

Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success Press Release

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Diverse group of universities form coalition to improve college admission process Goal is to recast admission process, broaden access, and encourage college-going mindset for all students

A diverse coalition of public and private colleges and universities is coming together with the goal of improving the college admission application process for all students. The Coalition is developing a free platform of online tools to streamline the experience of planning for and applying to college. The initial iteration of the planning tools will be available to freshmen, sophomores, and juniors in high school beginning in April 2016.

In creating this platform, these colleges and universities hope to recast the college admission process from something that is transactional and limited in time into a more engaged, ongoing, and educationally reaffirming experience. They also hope to motivate a stronger college-going mindset among students of all backgrounds, especially those from low-income families or underrepresented groups who have historically had less access to leading colleges and universities.

"The college admission process today can be stress-inducing and we know it can present barriers for all students, especially for those who are the first in their family to attend college," said Zina L. Evans, vice president for enrollment management at the University of Florida.

The Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success currently includes more than 80 public and private universities and colleges across the United States that have made a commitment to make college affordable and accessible for students from diverse backgrounds, and for students to be successful in completing their education. The Coalition, which continues to add members, will be working over the next few months to develop tools and processes that are intended to address many of the barriers that prevent students from attending college or successfully earning a degree.

"The schools in the Coalition have individually tried many different and creative approaches to address these challenges," said Jeremiah Quinlan, dean of undergraduate admissions at Yale University. "We have come to the conclusion that we can have a much bigger impact on student access and completion if we work together."

Later this year, the Coalition will share details about new college planning and application tools that will streamline the admission and financial aid processes and allow students to begin planning for college much earlier in their high school years. The online tools—which will include a virtual locker, a collaboration platform, and an application portal—seek to reshape the process of applying to college as the culmination of students' development

over the course of their high school careers, reducing the unfamiliarity of the application and leveling the playing field for all students. The application will add another option to all the ways that students currently apply to college. Many Coalition schools will accept applications through the portal in the summer of 2016, while others are still deciding when and how to use the application feature of the new system.

"Starting to think about college earlier reduces some of the pressure of the application process, but more importantly, it sets the expectation that students should aspire to attend college," said Seth Allen, vice president and dean of admissions at Pomona College. "There are so many talented students who should aim for a great school, but they often don't understand the path to get there."

For example, [research](#) has found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds often do not participate effectively in the college application process, struggle with applying for financial aid, and often do not get awarded all the financial aid they qualify for. As a result, even the most highly qualified students either do not attend college, attend a college that does not engage their full potential, or do not complete their degrees. Working to facilitate a college-going culture, both inside and outside of the classroom, greatly increases students' college success.

The Coalition hopes to address these findings through its free online tools and increased transparency around admissions and financial aid.

"The fact that some highly motivated and well prepared students do not apply to and enroll in colleges they are best suited for is a persistent problem," said Barbara Gill, associate vice president for enrollment management at the University of Maryland. "This Coalition is working to mitigate this problem by empowering students from disadvantaged backgrounds to immediately identify a diverse set of schools that are likely to provide considerable financial support and will invest in their academic success."

Members of the Coalition include a diverse group of public universities that have affordable tuition, along with need-based financial aid for in-state residents, and private colleges and universities that provide sufficient financial aid to meet the full, demonstrated financial need of every domestic student they admit. Coalition schools graduate at least 70 percent of their students within six years, with many having much higher graduation rates.

"Coalition schools offer students incredible choice in location, size, selectivity, and mission, but we all share a commitment that the students we admit can afford to attend and will have a high likelihood of graduating," said James G. Nondorf, vice president for enrollment at the University of Chicago. "That should give students confidence that college is within their reach, and that they can be successful. We hope this effort will ultimately be successful in persuading many more students to aim for college and help ensure that they are prepared to do so."

The Coalition's online platform of college planning tools will be open to high school students starting in April 2016. Additional details about the application process enabled by this platform will be announced before summer of 2016. More information can be found at

coalitionforcollegeaccess.org.

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