

Setting Up an Alumni Panelist Program

Planning Checklist



Students gain valuable insights about transitions to college when they hear first-hand from students who have done it themselves. This booklet outlines what to consider when creating a peer-to-peer student ambassador programs at your school. College ambassadors are college students (often alumni from your high school) who you bring together with your high school students to share information about college transitions from personal experience. College ambassadors can increase school counselors' capacity to provide advising, tips and important information about college transitions and experiences.

Start by Defining Your Goals

Clarify student gains

- Academic expectations
- Build independence
- Hear about challenges and solutions
- Explore social and campus life
- Financial and time management



Setting Up An Alumni Panelist Program



Diverse Panelists

Diversity factors to consider

- College type
- Majors and career paths
- First-generation college students
- Athletic & working students
- Out-of-state or student transfer

Ideal Panelist Traits

- Strong communication skills
- Honest and reflective
- Relatable personality
- Willing to share mistakes and lessons
- Encouraging but realistic

Panelist Prep

Send panelists briefing packet:

- Event purpose
- Audience Demographics
- Sample Questions
- Time Limits
- Expectations

Panel Questions

Examples:

- What surprised you most academically?
- What helped you feel like you belonged?
- What is one mistake you made early on?
- What is harder than you expected?
- What should students stop worrying about?

Recruitment

- Alumni database
- Counselors and teachers
- Parent networks
- Parents with younger siblings

Event Logistics

- Confirm panelists
- Collect bios
- Prepare moderator script
- Test microphones/tech/audio
- Prepare student question cards
- Review timing cues
- Provide water
- Confirm pronunciation of names

Moderator

- Keeps discussion moving
- Ensures equal speaking time
- Asks follow-up questions
- Redirects long answers
- Encourages quieter panelists

Timing Template

- 5 min – Welcome
- 10 min – Introductions
- 25 min – Guided Questions
- 15 min – Student Q&A
- 5 min – Closing Advice