



**National Association for  
College Admission Counseling**

*Guiding the way to higher education*

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## Counseling and College Counseling In America's High Schools

Since we don't know how much time counselors spend in direct service, how much time do they spend on college advising? A NCES study found that counselors reported they spent only 13% of their time in college guidance, compared to 25% in personal development. According to the NCES study, only 43% of all public high schools reported that more than 20% of their counselors' time is spent on college advising. Using NCES's ratio of 315 students per counselor in high schools, and the estimate of hours the average school counselor spends on college counseling, **counselors are spending 38 minutes per year on each student** for college advising.

Moreover, helping students prepare for college or assisting students in enrolling in college is not written into any existing accountability system, any leadership performance evaluation, or any K-12 job description. Yet, most of the American public, journalists, and policymakers assume that adequate numbers and adequately trained high school counselors are doing this job. Major counseling textbooks used to train new counselors **rarely**, if ever, mention or index "college" or "college counseling." Consequently, coursework in graduate education rarely, if ever, includes training in college counseling.

A final comparison comes from private college counselors. Increasingly competitive college admissions have made college entry a complex, high risk, and stressful task. In the absence of cohesive college advising programs within schools (and sometimes even in the presence of such programs), some students and their parents have looked to private counselors to:

- provide access to specialized knowledge
- coach on tests and essays
- guide students through the admission process
- keep the admissions process organized and the student on schedule, and
- help with peer pressure and learning disabilities or other special circumstances.

Private counselors spend more time with college-bound students than any type of school-based counselor, public or private, and most are available both by phone and in-person during evenings or weekends (McDonough, 1994; McDonough et al. 1997).