

## Postsecondary Partner Outreach Strategies Mini-Toolkit

Postsecondary institutions are complex and, at times, difficult to navigate. In this toolkit, we provide resources to help you find the right postsecondary staff, administrators, and faculty to engage as you pursue a partnership. “A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions” on page 2 can help focus your efforts as it outlines offices/staff typically housed within postsecondary institutions, as well as questions you may ask these staff members, administrators, and faculty as you explore potential partnership opportunities. Once you have identified which postsecondary staff, instructors, and administrators with whom you would like to cultivate a relationship, you are ready to meet with potential supporters who can champion the YouthBuild cause. The tool, “8 Tips to Successfully Engage Postsecondary Administrators, Staff and Faculty”, on page 7 provides useful outreach strategies. Finally the tool, “Strategies to Create Long-term Buy-in”, provides tips for creating long-term buy-in once a partnership is established.

### Toolkit Contents:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions .....                               | 2 |
| 8 Tips to Successfully Engage Postsecondary Administrators, Staff, and Faculty ..... | 7 |
| Strategies to Create Long-term Buy-in .....  | 8 |



# A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions

The tool below can help focus your efforts as it outlines offices/staff typically housed within postsecondary institutions, as well as questions you may ask these staff members, administrators, and faculty as you explore potential partnership opportunities. The tool also provides specific examples of how other YouthBuild programs successfully engaged these specific postsecondary resources.

| A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| Office/student service/faculty                   | How services can potentially assist current and former YouthBuild students and YouthBuild programs   | Questions YouthBuild programs may want to ask while developing a partnership  | Examples of YouthBuild programs successfully engaging with these PSE support services  |
| <b>Office of the Provost or Dean</b>             | Can help execute overall partnership and engage appropriate faculty, staff, and student services offices to help move partnership forward.   | <p>What are the strongest elements of institutional support for first generation college students?</p> <p>Would they be willing to assign a point person to serve as a liaison between the postsecondary institution and the YouthBuild program?</p> <p>How can YouthBuild best support the goals of the institution?</p> | Columbus YouthBuilders engaged the Columbus State Community College’s interim provost to help facilitate conversations with relevant CSCC departments and staff and ensure that appropriate resources were allocated toward the partnership. |
| <b>Financial Aid Office</b>                      | <p>Provides students with information and support needed to successfully complete the FAFSA and apply for additional student aid.</p> <p>May offer resources and information to help students develop financial literacy and fiscal planning skills.</p> | <p>What types of supports are offered to potential students? Tax preparation services Financial aid/budgeting workshops?</p> <p>One-on-one counseling sessions? Would financial aid administrators be willing to provide information sessions/personalized counseling to YouthBuild students?</p>                         | Massasoit Community College financial aid counselors visit YouthBuild Brockton to assist students with their financial aid applications during financial aid workshops.  |

A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions

| Office/student service/faculty   | How services can potentially assist current and former YouthBuild students and YouthBuild programs   | Questions YouthBuild programs may want to ask while developing a partnership   | Examples of YouthBuild programs successfully engaging with these PSE support services   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Educational Opportunity Center (TRIO Programs)<sup>1</sup></b></p> | <p>Provides counseling and information on college admissions to low-income adults.</p> <p>Provides services to improve the financial and economic literacy of participants and help adults become aware of financial aid options.</p> <p>May provide supports such as book grants and child care assistance.</p> | <p>What specific types of supports are offered to students?</p> <p>Do YouthBuild students qualify to receive pre- and post-enrollment support?</p> <p>Would they be willing to develop/provide workshops specifically for YouthBuild students?</p>                             | <p>YouthBuild Philadelphia successfully engaged TRIO-funded student support services to offer a range of academic and non-cognitive supports to YouthBuild Philadelphia students and alumni.</p>        |
| <p><b>Student Support Services (TRIO Program)<sup>1</sup></b></p>        | <p>Provides academic tutoring, academic and financial aid counseling, and transfer support.</p> <p>Some programs also provide personal and career counseling, opportunities for students to engage in cultural events, housing assistance for former foster-care youth, and mentoring opportunities.</p>         | <p>What are the eligibility requirements for students to become enrolled in this program?</p> <p>What is the range of services students can access? And can/should these services be coordinated as a YouthBuild cohort or within larger cohort of TRIO-eligible students?</p> | <p>YouthBuild McLean County worked with a Heartland Community College program called “Project Rise” to design and offer a YouthBuild-specific summer bridge program titled “Skills for the Future.”</p> |

<sup>1</sup> TRIO support services are not available at all colleges. Go to <http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/clcf/attachments/TRIOMailingFSADec04.xls> to determine if your potential postsecondary partner offers TRIO programs.

A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions

| Office/student service/faculty                | How services can potentially assist current and former YouthBuild students and YouthBuild programs                    | Questions YouthBuild programs may want to ask while developing a partnership   | Examples of YouthBuild programs successfully engaging with these PSE support services   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Vocational Education Department</b></p> | <p>Provides course work/academic programs for students to earn vocation-related credentials/credits.</p>              | <p>Are there available dual-credit opportunities for current YouthBuild students to earn credit for work completed during YouthBuild?</p> <p>Would they be willing to partner in developing and providing these opportunities?</p> <p>Are they partnering with employers in ways that improve career exposure and placement opportunities for students/graduates?</p> <p>Do YouthBuild students have access to internship opportunities?</p> | <p>YouthBuild Columbus Community School has worked with Columbus State Community College to develop and offer State Trained Nursing Assistant (STNA) courses so that students earn STNA certification while receiving college credit.</p> <p>Many YouthBuild programs are working with community college partners to award college credits for completion of National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) modules.</p> |
| <p><b>Academic Counseling</b></p>             | <p>Provides academic and financial aid counseling, transfer support, and long-term education and career planning.</p> | <p>Would they be willing to provide dedicated academic counseling staff to advise and support all YouthBuild students?</p>   | <p>At Madison Area Technical College, students at Operation Fresh Start all engage with a college counselor, who is also in close contact with YouthBuild staff to ensure students’ needs and challenges are met.</p>   |

A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions

| Office/student service/faculty   | How services can potentially assist current and former YouthBuild students and YouthBuild programs  | Questions YouthBuild programs may want to ask while developing a partnership   | Examples of YouthBuild programs successfully engaging with these PSE support services  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Transfer Support Services</b></p>  | <p>Assist students in developing a clear plan to prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university.</p>   | <p>Do they offer transfer orientation for first-year, pre-college students?</p>  | <p>LA CAUSA YouthBuild partners with University of Los Angeles to engage students in workshops on strategies for community college transfer success.</p>                           |
| <p><b>Career Services</b></p>  | <p>Provides students with career counseling, library, and internet career information.</p>  | <p>How can current YouthBuild students and graduates most consistently access career services resources?</p>   | <p>Metro Atlanta YouthBuild is partnering with Atlanta Metropolitan Community College to provide career counseling.</p>  |
| <p><b>Supplemental instruction and/or academic resource centers (tutoring)</b></p> | <p>Offers a range of tutoring and academic support services.</p>  | <p>What is the range of tutoring and academic support services available and how/where can YouthBuild students and graduates best access these resources?</p>  | <p>Portland YouthBuild students and graduates access tutoring and a broad range of academic support from Portland Community College before and after enrolling in the college.</p> |
| <p><b>Developmental education faculty and deans</b></p>                            | <p>May be able to provide high-quality developmental education instruction that meets the needs of YouthBuild students.</p> <p>Help align YouthBuild instructional practices with academic expectations of the college.</p> | <p>Would they be willing to work with a YouthBuild program to develop curricular alignment?</p> <p>Would they be willing to explore the possibility of providing additional proactive academic supports to former and current YouthBuild students?</p> | <p>Math and English instructors at Columbus State Community College observed YouthBuild’s academic instruction and developed an extensive alignment report.</p>                    |

A Guide to Navigating Postsecondary Institutions

| Office/student service/faculty                      | How services can potentially assist current and former YouthBuild students and YouthBuild programs  | Questions YouthBuild programs may want to ask while developing a partnership  | Examples of YouthBuild programs successfully engaging with these PSE support services   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Faculty and academic department deans</b></p> | <p>Help align YouthBuild instructional practices with academic expectations of the college.</p> <p>Conduct information sessions with students to expose them to various careers, disciplines, and majors.</p> | <p>Would they be willing to work with YouthBuild program to develop curricular alignment?</p> <p>Would they be willing to collaborate with YouthBuild instructors and discuss strategies to increase student learning and engagement?</p> | <p>Portland Community College faculty meet with Portland YouthBuild instructors three times a year to discuss academic alignment practices.</p> |

## 8 Tips to Successfully Engage Postsecondary Administrators, Staff, and Faculty

Now that you have identified which postsecondary staff, instructors, and administrators with whom you would like to cultivate a relationship, you are ready to meet with potential supporters who can champion the YouthBuild cause. The tips below will help you plant the seeds of a successful partnership.

1. **Familiarize yourself with postsecondary staff and departmental structures:** Before reaching out to postsecondary staff/instructors/administrators, become familiar with the staff that you are interested in working with, as well as the general staffing and departmental structures within the institution. While browsing the institution's website, review postsecondary staff bios and photos so that you will recognize them and become familiar with their backgrounds, roles, and responsibilities when you meet them in person.
2. **Meet with postsecondary staff/administrators/faculty armed with clear vision and a list of targeted questions:** Review your postsecondary plan (see Chapter 1 in *Creating Partnerships that Work* for resources to assist your goal-setting and planning efforts) and develop your questions/agenda items before you meet with postsecondary staff, administrators, and/or faculty. Although your goals might change as your conversations with the postsecondary institution evolve, think of possible activities you would like to pursue in collaboration with your potential partner before approaching them. For example, you may want to propose providing YouthBuild students with credit-bearing Certified Nursing Assistant training, engaging financial aid administrators to provide personalized financial aid workshops or working with faculty to design a college-readiness course.
3. **Visit the postsecondary campus and approach staff/faculty in person (versus initially reaching out via calls and e-mails):** Some PSE YouthBuild programs have experienced greater success engaging postsecondary administrators and faculty by visiting them in person instead of relying on phone calls or e-mails in the early stages of partnership development.
4. **Highlight the benefits of a YouthBuild partnership:** Successful partnerships, in part, rest on both parties recognizing real benefit from the engagement. Therefore, it is important that you help postsecondary partners recognize the benefits of working with YouthBuild. The tool *Making the Case to Postsecondary Partners*, highlights possible benefits to pitch to postsecondary partners.
5. **The earlier the better:** Planning and executing postsecondary partner activities takes time. More critically, building relationships and buy-in from postsecondary staff so that you can implement these activities successfully also takes time. In light of these realities, YouthBuild programs staff stress the importance of planning activities long before your desired launch date of these activities. For instance, if you want to plan a summer bridge program with your partner, you should begin building relationships and planning with potential partners months, rather than weeks, before the course starts.
6. **Engage students in the conversation:** Current YouthBuild students and alumni enrolled in the postsecondary institution can provide useful feedback/suggestions during your initial meetings with staff, faculty, and administrators from postsecondary institutions. For example, YouthBuild McLean County consulted students about their goals and needs prior to developing a bridge program with Heartland Community College.
7. **Develop a network across the institution:** The more staff, faculty, and administrators you can engage, the more likely your program will be able to provide current students and alumni with diverse supports. For example, Portland YouthBuilders, through its relationship with the president of Portland Community College, established strong working relationships with the dean of instruction and student development, a guidance counselor, career counselors, reading instructors, and math instructors.
8. **Ask for introductions:** Once you build relationships with key postsecondary champions, ask for personal introductions to other key PSE staff (e.g., financial aid directors, TRIO staff, and vocational education faculty). Building multiple relationships across various postsecondary offices and departments will help you create a more sustainable partnership, providing students with a variety of supports at multiple points during their postsecondary journeys.

## Strategies to Create Long-term Buy-in

Strong relationships are central to successful postsecondary partnerships. YouthBuild programs should work toward cultivating trust and long-term commitments from student services staff, developmental-education and college-level faculty, deans, and provosts. This relationship-building process is ongoing and should occur throughout the duration of the partnership. Based on the experiences of program staff, the following tips help create strong, long-lasting buy-in from postsecondary partners:

- **Thank-you's go a long way:** Thank the postsecondary staff/faculty after initial meetings and successful execution of projects. Programs have found success with handwritten cards or signed T-shirts from both YouthBuild staff and students. One YouthBuild staff member sends boxes of cookies to newly made YouthBuild champions. You can also recognize them with various leadership awards at public events.
- **Make sure the right people engage in relationship management:** Programs are strongly encouraged to ensure that staff members charged with relationship management represent the best fit for this work. Key factors to consider are:
  - Is the YouthBuild staff member's job position comparable to the postsecondary administrator's and staff your program is working with?
  - Does the YouthBuild staff member(s) have historical relationships/connections with the key postsecondary players involved?
  - Does the YouthBuild staff member(s) have good relationship management and networking skills?
- **Involve multiple staff in relationship management:** Multiple staff from the YouthBuild program are encouraged to engage with postsecondary partners and build meaningful relationships. Case managers, instructors, and other staff are well-positioned to interact with student support services and multiple faculty members. Program leadership should work to create efficient communication so multiple points of contact do not duplicate conversations.
- **Invite postsecondary staff and faculty to your YouthBuild program and important events:** This is a great way to create buy-in while introducing potential postsecondary partners to the unique needs and strengths of YouthBuild students. Partners generally appreciate invitations to important occasions such as graduations and community service events. Even if they are unable to attend, your invitation conveys a clear message that you view them as critical stakeholders/community advocates.
- **Be consistent in communication:** Send your partner press releases or e-mail updates highlighting good news regarding individual students or the YouthBuild program as a whole. Partners greatly appreciate consistent updates on the YouthBuild program and/or partnership activities and progress. Weekly/bi-weekly e-mails updating key partners on the general partnership work is a great way to keep individuals abreast of the work you are doing.
- **Introduce postsecondary partners to other influential community members:** Postsecondary administrators, staff, and faculty may benefit from meeting and building relationships with other YouthBuild community partners.
- **Document and keep track of your meetings and interactions with postsecondary partners:** This will ensure that you follow through with your meetings and keep track of whom you spoke to and when. Ashley Wood, YouthBuild Brockton's AmeriCorps VISTA point person responsible for community college partnership development, would keep all her meeting correspondence (including agendas and meeting notes) with postsecondary partners in a single folder.



