

# CASE STUDY:

## OneGoal

Founded in 2007, [OneGoal](#) is driven by a belief that every student deserves the opportunity to define their own future. Recognizing the transformative power of high-quality postsecondary advising in supporting students to obtain a postsecondary degree or credential—and ultimately, driving economic mobility—OneGoal is dedicated to expanding access to this critical support for students from low-income communities across the country.

OneGoal's flagship model is a comprehensive classroom-based program solution designed to empower underserved students to achieve their greatest postsecondary aspirations. Beginning in their junior year of high school and extending through their first year of postsecondary education, OneGoal pairs dedicated high school teachers ("Program Directors") with cohorts of students ("Fellows"). These Fellows, predominantly students of color (96%) and first-generation college students (73%) with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0, engage in a credit-bearing course anchored in five pillars of Fellow Success: personal identity, professional aspirations, academic and social skill development, and postsecondary knowledge. Trained and coached by OneGoal staff, Program Directors guide students in developing crucial skills and identifying their paths to postsecondary success. This personalized approach yields significant outcomes, including improved attendance, GPA, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment and completion. Notably, 81% of OneGoal graduates enroll in postsecondary education, and 73% successfully persist beyond their first year. OneGoal Fellows are about 1.5X more likely to earn a degree than their peers from low-income communities demonstrating the program's effectiveness in driving strong postsecondary outcomes. This is even more significant when we consider that OneGoal prioritizes underserved students in the academic middle.

### **Evolving Beyond Direct Service: A Focus on Widespread Impact**

In 2019, under the leadership of its new CEO Melissa Connelly, OneGoal recognized that scaling impact required more than just replicating its direct service model. "We needed to



move beyond incremental expansion and focus on integrating innovative practices into the fabric of our schools," Connelly stated.

Initially, OneGoal explored a "train the trainer" approach. However, this revealed a critical insight: simply changing the delivery method without fundamentally addressing systemic barriers would not achieve widespread impact. "We realized that true transformation required a deeper understanding of the constraints preventing widespread adoption," Connelly explained. OneGoal embarked on a period of intensive research, engaging with superintendents, teachers, principals, and counselors to understand the challenges and opportunities within existing school structures. This collaborative process informed the OneGoal Leadership Network, a multi-year coaching solution for district leaders that aims to drive long-term improvements in postsecondary outcomes. As part of the Leadership Network, districts join a community of experts and peers working to eliminate equity gaps and increase college and career opportunities for all their students. Leaders acquire new knowledge and skills critical to advancing postsecondary readiness, and clear gains in college and career readiness metrics for students. The organization is now a few years into its work toward system-level impact, and has already supported over 75 districts, collectively impacting over 125,000 students and seeing significant benefits, with 92% of partners reporting that OneGoal helped them improve their students' postsecondary outcomes.

Engaging in this deep and more systems-level work with dozens of school districts across the country allowed OneGoal to further refine its approach to influencing the ways postsecondary advising is delivered and embedded within school systems, ultimately leading to the inspiration to redesign a widespread impact model that is far more targeted and scalable: Essentials.

## **Essentials: Empowering Educators, Expanding Impact**

OneGoal Essentials focuses on empowering a broader range of educators within school buildings to provide effective postsecondary advising. This model provides educators and students with essential content knowledge, practical tools, and technology to facilitate meaningful conversations with students. Rather than relying on a single program director, Essentials builds capacity across the institution. "We focused on creatively addressing the primary problem we were trying to solve; not enough advising is happening and when it does, it is not as individualized and intrusive as it can be" explains Connelly. "We recognized that expanding practice at different entry levels within institutions was key." Early results from the Essentials pilot program are promising, demonstrating the potential for significant impact at scale. OneGoal plans to expand the pilot to more schools, building upon the principles that underpin the program's design.



## Building a Sustainable and Diversified Revenue Model

OneGoal also recognized the need for a sustainable revenue model to support its work. Initially, the organization leaned towards earned income, believing it offered greater stability. However, the pandemic and recent years have highlighted the vulnerabilities of relying solely on any single revenue stream. The organization now embraces a diversified approach, leveraging philanthropy for research and development while pursuing earned revenue to sustain local implementation of its various programs. "We are working to establish a flexible and effective pricing model for our program solutions, recognizing the diverse needs and resources of our partners and regions," says Chief Program Officer Karla Robles-Reyes.

## Navigating Organizational Change: Embracing Curiosity and Community

OneGoal's journey in developing its widespread impact model has highlighted the complexities and opportunities of effective organizational change management. As they integrated the new Essentials model, maintaining a culture of curiosity and community became paramount, ensuring staff felt supported and valued as the organization continued to evolve. Recognizing that change can lead to uncertainty about roles, impact, and even measurement, OneGoal prioritized clear communication. It reinforced the value of the direct-impact flagship model while emphasizing how direct, widespread and systems-level models work together to help the organization fulfill its mission. As Melissa emphasized, "We needed to ensure staff understood that while we were introducing exciting new initiatives, our core mission and the programs that had proven successful remained vital." This commitment to both innovation and stability guides OneGoal's strategic direction. Furthermore, the organization navigated a necessary shift in mindset regarding impact measurement, acknowledging the trade-offs between depth and breadth. As Melissa explains, "We've learned to measure the impact of Essentials differently, acknowledging its potential to reach a far greater number of students."

## Looking Ahead: A Catalyst for Systemic Change

OneGoal's journey reflects a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation. By combining its proven direct impact model with strategic approaches to systems-level and widespread impact, OneGoal is poised to transform postsecondary advising across entire districts. The organization aspires to be a catalyst for creating a world where all students can define their own future, leveraging collaborative partnerships and innovative solutions to expand access to high-quality advising for thousands of students across the country. They believe that it isn't only possible, but probable that the work they are doing will help to ensure high-quality and intrusive postsecondary planning and support will be a universal part of the high school experience in all schools in the near future.

