texas, the following three measures were endorsed more strongly than nationally: transcript audits of graduation readiness (67 percent compared to 62 percent nationally rated this a 6 or higher on a 10-point scale); high school graduation rates (64 percent compared to 57 percent nationally); and college application rates (63 percent compared to 57 percent nationally).

**Figure 3:** Texas Counselors More Likely to See Some Measures of Accountability as Fair and Appropriate



\*Counselors rating “Transcript Audits of Graduation Rates,” “High School Graduation Rates,” and “College Application Rates” as a 6-10 as a measure that is fair and appropriate to assess the effectiveness of school counselors

***When asked to rate different components of the college and career readiness agenda, counselors in Texas and the nation supported specific measures to ensure student success at similar levels. However, Texas counselors are less likely to think their schools are successful in this regard.*** Counselors were asked to assess the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy’s (NOSCA) “Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling,” a counseling system that focuses on ensuring all students graduate from the 12th grade, college and career ready. Nearly all counselors can see themselves committing to this approach. (Ninety-three percent of all counselors and 91 percent of Texas counselors rated this a 6 or higher on a 10-point scale.) Three-fourths of counselors in Texas agreed the following components were important: “Connect college and career to academic preparation and aspirations” (75 percent compared to 72 percent nationally); “Early understanding of academic and admission process” (74 percent compared to 72 percent nationally); and “College affordability planning” (73 percent compared to 68 percent nationally).

***Counselors in Texas are less likely to rate their school as extremely successful on each of these important components.*** While 30 percent of counselors nationally believe their school is extremely successful at connecting college and career to academic preparations and aspirations, only 24 percent of Texas counselors agreed. Only 23 percent of Texas counselors thought their school was successful at ensuring families had an early understanding of the academic process compared to 30 percent nationally.

## **Next Steps**

The Texas high school and college completion crisis comes at tremendous costs — to individuals, communities and the nation. School counselors are supportive of a college and career readiness agenda, and have indicated a desire to be leaders in supporting their students’ success. School counselors are highly valuable professionals in the Texas education system, but they are also among the least strategically deployed. This is a loss, especially given the fact that school counselors are uniquely positioned, in ways that many educators are not, to have a complete picture of the dreams, hopes, life circumstances, challenges and needs of their students. Counselors have both a holistic view of the students in their schools and the opportunity to provide targeted supports to keep these students on track for success, year after year. Now is the time to support school counselors in their efforts — to strengthen the Texas education system and secure its future.

## Notes

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3. National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). "Table 331: Graduation Rates of First-Time Postsecondary Students Who Started as Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09\\_331.asp?referrer=report](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_331.asp?referrer=report). in *The State of School Counseling in American: Literature and Landscape Review*. Civic Enterprises for the College Board. November 2011. Available at [http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/school\\_counselors\\_literature\\_and\\_landscape\\_review.pdf](http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/school_counselors_literature_and_landscape_review.pdf).
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8. Bridgeland, John and Mary Bruce, *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads* (New York: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research for the College Board, 2011). Available at [http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling\\_at\\_a\\_crossroads.pdf](http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf)









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The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT<sup>®</sup> and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup>. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

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## **The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center**

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