



**PROPOSED COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS ASSESSMENT (CASA)
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Construct:

A college-going culture includes the environment, attitudes, and behaviors in schools and communities that support and encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools, and perspectives to ensure access to *and* success in postsecondary education.

The Problem:

According to the U.S. Department of Education, over 30% of students who complete high school in the United States do not immediately enroll in a postsecondary institution, a figure that has remained stagnant in the last decade, and 42% of 25- to 29-year-olds have no college education whatsoever. Substantial gaps in the college enrollment rate continue to persist as well based on race/ethnicity, family income, and parental education. Furthermore, in addition to evidence of substandard and disproportionate college access, degree completion rates remain troubling; 42% of students who immediately enroll in a four-year institution will not graduate within 6-years. Less than one-third of the U.S. population has completed a bachelor's degree and, although some progress has been made to increase bachelor's degree attainment overall, the bachelor's degree attainment gap between white and non-white students has widened in the last three decades. Considering the considerable earnings differences positively correlated with educational attainment, along with associated social benefits that include higher rates of civic engagement and healthier lifestyles, it would seem prudent to ensure that America's greatest resource, its people, are maximizing their potential by pursuing existing educational opportunities. Although existing research speaks to ways secondary schools can enhance their college-going culture, these schools do not currently have a reliable and comprehensive tool available that allows them to assess the extent to which they have a college-going culture, benchmark to other schools, and make targeted improvements where needed. If the United States hopes to have an economically productive and engaged citizenry in the 21st century, its secondary schools must have the capacity to evaluate and enhance ongoing efforts to boost college access and success.

The Proposed Solution:

CASA's foundation is comprised of three parts as informed by the School/University Partnership Program at UC Berkeley:

1. **Environment:** Assesses what schools are doing/offering to foster a college-going culture [draws upon research and best practices literature from Tierney, Conley, Kaufman, Kirst, and McDonough]
2. **Attitudes/Perceptions:** Assesses student attitudes regarding their perceived capacity to value, pursue, and complete a college degree

3. **Behaviors:** Measures the extent to which students are behaving in ways conducive to college-going and in ways that reflect college readiness

Using the proposed three-pronged approach, students from all grade levels within each school would be surveyed using three distinct assessment components and each school would be provided with a CASA Total Score as outlined below:

Component 1: Environment

- The survey of approximately 50 questions would measure the extent to which students perceive their schools help to foster a college-going culture
- Example questions might include:
 - Does your school have evening seminars available that educate students and their families about the financial aid application process?
 - How frequently does your school offer trips to visit colleges?
 - Does your school offer SAT preparation courses?

Component 2: Attitudes/Perceptions

- The survey of approximately 20 questions would assess the extent to which students perceive they have the capacity to value, pursue, and complete a college degree. The survey would include statements to which students would state their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale. Each statement includes one or more types of capital upon which college capital is dependent.
- Example statements might include:
 - A college degree is necessary to achieve my career goals;
 - At the completion of my senior year of high school, I will be academically prepared to succeed in college;
 - I know how to apply for financial aid.

Component 3: Behaviors

- The survey of approximately 30 questions would assess the extent to which students are behaving in ways conducive to college-going and in ways that reflect college readiness
- Example questions might include:
 - Thinking about this school year, how often have you attended class with readings or assignments completed?
 - Have you taken the SAT and/or ACT?
 - How many AP courses have you enrolled in?
 - Have you taken one or more courses at a college or university?
 - How many hours during a typical week do you spend doing volunteer work?

CASA Total Score

- An overall statistic made up of the sum of the three components for each school that can be benchmarked with other schools in the pool of participants

Outcomes:

Each participating school would receive three component reports – Environment, Attitudes/Perceptions, Behaviors – each comprised of descriptive statistics by survey item as well as an overall statistic for each component. Each participating school would also receive a CASA Total Score that would comprehensively assess the extent to which each school is facilitating a culture geared toward maximizing college access and success.

More specifically, this series of reports would allow secondary schools to annually:

- Examine the extent to which their educational environment is conducive to a college-going culture;
- Reveal the extent to which students believe they have a capacity to value, pursue, and complete a college degree;
- Highlight how students are making use of their time and opportunities both in and outside of the classroom.

In addition:

- Schools would be able to observe short-term and long-term trends pertaining to their college-going culture;
- The predictive value for each element of each component would be correlated with actual college-going and first-year college success/retention using a logistic regression
 - These predictive values would be reported to the schools, allowing the schools to effectively target their resources in ways that enhance their college-going culture
- Each component report and the CASA Total Score would be benchmarked to other schools within the pool of participating schools, and to schools with similar demographic profiles

All told, the College Access and Success Assessment (CASA) would provide a valuable snapshot of each school's college-going culture and inform ongoing efforts to more effectively target resources in ways that will create and foster a college-going and college-ready culture within America's high schools that will have real and lasting implications for the future success of our nation.