School Faculty & Community Administrator: Implementation and Best Practice Guide

Introduction

CollegeforTN gives Tennessee's students access to a comprehensive college and career planning web portal. This portal provides resources to schools, counselors, students, and parents to assist the student in creating a post-secondary plan that promotes college and workforce readiness, identifies promising careers and advancement opportunities and facilitates the transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

A growing body of research points to the importance of guidance, information, and support in helping students apply to and pay for college. In order to be successful, students must complete a series of specific tasks, many of which are time dependent. CollegeforTN uses state-of-the-art technology to help students stay on track to graduate and effectively navigate the college search, application, and selection process or take the steps necessary to successfully transition to a postsecondary career or technical training program.

Best Practices

Whether your school is starting this initiative for the first time, or revisiting the CollegeforTN portal for a second year, use this resource guide for best practices in preparation & planning, implementation & scheduling, gaining support, motivating students & other useful tips! Listed below are essential preparation steps, fundamental practices, and beneficial suggestions to consider when starting implementation of the CollegeforTN portal.

Preparation & Planning:

- Create your Success Plan: Set your timeline, coordinate with teachers and administrators, and book lab time before students return to campus.
- Incorporate teachers and administrators in your plan: Strategize across the campus on how to implement the CollegeforTN portal. Engage all levels of staff in the planning process and gain interest before the school year starts.
- Set monthly or quarterly team meetings to discuss the CollegeforTN Portal: Include as an agenda item on already existing department meetings. Schedule appointments to periodically get your team together to communicate the status of CollegeforTN.
- Schedule specific time during registration events and orientation sessions to introduce the CollegeforTN portal to students and parents.
- Meet with your IT team to discuss potential obstacles and troubleshoot any challenges your school may encounter with technology: Make adjustments to firewalls and schedule computers to be upgraded with compatible browsers such as Google Chrome 30, Mozilla FireFox 27, and Internet Explorer 9 . Ensure that your school's technology is ready for when students return to school.
- Prepare for a system that requires students to have email accounts: Work with your technology department to create school issued email addresses or have students set up accounts during scheduled registration events or orientation. Although students might prefer the use of their phone, colleges and employers communicate via e-mail.

- Develop a plan to handle any school internet access protocols: Draft the permission forms in advance and send home at the beginning of the year as part of your "Acceptable Internet Use" procedures. Avoid a drawn-out retrieval process by requiring the form to be completed during registration events or making it due the first day of classes.

Encourage Involvement and Gain Support:

- Speak with District administrators, Counseling, and other personnel. Express your school's interest and involvement in college & career readiness, and ask for support implementing the CollegeforTN initiative and assistance from your district level constituents.
- Give a presentation to your faculty, and explain to the entire staff the benefits of the CollegeforTN portal. Advocate this program as a campus-wide initiative and encourage acceptance and support. A college and career-going culture is built by multiple users across functions, not just the counselors.
- Coordinate with teachers to determine methods of incorporating CollegeforTN portal tasks with classroom activities: examples include: building a portfolio and generating a resume in the portal during English class or taking career assessments in Career and Technology classes. Schedule classroom activities and library dates in advance to avoid time constraints and conflicts with competing activities.
- Integrate CollegeforTN portal activities into existing activities, such as a Financial Aid Night or a College Application event. Share ownership of this program with other organizations that will also benefit from students using the portal.
- Reach out to your Community College Partners to notify them of your participation with CollegeforTN; collaborate on ways to incorporate portal use as part of your partnership goals.

Implementation & Scheduling: Start early!

- Activate students in the early fall to capture activity from the beginning of school. Spring activation misses critical opportunities to work with students on activities corresponding with their fall start – especially seniors and juniors.
- Hold a school assembly to introduce the CollegeforTN portal to the student body – explain the purpose of the program, and stress the importance for students to use these tools and interact with the planning components.
- Start early integrating activities through the Portal at the start of the school year.
- Distribute ownership of the CollegeforTN initiative – involve assistant principals, department heads, or grade-specific counselors who work with particular groups. Schedule periodic meetings to communicate progress.
- Give students a break from state-mandated testing to engage this student-centric technology! During benchmark testing, schedule students that are not testing to work in the portal.
- Brainstorm various opportunities for students to engage the CollegeforTN portal – work with students during Saturday school, in-school suspension, and other after school programs.

Motivation & other helpful tips!

- Use local scholarships as an incentive to get students to log into their accounts – upload local scholarships onto the CollegeforTN portal when school starts so that your students can search the local database. Send portal messages when new scholarships are added. Use technology rather than the traditional paper & pencil bulletin.
- Create a School Password Pattern – implement a school specific format for students to use when creating passwords. Whether the pattern starts with the school's mascot and ends with the students' ID, or consists of the students' last name and six digit birth date, choose a pattern that is personal, but easy to remember.

- Use Log-in cards – have students or counselors record student's username and passwords on index cards for the counselor to store for safe keeping. Students can then refer to this index card to easily look up any forgotten credentials.
- Maintain a "password keeper" for students – using the ID roster, have students record their username and password. Counselors can then easily look up and assist students who do not remember their credentials.
- Host a "registration drive" in the library at lunch, or before and after school – invite Parents!
- Encourage friendly competitions during class for students to complete their "stars!"
- Encourage parent engagement! Include the Parent Registration flier in an all-school mailing.
- Promote the CollegeforTN portal use through school newsletters, e-mails and other media campaigns.
- Publicize the CollegeforTN portal through public relations announcements in your District or community newspapers – great PR!

Additional resources can be found on the CollegeforTN Support Portal.