Entry Name:
College, Career, & Counseling Support

Organization Name:
Tacoma Public Schools

Category:
Internet Website
Entry Summary

All students deserve equitable access to information on college and career. The college, career, and counseling information available to Tacoma Public Schools' students and families on our website has varied widely across our eleven high school websites. Historically, there has been no clear process or accountability for maintaining and ensuring the accuracy of college and career information on our district or school websites.

As our district’s focus on academic excellence and tracking students’ success after high school heightened, we recognized the need for consistent and equitable college, career and counseling information on all high school websites.

Our goal was to partner with staff and departments across our district to create a robust college, career, and counseling hub.

We met with staff and students over multiple months to gather feedback and created a new content section on each high school’s website. Now, students and families can quickly find information and resources to plan for their high school journey, explore college and career pathways, find counseling support, and connect with their school’s counseling team.

Research & Planning

In preparation, we sought feedback from students and staff to better understand the current gaps and opportunities on the college, career and counseling webpages. It was important to intentionally involve high school counseling staff who are content experts in their fields and current high school students who will navigate the website and use the information.

We audited our existing college and career information, analyzed what other districts in our area and across the country offered, and met with counseling teams at our schools to discuss opportunities for improvement. In addition, we coordinated with our Career and Technical Education (CTE) team, Academic Equity department, and various district leaders to ensure we worked towards our shared strategic goal of academic excellence.

Furthermore, we visited a third of our high schools, meeting with over 100 students, collecting feedback, suggestions, and user experience information. This helped us better understand how students, our target audience, want to use the website and the types of language they easily recognize.
Implementation

We designed nineteen core pages on our district site using the recommendations and feedback from staff and students.

We created these core pages on each school’s individual website, allowing us to keep the core information, while providing customizations and additional pages to meet the needs of each school’s community.

For instance, the landing page on each school site has the same structure, design, and information as the district landing page, but it also offers school-specific information like college visit dates, videos, counselor contact information, and school programs.

This web framework helps us keep our website up-to-date because we can update one page and have the changes automatically appear on all school sites.

Evaluation

We met our goal of providing consistent and equitable college, career and counseling information on all Tacoma Public Schools' high school websites.

We collaborated with our high school counseling teams throughout this project and will continue to solicit feedback from our students, staff, and families. From adding new scholarship opportunities to maintaining the college and career events calendar, we’re working to continuously improve and update this section of our website.

Future Efforts

- Students identified mental health as an area they would like to see more information and resources about. We’re working with district leaders to share the resources our schools, district, and community have available for students and families in our area.

- We’re planning to offer an opportunity for our community to send feedback via ThoughtExchange, an open-ended question survey tool, asking them what could be improved.

- We also see a need for this information to be available on our middle school websites.