



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

The Workforce Playbook: Onboarding Processes to Support
Program Exploration and Informed Decision-Making

Tess Henthorne, Program Manager
The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program

Strategy 3: Support Students' Career Goals

3

Support students' career goals from pre-matriculation through post-graduation



- Conduct intentional outreach and early support to ensure broad and equitable access to high-quality programs
- **Create onboarding processes to support productive program exploration and informed decision-making**
- Embed career and life-skills development throughout the student experience
- Help students achieve post-graduation employment in good jobs and careers

The Myth of the “Decided” Student



Susan

Single mother

28 years old

What She Said

“I’d like to sign up for cosmetology. My friend does it, and it seems interesting.”

What She Cares About

- Security and stability for herself and her child
- Job where she can help people
- Cost of program
- Maintaining income while in school

“I didn’t know you had to buy your own tools, find your own clients. I wasn’t turning a real profit for years; I ended up having to take on other odd jobs. That’s not why I went back to school.”

Results: Susan finished the program, but is unhappy with her outcomes.


55% of students receive their primary program choice advice from **informal sources** (e.g., friends and family).


What could have gone differently in this situation to help the student achieve her life goals?

Case Studies: Ensuring Informed Program Decision-Making

Broward College *Thoughtful On-Ramps*


On-ramps start through outreach across CBOs, K-12; health care-focused orientation and student life skills courses


 **Built-In Advising and Support:** Student success coaches work with ASN hopefuls to create education plans; all students assigned a CTE advisor

 **Structured Exploration:** Scientific Workplace Technical Certificate (stackable) to jump-start technical skills

Guttman Community College *Ethnographies of Work*

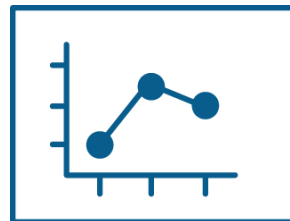
First-year experience course and career exploration research project framed through sociology and anthropology lens

 **Built-In Advising and Support:** Corequisite weekly group advising teaches networking, elevator pitching, etc.

 **Structured Exploration:** Research project requires students to visit workplaces throughout NYC and observe different workplace cultures, norms, and skills

What data and other information are students given as they make their program decisions?

Are there systems to ensure all students receive this information?
Students don't do optional.



Thank You!



Tess.Henthorne@aspeninstitute.org



highered.aspeninstitute.org



Twitter: [@aspenhigered](https://twitter.com/aspenhigered)