

## Appendix A

### Guidance Counselor Interview Protocol

#### Personal Background:

1. How long have you been working at this high school? Before coming here, what did you do? Where did you attend college? Did you pursue any post graduate degrees? If so, where?
2. Describe yourself as a high school student. (What activities did you participate in? What were your grades like? Which classes did you enjoy?) Did you utilize your Guidance Counselors in high school? Why/why not? How would you, as a current Guidance Counselor, have described yourself as a high school student?
3. What made you decide to become a guidance counselor? What made you want to come work here as opposed to other high schools?

#### Institutional Support/Requirements:

4. Describe to me the official job description of a Guidance Counselor at your high school. Do the day-to-day activities of a Guidance Counselor change throughout the year? How so? Tell me about your schedule yesterday.
5. Describe the College Counseling system at your high school. Is it a part of the Guidance Department or completely separate? Are students required to partake in college counseling? Are there resources available for students who do not wish to pursue a college education? How much of your time is devoted to college counseling as compared to other issues? In what ways are College Counseling issues intertwined with other types of Guidance-related issues?
6. What are the busiest times of year for Guidance Counselors? Tell me why these times are so busy.
7. How has the role of the Guidance Counselor changed during your tenure? What has motivated this change? Would your job be different if you worked at a different school? Does your school have any unique programs or structures that are designed to ensure quality college counseling? Who developed these programs?
8. What sort of external resources do the counselors draw upon (teacher's union/national organizations for guidance counselors/college admissions departments) to learn about/develop their college placement skills. How important is college placement relative to other tasks for which the guidance counselor is responsible? Is the guidance counselor's performance evaluated at the administrative level? How?
9. How are guidance counselors evaluated professionally? Are college placement statistics used in any way? Do students or parents have a formal opportunity to provide criticism/praise for their guidance counselors? Does the Principal observe meetings with students? How much oversight does the Principal have over the college counseling process? What role does the School Committee/Board of Trustees have in the Guidance process?
10. Do the guidance counselors interact directly with college admissions departments? If so, which ones? What is the nature of the interaction? Do they have a personal relationship (e.g. their alma mater) with certain schools? If so, how does it play out?

11. How do Guidance Counselors educate themselves about the students they are advising? Are students required to fill out questionnaires/surveys describing their interests/goals? Do you interact with their classroom instructors in any way? How do you interact with teachers? Is there a formal process by which teachers are able to provide guidance counselors with student evaluations? Do guidance counselors interact with non-classroom instructors (coaches, extracurricular advisors, etc.)?

Student Interaction:

12. Think of one student from last year who you feel that you helped with the college application process. Tell me about your earliest interactions with this person. Did he/she come to you for assistance or did you seek him/her out? How often did you meet with this person? What kind of information did you provide him/her with?
13. Now describe how the student you just described differs from the “average” student at your high school. Do you meet with all of the students for whom you are their guidance counselor on a regular basis? Are students required to meet with their guidance counselors? If so, when does this happen? How often do most students meet with their counselors? When they do meet, what are the typical topics of conversation? What questions do you hear most frequently?
14. How much do you tailor your college consultation to the student that you are meeting with? Do you provide all students with similar information or do you try and provide information specific to every student that you meet with? How do you remain informed about the college application process (journals, conferences, etc.)?

Parent Interaction:

15. How often do you interact with the parents of your students? Are there formal opportunities to meet or only informal ones? What do you usually talk about during these interactions? How do these interactions usually begin (do you reach out to the parents or do they reach out to you)? What kind of concerns do you try to address when speaking with parents? How do you make yourself accessible to parents (do they have your email, phone number, etc.)?

(Random Questions):

16. Where do you think that most students gain information about the college application process? Do you find that most students are well-educated about the process as a whole? Are you aware of any students who hire private college consultants? Describe your feelings about this practice. Do you think that these consultants prepare these students particularly well?
17. If you had to pick one goal that you have as a Guidance Counselor, what would it be? Evaluate how close you are to achieving this goal. What are the biggest challenges that you face as a Guidance Counselor? On the other hand, describe your most fulfilling experience as a Guidance Counselor. What would you change about your job if you could?
18. Do you consider being a Guidance Counselor a lifetime career? Where do you see your career in 5 years? 10 years? 20 years?
19. Do you have children? How old are they?
  - a. If high school aged or older: Where did they go to high school? How does that school organize the college application process? Did you know your child's guidance counselor? How would you evaluate their guidance

- department? When your child applied to colleges, did he or she work with his/her guidance counselor? Did you use your knowledge to help your child?
- b. If not old enough: Where do you expect that your child will attend high school? Are you familiar with that school's guidance department? Describe the ideal guidance counselor for your child.
20. Does your school keep records/statistics of college acceptances? How are these records utilized? Would it be possible for you to provide me with the statistics on college acceptances from the past five years?

## Appendix B

### Student Interview Protocol

#### Personal Background:

1. What classes are you taking this year? Do you enjoy your classes? Which classes are your favorite and why? Do you hope to pursue any of these academic areas after high school?
2. In an average week, what kind of extracurricular activities do you participate in? How much time do you spend on these activities? How/when did you first become interested in these activities? Do you hope to continue your participation in any of these areas after graduation?
3. Tell me about your friends. Are most of your friends in similar classes? Do they participate in the same extracurriculars? If a freshman at your high school were asked to describe you and your friends, what do you think they'd say?

#### Family Background:

4. How involved is your family in your academic/extracurricular life? What kind of expectations do your parents have for you as a high school student? Describe a time that your parents were particularly proud of something you did. What kind of activity would make your family disappointed in you?
5. Do your parents/guardians ever talk about what their experiences as high school students? If so, what do they talk about? What did they do after graduation? Did they pursue a college degree or any other post-graduate degrees? Where are your parents currently employed?
6. Tell me about your family's financial situation. On a continuum of lower class, middle class, to upper class, how would you rate your family? How does your family compare to the families of other students at your school? Do you have a rough estimate for how much money your parents/guardians make in a year?
7. Do you have any older siblings? Describe their high school experiences? What did they do after high school? What are they doing now? Do you have any other older relatives/neighbors who you are particularly close to? Describe their high school experiences? What did they do after high school? What are they doing now?

#### College Preparation/Aspirations:

8. Think back to the time that you first began to think about the college application process and/or post-graduation plans and describe this time in your life. What made you begin to think this about this? Who else, if anyone, was involved in this process? What steps did you take to begin educating yourself about the process?
9. Now describe the steps that you took to begin preparing for the college application process (as opposed to learning about the process). How did you know to do these things? Do you have any regrets about the college application process so far?
10. If you could choose to do anything when you graduate high school, what would you want to do? Do you think this is an achievable goal? Are you taking steps to make this occur? Describe these steps.

11. How do you plan to continue your preparation for college this fall? What exactly are you planning to do? (Will you visit colleges? Will you create a list of places to apply? Will you apply for scholarships? Will you get help with essays? Will you take the SATs?) In what way do you expect your guidance counselor to be involved with this process?

#### Guidance Counselor Interaction:

12. Describe your relationship with your guidance counselor. How often do you meet with him or her? What kind of questions do you usually ask? What information does the guidance office provide to students in general? How often did you meet with your guidance counselor as a Junior? How often do you think the average student at your high school meets with his guidance counselor? Have your parents met with your guidance counselor?
13. Now describe your ideal guidance counselor. In what ways does this ideal counselor differ from your actual counselor? In what ways are they the same?
14. When was the first time that you met with your guidance counselor expressly to talk about post-graduation plans? What happened at the meeting? What questions did you ask? What questions did he/she ask?
15. How often do you hope to meet with your guidance counselor this year? Do you expect them to play an active role in your post-graduation planning?

#### College Information from Other Sources:

16. Excluding your Guidance Counselor, where do you go for information about the college application process? Do you tend to trust your Guidance Counselor more than these other sources of information, or are they more trustworthy?
17. Do you talk to other students about post-graduation plans? If so, which students (only close friends, only students who have similar plans, etc?). How have your peers influenced your decisions about post-graduation activities? Are your friends planning to apply to college this year? If so, what kind of colleges are they hoping to apply to? Do your friends ask you for advice about the college application process? Do you feel that you are able to help them?
18. Out of everyone you talk to about colleges and post-graduation plans, who has been most helpful to you? Describe why this person was so effective. How do you plan to continue to interact with this person throughout your Senior fall? Do you think this person will remain your primary source of college application assistance?

#### Self Evaluation

19. How would you describe yourself as a student? What is your GPA/class rank? Are you satisfied with your grades from high school? If you were a different type of student, do you think that you would have different post-graduation plans?
20. Do you have any regrets thus far about your college application process? If you were starting as a high school freshman right now, would you act any differently during high school?
21. What are you most nervous about for your Senior year? What are you most excited about? If your senior year were to go perfectly, what would you be doing next year?