

MASCA Counselor's Notebook

MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 53, No. 1

September 2016

President's Message: Reflections on ASCA16

By KATE SALAS, Ed.D., MASCA President

Welcome back to school! September is a great time for new beginnings. I hope that everyone enjoyed some well deserved time off. I used to try to relax on summer break, but then I would return to school not very relaxed and feeling like I wasted those precious days. This year I decided to make the most of my summer break. I set my alarm during the workdays so that I was more productive and have been making an attempt to make every moment count.

I would say that I was quite successful in that area during my recent trip to New Orleans to attend ASCA16. This was my 7th ASCA conference and probably the best. I spent a great deal of time working with the other MASCA officers, planning ways to strengthen our organization. I also found time to network with other school counselors and find out what they do for their school counseling organizations and schools. I reconnected with school counselor friends from other states as well as a former grad student. I was inspired and it reaffirmed to me how important school counseling is to our students!

Now, I am all about having fun and New Orleans is certainly a city known for fun, so fun we had! As a school counselor from Alabama informed me, New Orleans is also a city in which people sometimes exhibit "questionable behavior."



While we certainly did not exhibit that kind of behavior, we were exposed to some, which prompted my experience with Uber. If you have not tried Uber, I would highly recommend it! Uber is an app on your phone in which you put in your destination, request a pick up and then it tells you who will pick you up and when they will be there. The longest we waited was 4 minutes. Not only did it prevent me from walking through areas where someone such as myself who lacks "street



**MASCA Board Members
Kate Salas, Megan Krell, Donna
Brown, and Ruth Carrigan with
Chef Pierre, ASCA16's mascot**

smarts" should not be walking, it gave us an opportunity to connect with the locals and hear their stories. Many of the Uber drivers that we talked to had lost everything during Hurricane Katrina and still said, "It's ok, we're ok now." Talk about resiliency! They asked us if we needed ideas of things to do and places to go to eat.

On July 1st, I started my year as MASCA president. My goal for this year is to strengthen our organization and make it more valuable for you. I am working with the other MASCA board members to improve professional development opportunities and increase membership value. I can't do it alone. If you want a strong state school counseling organization that can advocate for you and provide you with education to better help your students, I need your help. All I am asking is for you to do what you can. If you have a bit of time and some ideas to help school counselors, I want to hear them. I promise that you will not be roped into some big, time consuming committee. An active role in MASCA consists of fun and productive activities that have a positive impact for school counselors in the bay state!

"Alone we can do so little,
together we can do so much."
~Helen Keller

An Early Warning: Students at Risk of Missing Academic Milestones

Massachusetts EWIS, or Early Warning Indicator System, is a tool to systematically identify students who may need additional attention in order to reach an upcoming academic milestone. The Massachusetts EWIS identifies students in grades 1 through 12 as high, medium, and low risk of missing important academic milestones throughout their academic trajectory. Using EWIS tools and other resources, educators across Massachusetts study their students' risk, explore underlying causes, deploy programming, and monitor results of interventions that are implemented.

While Massachusetts schools continue to be recognized as educational leaders across the nation, we still recognize that we have a distance to travel for ALL of our students to have successful academic, career, and social outcomes after graduation from high school.

Introducing the Post Secondary Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS)

To support schools and districts in understanding whether high school students are on track to succeed in postsecondary education, ESE has expanded the scope of EWIS to include 3 new college success milestones.

For students who graduated from Massachusetts public high schools in 2013:

- 76% enroll in postsecondary education the immediate fall after graduation;
- 86% of those enrolled persist to the second year

- more than one-third of graduates enrolled in a Massachusetts public postsecondary institutions take at least one remedial course in their first semester; and

- gaps in college enrollment, academic readiness and college persistence exist among racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and English learners.

College Enrollment: likelihood to enroll in postsecondary education

Academic Readiness: likelihood for success in credit-bearing college courses in English and mathematics at the college freshman level

Persistence: likelihood for students to persist from the first to second year of postsecondary education

While these rates are high for post-secondary educational success, we can still target supports for students to reach higher toward their academic promise.

Not a “Life Sentence” or College Admissions measure

The intent of expanding EWIS to include college success outcomes is to help schools and districts identify students who may need additional supports to access higher education, and to better target those interventions and programmatic supports at the individual, small group, and whole school levels. It is not an accountability measure or a college admission indicator and should not be used to place students in a particular academic track. Student success should be measured by students meeting the educa-

tional outcomes, not changes in a student risk levels.

EWIS data and tools, in conjunction with local context and appropriate interventions, can help district and school leaders, along with college access partners, increase the percentage of students succeeding in postsecondary education. This is consistent with the Department of Higher Education's Vision Project, which serves to increase the percentage of high school graduates going to college and their readiness for college level work. EWIS is most powerful when used as part of ongoing data work or a data-driven cycle of inquiry.

Timeline for Reports

Beginning in September 2016, student-level reports for the college success outcomes (EW602) will be available in Edwin Analytics and support resources for using this new data will be available on the EWIS website. Current EWIS reports (EW301, EW302, EW317, EW318 and EW601) will be available for all students in grades 1-12 students for the four K-12 EWIS outcomes.

ESE will be offering two introductory webinars to the Post Secondary EWIS on **Sept 13 at 2 PM** and **Sept 16 at 10 AM**. You can register at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/conference/?ConferenceID=8386>.

If you have any questions about EWIS, please feel free to contact Nyal Fuentes at nfuentes@doe.mass.edu.

MASCA

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Reflections on ASCA and MASCA LDI

By MEGAN KRELL, Ph.D., MASCA President-Elect

This summer has been full of leadership development for your MASCA Executive Council and Governing Board! In July, the MASCA President, President-Elect, Past-President, and Executive Director took part in the ASCA Leadership Development Institute (LDI) in New Orleans, LA prior to the annual ASCA Conference.

This two-day program brought together over 175 state and national school counseling leaders. Day one included workshops on advocacy, financial management, leadership, and membership, as well as specialized breakout sessions for each of the leadership positions. Day two provided training on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), small group breakouts to discuss current issues in school counseling, and the Delegate Assembly.

Ample time was allotted for participants to connect and share ideas with other states' leadership. To help



build connections, many states brought goodies to share that are representative of their state. For example, Connecticut attendees brought PEZ dispensers and candy and Pennsylvania generously provided Hershey's Milk

Chocolate Bars.

In August, MASCA held its own LDI for the Governing Board and affiliate leaders at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts. The primary goal for MASCA's LDI was to bring together the leadership to help shape our vision for the next year. The two-day event began with reports and updates from the last year. A large portion of the programming was dedicated to reviewing, updating, and editing MASCA's Policies and Procedures Manual. Attendees participated in teambuilding activities to help everyone get to know each other, including a trip to the movies in the evening.

We hope to see you at MASCA's LDI 2017!



ASCA Board Chair, Julie Baumgart, thanks Bob Bardwell, Director of School Counseling at Monson Innovation High School for his service to the ASCA Board at ASCA16 LDI

Early FASFA and Prior-Prior Year – Are You and Your Families Ready for the Changes?

By IRIS GODES, MASCA Board Member and
Associate Vice President of Enrollment/Dean of Admission at Dean College

There is a major change to the financial aid process for those applying for financial aid beginning with the 2017-18 academic year. For the first time in history, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, better known as the FAFSA, will become available on **October 1, 2016**, three months earlier than in the past when the application opened on January 1 of students' senior year.

Many high schools have already moved up their traditional "Financial Aid Nights" so families will learn about the process closer to October. In the future, high schools may want to even think about offer-



ing this event in the spring of junior year.

The other major change to the process is what is being called Prior-Prior Year (PPY). In the past, students and parents reported their income on the FAFSA based on the previous calendar year. So, for the 2016-17 year, the FASFA required

income data from 2015, the prior complete tax year. This was challenging for many who completed the FAFSA before filing their tax returns. Families struggled trying to estimate what their income would be and then had to go back to the FAFSA after filing their tax return to correct the data based on the actual numbers.

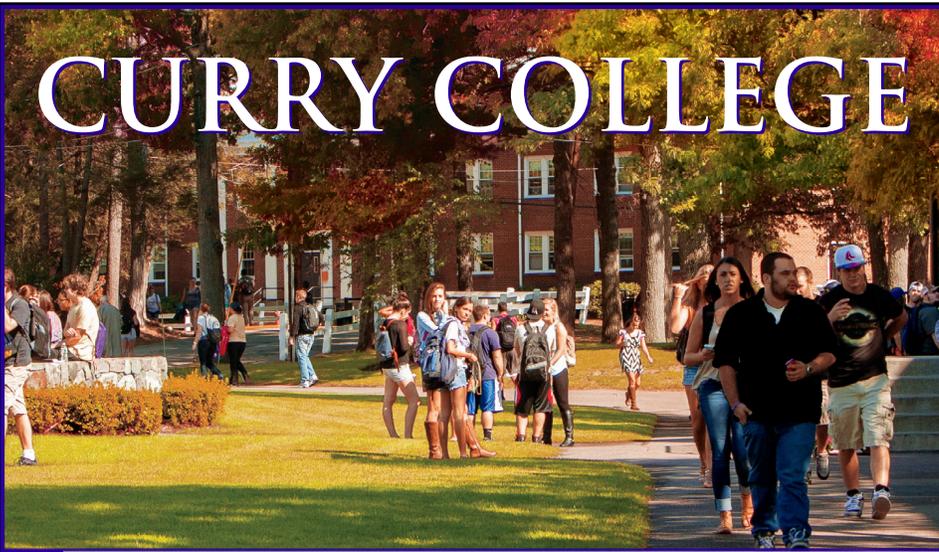
With prior-prior year, families will now report their income based on their income from two years ago, from tax returns that have already been filed. For those starting college in Fall 2017, they will report income from 2015. This will make the process easier for families with no need to make corrections later.

The College Board also announced that they will adopt PPY for the CSS/Profile. Colleges and universities are deciding what this means for their admissions and financial aid process. For some, this will allow admissions decisions and financial aid awards to be sent much earlier, especially rolling admission schools. Others are keeping things status quo and are watching how things develop before changing anything about their process. And still others do not feel any change is necessary based on the timing of their admissions process that is in effect already.

There will still be estimated financial aid awards, so it is still important for students to understand the difference between estimated or tentative awards and confirmed awards, as they always have. There

(continued on pg. 5)

COUNSELOR'S NOTEBOOK



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FAFSA (cont'd from page 4)

are pieces of the process that have not caught up to the early FAFSA, such as the release of Pell Grant and State Grant award amounts for the upcoming year. For many colleges, tuition, fees, and room and board charges are not usually set early in the fall. And of course, there is still verification for students to complete.

What does this all of this mean for high school counselors? Be prepared for more students requesting transcripts earlier in the school year, as the early FAFSA is expected to encourage early college admission applications also. Students and families will also be looking for earlier assistance with the financial aid process.

The biggest benefit of the early

FAFSA is that it will give families more time to file the FAFSA, and more importantly, will give them more time to carefully evaluate and compare financial aid offers and secure additional funding, if necessary.

There is no change to deadlines such as the standard May 1 enroll-

ment decision date for schools that require a deposit or a response to the offer of admission.

NACAC has a helpful one-page sheet on the details and considerations of these changes at <http://www.nacacnet.org/issues-action/LegislativeNews/Documents/PPY-Counselors.pdf>.

September Awareness Dates

Childhood Cancer Month
National Childhood Obesity Month
Hispanic Heritage Month

5-11 National Suicide Prevention Week
8 International Literacy Day
16 National School Backpack Awareness Day
16-18 Clean up the World Weekend
17 Citizenship Day
18-24 Child Passenger Safety Week
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DESE's Safe and Supportive Schools Commission Update

By DONNA M. BROWN, MASCA Executive Director

Two years ago, I was invited to be MASCA's representative on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Safe and Supportive Schools Commission. The first meeting was quite interesting and seemed to be addressing everything we as counselors do, so I committed to becoming one of 18 commissioners. However, I had no real idea of the scope and breadth of what we were charged to do. In 2008, section 19 of chapter 321 established the behavioral health and public schools task force which, in turn, recommended the following: "...the department of elementary and secondary education shall develop a safe and supportive schools framework. The framework shall provide guidance and support to schools to assist with the creation of safe and supportive schools that improve education outcomes for students."

The initial work created a basic framework and a self-assessment tool that could be used by schools to: "(i) assess the school's capacity to create and sustain safe and supportive school environments for all students; (ii) identify areas where additional school-based action, efforts, guidance and support are needed to create and maintain safe and supportive school environments; and (iii) create action plans to address the areas of need identified by the assessment."

Additionally, Chapter 69, Section 1P, also states, "The board shall develop procedures for updating, improving or refining the safe and supportive schools framework and the safe and supportive schools self-assessment tool, in consultation with the safe and supportive schools

commission established under subsection (g)." It is this subsection that gives MASCA a seat on the commission.

So, this is what the commission is about. Many things have changed since the initial framework was designed. For one thing, there has

been recognition that ALL students need to have services available to them, not just tier two and three students. This shift will make it possible for all students to receive the support they need to develop strong relationships with peers and adults,
(continued on pg. 8)



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Helping Your Students Reach Higher by Digging Deeper with Data – MASCA and DESE Announce New Data Usage Credential

By RUTH CARRIGAN, MASCA Past President and Professional Development Chair

Are you looking for a way to improve your professional practice and to improve outcomes for your students at the same time? Do you want to learn how to identify at-risk students and to develop an effective intervention plan? If so, I hope you will consider earning the new Data Usage Certificate for school counselors via this new and unique partnership between MASCA, DESE, and Reach Higher MA.

To earn this credential, counselors and school counseling teams will need to attend two half day workshops (one in the fall and one in the spring), participate in several webinars, and complete a

data project aimed at improving outcomes for students at their schools. Counselors will learn how to use EWIS, EDWIN, and DART Data. Once the requirements have been met and the project completed, counselors will earn 15 PDPS and the Data Usage credential.

Our goal is to make this program accessible and affordable for counselors across the Commonwealth. The initial face-to-face meeting will be held at Universal Technical Institute in Norwood on October 21, 2016 for counselors in Eastern MA, while an initial meeting for counselors in Western MA is slated

for October 28, 2016 at Holyoke Community College. The second and final face-to-face meeting will take place on April 3, 2017 at the Holiday Inn Boxborough in conjunction with annual MASCA Conference.

Please go to the MASCA website today to sign up for this exciting and low cost (\$35) professional development opportunity and Career and College Readiness Data Usage Credential.

If you have any questions, please contact Ruth Carrigan, MASCA Past President and Professional Development Chair, at Ruth.Carrigan@whrsd.org.

MA Model 2.0 Needs Input from School Counselors

The MA Model 2.0 writing team has been hard at work updating and refreshing the existing MA Model 1.0 document. The Foundation, Accountability, Management, and Delivery sections have been enhanced to include current references, appealing graphics, and helpful examples and templates for counselors to use in their practice.

The DRAFT MA Model 2.0 was shared at the MASCA Spring Conference this past April and the team reached out to colleagues for feedback. That feedback was reviewed and edits were made to all sections at a recent writing team meeting.

In order to give all MASCA members a chance to add their voice, the team is extending the

deadline to submit additional feedback. To do so, please go to the MASCA website and download the Microsoft Word version of the MA Model 2.0 document. Add your suggestions by using the “Track Changes” function, save your changes, and email your new document to 2.0ma-model@gmail.com. Changes should be submitted by **November 23, 2016**.

The team will review the responses and create a final document to be released at the 2017 MASCA Spring Conference. More information will be shared at local affiliate and MASCA meetings as well as by eblast, the website, and social media. Get involved and stay tuned!

tandrews@kurnhattin.org, and provides the registration link conference.kurnhattin.org."/>

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COMMISSION (*cont'd from page 6*) to regulate their own emotions and behaviors, to achieve academic and non-academic success, and to have their mental and physical health and disability needs met. The Framework also is a reform that provides a process, tools, and support for educators to create a safe and supportive learning community that can help students grow educationally, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally to foster competent and confident learners.

During the next school year, gatherings will take place across the state to collect input and ideas from all stakeholders. As school counselors, we are in a unique position to take a leadership role in implementing the Frameworks as we already focus on the whole child. This is a wonderful opportunity to apply our expertise and really make a difference in our students' lives.

A Closer Look at the Commonwealth Commitment: A College Completion and Affordability Initiative

By KATY ABEL, Associate Commissioner for External Affairs
for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

At the Metrowest College Planning Center on the campus of Framingham State University, director Colleen Coffey works closely with students and families to help them make a series of complicated decisions related to choosing and financing a college education.

But very often, families walk through her door too late. Some have already committed to college educations they didn't know they couldn't afford. Watching the debt pile up, they arrive at the Center in a state of high anxiety, looking for ways to cut their costs. "And at that point, maybe

two years down the road, our options for solutions become limit-



ed," Coffey says. "Transferrable credits have been completed and students are moving into their major classes. These are often

very well-meaning parents who want the best for their kids, people who have already accumulated a lot of debt, and given viable options for degree completion, sometimes I have to tell them that the most cost effective may be to stay the course at the college he or she has chosen – even though the price continues to be a burden for the family to bear."

Stories like these have Coffey feeling enthused about the new Commonwealth Commitment, a college completion and affordability initiative announced

(continued on pg. 9)

COMMITMENT (cont'd from page 8)

by Governor Charlie Baker last April. Beginning this fall, the program will allow Massachusetts students to shave thousands of dollars off the cost of a baccalaureate degree by following an "A2B" – Associate to Bachelor's - pathway to a degree.

Through the program, students will begin their studies at any of the state's 15 community colleges and then transfer, within two and a half years, to one of nine state universities or four University of Massachusetts undergraduate campuses (students transferring to the Massachusetts College of Art and Design or the Massachusetts Maritime Academy will need to transfer earlier, after one and a

half years).

Students must attend full-time and maintain a 3.0 GPA, and can choose a major from one of 16 MassTransfer Pathways programs that will roll out over the next two years, beginning this

fall. The pathways, including popular programs such as psychology, computer science and biology, and niche programs such as printmaking and international maritime business, will speed students' completion of 4-year degrees while also allowing them to reap substantial financial benefits.

The Commonwealth Commitment's three-part savings plan includes: a freeze on mandatory fees from the moment a student enters the program, a 10% per-semester rebate on student changes, and a 100% tuition waiver/credit at state universities and UMass campuses. Conservative estimates put the savings per student at more than \$5,000 before any financial aid is factored in. The average cost of a degree earned through (continued on pg. 10)



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COMMITMENT (cont'd from page 9)
the Commonwealth Commitment program will be below \$25,000 – not per year, but per degree.

“For students who can attend college full-time and maintain a reasonably good GPA, this is an outstanding opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree at a substan-

tially reduced cost,” says Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner of Higher Education for the Commonwealth. “We know that families are struggling to pay for college, and we know employers are very much in need of new talent. So this is a win-win for our state.”

Indeed, the comprehensive ap-



Governor Baker greeting students at the Commonwealth Commitment announcement at Middlesex Community College in Lowell in April 2016

proach to college affordability and completion has won plaudits from national organizations, including the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). “You are guaranteeing sort of a fixed cost up front and you’re helping them pay it,” SHEEO president George Pernsteiner told The Boston Globe last spring. “That’s a powerful motivation, I think, for students and families.”

Colleen Coffey agrees. “It’s not enough for those of us who work with high school students to help them get into college and said ‘OK, I’m done now,’” she believes. “We’ve got to help families look beyond that acceptance letter and make clear-eyed decisions that include a look at the total college price tag. Too often our public colleges and universities are overlooked, despite offering some excellent programs, so I’m hopeful that the Commonwealth Commitment will encourage families to take a second look at transfer opportunities and savings across the system.”

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New Tool Helps School Counselors Prepare Students for the Future

By JACKNEY PRIOLY JOSEPH, Director, Future Ready Massachusetts

A new digital collection of highly targeted materials and information is available to help school counselors and other adults prepare students for a successful future. The Future Ready Mentor Toolkit, available online at FutureReadyMA.org, includes information such as Massachusetts' curriculum requirements, middle and high school checklists, financial literacy activities and information regarding career exploration, college planning and financial aid.

The Toolkit was created by Future Ready Massachusetts, an initiative that provides students, families and educators of the Commonwealth with the essential resources and information they need to understand what it means to be college and career ready and how students can prepare to meet those expectations. Future Ready works to ensure that every child in Massachusetts is ready for college, career and citizenship upon high school graduation.

MASCA is partnering with Future Ready to distribute the Mentor Toolkit to school counselors and to support school counselors in integrating the Toolkit into their collection of college and career readiness resources. As we head into the beginning of a new school year, Future Ready is thrilled to debut the Future Ready Mentor Toolkit Webinar.

The Webinar provides an overview of the Mentor Toolkit assets, examples of how to integrate the Toolkit and college and career readiness into programming and sample activities that can be used to engage students in thinking about and planning for their future beyond high school. The Toolkit is flexi-

ble enough to use in its entirety or in part, selecting only the resources needed for a particular topic or activity. Download the Mentor Toolkit and follow along as the webinar goes into the uses for specific resources and examples of ways to

use the Toolkit to engage students.

The Mentor Toolkit Webinar is easily accessible via the Future Ready website at FutureReadyMA.org/Toolkit/Webinar. Learn more about the Mentor Toolkit by visiting FutureReadyMA.org/Toolkit.

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COUNSELOR'S NOTEBOOK

Amy Wheeler, Editor

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The Mission of MASCA

The mission of MASCA is to advocate for school counselors in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by providing leadership, collaboration, and professional development.

Stay informed by visiting MASCA's website regularly. You can share your views with fellow MASCA members by joining in the Forum.

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