

General Best Practices

Creating a college-going culture in your school and community will take time. In addition to the great things you're already doing, we've gathered some resources, activities and ideas that will assist you in engaging students, parents and administrators in this important process. Here's a list of overall best practices for reaching families with college planning information.

Engaging with students

- » Talk positively about higher education. Instead of saying "if you go to college," have conversations about "when you go to college." Constantly hearing about going to college helps reinforce that college is a possibility for your students.
- » Listen to the students. Take time to learn their interests, likes, dislikes and fears.
- » Use examples that are relevant to them. Students need real-life examples of people they can relate to. Try to find previous graduates of your school or someone from your area to come in and talk about their college experience. Keep in mind that college students, especially those in fraternities and sororities, are usually looking for ways to give back to the community.
- » Dedicate a common space outside of your office as the "college corner." Hang up scholarship postings, ACT/SAT information and event flyers, and display any resources you have about specific colleges, universities or career technology centers.
- » Construct an "Ask a Question About College" drop box. Instruct students to drop any college-related questions in the box. Answer them weekly or monthly by posting them to your website or newsletter, or read them over the speaker system during morning announcements.
- » Develop a college planning newsletter or section on your website. Include important information about grants, scholarships, and ACT/SAT tests. Adding links on your website to UCanGo2.org, OKcollegestart.org and StartWithFAFSA.org will put this type of information at their fingertips.
- » Schedule meetings with your students. If possible, aim to see everyone in the junior and senior class at least once a semester.
- » Use the *College Fair Best Practices* and *College Fair Worksheets* available at UCanGo2.org/Publications.html to encourage students to attend - and make the most of - college fairs. They can find a listing of all Oklahoma college fairs at GoToCollegeFairs.com.



- » Talk to students about campus tours. Encourage them to do first-hand research by touring their top picks.
- » Show students how to use the *High School Checklists* to stay on track. These can be found at UCanGo2.org/Publications.html.
- » Host a college event for juniors, seniors and their parents. If you'd like instructions on how to use our presentation tools and resources for your event, contact a UCanGo2 representative to speak with them about your plans.
- » Register your school to participate in College Application Week each year. See OKcollegeappweek.org for more details.
- » Partner with the local community. Ask for help mentoring kids or assisting in college planning events. Invite the local business community into the classroom to talk about careers.
- » Encourage students to visit OKcollegestart.org to compare campuses, explore degree programs and career interests, compare salaries and watch videos depicting a day-in-the-life of someone working in their career of choice.
- » Let students work with other students. Connect those who are interested in the same college or similar majors. Let them help each other through the preparation process.
- » Include financial literacy in your information for students. Weave basic money management—saving, budgeting, credit management—into your planning and paying for college message. Call Oklahoma Money Matters, OCAP's financial literacy program, at 800.970.OKMM or visit OklahomaMoneyMatters.org to learn more.
- » Don't forget about home-school students. Work with local organizations to provide these students with the information they need.

Working with administrators and teachers

- » Work with teachers and other administrators to create a college-going culture. Provide them with resources they need to talk to students about higher education, and work with them regularly to brainstorm new ways to reach students and parents in your community.
- » Post college preparatory and event flyers and posters in the classrooms.
- » Encourage teachers to use videos about financial aid, careers and college prep in the classroom. Visit StartWithFAFSA.org to find videos, available in English and Spanish, about the FAFSA completion process.
- » Ask teachers to use college-related examples and scenarios in their lesson plans. For example, an English teacher may consider assigning an essay about choosing a career or college.



- » Join the Oklahoma College Access Network (OK-CAN), a collaborative initiative designed to provide a forum for education and business professionals to exchange ideas and resources to promote college access. Visit OKcollegeaccess.org for more information.
- » Work with teachers to encourage students to consider areas in which they're naturally gifted. Ask the teacher to start conversations about careers/majors that may be a good fit for their natural abilities.
- » Print tools from UCanGo2.org/Publications.html, or develop your own flyer or worksheet about college planning, to send home with parents who attend Parent/Teacher Night. Ask teachers to direct parents to your office to talk about their child's future.
- » Consider asking your administration to allow students a few excused absences each year for them to attend college fairs and tour colleges.
- » Let your colleagues know that you're available to speak to classes or school groups about higher education. Encourage them to use the college planning games available at UCanGo2.org/Publications.html.

Working with parents

- » Host a FAFSA event for parents in your community. This program will answer questions parents have about the federal financial aid process and demystify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Visit the Educator section at UCanGo2.org for tools to help you promote FAFSA completion. Encourage families to visit StartWithFAFSA.org to find answers to their questions about the FAFSA. If you'd like to request a UCanGo2 representative to provide FAFSA assistance or speak at your FAFSA event, call 405.234.4239 or 866.443.7420.
- » If you're planning a college informational session for parents to attend, try holding the event in the evening after working hours. Advertise the event with flyers, ads and notes sent home from school. Don't forget to include information on your school website or social media sites.