**TOOLKIT FOR COLLEGE ACCESS ADVISORS**

Facilitation Guide

College Scorecard Website Training

**Facilitation Guide**

Professional Development Toolkit for College Access Advisors

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**Facilitation Preparation**

**Introduction:**

College access advisors and school counselors play an integral role in supporting students as they plan for post-secondary success, including searching for and selecting colleges and universities to attend. This facilitation guide, along with its accompanying materials, is intended to assist educational leaders—such as school and district-level staff, college access coordinators, county and state office leaders, and consultants—who are responsible for training college access advisors and school counselors in the use of College Scorecard. Through interactive activities, college access advisors and school counselors will explore the College Scorecard and understand its benefits and limitations.

**Facilitation Preparation Tips:**

* Facilitators will need to be familiar with navigating the College Scorecard website and understand the key data metrics, how to search, filter, and compare both schools and fields of study before leading this session with participants.
* Facilitators need to be prepared to pull up the College Scorecard website and project to participants as participants follow along. Practice navigating College Scorecard and projecting to display the screen.
* Take note of segments of the training where participants will practice using the College Scorecard website on their own computers. Be prepared to demonstrate how to access the website. The website is available at collegescorecard.ed.gov.
* Facilitators should anticipate questions and misconceptions that students might have and prepare answers in advance.

**Module 1: Introduction to College Scorecard**

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the module, college access advisors will be able to:

**Explain how students make postsecondary enrollment decisions**

* Understand how students make postsecondary enrollment decisions based on their individual preferences and how the College Scorecard can help students to identify institutions and programs that may be a good fit for their unique needs and goals.

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| **Time**  | **Activity** | **Slides** | **Facilitation Notes**  | **Materials Needed** |
| 5 minutes | Welcome and Overview | 1-4 | * Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
* Share session norms.
* Share learning objectives.
* Share the roadmap of modules for College Access Advisors
 |  |
| 5 minutes  | Activator | 5 | **Ask** participants, “What are the main obstacles students encounter when seeking information to make informed college decisions? In your opinion, what are the top three obstacles?" **Summarize** the key themes. Use these themes to inform the discussions. |  |
| 5 minutes | The Role of Advisors and School Counselors  | 6-7 | **Say,** Higher education may be the single most important investment students can make in their futures to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to compete in an increasingly global marketplace. Experts say that by 2027, 70% of all jobs will require education or training beyond high school ([U.S. Department of Education](https://www.ed.gov/raisethebar/postsecondary-pathways)). **Say,** according to the Equity Indicators Historical Trend Report, despite gradual increases in U.S. Higher Education participation and attainment over the last half century, there are persistent inequities throughout the U.S. higher education system.” (Cahalan, M. et al., 2022) **Share** the stats on slide 7.**Say,** College access advisors and school counselors play an integral role in supporting students as they plan for post-secondary success, including searching for and selecting colleges and universities to attend. It is important for college access advisors and school counselors to be equipped to meet this responsibility. |  |
| 10 minutes | About the College Scorecard | 8-10 | **Share** the following information to introduce College Scorecard. The U.S. Department of Education’s College Scorecard is a free online tool that helps students, families, educators, school counselors, and other college access professionals make data-informed decisions when choosing a college or university to attend. College Scorecard brings together information on college costs, graduation rates, student loan debt, post-college earnings, and more. The goals of this effort are to:* Provide students and families with information to make more informed choices.
* Provide policymakers and stakeholders with information to enable more informed decision-making.
* Make data widely available so others can multiply these efforts.

We will only focus on the first goal to *provide students and families with information to make informed choices* for this training. College Scorecard is user centered. It houses unprecedented amounts of data released on institutional outcomes, including former students’ earnings, the debt loads of college graduates, and repayment rates of borrowers. The College Scorecard also has an open API, which allows developers to easily access the data. This means that many other websites (for example Google) use or display College Scorecard data. |  |
| 30 minutes | Benefits of Using College Scorecard | 11-15 | **Share** that there are several benefits of using the College Scorecard. College Scorecard can be used to:* Inform decision-making
* Compare financial information
* Compare schools easily
* Customize your search
* Locate accurate data from a reliable federal source (this is one of biggest strengths of the College Scorecard)

**Explain** the accuracy, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the data provided in the College Scorecard. College Scorecard provides data to help students and families compare college costs and outcomes as they weigh the tradeoffs of different colleges, accounting for their own needs andeducational goals. College Scorecard developers have taken additional steps to ensure data are stable and accurate from year to year and representative of a certain number of students.College Scorecard provides high-quality data at the institution-level and data by field of study. Institution-level data contains aggregate data for each institution going back to 1996-97. The field of study-level data includes information on cumulative debt at graduation and earnings one year after graduation. The glossary tab clearly defines key terms and data sources found within the College Scorecard. The information is highly relevant for students making decisions about higher education. It includes critical factors such as average cost, financial aid options, field of study offerings, and potential earnings after graduation. This relevancy is especially important in today's higher education landscape, where return on investment is a significant concern for many students.**Share** the Benefits of Using College Scorecard handout and ask participants to review and discuss the importance of each category of data, the research justification, and specific data sources in each category. Allow 5 minutes for independent review before inviting participants to discuss with a small group.Discussion Questions: * What strikes you as a priority category for students? For parents/families?
* What challenges or misconceptions about these data categories do you anticipate? How would you respond?

**Direct** participants to the College Scorecard Glossary for additional information about each data point. **Demonstrate** how to access the Glossary by clicking on *About the Data*, then *Glossary.***Debrief** the benefits review and **Ask** participants, * Why is it important to consider many data sources when making an informed decision?
* What is the advantage or disadvantage of using many data sources for those searching for a college or school to attend?
* How would you describe the unique strengths of the College Scorecard as a college search tool?”

**Summarize** the key themes. Use themes to inform the discussion. **Key messages to reiterate in the discussion:** The benefit of using College Scorecard include, * Inform decision-making
* Compare financial information
* Compare schools easily
* Customize your search
* Locate accurate data from a reliable federal source (this is one of biggest strengths of the Scorecard)
 | Handout 1: Benefits of Using College Scorecard Data(Scorecard\_Benefits\_Handout\_1\_Revised) |
| 10 minutes | Reflection and Questions | 16-18 | Ask participants to summarize the module. Think about and share their response to the following reflection prompt: In your own words, how would you describe the benefit of using College Scorecard to students? To parents/families? Summarize themes to inform the reflection discussion. Invite participants to ask lingering questions and provide support. |  |

**Module 2: Navigating and Utilizing College Scorecard**

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the module, college access advisors will be able to:

**Analyze the College Scorecard Data**

* Identify key data metrics and understand the parameters of College Scorecard data while articulating its unique role for students within the postsecondary education admission and selection process.
* Describe the many data sources that contribute to the College Scorecard to provide accurate and comprehensive guidance during the postsecondary education admission process.
* Explain the foundational data methodology behind the three core statistics on the school profile page: graduation rate, median earnings, and annual average cost.

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| **Time**  | **Activity** | **Slides** | **Facilitation Notes** | **Materials Needed** |
| 5 minutes  | Welcome and Overview  | 1-4 | * Share learning objectives and session norms
* Share the roadmap of modules for College Access Advisors
 |  |
| 5 minutes  | Activator | 5 | **Ask** participants, “How might using data to make college admission decisions support student persistence and/or degree attainment?**Summarize** the key themes. Use these themes to inform the discussions. |  |
| 15 minutes | Navigating College Scorecard | 6-8 | **NOTE: The instructor will pull up the College Scorecard website and project to participants. Participants will follow along.** * **Orient** participants to the landing page and the different search options using the “show me options” feature. **Review** the various links and hover over words for key definitions.
* **Review** key terminology on this page and share details, including:
	+ School/College – A 2- or 4-year degree-awarding educational institution.
		- In addition, to 4-year institutions, College scorecard also provides data for technical and community colleges that receive Title IV federal financial aid funding.
		- Not all institutions are included. The College Scorecard consumer site is limited to US-based, undergraduate institutions who report to IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System). Additionally, the institution must have a designated OPE ID, a number assigned by the U.S. Department of Education to identify schools that have Program Participation Agreements (PPA), indicating that its students are eligible to participate in federal student financial assistance programs under Title IV regulations.
	+ Field of Study (also known as a “major”) – Categories of programs defined by both a Classification of Instruction Program (CIP) codes and a credential level. Since these are categories of offerings, they may not map directly to programs advertised on institutional course catalogs.

**Explain** the parameters of the College Scorecard data and articulate its unique role for students within the postsecondary education admission process. Include the following:* + The data represents students with different experiences– people come into college at different stages (Examples: different ages, someone could come in with college credits)
	+ The data represented on the Scorecard is only for federal financial aid recipients. If a student got a full scholarship or if they paid for school out of pocket (or with private loans) they would not be represented in this data. This may make it less applicable to some students, but also uniquely beneficial for students who will qualify for financial aid (more representative of their potential experience).
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| 30 minutes | Understanding Key College Scorecard Features | 9-13 | **Ask** participants, “What factors do students believe are important when they are choosing a school or college to attend after high school? What data are students most interested in exploring when searching for a school or college?” **Summarize** the key themes. Use themes to inform the discussion. Key questions and messages to reiterate in the discussion: * Why would a student need to consider the sticker price versus the net price when searching for schools by cost of attendance?
* Why is it important for students to compare an institution’s graduation rate as compared to 4-year schools and other schools?
* How might an institution’s academic quality and reputation impact a student’s decision to apply and attend the institution?
* Why is it important for students to consider statistics about an institution’s job placement after graduation?

**D**iscuss factors that most students rate as important when they are choosing a school or college to attend after high school. **Say, “**according to a report from the U.S. Department of Education, the following factors that most students rate as important when they are choosing a school or college to attend after high school.”* Academic quality/reputation
* Having a desired program of study
* Job placement after graduation
* Cost of attendance

SOURCE: U.S. Dept. of Ed., National Center for Education Statistics, 2019**Share** that the College Scorecard includes data metrics to support these important factors. Refer to the infographic to show how the College Scorecard supports these factors and aligns with student priorities.**Share** that advocates might ask students questions to strengthen the college search and reinforce the importance of the College Scorecard. For example, * What is important to you when you are choosing a school or college to attend after high school?
* How can the College Scorecard help you find the information you need to make an informed decision about college?
* What other high-quality data sources are available for you to find additional information not provided by the College Scorecard?
* What are the barriers to finding the information you need to make an informed decision about college?
* What other things might you consider when determining if a college or school is the right match and fit for you?

**Explain** that there are three distinct ways to begin your College Scorecard search. You can search by school, fields of study (major) or a broad list of school characteristics, such as degree type offered, graduation rate, cost, acceptance rate, etc. Demonstrate where to find these features on the website. Share that we will explore College Scorecard data in Module 3. | Using the College Scorecard (file name: *Using\_the\_College\_Scorecard.pdf)*Handout 2 – Student Priorities  |
| 10 minutes  | Independent Exploration | 14 | **Invite** participants to explore the College Scorecard features independently to apply what they have learned about the search function in this module. Provide guidance for independent exploration, if necessary. * **Ask** participants to practice searching by name, field of study/major, and other factors. Ask participants to think of 2-3 schools they commonly recommend. Then ask participants to search for those schools to practice using the search function. Ask participants to take notes about the following:
	+ What did you find interesting?
	+ What was surprising?
	+ What do you want to know more about?

**Ask** a few volunteers to share their findings. Summarize key themes for further discussion.**Debrief** with question, “How might College Scorecard and the search function have helped your own college search before attending college? Other than what is presented in College Scorecard, what additional information might have been useful? Where else might you look to find this information?” |  |
| 10 minutes | Reflection and Questions | 15-17 | Pose the questions and ask for participant responses. Reflect on usefulness of College Scorecard data.* What implications does this data have on college searches?
* What questions or misconceptions do you anticipate from students and/or families?
* What questions do you still have?

Invite participants to ask lingering questions and provide support. |  |

**Module 3: Practical Application of College Scorecard**

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the module, college access advisors will be able to:

**Help others make the most of the Scorecard Data**

* Adapt explanations of various data pointsfor different audiences (e.g., students, families, other advising professionals) and according to the advisee’s postsecondary goals). For example, the Scorecard is an ideal tool for students who qualify for federal financial aid and are looking to compare school costs but might not be an ideal tool for students who do not qualify for aid looking for the most “prestigious” schools.
* Effectively integrate the College Scorecard into discussions with families to further enhance and inform their postsecondary education search process.
* Empower individuals to organize and deliver College Scorecard training on their own, including interactive activities on the College Scorecard. Furthermore, advisors and school counselors should be able to customize their interactions with students based on their backgrounds, interests, and needs to maximize the value of the tool with different audiences.

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| **Time**  | **Activity** | **Slides** | **Facilitation Notes** | **Materials Needed** |
| 5 minutes  | Welcome and Overview | 1-4 | * Share lesson objectives and norms
* Share the roadmap of modules for College Access Advisors
 |  |
| 5 minutes  | Activator | 5 | **Ask** participants, “What should college access advisors and school counselors be mindful of when helping others make the most out of their college search experience?”**Summarize** the key themes. Use these themes to inform the discussions. |  |
| 20 minutes | Understanding the College Scorecard Data | 6-14 | Remind participants of the College Scorecard Data Sources Handout. **Share** that they will practice comparing schools and programs to better understand the College Scorecard data.**Explain** the information displayed on a school profile page by demonstrating with a sample school of your choice. Hover over key features for more information. * **Ask** participants to answer questions to check for understanding of the key features included on the school’s profile page. For example,
	+ Is the school/college private or public?
	+ In what region of the state is the school/college? North, South, East, or West?
	+ What is the graduation rate?

**Explain** the key data metrics by modeling the following steps: * In the “Search Schools” box, type in the name of a college or university in your area. Click on the school’s name.
* Once on the school’s College Scorecard profile page, navigate to the different data points.
* Identify three key data metrics shown on the school profile page. Hover over the information icon (the circular icon with the letter *i* ) and share key terms with participants. Key data points include:
	+ Graduation Rate – share of students who graduated within 8 years of entering this school for the first time, regardless of full-time or part-time status.

*Note: the graduation rate for degree granting schools is the proportion of entering students that graduated at this school within 8 years of entry, regardless of their full-time/part-time status or prior postsecondary experience. Graduation is measured 8 years after entry, irrespective of the award sought or award obtained.** + Average Annual Cost (in-state only) – school’s cost of attendance minus any grants and scholarships students typically receives.
	+ Median Earnings – The median annual earnings of individuals that received federal student aid and began college at this institution 10 years ago, regardless of their completion status (i.e., graduating, transferring, withdrawing, etc.).
* Share that there are several other data points that might be useful in a school or college search, but we will only focus on these three key data metrics for this session. Demonstrate how to navigate to the other data points on the school profile page. Point to where to find additional information/resources about those data points (i.e., clicking on the “i” icon to define the data points).

**Divide** participants into small groups. **Ask** participants to discuss how to interpret these data, how the definitions may impact that interpretation, and why these key data points matter in a school or college search. Why do we focus on these data?*Guiding Questions* (refer participants to the College Scorecard Glossary and/or College Scorecard Data Sources handout for reference):* **Graduation Rate**: (10 minutes)
	+ Who is included in this data point? Who is excluded?
		- What impact does the “of entering this school for the first time” have?
	+ What factors influence an institution's graduation rate?
	+ Why might a student not graduate within 8 years?
	+ Why does "8” years matter in this data point?
	+ Why would one want to know the percentage of students who graduated within 8 years of entering the school?
	+ How does this influence a student’s decision about college?
* **Average Annual Cost**: (10 minutes)
	+ Who is included in this data point? Who is excluded?
	+ What costs are included and excluded?
	+ What does it mean to be an "average” cost?
	+ How is the average cost different from the Sticker Price or the Net Price?
	+ What factors might influence the average cost?
	+ What factors might influence the difference between a student’s actual costs and the average costs?
	+ Why does the school’s average cost of attendance matter to students and families? Why is it important for students to consider the sticker price and the net price?
	+ Why is it important to be aware of the national graduation rates, which may not be as high as you expect? How might this information influence your perception of a college's effectiveness in educating and graduating its students?

**NOTE*:***Under “Costs” in a school’s College Scorecard, students can get an estimate on their average annual cost for an institution based on their family income bracket. Students and families can also use the calculator tool to estimate their personal net price. * **Median Earnings**: (10 minutes)
	+ What does “median earnings” mean in layman’s terms? Who is included in this data point? Who is excluded?
		- What impact does the “regardless of their completion status” have?
	+ If this data point includes students who “began college at this institution 10 years ago”, how old are most people likely to be now? How long since they graduated college?
	+ How might different fields of studies impact the median earnings and future debt?
	+ How does “graduation rate” impact “median earnings” and future debt? What other factors might impact median earnings?
	+ How does “median earnings” relate to “average annual cost”?
* **Related topics**: (5 minutes)
	+ Why might one want to know how much graduates with federal student loan debt earn after leaving the school or college?
	+ Why is it important to consider the demographic information of students when choosing a college? How might the diversity of the student body influence your educational experience and personal development?

After each segment, ask participants to share key points from their discussion. **Summarize** the themes. Use the themes to inform further discussion about the purpose for these data metrics. **Share** the Data Limitations of College Scorecard. **Ask** participants what other limitations they notice and how these limitations impact the data available to students. **Summarize** key themes and expand. **Share** that students can compare more than one school at a time in their search.  **NOTE: Facilitators will need to pull up and display College Scorecard to demonstrate how to use the website.** **Demonstrate** how to search, filter, and compare both schools and fields of study on the College Scorecard website.* **Ask** participants for a school to search by school name or location.
* **Show** participants how to use the filters to search (*degree type, graduation rate, average annual cost, test scores, acceptance rate, size, type of school, urbanicity, specialized mission, religious affiliation, WIOA programs*)
	+ Make sure to define specific terms as you go.
* **Show** participants how to **compare schools**. *(You can compare up to 10 schools)*
	+ You can add schools to the Compare Schools List by clicking on the gray checkmark. When on a school’s page, click add to compare school at the top right of the page.
	+ To share/save the search, click *Share this Comparison* at the top right and share the search to social media or copy the link to your clipboard to access later.
* **Show** participants how to **compare by field of study** *(You can compare up to 10 fields of study).*
	+ When searching by field of study, click the checkmark on the far right to add to compare fields of study.
	+ To share/save the search, click *Share this Comparison* at the top right and share the search to social media or copy the link to your clipboard to access later.

**Ask** participants, “What is the benefit of comparing by school versus comparing by fields of study? What is the importance of both search options?” **Summarize** the themes. Use the themes to inform the discussion. For additional guidance about using the College Scorecard, direct participants to the College Scorecard Guide. |  |
| 30 minutes | Helping others make the most of the Scorecard Data Scenario Activity & Pro Tips for Delivery | 15-19 | **NOTE: Participants will practice using the College Scorecard website on their own computers. Ask participants to navigate to the College Scorecard website if they have not already. The website is available at** [**collegescorecard.ed.gov**](https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/)**. Facilitators should anticipate questions that students might have and prepare answers in advance.****Activity #1: Scenario Activity** **Place** participants in groups of 3-4. Each group will work together to complete each of the scenarios below. Groups will record their responses on Handout 1.1 – Scenario Activity. * *You have a student who is interested in engineering. How would you use College Scorecard to help this student make an informed decision?*
* *After talking with a student and her parents, you learn that the student would like to attend a college in-state to pursue a degree in technology with an annual cost less than $15,000 a year. How would you use College Scorecard to help inform this student’s decision?*
* *A student has an ACT score below a 20 and they would like to attend [choose a university in your state]. How would you use College Scorecard to help inform this student’s decision?*
* *A student from a rural town in North Carolina is interested in studying animal science to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. After meeting with the student and her parents, they expressed a desire to attend a school in a city that has a high graduation rate for students receiving the PELL Grant. How would you use College Scorecard to help inform this student’s decision?*

Debrief the scenarios: * How was the tool valuable in addressing these scenarios around college choice? E.g., what data points and features did you use?
* In what ways would you integrate the College Scorecard into discussions with families to further enhance and inform their postsecondary education search process in these scenarios?
* Did the scenarios make you think about any of the data points or features in a different way?
* What other scenarios can you think of?
* How might you align this to your own district/school priorities?
* What questions do you still have?

**Activity #2: Tips for Delivery****Ask** participants to return to the same groups of 3-4. Participants will discuss the *Tips for Delivery* prompts and discuss implications for effective facilitation.**Ask** groups to share their responses to the prompts (one at a time). Summarize themes. **Emphasize** key messages about effective delivery. * **Prepare in advance.** Study the lesson plan and review accompanying handouts to prepare for successful delivery. Practice interactive activities ahead of time to prepare for effective facilitation.
* **Deliver the content.** Facilitate the learning activities and direct participants to the appropriate resources and materials. Lead meaningful discussions to enhance the learning experience and check for understanding throughout the lesson.
* **Respond and adapt to different audiences.** Customize interactions with participants based on their backgrounds, interests, and needs to maximize the value of the tool. Listen, summarize, and paraphrase to ensure understanding.
* **Reflect on the experience.** Provide insight into how you can maximize the value of the tool for different adult learners. Support participants with resources and follow-up support after the lesson.

**Prompt** group discussion to debrief the activity with guiding questions. For example, * How can you maximize the value of the tool with different audiences based on their backgrounds, interests, and needs?
* What do you want to be mindful of when organizing and delivering the interactive activities in the College Scorecard training on your own?
* How does College Scorecard strengthen the conversation with different audiences, including families to further enhance and inform their postsecondary education search process?

**Share** that the goal for the advisor training is to maximize the value of the College Scorecard tool to assist students and families make informed decisions about college. | Handout 3 Scenario ActivityHandout 3 Scenario Activity - Instructor GuideHandout 4 – Tips for Delivery |
| 10 minutes | Final Reflection and Future Steps | 20-21 | Participants will reflect on the following questions. Participants may share with a partner or engage in silent reflection and record their answers for later reference. Now that you have explored the College Scorecard website and brainstormed tips for successfully delivering the training, * What do you want to keep in mind? (What did you learn, how does this help you to think about the Scorecard differently?)
* What do you still need to know?
* List 1-2 next steps you will take to maximize the value of the tool.

Questions about the College Scorecard? Reach out to scorecarddata@rti.org.   |  |

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