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CONTACT  
Bronwyn McDaniel  
[bmcdaniel@uchicago.edu](mailto:bmcdaniel@uchicago.edu)  
773-834-0168

### **New resource helps school districts prepare students for college success**

*The “College Readiness Indicator Systems” Resource Series created by researchers from Stanford, Brown, and the University of Chicago is free and widely available for download now.*

Today is National College Decision Day, the moment when hopeful high school seniors select the schools where they will pursue their dreams of a college education. As greater numbers of students strive for a college degree, districts are struggling with how to prepare them for the challenges ahead—to build the critical attitudes, aptitudes, and skills necessary to succeed in college and beyond. To address this problem, education researchers from Stanford University, Brown University and the University of Chicago are releasing a “College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) Resource Series.” The series is a suite of educational products designed to help school districts use data to identify students and the supports they need to graduate high school and have success in college.

Funded by a \$3 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the CRIS initiative brought together the researchers with urban school systems in Dallas, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and San Jose. The aim of the initiative was to develop and study the implementation of a system of indicators and supports designed to deliver the knowledge and skills students need to be truly ready for college.

“A CRIS, at its most basic, is really a strategy for promoting educational equity. It is unusual in that it is not an early warning system, but a proactive approach that gets out ahead of the problem,” said Milbrey McLaughlin, the David Jacks Professor of Education & Public Policy, Emerita at Stanford University and founding director of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities. “A CRIS ensures that meaningful opportunities are available for the long-term success of all students, particularly those who have been traditionally underrepresented in the post-secondary education system.”

The CRIS Resource Series is free and available for download by interested educators and administrators via any of the program’s partner websites: [annenberginstitute.org](http://annenberginstitute.org), [ccsr.uchicago.edu](http://ccsr.uchicago.edu), [gardnercenter.stanford.edu](http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu), and [gatesfoundation.org](http://gatesfoundation.org).

## **A Robust Tool for Districts**

“Education leaders are grappling with the fact that students are not college ready when they leave high school,” said Jenny Nagaoka, deputy director of the University of Chicago Consortium for Chicago School Research. “Although many districts are starting to use indicators, too often they are not linked to practices and policies in ways that would enable action to create meaningful, lasting change. There is a great need for actionable resources that help districts and schools understand the problem and develop strategies that meet their specific needs and context.”

College readiness involves more than college eligibility. The CRIS Resource Series guides districts in selecting indicators that target three dimensions of students’ college readiness:

- Academic preparedness—students’ academic content knowledge and the key cognitive strategies necessary for college-level work
- Academic tenacity—the underlying beliefs and attitudes that drive student achievement, and
- College knowledge—the contextual skills that enable students to successfully navigate the academic and social intricacies of campus life once they arrive.

## **Actionable Indicators**

The CRIS Resource Series can help districts use data more effectively as they adopt the Common Core State Standards – promoted at the federal level and adopted in nearly every state – which emphasize the knowledge and skills young people need to succeed in college. More states are also adopting longitudinal data systems that allow them to offer vision, guidance and support to districts and school networks.

The CRIS resource series consists of six tools to guide a district through the implementation of a College Readiness Indicator System. Each tool is customizable to a given district and contains detailed information, questions and considerations. The six tools are:

- Beyond College Eligibility: A New Framework for Promoting College Readiness, including a dynamic, web-based representation that complements the Framework
- Menu of College Readiness Indicators and Supports
- Selecting Effective Indicators
- A Technical Guide to College Readiness Indicators
- District Self-Assessment Tool
- Essential Elements in Implementation

## **A Tri-level Approach**

A CRIS works at three levels, individual, setting and system:

- First, for individual students, a CRIS tracks progress with indicators that include courses and credits, study skills, persistence, future expectations and general knowledge of college requirements.
- Second, at the school level, a CRIS helps teachers encourage students to achieve higher levels of academic performance, build a college-going culture, and establish academic rigor.
- Last, at the district level, a CRIS addresses the policy and funding infrastructure to improve counseling, professional development for administrators and teachers, and data generation efforts. The overarching goal is to move the student, school and district toward post-secondary success.

"Individual-level indicators are key to identify both students' progress and the supports they need. But they do not address the 'inputs' for students: school and district policies, culture, and equitable distribution of resources, all of which play a critical role in students getting the right supports," said Angela Romans, principal associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. "An effective CRIS also needs setting- and system-level indicators to drive the policies, practices, and resources that lead to college readiness for all."