

NETWORK NEWS

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FOCUS ON 2009 SHEEO/NCES DATA CONFERENCE AND IPEDS WORKSHOP NEW ORLEANS, LA

In This Issue

...Network News provides a summary of the 32nd annual SHEEO/NCES Network Data Conference and IPEDS Workshop. One hundred and thirty-five people attended the conference held in May in New Orleans, Louisiana. Attendees included state IPEDS coordinators, state directors of research and information systems, NCES staff, representatives from statewide community college associations and the independent sector, and members of national postsecondary organizations. This issue of Network News provides summaries of several conference presentations as well as an overview of the annual IPEDS Workshop. Please visit the IPEDS website for additional information at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>. To access the most recent information regarding the 2009-10 IPEDS schedule and Technical Review Panel reports, see "Announcements and Alerts" under the "Newsroom" link on the IPEDS website.

Presentation material from the sessions highlighted here and other sessions can be found on the SHEEO website:

<http://www.sheeo.org/network/netmeet/netmeet09.htm>

Planning is underway for the 2010 Data Conference and IPEDS Workshop scheduled for April 6-9, in Washington, DC. Please contact the SHEEO Network staff if you have question about this invitational meeting or suggestions for next year's agenda.

Associate Commissioner's Remarks

Tom Weko, the Associate Commissioner for Postsecondary Studies welcomed the meeting attendees and thanked everyone for participating in the 2009 conference.

Weko's remarks were centered on the anticipated changes to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) under the new Obama Administration. He noted the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) presses IPEDS into service for greater transparency in the system, and while the administration's specific plans for data use is still developing he believes it will continue to build upon the goal of transparency. According to Weko, the administration may require additional data collection pertaining to student loans, student debt, time to degree, and other related issues. He stressed that the transition will most likely be an iterative process, and ample time will be provided if IPEDS is expected to make changes.

Weko also discussed his activities as a member of the interdepartmental committee known as the Domain Team. Committee members review documents on key data policy. Currently, they are working on reviewing and enhancing data systems designed to improve student performance. To best facilitate the evaluation of these data systems, efforts have been made to establish interoperability standards; common data dictionaries; data comparability; and seamless systems.

NETWORK NEWS is a product of the SHEEO/NCES Network; Director, Hans P. L'Orange. The Network is sponsored by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Contributors: Hans L'Orange
Natalie Mischler

www.sheeo.org

Questions or comments?
Contact Natalie Mischler
Phone: 303-541-1630
Email: nmischler@sheeo.org

Annual IPEDS Workshop

The IPEDS Workshop is a crucial component of the annual Data Conference. It provides an opportunity for IPEDS staff to relay updates on recent activities, as well as a preview of changes planned for the upcoming year. The workshop is also an excellent forum for IPEDS data providers, collectors, and users to communicate their issues, questions, and concerns in-person.

IPEDS Update

The 2009 workshop began with an overview of the 2008-09 reporting year. According to Jan Plotczyk, IPEDS Team Leader, the past year was both hectic and productive. HEOA was signed into law in August 2008, and led to new mandatory reporting requirements in IPEDS for 2008-09. Three Technical Review Panels were held to discuss plans for implementing these new requirements, which required OMB clearance.

This past year was also the first optional year for race/ethnicity reporting changes and for the new aligned financial forms. IPEDS also introduced the new advanced degree categories as optional.

Included in the IPEDS activity, were several bright spots. First, the 2007-08 winter and spring data were released to the public almost two months early. The improved Executive Peer Tool was also released and the new IPEDS website and Data Center were launched in April. NCES also hired two new survey directors, Craig Bowen and Jessica Shedd, as well as three AIR postdoctoral fellows who worked on IPEDS issues.

Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)

Elise Miller, IPEDS Program Director went into further detail regarding HEOA, noting the legislation contains many provisions which impact IPEDS reporting. Included in these provisions are mandates for making consumer information available through the College Navigator website and institution websites. In addition, HEOA requirements also include information on: net price; college affordability lists; net price calculator, multi-year tuition calculator; and state higher education spending charts.

Changes for 2009-10

There are two kinds of changes to 2009-10 IPEDS reporting requirements: those that comply with HEOA requirements; and those that will simplify reporting and reduce reporting burden for non-degree granting institutions. The changes have been submitted to OMB, and pending approval, will become mandatory this coming year. These changes are posted on the IPEDS website and notices have been sent to keyholders and coordinators.

For additional details, please visit:

http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/news_room/ana_3_19_2009.asp

IPEDS Help Desk

Janice Kelly-Reid and Jamie Isaac of RTI International presented an overview of IPEDS Help Desk Activity over the past year. The Help Desk has approximately 16-18 staff members who respond to emails and phone calls from IPEDS coordinators and keyholders. In the past year, the Help Desk received 26,366 phone calls and 5,007 emails.

RTI also runs the Data Tools Help Desk, which assists IPEDS users and others by familiarizing them with IPEDS Data Tools and assisting with outputting data files. This is an excellent resource for assistance with the new IPEDS Data Center.

AIR Training Update

Randy Swing, President of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), provided an update on AIR training. The title of Swing's presentation, "Challenging Times Call for Innovative Solutions" was appropriate in light of the issues he highlighted regard-

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ing turnover and skill-level in the typical IR office. As he pointed out, 30.6% of IR staff are considering leaving the organization they work for. Adding to the burden of high turnover rates, 38% of 4-year campuses report less than two full-time staff members devoted to institutional research.

AIR is responding to these issues by making improvements to their face-to-face training workshops. Thus far, efforts have been made to expand trainer recruitment to a national level; revamp curriculum; and offer travel grants and promotions for workshop participation.

NPEC Working Group on HEOA Disclosures

Bryan Cook, Director, Center for Policy Analysis, American Council on Education and the Chair of the NPEC Working Group noted this group knows data exist, but not everyone in Congress and other rule/regulation/policymakers are as familiar with existing data resources.

It isn't that Congress wants more data as much as it is that Congress (and others) want data to be more accessible to students, parents, and policymakers. The Working Group on HEOA Disclosures is developing suggestions—not set guidelines—on how to do this and hopes to have a report out in mid-summer. Other sites will have links to this report. Cook expects the report to:

- Provide examples of institutional websites to show that some institutions make the information easily available. That is those sites are easy to navigate and use intuitive terminology. For example, graduation rates can be found by searching on “graduation rate,” not on “student right to know.”
- List all reporting requirements in the HEOA. Cook assumes that users will be able to download the requirements into an Excel spreadsheet

Cook believes a similar list will be created for all reporting and disclosure requirements, not just those in the renewal of HEOA.

He notes that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between reporting and disclosure requirements.

IPEDS Online Data Center Demonstration

Mohamad Sakr, Chief Architect, IT Innovative Solutions, provided a demonstration of the new Data Center. He noted that for the past two years there have been plans to redesign the IPEDS data access tools, because although the system could perform a number of Tier 2 functions, it was difficult for some users to use. Accordingly, a study was conducted to determine what additions/changes users wanted.

On the front end,

- interface was made easier to use;
- processes were streamlined;
- terminology was changed to make it easier for people to understand; and
- changes were made to “tame the monster called ‘variables’.”

On the back-end,

- limits were removed (e.g., now more than 700 institutions can be searched) so that outcomes are more accurate and there are fewer timeouts; and
- Webmasters can use whatever technologies they have, for example XML/HTTP.

Instead of giving people specific steps to follow (e.g., Log in; Choose focus institution), the application is now more like a sphere that has many doors. It first asks what the user wants to do and begins there (with what the user wants).

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The enabling legislation states that the ERDC “shall be considered an authorized representative of the state educational agencies....under applicable federal and state statutes for the purposes of accessing and compiling student record data for research purposes.”

There are still a lot of changes to implement, and the IPEDS staff welcomes ideas on how to improve the Data Center.

More information on the IPEDS Workshop can be found at:
http://www.sheeo.org/network/presen2009/sheeo09_IPEDS.pptx

Plenary Sessions

Washington's Education Research and Data Center (ERDC)

Interest in state-level data resources continues to grow. Carol Jenner presented meeting attendees with an introduction to the Education Research and Data Center for the state of Washington. The state was interested in collecting and analyzing data that spanned various education sectors to address topics such as the influence of high school course-taking patterns on postsecondary completion, postsecondary enrollment swirl patterns, and workforce history for those who leave postsecondary education with significant credits but no degree or certificate. Questions state leaders were interested in answering included the following:

- At what rate do high school graduates (or dropouts) attend Washington higher education institutions within one year of leaving high school? Two years?
- What degrees and majors are pursued by students entering higher education directly from high school? Are they different from those transferring from community college?
- What are completion rates and time to degree for various categories of students? Is receipt of financial aid related to time to degree?

In 2005-06, the state began a top to bottom review of Washington's entire education system, its structure and funding. This 18-month effort, Washington Learns, resulted in 2007 legislation that created the Department of Early Learning, authorized K-12 teacher-course-student data collection, and created an “education data center” which took the form of the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC).

The enabling legislation states that the ERDC “shall be considered an authorized representative of the state educational agencies....under applicable federal and state statutes for the purposes of accessing and compiling student record data for research purposes.” ERDC resides in the state Office of Financial Management and additional P-20 data owners include the Office of the Superintendent for Public Education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Employment Security Department. Data-sharing agreements have been developed among the partners along with other state agencies and privacy and confidentiality issues have been worked out with the Office of the Attorney General. A Data Sharing and Linking Advisory Group also has been established with representatives from all agencies providing data and data-linking and anonymization protocols have been developed.

A standard set of products is being developed and include student achievement and progress reports designed to support improved management and policy decision-making; reports to contributing agencies; feedback reports to school districts and institutions; reports on key education indicators; standardized datasets for researchers; and analysis of outcomes for all student groups.

Work is also underway to develop a data dictionary with definitions, valid values, and data sources; procedures for dynamically generated standard research datasets and parameterized drill-down summary reports; and protocols for the authorized release of research data sets. The ERDC staff are also working on a compendium of key education indicators; completing a legislatively-mandated higher education per-student funding study; and participating in working groups to consider issues such as K-12 data feasibility, and enrollment projections for possible new branch campuses.

Jenner noted all of this work certainly comes with challenges. They need to maintain a focus on core mandates while responding to numerous requests for special stud-

ies. As with any project of this size, adequate resources are an issue and there is an ongoing need to prioritize their work.

For additional details, please visit:
www.ercd.wa.gov

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2010

Michelle Coon from the Postsecondary Studies Division of NCES and John Milam from HigherEd.org presented an overview of the 2010 Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP).

Updating the CIP codes and related information transmittal to users began with background research on the codes. The team reviewed the last three years of IPEDS Completions Data, paying particular attention to information about programs which were classified as “other.” They also reviewed selected college course catalogs, other data sets such as the College Board’s Annual Survey of Colleges, and NSF’s Survey of Earned Doctorates. The second stage of the update project solicited input from IPEDS keyholders and asked for suggestions and justification for new instructional programs. Suggestions were also solicited from other federal statistical agencies that use the CIP. This was followed by a review of each suggestion to make sure it didn’t already exist. To be considered for a new code, each program had to meet one of three different criteria: (1) exist in 10 or more postsecondary institutions, (2) if it did not exist in 10 institutions, show clear evidence of being in a emerging and growing field, or (3) be requested by a federal or state agency. The fourth step in the review process was the convening of a Technical Review Panel (TRP) to review over 300 suggestions for new CIP codes and provide change recommendations to NCES.

The resulting changes include 500 new 4-digit CIP codes, 300 new 6-digit codes, the reorganization of codes for English Language and Literature (series 23), Psychology (series 42), Residency Programs (series 60), and portions of Nursing (series 51.16). Technology and Industrial Arts (series 21) was eliminated. A new CIP user site including a CIP Wizard and CIP Selector was demonstrated at the session.

The redesigned CIP website includes the ability to electronically browse the entire CIP, crosswalk between CIP 2000 and CIP 2010, download copies of the CIP as Word or Excel documents, and browse frequently asked questions. Advanced search capabilities have also been added.

The CIP Wizard is designed to help users see codes used by an institution for the last three Completions surveys, and shows whether a code has been added, moved, deleted, or been subject to any changes. It also identifies new codes that may be of interest to users based on previously used 2- or 4-digit codes.

The new CIP Selector is designed to help a user find the CIP Code which best describes an instructional program. It groups CIP Codes into broad categories, asks the user a series of questions to help narrow down the choices, and then returns a set of suggested codes.

CIP 2010 can be seen at:
<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/default.aspx?y=55>

A Better way to Measure Community College Performance

J. Keith Brown from the North Carolina Community College System shared information on a current Achieving the Dream cross-state data project designed to develop a set of indicators to help more effectively track student performance, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and learn from the strengths of other community college systems. Achieving the Dream is a national initiative to help more community colleges students succeed (earn degrees, earn certificates, or transfer). The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that traditionally have faced the most significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color.

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Achieving the Dream is a national initiative to help more community colleges students succeed (earn degrees, earn certificates, or transfer). The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that traditionally have faced the most significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color.

The cross-state data workgroup began with six states and another six have joined to work on recommendations for an alternative set of measures for community college success. Those recommendations include tracking both part-time and full-time students, using six years as time to completion, adding transfer as a successful outcome, and tracking outcomes across a system within a state and not just from an individual system.

Brown reported that the next step for the Achieving the Dream data workgroup is to develop intermediate benchmarks to measure student progress. One example presented would be first year milestones that include (1) persisting from fall to spring, (2) passing 80% or more of attempted hours, and (3) earning 24 or more hours. Second-year and third-year milestones are also under development.

The next steps for the workgroup will be to analyze data against these new benchmarks at both the state and institutional level and to disaggregate and analyze performance by academic readiness, income ethnicity, and gender. They also will be identifying and documenting promising interventions. Brown suggested that data can reflect the different missions across institutions and systems and demonstrate that not all measures will pertain to all students. There are also implications for colleges, the states and national policy development for at-risk students, student advising, and policy development to improve student success.

More information on Achieving the Dream can be found at:
www.achievingthedream.org