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## **Below the accountability radar screen: What does state policy say about school counseling?**

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### **Abstract**

I examine the state policy context of implementing an initiative that transforms the training and role of today's school counselors. This is essentially a story of political process. Like the implementation of many initiatives, the Transforming School Counselor Initiative (TSCI) is a process of gaining support and then institutionalizing a newly-formed vision for the role and function of a profession that has been a part of the school organization for the better part of a century. I examine the educational reform contexts of California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana and Ohio as it relates to implementing the Initiative. As such, the framework for analysis on state policy context draws from macropolitical processes as a way of examining practices and actions of key state stakeholders, such as the state departments of education, the counseling profession's state-level association and state legislation and statutory language. The final

analysis ranks the 5 states with regard to their institutional capacity to fully implement and stabilize reform initiatives related to school counseling.

## Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift in education governance from local to state control. Traditionally in American public education, curriculum matters and school functions have been the prerogative of the local school district. However, as overall student performance continues to be a central concern to policymakers, a trend toward centralized state governance has emerged.

Increasingly, state policymakers are taking on the roll of educational architects in designing a coherent and systematized educational program—one that includes high content standards and accompanying accountability measures. Policies of “curriculum upgrading,” as some call it (Porter, Smithson, & Osthoff, 1994), have been the states’ response to calls for reform. Policies of curriculum upgrading include increasing course requirements in academic subjects, developing curriculum frameworks and standards, initiating various types of student assessment, and providing staff development. The effectiveness of these policies at the state level is increased, research suggests, when there is coherence among them (O’Day & Smith, 1993; Elmore & Fuhrman, 1994).

Yet, in the flurry of activity to systematize education, little attention has been given to upgrading the skills of non-teaching school professionals, such as school counselors. The leadership and advocacy role that school counselors could play, some argue, in a standards-based system has been overlooked. The Education Trust, with support from the Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund (WRDF), has been examining just such a role for school counselors. The Education Trust has been working with leaders to identify what school counselors need to know to be able to help all students succeed academically—especially students living in low-income communities and students of color. The result of The Education Trust’s investigation is now a national effort called the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) and is being implemented at six universities in five states (California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana and Ohio).

In the interest of upgrading school counselors’ effect on student achievement, the professional associations of school counselors at the state and national levels, along with some state departments of education, have developed curriculum standards and frameworks as a response to calls for a new focus, clarity in role and function, and a demonstration of effectiveness of school counseling programs. The desired result is a movement toward a more comprehensive and developmental program that measures program effectiveness that links with current educational reform initiatives (Dahir, Sheldon & Valiga 1998; Paisley & Borders, 1995).

Here I examine the state policy context of these five states and asks two related questions: 1) Does the transformation of school counseling preparation programs align with the agenda of states’ educational policies? 2) What degree of transformation is feasible in the policy context of these five participating states?

This analysis intends to get at whether systemic reform of non-teaching functions, like counseling, link up with the larger reform objectives of student achievement and school accountability, and to investigate whether the professional class of people outside of teaching and administration are flying beneath the policy radar screen?

## **A Theoretical Framework for the State Policy Context: An Institutional Perspective**

The state policy context of the TSCI is essentially a story of political process; it is a process of gaining support and then institutionalizing a newly-formed vision for the role and function of a profession within the institution of education. As such, the framework for analysis draws from macropolitical processes as a way of examining practices and actions of key state stakeholders.

In simple terms, policy context refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to a specific policy. These antecedents and pressures include the many social, political and economic factors that lead to an issue being placed on the policy agenda. These factors are influenced by pressure groups and broader social movements that force governments to respond through the articulation of a policy statement. Most recently, state and national pressure groups are calling for high performance and accountability to fuel these antecedents and pressures. School counselors, according to counselor reform advocates, have a role to play on the “achievement team” in helping to meet the demands for improved student achievement and school accountability.

According to Rowan and Miskel (1999), the goal of institutional theory is to explain how socially organized environments arise and how they influence social action. All institutions are frameworks of programs and rules establishing identities and activity schemes for such identities. The institutional environment, therefore, is characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy (Hoy & Miskel, 2001).

Institutional environments, observed Rowan (1982), consist of numerous social control agencies such as state-level professional organizations, state education agencies, professional schools, legislators, and their constituents. These groups or agencies play a major role in adopting, institutionalizing, and stabilizing new educational services. The role of control agents is to legislate (authorize and mandate new programs), professionalize (train, license, credential through state education agencies), and administer (monitor, regulate) programs.

Advocacy-oriented social networks or agencies, Rowan argues further, drive action through lobbying for their special interests. In the case of the TSCI, the five states and their legislatures (and the occasional governor’s office) represent the institutional environment, while the advocacy-oriented network includes The Education Trust, the counseling departments at the six universities, and the state-level school-counseling associations. I will describe the role of each of these institutions and each network or agent and the extent of their success in institutionalizing, adopting, and stabilizing TSCI.

## **Policy Institutionalism**

It is instructive to place an analysis of policy development, like the transformation of school counseling, into historical context. This helps explain previous developments and initiatives upon which a policy like the TSCI is built. In American public schools, at least a century of debate has centered on the purpose of schooling as chiefly either an equalizing process or a process of fostering educative excellence. Critics on either side of the equity vs. excellence argument fuel the debate. Critics of social reforms of the Progressive Era and the Great Society have argued that schools were not designed to be repositories of child welfare services, but rather to be vehicles for training young minds to be thinking and productive citizens (Sedlak & Schlossman, 1985; Tyack, 1992). Indeed over the century, supplemental services for students have been considered by such critics a diversion that “sap[s] schools of limited economic resources] (cited in Sedlak & Schlossman, 1985, p. 371). On the other hand, socially-minded reformers, who saw the enterprise of schooling as more than just a pursuit of excellence, have been able to articulate the importance of considering non-educative services for children. Slowly and steadily, more functions and professional roles were institutionalized: kindergarten, “visiting teachers” (now known as school social workers), the Lunch Act of 1946, vocational guidance counseling, hygiene classes, and physical education, to name a few. Whether as a result of social debate or social resistance, some reform features did not “stick” or were otherwise eliminated, such as dental offices in schools and school-based juvenile courts (Tyack, 1992).

As an artifact of the “space race” of the 1950s, the National Defense Education Act of 1958 poured millions of dollars into the schools of education to train a new generation of school counselors. The emphasis of this era was for counselors to sift and sort, and to identify promising young American students to enter the sciences and pursue higher education (Hayes, Dagley, & Horne, 1996). In the era from the 1960s until recently, the social concerns within the schools have been about teenage pregnancy, drug use, assault, and high dropout rates.

Rowan concludes that school functions, such as counseling, endure in public schools because agencies or political constituencies institutionalize various functions and roles.. Therefore, to understand the place of school counseling in public schools today, it is important to place the TSCI in the current educational reform context of promoting high achievement because the reform era of standards and accountability is now well-established, organized, and systematized in nearly every state.

## **Current Policy Thesis: Systemic Reform**

Amid the bevy of calls for educational excellence has been a consistent cry for achieving policy coherence and coordination around a set of clearly articulated outcomes. Particular political cachet is given to meeting high standards through accountability measures. The policy coherence effort is widely known as “systemic reform” (Furhman, 1993; O’Day & Smith, 1993) and represents the third in a series of reform waves over the past 20 years (Murphy, 1990).

Proponents of systemic reform argue that once the conditions for change (such as the proactive role of the key institutions) have been set, and once coherence exists among policies (such as aligning curriculum with standards and assessment), then systemic reform should produce higher levels of student achievement (O'Day & Smith, 1993). The thinking behind the TSCI is consistent with the theory of systemic reform in that the Initiative calls for, in part, an alignment or partnership between the policy-issuing organization (the state) and the counseling preparation institution (the university). The effectiveness of the TSCI is increased, research suggests, when there is coherence between the key institutions.

Two state-level questions related to the TSCI are considered and answered here: (1) Does the transformation of school-counseling programs align with the agenda of states' educational policies? and (2) How are state policies shaping or otherwise accommodating the efforts of university-based programs to transform school counseling? These are important questions to consider because the very success of the TSCI may hinge on the support of the state institutional environment and the use of social networks or agencies to institutionalize changes and, therefore, to transform the field of school counseling.

## **Method of Data Collection**

The analysis is derived from a two-stage method of data collection. In the first stage, site visits were conducted in each of the five states in late fall and winter of 1999-2000, which included interviews with TSCI project directors, counselor supervisors, practicing counselors, and school administrators and the gathering of relevant documents. In a second stage of data collection and analysis, focusing specifically on the state policy context, documents from each of the participating states were collected from the state departments of education, the state school counseling associations, and from the six university counseling education programs. These documents included key legislative language regarding the role and function of school counselors in the state, educational reform policy papers and legislation, corresponding state department of education papers or statements related to school counseling, university site progress reports to the Education Trust, other relevant documentation from The Education Trust (including applications from the grantees), and relevant web-based data from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Finally, one-hour follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone or e-mail the project director from each university and/or with state education department representatives.

The two stages of data collection generated a clear picture of the state context in which the TSCI was being implemented at the six universities. To verify this picture, a state profile was developed for each of the five states and presented to evaluation team leaders and then to state or site representatives for verification or amendment.. All feedback was incorporated into the final analysis.

## **Findings**

Each state's administrative or statutory rule was reviewed to consider the extent to which the states define the role and function of school counselors. The

corresponding office of school counseling within each state department of education is then descriptively analyzed here. Next, each state's school-counseling professional organization is described because, as a special interest group, professional associations often act as a lobby to the legislature and a liaison between the state department of education and the legislature. The analysis then turns to the larger education policy in each of the five states related to academic performance and accountability. These educational policies of reform are integrally related to the objectives of the TSCI. Thus, to consider the institutionalization of a reform, this analysis considers four features of each state: the statute, the state office, the professional association, and the state educational reform policy.

The data that follows shows that the five states can be clustered into three categories along a continuum of institutionalization: high, moderate, and minimal. Institutionalization of the TSCI is minimal in Florida. This state has few key features in place to support institutionalization. Florida has neither statutory language to legitimize the role and function of school counseling nor a state department office to monitor and support it. California and Georgia have institutionalized the TSCI to a moderate degree. In California, the Initiative is a vehicle for reform rather than an end in itself. In Georgia, the state has both the language and the office but does not have a partnership between the state department and the two universities to build on the components of the TSCI. Indiana and Ohio represent the highest form of institutionalization in that the states have co-opted the TSCI as part of a larger institution-building effort, integrating the TSCI objectives with already-established efforts of the university and state. (See Table 1 below for a summary of institutional features along a continuum.). Finally, I describe and discuss the adoption, diffusion, and stabilization of the TSCI in each state, suggesting the likely endurance of school counseling, given each state's policy context.

## **Institution Building: Definition and Rationalization**

**Definition.** Reforms begin with a period of institution-building in which services or functions are defined and rationalized. In the case of the TSCI, the role and function of the counselors in each state need to be understood.

Nearly all of the five states in which the TSCI is being implemented have a defining rule, administrative code, or statute that defines the role and function of school counselors in public schools. The state of Florida does not have language requiring school counselors to serve in public schools, but it does have statutory language for the certification requirements of school counselors.

**Table 1. Five-State Policy Context Summary: A Continuum of Institutionalization**

	TSCI university site	State statute (code, rule or article)	State-level educational reform policy	State department of education	State professional association	Degree of stabilization/ institutionalization

<b>Indiana</b>	Indiana State University (ISU)	Student Services Rule (IAC 511 4-1.5)	Public Law 221	Career Counseling and Guidance	ISCA	High degree through cooptation
<b>Ohio</b>	Ohio State University (OSU)	Rule 3304-2-64	Senate Bill 55	Guidance, Counseling and Development	OSCA	High degree through institution building
<b>California</b>	California State University, Northridge (CSUN)	Code Section 49600	Senate Bill 1X	Counseling and Student Support Services	CASC CSCA	Moderate degree, though in process
<b>Georgia</b>	University of Georgia (UGA) and University of West Georgia (SWUG)	Rule 160-4-8.01	QBE Act	School Guidance and Counseling Services	GSCA	Moderate degree, no link between site and state department
<b>Florida</b>	University of North Florida (UNF)	----	A+ Plan	Student Support Services Project at University of South Florida	FSCA	Minimal degree, no institutional support

California's State Board of Education has a policy that all students are *entitled* to the benefits of school counseling, but counseling is not required. In the other three states, Indiana, Ohio, and Georgia, the respective rules or codes makes explicit the licensing and certification requirements, the role and function of the professional.

In Indiana, Title 515, Code 1-1-74 (2001) clearly defines counselor licensing. The newly-adopted administrative code, Article 4-1.5 of Title 511 (2000), now known as the "student services rule," advances the profession of school counseling, in particular, by requiring that Student Assistance Services (SAS) and Educational and Career Services (ECS) be provided to students. SAS are required at both elementary and secondary schools. ECS are required for secondary schools and recommended for elementary schools. According to the state's professional school-counselor organization, these definitions are important because many counselors have successfully used the language to advocate for school counselors' filling student services positions (rather than social workers or school psychologists). They have done this by helping their administrators and school boards understand that school counselors are the only student services professionals permitted to coordinate both SAS and ECS (Indiana School Counselor Association bulletin, 2000). In addition, the new rule contains recommended ratios for providers of these services. Representatives of the Indiana School Counselor Association (ISCA) say that this is a first step in their attempt to mandate student to counselor ratios.

In recent years, the ISCA worked closely with the Indiana Department of Education (IDoE) to enact this code. Indeed, from the early 1990s to 2000, the department and the ISCA were in discussions about changing the language in administrative code 511,4-1.5. In 1995, the ISCA Governing Board successfully

blocked language which would have separated guidance and counseling into two separate professions. But, in collaboration with the IDoE, the ISCA wrote the newly adopted language which is viewed as a “win-win situation for all involved” (Indiana School Counselor Association memo, 1998).

In Ohio, the definitions of school counseling and its licensing requirements are stated in separate codes. Administrative Code 3304-2-64 (1983) outlines the responsibilities that counselors have in the provision of services to students. More specifically, Administrative Code 3301-23-05 (2001) spells out licensing requirements and prerequisites. The adoption of this newly revised licensing code (3301-23-05), is the result of concerted efforts by the institutions of higher education in Ohio, led by Ohio State University (OSU) with the support of the Ohio Department of Education. According to the OSU project director, the current licensing rule (Rule 3304-2-64) did not allow for anyone without teaching experience to become a school counselor:

This is what led to the decrease in minorities in school counseling in Ohio, I believe. I have spent the last three years working to change the rules with a coalition of counselor educators across the state. We succeeded in getting the new rules passed as of last November [2001]. The effort was monumental, but will probably be the most important outcome of my DeWitt Wallace grant. (Sears, S. personal communication, January 24, 2002)

The institutionalization of a new counselor education program, in the mind of the project director, was defined by changing the requirements for obtaining a counseling license in Ohio. By waiving the requirement to have two years of teaching to qualify for the counseling license, the director hypothesized that counseling education would not only recruit new and more students to the program, but would also recruit and attract minority students. Because teacher licensing can sometimes operate as a sorting mechanism (based on teacher education admission requirements) and because teaching as a profession attracts different populations than counseling, the project director at Ohio State listed the waiver as the major goal (and accomplishment) for the WRDF grant. As a result, OSU built a coalition with counselor educators from around the state and with the Ohio Department of Education.

In California, State Board of Education policy decrees that all public school students are entitled to the benefits of school counseling, but that they are not required. Education Code Section 49600 (1987) states that any school district “*may* provide a comprehensive educational counseling program for all pupils enrolled in the schools of the district.” Education Code 49600 is permissive, leaving the hiring of school counselors to the district’s discretion. Indeed, fully 29 percent of the state’s school districts do not employ counselors of any kind (California Association of School Counselors memo, 2001). Nonetheless, should a district employ counselors, the Code defines an effective counseling and guidance program as one that provides a planned sequence of activities that result in specific student outcomes in terms of demonstrable knowledge, skills, and attitudes. A new vision for school counseling, according to state department representatives, would reinforce the requirements of the California Education Code. If a district does provide a program, however, it *must* include academic



counseling, career and vocational counseling, and personal and social counseling.

In Georgia, the State Board of Education provides Rule 160-4-8.01(2000) under Student Support Services. The Rule defines counseling as “a process where some students receive assistance from professionals who assist them to overcome emotional and social problems or concerns which may interfere with learning.” While this definition does not currently resonate with the profession’s national standards in which counseling emphasizes the social/emotional, career, and academic development of students, other documents suggest a sea change in educational policy has occurred in the state of Georgia that does resonate with new vision counseling. The Georgia Department of Education’s Office on School Guidance and Counseling Services emphasizes that, in the context of educational reform:

[G]uidance counselors will assume more of a responsibility for student growth and thus become more accountable in the process. The activities that guidance counselors conduct should have a link to defined student standards (Georgia Department of Education, Program Overview, 2000).

In Florida, there is no statutory rule or educational code that provides a directive or mandate for school counselors, except for Florida State Board Rule, Chapter 6A-4.0181 (1990), which spells out the specialization requirements for certification in guidance and counseling. Beyond that rule, nothing exists in terms of monitoring or advocating for the field. According to University of North Florida TSCI project director, state policy has changed so that now every school counselor must have 12 hours of in-service, career, and academic advising in order to renew his or her certificate.

California and Florida share a similar state policy history in that in the early 1990s, the offices of counseling in the respective state departments of education were disbanded. In both states, the political climate at the time was quite conservative in educational policy, reserving educational finances for “the basics.” In the case of Florida, of the state department of education was downsized. In the case of California, the disbanding of office was more personal, involving an unpleasant encounter between a counselor and one of relatives of the Education Commissioner.

Today, the state context in Florida remains interesting in that the usual state-level elements that constitute a strong political constituency for school counseling are absent. First, there is no state requirement for school counseling. Second, there is no office for student services in the state department of education. Instead, a Student Support Services Project is funded through federal grant money and is housed at the University of South Florida. Third, according to documents and interviews, the state’s professional counseling association is perceived as weak. Coinciding with the demise of the office for student services in 1990, the membership of the state’s professional association, the Florida School Counseling Association, diminished dramatically. Without a statute or rule to provide guidance in the state, and without an administrative body to administer and monitor legislation, there is a limited role for the professional association to

play.

Despite a history similar to Florida's in the early 1990s, California's outcome is entirely different at this point in time. Not only is California's a story of institution building, it is a story of rebuilding. In 1991, the state superintendent disbanded the office of counseling at the state department of education, and the state professional association was considered outmoded and out of touch. Statistics on student to counselor ratios from the mid-1990s reflect this apathy. The student to counselor ratio in 1995-96 and 1996-97 averaged 1,074:1, over four times the recommended ratio and nearly twice the national average (California Association of School Counselors, 2001). However, by 1999 a combination of opportunities in California began to breathe new life into the field of school counseling. The office was reinstated, a new professional organization was getting mobilized, and by 2000-01, the student to counselor ratio dropped to 945:1. What changed in California and the lessons to be learned there are not only a story of new vision, but also an important story about alignment with key political constituencies and the field's leaders. Renewed vision is also important for the other participating institutions in the other states.

**Rationalization.** A rationale for changing and advancing the role and function of the school counselor has been developed in several studies and reports on the topic. A needs assessment by the Education Trust found, among other things, that counselors do not focus enough on promoting high academic achievement, that there is little connection between the way counselors are being trained in universities and the services they need to provide to students, that preparation classes are "generic," and that the classes place a disproportionate emphasis on a mental health model (Guerra, 1998). The counseling field has been described as a "set of loosely related services" (Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986) and "disconnected" from what counselors are trained to do and what they are expected to do (The Education Trust, 1998, p. 6). Thus, the TSCI was designed to overhaul and update school counselor preparation programs at the university and college level.

As a result of the near extinction of a school counseling presence at the California Department of Education, a set of new forces propelled the office out of obscurity and into the forefront. The forces at work in California run the gamut from local, to state, to national. At the local level, practitioners were recognizing that their field was falling further behind as the needs and demands for services mounted. Calls from local districts gained attention at the state. At the state level, institutions of higher education and professionals within the California Department of Education began to draw on research, best practices, and model programs to set a new vision for the state's counseling office. And, at the national level, organizations such as The Education Trust played a critical role in providing focus, support, and a vision for the office of school counseling. In 1999, a policy paper on the direction of school counseling laid out the future of school counseling in California. In answer to the rhetorical question, "Where should we be?," the policy paper said:

[The California Department of Education] should embrace a new vision of pupil services that moves the traditional program to a more comprehensive and developmental program for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The

vision proposed is one of schools where every student is challenged and supported to achieve at the highest possible level. This new vision requires active involvement in integrating and implementing the best concepts, practices, elements, direction, outcomes, and models. This vision should be based on such documents and resources as The National Standards for School Counseling Programs, Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs, the State Board Policy Statement on Guidance and Counseling, and the California Education Code. (California's Comprehensive Guidance Program: Providing Support for Academic Success, 1999, p. 1).

In Indiana, a study commissioned by the Indiana Youth Institute, "High Hopes, Long Odds," called for a similar refocusing and transformation of the counseling profession. Indiana's state context was ripe for change. The objectives of the TSCI were closely aligned with the objectives of the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana School Counselor Association. As a recipient of the WRDF grant monies, Indiana State University (ISU) was well-situated to emerge as a state-level player in this transformation effort.

Between 1995 and 1997, the ISU Counseling Department reviewed the gap between the content of counselor preparation programs and the skill set needed for school counselors in the current context of high standards and accountability. As a result, the department hired a director to spearhead a systemic change process needed to create a program focused on student achievement. The director brought together numerous stakeholder groups and developed curriculum based on student competencies. The new school-counselor program fit well within the context of the Professional Development Schools (PDS) Program of the School of Education. The program emphasizes increased achievement for all students in PDS sites, commitment to continuous professional development for school and university faculty, and school-university collaboration. The PDS program is considered fertile soil for the activities of the TSCI.

In addition, the ISU TSCI project director and a staff member from the Indiana Department of Education, teamed up to resurrect the Indiana School Guidance Leadership Project (now known as the Indiana Student Achievement Institute). The Institute teaches school-community teams a vision-based, data-driven, whole school reform process. School counselors play a central role in this process. The Institute has been recognized and approved by the Indiana State Board of Education as a model that schools can use to develop their school improvement plan.

In Ohio, Ohio State University's (OSU) vision for transformation departed from state legislation requiring counselors to hold a teaching license and to have two years of teaching experience. As such, the initial rationalization for the TSCI grant was to change the counselor training program, change the role and function of the school counselor within the school district, and to change state regulations that define these two areas (DWRD application, 1998). Subsequently, the involvement of the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) senior-level official in counseling was specifically requested. The direct and early involvement of ODE proved to be not only critical but also politically expedient and

forward-thinking. From the start, ODE's counseling office has been a part of the Core Executive Team -- a body designed in the OSU application to WRDF and formed early in the planning grant stage. The Team was established to build a solid collaborative relationship for change. The membership of the Core Executive Team includes key stakeholders representing the partnering school district in Columbus, the teachers union, the state, and community (represented through the mayor's office).

The ODE representative agreed with Ohio State's rationalization for waiving the teaching license requirement, even though 83 percent of those surveyed by the Ohio School Counselor Association disagreed and 71 percent of school administrators disagreed (E. Whitfield, personal communication, May 15, 2001). ODE's representative recognized the low number of minority counselors in the state and attributed this situation to the onerous requirement of the teaching license. He also wished to align the counselor education requirements with Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) standards which require an internship during training. However, he suspected that the requirements of a teaching degree, teaching experience, and the internship would make seeking a counseling degree seem too long and arduous to attract many students. The ODE representative also recognized the imperative in the state of Ohio to close the achievement gap between whites and minorities. He stated, "In Ohio, about 21 districts enroll 72 percent of the minority student population. These districts employ very few minority counselors."

The state's urban initiatives, OSU's College of Education Urban Initiative, and the partnership with Columbus Public Schools to transform school counseling, and the ODE support for change all added to the momentum to reform the licensing requirement. Furthermore, the College of Education at OSU and the Columbus Public Schools have a longstanding collaborative relationship that focuses on institutional change. One agreed-upon outcome of the DWRD grant is concurrent deep-rooted institutional change at the university level (including significant changes in graduate training) and significant change in the role and function of the school counselors at the district level.

In all five of the participating states, the larger statewide reforms in education give school counselors plenty of rationalization to transform school counseling. In Georgia, for example, updating school counseling is clearly aligned with the state's larger educational reform initiatives. The state expects results, and to that end, standards and accountability are the watchwords. The student standards, to which counselors are expected to link their work, are spelled out in the state's sweeping Georgia Quality Basic Education Act of 1986 (known as QBE). Among other features, such as quality professional development and sufficient funding, the QBE Act requires the Board of Education to develop a statewide basic curriculum (and accompanying standards), including the competencies that all students must master in order to graduate. The sequenced curriculum is known as the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), which forms a framework for accomplishing the competencies and is revised and updated every four years.

The Guidance and Counseling Curriculum has standards and objectives that are aligned with the QCC. Last updated in 1999, the Guidance and Counseling Curriculum, known as Georgia's Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling

Curriculum, emphasizes “promotion of student success and high achievement for all students by altering the philosophical thrust of guidance programs” (Georgia Department of Education, 1999). The state of Georgia is quite prescriptive in defining the role of school counselors and their use of time. Through House Bill 1187 (2000), counselors are required to collect data that reflect the new role and function of counselors, including monthly reports that record the percentage of time spent in counseling (five of six hours of work are prescribed to be counseling).

Georgia’s Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Curriculum characterizes the new program development in guidance and counseling as results driven, stating that “guidance counselors...assume more of a responsibility...and become more accountable in that process” (Georgia Department of Education, 1999, p. 2). Using a collaborative process that involved guidance counselors, guidance supervisors, and teachers, the state developed “A Framework for Developing and Implementing Asset Building Standards.” The framework has evolved over the past few years and has involved “everyone committed to the idea of changing the way things are done to how they should be done” (Georgia Department of Education, 1999, p. 1). The framework is designed to assist counselors in developing standards and competencies to use in maximizing students’ assets and abilities.”

In Florida, the governor has marshaled significant educational policy through the legislature that has shaped the educational reform context for the state. The governor refers to the educational reform initiative as the A+ Plan. Before Governor Bush’s initiative, Florida already had in place the “Sunshine State Standards,” student accountability through criterion-referenced tests (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test), and school accountability through a five-tiered grading system. As part of his new plan, Bush called for further legislation adding parental choice, rewards for improvement, and sanctions for low performers. Additionally, Governor Bush initiated One Florida, an initiative designed primarily to assist underrepresented groups of students to become better prepared for college. One Florida has been described as the governor’s alternative affirmative action program in higher education. According to Florida site interviewees, the governor replaced affirmative action with a policy that allowed all students in the top 20% of their graduating class to attend any state university in Florida tuition-free. He called these students “the 20 percent talent.” However, the governor failed to realize that being in the top 20 percent of a graduating class did not necessarily mean that these students had met all enrollment requirements to the state university system. One Florida changed its mission from one of access to one of preparation. Among other things, One Florida emphasizes higher academic achievement as a precursor to access and enrollment to higher education. As the TSCI project director at the University of North Florida (UNF) sees it:

One Florida has certainly impacted [the point of view] that we [counselors] are critical and central to widening the options for students and that we need to be the advocate. ...we are the people who need to make sure that students are given the information they need to access advanced classes and to go beyond minimum requirements for secondary education.

One feature of One Florida is to engage school counselors as “advocates, not gatekeepers” to postsecondary education. This not a policy directive to school counselors, but rather a policy guideline. According to the UNF project director, “Florida is beginning to focus more on how [school counselors] are an integral part of the nature and function of schools.” She added that low student performance and their lack of preparation for higher education were “being laid at the feet of school counselors, that we were adversely stratifying kids’ opportunities to get into higher levels of academics.”

Blame for low performance in Florida has been placed on all education system personnel, including school counselors. The elimination of the state department’s office of school counseling in 1990 and the lack of reinstatement by the new education commissioner have not helped efforts to provide counselors with a role in supporting students and academic achievement. In order for counselors to play a role on the “achievement team,” and in order for counselors to gain legitimacy, institution building statewide still needs to happen.

### **Adoption: Gaining Legitimacy and Spurring Diffusion**

Evolution of a support network is considered critical to adoption and diffusion of reform. As institution building proceeds, services or functions gain legitimacy which, in turn, spurs adoption through diffusion (Rowan, 1982). The period in which the TSCI gained legitimacy in each state coincided with a larger movement toward accountability through standards and assessment.

### **Gaining Legitimacy through Policy Alignment**

The larger policy context within which any reform exists is critical to its gaining legitimacy. Counseling reforms must justify their *raison d’être* more than most other educational reforms because school counseling suffers from a precarious position in educational institutions. Being perceived as a non-educative role has long plagued the profession. Subsequently, justification not only for its continued existence but also for its newly revised function must take hold within the current policy context of accountability and high student performance. As part of the adoption process required for reform, a solid support network must champion the cause. The process of gaining legitimacy and the constellation of political constituencies involved as champions vary from state to state.

In Indiana, adoption of the TSCI coincided with the adoption of a few central pieces of legislation and the administrative code. The new Student Services Rule (IAC 511 4-1.5) defines the student services that schools must provide students, and Public Law 221 (2001) calls for systemic reform and accountability. The support network in Indiana at the state level has been gaining momentum since the 1990s. The key state-level stakeholders in Indiana, apart from the university system, are embodied in a single individual who serves both as the Executive Director of ISCA as well as the Guidance Consultant for the Indiana Department of Education. While it is an unusual arrangement that the department of education consultant also directs the state’s professional counselor organization, the alignment lends considerable state-level authority to reform efforts. The ISU project director has also been instrumental in chairing the Indiana Professional

Standards Board (IPSB) External Committee for School Counseling and advising the IPSB concerning the development of certification of student services personnel and assessment patterns.

These two state-level leaders based at ISU and ISCA/IdoE created a network of dominating force by pairing their lobbying efforts to great effect. Their influence on policies and programs includes the passage of the updated Student Services Rule (IAC 511 4-1.5), and the development of the Indiana Student Achievement Institute, a whole school reform process in which school counselors are major players.

While Public Law 221 does not directly speak to the field of school counseling, the progress that ISCA/IdoE, and ISU have made through the TSCI has situated them well within the state's new reform context. Public Law 221 calls for reform in accreditation, annual performance reports, accountability, strategic and continuous school improvement, and professional development. Through collaboration among key state-level stakeholders, the efforts of the TSCI are well on their way to aligning with the provisions of Public Law 221.

In the case of Ohio's TSCI effort, the support network at the state level includes the director of guidance at the state department, the institutions of higher education across the state of Ohio, and to a lesser extent, the professional association. The implementation of the TSCI coincided with the passage of Senate Bill 55 (1997), Ohio's accountability measure for school performance passed in 1997 by the Ohio General Assembly and modified in 2001. Its provisions represent a package of school improvement and academic accountability initiatives. Combined with the fiscal accountability provisions of House Bill 412 (1997), Senate Bill 55 represents a comprehensive approach to improving schools and increasing the level of achievement of all Ohio students.

The support for the TSCI in Ohio began to evolve with the inception of the TSCI grant in 1999. The alignment of the Initiative with the provisions of Senate Bill 55 on continuous improvement and the state's operating standards for high performance adds to the momentum. The central role of the guidance director at the state department of education proved to be a considerable asset, as this collaborative partner provided entrée for the licensing waiver. He began to see how counselors needed to be a part of the "learning team," that counseling was moving away from a mental health role because of the significant pressure on schools to produce high achievers, and that ultimately counselors could prove to be a valuable partner in the effort for high performance: "I feel the primary purpose for counselors is promoting learning; counselors must consider mental health issues, but The Ed[ucation] Trust has clarified a need for more of an emphasis on student achievement." Similarly, the TSCI project director at OSU shared her conception of a transformed school counselor as a "learning expert." She continued

We are trying to see if we can develop a prototypic school counseling program based on the continuous improvement plans (Senate Bill 55). School districts have to develop an improvement plan if they don't meet all of the state standards. This is a very different approach to developing school counseling programs, but we are making

headway. Right now, in Ohio, academic performance is everything. That can lead to the exclusion of the counselor altogether, unless the counselor is willing to understand how they can show they are important to the achievement of the continuous improvement goals and strategies.

Ohio School Counseling Association (OSCA) representatives serve as part of the larger coalition that the Ohio TSCI project director has put together. The project director serves as treasurer and newsletter editor of OSCA and maintains a close relationship with the association's president and president-elect. And while OSCA's involvement has been somewhat limited in the planning and implementation of the TSCI, the association provides support through dissemination of information and papers on the topic.

In California, the accountability measure is Senate Bill 1X (Chapter 3 of 1999) which calls for school improvement through greater accountability. The support network required in the adoption process of a reform came from a disparate group of organizations from the field of school counseling. This group of mobilized advocates working for change at the state level includes: the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC); faculty at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) with the assistance and vision of the TSCI; officials of the California Department of Education (CDE), including the state superintendent; a newly assembled state professional association, the California Association of School Counselors (CASC); and leaders in the Los Angeles County and Moreno Valley School Districts. This group mobilized to reinstitute and reinvigorate school counseling in California, thereby gaining legitimacy and credibility. The new vision for counseling in California recognized a need to align specifically with the state's need for adequate provisions for standards, assessment, and accountability. Because California does not require school counselors by statute, professional school counselors needed to align with the larger reform forces in California, as exemplified by the provisions of Senate Bill 1X. Thus, the new mission and objectives for school counseling focuses on standards—including a change in the credentialing standards—and accountability in all programs designed to support learning and to promote student success. According to the state's policy paper on guidance and counseling:

No student should be left behind in California's movement toward standards, assessment, and accountability. Every school should provide a well-coordinated and supported guidance program led by a credentialed pupil services professional who can help reduce the barriers to learning, assist with the educational plan for each student that provides appropriate options, intervene with appropriate services for students and families, and make referrals as needed to outside agencies (Comprehensive Guidance Program: Providing Support for Academic Success, 1999, p 2).

The CTC provided early impetus for an overall change to counseling preparation programs. The CTC sets standards, requirements, and guidelines for college and university preparation programs in Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credentials, including school counseling. The TSCI project director from CSUN served on an



advisory panel of the CTC, along with a CTC-PPS coordinator, a representative from CDE, a representative of the school counseling association, as well as a number of other practitioners and counseling educators from around the state. The panel recommended and made changes to current standards, requirements, and guidelines for PPS. The new standards are called the Pupil Services Standards of Program Quality and Effectiveness and meet the spirit and intent of state accountability measures, Senate Bill 1X.

The CTC School Counseling Advisory Panel—drawing on the vision and concerns of the TSCI, the National School Counseling Standards, CACREP standards, and other key documents—provided critical guidance in several important ways: in rewriting the credentialing standards, in reinventing the strategic plan for a comprehensive guidance and counseling model and system in the state, and, finally, in developing an office in the CDE for the delivery of a professional development model. As a result of WRDF’s support and project directors’ championing of the vision for the transformation of school counseling, 33 preparation programs in California will be changing their program to align with standards that are an outcome of these efforts.

As part of the PPS credential, the school counselor is expected to develop a comprehensive and age-appropriate program that includes academic, career, personal, and social development—in keeping with the nationally recognized mission of school counseling. Additionally, the credential sees counselors as advocates for high achievement and providers of prevention/intervention counseling, among other duties. In a recent statement issued by the state superintendent during National School Counseling week, the state’s emphasis on academic achievement was emphasized:

I urge Californians to take time during this week to acknowledge school counselors for the tremendous impact they can have in helping students achieve academic success and plan for a career. School counselors work as an integral part of the school team of teachers, parents, and administrators in enabling all students to achieve success in school, and to become responsible and productive members of society (Department of Education, News Release, January, 2002).

A schism emerged between “old guard” school counselors and “new vision” school counselors during this period of transformation in California. The old guard association was the larger California School Counselor Association (CSCA) that had presided over school counseling for decades. Because of CSCA’s ties to the California Association of Counseling and Development (the state equivalent of the American Counseling Association) and the associated membership fees, school counselors were reticent to join. As a consequence, a group of key leaders, including practitioners and counseling educators, who had been very active in pushing for new legislation for school counseling broke from CSCA. Their newly-founded state association is the California Association for School Counselors (CASC), which has successfully pushed for new legislation and is proving to be more active and knowledgeable about the legislative process than CSCA. (C. Hanson, personal communication, January 16, 2002). CASC’s leaders have played an important role in influencing and shaping the new

direction for school counseling in the state.

In Georgia, implementation of the TSCI coincided with the passage of the standards and accountability act, known as the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) (1986). The objectives of the TSCI were closely aligned with the objectives of QBE and, thus, the Georgia Department of Education. State University of West Georgia (SUWG) developed a competency notebook that included the ASCA and CACREP standards. The University of Georgia (UGA) consulted with the department of education, as well as with other state-level stakeholders, in considering revisions to its program. In the form of a statewide summit, UGA consulted with the Board of Regents, the Georgia School Counselors Association, deans from eight higher education institutions, and the department of education (State University of West Georgia, 1999). In this way, the transformation of school counseling has been well situated within the context of Georgia's state-level reforms.

Critical members of Georgia's support network at the state level are the state professional associations. Both SUWG and UGA worked closely with Georgia School Counselors Association (GSCA), the Licensed Professional Counselors Association of Georgia (LPCA), and the Georgia Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors (GACES). Indeed, GSCA, considered to be one of the strongest, most mobilized school counselor professional organizations in the country, proved to be a pivotal player in strengthening the relationship between the state department and counselor educators. Interaction between the state department of education and the counseling education programs seems to be limited to meetings and conferences, such as informational exchange meetings. The representative from the state office of guidance and counseling serves on SUWG's advisory board in order facilitate the exchange of information and involvement. The project director at SUWG explained that policy change generally begins at a personal level. Project directors at SUWG and UGA describe the relationship between the state department and the two universities as limited. The UGA project director commented, "We don't shift with every demand from the state. We have a model about preparation of school counseling and we focus on that." The project director continued, "We [universities and state department] work in parallel, not together. It is not an antagonistic relationship, but rather a parallel one." Faculty at SUWG concurred with this characterization of the relationship with the state department. Apparently, the state department likes what is happening with the TSCI because it lines up well with education reform efforts. The fact that two universities in the state are deeply involved in transforming school counseling adds to the impact.

GSCA, according to the project directors, is credited for bringing the universities to the state department's table and vice versa. In this way, the state professional association played a key role in mediating serving as a liaison between the state department and the universities. According to one project director, counselors enjoy considerable respect in the districts. Counselors have made great gains in the pay scale by getting advanced degrees in their field, and thus the GSCA has swelled in numbers and influence. Its presence in the Georgia policy context has added considerable value.

What is not clear, however, is the extent to which the state accommodates the

efforts of the university programs. Independently, the state department and the universities seem to be doing the same kind of work. They seem to operate, as the UGA project director characterized them, as parallel systems— not inconsistent in their shared objectives, but pursuing them separately. To date, this seems to have worked for Georgia. As long as the university programs are aligned with the larger educational reform context, and as long as the universities in Georgia find support in their endeavors—either through granting institutions like the WRDF or through social networks like the Georgia professional associations—the TSCI program has legitimacy.

In the case of Florida, the support comes not from the state, but rather from local leaders, university leaders, and the federal government. Despite the lack of supportive mechanisms at the state level, the University of North Florida (UNF) has successfully developed a comprehensive school counseling preparation program, Supporters of Academic Rigor (SOAR), in partnership with the Duval County Public Schools. Increasingly, this local effort is gaining state and even national attention and respect for its successful collaboration between an urban university and an urban school district. SOAR's stated mission is to "change the preparation process and utilization of school counselors to enable counselors to provide the conditions necessary for academic achievement for all children with emphasis on those strategies needed to eliminate the achievement gap between minority and low-income students and their more advantaged peers" (University of North Florida grant proposal, 1998). SOAR is recognized as a welcomed collaborator in its partnering district because of shared goals and objectives. An area superintendent summarized the effectiveness of the partnership this way:

SOAR aligns well with the district and the state, especially in its theme that "all children can learn". No state policies are affecting SOAR significantly. We do not have strong political adversaries. The [school] board is very supportive. SOAR aligns with the superintendent's [academic improvement] initiatives. Other aspects of SOAR aligned with the district are the notions that data drives programs and that all programs are accountable. SOAR ideas were moving in place before much of the district's current initiatives began, but it moves in tandem with the district now (August, 1999)

In addition to receiving grant monies from the TSCI, UNF and its partner district, Duval County, have survived and thrived on four sources of federal grant dollars: GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), ESCADA (Elementary School Counselors Demonstration Act), Title VI, and the National Science Foundation's Urban Systemic Initiative.

Beyond federal support, support UNF is also significant. First, the counseling preparation program is in the College of Education and Human Services, a college that is recognized as committed to urban educational reform. The dean of the college is considered "tremendously supportive," according to project director continued:

[Our program] is embedded in a college ...that is talking the same talk, and that helps. [Our program] came along after they [the college] were well down the road....Their [members of the college] eyes don't

glaze over when we start talking about what we want to do in our preparation program. They know what we're talking about, and these are some really exciting, powerful relationships when we feel like we are in line with where the whole profession is going (January, 2002, personal communication).

The second area of support from UNF comes from an initiative referred to as the Florida Institute for Education (FIE), funded by the state legislature. According to one interviewee from the Florida site, one aspect of FIE is to promote the use of counselors as advocates, "a person that promotes academic achievement and high expectations for students." FIE acts as a liaison organization between the Florida legislature and both the state university and K-12 education systems.

FIE is currently housed at UNF, although it moves from one Florida institution of higher education to another. Among other things, the executive director of FIE has worked directly with the UNF counselor education program to support counselor programs statewide. The executive director assembled counselors and counselor educators from around the state to identify changes that need to be made in school counseling. Furthermore, FIE co-wrote a grant with the TSCI project director and others to develop a professional development model for training counselors using SOAR's philosophy. FIE adds legitimacy to SOAR and gives it greater statewide visibility.

### **Diffusion: Deliberate Intervention of Reform**

As stated earlier, diffusion of a reform is a precursor to stabilization. In several important ways, the work and efforts of the TSCI are being diffused throughout each of the states.

The work and efforts of the TSCI are being disseminated in Indiana in at least three important ways. First, the TSCI project director at ISU and her collaborator at the state department and professional association have published or presented papers since 1999 that have been widely distributed to school-counseling professionals and academics. Second, the project director's work on the External Committee of the Iowa Professional Standards Board has brought school counselor standards to a level which all counselor preparation programs have to meet. This state-level work has significant bearing on preparation programs statewide. And third, as of 2002, the project director, in collaboration with the state department collaborator, are beginning to establish what will be known as the Four-Star Guidance Standards – a set of standards for counseling programs. The program will be administered through the state department.

In the state of Ohio, the TSCI project director has presented papers at state and national conferences including the American Counseling Association; the Columbus, Ohio, and national affiliates of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; and at the High Schools that Work national meeting. In 1999, she hosted a conference for several counselor-education programs across the state to describe and inform colleagues about the program revision at OSU. In 2000, she assembled representatives from the partner school district (Columbus), including counselors, the director of guidance, and a union

representative, to present the TSCI partnership to 11 counselor preparation programs from around the state. In 2001, the project director helped host the Ohio Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors meeting and presented on the restructured school internship as a result of the TSCI. Finally, in 2001, the Ohio School Counselors Association (OSCA) newsletter featured an article on the TSCI in its fall issue, reaching over 2,000 counselors in Ohio. To the extent that OSCA is an avenue for disseminating information on the TSCI, the association plays an important role.

To an even greater extent, the diffusion of a transformed model of school counseling is reflected in nascent efforts by the OSU project director and others to develop a statewide framework of school counseling standards. This framework, when adopted by the state, would reflect an emphasis on helping school counselors to become advocates for students, to improve student achievement, to collaborate with other educators and with the community, to consult with teachers and parents, to coordinate mental health services rather than delivering them, and to use data to effect systems change (Ohio State University, Progress Report, 2001). The nascent committee on a state framework for school counseling currently includes the TSCI project director; the OSCA president and president-elect; faculty representatives from Bowling Green, John Carroll, and Ohio Universities; a doctoral student from OSU and the director of guidance from the state department of education. The coalition is currently operating as the State Framework Committee; the group hopes to form an advisory committee to be hosted by the office of guidance at ODE, at which point the group's work could have statewide impact.

Information about the project in California has been disseminated through direct presentations to and discussions with key school-counseling educators in the state and with the Standards Committee of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (California State University, Northridge, Progress Report, 2000). In turn, 33 credentialing programs in California are now aware of the new standards, and these standards closely mirror the work of the TSCI. Additional dissemination efforts include presentations at local, state, and national meetings including the California Counselor Leadership Academy of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, California Association for Counseling and Development, Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors, and the American School Counselor Association.

Project directors in Georgia have presented their work on the TSCI at major state and national conferences, conventions, and seminars. SSUWG faculty have presented papers at local, state, regional, and national conferences including the American Counseling Association; the American School Counselors' Association; the Rocky Mountain, Georgia, Southern, and national affiliates of the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors; the Alabama Counselors' Association; and with counselors in Utah. In addition, the project directors have provided 20 hours of in-service workshops to professional school counselors in their partner school district, Clayton County public schools. UGA sponsored a Counselor Academy for its partner district—a week-long professional development program. However, the lack of collaboration with the state department described above keeps dissemination of a new vision for school counseling potentially limited to academic circles.

The work and efforts of Florida's SOAR/TSCI are being diffused locally, statewide, and nationally. At the local level, information about the project has been disseminated to key school counseling educators in the state. The venues have included a key stakeholders meeting (including counselor educators from Florida state universities, the Florida School Counselors Association, Florida Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors, and the Florida Counseling Association); meetings of school administrators, instructional supervisors, and human resource services; and Tri-County Counselors' meetings. At the state level, papers and presentations have been delivered at meetings of the Florida School Counselors Association, Florida Counseling Association, Florida School Counselor Supervisors and Education (8 of the 10 state universities in attendance), and the American School Counselor Association; at the national convention of the American Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; and at the International Conference on College Teaching and Learning. Other creative dissemination vehicles include a SOAR Web site, professional videos, press releases, and, importantly, a Summer Institute for training school teams statewide. The considerable support and visibility that the Florida Institute for Education has provided SOAR/TSCI has also been an important part of dissemination.

## **Stabilization**

Statewide adoption of newly revised standards that reflect the transformation of the role of school counselors moves states to a period of stabilization of reform. After adoption, as the transformation of school counselor preparation becomes aligned with state-level reform legislation, the new vision of school counseling becomes an enduring or stabilized fixture on the education landscape. The extent of stabilization across the five states varies. The extent of stabilization is predictable, depending on the stage of institution building and reform adoption in each state. In Indiana, Ohio, and California, institution building and adoption are well along, whereas in Georgia there is room still for institution building with the state department of education. In Florida, the limited state presence in the field of school counseling has hindered the extent of stabilization.

The credit for the swift move from institution building to adoption to stabilization in Indiana is due in great part to the collaboration of leaders at the state level, the TSCI project director and the key leader at the state department and state counselors' association. The smooth alignment of the TSCI with Indiana's statewide school reform context of high standards and accountability also solidified adoption. These state-level players worked to align their vision of reformed school counseling with the state's vision of school reform.

Like Indiana, the move from institution building to adoption to stabilization in Ohio is due in great part to the project director at OSU, the state director of counseling at ODE, the professional association, and the district. The move toward aligning Ohio's statewide school reform with the efforts of the counselor-education programs promises to affix the new vision school counselor as an enduring feature in educational institutions. The key political constituencies at the state level, among the institutions of higher education, and at the district level are aligning their vision of reformed school counseling with the state's vision of

school reform.

Beyond adoption, as the transformation of school counselor preparation becomes aligned with state-level reform, the new vision of school counselors in California promise to become an enduring or stabilized fixture on the education landscape. The TSCI project director at California State University, Northridge, sees that, as a result of the TSCI, the counseling program is working to integrate teacher education as a part of the curriculum by building instructional components with university faculty in teacher education. Further evidence of stabilization is reflected in the fact that the project has added a new faculty position in school counseling—a position written designed expressly for the school-counselor preparation program as planned and outlined in the TSCI grant proposal. As well, the newly formed Office of Counseling and Student Support Services in the California Department of Education and the new statewide professional association (California Association of School Counselors) are two more indications of state-level stabilization that will contribute to the endurance of a transformed school- counseling program.

The new vision of school counselors in Georgia has legitimacy as a new reform, but the likelihood of institutionalizing this new vision across the state is limited. The objectives of the TSCI are closely aligned with Georgia's educational reform plan; however, the lack of collaboration with the state department of education will potentially hinder Georgia's efforts at statewide diffusion and stabilization of a transformed school counseling program. The lack of collaboration between the state department and the universities is the single factor that keeps this innovative program from moving toward a stage of stabilization. As research has repeatedly shown (Easton, 1965; Elmore & Fuhrman, 1994; Rowan, 1982), political support for reform is promoted by influential constituencies that consistently make their way into institutional practice.

Statewide adoption of an initiative like the TSCI depends greatly, according to the model proposed by Rowan (1982), on the state control agencies such as the department of education and the professional association. Without either of these agencies firmly in place in Florida to act as a support network, statewide adoption is hampered, which in turn, limits the chance for stabilization of the Initiative. The considerable financial support from federal grants and the WRDF has significantly bolstered Florida's SOAR/TSCI efforts, but these sources cannot be depended upon for stabilization. To some extent, the state's educational reform efforts (including mechanisms such as One Florida and the Florida Institute for Education) have provided implicit support, a kind of doorway through which SOAR/TSCI has gained legitimacy. Funding from the state, however, is not there.

The yeoman's work, without a doubt, has fallen on the backs of UNF and its partner district. Despite the limited institutional support from the state of Florida, UNF and Duval County have managed to pull off an impressive Initiative that is institutionalized or stabilized at the local level. The alignment of TSCI objectives with those of the district, the college, and the state's educational reforms of high standards and accountability provides the needed momentum and implicit support that stabilizes SOAR/TSCI for Duval County and UNF students. Stabilization at a statewide level would require development, support, and

dissemination by the state department of education and the professional association that is not in place. For the TSCI project director and colleagues to take on the statewide dissemination and stabilization of the Initiative on their own is certainly beyond the call of duty.

## **Summary and Implications**

Change in school counseling, like any reform, is a political process. The political process requires getting support and legitimacy and then diffusing and institutionalizing change. When the change is aligned with other overriding reform efforts in a systemic way, the change process is made easier. Political support for reform—that is promotion by influential constituencies consistently allows reforms to make their way into institutional practice, according to Rowan (1982). Thus, the stage of institution building and adoption is critical to the overall institutionalization or stabilization of any reform. As was demonstrated here, the state contexts of Indiana, Ohio, California, Georgia and Florida vary in some important ways.

In Indiana, the state policies and the constellation of political constituencies combined fortuitously for the TSCI. With the newly implemented educational policy, Public Law 221, and the particularly powerful combination of state department representative and professional association director rolled into one person, the state provided a perfect environment for implementation of this student-achievement-oriented counseling initiative.

Similarly in Ohio, with the policy context of Senate Bill 55 focusing on continuous improvement, OSU's project director quickly and strategically aligned the efforts of the TSCI with the interests of the key official in the state department of education and with the state's larger policy objectives. OSU also showed foresight and political savvy in combining forces with the state's professional counseling association and fellow counselor educators from around the state; OSU is well on its way to making great gains with this Initiative.

Critical to California's success was the reinstatement of the office of school counseling at the state department of education, and CSUN's presence on the powerful California Teaching Credential Advisory Board. A combination of forces (CSUN, the state department, and other counseling leaders) helped to build the new professional association that is proving to be powerful in pressing for new legislation favorable to counselors.

It is unclear what impact Georgia's state department of education might have should the two TSCI sites in Georgia combine forces with the office of counseling. To be sure, the state department could play an important role in merging the ideas in the "Framework for Asset Building Standards in a Guidance and Counseling Curriculum" with the larger objectives of the TSCI. The statewide presence of the department would also be instrumental in diffusing the reform across the state.

In Florida, it is unfortunate that there are no state institutional mechanisms to administer, guide, or otherwise support the good work of UNF's SOAR/TSCI efforts. Institution building, adoption, and stabilization have occurred mostly at



the local level with sporadic statewide institution building happening on a catch-as-catch-can basis. These institution-building efforts are in large part due to the singular focus and passion of the project director and her colleagues at the district level. Without an institutional environment at the state department to provide guidance, without any legislative directive to provide legitimacy, and without a strong professional association to provide advocacy, the TSCI at UNF is built on the backs of a few. Despite the lack of state support, UNF has built an impressive program; however, the prospect for diffusion and stabilization within the state context is limited to the amount of stamina that UNF's team can muster.

In the final analysis, the TSCI strives to reform counselor education as a system. Its premise is working for coherence across component policies, such as the university's preparation program, the state's educational policy objectives, and practices in the local education agencies. The theory of systemic reform in education suggests that when a component policy is designed to promote reform in one area, the existing policies in other areas must be aligned with and support this new policy. In the case presented here, if the universities are to implement and promote the TSCI, then they must align the effort with state standards and assessment policies, state certification requirements, and the state institutional environment—or they must change them, as it happened in Ohio and California. Educational reform plans, such as Georgia's QBE Act or Florida's A+ Plan, may set the achievement bar towards which educators implementing the TSCI are striving, but the other component policies must be in place to realize true transformation. Transformation or systemic reform does not occur in a policy vacuum; it happens through coherence and alignment. On this score, the state contexts of the participating TSCI sites vary. Where there is coherence, as there is in Indiana, Ohio, and California, transformation looks promising. Where there is not total coherence, as in Florida and Georgia, transformation is less likely, but not impossible. It may be merely a matter of changing some of the components. This looks more feasible in Georgia where it is a matter of building stronger linkages between the universities and the state department. It appears more challenging in Florida where writing statutory language on school counseling and subsequently reinstating the office of counseling would take an act of the state legislature. But if California can serve as a guide, it is not beyond the realm of the possible. Florida might begin with building a strong professional association whose role is advocacy and lobbying the legislature.

A final word: A lack of state mechanisms or component pieces does not necessarily hinder the work of the TSCI. Georgia and Florida, by many measures, have and are developing strong counselor preparation programs through the TSCI. Rather, a supportive state context can be accommodating and add resources to aid the effort toward institutionalization, as is evidenced in California; and a strong state context can also provide avenues for greater statewide dissemination and stabilization as shown in Ohio and Indiana.

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