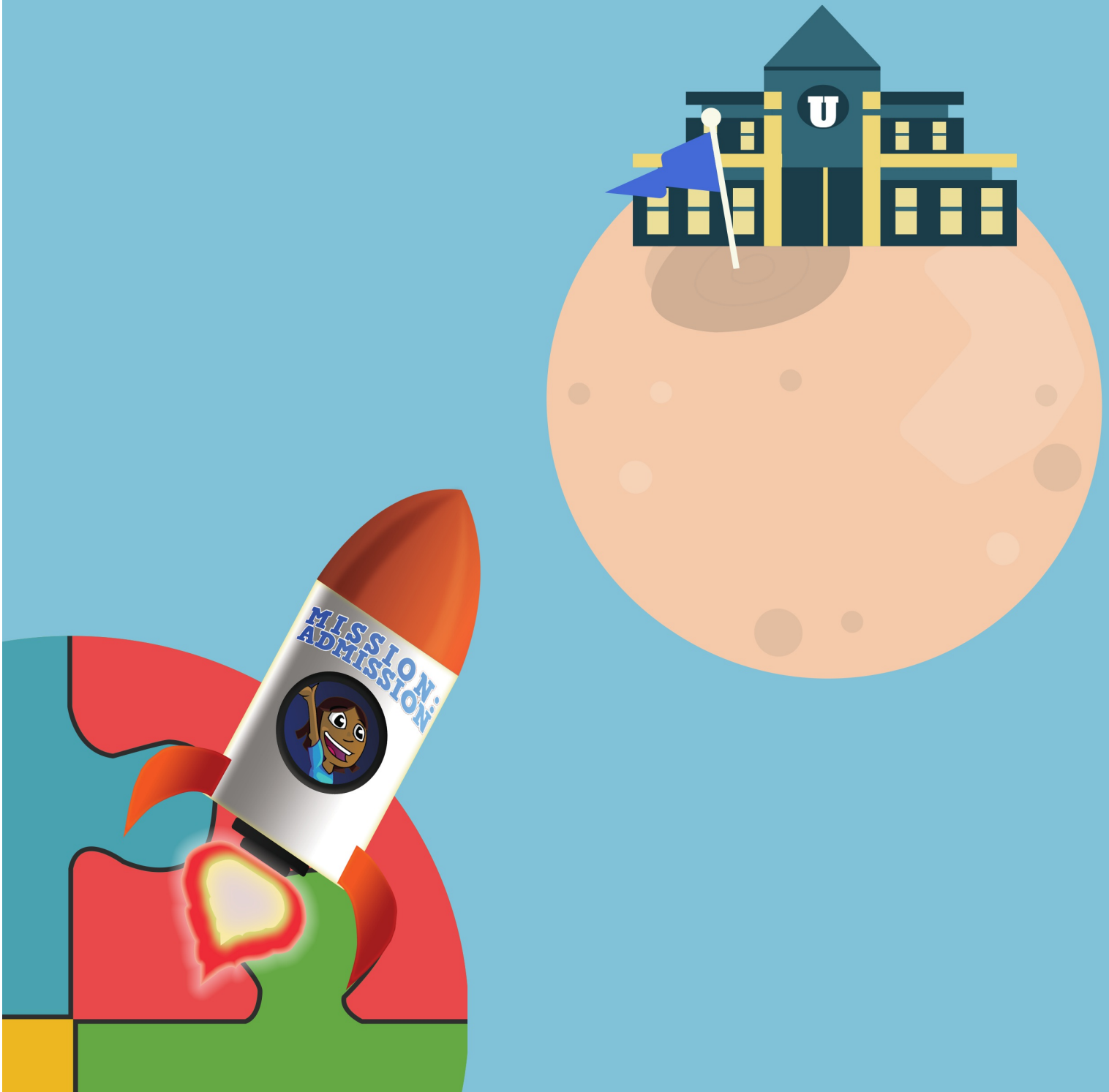


ZOOMING ALONG: NEXT STEPS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Pullias Center for Higher Education

MARCH 2017



Greetings from the University of Southern California! You are receiving this report because you are participating in the Pullias Center for Higher Education's grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education's First in the World (FITW) program. As you know, the grant explores the role of games and digital media on college-going outcomes for California high school students.

Beyond implementing the Mission: Admission intervention on select high school campuses, the USC research team is collecting robust mixed methods data about the college culture and digital infrastructure of participating schools. This study is unique in its focus and scope and has the attention of the U.S. Department of Education.

This document is a follow-up report to "From Pre to Post: Putting the Data Pieces Together" (October 2016) where we presented interim findings from data collection with students and teachers at a select group of treatment schools in the randomized controlled trial study (a rigorous research design preferred by the U.S. Department of Education).

To date, students in the graduating class of 2017 at treatment schools had the opportunity to participate in two rounds of the Mission: Admission intervention and three points of survey data collection during their junior and senior years. This report reflects our data collection with this group of students and teachers thus far.

The data portrayed on page two of this document represent a snapshot of students' engagement with the intervention (over 7,500 students in over 30 California schools).

During the 2017-2018 academic school year, both treatment and control schools will have an opportunity to participate in the intervention.

On page three, we share the class of 2017's college aspirations, highlighting how we are planning to connect students' aspirations with data on actual college-going behaviors.

On pages four and five, we highlight students' attitudes towards college (as first mentioned in the "Pre to Post" report), as well as provide areas of college knowledge the class of 2017 (aggregate participant sample) excels at and has room to improve on. It is our hope these findings help you identify areas to target in future years.

Applying for college is one of the most crucial steps in the college-going process. One page six, we share data about students' college application processes, specifically where they are seeking guidance and information. In our findings, teachers emerged as a prominent resource for students. We also share the teachers' view of their role (aggregated from surveys taken by over 500 teachers in 58 participating schools). Finally, successful strategies for college preparation, as reported by teachers, are shared on page seven.

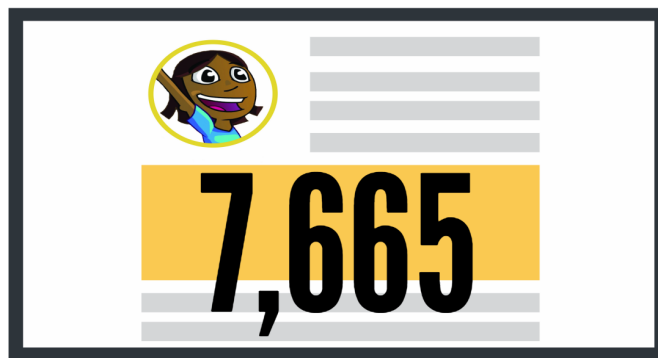
Whether your school was a treatment school or not, your participation in the research component of the study is invaluable to our efforts to learn about the implementation of digital initiatives at a school-wide level. The next step is to gain a more complete understanding of the class of 2017's college-going behaviors. Please see page eight for details.



Student Engagement with the Mission: Admission Challenge and GetSchooled.com



Accounts created



Activities completed

150,538

This includes reading an article, watching a video, playing a game, checking into a location, or taking a quiz, just to name a few.



Points are earned for completing activities on GetSchooled.com. A higher number of points indicate higher interaction with the website, and points can be redeemed at the Get Schooled Reward Store, which include items such as T-shirts, In-n-Out gift cards, electronics, and more.



Badges earned

5,667

(including 1,254 Mission: Admission badges)

Badges are groups of 10-12 activities organized around a single subject or theme. Completing a badge earns extra points. The two Mission: Admission badges focused on content related to the Mission: Admission game, college applications, and financial aid.

*Across all participating schools and both challenges

Student College Aspirations

Students in treatment schools were given the opportunity to complete a survey at three points in time: before and after the first round of the intervention in the spring of the 2015-2016 school year, and after the second round of the intervention in the fall of the 2016-2017 school year. The data presented below represents seniors' college aspirations as reported in the fall of 2016 (aggregate of all treatment schools).

Does the class of 2017 want to go to college?

Choice*	Percentage
4 Year	67%
2 Year	20%
Maybe	9%
No, working	1%
No, military	1%
No, other	2%

*Students could only choose one.

For class of 2017 seniors that indicated a 4-year institution, where do they want to go?

Choice*	Percentage**
UC	60%
CSU	65%
Private	25%
Out-of-State	17%

*Students could check multiple responses.
**Out of 495 responses each.

On-going data collection with the support of your district, school, the California Student Aid Commission, and National Student Clearinghouse will be able to tease out if students' actual college behaviors match their aspirations. We are excited to share the following information as it becomes available (please see page 8 for more details).



Student's college aspirations (where they applied)



College qualifications (where they were accepted)



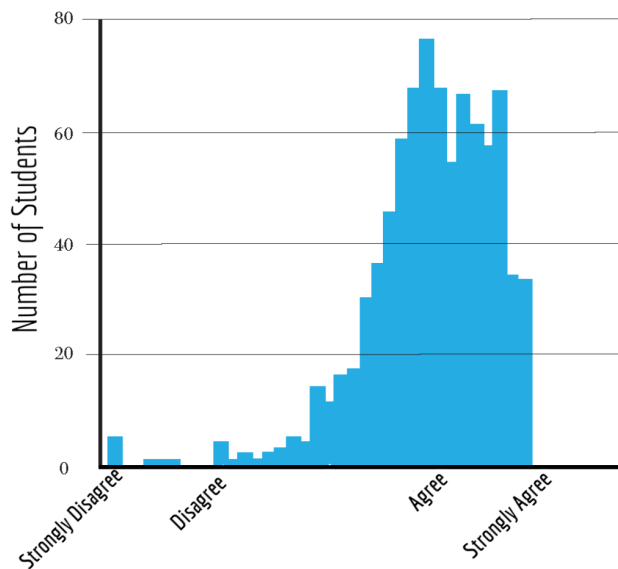
College goals (where they plan to enroll)



Checking In: How Do Students Feel About College?

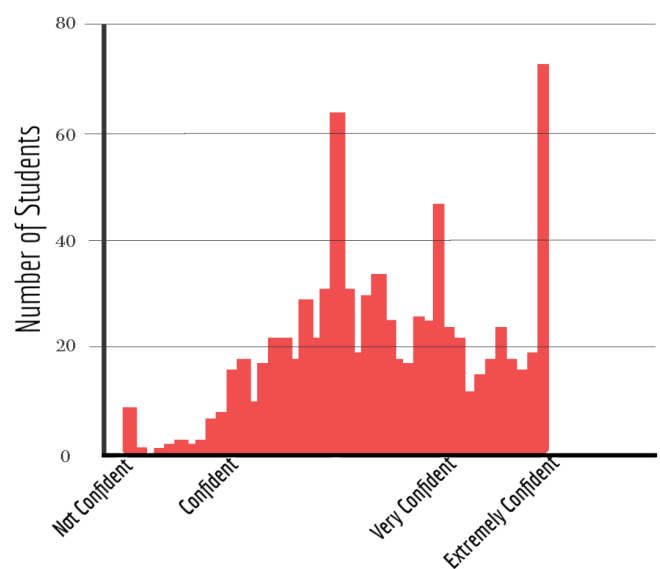
The following graphs represent the data aggregated over all participating treatment schools for students who completed the survey in the fall of 2016. We revisited a series of questions originally posed to the class of 2017 before and after the first round of the intervention (in the spring of the 2015-2016 school year), and then again after the second round of the intervention (in the fall of the 2016-2017 school year).

Interest in College



We included a measure of students' interest in going to college based on 18 questions asking about college preparation, engagement, and information-seeking behaviors. Students indicated how interested they were in a host of college-related behaviors (e.g., actively seeking out new information, preferring college-related activities over other activities) on a 5-point scale, with 1 indicating low interest and 5 indicating high interest. **As you can see, most students were very interested in going to college.**

Self-Efficacy about College



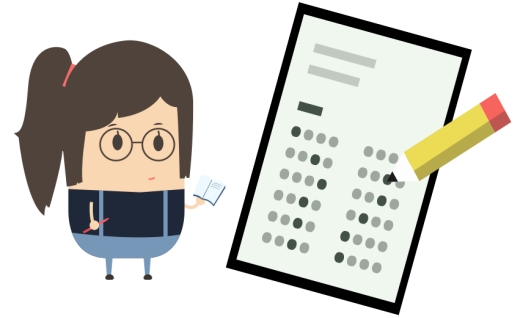
We also asked about students' college-going self-efficacy. Students indicated how confident they felt in successfully completing college-related behaviors, such as applying to college, completing the FAFSA, and requesting letters of recommendation, on a 5-point scale: 1 indicating low confidence and 5 indicating high confidence. **As you can see, there is a lot of variability in how confident students feel about successfully completing college-related behaviors.**

Examining our findings for interest and self-efficacy, we can see that while the students are very interested in going to college, many are unsure of whether they can complete the activities associated with the college-going process. Again, current and future data collection with multiple academic stakeholders will be able to shed light on the relationship between the class of 2017's interest and self-efficacy and actual college behaviors (please see page 8 for more details).

What Are Juniors and Seniors Most and Least Knowledgeable About?

As part of the pre- and post-intervention surveys students took, we included an assessment of students' college knowledge. The questions were created to determine what students know about topics like the college application process, selecting a college that is a good fit, and financial aid and affording college.

Overall, students are very knowledgeable about college entrance exams. Students know the **most commonly required college entrance exams** and understand what to do if they **cannot afford to pay the entrance exam registration fee**. This suggests that schools in our sample emphasize the requirements and processes for taking college entrance exams, and that students are knowledgeable about this portion of the application process.



Students also did very well on a question about **criteria for selecting a college**, identifying correctly that colleges with a **strong academic program in their area(s) of interest** and one that is a **good fit in terms of size, cost, and distance from home** are better criteria to judge a college by than choosing the college that is most expensive and prestigious, or that has the best party scene.

Students tended to struggle more with questions about college affordability and financial aid. Many students said they believe that **cost is always the most important consideration** when choosing which college to attend. Many believe that **private colleges are always more selective, or harder to get into, than public colleges**. Finally, one common misconception that we believe is particularly important is that many students indicated that they believe that **loans they take out through FAFSA do not need to be repaid if they graduate from college**.

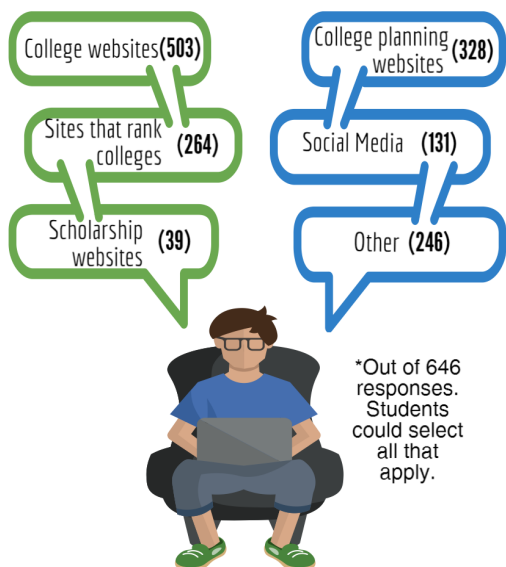


Based on these findings, we recommend that counselors and teachers make efforts to **talk to students** about:

- 1 the differences between different types of institutions,
- 2 the many variables that factor into choosing a college that is a good fit,
- 3 perhaps most importantly, about the different types of financial aid.

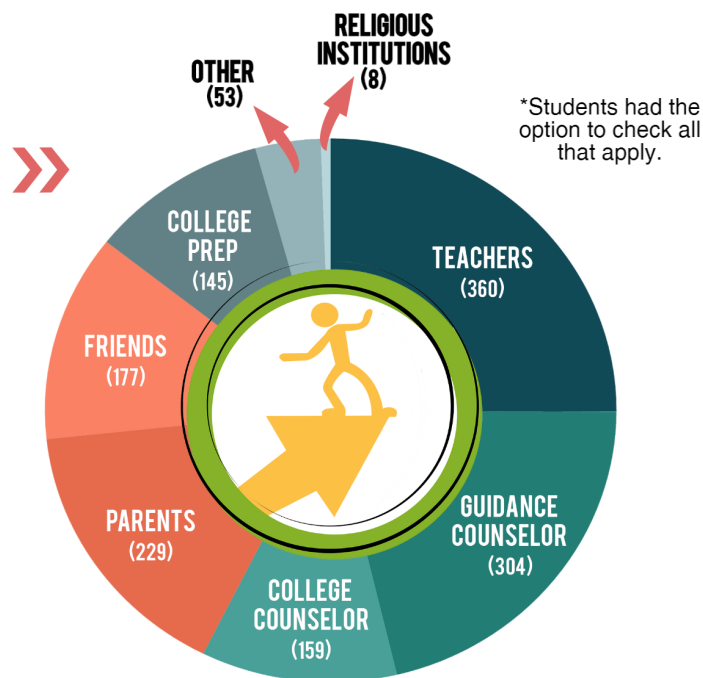
It is very important that students understand the difference between grants and scholarships versus loans when they make decisions about where they will go to college.

Students and Teacher Perspectives on Help with the College Application Process



« In the fall of 2016 when college applications were open for submission, we asked students about their **online college information-seeking and application behaviors**. Specific college websites, college-planning websites, and sites that rank colleges were the most popular digital resources for researching and learning about college.

When asked about **who helped students' with their college applications, students overwhelmingly report relying on campus personnel for college guidance**. Teachers emerged as the most cited point of contact students turn to during the college application process, followed by counselors second, and parents/guardians third. Interestingly, college preparation programs didn't make it into the top five sources that provided help to the students. **This finding highlights the critical potential of teachers to support student college aspirations and underscores the need to equip teachers with college guidance tools and training.**



How do teachers feel about their role as a resource for the college guidance process? We asked over 500 teachers from 58 schools to reflect on their perceptions of responsibility and comfort in the college guidance process. Teachers reported feeling a strong sense of responsibility and comfort in providing college guidance to their students.

TEACHER PERSPECTIVE	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
"It is my responsibility to provide college guidance to my students."	7	16	29	160	234	191
"I feel comfortable providing college guidance to my students."	3	9	25	162	232	203

Teachers' Successful Strategies for Preparing Students for College

Five hundred teachers from 58 schools in California shared their strategies for college preparation. After analyzing hundreds of responses, the following top three strategies emerged. Quotes from teachers add nuance to the strategies.

1 Boost students' college-going identity by increasing student exposure to the actual college experience and making connections and comparisons for life beyond high school.

"Have speakers come into classes to demystify the college experience. Specifically, provide students with people who are similar to them (ethnically, linguistically, etc.)."

"Plan backwards. Show them the benefits of why the cost and effort of going to college are worth it. For example: show them the annual salary or lifelong earnings of a college graduate versus that of a high school graduate and what they typically earn. It is critical that they understand that the sacrifice now for benefits of tomorrow are well worth it."

2 Cultivate a college-positive classroom atmosphere by sharing personal experiences and talking about college despite the subject of the class.

"Students are often curious about their teachers' private lives and how they arrived at this school. I have created a large timeline on my classroom wall that details my educational process from high school through college and ultimately my employment at ----- High School. It's quite detailed with several photographs, copies of my degrees and certificates. While we do not discuss it in detail during class time, there have been several occasions when students have asked questions or expressed interest in it. When they ask questions, I briefly answer before re-directing them to classwork. The current A-G requirements are posted along with several college pennants. There is no way to measure the relative success or failure of these strategies, but I find them helpful in terms of sparking conversations and motivating students to at least consider other options for their future."

"I talk about my own experiences, and I invite current students in to talk about their experiences. Students are far more interested in what college is like in terms of culture and classroom policies than they are about academic content that prepares them for college."

3 Integrate college preparation into the curriculum by creating and maintaining a rigorous academic environment in the classroom.

"I feel it's important to prepare students with true-to-life lessons like the ones which I received in my college level classes. Increasing the level of difficulty and holding the student to a higher level of expectations, even if this doesn't make me the most popular teacher, is also important. The students who go on to college and reflect back will see that my assignments weren't all that bad and that the intentions were there for preparation. That is the best gift I can give them along with the content."

"Assigning work that is due in both short lengths of time as well as longer stretches; using classroom techniques that require them to monitor their own progress and set goals and metacognate about their struggles and successes."

"Maintaining high levels of standards and rigor in my courses and in my grading - they need to recognize that grades should reflect their knowledge and skills, rather than just showing up and completing the work as though they were checking off boxes. I also spend a good deal of time reviewing student transcripts and having one-on-one discussions with them about course selection in high school that can better prepare them for college."

Other strategies teachers indicated were specific to how they interact with students, including being honest, consistent, modeling behaviors related to work ethic, inquiry and rigor, and providing positive reinforcement. When possible, teachers reached out to parents and talked specifically about financial aid with their students. Finally, teachers cite referring students to college preparation-specific resources, mostly to on-campus counselors and AVID, and less so to online resources and other support groups both on- and off-campus.

Next Step: Completing the Picture of the Class of 2017

As per federal guidelines, we are working with an outside evaluator, Augenblick, Palaich & Associates (APA), to measure the impact of the intervention on tangible educational outcomes. To date, our research has followed the graduating class of 2017 starting from their junior year. As they move beyond high school, APA will be tracking FAFSA/Dream Act and college enrollment data.

Here's a brief overview of the data being shared to provide context for the intervention's impact.

Data outcomes	College Eligibility	College Application Data	FAFSA/Dream Act Completion	College Enrollment Data
Data sources	Your School District	Your School	California Student Aid Commission	National Student Clearinghouse



We are asking school sites to fill in an important gap in data, specifically for students':

- college aspirations (where they applied),
- college qualifications (where they were accepted),
- and college goals (where they plan to enroll).

As our view of students' college trajectories becomes more complete, we will share nuanced results about the application process with schools, districts, and state legislators.

USC is working in collaboration with UC Merced's Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP) and the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) on data analysis. CEP has created a data spreadsheet template and an online path specifically for the data upload to secure servers on the UC Merced campus. CEP has a strong track record of working with schools and school districts to collect and analyze data as they pertain to college pathways and is committed to producing data reports that are tailored to your schools. School participation is also of value to the larger field of education - in particular to increasing understandings of how technology tools might impact student learning and college access outcomes.

The deadline for the college application data upload is Friday, May 5, 2017.

As always, our team will follow up via direct email, phone call, and/or in-person visits to facilitate this process.

With gratitude for your support,

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