College Choice Pulse Check

• If you went to college, how did you decide which college to attend? Did you make the right choice?

• If you did not go to college, why not? Did you make the right choice?
College Choice Pulse Check

How many people chose their college based on…

- simple math?
- following friends or family traditions?
- a specific major or degree offered?
- playing a sport or fandom for a specific team?
- other?
Match and Fit in the College Transition Process
Pathways for Adult Success Conference
May 2023
Vision
Atlanta is a city where race and income no longer predict postsecondary success and upward mobility.

Mission
Achieve Atlanta’s mission is to help APS students access, afford, and earn postsecondary credentials.
Achieve Atlanta builds cross-sector collaboration across a range of partners.

Achieve Atlanta catalyzes and facilitates results-driven cross-sector collaboration by setting the vision, assembling teams, and creating conditions for success.

- Improve Postsecondary Access
- Improve Postsecondary Affordability
- Increase Postsecondary Success

Achieve Atlanta engages students and families to ensure their experience and feedback inform how supports and services are provided and improved.

- Provide college advising to help students identity and access chosen postsecondary education
- Help students understand the benefits and value of postsecondary education and help them pay for it through scholarships
- Provide supports to help students persist and complete degrees

10 Higher Education Institutions
Our recent external evaluation showed that AATL Scholars persist well above similar non-Scholar APS graduates who enroll in college. These gains last throughout four years.

![College Persistence By Year/Term](chart)

- **Year 1 Spring**: 82% Non-Scholars, 93% Scholars
- **Year 2 Fall**: 67% Non-Scholars, 77% Scholars
- **Year 3 Fall**: 51% Non-Scholars, 62% Scholars
- **Year 4 Fall**: 44% Non-Scholars, 52% Scholars

College persistence as reported from the National Student Clearinghouse. Retention of AATL Scholarship is not considered; solely whether the student remained enrolled or earned a credential.
Our Match and Fit Journey
Undermatching means, on average, attending a school with a lower graduation rate.

Average six-year African American/Hispanic Graduation Rate by Selectivity Category

Source: Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson (2009)
Our analysis found a large share of APS graduates were undermatching.

Percentage of APS Graduates Who Attend Institutions That Match Their Qualifications

- No College: 42%
- Far Undermatch/Very Likely: 17%
- Undermatch/Likely: 12%
- Match/Target: 25%
- Overmatch/Reach: 4%
Our process to scaling Match and Fit advising in APS

- Field scan of match & fit practices, tools
- APS postsecondary match historical analysis and focus groups
- Workshops for key district and partner stakeholders
- School-team root cause analysis with their own match data
- Ambassadors “championing” the need for change
- Multiple rounds of design-feedback-redesign
- Student testing for user interface and simplicity
Stakeholders helped us identify intervention points to influence the college enrollment trajectory

1. **Exploration**
   - Student *did not know about* or explore match or more competitive schools

2. **Application**
   - Student *did not apply to* match or more competitive schools

3. **Admittance**
   - Student *applied but was not admitted* to match or more competitive schools

4. **Enrollment**
   - Student was *admitted but chose not to enroll* in match or more competitive school

We have the most leverage at the initial two stages.

Things to know about the Match & Fit List Builder...

**College list-building tool** to support students in their initial college search process; allow students to own the first step and *build a balanced list*.

**Student’s academic data automatically** pulled in from Infinite Campus/College Board/ACT – reducing errors and search time.

**Specific to Atlanta Public Schools’ students** – historical APS enrollment and persistence data; USG test score requirements.

Counselors, CAC Advisers, OneGoal PDs and students have *tested the tool* and provided feedback to make it simple and useful.

Helps students own the college search process and start earlier! *Saving counselors, advisers time* and allowing them to improve their craft.
Match and Fit Advising and Support
The implementation of the MFLB highlighted other necessary supports.

- Adults need more guidance on how to have effective match and fit conversations with students.

- Students and families need more support reading and understanding their financial aid offer letters.

- School staff should use the tool to make sure the right schools are in front of students.
Our efforts help students in junior and senior year with their college enrollment decisions...

**Junior Year**
- Explore career interests
- Create balanced lists and attend college tours

**Senior Year**
- Rebalance college list
- Attend college tours
- Apply to college & financial aid
- Celebrate acceptances
- Prevent summer melt
...and continue as they enroll and persist through college.

- Campus Ambassadors support building a community of belonging
- Official scholarship and persistence support through postsecondary and nonprofit partners
- Professional development for opportunities during and after college
- Basic needs assistance to support persistence
We have four key lessons learned from our match and fit journey.

- Identify the problem
- Work with partners
- No silver bullet
- Persistence begins in high school
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