

Help students seamlessly navigate transitions from high school into college and career pathways



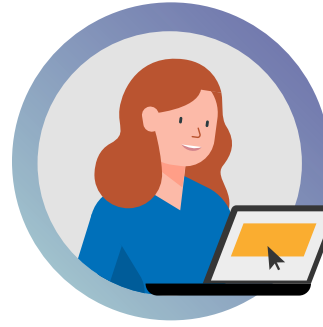
GRACE IS IN HIGH SCHOOL AND PLANNING TO BE THE FIRST IN HER FAMILY TO GO TO COLLEGE.

She wants to attend a four-year college that will support her through graduation and set her up for a high-quality career close to her family. Early in high school, she works with her family and school counselor to set

college-going goals for herself, understand her progress toward those goals, and access information that makes the steps she must take to stay on track clear.

When Grace gets to senior year, **she's able to explore two- and four-year college options, including specific institutions and whether their programs meet her needs, her financial aid eligibility, the availability of support services provided by each institution, and outcomes for first-generation students like her.** Based on this information, she's able to decide which colleges and programs are best for her, knowing that she will have to work while attending college. Grace is then able to apply for college and financial aid supports by easily uploading her academic information in one place.

Everyone should have the information they need to make informed decisions about their own education and workforce pathways, support individuals navigating these pathways, and create policies that might help others navigate smoother pathways.



LISA KNOWS THAT SHE WANTS TO HAVE A CAREER IN TECHNOLOGY.

Currently, she is enrolled in a career and technical education (CTE) program that she knows aligns with her college and career options after high school. To figure out how to get the skills and training that she wants without taking on college debt,

she uses a resource that puts her goals side by side with information on those options and the steps she needs to take to get there.

Because she has this resource, **she can see that the best fit for her is an apprenticeship program that allows her to earn as she learns and puts her on track to pursue an associate degree.** She focuses her high school course taking on the requirements necessary to pursue this pathway and upon graduation immediately enters a program that provides her on-the-job training while working toward an associate degree.

Regardless of which pathway from high school into postsecondary education and the workforce they take, right now students like Grace and Lisa cannot weigh their college and career options side by side to decide what's right for them. When states change their data systems to enable access, individuals will be able to use data to make decisions about their pathways into college and career.

WHAT DOES ACCESS LOOK LIKE IN ACTION?

Robust state data systems that prioritize meaningful access to data will meet current and future information needs in the following ways.



STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES have access to data that helps them:

BEGIN PLANNING for the future early in their high school education by:

- Exploring available, in-demand careers and understanding the connections and tradeoffs among the student's skills, postsecondary education options (e.g., two- and four-year degree programs), career preparation programs (e.g., apprenticeship), and the credentials required for those careers.
- Mapping their high school course taking, acquired skills, and experience to their desired college, career, or military pathway, including dual enrollment, CTE, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) credit transferability.
- Considering two- and four-year colleges as well as career preparation options to facilitate discussions with high school counselors and other college-oriented support staff.
- Staying on track to graduate.
- Identifying opportunities to earn college credits while still in high school, including dual enrollment, AP, and IB credit.

PLAN for their desired career by:

- Matching the student's existing skills, prior learning, and other experiences with the necessary credentials, local employers, and job openings.
- Identifying career options based on job programs or training that align with their experience and allow them to pursue their interests or goals.
- Understanding what their career options would look like with additional education and training that lead to advanced credentials.
- Understanding the labor market, where quality jobs are located, which opportunities offer career pathways, and the potential for earnings and professional growth.

IDENTIFY college programs and streamline the process for admission and enrollment by:

- Exploring college options, including institution and program characteristics, financial aid eligibility, the availability of support services provided by the institution, and student outcomes.
- Understanding the differences between two- and four-year institutions as well as public, private, and for-profit institutions and the options for transferring among them.
- Tracking graduation and college application requirements and getting personalized nudges and information to support them in applying for college programs and financial aid.
- Identifying two- and four-year college options that are the student's "best fit" based on disaggregated outcome data (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status, region).
- Understanding the admission requirements at various types of institutions, including two- and four-year colleges and other career preparation programs.

INDIVIDUAL ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data that is:

- ✓ Specific to the individual's role and the questions that they are trying to answer;
- ✓ Timely;
- ✓ Able to be manipulated and help them take action;
- ✓ Translated into languages other than English;
- ✓ Secure; and
- ✓ Longitudinal.

SIMPLIFY the transition between high school and college by:

- Tracking and understanding the process for transferring any college credits earned while still in high school.
- Identifying, assessing their eligibility for, and enrolling in any public benefits programs (e.g., nutrition, health care, housing) that might be available to them or their families and could help support them.
- Identifying, assessing their eligibility for, and enrolling in any financial aid programs that can help subsidize

the cost of their education and any community programs that can assist them with the additional considerations that may affect their ability to attend college (e.g., materials, distance to program and transportation limitations, need for emergency financial assistance).

- Selecting college courses based on the student's desired career path and program requirements.



HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

have access to data that helps them:

ADVISE students on their options by:

- Assisting students in identifying high-quality options and the tradeoffs between two- and four-year college programs and other career pathways (e.g., apprenticeships)—including sharing information about options, costs, and outcomes.
- Identifying two- and four-year college programs and career pathways that have a track record of helping

students, particularly historically underserved students, complete on time without an undue debt burden.

- Counseling students on the progress of their course taking and courses they should take in the future based on their career interests and demonstrated aptitudes, including potential CTE, dual enrollment, AP, and IB courses.

HELP students succeed as they pursue their college and career goals by:

- Identifying and intervening with students who may be off track with respect to the requirements they must meet for their education and career goals.
- Assisting students in completing college applications and interpreting financial aid eligibility and awards.
- Evaluating past student outcomes and improving programming and practices for current and future students.

- Supporting students in identifying and applying for workforce preparation programs that leverage their experience and prepare them for their career goals and helping students understand the costs and benefits associated with those options.
- Aiding students working to identify, assess their eligibility for, and enroll in any public benefits programs (e.g., nutrition, health care, housing) that might be available to them or their families and could help support them.

Tools and information are available to other **individuals and organizations that offer support** to high school students, including but not limited to:

- Disability services staff;
- Social workers;
- Foster youth services organizations;
- GEAR UP and TRIO program administrators;
- College access organizations;
- Teachers;
- College access advisors (e.g., Higher Achievement, TeenSHARP); and
- College admissions staff.



THE PUBLIC
(individuals, advocates, and community organizations) has access to data that helps them:

- **HOLD** their governments accountable for college and career outcomes through clear information about how well different groups of students fare.
- **UNDERSTAND** and act on information about how schools prepare students to transition into two- and four-year colleges.
- **EXPLORE** the landscape of college and career preparation program options, the quality of those programs, and who enrolls in them (broken down by different student groups).
- **ANSWER** questions about two- and four-year program enrollment, total cost of attendance, tuition, net price, loans, grants and scholarships, default rates, transfer rates, graduation rates, popular majors and the job openings associated with them in the state, employment and earnings, CTE graduation rates by CTE status, and two- or four-year degree or workforce training program enrollment for CTE graduates.
- **UNDERSTAND** whether the K–12 schools in their community are preparing students for enrollment in college, getting started without remediation, and persisting in their two- or four-year school of choice (through data displayed side by side, disaggregated, and shared by region).
- **IDENTIFY** which K–12 schools and programs prepare students for the requirements, additional on-the-job training, and education that lead to high-quality careers.
- **DETERMINE** whether current college and career readiness programming in high schools prepares students for available college and career pathways and helps them establish goals, plan and prepare for college and career preparation program applications, and successfully enroll in different programs.
- **INVESTIGATE** whether their communities have access to programs (e.g., AP, IB, CTE, dual enrollment) that support students' college and career readiness and whether quality programs are available to all students (particularly those from historically underserved populations).
- **CREATE** change in their communities by advocating for access for all high school students to the courses and supports that are shown to prepare students for quality postsecondary education and career preparation options.
- **ASSIST** other community members in navigating the patchwork of education and career development programs, support services, and other opportunities available to high school students seeking postsecondary education or career preparation programs.

PUBLIC ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to open data, aggregate data, and dashboards that:

- ✓ Are easy to understand and navigate;
- ✓ Are available in languages other than English;
- ✓ Are disaggregated by different groups of students and by program/school;
- ✓ Are dynamic and able to be queried and customized; and
- ✓ Include best practice indicators, such as those in the [Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework](#).



POLICYMAKERS

(state legislators, agency heads, local school boards, and district leaders) have access to data that helps them:

PLAN, allocate resources, and answer questions, such as:

- Are historically underserved student populations attending high-quality, affordable two- and four-year colleges?
- Are historically underserved student populations getting into quality career preparation programs and careers? Are groups of students differently prepared for success in workforce training programs and the workforce based on their experiences in high school?
- Are certain groups of students being tracked into certain, better, or less socially mobile pathways?
- How does college enrollment vary across high school students from different K-12 districts, regions, and backgrounds and across two- and four-year programs?
- How does access to quality career preparation programs and careers vary across high school students from different regions and backgrounds, including student return on investment and alignment to in-demand careers?
- What happens to students who enlist in the military, and what does enlistment mean for their postsecondary and workforce outcomes? Are there pathways through high school that lead to better-quality post-military outcomes?
- How does college enrollment in quality programs with a track record of graduating students who can repay their debt vary across high school students from different regions and backgrounds, including student return on investment and alignment to in-demand careers?
- Do financial aid policies make applying for and receiving needed financial assistance easier for students, once they are prepared for college?
- Given the future needs of industry in our state/region/community, to what extent do our K-12 programs prepare students for those jobs, and to what extent do we need additional programs to meet industry needs?
- Which programs (e.g., dual enrollment, CTE, youth apprenticeships) align with college-level courses, build academic momentum, and better prepare students for college? Do these same programs remove barriers to high-quality career pathways for students from low-income backgrounds and historically underserved students?
- What types of financial, social, and wraparound supports help students—including students in foster care or experiencing homelessness—leave high school future ready?
- What K-12 policies and investments, service opportunities, or programs are associated with positive outcomes for students enrolling in two- or four-year colleges directly after high school or finding quality employment? Which programs should be replicated or scaled, and which should be discontinued?

POLICYMAKER ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data that:

- ✓ Can be viewed statewide and tailored to answer policymakers' specific questions;
- ✓ Enables policy creation, evaluation, and adjustments as needed; and
- ✓ Enables effective management of programs.

WHAT WILL REALIZING THIS VISION MAKE POSSIBLE?

Access to data helps people make decisions and improves state and local investments in education and workforce pathways.

When state leaders give people tailored, individual access to the data they need, they also support the success of policies and programs like these:

FOR COLLEGE

- Early warning systems that help educators identify students falling off track and support them to stay on track for high school graduation;
- Financial aid tools and resources to support students in applying for financial assistance to pay for college;
- Auto-admit systems to facilitate postsecondary enrollment;
- Graduation and college application tracking tools that assist students with meeting requirements;
- Personalized nudges to support students graduating from high school and applying to and enrolling in college (e.g., dashboard alerts, emails, text messages);
- Course-mapping and career-planning tools in high school and college; and
- Feedback reports to school districts about degree outcomes of former students for schools to understand course-taking patterns, outcomes, and more.

FOR CAREER

- Dual enrollment programs that are easier for all students to access;
- Career-connected high schools that are effectively implemented;
- Stackable credentials that align to employment needs;
- More targeted support and opportunities focused on the distinct talents and needs of opportunity youth (young people who are 16- to 24-years-old and are disconnected from school and work);
- Quality CTE programming;
- Expanded and improved information for Job Corps participants;
- Registered apprenticeship programs for students straight out of high school;
- More targeted support and opportunities for historically underserved and vulnerable populations; and
- State professional learning programs.

STATES GETTING STARTED

This work is ambitious. While some states and districts have created resources that allow individuals, the public, and system leaders to use data to make decisions about **pathways from high school to college and careers**, leaders must go farther to give people the kind of data access they need. Examples of how states have gotten started include the following:

Pathways from High School into College

- The [California College Guidance Initiative](#) provides students with state colleges' admissions requirements to ensure that students meet those requirements and apply for financial aid and college more seamlessly.
- Texas's [seekUT](#) enables students to explore postsecondary programs and clear pathways with a focus on affordability and in-demand careers.
- [College for TN](#) allows students to search for and compare colleges based on affordability, outcomes, and other characteristics. The website also provides important information about career pathways and financial aid.

Pathways from High School into Jobs and Career Development Programs

- [My Colorado Journey](#) provides course-mapping and career-planning tools.
- Indiana's [CTE Employer Connector](#) enables employers to access information about students who have completed CTE programs.
- New Jersey's [Training Explorer](#) allows individuals to find training opportunities to upskill or change careers.
- Kentucky's [Career Explorer](#) and [Career and Technical Education Employer Connector](#) provide tools for matching employees with in-demand careers and employers with youth skills.