

GoAlliance Counselor Course: Module Three

Syllabus

Course Description

This module includes four sessions, which address financial literacy, financial aid, completing the FAFSA and preparing college applications. Parents and students need assistance in navigating the complexities of financial aid and the college admission process. The school counselor in collaboration with principals and teachers can guide parents and students through these processes to increase student access to college and postsecondary training. This module focuses on the counselor's role in counseling parents and students in accessing financial aid and successful preparation and application for college admission.

The term "college" is used throughout this course to refer to any postsecondary education or training in accordance with the NCAN (<http://www.collegeaccess.org/NCAN/>) definition: "College" ... refers to a Pell-eligible educational institution beyond the high school level, including those that offer apprenticeship programs, certificates, and associate and/or bachelor degree programs.

Prerequisites

This is an introductory module for school counselors. Participants are expected to have regular access to computers, and proficiency with email and current web-browsers.

Goals

During this module, counselors will learn to:

- Prepare students from high-need areas and from families without prior college access for college application and success
- Help parents and students overcome barriers to college access and success
- Communicate the intricacies of financial aid, including terminology, to parents and students
- Assist students and their parents in completing the FAFSA
- Help parents and students understand the total cost of college as well as the variety of financial aid available to them
- Collaborate with other teachers to prepare students for college admission tests
- Help eligible students apply for waivers for admission tests and college application fees

Assessment and Course Requirements

This module is divided into four one-week sessions, each of which includes readings, an activity, and an online discussion among participants. The time for completing each session is estimated to be four to six hours.

Module Products

As an outcome for this module, participants will complete and submit the Module Three Portfolio, which will include products assigned during the sessions and a final Action Plan with both short-term and long-term goals.

Requirements

Participants are required to complete all assigned products in this module and to participate in each of the discussions. The discussion rubric describes the expectations for posts in the discussion forums.

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Assessment

Participants will complete pre/post surveys to determine growth in knowledge and skills based on the goals of this module. Additionally, participants will complete a self-assessment comprised of a two to three-question quiz at the end of each session based on the content of the session. Discussion participation and completion of products will be assessed using the rubrics provided for these purposes.

Session Overviews

Session One: Guiding Parents and Students through the Complexities of Financial Aid

This session addresses the complexity of financial aid, strategies to help parents and students understand the total cost of college or postsecondary education, and best sources of financial assistance for their particular situations. Participants will compare and contrast grants, loans and scholarships as methods to pay for postsecondary education or training with the goal of assisting parents and students with locating and applying for the most appropriate source of postsecondary funding and assistance. Participants will also begin working on the Module 3 Action Plan.

This session will enable counselors to:

1. understand where to find the key resources and contacts for counselors related to financial aid
2. increase parental engagement and access to information related to financial aid
3. learn strategies to assist parents and students in understanding financial aid terminology, as well as the process and timeline for applying
4. be able to communicate with parents and students the differences among grants, loans and scholarships
5. guide parents toward an understanding of the total cost of college/postsecondary education, including fees, textbooks, room and board, required tools (for example, a scientific calculator)
6. collaborate with colleges and universities to participate in information sessions with parents and students

Session Two: Assisting with the Financial Aid Process

In this session participants will learn the process parents and students need to follow to complete the FAFSA, what information they will need, and what financial aid terminology means. Participants will review the types of aid students can receive based on the FAFSA. They will work on planning a financial aid workshop and explore how to help students and families understand and compare financial aid awards.

This session will enable counselors to:

1. become knowledgeable about the FAFSA
2. be able to convey information and provide assistance to parents and students about the FAFSA application process
3. understand the FAFSA timeline and be able to communicate with students and their families about needed documentation for FAFSA completion
4. understand postsecondary financing options and the pros and cons of each
5. help students and families understand and compare financial aid award letters
6. help students and families understand the different types of student loans available
7. plan a financial aid workshop for parents and students

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Session Three: Preparing for College Admission Tests

In this session, participants will plan ways to help students prepare for college admissions tests. This session also addresses fees and waivers, test-taking strategies and practice tests. Participants will watch videos of practicing counselors working with students, and work through a scenario in the School Counselor Simulation. Additionally, in the discussion, participants will share ideas about helping students learn effective test-taking strategies for college admission tests. Finally, participants will continue to work on the Module Three Action Plan.

This session will enable counselors to:

1. provide assistance to students in preparing for admission tests, including the use of web sites for test preparation
2. ensure that students have information about and assistance in registering for appropriate tests based on both career goals and college choice
3. provide information to students and parents about fees and fee waivers

Session Four: College Admissions: Application Process

This session focuses on ways counselors can assist students in completing the application process for the postsecondary school they've selected. Key areas included in this session are the college essay; requesting letters of recommendation and providing appropriate information to those preparing a letter; and strategies to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities and community service. Finally, participants will complete and submit their Module Three Portfolio.

This session will enable counselors to:

1. assist students and parents throughout the application process
2. help students understand different admissions options including early action and early decision
3. write effective recommendation letters for students
4. support students in writing effective essays
5. gain collaboration from teachers in assisting students with application packets
6. encourage and plan for visits from college admissions officers
7. learn about college admission fee waivers for eligible students