

JHSCCA

JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

October 13, 2015

Colleague Leaders of the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success:

Thank you for hosting the session on October 3rd as part of the NACAC Conference in San Diego. We represent a majority of the over 50 Jesuit High Schools across the United States. We also enroll a significant number of underrepresented and underserved students which we understand your group is attempting to assist through this new application/portal.

After the NACAC session we as a governing group feel it necessary to bring to your attention our concerns regarding the implementation of the Coalition Application and its connected tools (specifically, the student “locker”) as well as the need to reassess what “access” means. Our concerns are the following:

- Based on all adolescent development models, starting to “collect items” and for parents to “obsess” in the 9th grade will most likely produce significant concern/anxiety over the college process at a time when all of our students’ focus should be on the growth of their personal and academic selves. We could, for example, suggest you consider the establishment of a five-piece portfolio that is built in the junior and senior years when the time is appropriate for all parties involved.
- We question how this application will benefit students who do not have counselors, or who are in schools with inadequately trained counselors and/or counselors with 300 – 1000 students in their caseload. We have yet to see the specific details of how this application will aid these students.
- We also don’t believe counselors have the time or bandwidth to help parents and students understand the components when it is not clear how this information will be used.
- We have major concerns related to the privacy of the student’s locker. We feel that access from any third party individual will cause more confusion about the application process, especially from people who do not fully understand college admissions. We strongly feel that the locker needs to be private, and students need to be able to add and delete items as they wish, with no direct action/supervision from any third party (parents, counselors and especially those within the membership of the Coalition Application). If the locker is to exist, we highly advise that students have the option to share what they wish when they wish with whomever they wish.
- Concern/anxiety over the placement of content that is stored in the locker will detract students from learning for learning’s sake instead of positioning oneself. The heightened scrutiny with which these documents will be assessed will devolve from what a positive high school educational experience can encompass into a competitive “stepping stone” mentality that will affect every decision within these formative years.
- Please remember that your first-year class of 2017 and their parents are being hit with three major changes in the college application process: the “new” SAT, Prior-Prior Year financial aid filing, and this Coalition application. We, speaking for our counselors and those around the world, need you to supply clarity of purpose and process in your application as we help our families navigate all of these changes.

We strongly suggest that the current timeline for implementation be delayed until August of 2017 as students begin the college application process for Fall 2018. We suggest that a more developed pilot program be evaluated and close scrutiny be applied to every component of the students' portal so all of us are not subject to what we experienced with the untested Common Application two years ago. Our hope is that a diverse group of college and school/academic counselors be invited to provide input so that collaborative efforts will enhance a sustainable application that can truly support the process for all students across the board.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcome the opportunity to assist in your creation of an application that is both fair, developmentally balanced, and has the potential to aid students who are desperately in need of strong college guidance.

Sincerely,

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<i>Corrie McCarthy</i>	Jesuit HS, FL	<i>Brice Campoverdi</i>	St. Ignatius College Preparatory, CA
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The Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools

FOUNDING SCHOOLS

Antilles School
The Benjamin School
The Bishop's School
The Bolles School
The Bush School
Colorado Academy
Groton School
Harvard-Westlake School
Hathaway Brown School
Hawken School
Isidore Newman School
King Low Heywood Thomas School
Latin School of Chicago
Lawrenceville School
Loomis Chaffee School
Madeira School
Mary Institute & Saint Louis Country Day School
Middlesex School
Milton Academy
National Cathedral School
Pace Academy
Pembroke Hill School
Phillips Academy Andover
Phillips Exeter Academy
Phoenix Country Day School
Pine Crest School
Polytechnic School
Potomac School
Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School
Sandia Prep School
Sanford School
Sidwell Friends School
St. Albans School
St. George's School
St. Margaret's Episcopal School
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St. Stephen's Episcopal School
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The Webb Schools
The Wellington School
The Westminster Schools
The Wheeler School

Dear Colleague,

The leadership of the Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools (ACCIS) applauds the Coalition's quick response to the reactions expressed at NACAC and elsewhere to the development of a new application platform and in particular, the decision to delay the rollout of the Virtual College Locker. The communiqués we have seen are more clear and reassuring in their messaging and will do much, in our opinion, to tamp down the concerns that many of us in the counseling community have felt. We know that some of our members have been particularly “noisy” in their criticisms; we know, too, that many more are eager for collaboration in working with the Coalition to assure access to college for the able, yet underserved, students that you seek. Many of our members are already a part of the Coalition Counselor Community. As you continue the dialogue and receive feedback, we ask that you bear in mind some of the observations that we share below:

- Students in the class of 2017 – and the adults who offer them support in the college process – are already juggling a number of significant changes. The new SAT and the implementation of prior-prior year FAFSA submission are already causing confusion and consternation, and we are concerned that the Coalition platform will increase both. The most underserved students will already have to navigate the changing waters of financial aid; asking them to navigate a new Virtual College Locker and new application could undermine the Coalition's goal.
- Access and affordability for *all* students, regardless of whether or not they attend our member schools, is a matter of great care and concern to ACCIS. We support this initiative and commend the Coalition for exploring new and innovative ways of increasing access. We do not believe, however, that a new platform alone will accomplish this goal. As such, we encourage the Coalition to conduct further research over the next year to determine additional means to more effectively reach our nation's underserved students.
- Because our member schools also serve students with significant financial need, our counselors will work to educate their students about the Coalition platform. However, getting information to the countless schools nationwide where counseling loads are exceedingly large, and where counselors do not have the funding or leave-time for professional development, will take time, effort, and creativity. We urge the Coalition to take the time to explore further ways of doing so, and if ACCIS can be a resource in this planning, our leadership and members are eager to assist.

While our schools serve many underrepresented students, we acknowledge they also serve a large number of students who already have plenty of “access.” We have heard from admission leaders who believe that our members’ concerns serve only the interests of these students. This is untrue. While the new platform, as it is currently conceived, is likely to increase workload, most of our members will happily endure the change if they believe that access for the most needy students will improve. This is why taking sufficient time to maximize success is so important. ACCIS believes that the Coalition’s intentions are noble; allowing for further input, counsel, and data will spread that belief.

Our thanks for considering these thoughts.

Sincerely,



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