

Destination College Advising Corps

College-Going Resources for Low Income, First Generation, and Underrepresented College Students

Destination College Advising Corps (DCAC) at Berkeley is a founding chapter of **College Advising Corps**, a national organization that places recent college graduates who faced barriers to higher education in a full-time year of service fellowship in high schools and other partner sites to serve students with similar challenges.

The program meets critical unserved needs. The national counselor-to-student ratio in high schools is one counselor for every 400 students. In California, the ratio is 1 counselor for every 900 students, and in some of the schools DCAC has served, there were times when there were no counselors at all. In addition, the vast majority of school counselors are trained to provide primarily social and emotional support. California school counselors are rarely trained to provide college advising and, with incredibly heavy workloads, they do not have time to support their students' journeys out of poverty through education.

DCAC College Adviser Fellows provide one-on-one college and financial aid advising for 300 students per school and provide group and substantial whole-school college preparation services to benefit students, their families, schools, and communities. Secondary school students who met even once with DCAC fellows in 2013-14 were:

- » 24 percent more likely to apply to one or more colleges
- » 14 percent more likely to apply to a four-year college
- » 19 percent more likely to take an ACT or SAT prep course
- » 21 percent more likely to submit their FAFSA (federal financial aid application)
- » 23 percent more likely to be accepted to college

The Destination College program was started in 2007 with a grant from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Program Highlights to Date

From a pilot program of two advisers in 2007, in 2015-16 DCAC placed 41 full-time College Adviser Fellows serving more than 30,000 students in San Bernardino, San Jose, Solano, West Contra Costa, and Alameda counties. The partner schools have significant unmet needs. Many of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, are underrepresented in higher education, and are first in their families to attend college. Each school district funds a significant portion of their advisers' annual fellowship.

DCAC fellows receive rigorous training before their placements from experts in the college access and higher education field and from Berkeley experts drawn from the Center for Educational Partnerships and other staff within Berkeley's Division of Equity & Inclusion. There are four weeks of full-time 'boot camp,' when all the adviser fellows are trained in the basics of college advising, admission requirements, and recommendations for both the University of California and California State University systems, as well as private colleges, financial aid systems, and essential cultural supports for students who will be first in their family to attend college. This College Advising Boot Camp includes two weeks of training held in local districts

with Berkeley's regional DCAC manager, with whom fellows will work for the next academic year, learning about the specific situations or challenges of the high school where they will serve, and meeting with administrators and staff of the school and community partners who support this work.

The young professionals who serve one or two years as DCAC Fellows are often the first in their family to attend college and have personal knowledge of what it requires from students, families, and communities to blaze new education trails. Many advisers go on to pursue master's degrees in teaching, counseling, and higher education and continue to work as advocates in the communities they serve.

Impact and Institutionalization

Berkeley's Destination College Advising Corps was one of two programs highlighted by Chancellor Nicholas Dirks in the 2014 White House Summit on increasing college going, particularly among students underrepresented in higher education. Dirks pledged the first campus support of DCAC — \$300,000 to expand the program — and observed, “Expanding access to the unrivaled benefits and opportunities inherent in a high-quality college education is an indivisible element of our public mission, and we are fully committed to supporting this important initiative.”

Within the communities it serves, DCAC is seen as a leader in helping students dream of and get to college. This requires working effectively with families as well as students, schools, and other partners. Creative initiatives that have grown from community collaborations include:

- » **Solano County:** A new partnership of DCAC, the Vacaville Unified School District, and the largest Roman Catholic church in Vacaville provides outreach to Spanish-speaking families after worship services on Sundays.
- » **West Contra Costa Unified School District:** The district has consistently expanded the number of high schools served by DCAC. In the spring of 2015, they did their first ever district-wide Decision Day, when high school seniors announce which college they will attend. This event has had very strong representation by the school board and principals of every high school of participating students.
- » **Oakland Unified School District:** DCAC has a strong partnership with the district and is an essential part of the African American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI). The San Francisco Foundation has supported DCAC's work with AAMAI since 2010.
- » **San Jose Unified School District:** Inspired and largely implemented by Berkeley's DCAC team in San Jose, a citywide College Day was created for SJUSD in 2011. The event brings in politicians, sports leaders, and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs to talk about their own educational journeys with students and family members at every school. This is now a yearly event that helps those who will be first in their families attending college to realize that this is a dream they can also achieve. The curriculum for College Day is provided by Berkeley's **Center for Educational Partnerships**.