



Noble Network, UIC College Prep

Spill the Tea: Alumni Counselor Secrets to First-Gen Student Success

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Noble, founded as Noble Street Charter School in 1999, is a nonprofit organization that manages 17 charter public high schools and one middle school in the city of Chicago that serve more than 12,000 students. Noble's commitment to students' success continues after high school graduation through college. Noble [Alumni Counselors](#) advise graduates, 84% of whom are first generation college students, in navigating through college graduation. This individualized active support helps students to overcome challenges they face in college, and improve college persistence and matriculation to graduation.

Alumni Counseling in the News

Wall Street Journal: [Charter Schools Keep Tabs on Grads to Keep Them in College](#)

PBS NewsHour: [The guidance counselor who won't go away, even after graduation](#)

[The Alumni year-long multimedia project.](#)

The [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#) reports the six-year overall college completion rate in the United States at 60%, with rates of 73% for white, 59% for LatinX, 50% for Black, and 21% for students from [low income schools](#). Challenges to college graduation common among first-generation and low-income college students include lack of adequate [financial resources, administrative and bureaucratic barriers, as well as a lack of understanding among faculty and staff about student needs.](#)

Noble has redefined success to include college completion, relying on Alumni Counselors to reach those goals. Freedom to develop innovative educational methods and programs has allowed charter schools to deliver high quality, targeted support and mentoring to help their alumni access campus resources; troubleshoot issues with enrollment, financial aid, and academic support; and build a community of Noble alumni on college campuses. Noble Alumni

Counselors track college enrollment and retention data to offer targeted interventions, advocacy, and connectivity. The phrase "spill the tea" – the encouragement to share or reveal practical and personal information - defines the work of Alumni Counselors who start building relationships with students during freshman year of high school and continue throughout college. Strong relationships and trust with trained and skilled Alumni Counselors are key to success.

Principles that guide the UIC Prep Alumni Counselors' efforts, and that are referenced in this webinar, are based on Yosso's community wealth model.^{1,2,3} Grounded in critical race theory, the model identifies forms of capital that communities of color develop to cope with systemic oppression. Students draw from these strengths to build success.

- Aspirational capital - hope about future, career aspirations, focus on training and experience to meet goals;
- Familial capital – social and personal resources in home environment, desire to support family and community;
- Social capital – connections with social networks, lessons learned from interacting with peers;
- Linguistic capital - communication skills developed through experiences in more than one language or style;
- Navigational capital - experience navigating within social institutions that have been discriminatory or hostile;
- Resistant capital - experience facing social and academic obstructions and the desire to make change.

¹ Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 8, 69–91. doi:10.1080/1361332052000341006

² Garriott PO. [A Critical Cultural Wealth Model of First-Generation and Economically Marginalized College Students' Academic and Career Development](#). *Journal of Career Development*. 2020;47(1):80-95. doi:10.1177/0894845319826266.

³ Guzman, Bianca. (2015). [A Community Cultural Wealth Examination of Sources of Support and Challenges Among Latino First- and Second-Generation College Students at a Hispanic Serving Institution](#). *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. 16. 10.1177/1538192715619995.

