

The Missouri College Advising Corps: Helping Missouri Students Go To College

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs today require postsecondary education, yet the US lags behind other nations in young adults enrolled in higher education. Students are currently discouraged from entering higher education by avoidable barriers such as a lack of information about financial aid and college admissions processes. This is particularly true for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students.



OBJECTIVES:

The overarching objectives of the Missouri College Advising Corps (MCAC) are to:

- help Missouri students and their families see college as an attainable goal
- inform students and their families about college application and financial aid processes
- increase college enrollment/graduation among high-ability, low-income students
- encourage community college students to complete the associate's degree and pursue a baccalaureate degree

OUTCOMES:

The **FIRST Year** – 2008-09:

- 5,916 students advised, grades 9-12
- 1,619 students advised one-on-one
- 4,297 students advised in workshops
- 10,796 hours spent advising students
- 984 students who had been advised applied to 139 colleges and universities
- students advised are currently enrolled at 73 colleges in 14 states, most in Missouri

The **first SIX months of the SECOND Year** – (August 2009 – January 2010):

- 7,837 students, grades 9-12, have access to college guides' advising
- 2,491 students advised one-on-one
- 6,439 students advised in workshops
- 294 workshops delivered
- 60% of students advised are first-generation college students
- 69% of 9th – 12th grade students advised are ethnic minorities
- In December 2009 and January 2010 alone, MCAC helped students secure \$265,761 in scholarships
- In December 2009 and January 2010 alone, students advised by guides applied to 94 unique colleges and universities and were admitted to 78

STUDENTS ADVISED:

Of the study body in our partner schools:

- graduation, college-going, and ACT-taking rates are, on average, well below the state average
- 89% in the 7 urban and 69% in all 11 partner schools are ethnic minorities
- 60% -78% are first-generation college students
- 73% are free and reduced lunch-eligible

THE PROGRAM:

- 2007 – National College Advising Corps (NCAC) created to address barriers to college access, particularly among low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students
- 2007 – The University of Missouri (MU) established the Missouri College Advising Corps (MCAC), a college advising program
- MU is 1 of 10 inaugural members of the NCAC, a consortium of 132 college guides serving 37,000+ students each year in 13 states
- 2008 – MCAC placed its first college guides in high schools and community colleges in MO

THE COLLEGE GUIDES:

MCAC accomplishes its objectives by hiring full-time college guides who are:

- recent MU graduates chosen for academic success and commitment to service
- first-generation graduates, economically disadvantaged, and or underrepresented minorities themselves
- immersed in the high school or community college to advise students:
 - ♦ in one-on-one and group settings
 - ♦ grades 7-12
 - ♦ seeking an associate's degree and considering a baccalaureate

College guides help students who would not otherwise have gone to and completed college to:

- navigate admission and financial aid processes
- find a "best fit" institution
- complete an associate's degree and transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution

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I have heard nothing but positive remarks about the MCAC program from school counselors working in the high schools where MCAC guides are serving the needs of low-income and underrepresented students. They appreciate that these well trained near-peer advisors — enthusiastic, bright, and dedicated recent graduates — are extending their own reach by providing help to deserving students when their own resources are stretched so thin. It truly is a win-win situation for school counselors, [MCAC college] guides, and above all, the students.

— Dr. Bragg Stanley,
Director, Guidance
and Placement,
Missouri Department
of Elementary and
Secondary Education

MCAC IS UNIQUE:

Activities provided by MCAC are unique from those generally provided by other college access programs and school counselors/guidance staff:

- Working alongside counselors, *college guides* role-model that college is within reach, and because of the near-peer model, uniquely interact with students
- While many college access programs use adults in advising roles, provide part-time services, and are not embedded in the site they are serving, MCAC *college guides* devote full-time attention to college advising and are immersed in the setting
- MCAC works in both high schools and community colleges
- MCAC guide advisement is made available to all students in the school
- MCAC helps students find their “best fit” postsecondary institution
- MCAC concentrates its efforts in both urban and rural areas of the state

PARTNER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES:

2008 – 7 high schools and 3 community colleges in both urban and rural MO

2009 – 4 high schools added

2009 – 13 *college guides* working in the following 11 high schools and 3 community colleges:

Kansas City Area

- Grandview High School, Grandview School District, Jackson County
- Northeast High School, Kansas City MO School District (KCMSD), Jackson County
- Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts Schools, KCMSD, Jackson County
- Van Horn High School, Independence Public Schools, Jackson County
- Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley, Jackson County

St. Louis Area

- Jennings High School, Jennings School District, St. Louis County
- Riverview Gardens High School, Riverview Gardens School District, St. Louis County
- Soldan International Studies High School, St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County
- St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley, St. Louis County

South Central Area

- Bourbon High School, Crawford County R-1 School District, Crawford County
- Cuba High School, Crawford County R-2 School District, Crawford County
- East Central College, Union, Franklin County
- Salem High School, Salem R-80 School District, Dent County

Mid-sized Area

- Benton High School, St. Joseph School District, Buchanan County

CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES:

- College Access Challenge Grant (overseen by the Missouri Department of Higher Education)
- The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (this grant launched the program)
- TG grant
- University of Missouri-Columbia

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