

# Research on the Growth Patterns and Training Paths of Excellent Counselors in Private Colleges

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**Abstract:** With the rapid development of private higher education, the construction of counselor teams in private universities has become increasingly important. This paper focuses on outstanding counselors in private universities, delving into their growth patterns and proposing targeted training paths based on this analysis. By reviewing relevant theories and analyzing case studies of excellent counselors, it is found that outstanding counselors in private universities exhibit stage-specific characteristics during their development, influenced by personal traits, school environment, career progression, and other factors. In terms of training approaches, efforts should be made to improve selection mechanisms, strengthen training systems, provide career development support, and create a positive work atmosphere, all aimed at enhancing the overall quality of the counselor team in private universities and better serving student growth and institutional development.

**Keywords:** Private colleges and universities; Counselors; Growth patterns; Training paths

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research background and significance

Private universities, as an important part of China's higher education system, have made significant progress in recent years <sup>[1]</sup>. Counselors, as key figures in the ideological and political education and daily management of students at private universities, play a crucial role in students' growth and development as well as the stable development of the institution <sup>[2]</sup>. However, compared to public universities, the construction of counselor teams at private universities faces some unique challenges, such as lower professional identity and higher turnover rates <sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, in-depth research on the growth patterns of outstanding counselors at private universities and exploring effective training pathways is of great practical significance for strengthening the counselor team at private universities <sup>[4]</sup>.

From a theoretical perspective, current research on the growth patterns and training paths of college counselors primarily focuses on public universities, with relatively fewer studies addressing private institutions <sup>[5,6]</sup>.

Private universities differ from public ones in terms of educational systems and management models, leading to distinct growth patterns and training needs for their counselors<sup>[7]</sup>. Conducting this study can help enrich and improve the theoretical framework for counselor team building in higher education institutions, providing new perspectives and ideas for related research<sup>[8]</sup>.

## **1.2. Research status at home and abroad**

Abroad, although there is no exact equivalent position to that of university counselors in our country, there is relatively mature experience and research in student affairs management<sup>[9]</sup>. American universities emphasize the professional background and training of student affairs managers, stressing a student-centered approach and providing comprehensive services<sup>[10]</sup>. Research primarily focuses on student development theories, psychological counseling, and career planning, offering valuable insights for the work of university counselors in our country<sup>[11]</sup>.

Research on college counselors in China began in the 1980s. As the counselor team has grown stronger, research findings have become increasingly rich. Scholars have delved into various aspects of counselors' roles, responsibilities, functions, qualities, and career development<sup>[12]</sup>. In terms of growth patterns, studies indicate that college counselors experience stages of adaptation, development, and maturity<sup>[13]</sup>. Regarding training paths, measures such as enhancing training, improving incentive mechanisms, and building development platforms have been proposed. However, specialized research on counselors at private universities remains relatively insufficient, particularly concerning the growth patterns and training paths of outstanding counselors, which require further in-depth study<sup>[14]</sup>.

## **1.3. Research methods and innovations**

This paper primarily employs the literature review method, case analysis, and questionnaire survey<sup>[15]</sup>. By extensively reviewing relevant domestic and international literature, it organizes existing research findings to provide a theoretical foundation for this study. It selects outstanding counselors from multiple private universities as case studies, delving into their growth trajectories and summarizing the patterns of their development<sup>[16]</sup>. At the same time, a questionnaire is designed to investigate the current status and needs of counselors at private universities, providing empirical evidence for the proposed training pathways<sup>[17,18]</sup>. The innovation lies in focusing on the specific domain of private universities, thoroughly analyzing the growth patterns of outstanding counselors, and fully considering the characteristics of private university operations and the actual situation of the counselor teams. In terms of training pathways, targeted and actionable suggestions are proposed<sup>[1]</sup>, such as establishing a training system tailored to the characteristics of private universities and creating diversified career development channels, aiming to offer new insights into addressing practical issues in the construction of counselor teams at private universities<sup>[19]</sup>.

## **2. Analysis of the growth patterns of excellent counselors in private colleges and universities**

### **2.1. Role positioning and responsibilities of counselors in private colleges and universities**

Counselors at private universities shoulder multiple roles, including ideological and political education, daily behavior management, mental health education, and career planning guidance. Compared to counselors at public universities, those at private universities may focus more on the individual needs and overall development of students to meet the talent cultivation goals and market demands of private universities. In terms of ideological

and political education, they need to guide students in establishing correct values and outlooks on life, fostering a sense of social responsibility. In daily management, they should pay attention to students' academic and personal lives, promptly addressing any issues that arise. For mental health education, they must possess certain knowledge and skills in psychological counseling to help students cope with stress in their studies and lives. In career planning guidance, they should tailor their advice based on the characteristics of private university students and the job market, providing targeted support.

## **2.2. Analysis of the characteristics of excellent counselors**

Through case studies and questionnaire data analysis of outstanding counselors from multiple private universities, it is found that these counselors share the following common characteristics. In terms of political and ideological qualities, they have a firm political stance, always adhering to the guidance of Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, actively implementing the Party's educational policies, and integrating ideological and political education into every aspect of their daily work. In terms of professional ethics, they demonstrate a high level of dedication and commitment, showing care for students and being responsible in their work, with good professional conduct. In terms of professional competence, they not only possess solid knowledge in ideological and political education but also have a broad understanding of related disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy, and management, capable of using various professional methods to address student issues. In terms of work ability, outstanding counselors have strong communication and coordination skills, able to establish good relationships with students, parents, and school departments; they possess excellent organizational and management skills, effectively organizing various student activities; they have strong innovation capabilities, continuously exploring work methods and models suitable for the characteristics of students at private universities.

## **2.3. The periodic stages of growth**

The growth of excellent counselors in private colleges and universities generally goes through three stages.

The first stage is the adaptation period, typically lasting 1 to 2 years after joining. During this phase, counselors face the transition from student to educator. Their primary tasks include familiarizing themselves with the work environment and procedures, understanding student characteristics and needs, and mastering basic work methods and skills. This stage can lead to difficulties in role adaptation and high work pressure, requiring timely training and guidance from the school.

The second phase is the development period, typically lasting 3 to 5 years after joining. After the initial adaptation period, counselors gradually become familiar with their roles and begin to consider how to improve work efficiency and quality. During this stage, counselors actively participate in various training and learning activities, continuously enhancing their professional competence and work capabilities. They also experiment with innovative work methods, developing their unique professional characteristics. At the same time, they take on more tasks and responsibilities, playing a greater role in student affairs.

The third stage is the maturity phase, typically occurring after five years on the job. By this point, counselors have accumulated rich work experience and a high level of professional expertise, enabling them to skillfully apply various methods to address complex student issues. They have developed their own unique work philosophies and models in areas such as ideological and political education, student management, and team building. These counselors have become experts and pillars in student affairs, capable of guiding and leading younger counselors.

## **2.4. Factors affecting growth**

The factors that affect the growth of excellent counselors in private colleges and universities mainly include personal factors, school factors, and social factors.

In terms of personal factors, an individual's career planning and development aspirations play a crucial role. Counselors with clear career goals and a strong desire for development are more willing to take the initiative in learning and improving themselves, actively addressing challenges at work. Moreover, personality traits, learning abilities, and communication skills also influence the speed and quality of their growth. Outgoing and communicative counselors are more likely to build good relationships with students, while those with strong learning capabilities can grasp new knowledge and skills more quickly.

In terms of school factors, the management system and operational mechanisms of schools have a significant impact on the growth of counselors. A reasonable management system can clarify the responsibilities and authority of counselors, providing them with a good working environment and development space. The level of emphasis and support from the school is also crucial, including offering training opportunities, setting up research projects, and improving incentive mechanisms. A positive team atmosphere is another important factor in promoting the growth of counselors; mutual learning, communication, and support among team members can inspire their enthusiasm and creativity.

In terms of social factors, the recognition of private universities by society, adjustments in higher education policies, and changes in the socio-cultural environment all influence the growth of counselors. An increase in societal recognition of private universities can help enhance counselors' professional identity and pride; adjustments in higher education policies may bring new tasks and requirements, prompting counselors to continuously learn and adapt; changes in the socio-cultural environment, such as the development of new media and shifts in student mindsets, require counselors to promptly update their work concepts and methods.

## **3. Current situation and problems of cultivating excellent counselors in private colleges and universities**

### **3.1. Current situation of the training system**

Currently, some private universities have recognized the importance of counselor training and have initially established corresponding training systems. In terms of training content, it covers multiple areas such as ideological and political education, student management, mental health education, and career planning. Training methods include centralized lectures, specialized seminars, practical exercises, and online learning. Some private universities also actively organize various training sessions and academic exchange activities for counselors to participate in, sharing experiences and resources with other institutions. Regarding the training mechanism, some universities have established a mentorship system for counselors, where experienced counselors provide one-on-one guidance to newly hired counselors. At the same time, by organizing events like counselor competency competitions and outstanding counselor awards, they motivate counselors to continuously improve their abilities and levels.

### **3.2. Existing problems**

Although private colleges and universities have made some achievements in the cultivation of excellent counselors, there are still some problems.

First, the training objectives are not clear enough. Some private colleges and universities lack systematic planning for the training of counselors, and do not formulate specific training objectives according to



the different growth stages and job requirements of counselors, which leads to the lack of pertinence and effectiveness of the training work.

Secondly, the content and methods of training need to be optimized. The training content suffers from a disconnect between theory and practice; some courses focus excessively on theoretical knowledge, lacking practical operations and case studies, which fail to meet the actual needs of counselors' work. The training methods are relatively monotonous, primarily relying on centralized lectures with insufficient interactivity and participation, which affects the learning enthusiasm of counselors and the effectiveness of the training.

The third issue is insufficient career development support. The career advancement path for counselors at private universities is relatively narrow, with limited opportunities for promotion. In terms of title evaluation and position advancement, there are problems such as unclear standards and fewer opportunities compared to teaching and research staff. Additionally, schools provide inadequate guidance on career development plans for counselors, leading to a lack of clarity in their own career direction.

The fourth issue is the inadequate incentive mechanism. Although some private universities have established incentive measures such as selecting outstanding counselors, the rewards are limited, and the evaluation criteria lack scientific rigor, often emphasizing work performance over overall quality. Additionally, there is insufficient motivation for counselors' daily work and a lack of effective performance assessment and feedback mechanisms, making it difficult to fully motivate their enthusiasm and creativity.

### **3.3. Constraints on the growth of counselors**

The aforementioned issues severely constrain the growth of outstanding counselors at private universities. Unclear training objectives leave counselors directionless in their development, making it difficult to enhance their capabilities effectively. Inappropriate training content and methods result in counselors failing to acquire practical knowledge and skills, which negatively impacts work efficiency and quality. Insufficient career support leaves counselors uncertain about future career paths, leading to burnout and a decline in enthusiasm and initiative. An imperfect incentive mechanism fails to fully ignite counselors' passion and creativity, hindering the emergence of exceptional counselors.

## **4. Construction of the training path of excellent counselors in private colleges and universities**

### **4.1. Improving the selection mechanism**

A scientific and reasonable selection mechanism is the foundation for cultivating excellent counselors. Private universities should clarify selection criteria when recruiting counselors, focusing on evaluating candidates' political and ideological qualities, professional ethics, knowledge and skills, as well as communication and coordination abilities. Comprehensive assessments can be conducted through written tests, interviews, psychological tests, practical operations, and other methods. During the selection process, it is important to broaden recruitment channels to attract more outstanding talents to join the counselor team. In addition to hiring recent graduates, counselors with relevant work experience from enterprises and primary/secondary school teachers can also be selected. At the same time, fairness and impartiality in the selection process must be emphasized to ensure that the selected counselors possess good overall qualities and development potential.

### **4.2. Strengthening the construction of the training system**

Building a comprehensive training system is key to enhancing the quality and capabilities of counselors. Private

universities should develop systematic training programs based on the growth patterns and job requirements of counselors. In terms of training content, emphasis should be placed on relevance and practicality. For ideological and political education, focus on learning and training in Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era to improve counselors' theoretical knowledge and ideological awareness. For professional knowledge, strengthening training in related disciplines such as ideological and political education, psychology, pedagogy, and management can broaden counselors' knowledge horizons. For work skills, conducting training in student management, mental health education, career planning guidance, and new media application can enhance counselors' practical working abilities.

In terms of training methods, a variety of formats should be adopted. Besides traditional centralized lectures and specialized seminars, practical exercises, case studies, group discussions, and online learning activities can also be organized. For example, arranging counselors to undergo practical training in enterprises, communities, and other organizations to understand social needs and enrich their work experience; regularly holding case study sessions where counselors share real-life cases from their work and collectively explore methods and strategies for solving problems; utilizing online platforms for online learning to provide counselors with convenient access to educational resources, enabling them to learn anytime and anywhere. Additionally, inviting experts and scholars both inside and outside the school, as well as outstanding counselors, to share their experiences and offer guidance can broaden the horizons and perspectives of counselors.

### **4.3. Providing career development support**

Providing counselors with excellent career development support helps to stimulate their enthusiasm and creativity, promoting their growth. Private universities should establish diversified career development pathways, offering more promotion opportunities for counselors. In terms of title evaluation, specific standards for counselor titles should be formulated, fully considering the characteristics and performance of counselors' work to ensure fair opportunities in title evaluation. For position advancement, a management track for counselors can be established, selecting outstanding counselors to serve as heads of student affairs departments or deputy secretaries of colleges. At the same time, counselors are encouraged to develop professionally, becoming experts in areas such as ideological and political education, mental health education, and career planning guidance.

The school should also strengthen guidance on career development plans for counselors, helping them to formulate personal career development plans. This can be achieved through organizing career development training and one-on-one consultations, guiding counselors to clarify their career goals and paths. Additionally, opportunities should be provided for counselors to participate in academic research, training exchanges, and other activities, supporting them in conducting research work and enhancing their academic level and professional influence.

### **4.4. Creating a positive working atmosphere**

A positive work environment can enhance counselors' sense of belonging and cohesion, promoting their growth. Private universities should strengthen campus culture construction to create a positive, cooperative, and united atmosphere on campus. School leaders should care about the work and life of counselors, frequently communicate with them, understand their needs and difficulties, and provide timely support and assistance. At the same time, efforts should be made to build a strong counselor team, organizing various team activities to enhance communication and cooperation among counselors. For example, regular counselor seminars, social

gatherings, and quality development activities can be held to foster emotional exchanges among counselors and create a good team atmosphere. Additionally, the school should establish a reasonable work evaluation mechanism to objectively and fairly assess the performance of counselors, giving full recognition and rewards to those who excel, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm and initiative.

## **5. Conclusion and prospects**

### **5.1. Research conclusions**

This study, through an in-depth investigation into the growth patterns and training paths of outstanding counselors at private universities, draws the following conclusions. Outstanding counselors at private universities exhibit stage-specific characteristics during their development, typically progressing through an adaptation period, a growth period, and a maturity period. These counselors possess firm political and ideological qualities, noble professional ethics, solid expertise, and strong work capabilities. Factors influencing their growth include personal, institutional, and social factors. Currently, a preliminary system for cultivating outstanding counselors at private universities has been established, but issues such as unclear training objectives, unreasonable content and methods of training, insufficient support for career development, and inadequate incentive mechanisms remain. To address these issues, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive training pathway, which includes improving selection mechanisms, strengthening the training system construction, providing career development support, and fostering a positive work environment.

### **5.2. Future outlook**

As private higher education continues to develop and the demand for talent changes, the team building of counselors in private universities will face new opportunities and challenges. In the future, private universities should further emphasize the construction of counselor teams, increase investment, and continuously improve the training system. In terms of content and methods of training, greater emphasis should be placed on innovation and practice to adapt to the characteristics and needs of students in the new era. For example, with the rapid development of new media technology, counselors should receive more training in new media applications to enhance their ability to use new media for ideological and political education and student management. In terms of career development, it is necessary to broaden career development channels and establish a more scientific and reasonable system for title evaluation and promotion, providing counselors with broader development opportunities. At the same time, theoretical research on counselor team building should be strengthened, continuously summarizing experiences and exploring patterns to provide theoretical support for the sustainable development of the counselor team.

In addition, exchanges and cooperation between private and public universities should be strengthened, learning from the advanced experiences and practices of public universities in building counselor teams. By organizing inter-university exchange activities and joint training programs, we can promote the overall improvement of the quality of counselors at private universities. We believe that with the joint efforts of all parties, the excellent counselor team at private universities will continue to grow, making greater contributions to cultivating well-rounded socialist builders and successors who excel in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education.

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