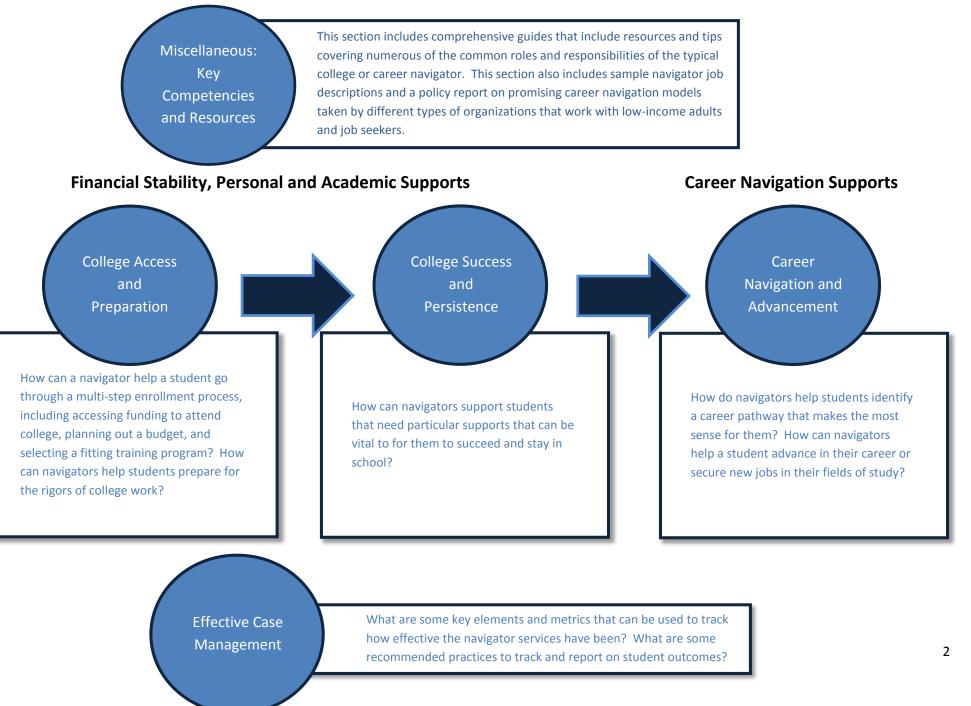# A Resource Guide for College/Career Navigators or Those Interested in Starting a Navigator Program Prepared by the Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategies Initiative for Participants in the C2C Consortium

A growing body of practice and data suggests that college/career navigation assistance programs are drivers of student retention, completion of training programs, and employment advancement for nontraditional students. This somewhat new specialized role is gaining attention across the country as a way to close the gap in helping low-income individuals access and succeed in college programs, attain credentials, and ultimately pursue quality careers. The professionals providing these services range in their scope of work, target populations served, and by title; some are referred to as adult career coaches, career advisors, global career development facilitators, career counselors, among other titles. In this resource guide, we will refer to this professional role that provides individual guidance and assistance to students as navigators.

This resource guide is intended to help current navigators, managers or supervisors of navigators, or those considering a college/career navigator career. First, the guide presents several resources that detail the role of the navigator, as well as miscellaneous key competencies and best practices across a range of the navigator's functions. Many of these resources are comprehensive guidebooks and do not focus on just the role of the navigator, but also provide insight on ways that various segments of the college can coordinate to address student needs. The next set of resources are organized around three basic steps that navigators take in engaging and supporting a student – college access, college persistence and success, and career navigation and advancement. Lastly, the guide presents resources that can be used to help community colleges think about metrics and data tracking to measure the effectiveness of their navigator services.

Organization of the Resources

Miscellaneous: Key Competencies and Resources

This section includes comprehensive guides that include resources and tips covering numerous of the common roles and responsibilities of the typical college or career navigator. This section also includes sample navigator job descriptions and a policy report on promising career navigation models taken by different types of organizations that work with low-income adults and job seekers.

Financial Stability, Personal and Academic Supports

Career Navigation Supports

College Access and Preparation

How can a navigator help a student go through a multi-step enrollment process, including accessing funding to attend college, planning out a budget, and selecting a fitting training program? How can navigators help students prepare for the rigors of college work?

College Success and Persistence

How can navigators support students that need particular supports that can be vital to for them to succeed and stay in school?

Career Navigation and Advancement

How do navigators help students identify a career pathway that makes the most sense for them? How can navigators help a student advance in their career or secure new jobs in their fields of study?

Effective Case Management

What are some key elements and metrics that can be used to track how effective the navigator services have been? What are some recommended practices to track and report on student outcomes?

Miscellaneous: Key Competencies and Resources

Best Practices for Navigators, a free professional development course created by Minnesota FastTRAC

Minnesota FastTRAC has assembled an online, self-paced professional development course for navigators of adult basic education students. The course material includes numerous links to practical tools and examples that navigators can use in all phases of their work with students. The modules included in this course include:

- Module 2 - The Role of a Navigator
- Module 3 - Enrollment and Motivating Participants
- Module 4 - Navigating Educational Pathways
- Module 5 - Creating Access to Success for Participants
- Module 6 - Navigating Work and Career Development

https://sites.google.com/site/mnfasttracpdcentral/courses/best-practices-for-navigators/gathering-information

A Comprehensive Guide with Key Resources on College Access and Preparation

The ABC's of College Navigation Guide, created by the Seattle Jobs Initiative, is a comprehensive guide to the college navigator role. The guide is organized around typical steps that a college navigator would take in working with an individual, at a community college, access and succeed in a professional/technical college program, with a heavy emphasis on resources relevant to students in Washington state. Check out the table of contents to explore resources around the following steps taken by college navigators:

- Preparation for Becoming a Successful College Student: p.15-28
- Selection of the Right College Program: p. 29-38
- Navigating the Application and Enrollment Process: p. 39-46
- Hints and Resources to Persist through College: p. 47-50
- Career Readiness: p. 51-58

http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/innovations/tools-resources/college-attainment-tools/

A Free Course on the Role of College/Career Navigators

This free 3 hour online course, "Finding the True North: Role of the Navigator," is offered by The National College Transition Network and identifies the types of supports that adult learners need to be prepared for college and careers. It also introduces the core functions and responsibilities of a navigator, such as coordinating and providing services that supplement academic instruction, which have been found to aid student persistence and success. This course also introduces the core competencies of effective navigators, approaches and styles of advisors, and navigator program design elements to consider.

http://elearningpd.worlded.org/finding-true-north/

[College and Career Navigator Reference Guide](#)

This comprehensive manual, developed under the College and Career Navigation Initiative of Colorado, is a product of Colorado's Career Pathways through Education and Employment Program. Central to this program was the alignment of workforce, adult basic education, and career and technical education resources. This manual was created to improve the understanding of the navigator role, with the following helpful sections:

- The role of the Navigator
- Recruiting and outreach strategies
- Case management resources
- Financial aid resources
- Career and academic exploration and planning resources
- Workforce resources
- College and career success course syllabi and resources
- Navigator professional development
- Data collection and analysis instruments

http://www.coloradostateplan.com/CCNI/CollegeandCareerNavigatorReferenceGuideFINAL6-26.pdf (copy and paste link)

[An AspenWSI Brief on Strategies to Help Adult Learners Navigate Community College and the Labor Market](#)

This AspenWSI brief details strategies to address barriers that adult students experience on the path to college enrollment, completion, and employment or career advancement. The brief first describes barriers around a general step taken by the adult learner, similar to those around which this resource guide is based, and then details promising strategies that navigators and institutions may find useful, such as linking students with intensive services off campus, helping students prepare for community college placement exams, and providing confidence and motivational supports. This brief is likely to be most useful as a starting point for consideration in the development of a navigator program.

http://www.aspenwsi.org/2013/05/10/report-on-helping-adult-learners-in-community-college-now-available/

[A Training Manual for College and Career Navigators](#)

This training manual, developed by Jobs for the Future for the Accelerating Opportunity Initiative, is designed to train career navigators, transition counselors, or those involved in providing direct student support and guidance, and connecting campus/community support services. While not intended to be used as a script, the training manual includes material that can be used to provide a full day's worth of training content for new navigators. The participant handout materials at the end of the manual include a number of specific tools and resources that experienced navigators might also find useful, such as links to information about a variety of support services, a goal-setting tool to use with new students, and a checklist of college and career readiness skills and tasks. The following areas of training content are identified as potentially the most useful segments for those familiar with providing student supports and career pathways, but new to a comprehensive navigator role:

- Building Networks of Support: Research on the benefits of support networks for students is presented.
- Intake Interview Questions: Research is presented on persistence and resiliency.
- Introduction to Career Pathway Planning: An overview of effective career planning assistance.
- Designing your Navigator Program: Trainees use a template to map comprehensive supports and identify gaps in service.

www.jff.org/sites/default/files/NCTN-manual-TtT-Navigators.pdf (copy and paste link)

[Report on Promising Models of Career Navigation](#)

What are some of the key competencies of successful college/career navigation programs? What are key competencies for career navigation professionals? This extensive report, *A New National Approach to Career Navigation for Working Learners* from the Center for American Progress, examines and provides case studies of promising models for career navigation programs in community colleges.

Particular pages of interest to community colleges:

- 18-20: These pages discuss broadly the shared characteristics of effective career navigation programs. In addition, these pages outline the Virginia Community College System's "Education Wizard," an interactive, education online career planning to help students enroll in and pay for postsecondary education, complete with a talking avatar to guide users through the available resources.
- 28: Outlines key competencies of career navigators.
- 40-43: These pages provide case studies of promising career navigation models, and go more in-depth into the usage of the Education Wizard.

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/report/2010/03/11/7531/a-new-national-approach-to-career-navigation-for-working-learners/

[A Guide and Toolkit for College Navigators](#)

Assembled by SkillUp Washington, this comprehensive guide and toolkit for navigators provides a concise overview of the functions and key competencies for college navigators.   The tools include checklists/steps that may be useful to navigators, particularly in terms of organizing and tracking their work with students. For instance, the Student Early Alert tool includes a checklist of early alert risk categories that can be used to identify students that need special supports. There is also an employer engagement tool, student tracking form, and several others.

http://www.skillupwa.org/our-work/guide-and-tools-for-navigators

Sample Navigator Job Descriptions

- **Sample Job Description produced by the AO Initiative and available through the Finding the True North Course**
    - Found in the course under "What's in a Job Description?"

- **Colorado's College and Career Navigator Initiative Sample Job Description**
    - http://www.coloradostateplan.com/CCNI/Section2_Role.pdf

- **Automotive Career Advancement Navigator Role:** Describes the job duties and responsibilities of the Career Advancement Navigator for the General Service Technician program at Shoreline Community College in Seattle.
    - http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/how-c2e-partnerships-work/

- **Job Description for Capital IDEA Career Counselor**: Explains the roles, responsibilities and required qualifications of a Capital IDEA Career Counselor. Also includes notes from AspenWSI's research on how the counselors interact with students and respond to their needs.
    - http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/how-c2e-partnerships-work/

College Access and Preparation

A Tool for Adult Students to Begin Planning to Go to College

This website, College for Adults developed by World Education, is intended to help adult students with career planning, college selection, financial planning, and the application process. It also helps students find funding sources to pay for college, and directs them to resources to prepare for college-level work. There is a plethora of resources outlined on this site to help adult students plan a career, apply to college, plan and manage to pay for college, develop skills for academic success, and even tips on using a college library.

http://collegeforadults.org/index.html

Community College 101 Course for Students Interested in a Vocational Skills Training Program at a Community College

Community College 101 is a course, developed by Goodwill Industries of Seattle, intended to prepare students interested in entering a job training program at a community college. The course materials, available on the AspenWSI website, contain lesson plans, a student handbook and course materials, as well as presentations designed to help students learn of ways to pay for college. Students that take the course will have a better sense of the skills and expectations to successfully attend a vocational skills training program.

http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/c2e-curricula/

[Interaction of Pell Grants and Tax Credits: Students May Be Foregoing Tax Benefits by Mistake](#)

Why are students missing out on millions of unclaimed tax credits, such as the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC)? According to this fact sheet produced by the United States Treasury, "Many students would benefit by claiming at least a portion of their QTRE for the AOTC, even if that requires including some of their Pell Grant (or other scholarships) in taxable income."

http://bit.ly/1vnA7sZ

[Help with Aid Applications Raises College Attendance](#)

This report details a National Bureau of Economic Research study—the findings of which are likely to be helpful towards determining which services to include in a college navigator program. In the study, one group of low and moderate income individuals received help from tax professionals to complete the FAFSA and then each individual was given an estimate about their eligibility for governmental financial aid and information about postsecondary education options. A second group received only personalized information on their eligibility for aid, but did not receive help in filling out FAFSA. The study, which included over 23,000 individuals, found that the students that received help with both completing FAFSA and information about their aid eligibility were 40 percent more likely to apply for financial aid.   For the low-income adults with no prior college that participated in the study, both information and help with FAFSA increased college enrollment by about 20 percent.

http://www.nber.org/digest/feb10/w15361.html

Accessing Employer-Paid Tuition Assistance

Many employers offer various kinds of employer-funded tuition assistance that can help fund college education. Participants that are employed may find that their employers will help fund college tuition. The following are two quick guides:

- [Four Steps to Using Your Employer's Tuition Assistance Program](#)
    - http://bit.ly/1pgq2Jq

- [Employer Tuition Assistance Programs](#)
    - http://www.fastweb.com/financial-aid/articles/709-employer-tuition-assistance-programs

College Success and Persistence

[Helping Students to Access Health Care Under the Affordable Care Act](#)

Community college students stand to benefit from the new, no and low-cost health insurance options that are available under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Community college navigators can play a vital role in helping students to access health coverage that may help the student to stay in and persist to completing their studies. This brief from the Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP) provides information on how to help students understand their options, how to apply, and key outreach methods.   You can also learn about state specific resources and support for health care enrollment through **[Enroll America](#)**.

http://bit.ly/1okwaQS

Promoting Persistence through Comprehensive Student Supports

This short report, produced by Jobs for the Future as part of the Accelerating Opportunity initiative, provides clarity on the work of providing comprehensive student supports, identifies effective practices, and details cost-effective ways for colleges to provide high level, comprehensive student supports. The case profiles, on pages 12-15, and the recommendations for community colleges, pages 16-17, may be particularly helpful to colleges to think about how to structure their support services.

http://www.jff.org/publications/promoting-persistence-through-comprehensive-supports

Vision, Initiative, Perseverance (VIP) Syllabus, Lesson Plan, and Worksheets

This syllabus, lesson plan and worksheet briefly describe topics covered in VIP peer support sessions that are provided by Capital IDEA staff to students. VIP sessions are designed to help students build the personal, professional, and academic skills they need to succeed in college and the workplace. The document also includes suggestions for students around financial planning, balancing work and study, as well as balancing familial obligations.

http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/c2e-curricula/

Career Navigation and Advancement

In addition to the career navigation and advancement tools and resources presented in several of the comprehensive guides above, the following are existing technology-based career navigation tools:

- Virginia Education Wizard: an interactive, online career-planning tool that helps Virginia community college students make educational choices with career knowledge. While this applies to Virginia's current and potential students, this may be a useful model for other community college systems.
  - https://www.vawizard.org/vccs/Main.action

- Explore Careers through CareerOneStop.org: This site is useful in helping to identify and compare occupational outcomes across various occupations that may be of interest to the student.
  - http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/ExploreCareers.aspx

- GatewaytoCareers.com: This site, funded by the Department of Labor, provides area-specific resource and advice to jobseekers.
  - http://www.gatewaytocareers.com/

- My Skills My Future: This site, also funded by the Department of Labor, helps students explore careers relevant to their skills and interests.
  - http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/

- **MyMnCareers**: This site is designed for low-literacy job seekers and English language learners find career planning and work preparation information. It also allows the user to narrowly browse careers by type of training or education options.
  - http://www.iseek.org/mymncareers/about-us.html

An AspenWSI Brief on Ways that Nonprofit-Community College Partnerships Can Help Adult Learners Through Longer-Term, Post-Program Engagement
A product of AspenWSI's Courses to Employment demonstration, this brief details ways that community colleges working with nonprofits can improve opportunities and outcomes for low-income individuals by operating sector-oriented workforce development programs with a focus on post-program engagement and advancement. Although targeted towards nonprofit-community college partnerships, this brief details some of the key aspects of impactful post-program engagement that works to help adult learners advance in the labor market.

http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/cte1-beyond-graduation/

Effective Case Management

Effective Case Management: Key Elements and Practices from the Field
This issue brief, developed under the Technical Assistance and Training initiative of the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, is targeted towards state and local workforce administrators and practitioners, provides examples of key elements and practices for effective case management in the workforce system. While not focused on community colleges, the resource provides many examples of state and local tools, processes, and policies designed to create or improve career counseling and navigation. An annotated list of additional resources on evidence of effective case management through career navigation is also included.

https://effectivecasemanagement.workforce3one.org/page/resource_map

Effective Case Management Resource Map
This resource map, posted on the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration website, contains links to reports, policy documents, webinars, and toolkits for professionals in the workforce development system to measure effective case management.

https://effectivecasemanagement.workforce3one.org/page/resource_map

Tracking and Reporting Student Outcomes

Since the career navigator is a relatively new role, there are few studies on outcomes and models for reporting outcomes. AspenWSI's Courses to Employment data study at Shoreline Community College reported that students who were assigned navigators achieved 2-3 times higher program completion and employment outcomes (See page 32 of AspenWSI's data study). However, the sample size for this comparison study was very small. Northern Virginia Community College has a large-scale navigator initiative serving several hundred moderate-income adult students. Its dashboard report offers one potential method of reporting outcomes.

https://effectivecasemanagement.workforce3one.org/page/resource_map

10