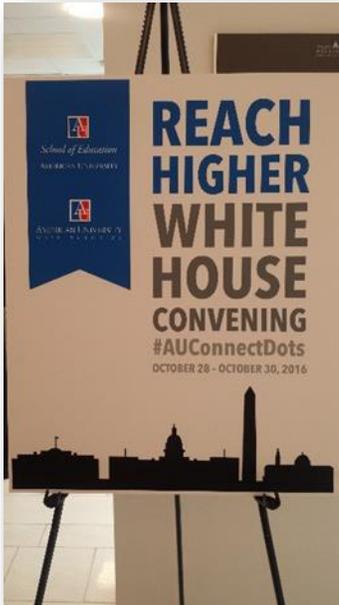


REACH HIGHER MASSACHUSETTS

Notes from the 5th Annual Reach Higher Convening Washington, DC



A beautiful weather weekend in Washington DC was the setting and location for the 5th Annual *Reach Higher* White House Convening held at American University, October 28 – 30th. [Reach Higher Massachusetts](#) Leadership: Bob Bardwell (Board Director, NACAC) and his team: Ruth Carrigan, Yolanda Johnson and Jackney Prioly-Joseph along with Christine Maher joined other state teams consisting of school counselors, college counselors, teachers, state agency leaders, policy makers and business leaders. The theme this convening: Connecting the Dots: Cultural Competence, Counseling, and College and Career Readiness of Underserved Youth.

Building on previous convenings, this fall 2016 kicked off with Cheryl Holcolm McCoy; AU Dean School of Education and Vivian Lee; John Hopkins School of Education as event co-chairs welcoming attendees from 26 states across the country. This convening placed special emphasis on school counselors.

Among the many amazing and highly esteemed speakers, the first to take the podium was Education Secretary John King. He recalled his mom who was a school counselor had positively influenced his life and also the many student stories he heard about her great guidance with countless kids. He commended school counselors as “inspirational heroes for helping students navigate everything from socio-emotional obstacles to the college application process” including counselors have positive lasting effects on lives.

Under the Obama Administration, King noted an increase to college access citing one million more African American and Latino students are attending college. He concluded with an announcement by the Education Department that the *Educator Ambassador Program* (which encourages the exchange of information between principals and teachers with government officials) will now include school counselors – to which there was resounding applause!

Other notable speakers included: AU President Neil Kerwin and Provost Scott Bass who both echoed the importance of diversity and inclusion.

Friday, Saturday and half day Sunday were filled with outstanding presenters, panel discussions and breakout sessions. One session in particular challenged us to have courageous conversations – speaking openly about matters on race/ethnicity/religion/immigration status/sexual orientation and other sensitive topics that all school counselors will certainly encounter and need to handle honestly, respectfully and knowledgeably.





An excellent and inspired time was had by all. Everyone is encouraged to attend future **Reach Higher** Convenings both in Massachusetts and at the National level. The next Reach Higher Massachusetts meeting will take place on Thursday December 1st at 8:30AM at [MassEdCo in Worcester, MA](#).

To learn more about Reach Higher Massachusetts visit us [here](#).