

Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI)
High School to College Mini Convening Summary
February 29, 2008

It was my utmost pleasure to meet with such energized and passionate people. Wonderful things are happening across the AHSI Network to advance post-secondary planning, access, and support. Congratulations on a job well done in San Diego! Thank you so much for participating and providing such rich and valuable information. I look forward to our continued work together.

I. Purpose of Summary

- a. To provide a reflective account of the AHSI High School to College Mini Convening held in San Diego, February 4-5, 2008; and
- b. To propose a desired result and outcome-based objectives that will guide the AHSI high school to college work. Along with this summary and session notes, please find attached your survey responses.

II. Mini Convening

The high school to college mini convening brought together AHSI Intermediary group practitioners to learn about each others' work, to share best practices for supporting students as they prepare and transition from high school to college/career, and to identify opportunities for advancing each others' work individually and collectively. On this day we focused on three primary areas: defining the topic, learning about strategies of the different AHSI Intermediaries, and identifying areas of intersection.

Defining the Topic

- A. In many of our conversations we may use "college" as the preferred term when discussing what our students do after high school; our job is to not only provide opportunities for college access and readiness, but to also look at several other post-secondary options. Our goal is to ensure that all of our students have some sort of plan after high school.
- B. What does it mean to be college ready?
 - a. academically prepared,
 - b. show an awareness of self
 - c. be aware of post-secondary options
 - d. have some sort of financial plan in place.
- C. In terms of what college readiness planning looks like we have some varying approaches.
 - a. Some participants cited examples of post-secondary planning curricula used to assist a student in becoming college ready.
 - b. Others noted that a strong post-secondary planning program begins early in a student's high school career and encompasses exposure to

college/post-secondary culture (i.e., campus visits, college terminology, financial aid, academics, guest speakers, goal setting, etc.)

- D. When we began our conversations around barriers we face in this work it was also clear that we all face some of the same challenges.
- a. Several issues related to students and families
 - b. our organizations' own resources and our ability to disseminate information to students and build relationships with post-secondary opportunities
 - c. Issue of financial aid literacy—that is, ensuring that students have the tacit knowledge necessary to navigate the financial aid process—was a glaring concern for everyone.
 - d. One recommendation was to develop tools and/or strategies to help AHSI groups build funding to create scholarships for AHSI students. In addition, financial resources could be used to support alumni who face a multitude of issues.

Sharing our work

Having an opportunity to learn about the various intermediaries proved to be very valuable. As outlined in the notes, participants provided fairly detailed overviews. Many of the participants provided in-depth details on rich and full-bodied programs that include cross-cutting collaborations with collegiate institutions, local/regional businesses and/or organizations.

Making Connections

After having an opportunity to discuss high school to college and learn about each other's programs the latter part of our day was spent reflecting on the things we do well in high school to college programming and areas of improvement. Through a chalk talk activity participants were able to brainstorm strategies and ideas that may strengthen each intermediaries programming. Participants were able to identify opportunities for cross-cutting work, as well offer strategies on how we might structure our work. One of the most prominent suggestions is that we are able to share best practices and resources via the AHSI website and convenings such as this one.

Desired Result

One way to ensure that we are addressing specific needs of the high school to college group is to map out a clear, concise result framework that will provide direction and clarity on how we will grow our work together. Below is a proposed desired result along with strategies that will enable us to reach our desired result.

The desired result for the high school to college component is to enhance each intermediary's capacity to prepare, matriculate, and support students' post high school plan.

- 1) Develop a common understanding of key competency-based indicators which demonstrate student's college /career readiness.
 - a) Develop a shared definition and understanding of college/career readiness.
 - b) Determine key indicators of college/career readiness

- 2) Identify and develop tools that improve college access and transition support.
 - a) Develop model(s) of MOU's (Memorandum of Understandings)
 - b) Produce a list of post secondary institutions where AHSI student attend.
 - c) Identify which post secondary institutions are in alignment, or interested in developing partnerships, with the AHSI network. Possible strategy could include the development of a booklet indicating these institutions.
 - d) Promote financial aid literacy and scholarship opportunities throughout the network. Develop a databank with funding possibilities for students, specifically, addressing the needs of special populations (i.e. foster care youth, etc.).
 - e) Develop an alumni network that will allow former AHSI students to connect, interact and support each other individually and/or collectively.
 - f) Generate a resource guide detailing college access and transition support *best practices*.

- 3) Develop communication structure that will guide the high school to college work
 - a) Determine meeting dates, times and objectives.
 - b) Collect, synthesize and store high school to college transition information and resources on Media Max.
 - c) Develop link to AHSI web site to include a high school to college introductory page.
 - d) Maintain ongoing communication with intermediaries and high school to college practitioners via the AHSI newsletter.

- 4) Build interest and opportunities to address, share and improve strategies around college/career preparation and transition support for students.
 - a) Increase AHSI's high school to college initiatives' visibility by providing opportunities for practitioners to present at regional and national conferences.
 - b) Advance intermediary capacity to develop shared partnerships with professional organizations (i.e. National College Access Network (NCAN)).

Next Steps

I would like to invite you to participate in a conference call to discuss the summary and review the proposed framework and strategies. During this call we can also determine best methods for future communication. I propose that we make contact mid March. The proposed dates are **March 11 or 13**, either **10:00-11:30 a.m. EST** or **2:00-3:30 p.m. EST**. Please contact me via email (sbyers@bigpicture.org) by Friday, March 8, so we may confirm this call identifying which day and time frame would work best for you.