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College-Going Culture in Lancaster County School District of South Carolina:  
A Lack of Information and Resources about College

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section introduces the entire paper, including the local problem, precedent, and the argument for a solution. The second section identifies the local problem through evaluation of current college resources in the local area. The third section evaluates the precedent both in its original context and the context of the local problem. The fourth section then presents a local solution using the evaluated precedent. Finally, the fifth section concludes the paper.

**Section 1: Introduction**

In public high schools, school counselors are responsible for “providing students with the necessary information and resources to prepare for college” (McClafferty et al. 3). To better meet the needs of high school students within the Lancaster County School District (LCSD), the Furman University’s College Advising Corps program was established in 2017 (“College Advising Corps” [Furman]). This program employs recent college graduates as college advisors to support the school counselors in best serving students in their pursuit of higher education. But despite the work of Furman advisors and school counselors at LCSD high schools, students and their families still do not have access to all the information and resources needed to adequately prepare them to determine what type of higher education is right for them, apply to colleges and

universities, find funds to support their higher education pursuit, and be successful after high school graduation.

The college-going culture in LCSD is weak in terms of information and resources about college. This is shown through the evaluation of each high school's current resources and information, which were shown to be incomprehensive, out-of-date, and not easily accessible to all students and their families. As such, these resources are not meeting the standards necessary to prepare students to go onto higher education, as put forth in the article "What is a College Culture? Facilitating College Preparation through Organizational Change" (McClafferty et al. 14). The lack of adequate resources puts the responsibility of finding necessary information on each individual student. Some students--especially those who are first-generation students or the first in their family to go into college--may not be able to find everything they need to know about college, which may prevent them from starting higher education or leave them unprepared once they do get to college. For example, a student who has never heard of the FAFSA may not know they need to file it every year, and this would create an even more significant financial burden, one that may prevent them from completing higher education. To address this local problem, Furman college advisors should implement a two-pronged solution that will address both the lack of online resources in LCSD and how those resources should be distributed through methods other than the schools' websites.

## **Section 2: Introduction to Local Problem and Precedent**

### *Introduction*

Attaining postsecondary education is becoming increasingly important for students. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), currently 36.3% of employment requires some college (no degree), a postsecondary nondegree award, an associate's degree, a bachelor's

degree, or a master's degree. In addition, the BLS also projects that these jobs that require higher levels of education "are projected to grow faster than average" between 2020 to 2030. While the average employment change is projected to increase 7.7%, jobs that require associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees are projected to change 10.5%, 9.9%, and 16.4%, respectively (BLS). In order to encourage and better prepare students to go onto higher education and fill these jobs, creating a comprehensive college-going culture is crucial. According to the CollegeBoard, a college-going culture "builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students" and is one in which "college is a reasonable expectation for all students" ("Creating a College-Going Culture Guide," 2).

In South Carolina (SC), specifically LCSD, the college-going culture is severely lacking in the important aspect of Information and Resources, which is a key principle identified in the article "What is a College Culture? Facilitating College Preparation through Organizational Change" (McClafferty et al. 9). Because of the subpar accessible information and resources about college, high school students are individually responsible for ensuring they have credible information about scholarships, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), deadlines, applications, and so much more. However, regardless of information and resources, schools are not adequately preparing students for college or higher education. In South Carolina (SC), college readiness scores are significantly lower compared to the national average: according to the ACT's *Condition of College & Career Readiness 2019: South Carolina Key Findings* report, only 26% of the SC graduating class of 2019 "met three or four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks" compared to the national average of 37% (1). Furthermore, in 2019 only 41.2% of diploma earners at Lancaster County high schools were considered college-ready

(“Report Card Data”). In LCSD, the information and resources for college do not meet the standards necessary to prepare students for higher education.

### *Evaluation of Current Information and Resources Available in LCSD*

This section will first introduce the best realistic standards and practices for providing students with the information and resources necessary to pursue a higher education. Second, each of the high schools in LCSD will be evaluated against these standards. LCSD is composed of four high schools: Andrew Jackson High School (AJHS), Buford High School (BHS), Indian Land High School (ILHS), and Lancaster High School (LHS). In LCSD high schools, the school counselors and college advisor are primarily responsible for collecting and distributing information about college. These resources used in the following evaluation can primarily be found on each high school’s website, specifically on the counseling page.

### **Best Realistic Standards for Information and Resources about College**

A crucial aspect of building a strong college-going culture is ensuring students have the information and resources necessary “to make informed, reasonable decisions about his or her educational future” (McClafferty et al. 14). In addition, the information and resources must be “comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible” (14). Information and resources must meet all three standards in order to be useful and beneficial to students. For example, a resource that is comprehensive and up-to-date is not useful or beneficial if students are not able to access it.

First, information and resources about college must be comprehensive, enabling students to “develop plans for college, then raise their awareness of the range of possible options, and finally choose among these options” (McClafferty et al. 14). To be comprehensive means to be complete and all-inclusive. As such, comprehensive college resources include information about all aspects of college, from completing applications to financing higher education. Many guides

already exist that strive to detail all of the steps a student must take to go onto higher education. For example, a *U.S. News & World Report Education* article, published September 13th, 2021, outlines several components that compose their “Step-by-Step Guide to Applying to College,” which include completing the FAFSA, filling out the Common App, and finding scholarships to pay for college (Ross and Moody). In informing students on which college application platform to use, authors Ross and Moody include descriptions of both the Common Application, the Coalition Application, the Common Black College Application, and school-specific platforms. This successfully meets the standard of comprehensiveness that informs students of “the range of possible options” and prepares them to “choose among these options” (McClafferty et al. 14).

This guide covers two crucial parts of applying to college: the actual process of applying (the Common App, essays, and recommendation letters) and how to pay for college (the FAFSA, financial aid, and scholarships). The guide is comprehensive on the topics it does include. However, as an overall college guide it is incomprehensive because it does not include steps guiding students on how to reach the point at which they are ready to apply to college. As such, a comprehensive college guide, or any collection of college resources, includes information on college exploration and search, in addition to the other topics including in the *U.S. News & World Report Education* article.

Second, information and resources about college must be “accurate and up-to-date” (Eichelberger et al. 14). According to a 2017 article published in the *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, “reliable, centralized online resources” can ensure underrepresented students have access to necessary information to “complete the steps needed to receive financial aid,” such as filing the FAFSA (Eichelberger et al. 77). However, when resources are not up-to-date, they lose their accuracy, reliability and usefulness. For example, the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship was

recently modified to allow students to attend a two-year institution or technical college and still receive the scholarship (Woodfaulk 1). Previously, students could only receive the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship if they attended a four-year institution. Despite this change, the previous eligibility requirements can still be found across the LCSD high schools' websites. Found on the ILHS Counseling page, a PDF labeled "Financial Aid Programs 2021," that should be up-to-date for the 2021-2022 school year as the title suggests, still reflects the old eligibility requirements for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship (Truss 2). Having outdated information for financial aid or another step of the college admissions process can confuse students and negatively affect their college-related decisions.

Third, information and resources about college must be accessible to all students, not just those who are "considered college bound" (McClafferty et al. 14-15). The article emphasizes that college resources should not be "hidden neatly away in a counseling center," meaning they should not be limited to one location but rather shared through a variety of methods (McClafferty et al. 15). To benefit all students, "the information and resources must be shared at every opportunity with a full range of students, educators, and family members" (McClafferty et al. 15-16). In the context of LCSD, most of their resources are located online, which makes them inaccessible to those students and their families without an internet connection. According to NCES data from 2015-2019, 21.2% of households in LCSD did not have broadband internet access, which means they did not have access to online resources about college provided on each high school's website ("Lancaster County").

For those who do have internet access, the accessibility of the online resources must be evaluated in other terms: how easy it is to navigate to and within the college advising pages, the language the information is available in (English, Spanish, etc.), and the type of language used

(is it easily understood by someone not familiar with college lingo?). For example, NCES data from 2015-2019 also estimates that 4.8%, or 4,125 individuals, of the total population in LCSD speak Spanish at home; furthermore, 1.9%, or 1628 individuals, “speak English less than ‘very well’” (“Lancaster County”). This means the online college resources that are only in English may be inaccessible to those students and families whose first language is Spanish. Yet even for native English speakers the language and terms about college can be very confusing to understand.

When information and resources do not meet these three standards, students are solely responsible for finding information and resources themselves. This process becomes even more difficult for first-generation students who are the first in their family to go to college and “may lack the critical cultural capital necessary for college success” (“Defining First-Generation”). According to the 2015-2019 LCSD Profile, the highest level of educational attainment for 26.6% of parents is a high school diploma while 11.4% have not attained that (“Lancaster County”). This means many LCSD students are coming from families who have not gone through the college application process before. Because of this, family involvement must also be prioritized in order to best serve students. In the article “What is a College Culture? Facilitating College Preparation through Organizational Change,” the importance of family involvement is explained: “Numerous studies have indicated that family involvement in a child’s education contributes significantly to student educational success” (McClafferty et al. 21). For example, first-generation students and their parents may not know what the FAFSA is or that they need to file it every year, so both the student and their parents would need to be informed. In addition, first-generation students may miss important deadlines, scholarship opportunities, and so much more because of their school’s lacking college-going culture.

### **Andrew Jackson High School**

On the AJ Counseling homepage, the pages for “Scholarships,” “FAFSA,” and “Testing Info,” accessible through the ribbon, are all blank (“Home” [AJ]). On the “College” page, there are three main resources, the two of which are presentations that include information on SC colleges, including links to virtual tours, lists of which schools offer free applications and which do not require submission of ACT and SAT test scores, and more (“College Application”; “Virtual Visits 2020”). While this does prepare AJ students to apply to college in SC, it provides no information on colleges outside of the state nor does it mention some students may qualify for a waiver for schools that do charge application fees.

The third resource is a Google Drive folder containing ten different documents--eight PDFs, one infographic, and one presentation--mainly pertaining to the FAFSA and other forms of federal aid (“College” [AJ]). While it is a comprehensive resource on federal aid, the resources were not up-to-date. As of September 23rd, 2021, these resources, mainly concerning the FAFSA, are almost two years out of date. On October 1st, 2021, the 2022-2023 FAFSA will open, yet these resources are for the 2020-2021 FAFSA year. In addition, some of the resources, including the financial aid presentation, are inaccessible. Having to request access to view the video, a crucial part of the presentation on the FAFSA, deters students from watching it as there is an added barrier and their request to access it may not be accepted when they need the information (“10/22 Presentation”).

### **Buford High School**

The BHS Counseling page consists of four sections that include information and resources about college: “Parent/Student Information,” “FAFSA,” “College Planning,” and “Testing Information” (“Home” [Buford]). The first page largely consists of the “College and



Career Planning Guide,” a comprehensive document including the following sections: “College Testing Information,” “Suggestions for Submitting College Applications,” “Financial Aid Information,” “Federal Student Aid/Programs,” and guides for students to follow each year of high school (“Parent/Student Information”). While this guide has been updated for the 2021-2022 school year, the financial aid information is out-of-date in several places. Specifically, the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship still lists the former eligibility requirements, and the new FAFSA is stated to open on October 1st, 2020 instead of October 1st, 2021.

The second page, labeled “FAFSA Information,” is comprehensive in that it includes several YouTube videos and a Q&A section for relevant questions (“FAFSA Information”). However, between the two resources, there is conflicting information. In the Guide, students are instructed to use their parents’ 2019 taxes if filing the FAFSA before January 1st and use 2020 taxes if filing after January 1st (“Parent/Student Information”). However, on the “FAFSA Information” page, students are instructed to use 2020 tax information only. According to a 2017 article titled “Uncovering Barriers to Financial Capability: Students’ Access to Financial Resources,” the authors find that “students mistrust the conflicting information they receive from a variety of sources and find verification too time consuming and difficult, so they do not complete the steps needed to receive financial aid or the assistance they need” (Eichelberger et al. 77). While resources make students aware of the FAFSA, it does not provide accurate, up-to-date information.

Under the “College Planning,” students and parents/family can find pages on “Scholarships,” “Important Dates and Announcements,” and “Getting Prepared” (“Home” [Buford]). The first page contains tips for applying for scholarships and lists of the scholarship pages of SC colleges and websites for outside scholarships, such as BigFuture and Fastweb

(“Scholarships” [BHS]). The second page mainly consists of flyers for college fairs (“Important Dates & Announcements”). While providing useful information, some of it has not been updated for the 2021-2022 school year, including dates of college fairs and scholarships such as the 2021 HonorsGradU scholarship (“Important Dates & Announcements”). The “Get Prepared” page includes various information, including a description of the Common App and guides for 11th and 12th grades. These both inform students on crucial aspects of preparing for college, including when they should take certain actions, but the information is very general.

Lastly, the “Testing Information” tab is the most comprehensive and up-to-date resource, or collection of resources, found on the high school’s website. This page and two subpages (ACT Practice and SAT Practice) include the following information and resources: descriptions of the PSAT, SAT, and SAT; links to various practice resources for the SAT and ACT, including ACT Academy and Khan Academy; and an ACT/SAT comparison chart used to determine which test to take (“ACT/SAT Testing”). This prepares students by providing information on what these tests are, why they should take one over the other, and how to prepare for each.

### **Indian Land High School**

On the Counseling page of ILHS, there are four pages dedicated to providing college-related information and resources: “AP/SAT/ACT Updates,” “College,” “College Resources,” and “Financial Aid/Scholarships.” The first page is a fairly comprehensive and up-to-date resource for the SAT and ACT. It includes testing dates for the 2021-2022 school year and links on how to register and prepare for both tests. However, unlike BHS, the ILHS page does not give descriptions of either test or mention fee waivers (“AP/SAT/ACT Updates”).

Next, the “College” page consists mainly of links to various resources, including college search sites, college planning guides for all grades, the Common App, the Common Black

College app, and more. These guides contain general steps or actions students should take every year but do not give specific dates for when they should be done. As such, these guides do not need to be updated yearly, unlike the guide BHS gives. This page prepares students for the beginning of their college search, determining which schools are right for them--in-state, out-of-state, and online.

On the “College Resources” page, there are additional guides, “College Essentials,” created by the CollegeBoard that also do not need to be updated yearly. Similar to AJHS, there is also a list of virtual college tours, but colleges outside of SC are also included, making it more comprehensive. There are also two documents about the CommonApp, including information for international students (“College Resources”). Lastly, there is a document titled “Application Dictionary,” which defines important college-related terms such as “FAFSA,” “Financial Aid,” and “Rolling Admission” (“College Resources”). This addresses another aspect of building a college-going culture, articulation. While this process should start early on in a students’ K-12 education, it is crucial for students to learn about college through “a consistent message, rather than separate bits of information that lose both meaning and impact in their isolation” (McClafferty et al. 27). To encourage and enable all students to go onto higher education, they must be able to understand and speak about college.

ILHS website’s “Financial Aid/Scholarships” is a robust page of resources containing the links to many “helpful scholarship search sites,” such as BigFuture, Fastweb, and Finaid (“Financial Aid/Scholarships”). Embedded within the page is a document that lists several state-based financial aid programs, including information such as the award amount, renewal criteria, eligibility, and deadlines (“Financial Aid/Scholarships”). Although updated on September 15th, 2021, it still does not have updated eligibility criteria for the Palmetto Fellows

Scholarship, as seen on other schools' sites. There is also a Google Sheets titled "ILHS 2021-22 Scholarship Portal"; this includes links to various outside scholarships and their deadlines.

### **Lancaster High School**

On Lancaster High School's homepage, a "College Advisor" page can be found under the "Academics" tab, as opposed to the "School Counseling" tab. This "College Advisor" page includes the following: "Resources," "Dates and Events," and "Tips and Links" ("Home" [LHS]). The first page consists of three drop boxes which are comprehensive resources on "Post-Secondary and Career Planning," "SAT and ACT Registration," and "Financial Aid and Scholarship Information" ("Resources"). The first box includes links to various assessments that can help guide students after graduation and several websites such as BigFuture and the CommonApp that are useful during the college application process ("Resources"). The second box is an ACT/SAT resource similarly comprehensive to the BHS ACT/SAT resource as it includes links to register, prepare, and practice for both tests ("Resources"). Lastly, the third box includes links for FAFSA information, state-based scholarships, and outside scholarship searches ("Resources"). The number of links found in each box is both good and bad: while every aspect of these topics are virtually covered, the numerous links can be very unapproachable and intimidating to a student or parent/guardian.

The second page includes relevant dates of college events. For example, the dates of six NACAC virtual college fairs are listed ("Dates and Events"). Students are also reminded when the FAFSA opens and closes, as well as days when they can get help with their college applications. The third page, "Tips and Links," consists of reminders when completing the FAFSA and searching for outside scholarships. In addition, students can find links to the websites of many SC colleges, including Clemson University and Coastal Carolina University

(“Helpful Tips and Tricks”). There are no links for colleges outside of SC, so the resource is not as comprehensive as it could be.

Compared to the other high schools’ websites, the information and resources found on LHS’s pages are heavily link-based, instead of graphics, PDFs, or other documents created specifically for LHS. Because of this, the majority of information and resources do not need to be updated, just monitored in case the links addresses change or break.

### *Precedent*

#### **Solutions Offered in the Local Area of Focus to Attempt to Meet Problem**

In South Carolina and in LCSD, there have been several programs established with the purpose of building a college-going culture. At the state-level, there is SC CAN GO. At a more local level, there is the Furman University’s College Advising Corps Program. In addition, the University of South Carolina Lancaster sponsors the Upward Bound program, which operates through the TRiO Learning Center (“Upward Bound Program” [USCL]).

#### *SCCANGO*

According to the website, SCCANGO is “an integrated marketing and advertising campaign to promote a college-going culture in South Carolina and raise needed college access awareness throughout the state” (“What is SCCANGO?”). SCCANGO does this by providing necessary resources and materials to South Carolina school counselors and college advisors (“What is SCCANGO?”). This campaign is not just limited to high school students, but instead SCCANGO targets all students K-12 as is evident from the pages dedicated to elementary school, middle school, and all grades in high school (“What is SCCANGO?”).

SCCANGO also sponsors several events throughout the school year, including College Application Month, College Goal SC, and SC Decision Day. On the College Application Month

page, there is a toolkit provided, as well as a student resource guide and various flyers. For the 2021 College Application Session (from August to December), all four LCSD high schools have registered with SCCANGO (“College Application Month”). College Goal SC is part of College Goal Sunday, which is “a volunteer program that provides free information and assistance to students and families who are applying for financial aid for postsecondary education” (“College Goal SC: Getting Started”). Similarly, there are many resources provided for hosting a College Goal event, including direction signs, flyers, and more (“College Goal SC: Getting Started”). However, there are no College Goal SC events in Lancaster County, with the closest being in Rock Hill and Chesterfield, SC (“College Goal SC: Getting Started”). Lastly, College Decision Day also gives high schools the opportunity to register their event with the “aims to celebrate the college decision of a graduating high school senior, and also impact the college going culture for younger students in South Carolina high schools” (“College Decision Day”). By celebrating the decisions and accomplishments of senior students going to college, SCCANGO aims to encourage younger students to do the same.

*Furman University’s College Advising Corps*

Established in 2017, Furman University’s College Advising Corps program places college advisers at all four LCSD high schools in partnership with the National College Advising Corps (“College Advising Corps” [Furman]). The National College Advising Corps (CAC) is a program designed to increase “college enrollment and completion among low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students” (Butler).

Furman’s college advisors are able to build connections with students through various ways, including “one-on-one meetings, group presentations, college tours, parent engagement activities related to the college applications process, and financial aid” (“College Advising

Corps” [Furman]). Having college advisors are “key to establishing a school’s college culture,” especially considering school counselors have many responsibilities that do not allow them enough time to provide comprehensive college advising to all students (McClafferty et al. 16).

*USC Lancaster’s TRiO Learning Center*

The University of South Carolina Lancaster’s USCL’s TRiO Learning Center sponsors the Upward Bound Program, which “helps motivate high school students to finish high school and obtain a four-year degree” (“Upward Bound Program” [USCL]). Currently, the program is only open to students at AJHS, BHS, and LHS (“Upward Bound Program” [USCL]). Each year, 60 9th grade students will be selected from all three high schools, and those students will be able to participate in the program up until they graduate from high school (“Upward Bound Program” [USCL]). According to the U.S Department of Education website, these students must be from low-income families or families in which neither parent holds a bachelor’s degree (“Upward Bound Program” [US ED]).

In addition, Upward Bound students will also complete the Summer Experience program. This program lasts for six weeks, during which students have the chance to take a class at USCL, participate in various workshops, and receive tutoring (“Upward Bound Program” [USCL]). By providing support throughout the four years of high school, Upward Bound aims to build a college-going culture by allowing “students an opportunity to really get a feel for the college experience while still in high school” (“Upward Bound Program” [USCL]).

**Solutions Offered in Other but Similar Areas to Attempt to Meet Local Problem**

*North Carolina State University’s College Advising Corps*

Just as they did with Furman University in SC, the National College Advising Corps has partnered with several universities located in North Carolina (NC), including North Carolina

State University (NCSU) (“College Advising Corps” [NC]). Established in 2014, only three years before Furman’s program, NCSU’s College Advising program has “expanded to 21 advisers serving in 21 schools,” which are in rural areas (“College Advising Corps” [NC]). Similar to Furman’s program, NCSU advisers participate in “an intensive four-week training program each summer and on-going training throughout the year” in order to prepare and best serve the rural students (“About Us”). To create a strong college-going culture in these rural schools, NCSU advisers “meet with students, collaborate with high school teachers and staff, and plan events throughout the year” (“About Us”). NCSU advisers assist students with their college search, college applications, ACT and SAT exams, financial aid, and finally enrollment (“Mission and History”).

To introduce and celebrate the 21 college advisers, NCSU includes a “Meet the Advisers” page on their website. This page divides the 21 advisers into their respective geographic regions--Northern, Northeastern, Central, and Southern--and lists the names of each adviser in each region (“Meet the Advisers”). Additionally, a headshot and biographical information for each adviser can be found hyperlinked to their name (“Meet the Advisers”). For example, the first adviser in the Northeastern region is Chase Harris, who was a 2020 graduate with the major of Broadcast Journalism (“Chase Harris”). In his biography, Harris’s extracurriculars are listed, and it says he “hopes to create a space of acceptance to better advise all students” (“Chase Harris”). This information makes clear NCSU’s near-peer advising model, which relies on college graduates who have “recently gone through the college process themselves” and “can impart up-to-date, current knowledge of college today” (“What We Do”).



*Broward County Public Schools' FAFSA Nights*

To address the need for information about the FAFSA, Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida held “a live, virtual FAFSA night every Thursday and one Tuesday in the month of October” in 2020 (Carrell and DeBaun). These events were hosted on Microsoft Teams, an online platform similar to Zoom. BCPS took advantage of the multiple room feature of the Microsoft Teams platforms multiple rooms feature as each school had its own virtual room, each with “two staff members and three or four advisors” (Carrell and DeBaun). In addition, rooms were also allocated for different FAFSA topics, including “FSA ID creation and...one-on-one assistance” (Carrell and DeBaun). During the events, students and families were provided with “FAFSA completion assistance” by volunteers inside and outside of the BCPS school district, including “local community college administrators” and “college and career readiness professionals” (Carrell and DeBaun). These volunteers serve students and their families by answering questions in the chat and providing additional advising (Carrell and DeBaun).

*East Bladen High School's Drive-Through FAFSA Event*

In Elizabethtown, North Carolina, East Bladen High School (EBHS) hosted their first drive-through FAFSA nights in 2020 (Douglas-Gabriel). In response to COVID restrictions, East Bladen moved their FAFSA assistance from inside a classroom into “a parking lot, complete with WiFi and masks” (Douglas-Gabriel). The EBHS counselors were primarily motivated to host a drive-through FAFSA night because filing the FAFSA sooner gives students a greater chance to receive the financial aid they need, including the “first-come-first-serve state grants” (Douglas-Gabriel). During the event, students and their families “remain in their cars while advisers walk them through the application from a distance” (Douglas-Gabriel). This allowed the

EBHS college advisors and counselors to still give students and their families direct assistance with the FAFSA while maintaining safety and upholding social distancing guidelines.

*ICAN One-on-One Personalized Advising Sessions for FAFSA Completion*

While students can reach out to the colleges and universities they have applied to or their high school's college advisor or counselors for help filing the FAFSA, other organizations and programs have also been created to meet this need. For example, ICAN is a non-profit organization, founded in 1998, that has helped to "empower Iowans to achieve lifelong success through education, training, and information decision-making" ("Iowa"). ICAN has a web page dedicated to the FAFSA, including a description of the form, its uses, and web links to additional resources ("FAFSA" [ICAN]). If students or their parents need assistance filing the FAFSA, they can take advantage of the one-on-one appointments that ICAN offers using the online platform Zoom ("Virtual Appointments"). These appointments, which are typically an hour long, are free to Iowans, but for non-Iowans they cost \$75 an appointment ("Virtual Appointments"). If a student or parents only need help creating a FSA ID, these appointments run 30 minutes, and they are free for Iowans and again \$75 for non-Iowans ("Virtual Appointments"). During an appointment, students and their family can expect to "sit down with a highly trained Student Success Advisor and, together, [they] will complete" the FAFSA form ("Virtual Appointments").

**Section 3: Evaluation of Precedent**

As mentioned previously, the college-going culture in LCSD is lacking especially in terms of information and resources about college. After examining the information and resources about college in the four LCSD high schools, I found no consistency in the availability of resources or the quality in terms of comprehensiveness, currency, and accessibility. While some pages, like most of the ACT/SAT pages, were comprehensive, current, and accessible, other

resources were completely missing or were not updated, as could be seen across all of the schools.

### **Solutions Offered in the Local Area of Focus to Attempt to Meet Problem**

#### *SCCANGO*

Evaluating the successfulness and impact of SCCANGO is very difficult as there are little statistics or data, specifically about the usage of the resources. When the SCCANGO website was first created, it would have had the makings of an overall comprehensive resource about college. Yet as several years have passed since the resources were last updated, SCCANGO becomes less useful and beneficial. For example, the most recent information for the Pell Grant is for the 2015-2016 school year, and the “new” brochures for the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and HOPE scholarships are marked as “Current as of Fall 2014” (“Life\_Hope-Brochure”; “Palmetto-Fellows-Brochure”). If a counselor or college advisor were to distribute the Palmetto Fellows brochure to their students, as the resources are intended to be used, they would be distributing inaccurate information which could have negative effects.

However, SCCANGO does set a good example of how college resources should not only be targeted at juniors and seniors in high school, but at all students K-12 (“What is SCCANGO?”). According to McClafferty et al., students are better off when “a college message is communicated from kindergarten through 12th grade” (25). To help schools build a college culture at all grades, SCCANGO provides resources, checklists, and more for elementary school, middle school, and each year of high school. While these resources may not all be up-to-date, the framework that SCCANGO utilizes could be successful on LCSD high schools’ websites.

*Furman University's College Advising Corps*

On Furman's website, the available statistics about the program's effectiveness all use the phrase "more likely" ("College Advising Corps" [Furman]). For example, students who meet with a Furman advisor are "more likely to visit a college or university," "22% more likely to submit the FAFSA," "28% more likely to apply to college," and "21% more likely to be accepted to a college" ("College Advising Corps" [Furman]). By using the phrase "more likely," it is very difficult to interpret and understand the actual impact of Furman's program. While there is an obvious relationship between meeting with an advisor and the actions listed (visiting a college, submitting the FAFSA, etc.), it is unclear whether meeting with the college advisor directly or other influences increased the likelihood of students taking actions to go onto higher education.

Furthermore, this increase in likelihood is based on whether a student meets with their advisor. The website gives no statistics or data on the number or percentage of students who actually met with their advisor. This means that this increase in likelihood could only affect 10% of students, for example, because that is the percentage of students who met with their advisor. Lastly, these impact statistics do not list the school year in which the data was used from. As such, this data could be from the 2017-2018 school year when the program was first established, or the data could be from as recent as the 2020-2021 school year. Yet, there is no way of telling that, so the current impact or influence of Furman advisors is unclear.

*USC Lancaster's TRiO Learning Center*

Similar to SCCANGO, there are little statistics available on the impact of USCL's Upward Bound Program. According to the *Department of Education* website, the Upward Bound program's success is "measured by the percentage of low-income, first-generation college students who successfully pursue and complete postsecondary education opportunities"

(“Frequently Asked Questions”). While the website offers forms and templates for individual programs to submit their data, this data and any recent evaluations are not available on the website. The most recent “Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science Programs: Postsecondary Outcomes Report” is dated September 2016 (“Resources”). Furthermore, there is no data available that is specific to USCL’s Upward Bound Program. Because of the lack of recent and local data, this program cannot be used as precedent for the local solution.

### **Solutions Offered in Other but Similar Areas to Attempt to Meet Local Problem**

#### *North Carolina State University’s College Advising Corps*

To analyze the effectiveness of the program, NC State University “engages in a continuous process of collecting, analyzing, and reporting of data” (“What We Do”). This “data-informed” commitment to “ongoing assessment and evaluation” allows the program to identify areas that need improvement or change, which better serves the students (“What We Do”). In addition, NC State also utilizes an “external evaluation conducted by the Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE), a research group at Stanford University”

The most recent data available is for the 2019-2020 school year. During this time, NCSU advisors “met with 98% of all seniors,” which is very successful as the program covers 21 schools (“Our Impact”). In addition, NCSU advisors “assisted 2,798 students in registering for the ACT or SAT,” which resulted in “91% of the seniors” taking one of the college entrance exams (“Our Impact”). Considering only 76% of the SC Graduating Class took the ACT, direct assistance with registration could be very successful in increasing the percentage of the LCSD high schools’ graduating classes (“Average ACT Scores”). Additionally, NCSU advisors “directly assisted 42% of all FAFSAs submitted” (“Our Impact”). Direct assistance was very

successful in the NCSU school district, and it could be equally successful in the LCSD school district.

In addition, NC State's data shows that college advisors "held 1,420 meetings with parents" ("Our Impact"). By making it a priority to meet with students' parents, NC State is addressing another important aspect of a strong college-going culture, family involvement. By involving parents and family members in the college search and college application process, students' support system is expanded beyond the college advisors and counselors. In addition, by providing headshots, short biographies, and contact information for each advisor, the advisors become more identifiable and accessible to family members who may not have been introduced to or made aware of the advisors previously. A similar emphasis on family involvement would be necessary and useful in LCSD high schools because of the population of students who will be first-generation, or the first in their family to go to college.

These impact statistics are much more concrete than those available on Furman University's program page. These statistics allow NC State college advisors to better understand their current impact, which allows them to plan, focus, and improve on areas in which the program is not achieving ideal results. In addition, these statistics also show the direct impact of NC State advisors, rather than just a likelihood increase.

#### *Broward County Public Schools' FAFSA Nights*

Considering BCPS is "the sixth-largest school district in the United States," Broward County Public Schools' FAFSA Nights were very successful as each event "drew hundreds of attendees" (Carrell and DeBraun). According to the NCAN article, these virtual events are successfully combating the decline in FAFSA completion rates: "through Nov. 13 of [2020], seniors in Broward County Public Schools have completed 6.1% fewer FAFSAs than through the

same date last year” while the overall state of Florida has “seen 16.1% fewer completions” (Carrell and DeBaun). Through the FAFSA night events, BCPS was able to increase the number of students filing the FAFSA. As seen with the other examples of precedent, direct assistance and advising is crucial to seeing successful increases in FAFSA completion. These events would be similarly successful in LCSD.

In addition, these events were made accessible to non-native English speakers as “advising was provided in several languages besides English (e.g., Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese” (Carrell and DeBaun). In LCSD, this same practice could work well if advising during the events was offered in Spanish as there is a significant Spanish-speaking population.

*East Bladen High School’s Drive-Through FAFSA Event*

In 2020, East Bladen High School’s drive-through FAFSA nights had limited success (Douglas-Gabriel). According to Aliaha Austin, the college advisor at EBHS, only “one or two parents showed up for the face-to-face fair” while about “20 joined her via Zoom” (Douglas-Gabriel). In the Bladen County School District (BCSD), 29.8% of households do not have broadband internet access, similar to 21.2% in LCSD (“Bladen County”; “Lancaster County”). Despite the similar levels of broadband internet access, LCSD high schools would likely not see a better turnout with in-person drive-through FAFSA events. For it to have equal or greater success, the event would need to be very widely advertised, especially through methods such as phone calls and paper to reach students and families who do not have access to broadband internet. Additionally, the very limited success does not warrant the time and cost of hosting such an event. Outreach program director at Get2College Shannon Grimsley estimates the requirement necessary for hosting such an event--“a generator, WiFi hotspots, mobile printers, tents and personal protective equipment”--would cost around \$1,000 (Douglas-Gabriel).

To increase attendance, incentives could be offered to students and their families, but that would present additional costs on top of equipment costs.

*ICAN One-on-One Personalized Advising Sessions for FAFSA Completion*

ICAN as an organization has found great success promoting a college culture and assisting students on their way to college. During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, ICAN had the following impact: “621,909 customers served,” “6,124 FAFSAs completed,” “858 school-based presentations given,” and “62 training events, curriculum lessons, fairs, and exhibits given (“Iowa College Access Network: ICAN”). As shown from the statistics, ICAN has a huge impact in Iowa and even with students and families outside of the state. In LCSD, the college advisors and school counselors already offer one-on-one appointments to students and their families, just as ICAN does for Iowans, but these offerings could be more widely advertised and encouraged like ICAN does.

In addition, ICAN serves many underrepresented students who may not already have the resources or support to go to college. The following are statistics about the customers ICAN assists: “21%...identify themselves as belonging to races other than Caucasian compared to 9.43% of the population in Iowa;” “More than 30% of families make less than \$50,000 per year;” and “45% are first-generation college students who have no family members to guide them through the planning and financing process” (“College and Career Access in Iowa”).

#### **Section 4: The Local Solution**

*Introduction*

In order to address LCSD’s weak college-going culture and lack of access to adequate resources, a two-pronged solution should be implemented: (1) college advisors should utilize a guide specifying what information and resources about college should be on each school’s



website and (2) each school should host additional college-related events to disseminate information and resources about college and to provide individual assistance to students and their families. Across the four high schools in LCSD--AJHS, BHS, ILHS, and LHS--there is no consistency in the availability of resources or the quality in terms of comprehensiveness, currency, and accessibility. Using a guide on what information and resources should be available will allow Furman advisors to better prepare students to go on to higher education. In addition, events such as FAFSA drive-ins and financial aid nights should be held more often and advertised more to increase attendance. Because 21.2% of households in LCSD do not have broadband internet access, they will have very limited access to online resources available on each school's website ("Lancaster County"). As such, it is necessary to make this information and these resources available to them through other methods, such as events they are able to attend. In addition, in-person or virtual events would allow first-generation students and their families to receive individual advising and assistance, which research shows to be highly effective (Eichelberger et al. 78).

### *The Solution*

#### **Online Resources**

To ensure LCSD students and their families have access to comprehensive and up-to-date resources about college, Furman college advisors should utilize a guide, outlined below, that will allow them to better fulfill their purpose of "establish[ing] a stronger college-going tradition" by providing necessary information and resources about college ("College Advising Corps" [Furman]).

### *The Guide*

This section serves as a guide for Furman college advisors. It outlines the pages and subpages that should be available on each school's Counseling page or College Advisor's page. In addition, this section describes the information and resources that should be made available on each page and subpage. All of these pages and subpages should include any relevant dates and links. For example, the "FAFSA and Federal Aid" subpage should list October 1st as the date the FAFSA opens every year. Another example would be the "College Search" page including links to *Big Future*, a website that allows students to find the best college for them, as done by the current LHS advisor ("Resources").

The first web page should introduce students and parents to the "College Search" and the factors they should consider when determining the right institution and program. Once a student has determined higher education is the right path for them, they need to begin their college search. On the ICAN website, the "Explore Colleges" page lists several factors students and their families should take into account: "location," "type," "academic programs," "campus life," "cost and financial aid availability," "facilities," "living accommodations," and "campus safety" ("Explore Colleges"). For example, the location of a school, whether in-state or out-of-state, would greatly affect the tuition rates a student was charged. In addition, the type of school--private or public, 2-year or 4-year, and community college or technical school--will also affect tuition and the degrees available. All must be considered in order for a student to make an informed decision about the schools they wish to apply to.

Each student's needs and preferences concerning higher education will greatly influence the schools they should look at and consider. For example, a student who is interested in going into a trade such as an electrician may want to consider going to a two-year technical school

whereas a student interested in journalism may be better served going to a four-year institution. Another student may want to go to a two-year community college before transferring to a four-year. By making students aware of the different options, they are able to make better informed decisions when determining the schools and programs that will be best for them and that they want to apply to.

The second page should cover “Applying to College,” which is the next step students should take after determining which colleges and programs they like. Applying to college is one of the most important steps in a student’s journey to higher education. There are many different aspects that go into applying to college that students and their families need to be aware of. Furman advisers should include these subpages under the “Applying to College” page: “Application Deadlines”; “Application Platforms, Fees, and Waivers”; and “Application Materials.”

Under the “Applying to College” page, the first subpage should be “Application Deadlines,” which informs students about the various types of application deadlines they may encounter when applying to colleges. In the *U.S. News & World Report* “Complete Guide to the College Application Process,” the various types of deadlines are emphasized (Ross and Moody). These include early decision (ED), early action (EA), regular decision, and rolling admissions. Some schools may only have one or two different application deadlines while others have several based on different factors. According to the “Complete Guide,” ED deadlines are most important when students are applying to schools that are their first choice. When students apply through early decision (ED), they will receive a decision much earlier than other students who apply by the regular decision deadline (Ross and Moody). However, students should also know that ED is binding, “meaning an applicant must enroll if offered admission” (Ross and Moody). As such,

students should be careful which school they apply to via ED, as they typically should leave that to their first-choice school. The second type of early application deadline, EA, allows students to hear a decision earlier while not being bound to apply to that school (Ross and Moody). If a student applies through regular decision, they will generally receive an answer “in mid-to-late March or early April” (Ross and Moody). Lastly, some schools may offer rolling admissions. A school may offer only rolling admissions, or they may offer this after the regular decision deadline has passed. Using this method, schools “evaluate applications as they receive them and release admissions decisions on an ongoing basis” (Ross and Moody). While students may appreciate the additional time, they should also be made aware that applying through rolling admissions may mean they lose out on the chance at some scholarships that are first-come-first-serve or have limited funds. For example, USC Lancaster offers rolling admissions, but students who wish to be eligible for the Lancers Scholarship must apply by November 1st (“Scholarships”). By providing students with all of this information about application deadlines, college advisors are making students aware of the different types of application deadlines they may encounter when applying to schools. This means they will be better prepared to submit their applications on time, according to their preferences and that of the schools they are applying to.

Under the “Applying to College” page, the second subpage should be titled “Application Platforms, Fees, and Waivers.” Students should also be made aware of the “several options when it comes to college application platforms, as emphasized in the “Complete Guide to the College Application Process” (Ross and Moody). Depending on the school, applications may be accepted through only one platform, or they may be accepted through multiple platforms. This subpage should inform students about the following application platforms: the Common Application, the

Black Common Application, the Coalition Application, the Questbridge Application, and individual schools' websites. Additionally, this subpage should also inform students that most schools do charge application fees, but some students qualify for fee waivers and should contact the college advisor for more information.

The Common App is one of the most common application platforms, used by “more than 900 colleges, including some located outside the U.S.” (Ross and Moody). This platform allows students to fill out a base application and then submit this to as many schools as they want, as long as they pay the application fees for each school (Ross and Moody). Some schools may require supplemental materials along with the base application, such as “additional essay questions” (Ross and Moody). Other application platforms students should know about are the Coalition Application and the Common Black College Application. The Coalition Application is “accepted by more than 150 schools” while the Common Black App is “accepted by more than 60 historically Black colleges and universities” (Ross and Moody). In addition, some schools may accept applications directly on their website. Lastly, the QuestBridge Application, not mentioned on any of the LCSD high school’s websites, is another way for students to apply to colleges. According to their website, QuestBridge is a “non-profit organization that helps high-achieving, low-income students gain admission and scholarship to 45 of the country’s top-ranked colleges.” Students admitted through QuestBridge can receive “full four-year scholarships” (“National College Match: How It Works”). For the 16% of LCSD families that have incomes below the poverty level, the QuestBridge App serves as a good way for students to apply to high ranking schools without application fees and have the chance to receive a full-ride (“Lancaster County”).

Under the “Applying to College” page, the third subpage should be listed as “Application Materials.” When applying to college, students will need to include different materials with their application: college essays or short answer responses,” “personal information,” “high school transcript,” “standardized test scores,” and “letters of recommendation” (Ross and Moody). The advisor should give short descriptions of each of these items, so that the student is prepared when they encounter them on a college application. In addition, this subpage is an appropriate place for college advisors to include tips and tricks that they find or found helpful when they applied to college.

The third page should be “ACT/SAT Testing.” Once students decide they want to apply to college, they must then determine which test, the ACT or SAT, is the right college entrance test for them. Most of the LCSD high schools had fairly comprehensive and up-to-date ACT/SAT resources, but by following this guide, the information and resources will be standardized and ensure availability of the resources. While some schools may not require either of these test scores, other schools do, and so it is important for LCSD advisors to provide students with the information and resources necessary to determine which test is right for them, learn how to register for a test, and prepare for the test. When students register for the ACT or SAT, they are required to pay a fee in order to take the test, which could create a financial burden for some students and their families. This page should inform students that there are fee waivers available, and they should contact their college advisor for more information. Additionally, this page should also include a comparison chart, similar to the chart included on the BHS ACT/SAT page, so students are able to choose which test is best suited for them (“ACT/SAT Testing”). To help better prepare students for the tests, college advisors should also include links for practice websites, such as *Khan Academy*. By providing these websites on the ACT/SAT Testing Page,

advisors are making students aware of free practice sites that can help them. Relevant dates on this page should be testing dates for both tests, as well as when students must sign up for the tests.

The fourth page, titled “Money for College,” should advise students on how to fund their higher education experience. The first subpage, “How much does college cost?,” should introduce students to various costs and fees they may encounter during college, including the following: tuition, orientation fees, textbooks, parking fees, lab fees, technology fees, and living costs (food and housing). The college advisor should also recommend students to look at each school’s website to estimate how much tuition and other costs may total. The second subpage should cover the “FAFSA and Federal Aid.” On this subpage, college advisors should include information on what the FAFSA is and steps on how to file it. In addition, they should also explain the different types of federal aid, such as loans and Pell grants. The third subpage should give descriptions of “South Carolina Scholarships and Grants,” including the Palmetto Fellows scholarship, the LIFE scholarship, the HOPE scholarship, SC Need-Based grants, and the Lottery Tuition Assistance. These descriptions should include the amount of the scholarship, eligibility requirements, and other relevant information. The fourth subpage should primarily provide links to websites on which students can find “Outside Scholarships” and what outside scholarships are. Many of the LCSD high schools already include such links on their websites. For example, the LHS advisor included links to *Scholly* and *Scholarships.com*, which are both websites where students can find and apply to outside scholarships (“Resources” [LHS]).

The fifth page should be dedicated to the college advisor themselves. The college advisor is an equally, if not more, important resource to students and parents at each school. These pages should be modeled after NCSU’s “Meet the Advisors” page, which allowed for each of the 21

NCSU college advisors to be easily identified and contacted (“Meet the Advisors”). On each LCSD high school website, there should be a “Meet the College Advisor” page on which the following information can be found: the name of the current college advisor, the years the advisor is serving (ex. 2021-2022 school year), contact information (email and phone number), a headshot or other picture, and brief biographical information (hometown, alma mater, major, extracurriculars, and statement of purpose). Three of the four LCSD high schools, excluding AJHS, already include similar pages introducing the college advisors.

### *Implementation*

As it is already the responsibility of Furman advisors to provide online information and resources about college, no additional time would need to be allocated for this part of the solution. Because the advisors have already constructed their webpages for the 2021-2022 school year, this guide should first be used in preparation for the 2022-2023 school year. Furman college advisors begin pre-service training in early June of each year (“College Advising Corps” [Furman]). When they start training in June 2022 and receive introductory materials, this guide should be included in those materials (“College Advising Corps” [Furman]). This will allow advisors to familiarize themselves with what online resources they should be collecting while learning about and training for their other responsibilities.

During the summer, LCSD college advisors should work collaboratively to collect information and resources about college as according to the guide outlined and detailed above. By the end of the summer or beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, LCSD college advisors should finish collecting information and resources. They should create PDFs, presentations, and other documents as necessary to best display the information. For example, creating a presentation for ACT and SAT testing information would not be appropriate as the information



could be better displayed directly on a webpage or Google Doc, just as ILHS and BHS advisors chose to do so on their respective web pages. On the other hand, other information and resources would be better visually displayed as a presentation; for example, nineteen virtual campus visits is more more appealing and approachable in a PDF rather than as a very lengthy webpage, just as the AJHS college advisor did with the “Virtual Visits 2020” presentation (“College” [AJHS]).

To ensure the online information and resources about college are accessible to all students and families, there should be both English and Spanish versions of all the content. If there is no current Furman college advisor fluent in Spanish, a professional translating service should be utilized. For example, Gengo is a professional translation service that charges \$0.06 per word and has under a 3% error rate on average (“Pricing and Languages”). This should be a one-time cost that is funded by the Furman College Advising Corps.

At the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, LCS D advisors should work with their respective school’s webmasters to ensure they have access to add and modify the current information and resources available on their school’s website. According to Bridgett Plexico, former webmaster and teacher at the LCS D Career Center, the school’s webmaster is responsible for creating and linking web pages, but individual teachers and departments are responsible for maintaining the content of their web pages. As such, the Guidance Department and college advisor should have the ability to change the content of their webpages.

Once the online college resources have been curated and created for the 2022-2023 school year, the workload of subsequent college advisors will be decreased. Because comprehensive and accessible information and resources about college will already be available on each LCS D high school’s website, the college advisors’ main focus will be on ensuring the information and resources remain up-to-date and accurate.

To evaluate the effectiveness of this guide, students and their parents should be heavily consulted. Because these information and resources about college have the purpose of helping students and their families prepare for college, their opinion about the effectiveness is highly important. When the LCSD advisors meet with students and parents throughout the year, they should inquire about their use of the online resources and their opinions on them. Feedback allows advisors to determine whether students and families are aware of the resources, how useful the resources are, and what may need to be changed.

### **College-Related Events**

In addition to providing online resources, LCSD advisors should also distribute this information through in-person and virtual events. This will allow more students and families to have access to the information and resources found online, as well as have the opportunity to receive one-on-one advising and to ask questions.

#### *Event Descriptions and Logistics*

The two events that would be most beneficial to students are Financial Aid and FAFSA nights. These two events should be modeled after the BCPS FAFSA nights, which were very successful. The Financial Aid Night event should involve a presentation about the different types of financial aid, already listed previously, given by a financial aid professional or representative from a local or South Carolina college. For example, staff from the financial aid office at USCL could be recruited to go over important financial aid topics such as tuition and the fafsa, as well as answer questions. Because colleges' Financial Aid Offices already have presentations that they use, the college advisor would only need to create a flyer to advertise the event, create a schedule for the event, and determine a time and date for the event. On the SCCANGO website, there is advice for determining when an event should be held during the day: "Earlier than

7:00pm can sometimes be too soon for parents to finish work, come home and eat dinner. Later than 8:00pm can also be challenging for a weeknight” (“Planning and Hosting”). It is important to choose a time that is best for the greatest number of people. This event could be hosted on several different platforms, including Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or even Facebook Live.

Additionally, once the event is held for the first time, a recording of the event should be available online, without requiring people to request access, so that students and families who were unable to attend the event in real-time will still have access to the information given during the event. In addition, this would also be very beneficial for those who do attend the events, as it can sometimes be an information overload, especially for first-generation students.

The second event, a FAFSA Night, would be very similar but instead focus only on the FAFSA. Again, college advisors should recruit a college financial aid representative to give a presentation on the FAFSA, including what it is and how to file it. Additionally, there should be school counselors or others who can help “manage attendees’ questions in the chat,” just as BCPS did during their event (Carrell and DeBaun).

### *Implementation*

As it is already the responsibility of Furman advisors to plan college-related events, no additional time would need to be allocated for this part of the solution, either. Because events have already been planned for the 2021-2022 school year, these college-related events should also be held beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. At the very beginning of August once school starts, each college advisor should begin planning the events for the fall semester. Then, after the last event of the fall semester occurs, they should begin planning for the spring semester. Depending on the policies of each LCSD high school, the college advisor would need

to go through the necessary channels to get the events approved, such as talking to the Media Center staff to reserve that space.

To evaluate the effectiveness of college-related events, LCSD advisors should primarily look at attendance of the events: the number of students attending, the number of parents attending, and the demographic of the attendees. For in-person events, a sign-up slip should be created and distributed to all attendees for them to fill out. This slip should include areas for the attendees to write the following information: their name, contact information, reason for attending, and demographic information (optional). For online events, a Google Form should be created for each event, and the same information should be collected. This will allow advisors to better plan events to meet the needs of LCSD students and families. When the LCSD advisors meet with students and parents throughout the year, they should inquire about their attendance and their opinions of the events. Feedback allows advisors to determine whether students and families are aware of the events, methods of increasing attendance, and aspects of the events that need to be modified.

### **Section 5: Conclusion**

As shown through the evaluation of the LCSD high schools' current online information and resources about college, the college-going culture is weak and must be addressed in order for the college advisors to best serve students, especially those who will be first-generation college students. As a first-generation college student myself, I was forced to figure out everything college-related on my own, which I primarily did through colleges' websites and other online resources. By providing these resources that are comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible, LCSD schools and advisors are ensuring their students have the information they need to pursue a higher education. Furthermore, offering online resources and events will increase students'

access and exposure to college information, which will better prepare them for post graduation. Additionally, this could be seen as a pilot program for the Chester County School District (CCSD). Because the Furman College Advising Program places advisors in both LCSD and CCSD high schools, these guides and event information could easily be shared with the three CCSD advisors to implement in their respective high schools.

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