NETWORK NEWS

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SHEEO

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INSIDE

FOCUS ON 1998 NETWORK CONFERENCE AND IPEDS WORKSHOP

In This Issue…

Network News provides highlights from the 1998 SHEEO/NCES Network Conference and IPEDS Workshop held in Arlington, Virginia from June 3-5. Over one hundred and fifty people attended, including IPEDS coordinators, state directors of research and information systems, other SHEEO agency staff, community college personnel, NCES and Census Bureau staff, and representatives from national postsecondary organizations. The conference agenda included an all-day IPEDS workshop, 17 concurrent sessions covering a variety of postsecondary topics, and table topic discussions. Over 50 attendees served as presenters at the conference.

This issue of *Network News* summarizes many conference sessions and provides contacts for further information. It begins with an NCES update bringing together information from the IPEDS workshop and other conference sessions.

NCES Update

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects, analyzes, and disseminates postsecondary education data in a dynamic national environment. New information needs are constantly arising, whether a result of federal legislation, state laws and policies, or educational changes such as developments in technology-based instruction. NCES is instrumental in coordinating the development of new common definitions and standards for data collection and reporting. These guidelines foster data quality, comparability across institutions, and consistency over time, making data a valuable tool for administrators and policymakers at all levels.

The 1998 SHEEO/NCES Network Conference and IPEDS Workshop highlighted several external developments affecting postsecondary data collection efforts, as well as NCES efforts to meet ever-changing information needs.

New Racial/Ethnic Codes. In 1993, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) undertook a review of the federal standards for racial/ethnic data collection, analysis, and reporting. Initial recommendations for revised racial/ethnic standards were published in the *Federal Register* in July 1997, and final Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity were published in October. Full implementation is required by January 1, 2003.

Major changes from previous standards include the following:

- Instead of asking respondents to choose a single racial category, respondents to federal surveys must be offered the option of selecting one or more racial categories by using the instructions "Mark one or more" or "Select one or more."

- The existing racial category "Asian or Pacific Islander" is split into two categories: "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander."

- The existing racial category "Native American or Alaskan Native" is changed to "American Indian or Alaska Native" and the definition is expanded to include any of the original peoples of Central and South America as well as those of North America.

- When self-identification is used, a question on Hispanic ethnicity should be asked first, followed by a question on race.

- "Black or African American" replaces "Black."

- "Hispanic or Latino" replaces "Hispanic."

While these categories work well for individual data collection, they are problematic when it comes to aggregating data and preserving trend lines. The changes will necessitate database modifications that could be costly for institutions and state systems. OMB is expected to issue additional guidance for tabulating data by fall 1998.

In the meantime, in March 1998, NCES, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) cosponsored a Policy Panel on IPEDS Racial/Ethnic Classifications to begin consideration of the practical aspects of implementing the new OMB standards, including reporting, implementation/process, and timing issues. While awaiting the OMB tabulation guidelines, the panel developed the following preliminary recommendations:

- NCES should develop minimal guidance for institutions to collect racial/ethnic data from students and clear instructions for reporting data.

- Institutions should report unduplicated counts along with a supplemental set of duplicated counts.

- There should be a bridge between old and new categories; this might take the form of a minimum and maximum.

- Nonresident alien should be relabeled, but no racial/ethnic breakdown on this group should be requested.

- Rules for collapsing duplicated into unduplicated counts might be necessary to preserve trends.

- Three new questions should be added to IPEDS: percentage of students reporting more than one racial/ethnic category; whether one or two questions were used to collect the data; and the number of students reporting one race, two races, and so on.

Finally, the panel opted to reconvene the working group after final guidelines from OMB are released to settle crosswalks, tabulation rules, and IPEDS format issues. This should occur in fall 1998 or spring 1999 so that final IPEDS forms can be approved by fall 2001, and effective by fall 2002.

The National Cost Commission. In January 1998, the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, charged with studying the overall costs of college and affordability issues, submitted a report and recommendations to Congress. Among other things, this report distinguished between "cost" and "price," and identified a variety of prices such as total price, sticker price, and net price. It recommended that IPEDS collect data to examine fully the important questions related to college costs and student financial aid.

As a result, both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives have drafted bills this year demanding that new kinds of information be collected. The House bill, which has been passed by the entire House, focuses on the costs of providing postsecondary education. The Senate bill, currently passed by committee, focuses on the price of attendance; it requires NCES to provide definitions for the collection of these data within 90 days of enactment and to collect data by 1999-2000. At the time of this writing, the final outcomes are still unresolved, but in either case, data elements not currently collected through IPEDS would have to be collected, and difficult definitional issues would have to be resolved.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Issues. The Student Right-to-Know Act requires institutions to "report what you know" about students who transfer out of the institution when calculating the transfer-out rate. Clearly, institutions and states have varied capabilities for tracking transfers out, and the methods used will affect the final counts. One method of verification includes direct communication with students who have left the institution. Other methods involve communicating with a third party, such as the TransferTrack service of the National Student Loan Clearinghouse, or sharing data within and among states.

Previously, institutions and state agencies were advised that such data sharing practices were acceptable. Currently, however, the Department of Education is reviewing whether or not this is permissible under FERPA. At the conference, NCES advised institutions and state agencies to hold off sharing data with third party agencies or among states until further clarification on FERPA issues is provided.

IPEDS Redesign Project. As a result of these and other factors, NCES is currently engaged in an examination of all NCES postsecondary education data systems with the goal of designing an "IPEDS for the 21st Century." The primary areas of concern are:

- How IPEDS fits in with other NCES data systems.
- How NCES and the Department of Education use IPEDS data.
- How IPEDS serves the various mandates that have resulted or will result from federal legislation.
- How the IPEDS process can be updated and improved.
- How the use of IPEDS data can be facilitated.

Current IPEDS surveys will be reviewed for their relevance, content, universe, and timing. Candidates for new surveys will also be considered, and discussion will focus on whether IPEDS is the most appropriate vehicle for addressing particular questions. Important student survey issues to be addressed are such topics as racial/ethnic changes, fall vs. full-year enrollment, non-degree credit enrollments, and distance education. Resource survey issues include costs of providing postsecondary education, price of attending college, and financial aid questions.

An NCES internal review task force has been charged with completing its work within 12 months. The IPEDS Redesign Working Group met in May and is seeking input from all available sources, including several IPEDS external review groups, NPEC working groups, technical review panels of other NCES surveys, and specially convened focus groups.

IPEDS Electronic Reporting. Not only is the content of surveys being addressed, but NCES and the Census Bureau are continually reviewing their data collection strategy in an attempt to make better use of technology for data collection. While traditional survey collection involved the physical transport of data to the Census Bureau where it was checked in, entered, and edited, new strategies in place or under consideration involve:

- Downloadable software
- Data entry and editing at the source
- Electronic transmission of data
- Two-way dialogue
- Direct reporting

Most current electronic reporting uses a predetermined ASCII format, while the trend is toward using new data entry/edit software. It is expected that new kinds of electronic reporting will improve the quality and timeliness of the data while reducing data collection burden.

For more information on NCES activities and to obtain publications, visit the NCES web site at nces.ed.gov.

NPEC Update

In 1994, Congress authorized NCES to establish a national “co-operative” to promote comparable and uniform information and data at the federal, state, and institutional levels. Three sessions at the conference focused on the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC), now in its third year.

In the first session, **Meredith Ludwig**, Director of Postsecondary Statistics Support with the Education Statistics Services Institute, gave an overview of NPEC projects. In the second session, **Mary Sapp**, Director of Planning and Institutional Research at the University of Miami and chair of the NPEC project on *Best Practices for Data Collectors and Providers* reviewed the two draft documents that have been produced for this project. In the third session, **Toni Larson**, Executive Director of Independent Higher Education of Colorado and co-chair of the NPEC project to pilot test a model for linking student outcomes to policy, discussed this project. All of the NPEC projects are listed here.

Completed Projects

- Policy Panel on Access and its Ramifications for Data Systems
- Policy Panel on Technology and its Ramifications for Data Systems
- Better Coordination of Postsecondary Education Data Collection and Exchange

Continuing Projects from 1997

- Data Ramifications of Workforce Development Policies
- Pilot Test for Linking Student Cognitive Outcomes to Policy
- Pilot Test for Linking Preparation for Employment Outcomes Policy
- Unit Record Data Exchanges

New Projects in 1998

- Access: Setting New Directions
- Best Practices for Data Collectors and Providers
- Data Ramifications of Competency-based Initiatives
- Data Ramifications of Technology for Current Surveys
- Examining Policy Issues and Data Needs at Points of Student Transitions
- IPEDS Redesign
- Panel on Racial/Ethnic Categories

For more complete project descriptions, visit the NPEC web site at nces.ed.gov/npec.

Achieving Diversity in Higher Education

Despite intermittent progress over time, achieving diversity in higher education remains an elusive goal. Many states are experiencing tremendous population growth and increases in minority populations. At the same time, recent court decisions and controversies over affirmative action are limiting the approaches state higher education agencies may take to pursue their goal of greater diversity. The session entitled *The Challenge of Achieving Diversity in Higher Education* presented a national overview and explored state perspectives and responses.

Beginning with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a number of national and regional milestones have served to define the present status of affirmative action, according to **Reginald Wilson**, Senior Scholar, American Council on Education. Through summarizing these complex legal decisions, executive orders, and Regents' decisions, Wilson succinctly described where we are today.

In essence, the courts have upheld:

- Curing present effects of identified past discrimination at the institution.
- Addressing manifest imbalance in the representation of racial groups within specific job categories.
- Fostering diversity in student admissions.

At the same time, the courts have rejected:

- Remedying societal discrimination.
- Maintaining racial balance.
- Increasing the number of professionals practicing in underserved areas.
- Providing faculty role models for public school students.

Picking up on these themes, **David Gardner**, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, provided insight into the consequences of the 1996 Hopwood v. Texas decision which banned racial preferences in college admissions. One positive result, he noted, is the generation of a great deal of attention about the importance of diversity in institutions; the Commission was compelled to address the question: "Is there a race-neutral set of factors that can lead to diversity on campus, given that race cannot be considered?" As a result, the Commission recruited a team of sociologists to identify such factors (e.g., socio-economic background or language spoken at home), and these factors are now being considered as part of the admissions process. In addition, other approaches are being examined as ways to increase diversity in college. For example, the legislature is currently considering paying the tuition and fees of students identified as economically disadvantaged to encourage them to enroll in college.

Penny Edgert, Assistant Director of Academic Programs and Policy at the California Postsecondary Education Commission, provided interesting data to document the extent of the problem in California. She reported that the Commission periodically conducts an eligibility study to determine how many high school graduates are "fully eligible" to enter the University of California (UC) and the California State University Systems under their mandated admissions guidelines. Since all eligible students are accepted, this number, in effect, sets the maximum number of minority students who might attend these colleges. In fact, the number of minority students fully eligible to enter the UC system declined between 1990 and 1996; in 1996, there were only 544 fully eligible black public high school graduates and about 3,000 Latinos. This kind of analysis has led to questions about the reasons for ineligibility. Similar to the Texas situation, the issue of inequities is getting more attention, and the level of collaboration between K-12 and higher education is at an all-time high. Edgert reported that although the state seems to be moving in the right direction, there is a long way to go until educational equity is achieved.

Since April 1997, the California Postsecondary Education Commission has published a series of six Higher Education Updates exploring California's policies, programs, and practices pertaining to equal educational opportunities. For more information, contact Penny Edgert at 916-322-8028 or pedgert@cpec.ca.gov. The American Council on Education annually publishes the report Minorities in Higher Education; its 1995-96 issue included a special focus on affirmative action. For more information or copies of reports, contact ACE's Office of Minority Concerns at 202-929-9395. Finally, David Gardner may be reached at 512-483-6140 or gardnerdd@thecb state.tx.us.

Cost of Education

Postsecondary institutions are focusing increased attention on the costs they incur for providing services. This emphasis on cost has been driven largely by declining federal and state contributions to higher education. Key constituencies such as legislators and citizens have also become increasingly vocal in their demands for accountability, a trend affecting all public sectors, including higher education.

In a session entitled *Factors Influencing Cost of Education: Implications for Policymakers,* **Robert Toutkoushian**, Executive Director of the Office of Policy Analysis, University System of New Hampshire, reported that cost functions can provide valuable information to policymakers, but how best to apply this knowledge is not always obvious. In fact, policy responses that speak only to cost factors may not produce the best outcomes for higher education.

Using 1994-95 IPEDS data for 828 institutions, Toutkoushian estimated the relationships between selected institutional characteristics and total and average variable costs per student. He then analyzed the policy implications of his findings, concluding that policies designed to achieve lower per-student costs may have negative impacts on higher education. He noted:

- *Average costs are minimized at an enrollment level of about 23,000 students*. While the policy implication might be to merge or expand smaller institutions, not all students learn well in this environment.

- *A one-unit increase in the student/faculty ratio will decrease costs per student by $170.* If this is achieved through increasing enrollments and raising class sizes, it may have a negative impact on student learning. If it is achieved through reducing faculty, it will reduce the knowledge output of institutions.

- *A $100 increase in salaries leads to a $20 increase in per student costs.* A policy that would slow the growth in faculty salaries, however, could hurt an institution's ability to attract and retain good faculty.

- *Per student costs decrease by $84 for each percentage increase in expenditures for instruction.* However, reallocating expenditures to instruction would produce less money for support activities, hurting students in the long run and even reducing demand for attendance.

- *Public institutions spend $2,000 less per student than similar private institutions.* No public policy changes are suggested by this finding, as the evidence suggests that public institutions are being prudent with public dollars.

Toutkoushian concluded that the pursuit of cost minimization alone does not lead postsecondary institutions to be more successful at producing and transmitting knowledge. When redesigning higher education systems, policymakers should take into account how possible changes will affect the ultimate goals of their higher education systems, such as the value-added from instruction and the contributions of faculty research to society.

For more information, contact Robert Toutkoushian at 603-862-0966 or r_toutkoush@usnh.unh.edu. The full report is available from the author upon request.

Ensuring Quality in Distance Learning at the University of Phoenix

The University of Phoenix (UOP), whose mission is to serve the educational needs of working adults, has been assessing the cognitive, affective, communications, and critical thinking abilities of its "ground" and online students for nearly 10 years. Its assessment system has been recognized by such organizations as the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE), the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC), and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as an exemplar of "best practices" in distance education. While certain aspects of its programs are unique (e.g., programs focused largely on business and technology), many UOP practices have wide applicability. In this regard, the UOP receives many requests for assistance in designing technologically-delivered programs, faculty training programs, and assessment of learning outcomes.

Karen Spahn, Executive Director for Institutional Research at UOP, reported that the assessment system is built on an educational model geared to adult learners. This model involves student-centered delivery, collaborative learning, and standardized, "lock-step" courses which integrate theory and practice and focus on basic workplace competencies. Online courses use an asynchronous conferencing system with the following characteristics:

- Each class is limited to 12 students and uses a group mailbox.
- Students upload work and ideas for comment by all.
- The environment is highly interactive, promoting analysis and synthesis.
- Attendance is mandatory; students are required to sign on five times each week.
- Students average 15 to 20 hours per week on coursework.
- Students and faculty utilize the Online Library which accesses major vendors, databases, and journals.

Before students are enrolled, the assessment system begins with faculty selection, training, mentoring, and evaluation. All faculty undergo a comprehensive eight-week online course covering online facilitation techniques, technical training, instructional issues, and other topics. Each faculty member's first online course is mentored, and there is ongoing professional development. Faculty members identify core competencies and provide assessment questions that measure whether students have achieved them.

Student academic achievement is measured through the Adult Learning Outcomes Assessment (ALOA) which has several components:

- Comprehensive Cognitive Assessment, a two- to three-hour objective cognitive test internally developed, validated, and normed. UOP faculty have developed these for each degree program, and they are given at admission and repeated when the student nears graduation.
- Affective Assessment, assessing development and change on personal and professional values, attitudes, and self-reported behaviors known to be relevant to success in professional disciplines.
- Communication Skills Inventory.
- Portfolio Assessment.
- Critical Thinking Assessment, occurring in a course at the beginning and end of the student's academic program.
- External Validation, through a random sampling of students using nationally normed tests (e.g., ETS major field tests, GMAT).

The Academic Quality Management System (AQMS) measures institutional effectiveness and provides feedback for continuous improvement. The following are administered on a continuous basis:

- Registration Survey
- Student End-of-Course Survey
- Faculty End-of-Course Survey
- Graduation Survey

- Internal Customer Survey
- "Comments to the Chair," a mechanism through which students, faculty, and staff can write directly to the Chairman of the Board
- Exit Survey
- Faculty Involvement
- Alumni Survey
- Employer Survey

Information gained from ALOA and AQMS is used to improve the effectiveness of curricula and teaching methods, resulting in improved program and instructional design. This information also serves to advance the general understanding of adult educational needs and programs.

Visit the University of Phoenix website at www.uophx.edu. For more information about the University of Phoenix's assessment systems, contact Institutional Research at 602-966-8577 or mrwebers@apollogrp.edu.

Keeping College Affordable and Accessible

There is concern nationally by the public and policymakers over the cost of education. In the session *Keeping College Affordable and Accessible*, **Travis Reindl**, Policy Analyst with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, noted that there is considerable misinformation available—the public tends to overestimate charges and underestimate financial aid. The facts are that more than half of public four-year colleges and universities charge less than $3,000 in tuition and fees, and between 1990 and 1995, public institutions increased aid to students by 62 percent.

Reindl did acknowledge, however, that tuition has increased significantly in the past ten years and cites several reasons:

- Higher education's share of state general fund appropriations has declined from 15.5 percent to 12.9 percent over the past decade.
- Fringe benefits have increased by approximately 65 percent over the past 10 years, roughly twice the rate of the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- The number of computers at public colleges and universities has increased 122 percent between 1990 and 1996. For the most part, institutions are depending on one-time student fees for these investments. Professional development for faculty related to technology also drives increased costs.
- The rate of inflation for library acquisitions has increased at more than double the rate of the CPI in recent years. The Association of Research Libraries found that libraries are purchasing 7 percent fewer serials than 10 years ago, but spending twice as much on them.
- The average estimated cost for a public four-year college to comply with regulations of the American for Disabilities Act is $1.4 million.

Reindl noted that the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education has taken a hard look at the complex issue of college costs. Their recommendations include:

- Strengthening institutional cost control
- Improving market information and public accountability
- Deregulating higher education
- Rethinking accreditation
- Enhancing and simplifying federal student aid

Reindl concluded that although the Cost Commission addressed some important technical questions, the big policy question remains unanswered—what is the appropriate balance of responsibility for financing higher education?

For additional information, contact Travis Reindl at 202-293-7070 or reindl@aascu.nche.edu, or visit the AASCU web site at www.aascu.nche.edu.

Data Warehousing

"The concept of data warehousing means more than a place to store records; it is a community of information, access, and people geared to meet the ever-increasing demands for information for policymaking," according to **Michael Scroggins**, Assistant Director of Information and Technology, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). At a session entitled *Data Warehousing for Quality Information*, he focused on experiences of the SBCTC as it implemented an executive information data warehouse to replace costly, inflexible systems.

Scroggins described the differences between a data warehouse and an operational database:

Data Warehouse

Subject oriented
Historical data
Read only
Infrequent updates
Supports policy
Covers fixed time period

Operational Database

Application oriented
Current data only
Read and write
Continuous updates
Supports operations

Before implementing the new data warehouse in 1995, SBCTC staff evaluated carefully why they needed a new system: the minicomputer environment was expensive to operate and maintain; the computer programs were old, inflexible, and the programmers were no longer on staff; the reports were complex, expensive to maintain, and took a long time to run; and any kinds of changes in the programs brought about unexpected problems. In developing the data warehouse, Scroggins stressed the importance of involving the users in the design and reengineering phases: “The users know the data and how it is used; their involvement also ensures ownership in the finished product.”

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges uses its data for a variety of purposes including:

- Federal and state enrollment reporting (e.g., IPEDS)
- Vocational followup
- Research studies
- Enrollment forecasting
- Performance and outcomes support
- Capital and operating budget support
- Ad hoc legislative requests

For more information, contact Michael Scroggins at 360-586-8771 or mscroggins@sbctc.ctc.edu. His presentation is available on the SBCTC web site at www.sbctc.ctc.edu.

Other Conference Sessions

Resolving Differences in the Measurement of Completion Rates. This session explored the issues of why consistency in completion rates matters, why there is so much inconsistency in their measurement, problems states have faced in using unit record databases to measure and report student completions, and what has been learned from these experiences. **Carol Fuller**, Assistant Vice President for Research and Policy Analysis, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, began by noting that consistency in the data matters precisely because the numbers themselves have value to higher education institutions—higher numbers are judged to be better than lower numbers, and completion rates have consequences. Inconsistency causes problems, including added data burden, mistrust and confusion among policymakers, and the impossibility of making comparisons across institutions and states.

Jean Keating, recently retired Research Administrator for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), reported that SCHEV has been calculating completion rates on a statewide basis since 1981. She described the range of data collection and reporting problems her state has faced, and she noted with a touch of humor that "no good deed has gone unpunished." **Jeff Weber**, Manager of Information and Research, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, shared findings from his report *State-level Reporting of Degree Completion Rates: National Comparisons and the Implementation of Student Right-to-know Guidelines*. This study contains an excellent analysis of the extent to which competing methodologies for measuring degree completion affect the comparability of information presented, using Indiana data as an example.

For more information, contact Carol Fuller at 202-785-8866 or carol@naicu.edu, or Jeff Weber at 317-464-4400 or jeffw@che.state.in.us. Weber's papers are available at www.che.state.in.us. (Select "publications" and then "staff working papers.")

Statewide Admission Policies and Student Success in College. Increasingly, state higher education agencies are engaging in research that explores the transition from high school to college and the factors promoting student success in college. This session explored how data in three states have been used to inform policy development, and how unintended consequences have sometimes resulted from data findings.

Michael Keller, Director of Policy Analysis and Research, Maryland

Higher Education Commission, presented some interesting results from Maryland's Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR), a high school feedback report mandated by 1990 legislation. Although intended to help local educators evaluate high school preparatory curriculum, counseling, and policy, SOAR served, in fact, to publicize the large percentage of college students needing remediation; it also led to awareness of how difficult it was for high school personnel to address this problem given the great amount of variation in remediation practices among colleges. The positive outcome of this has been the development of consistent statewide instruments, standards, policies, and procedures for remedial education to be in place in all community colleges by the year 2000.

John Wittstruck, Associate Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education, described a dynamic process in which data have been used to set admission policies, goals for successful completion of the freshman year, and goals for graduation and time-to-completion, all tied to a tiered system of college admissions. Since this results-oriented system has been put into place, higher education has been receiving more support from the state legislature.

Joe Hagy, Director of Special Programs, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, discussed the interaction between data and policy in describing how Oklahoma has attempted to increase student success over the past 20 years. Briefly, a unit record system in place since 1978 provided data to show the effects of segregation, inequality, and uneven academic preparation, and led the agency into the "equity of preparation" business, now moving down to eighth grade students.

For more information, contact Joe Hagy at 405-524-9154 or jhagy@osrhe.edu, Michael Keller at 410-974-297, x159 or mkeller@mhec.state.md.us, or John Wittstruck at 573-751-2361 or john?cbhe400@admin.mocbhe.gov.

Integrating Policy Development and Data Collection. In this session, **James Firnberg**, President of Our Lady of the Lake College, **Marsha Krotseng**, Director of Research and Information Systems, State College and University System of West Virginia, and **Toni Larson**, Executive Director, Independent Higher Education of Colorado, explored the roles of the policymaker and data in decisionmaking in higher education.

Firnberg suggested that a staff member in a higher education agency must play three roles in responding to requests for information: First, staff should put themselves in the place of the person asking for information (e.g., the executive director, board member, legislator, reporter). Why is this person asking this question? What will he do with the data? What policies will it affect? Second, staff need to be the analyst and to translate the data into information and into terms which permit a solution. And third, the staff must be the technician, that is the person who understands the data in detail.

The panelists determined that while we do a very good job of collecting and analyzing the data, we need to do a better job of interpreting the data and presenting our conclusions in such a way that will cause others to act in a responsible fashion.

For more information, contact James Firnberg at 504-768-1710 or jfirnber@ololcollege.cc.la.us, Marsha Krotseng at 304-558-1112 or krotseng@scusco.wvnet.edu, or Toni Larson at 303-571-5559 or tlarson@csn.org.

WebCASPAR. The National Science Foundation's WebCASPAR contains IPEDS data as well as information on research and development (R&D) expenditures, federal funding, degrees awarded, and graduate student enrollment, and it can easily be accessed via the web, as demonstrated by **Nicole Lane**, **Tammie Nelson-Stringer**, and **Teresa Grimes** of Quantum Research Corporation (QRC). Pre-defined templates make it easy to select data of interest and download it as tables, spreadsheets, or data files. Online help and a tutorial are also available. **James Firnberg**, President of Our Lady of Lake College and a consultant with QRC, noted, "WebCASPAR is a valuable tool for policy analysis. The database provides easy access to a large body of statistical data resources dealing with science and engineering at U.S. academic institutions. While WebCASPAR focuses primarily on science and engineering (S&E), many of the data resources also provide information on non-S&E fields and higher education in general."

Access WebCASPAR at www.nsf.gov/sbe/srs/stats.htm. For more information, contact Teresa Grimes (tgrimes@qrc.com), Nicole Lane (nlane@qrc.com), or Tammie Nelson-Stringer at 301-657-3070.

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