From College and Career to Postsecondary Readiness Counseling: Latino, First-generation Perspectives in Arizona

Andrea Michelle Estolano

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

University of Washington

2024

Committee:

Ann Ishimaru

Jenee Myers Twitchell

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

College of Education

University of Washington

Abstract

From College and Career to Postsecondary Readiness Counseling: Latino, First-generation Perspectives in Arizona

Andrea Michelle Estolano

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Ann Ishimaru

College of Education

Abstract: How do first-generation Latino students work with their college and career center to prepare for postsecondary opportunities? What factors influence first-generation Latino students' postsecondary choices? This qualitative study focuses on one Arizona high school. It draws on data from five first-generation, Latino students and one college and career counselor's virtual interviews to share student experiences working with their college and career center for either a college or workforce pathway. The student data highlights overlooked needs and influences that impact their postsecondary readiness, access, and success. First-generation Latino students can benefit from their college and career center implementing funds of knowledge, community and parent partnerships, professional development to increase pathway knowledge for all school staff, and collaborations within school programs to support career exploration and skill building.

From College and Career to Postsecondary Readiness Counseling: Latino, First-generation Perspectives in Arizona

Throughout the past years, many different initiatives and programs have emerged with the intention of improving college-going cultures, college access, and postsecondary readiness for high school students. Many initiatives, reforms, and grants at the local and state levels have come together to envision equitable opportunities for historically underrepresented students. Many persistent barriers still discourage and restrict marginalized communities from pursuing higher education or finding career paths that differ from pursuing typical 4-year degrees. In response to unjust systemic policies, inadequate resources, unaffordable institutions, and lack of access to information, educators and school leaders wake up each day to work as allies against these injustices. One way high schools do this is through college and career centers, which commonly offer information, application assistance, career advice, and skill-building workshops.

Unfortunately, many gaps and shortcomings still affect marginalized students even with this available resource. This small community-based qualitative study examines first-generation, Latino students' experiences working with their college and career center in planning their next steps for postsecondary opportunities. The goal of this study is to highlight student needs that have been missed or that are unknown, and elucidate influences or gaps within the program. Understanding how we can best support students as they explore and prepare for postsecondary opportunities is important, as these students are community members, role models, and active members of society. As times change, policies and reforms reveal their effects on students, and as different students fill the school, students' needs change and transform. With this in mind, I designed this study to understand the experience and needs of recent students interested in both college and workforce pathways. The questions I aimed to answer are: How do first-generation,

Latino students work with their college and career center to prepare for postsecondary opportunities? What factors influence first-generation, Latino students' postsecondary choices?

Literature Review

Latino student participation in higher education has consistently increased over time. However, racial and ethnic disparities in college and workforce access continue. In the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's (NSCRC) report, data collected shows that "Latinos are more likely than their peers to still be enrolled beyond six years on their path to a degree," this is influenced by having a higher likelihood of beginning at a community college, being full-time or part-time workers, and experiencing mixed enrollment statuses (Santiago and Cuozzo, 2018, p.1). The article *Achieving the College Dreams? Examining Disparities in Access to College Information Among High Achieving and Non-High Achieving Latina Students* by Erin Kimura-Walsh et al. highlights how their state, which consists of a high Latino population, "cannot fail in its attempt to improve college access for its largest and fastest growing minority group as the state's future economic and social stability relies on having a diverse educated population" (2008, p. 299). One significant barrier between Latino students and college entry is the college and career counseling they have access to. The counselor-to-student ratio usually exceeds the recommended ratio of 250:1, averaging 385:1 in 2022-2023 (American School Counselor Association, 2023), making it challenging for the counselor and students to work together effectively.

Especially at low-income high schools, high caseloads and counselors' numerous and varying responsibilities affect the quality of the support they can provide their students. Counselors, among teachers and peers, are one of the students' central resources "in providing information and processing fee waivers for standardized testing and college applications"

(Kimura-Walsh et al., 2008, p. 300). It is not enough to simply have access to this eminent resource. Students need to be made aware of it early enough to meet detrimental deadlines, seek financial aid, and be able to explore internships or apprenticeships with enough time. The author suggests, through previous research, that counselors with heavy caseloads shift their focus to high-achieving students and the most disruptive students by choice or by assignment (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2008).

Historically, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students also face the barrier of "deficient perceptions of intellectual ability based on race or ethnicity" from educators, administrators, and school leaders (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2008, p. 301). These deficit notions deny students access to basic college preparatory information about attending and financing college or the opportunity to take honors and AP courses. These deficit notions can also deny students access to technical schools, apprenticeships, and internships that would support students' journeys in their chosen fields. Kimura-Walsh et al.'s article is guided by an Opportunity to Learn (OTL) framework that "illuminates contextual factors that may affect student access and achievement within and between schools… OTL is often used to identify linkages between school context and learning outcomes as a way of recognizing and assessing levels of educational inequality" (2008, p. 302). Thus, in this study, I use this framework, and funds of knowledge, to guide the understanding of factors that influence first-generation Latino students' postsecondary choices and preparation.

Obstacles Counselors Face

State legislation, district policies, school leadership, and administration all play a role in appointing efficient college and career counselors as well as academic counselors and ensuring the counselor-student ratio and caseloads follow appropriate guidelines. Mary Kate Blake's

article *Other Duties as Assigned: The Ambiguous Role of the High School Counselor,* studies how schools utilize counselors and the pressure they feel from "role ambiguity and role conflict due to lack of a clear job description, overlap with similar professions, supervision by non-counseling administrators, inadequate forms of performance evaluation, and conflict between their roles as counselors and educators" (2020, p. 1). High school counselors struggle with overwhelming workloads that take away from time with students, such as overseeing and organizing different student programs. As a result of less face-to-face time with students, they find themselves providing one-size-fits-all counseling.

An attempt to resolve this issue has been made by hiring more counselors. However, counselors need to be trained effectively and have their time used appropriately for this to be effective. For this reason, it is crucial for "research [to] incorporate an educational, organizational theory approach to…clarify the high school counseling work environment and, by extension, how this environment affects the way counselors serve students" (Blake, 2020, p. 316). This study gathered data from observations and interviews with high school counselors and administration to interrogate school counselors' training and organizational structure. The counselor position first began by focusing on student mental health, and then their duties expanded to include academic and postsecondary counseling to students.

Role Theory helps explain how behaviors are connected to one's social identity, which for counselors means that their role requirements, expectations, and how school leadership perceives their work influences the work they do. To combat role ambiguity and conflict, counselors need their jobs to be clearly defined at the outset, as "how they are supervised within schools/districts, and the duties they are assigned all play a major part in how their roles are framed" (Blake, 2020, p. 317). Role ambiguity can happen when one doesn't have enough

information or preparation for the tasks they are being asked to perform or the outcomes demanded (Blake, 2020). On top of their formal expectations, counselors are often met with informal expectations and desires from others, such as teachers, administrators, and families, that lead to role conflict. Counselors are asked to support students' mental health, academics, behaviors, dual enrollment and CTE credits, and schedule planning for the following years, among other tasks that vary throughout schools' needs. Role ambiguity and role conflict lead to poor job performance, stress, and burnout. The lack of an effective evaluation and supervision system for counselors negatively affects how stakeholders understand their purpose and their value to the school (Blake, 2020). Additionally, it is difficult for counselors to be supervised by administrators who do not understand their role yet significantly influence their organization, goals, and decision-making -- especially regarding students' socio-emotional needs. In many cases, counselors are placed in a position where they must choose between doing what is best for the student or what is best for the school. Therefore, in my study, I examine the organization and support structures at an Arizona high school's college and career center and the relationships between the center and first-generation students as they work towards postsecondary opportunities.

Postsecondary Readiness

There are studies and reports that show assessments of students' post-secondary readiness. For example, in Washington state, Washington STEM "expanded a pilot project with four schools to understand persistent inequities in college and career readiness along the lines of race, income, gender, and geography" (Tavares, 2022, p.2). The report *High School to Postsecondary: Improving Outcomes Through Inclusive School-Based Inquiry* by Henedina Tavares (2022), with support from the Washington STEM team, helps us understand the

influences educators' perceptions and knowings have on students' postsecondary beliefs and understandings. This information is vital as it acknowledges that postsecondary counseling is not the only influencing factor or resource in students' postsecondary preparation and readiness. Educators also serve as a resource for postsecondary readiness and understanding of opportunities. The findings show equity gaps shared by students and educators, such as accessing postsecondary information early and insufficient professional development to support students' career and college needs and training. Survey findings show a "significant discrepancy between student aspirations for postsecondary plans compared with staff perceptions of student aspirations," with K-12 staff under-reporting student aspirations for pursuing higher education by 20% (Tavares, 2022, p.5).

Tavares' (2022) report further shows that high school staff carry a stronger understanding of 2-year and 4-year college requirements and information, given their current certified positions require advanced education, compared to other options, such as 1-year certificate programs that satisfy other fields. With this circumstance, high school students in upper grades were found to be more knowledgeable about college programs and requirements than 1-year certification programs. Upper grades were also found to be more knowledgeable about postsecondary opportunities than lower grades in high school. Additionally, for students interested in college or programs requiring financial aid, it can be crucial for educators to understand FAFSA. In this study's sample size,

> 6 out of 10 educators were knowledgeable about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)...5 out of 10 educators were knowledgeable about scholarships and that only 3 out of 10 educators had knowledge about the Washington Application for State

Financial Aid (WASFA)—state financial aid for DREAMers (students who are undocumented or who do not have recognized US citizenship) (Tevaras, 2022, p.6). Educators' knowledge of these processes is essential as it influences students' beliefs of what opportunities they can access and sustain.

College and career centers present themselves to students as promoters of both pathways. One of the challenges students and schools face regarding postsecondary preparation is not having enough opportunities for students to build lifelong skills and apply them to various scenarios as they learn. In *Improving College and Career Readiness Through Challenge-based Learning* by Carl Shuptrine, students are under-prepared for post-graduation obstacles (2013). This includes high-achieving students who find themselves underprepared in college with inadequate skills in problem-solving, taking initiative, and intrinsic motivation to navigate unknown challenges. This study examined "the relationship between project-based learning, career technical education (CTE), and the establishment of community and business partners to increase student motivation while simultaneously preparing secondary students for a variety of post-secondary environments" (2013, p.181). Students were faced with increasing community awareness for one class where they used challenge-based learning to solve problems. Learning skills and then navigate how to use them as a group without an instructor sharing step-by-step instructions helped their intrinsic motivation and grew the purpose they felt in that class. The findings express the importance of CTE programs collaborating with core subject classes in project-based learning, which "enable students to develop the skills needed to navigate the challenging situations encountered in postsecondary environments while simultaneously connecting classroom learning to personally relevant, real-world applications" (2013, p. 187). In

my study, I examine the opportunities first-generation students have to explore college and workforce pathways.

High School Counseling for Marginalized Students

In 2012, Savitz-Romer's phenomenological study documented that school counselors felt unprepared to support students in their college-going process, especially supporting marginalized students. A few themes and issues counselors shared in this study were students' low and misinformed expectations, student apathy, and student's personal challenges (Savitz-Romer, 2012). Students struggle with believing they can achieve certain postsecondary goals because they do not understand the benefits compared to the cost or the opportunities that vary from opportunities they have personally seen in their communities. Marginalized students rely on counselors as a resource for social capital as their networks may lack resources and information that can adequately help them plan and achieve their goals. These issues and themes provide a window for what marginalized students need their counselors and educators to consider while working together. For this reason, my study predominantly centers on current and recent first-generation Latino students' experiences and needs.

Social Capital and Funds of Knowledge

Educators, academic counselors, and college and career counselors have the ability to increase students' social capital, networks and relationships, for postsecondary opportunity access. Marginalized students don't always have people in their lives to give them first-hand knowledge and advice about college or new career pathways. First-generation Latino students and their families ultimately rely on school staff for guidance. Families and students should be able to "secure important information and resources from school personnel that will assist with students' postsecondary educational transitions" to establish strong postsecondary readiness

(Holland, 2010, p.112). Postsecondary counseling's adequate use of funds of knowledge can also serve as a resource to increase students' social capital. Since first-generation students cannot depend on their families for all information regarding college and career pathways, counselors' must understand where students' conceptions of these pathways come from. Many conceptions come from students' family and community networks, such as seeing or hearing about a family member's positive or negative experience attempting a college pathway (Kiyama, 2017).

To utilize students' funds of knowledge to increase social capital, postsecondary counseling must acknowledge students' current social capital. Funds of knowledge can allow counselors to value the knowledge, resources, and connections embedded in students, families, and communities. It can also allow space for acknowledging Latino culture, which plays a role in students' conceptions of their futures. For example, in *Learning from Latino Families* by Susan Auerbach (2011), Latino parents shared how they support their students through motivation and encouragement, and always highlight the importance of education at home. One school's partnership with families and parents allowed it to bridge the gap between school ideologies of parental involvement and authentic parental involvement that nurtured parents' voices. Recognizing all first-generation Latino students and their families already possess, can inform and assist counselors in suitably supporting marginalized students. Thus, in this study, I examine how first-generation, Latino students engage with the college and career center staff and services while being influenced by their own life experiences.

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative study uses the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) framework alongside the funds of knowledge framework to examine and offer an informal evaluation of the college and career center at a high school in Arizona. OTL helps recognize the importance of historical and

current context to understand how college preparation occurs for students at all levels, including high or non-high-achieving levels. OTL indicators that facilitate college access and preparation include college counseling, college recruitment information, contact information about general and specialized pre-college preparation programs (e.g., after-school initiatives, summer programs, CTE programs, internships), and information or workshops about college applications, fee waivers, and financial aid (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2008, p. 302). OTL can also be expanded to recognize the historical and current contexts of the workforce for marginalized students, along with the funds of knowledge framework that specifically recognizes cultural differences and knowledge gaps.

The funds of knowledge framework allows alternative ways to view and critique the college and career center's services to support students, how success is conveyed, minoritized student experiences, and roles of cultural differences. The funds of knowledge framework partly originated from a collaborative qualitative study in education and anthropology, and it highlights the importance of understanding and valuing the skills and knowledge that come from the household and how they can serve as assets for learning and making further connections (Moll et.al, 1992). Where I conducted my study, many students are first-generation students compared to the majority of the school staff who have attended a form of higher education. The funds of knowledge framework grants us the ability to see these differences and acknowledge historical and current processes that may reproduce certain biases and deficit thinking.

There are a few ways to define the funds of knowledge framework. However, they all encapsulate the importance of including and valuing the knowledge students bring from home and their life experiences and accepting that different members of households can hold valuable knowledge apart from formal academics (Hogg, 2012). As I listened to students' experiences, the

questions about who influenced their pathway choice, if their families/guardians were invited to be involved, and how they prepared for their chosen pathway provided insight into the relationship between funds of knowledge and postsecondary opportunities and support through an OTL lens.

Methods

I collect information from interviews with five students and one college and career counselor in this qualitative study. The college and career counselor's interview increased my understanding of the college and career center's services and the relationship the center has with students. The data collection took place virtually, as students and the counselor were interviewed via Zoom during the end of winter break and the first days back in school for the Spring semester. The students were purposefully selected to represent a range of experiences. During these interviews, I was able to collect data on shared first-generation, Latino student experiences of working with their college and career center for either a college pathway or a workforce pathway. From these interviews, I identify common themes that portray the influences and needs that impacted student postsecondary decisions and student relationships with the college and career center.

Carlo, Elena, Daniel, Isabel, and Alex (all names are pseudonyms), the five students whose experiences I present for this small qualitative study, are all first-generation, Latino students who recently attended or are currently enrolled at Copper View High School (CVHS), an Arizona public high school. CVHS has a population of about 1,724 students with a 61% Hispanic enrollment and about 64.6% total enrollment in their free and reduced lunch program (Highschools.com). The majority of students at this high school hold minority identities, with many Spanish-speaking students, but the school's personnel is majority white and

English-speaking. Most students enrolled at CVHS live in poverty: the college counselor shared that their zip code is “one of the lowest zip codes in [their city], and [they] experience a lot of students that don’t live with biological parents, they may be considered youth on their own, at risk or homeless" (personal communication). The city where the school is located is not classified as a border town. However, it is an hour away from the Mexican border. Therefore, the student population at CVHS has substantial diversity in immigration status.

This project was designed to investigate the support and services offered by the school’s college and career center compared to what first-generation, Latino students share they need. CVHS’s college and career center includes one college and career counselor, Anna, who works closely with nine fellow school counselors and volunteers to provide workshops, career fairs, and application assistance as described in the following.

College and Career Center

Anna is in her fourth year as a college and career counselor and has spent the past couple of years redesigning the college and career center’s initiatives. The center offers consistent workshops that inform and assist students with college requirements, searching for programs, scholarships, and FAFSA, and inviting organizations to come speak with students. Students are allowed to apply for internal scholarships, which are funded through a foundation the school organizes. The program's current goals are “to amplify opportunities for all students, whether that is in regards to college plans, getting a job right after high school, going into a trade school, gaining an apprenticeship opportunity, going to the military, or maybe taking a year off to figure life out,” shared Anna (personal communication).

In recent years, Anna has been monitoring students’ progress by tracking how many go to college and trade schools, how many apply to college by December, and how many have

completed FAFSA by February. This helps compare progress year to year and see what is effective. The program counts on students communicating with and encouraging one another to seek resources and participate. Recently, their student participation has remained consistently high. Anna shared, “We’re having so many students scheduling an appointment to where we are just inundated and we’re getting overwhelmed, our calendars are just too full” (personal communication). From the counselor’s point of view, some struggling areas for the center were shared, such as time capacity, low staffing, and involving families to participate in these postsecondary readiness resources.

The way CVHS’s college and career center is organized and led by one college counselor is common among low-income public high schools. This allows us to recognize that obstacles, services, and relationships shared throughout the study, may be common for college and career centers in low-SES high schools with large first-generation Latino populations.

Participants and qualitative interviews

Carlo and Elena are currently high school seniors. Carlo has chosen the workforce pathway to become a barber, while Elena has chosen the college pathway towards either community college or a 4-year university. As high school seniors, both Carlo and Elena had a guardian present who, although they preferred their students to answer most questions, did give input from their own perspectives. Daniel, Isabel, and Alex are high school graduates who received their diplomas in May of 2023. They all chose the college pathway during their senior year of high school. However, once enrolled, Daniel stayed on that 4-year university pathway, Isabel transferred to community college after her first semester, and Alex chose to leave school halfway through his first semester to follow his entrepreneurial goals. Anna is now in her fourth year as a college and career counselor but previously worked as a counseling assistant for the

school. She has spent the past few years redesigning the college and career center, attempting to reimagine how the counseling office can support students in preparing and accessing higher education. Future goals for the college and career center are to connect more with the community for career opportunities and to build their relationship with the CTE program at the school.

Data Collection

All participants were invited to join this study through shared acquaintances, direct messages, and emails requesting their interest. Initially, high school students' parents or guardians were invited to answer all questions. However, they requested for their student to respond to all questions and for themselves to add comments. Students who had already graduated from high school were invited to participate independently. The interviews were designed to be about 45 minutes long. However, each varied in time, some being a bit shorter. They all received an email with their date, time, and Zoom link. They were each given the topic and purpose of the interview, but no questions were asked in advance.

Each interview shared the same style of questions but was designed specifically for the path the students had shared to have taken: college pathway or workforce pathway. The interview questions also differed by whether the student was currently in high school or graduated (see Appendix for questions). At the beginning of each interview, the topic and purpose were briefly introduced, after which students would introduce themselves and their current pathway. During the interviews, some questions were modified and adapted to what students were sharing. All students and guardians were notified that the interviews were recorded from beginning to end. They all gave verbal consent to share their experiences within this study to support the findings.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed manually from the individual recordings, and each participant was given a pseudonym. Five of the six interviews were in English and transcribed exactly as recorded. Then, I edited the transcription to remove filler words and student identifiers. One interview was done in Spanish and then translated into English, by me, as it was transcribed. The transcript was also edited to remove filler words and any student identifiers. Any changes made to the transcripts were for clarity. In the findings section, those small changes will be noted in brackets. There was no additional communication with participants as I began to analyze the data collected.

After listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts multiple times, I used inductive coding to group information into themes and develop codes from those themes. Initially, the grouping began with finding commonalities in experiences or student beliefs that influenced their decisions and pathway choices. Four themes emerged throughout the five student interviews: internalized individualism, college or nothing, the opportunity to explore, and financial influence, understanding, and impact. Despite the difference in pathways, there were still commonalities between each experience. The four themes support the importance of the needs and influences gathered, while the data collected provides evidence of how they impact first-generation, Latino students' postsecondary readiness and opportunities.

Positionality Statement

I must be fully transparent with my own positionality which influences how this study was conducted and the themes explored. As mentioned previously, the study aims to understand how first-generation, Latino students at this particular high school work with their college and career center in order to prepare, access, and succeed in postsecondary opportunities. As a first-generation college student, who immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, I experienced many

of the obstacles this community faces when accessing and preparing for higher education. I also stood by the side of many peers who did not want to pursue higher education and did not know what steps to take or what was possible for them. After being a college student for a year, I finally encountered resources and mentors who helped me succeed within my chosen pathway. At the same time, I saw others who did not encounter those resources and mentors in time and were forced by their circumstances and barriers to walk away from certain opportunities or goals.

Those experiences and identities help me pay attention to organizations and systems and how they may limit students' postsecondary preparation and opportunity access or reproduce barriers. With this in mind, I looked for a school whose demographic shared those experiences and wanted to find a way to give back to this community by acknowledging and validating their experiences and searching for a sustainable way forward that addresses the needs established. A significant difference between my experiences and the students' is their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic in high school. This pandemic brought on many barriers and challenges, along with positive and negative changes for students, that I did not experience as a high school student.

Findings

Throughout the five student interviews, there were commonalities between students' experiences that convey overlooked needs within the services, support, and knowledge students have received or are currently receiving in high school through the college and career center. Some overlooked needs expand beyond college and career counseling towards the college-going culture school-wide; others are rooted in students' lifelong exposure to the norms schools commonly push. The counselor interview acknowledges and supports some of the found needs and gaps, while not all, and shares limitations that college and career counseling face, from time

capacity to legislative restrictions. Overall, this small qualitative study has served as a community-based evaluation that can help us acknowledge the following needs, gaps, and influences, while allowing us to seek connections with available literature to guide us in working towards fulfilling first-generation, Latino student needs.

Internalized Individualism

A common thread between students both in high school and recent high school graduates is their belief that their success depends on them: that they solely carry the weight of their future. The students described their experience navigating their future plans by seeking information from their college counselor and academic counselors, achieving good grades, and attending workshops and college field trips. Carlo, a high school senior, shared, "It is up to the student to know what they need to do," bringing the idea of individualism, where one should think and act independently, and not rely on others to light (personal communication). It is not unusual for first-generation, Latino students to feel they need to bear the weight of their schooling and future planning alone. Latino home ideals differ from schooling ideals regarding individualism, as their cultural and familial ways encourage more collectivistic ways of supporting each other through various roles. Schools and teachers promote more individualistic ways of being successful, responsible, and independent in school settings. A credible point of reference can be Angela Valenzuela's (1994) work referring to the relationship between familialism and achievement. If we take a look at one group of Latinos, Mexicans, we can find deficit depictions of how familialism hinders socioeconomic success. However, these assumptions are drawn from cultural ties to Mexican culture's unwillingness "of youth to move away from extended family in order to pursue occupational and educational opportunities" (Valenzuela and Dornbusch, 1994, p. 20). Believing this deficit notion ignores systemic barriers that affect geographic mobility and the

positive impact of familialism and community. Referring back to Auerbach's *Learning from Latino Families*, we can see one positive example of how involving families and working "with them to develop relational power to accomplish goals of common interest" benefits the students, the school, and the community (Auerbach, 2011, p. 21). Above all, it can help support the weight that first-generation Latino students currently carry alone.

From an early age, students are told that their choices and hard work determine their success. Elena, a high school senior, shared that the college and career counselor shares plenty of opportunities with students. Still, again, "it is up to [them] if [they] want them," reinforcing the notion that they're solely responsible for the opportunities they take or pass (personal communication). This belief doesn't acknowledge the many barriers that may be at play in a student's circumstance. Even as one, now college student prepared for college, Daniel shared that his reason for seeking out the college counselor at the beginning of his senior year was because he "wanted to make sure that [he] was able to have everything [he] needed to graduate" (personal communication). It is interesting to learn how every step of preparation for graduation and post-graduation opportunities came from students seeking information and support on their own. Anna, the college counselor, supported this concept, as she affirmed that students are expected to seek their services independently. She shared that students make their appointments, "[reach] out to their counselors, [make] appointments with me, [come] in during their free hours before school, after school, and during lunch" (personal communication).

When asked about their family involvement throughout their processes, most students indicated they couldn't ask their family for help since their parents had not attended college. Daniel shared, "No one in my family had ever gone to college. I am…independent with my family, so I did it just me" (personal communication). Again, this is very common among

first-generation students. Various discourses on this topic show that Latino families encourage further schooling for their students, especially if they, as parents, did not have the privilege to pursue further education themselves. The lack of technical knowledge brings obstacles as students navigate a system they and their families have not accessed before. So, with Latino families encouraging students to pursue further education and schools pushing a college-going culture, it leads students to believe that they must do it all on their own. All five students conveyed that they sought information on their own, only accepted application assistance from a college counselor, and felt the need to leave their families and other support systems outside the process.

Through Anna's and the students' perspectives, going through the process independently and individually prepares students for life after high school. Carlo, Isabel, and Alex all mentioned that postsecondary students need to be able to advocate for themselves, find resources on their own, and be independent. Yet, Isabel and Alex did not feel prepared once those challenges arrived. Going through the processes alone put them in a position where they felt like they were failing if they weren't figuring things out themselves. Anna shared, "when you look at the research especially human development in adolescents, most of the impact is going to be peer-to-peer contact. They may not listen to parents as much, they may not listen to teachers and administrators" (personal communication). This reinforces the push for students to be solely responsible for the resources they access, which can hinder their ability to ask for help, find mentors, and learn how to begin looking for resources they need, even if their peers do not need those same resources. These challenges were shared through Isabel's and Alex's experiences, and Isabel shared that once she was in college, she didn't know where to seek help or if the college even offered similar resources to the college and career center.

College or Nothing…

Only one of the three graduates who walked that high school graduation stage together found their chosen path fitting. All three high school graduates interviewed took on the college pathway their senior year. They all held good academic standing, and as they spoke with their college counselor, they found that applying to a 4-year university was a possibility for them. They sought out information, application workshops, and scholarship opportunities. They were met with support and care at each step of the process. Daniel shared, "I [visited] my counselor a lot. She taught me the ropes. I told her I came from a family that has never [attended] college. So, no one in my house could help me the way she did" (personal communication). Isabel shared, "My [academic] counselor was always the first person I would go to, and if she didn't have advice for me, I would go straight to the college and career counselor. I love her. She was so helpful in everything". Overall, the support for the college pathway is remarkable. Every student interviewed expresses the care they feel and have felt from the academic and college counseling counselors, which is noticeably different from the dominant norm in literature.

Two of the three students decided to leave their 4-year university halfway through the first semester or at the end of it. Alex chose the workforce pathway, while Isabel transferred to a community college due to the unexpected workload and stress of attending a 4-year college and life after high school. Their journeys give us insight into the influences that drove them to enroll at a 4-year university right after high school and why it was not fitting or sustainable for them.

Alex, a high school graduate who unenrolled midway through his first semester, shared that throughout senior year, his only plan was to attend college. He, too, wanted to be the first in his family to pursue higher education, seek resources available, and succeed. As he began his college journey, he became aware of the uncertainty he felt about attending college. He came to

see it as a rushed decision. Alex shared, “I think college is great if you know what you want to do, if you have a plan, and if you’re ready to take action on that plan. If it is up in the air… you should take some time to figure it out” (personal communication). He participated in college and career days and workshops throughout his senior year, but everyone involved seemed mainly focused on college. There weren’t enough people sharing their experiences with different routes, such as entrepreneurship, which is the path he has taken. Once he left college, he began his own business that is currently successfully growing.

Taking the path toward entrepreneurship was never something he believed he would do; it was a spontaneous opportunity that bloomed the summer after graduation when the feeling of uneasiness about the path he had believed to be the right one began to grow. During high school, Alex said, “It [felt] like they just wanted to get people into college. I don't think college is the only way; that is where I was misled. It was a big fear factor playing into how it is the only way to be successful” (personal communication). As he reflected on his journey, he voiced the need for the college and career center to be more “50-50 with college AND career [guest-speakers] coming to the school. More variety [needs] to be given to the students" to allow them to explore all the successful pathways, not just college or nothing.

Isabel, a high school graduate who transferred to community college after one semester at a 4-year university, had a similar experience with the influence of seeing enrolling in a 4-year college as the only right step forward. During her senior year, her mind was set on colleg. She saw her older sibling attend a 4-year university and succeed and felt she could follow in their footsteps. She felt supported as she applied for scholarships and even more confident in her choice of college as she received those scholarships. Her grades were good, and she listened as her teachers expressed their perception of college right after high school in a very exclusive and

positive way, so her expectation of college was that it would be great. As she navigated that first semester of college, the reality did not come close to those expectations. The workload was extensively more than in high school and so were the stress levels. Isabel encountered the crossroads of becoming a working student, but it felt impossible with the abundance of schoolwork. Her community college friends were taking similar coursework but at a lower volume. Her friends were able to maintain a school and work-life balance that did not seem feasible to her at the university.

In reflecting on her journey, Isabel voiced the need for high school and college and career center to be more honest about the realities of college, including the processes once enrolled in college, like coursework loads, being a working student, and highlighting community college as a great option. She said, “A lot of it has to do with the teachers. They have students perceive college after high school in a specific way…I think being able to have the counselors talk to students about what college actually is [is important in stopping] teachers influencing students the wrong way”. In connection with Washington STEM’s (2022) report, this underlines the misconceptions and biases that can so easily flow from educators and school staff towards students who may already be carrying their own misconceptions and biases. It potentially leads students to miss opportunities or, as shared by Isabel, influences them to make decisions they do not fully understand, agree with, or can sustain. She followed by saying, “I think [students] want to go straight into university to prove a point to themselves and others, so let them know it is okay to go to community college” if that is what fits best with their circumstances and resources (personal communication).

It is crucial to note teachers, counselors, and peers' influence on students’ postsecondary preparation and choices. As important as it is to encourage and support students’ preparation and

access to college, especially historically underserved students, it is equally as important to serve them the same level of encouragement and support as they explore various opportunities. There is more than one way to succeed. Many teachers, counselors, and school staff hold 4-year college degrees and experiences with higher education, so it is understandable for one to promote their own experiences and see them as the best paths. It is a joy to know that the college-going culture at this Arizona high school is strong. At the same time, we need to be able to acknowledge the difference between supporting students to attend college and feeding into the fear that college is the only path to success.

Opportunity to Explore

Throughout the interviews, the students' need for opportunities to explore their options, who they are, and where they would like to go to succeed was immanent. Career fairs, although offered by the college and career center, did not help students see their ability to explore different paths, interests, or opportunities that varied from college. A few students mentioned more than once that the efforts that go into college and career preparation and information did not feel equal. The push for college overshadowed other career options. One career option brought up by students apart from college was technical schools. However, they seemed to know very little about those options, summing it up to be only for technical jobs like electricians. This reflected the lack of information about technical schools, their programs, and the relevant connection to those already in those fields.

A common thread within the need for the opportunity to explore was the need to understand more about life after high school. Some of these students had not held a job before graduating, which made their understanding of work, school, and life balance inadequate for overcoming new challenges and adapting to new environments. It also led to rushed decisions to

enroll in college without understanding what they truly wanted to do. Alex shared, “For a lot of [students] when they are in high school, they are not really living that adult life yet” (personal communication). There is a lot that either families, guardians, or the school controls that students may not be aware of. The school day from 8 am to 3 pm holds a lot of routines and resources on campus for students to easily access. After graduation, students hit a hard realization of losing those routines, not seeing their peers daily, and not having a constant adult to tell them what is next. It becomes very daunting to students who might have felt they had everything figured out but then realize that the playing field is now new and unknown.

As Alex now thrives in his position as an entrepreneur with his window cleaning and installing company, he shared, “I think what would be beneficial is to offer eye-opening experiences and opportunities that include entrepreneurs coming to the school and sharing their experiences”. He came across this opportunity and skill set as he spent the summer after graduation installing art for a local artist whom he happened to come in contact. The goal he hopes is achieved is to allow students to understand what an entrepreneur is. Expanding this idea, students shared the need for a deeper understanding of what opportunities are available, what they look like, and what they could bring to their lives. As mentioned in the previous section, high school students fear failur and carry it with them as they seek and prepare for postsecondary opportunities. Offering opportunities to explore who they are and where they would like to go must go beyond career fairs. This could look like career workshops that allow students to work in groups to find opportunities, listen to guest speakers from various careers and technical schools, and see what skills are needed to succeed in those interests they find. Throughout the interviews, the students conveyed interest in these options. Carlo shared that his next step is a barber internship that will lead to a full-time job as a barber. When asked where he found that

opportunity, he shared, “I was told by my barber who works at that barber shop. He let me know that that is where he did his internship, and the owner is able to do that for young barbers” (personal communication). It is community connections such as this one that could open the door to possibilities for students. Supporting exploration, understanding, and preparation for after graduation is essential for students as shared through the students' experiences.

Financial Influences, Understanding, and Impact

Students’ finances are essential to their choices and access to resources, networks, and ability to sustain those choices. The qualitative data collected supports financial aid’s influence on students’ choice to attend a 4-year university versus community college and the impact that immigration laws have on financial aid. All students interviewed identify as low-income students with varying citizenship status. As they have made and are making decisions for their futures, their socioeconomic status has stayed at the forefront of their decision-making and understanding. Socioeconomic status is a factor that should also be at the forefront of our minds as educators and educational leaders.

Students shared how the scholarships were mostly for 4-year universities right after graduation. Among many other pressures, the idea that because they received scholarships to fund their first year at a 4-year university, they must attend or give up on a huge opportunity influenced their decisions. This influenced their choice of attending a university instead of a community college too. Then, once at the chosen university, they realized their scholarships did not work the way they believed. One student shared how no one explained how the money breakdown worked, “I didn't know financial aid got cut in half or that you need to apply to FAFSA every year” (personal communication). It left them trying to figure out what to do next alone.

On the other hand, an experience shared by Elena, an undocumented student who plans on attending college, shows the impacts of immigration laws in Arizona. The college and career center offers information to all state and community colleges, offers workshops, and help students apply for scholarships. Elena shared, “They do offer a lot of scholarships, but most of them have [citizenship] requirements… Even with community college, they say you don't need that much money there. It is cheaper, but it still costs money that many families don’t have” (personal communication). Elena’s mother shared, “In reality, what we need is financial help”.

The school these students attend or have attended holds a graduation requirement for all students to complete the FAFSA their senior year. This leaves a very prominent target on undocumented students who then are forced to disclose their citizen status to the school. However, the student and their mother voiced that although there is a lot of motivational support, and information is constantly shared, those efforts do not include specific support and resources for undocumented families. Making the FAFSA a graduation requirement that fails to acknowledge different citizenship statuses throughout the schools’ demographics, increases the urgent need for resources, scholarships, and opportunities that center undocumented students. Anna, the college counselor, mentioned in her interview how she is “really aware [of this situation] and [is] a huge advocate for undocumented populations … [and is] always trying to find loopholes to make sure [her] students and families are protected especially when you come to things like FAFSA”. The school does exempt students from this requirement when it is brought to their attention, but the goal must be to ensure the school’s undocumented communities are protected and supported.

Conclusion

Student experiences open a window of opportunity for conversations that acknowledge students' realities and needs. It is an opportunity to improve, innovate, and collaborate in ways that center their experiences and make room for their families to support them in a more inclusive form. Overall, the consistent influences and needs shared in this study were: the internalized obligation to do everything independently, a perception that college is the only path to success, not having enough opportunities to explore and understand various pathways, and the influence and impact financial aid and status holds over students and families. While support and many incredible resources are available for students at this college and career center, it is important to acknowledge any overlooked needs and gaps that may be quietly hiding or emerging. The expectation of students preparing and planning their futures individually or relying on their peers to encourage where they seek resources hinders their preparation and access to opportunities, as shared by students' postsecondary experiences. It raises the question of how much their postsecondary preparation and readiness would benefit if they were encouraged to move away from individualistic habits and learn how to work collectively. How much more prepared would they be if they learned how to use each other as resources, how to ask for help, and where to find support in adaptable ways? This study allows a small window into potential improvements and collaborations that can support students' postsecondary readiness and access.

These five students bravely shared their experiences and insights to hopefully point us towards ways we can learn from them and improve postsecondary readiness and access to opportunities. Daniel learned about an internship opportunity from his barber and Alex began his entrepreneurial journey by working with a local artist. Increasing their social capital through their community, highlights the importance of connections with community members to increase

postsecondary opportunities and readiness for various pathways. Other students shared how their families supported and inspired their college pathway. Elena's mother is a great example of parents encouraging their students to continue their education and being eager to access financial information that will allow them to support their students' goals. Each student experience gives us insight into their realities, support systems, and needs. They all have meaningful community connections that CVHS and their college and career center could invite and collaborate with to support their postsecondary readiness and success.

Implications

As I began examining how first-generation, Latino students work with their college and career center at this one Arizona high school, the research and language was focused on college and career counseling. Yet, the topics covered by college and career counseling and the school's college and career center did not fully match what the students' experiences were highlighting. As the study developed and findings began to be explored, it became clear that postsecondary readiness counseling better encapsulates the needs of first-generation, Latino students' postsecondary preparation. Postsecondary readiness counseling "is a developmental process that engages young people in developing postsecondary aspirations and expectations, gaining awareness of one's interests and abilities, and receiving support and information" to access opportunities (Savitz-Romer, 2012, p.98). The college and career center may consider redefining their center to emphasize to students that postsecondary readiness includes more than college readiness, is not defined by their current understanding of careers, and is able to center their interests, needs, and goals. Moving towards postsecondary readiness counseling, rather than focusing and promoting only college and career support, allows space to explore how student and community needs and opportunities may shift over time.

Implications for Practice

Postsecondary counselors and teachers can draw from funds of knowledge to reframe how they view postsecondary readiness and access to various learning and career opportunities for first-generation, Latino students. By reframing how students are viewed, students' experiences and lives are embraced as strong influences in their academics and postsecondary goal setting. Drawing from funds of knowledge encourages and allows counselors and educators to offer opportunities for first-generation students to "find greater meaning [in] what they are learning, as they see the value of their own knowledge and experiences reflected" in their career exploration and learning environments (Delima, 2019, p.207). Additionally, by having "deep personal value in what they are learning, [first-generation students] can further develop their academic growth and persistence in higher education" and other postsecondary endeavors (Delima, 2019, p.207).

Many teachers already use funds of knowledge to engage students in core subjects and help them make connections. It is an approach that the college and career center can implement in their teaching and learning about different pathways, career exploration, and community involvement. Delima explains,

> Teachers are able to deeply interrogate their own preconceived notions of their students' learning capabilities and recognize and utilize the valuable academic resources that already exist in students' lives. Teachers then develop a curriculum that actively engages their students' homes and communities as part of the classroom's teaching and learning experience. (2019, p.206)

Postsecondary counselors and teachers may consider adapting this approach to college and career conversations and planning to include all students and their realities. This may engage students

in thinking about their futures without reinforcing fears, increasing stress, or misunderstanding their opportunities.

Additionally, adequately integrating funds of knowledge can increase community and parent involvement, which are linked to student achievement. Afterschool program initiatives, summer programs, community internships, collaborations with academic courses and CTE programs, and parent partnerships assist in increasing engagement and support. The OTL framework helps us recognize links between programs and services, like these, that benefit students' postsecondary readiness at all levels. Postsecondary counseling and the school can benefit from examining effective examples of parent and community partnerships, such as the one shared by Susan Auerbach to begin working towards cultivating relationships that bring "parents to the table in a true spirit of partnership to learn and work together for the mutual benefit of schools, families, and communities" (2011, p. 21). The shared advice highlights the importance of validating families' and students' cultures to bridge the gap between school ideologies and Latino cultural ideologies. We see through students' experience with internalized individualism that this bridging and partnership is needed.

In partnership with the college and career center, the school may consider the benefits of professional development regarding teachers and counselors understanding the many different pathways for postsecondary and their processes, financial requirements, and resources. Throughout student conversations, it was clear that most college and career conversations revolved around college or program requirements. Although requirements and deadlines are crucial information, understanding the process and preparation to succeed in that pathway is fundamental. Washington STEM's (2022) report shared that educators called for more professional development to adequately support students' career and college readiness.

Educators "indicated not having sufficient professional development opportunities and other resources to support students' career and college course-taking" and advised more professional development aimed at supporting students' career pathways, training, and financial aid (Tavares, 2022, p.11). Professional development allows teachers and counselors to not rely solely on their experiences and the pathway they are more familiar with. Increasing educator and counselor knowledge permits students to access unbiased information and support.

Implications for Policy

To increase community and parent partnerships, the district and school may consider inviting community members and parents to conversations and decision-making spaces, and cultivating an environment where parents can express their cultures and ideologies. It is important to keep it small and parent and community centered since most communication is often "marked by formality and bureaucracy, as in one-sided teacher presentations at back-to-school night or procedural runarounds in the front office" (Auerbach, 2011, p. 19). Instead, the district and school, in support of the college and career center, can invite community members and parents to share their needs and experiences in small informal settings led by parent liaisons that share their identities. This could be conducted through individual interviews, similar to the ones conducted in this study, or in small groups. Auerbach shares how parental involvement commonly declines in secondary school but "if [districts and schools] build it, [parents] will come—as long as you create a supportive climate…and respond to parents' concerns" (2022, p.19). The needs and experiences shared in these spaces can then inform policies that nurture and sustain community and parental involvement and collaborations.

As a means to increase professional development for educators and counselors to expand their postsecondary knowledge, districts and schools may look to educators and counselors for

the areas of weakness they have noticed. Student and parent experiences also serve as indicators of areas that need additional support, information, and resources. Creating space for counselor and educator needs to be shared, as well as students', in meetings and evaluations is an opportunity to recognize what professional development is the most relevant. These conversations allow for educators and counselors to be actively involved in the resources they receive. It is important to provide professional development that is effectively integrated in contract hours or offers additiona compensation to avoid burnout and overwhelming workloads that take away from student services.

Furthermore, the school, counselors, and educators may consider the findings provided by Shuptrine (2013) of in-school collaborations within programs to strengthen postsecondary skills. Collaborations between the college and career center, academic courses, and CTE programs grants students a chance to connect their academics and personal experiences with career exploration and understanding. In *The Four Steps Framework of Workforce Preparation* by the Emerging Workforce Initiative (2010), the authors share skills to support workforce readiness through formal and informal learning environments. The four steps shared include "1. Connect with the community [you] belong to and impact, 2. Know what jobs [are] needed in [your] community, 3. Learn skills necessary to fill community jobs, 3. Make plans for success and see them through" (Emerging Workforce Initiative, 2010, p.1). The goal for these skills is for young people to earn the experience and connections that will allow them to sustain stable postsecondary opportunities. Teacher, counselor, and CTE collaborations can better prepare students for postsecondary transitions. This leaves students prepared to lean on their community, and once ready, give back to their community.

Implications for Research

Students perspectives and experiences gave this study essential insight into positive ways postsecondary counseling can improve. The findings explored have fostered my curiosity towards the effects of integrating collective practices in learning and postsecondary preparation. Including the voices of students, parents, and communities in leadership and representative roles is powerful. Students working together for career exploration and skill building, school programs and teachers collaborating, and school and parent partnerships' way of bridging ideologies, needs, and goals are all forms of collective practices that need further exploring and implementing. I'd like to reimagine postsecondary preparation, understanding, and access in ways that communities' needs are centered to increase pathway sustainability. Is it possible for postsecondary preparation to begin in primary school? How can districts cultivate and sustain community and parental involvement throughout students' K-12 journeys?

We must center students' experiences and collaborate with all available resources to best prepare students for postsecondary readiness and success. What and who students bring to the table is a guide for postsecondary counseling as college and career counselors and educators scaffold students' responsibility for their post graduation plans and preparation. To adequately scaffold and support first-generation, Latino students' postsecondary understanding and preparation, counselors and educators require sufficient professional development on pathways, processes, and resources. Lastly, nurturing community and family partnerships and in-school collaborations can increase access to opportunities and promotes postsecondary skill building. These implications for practice, policy, and theory come from first-generation, Latino student experiences linked with literature. Amplifying student voices can be our first step in stregthening postsecondary preparation, access, and success for first-generation, Latino students in low-income public high schools.

References

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (n.d.). *School counselor roles and ratios.* https://schoolcounselor.org

Auerbach, S. (2004). Engaging Latino parents in supporting college pathways: Lessons from a college access program. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education,* 3(2), 125-145. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192703262514

Auerbach, S. (2011). Learning from Latino families. *Educational Leadership*, 68, 16-21.

Blake, M. K. (2020). Other duties as assigned: The ambiguous role of the high school counselor. *Sociology of Education,* 93(4), 315-330. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720932563

Delima, D. G. (2019). Making a case for a funds of knowledge approach to teaching and learning for first-generation college students. *College Teaching,* 67(4), 205–209. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2019.1630355

Emergencing Workforce Initiative. (August 2010). The four steps framework of workforce preparation. Emergingwork.org. https://www.emergingwork.org/uploads/3/1/5/8/3158897/four_steps_framework_of_workforce_preparation.pdf

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2010). Involving low-income parents and parents of color in college readiness activities: An exploratory study. *Professional School Counseling,* 14(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X1001400111

Holland, N. E. (2010). Postsecondary education preparation of traditionally underrepresented college students: A social capital perspective. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education,* 3(2), 111–125. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019249

Kimura-Walsh, E., Yamamura, E. K., Griffin, K. A., & Allen, W. R. (2008). Achieving the college dream? *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education,* 8(3), 298–315. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192708321648

Kiyama, J. M., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2018). Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths. *Routledge.*

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 132–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534

Núñez, A.-M., & Oliva, M. (2009). Organizational collaboration to promote college access: A P-20 framework. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *8*(4), 322–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192709347844

Rangel, V. S., & Arámbula Turner, T. (2019). Counseling opportunity structures: Explaining college-going using a typology of school-level opportunity structures. *Professional School Counseling,* 23(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X20927428

Rios-Aguilar, C., Kiyama, J. M., Gravitt, M., & Moll, L. C. (2011). Funds of knowledge for the poor and forms of capital for the rich? A capital approach to examining funds of knowledge. *Theory and Research in Education,* 9(2), 163–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878511409776

Santiago, D., & Cuozzo, M. (2018, March 31). College completion through a Latino lens. *Excelencia in Education*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED587440

Savitz-Romer, M. (2012). The gap between influence and efficacy: College readiness training, urban school counselors, and the promotion of equity. *Counselor Education and Supervision,* 51(2), 98–111. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2012.00007.x

Shuptrine, C. (2013). Improving college and career readiness through challenge-based learning. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research* (CIER), 6(2), 181. https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v6i2.7727

Tavares, H. (August 2022). *High school to postsecondary: Improving outcomes through inclusive school-based inquiry.* Washington STEM. Retrieved on 03/01/2024 from: https://bit.ly/ImprovingK12Outcomes

Valenzuela, A., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1994). Familism and social capital in the academic achievement of Mexican origin and Anglo adolescents. *Social Science Quarterly,* 75(1), 18–36.

Appendix

Interview: Carlo

1. HS Senior, male, planning to join the workforce.
2. Friday, Jan 5th at 8:30 am
3. 11 minutes and 39 seconds
4. Questions
    a. What grade are you in?
    b. What are your plans after graduation?
    c. What influenced your decision?
    d. To what extent has the college and career center supported your decision so far?
        i. How often do you go there for help?
        ii. How often do they come to you?
    e. What resources do they offer?
    f. To what extent do you feel the college and career center can help prepare you for your decision?
        i. Would you say the College and Career Center offers what you need?
    g. How is it going to prepare for your plans?
        i. What are resources or help you feel you need to succeed?
    h. What College and Career Center resources and support would you say would be beneficial for high school students like yourself at FWHS?
        i. What would you like for them to offer?
5. The guardian present was the older sister. As requested by parents, the student was invited by her to respond to questions alongside her. The student is first-generation.

Interview: Elena & Elena's mother

1. HS senior, female, planning on going to college.
2. Friday, Jan 5th at 11 am
3. 18 minutes and 17 seconds
4. Questions
    a. What grade are you in?
    b. What are your plans after graduation?
    c. What influenced your decision to apply to college?
    d. To what extent has the college and career center supported your decision to go to college?
        i. How often do you go there for help?
        ii. How often do they come to you?
    e. What resources do they offer?
    f. To what extent do you feel the college and career center can help prepare you for college?
        i. Would you say the College and Career Center offers what you need?

    g. How is it going preparing for college?
        i. What are resources or help you feel you need to successfully enroll and succeed in college?
    h. What College and Career Center resources and support would you say would be beneficial for high school students like yourself at FWHS?
        i. What would you like for them to offer?
5. The mother was present and requested the student respond to student-related questions. The student is a first-generation college student. Her mother attended college in a different country.

Interview: Daniel

1. College freshman, male, journalism major.
2. Sunday, Jan 6th at 1:30 pm
3. 16 minutes and 57 seconds
4. Questions
    a. When did you graduate from FWHS?
    b. When did you decide you wanted to attend college after high school?
    c. What factors influenced your decision to apply to college?
    d. To what extent did the college and career center support your decision?
    e. What resources did they offer?
    f. To what extent did the college and career center's support prepare you for college?
    g. How has your college experience been so far?
    h. What are the top 3 resources and/or skills you need to be prepared for college?
    i. What College and Career Center resources and support would you say would be beneficial for high school students at FWHS?
5. First-generation college student.

Interview: Isabel

1. College student, female, transferring from university to community college.
2. Sunday, Jan 7th at 2 pm
3. 12 minutes and 17 seconds
4. Questions
    a. When did you graduate from FWHS?
    b. When did you decide you wanted to attend college after high school?
    c. What factors influenced your decision to apply to college?
    d. To what extent did the college and career center support your decision?
    e. What resources did they offer?
    f. To what extent did the college and career center's support prepare you for college?

   g. How has your college experience been so far?
   h. What influenced your decision to transfer to community college?
      i. How has the process been?
   i. What are the top 3 resources and/or skills you need to be prepared for college?
   j. What College and Career Center resources and support would you say would be beneficial for high school students at FWHS?
5. The student began at university right out of high school and, after the first semester, transferred to community college.

Interview: Alex

1. HS graduate, male, self-employed
2. Sunday, Jan 7th at 2:30 pm
3. 13 minutes and 32 seconds
4. Questions
   a. When did you graduate from FWHS?
   b. What have you been up to now post-graduation?
   c. During high school, was there a point where you planned what you wanted to do after graduating?
   d. What factors influenced your decision?
   e. To what extent did the college and career center influence or support your decision?
   f. What resources did they offer for your plan?
   g. To what extent did the college and career center's support prepare you for your decision?
   h. How has ____ been so far?
   i. What are the top 3 resources and/or skills you need to be prepared for the workforce after high school?
   j. What College and Career Center resources and support would you say would be beneficial for high school students at FWHS who do not plan on going to college and want to go straight into the workforce?
5. Students enrolled at a university and attended for a couple of weeks before dropping out and beginning their own business.

Interview: Anna

1. College and Career Center Counselor
2. Tuesday, Jan 9th at 3:15 pm
3. 35 minutes and 55 seconds
4. Questions
   a. How would you describe the current goals of the College and Career Center at FWHS?

   b. What activities does the program lead to meet those goals?
   c. Who makes up the College and Career Center program?
   d. How does the program reach students?
   e. Which student demographics are involved in the program?
   f. Do you know how many students are first-generation?
   g. Does the program offer support for students with different citizenship statuses?
   h. What expectations and requirements does the program hold for students involved?
   i. How do you measure the "success" of the program?
   j. To what extent does the program involve families and community members?
   k. How is the program organized and supported by the school and district?
   l. What are some obstacles or restrictions the program faces?
   m. To what extent does the program collaborate with outside organizations?
   n. For Colleges
   o. For Career
   p. If you had a magic wand, what changes would you make to the program?
   q. How would you describe the future goals of the Career Center at FWHS?
5. The counselor began working as the College and Career Center counselor in 2019. The 2020 pandemic happened, and as they have begun rebuilding, many changes have been implemented for the past 3-4 years.