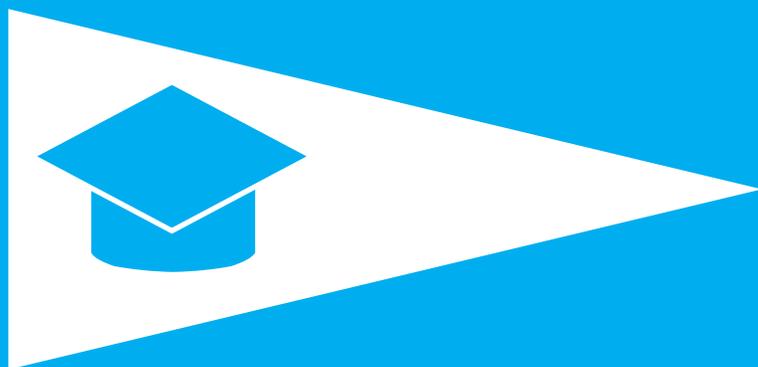


OREGON GEAR UP TOOLKIT



College-Going Culture

what you believe, what you say, what you see, and what you do

REACHING HIGHER

RIGOR

RELEVANCE

RELATIONSHIPS

RAISING AWARENESS

7 8 9 10 11 12 13+

Parents Community **Teachers**



oregongearup.org

© 2012 Oregon GEAR UP

Updated July 2018

REACHING HIGHER

Create a school environment, policies, and teacher expectations that support all students' pursuit of a postsecondary education.

Strategies

- Create a college-going culture in schools.
- Consistently communicate the expectation of postsecondary education for all students.



DOWNLOAD PRINT-AND-USE RESOURCES: bit.ly/1TORfYm

Look for the printer icon and green text throughout the toolkit.

- Staff Discussions
- Business Poster
- College Donation Request
- Senior Certificates
- Announcements
- Teacher Door Posters
- Hallway Signs
- College Conversations
- Progress Tracker
- DIY Pennants

Table of Contents

<u>What the Research Says</u>	3
<u>What You Believe</u>	4
<u>What You Say</u>	5
<u>What You See</u>	6
<u>What You Do</u>	8
<u>Planning Guide</u>	10

Sources & More Information

UC-Berkeley, [Advancing College-Going Culture](#)

College Board, [Creating a College-Going Culture Guide](#)

UCLA, [Creating a College-Going Culture: A Resource Guide](#)

USC Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, [Getting There—and Beyond: Building a Culture of College-going in High Schools](#)

Craft ideas submitted by Susie Snelling

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

School culture and climate directly affect student learning and engagement as well as college aspirations and preparation. A college-going culture sets high expectations for all students and provides them with the academic preparation and other tools to meet those expectations. Students benefit from ever-present reminders of college expectations in visual reminders, verbal interactions and activities dedicated to exploring postsecondary opportunities. All school staff, plus parents and students (and even the community) play a role in consistently echoing the expectation of education after high school.



A school's culture is:
what you believe
what you say
what you see
& what you do

A college-going culture sets high expectations for all students and provides them with the academic preparation and other tools to meet those expectations.

What is your school's culture? What are the expectations for all students and staff? What are the conversations in the breakroom, the classrooms and the cafeteria? What do you see when you walk down the halls? What are the traditions at your school? What is celebrated? These are the kinds of questions that will help you and your staff begin to [assess the culture](#) of your school.

Educators, students and communities can set the tone by creating traditions that celebrate college acceptances and academics, providing visual reminders of college and career, and regularly talking about the expectation for education after high school. This toolkit will provide several easy, low-cost ways to highlight a college-going culture.



WHAT YOU BELIEVE

BUILD STAFF BUY-IN

A college-going culture starts with the expectations and attitudes of administrators, staff and teachers.

Administrators should lead **Staff Discussions**  to discuss current data on academic achievement, college enrollment and student, teacher and parent attitudes as well as the merits of postsecondary education and the [importance of high expectations](#).

Ask staff: “What does college and career ready mean?” and discuss the various answers and how to achieve these outcomes.

CREATE A MISSION STATEMENT

Mission statements for schools and organizations serve as guiding principles for staff, students, parents and the community. In order to create a college-going culture, these stakeholders need a shared, expressed goal; a college mission statement should succinctly state the expectation of postsecondary education for all students as well as lay out an action plan with measurable goals.

► WRITE A MISSION STATEMENT

A guide to crafting a mission statement with a basic structure and key questions to consider.

assessment.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1804/2016/06/HowToWriteMission.pdf

Creating and adopting a college mission statement and action plan should be a collaborative, inclusive process that encourages buy-in of all stakeholders. This may involve educating administrators, staff, students and parents about the importance of higher education.

In addition to a well-crafted mission statement, it may be helpful to have a slogan that sums up your intentions in a digestible, catchy phrase. Keep it short—like

what you would see on a bumper

COLLEGE

It's not a dream, it's a plan.

sticker. You can always use Oregon GEAR UP's: College. It's not a dream, it's a plan.

EXAMPLES OF MISSION STATEMENTS

YES Prep Public Schools

Houston, TX

YES Prep Public Schools exists to increase the number of low-income Houstonians who graduate from a four-year college prepared to compete in the global marketplace and committed to improving disadvantaged communities.

KIPP Schools

Nationwide

At KIPP, all teachers and school leaders nationwide share the same goal: helping every student persevere to and through college.



WHAT YOU SAY (& WHO SAYS IT)

Talk regularly about the expectation of college with students and parents to reinforce the college mission statement. This message should come from **everyone**—administrators, teachers, staff, other students and the community.

FROM THE SCHOOL

- **Language Choices:** Pay attention to the little things, such as saying “*When* you go to college...” not “*If* you go to college...”
- **Announcements** 📢: Take advantage of a captive audience and share facts and information about college preparation one day a week. Use our power point of images for digital bulletin boards as well.
- **College Conversations** 🗣️: Once a week, spend 5-10 minutes of dedicated time in Advisory or in a class to discuss students’ future plans and getting ready for college and career.

FROM PARENTS

- **Newsletters:** Send home monthly parent newsletters with conversation prompts.
- **Workshops:** Offer workshops for parents and students that encourage conversations about postsecondary plans.

▶ PARENT ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Strategies and resources to communicate with families.

oregongearup.org/resources/parent-engagement-toolkit

FROM PEERS

- **Student Mentors:** Use high school students as mentors and tutors. Have high school students create a short presentation or activity for elementary or middle school students about college.
- **Alumni Panel:** Invite high school alumni who are now in college (as well as their parents!) to speak to current students and their parents at a college information night to share what they wish they would have known.

▶ IT'S A PLAN: ALUMNI & PARENT PANEL DISCUSSION TOOLKIT

Agenda, questions and handouts for an event featuring alumni who are current college students and their parents.

oregongoestocollege.org/itsaplan/educators/downloads

FROM COMMUNITY

- **Business Poster** 📢: Send a student leadership group out into the community to hang posters in local businesses. Add your school name so the community can show their support.



WHAT YOU SEE

Broadcast your college mission statement in halls and on walls. Think of it as advertising—but instead of selling toothpaste or potato chips, you’re selling postsecondary education.



Pennants hang in Elkton Charter School’s counseling office.

State Map: Put up a state map and label all of the community colleges, 4-year universities and trade schools.

Teacher Door Posters 📄: Display each teacher’s alma mater on their door.

College Door Wars: Turn it into a competition and get students and teachers excited about creating a college-going culture. Provide paper, scissors, college catalogs and other materials.

Bulletin Boards: Use school bulletin boards for a rotating display of college and career themes such as College of the Month, SAT Word of the Day, or Cool Careers.

Senior College Acceptances: Take photos of seniors with their post-high school plans and display on a prominent wall.

Progress Tracker 📄: Keep track of the percentage of students completing college applications, filling out the FAFSA or going on to college and share the results in a public place.

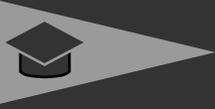
College Pennants and Posters can often be donated—make the ask with our **College Donation Request** 📄

Computer Bookmarks: Set the home page on every computer to oregongoestocollege.org or a college search site like bigfuture.org and pre-load college websites in the browser bookmarks.

Flags, T-shirts, Hallway Signs 📄 and any other way you can think to advertise the college message!



Taft High School provides a roadmap for college success in the counseling office.



WHAT YOU SEE

GET CRAFTY

- **College T-shirt Pillows:** Check out thrift stores for college t-shirts; sew closed and stuff for comfy and collegiate style.
- **DIY pennants** 📄: Have students make pennants of local universities or have them design their own perfect college.
- **“I’m Going to College” Mirrors:** Spruce up the bathrooms or buy cheap magnetic locker mirrors and decorate with affirming messages about higher education.



A bulletin board at Lost River Jr/Sr High School



DIY pennants at Yoncalla High School

► POSTERS

Download or order posters that spotlight the importance of college and careers. Find cheap color printing at Costco or other discount stores.

- [Oregon GEAR UP: The Benefits of College](#)
- [Oregon GEAR UP: The ABC’s of College](#)
- [Oregon GEAR UP: Oregon Colleges Map](#)
- [Oregon Goes To College: It’s A Plan](#)
- [Worksource Oregon: Education Pays](#)
- [FSAPubs.gov](#)

FOR PURCHASE

- [Principals Essentials](#)
- [Partners in Learning](#)



WHAT YOU DO

A college-going culture celebrates postsecondary education regularly and gives students the information and skills needed to succeed. Create school traditions and regular practices that encourage aspirations and highlight the college application process.

CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Decision Day:** Hold a ceremony or party for seniors with verifiable acceptance letters to college, the military or on-the-job training and post photos or **Senior Certificates** 📄 with their post-high school plans in a highly visible spot for students and parents to see.
- **Academic awards:** Give trophies and awards to students and display them alongside (or in place of!) sports memorabilia.
- **Graduation traditions:** Have high school graduates walk through the elementary schools in their caps and gowns.

MAKE IT PART OF CLASS

- **Integrate college planning into math and language arts curriculum:** Assign college/scholarship application essay questions in ELA class or cover college budgeting in math. See [The College Board's suggestions \(on page 9\)](#) for more ideas.
- **Integrate college practices into the classroom:** Align high school curriculum with college-level classes, encourage teachers to use syllabi.
- **Test preparation:** Dedicate several class periods to college entrance exam preparation; encourage all students to take the [SAT](#) or [ACT](#).

SUPPORT THE COLLEGE PROCESS

- **Career and future planning:** Have all students research careers and educational requirements.
- **College visits:** Create a series of college visits starting in middle school to introduce students to a variety of colleges.

▶ COLLEGE VISIT TOOLKIT

Plan a relevant and engaging field trip with our step-by-step guide and resources.

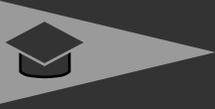
oregongearup.org/resources/college-visits-toolkit

- **College application events:** Provide seniors with dedicated time and support during the school day for the key tasks in the college application process. Hold a [College Application Week](#) and [FAFSA and scholarship events](#) to reach as many students as possible in a short amount of time!

▶ IT'S A PLAN

Monthly checklists for students and parents, with resources for educators to provide support.

oregongoestocollege.org/itsaplan



WHAT YOU DO

PARTNER WITH POSTSECONDARY

- **Presentations and guest speakers:** Make connections with local college faculty and staff and ask them to present to students and parents about financial aid, student services, and more. Professors and graduate students can also share their research as it relates to what high school students are studying in class.
- **Dual enrollment:** Offer college-credit classes to all students.
- **Summer programs:** Partner with local postsecondary institutions to offer summer camps and workshops either on campus or at your school.
- **Virtual visits:** Ask professors and current college students to serve as pen pals with students or classes, either via mail or video chat service like Skype.

HELP STAFF BE KNOWLEDGEABLE

- **Professional development for all staff:** Continue the conversation about college and career readiness. Read [books and articles](#) in Professional Learning Communities or share [research briefs](#) during staff meetings.
- **Staff workshops:** Help all staff become college advisors to students by holding workshops or offering coaching on how to write letters of recommendation, how to discuss college options with students and more.



MAKE IT FUN

- **College gear day:** Choose a day of the week or month for students and staff to wear college-related gear. Offer incentives or small prizes for participants.
- **College rivalry days:** Take advantage of your state's college rivalries to plan fun (and educational) activities about college around major sporting events.
- **College club:** Create a student club that meets after school or during lunch that is focused on getting ready for college. Encourage members to be peer leaders and help put on workshops and events and create posters for hallways.

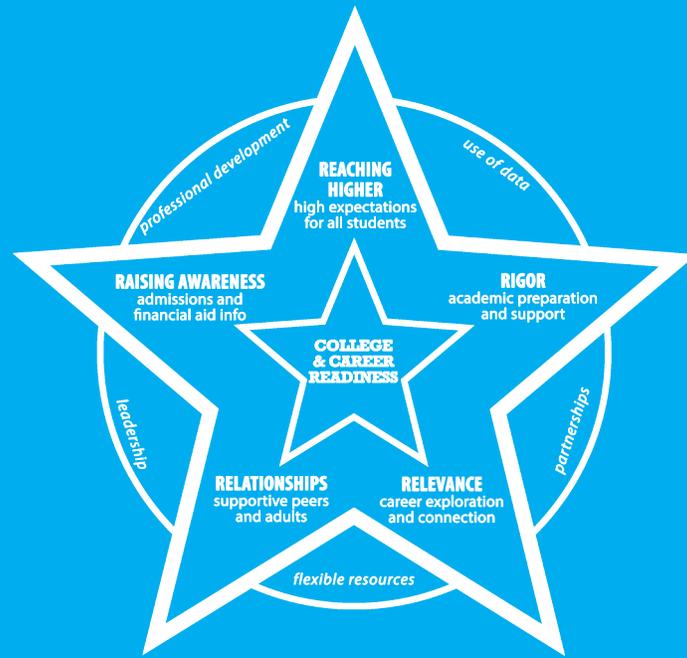
► NEED MORE IDEAS?

Our GEAR UP Week Toolkit has even more ideas and ready-to-use templates.

oreongearup.org/resources/gear-up-week-toolkit

COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE PLANNING GUIDE

	Activity	Lead Person/Group	Materials/Needs	Timeline
<p>WHAT YOU BELIEVE</p>				
<p>WHAT YOU SAY</p>				
<p>WHAT YOU SEE</p>				
<p>WHAT YOU DO</p>				



oregongearup.org

© 2012 Oregon GEAR UP

Updated July 2018

COLLEGE. It's not a dream, it's a plan.