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## **Students Need More Guidance about the “Financial Fit” of Higher Education Options, Survey Reveals**

*American Student Assistance national survey of high school counselors finds they don't have the training or resources to effectively guide students on financial matters*

**BOSTON, April 10, 2018** – American Student Assistance® ([ASA](http://asa.org)) today released new data about high school counselors' capacity to advise students about financial considerations for education options after graduation. The [survey](#) shows that counselors – often overworked and underappreciated – are frequently without access to the resources and training required to provide effective guidance to students.

“Financial fit is about taking steps to minimize risk so that the investment in higher education pays off for students in the long term,” **said Kevin Fudge, director of Consumer Advocacy at ASA®**. “Students today should be empowered to consider both the academic fit and the financial fit of a full range of education options.”

While 90 percent of the 1,000+ counselors surveyed nationally said finances are a major concern for their students, many often feel ill-equipped to guide students because of a lack of training on financial aid and student debt issues. Further, counselors frequently weigh academic fit over financial fit when discussing college options, and they are less likely to recommend two-year or alternative programs that can carry a lesser debt burden than four-year degrees.

“Gone are the days when a student applied to college senior year and worried about cost at the end of the process. Waiting to see if a college or university will ‘make it affordable’ in March of senior year is no longer an option,” **said Lisa Micele, director of College Counseling, University of Illinois Laboratory High School**. “While academic offerings, location and size of an institution are all important factors in college selection, the ‘financial fit’ is paramount and should be at the forefront.”

### **Key Findings of the ASA Survey:**

- **High school counselors lack formal training on financial aid and student debt.** While 92 percent say it is their responsibility to discuss college affordability with their students, only 55 percent have received formal training on how to handle questions regarding financial aid, and just 21 percent are prepared to advise on student debt issues.

- **Counselors lack knowledge about their students' financial circumstances.** Only 11 percent of counselors are always aware of their students' financial situation, which makes discussions about financial fit extremely challenging during the college planning process.
- **There are high student-to-counselor ratios at schools.** Fifty-four percent of counselors manage more than 300 students, and 81 percent assist more than 200. This ratio diminishes counselors' ability to provide the comprehensive and individualized attention required to effectively advise students on their educational futures.

“As a former school counselor and as a current high school assistant principal, I know firsthand how the lack of formal training on financial aid and student debt impacts counselors' ability to help students find the right financial fit,” said **Sean Emberley, assistant high school principal at Danvers High School.**

The ASA report includes recommendations for increased access to tools and resources that will help students assess the financial fit of post-secondary education – specifically a better understanding of the true costs of college choices, and how those choices fit with their long-term goals.

For more information about the survey and its findings, please visit:  
[www.asa.org/FinancialFit](http://www.asa.org/FinancialFit)

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#### **About American Student Assistance (ASA)**

*American Student Assistance® helps kids discover their education and career opportunities. ASA® is an innovative nonprofit developing services, initiatives, partnerships, and philanthropic programs to help guide kids through the process of selecting the right education path for them, and to bridge the education-to-workforce gap. Most students today are not receiving education and career guidance at an early enough age to set them on a path to future success. After 60+ years working directly with students, ASA is turning its experience into actionable and effective solutions to help kids better prepare for 21st century jobs. ASA is committed to helping kids know themselves, know their options, and make smart choices about their education and career journey. For more information visit <https://www.asa.org/>.*

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