

NETWORK NEWS

SHEEO

Volume 27, No. 2
October 2008

FOCUS ON THE 2008 NETWORK DATA CONFERENCE

In This Issue

...Network News provides a summary of the 31st annual SHEEO/NCES Network Data Conference and IPEDS Workshop. One hundred and thirty five people attended the conference held earlier this year in Arlington, VA. 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 presents selected highlights from the meeting and opens with an overview of the annual IPEDS Workshop where information about the IPEDS data collection process and reporting were presented. Please visit the IPEDS web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/> for more detailed information on IPEDS; the most recent information including changes scheduled for implementation in 2009 can be found in "Announcements and Alerts" under the "Newsroom" link. Highlights of several plenary and concurrent sessions are also provided here; these and other presentations can be found on the SHEEO web site at <http://www.sheeo.org/network/netmeet/netmeet08.htm>.

Planning is already underway for next year's conference scheduled for May 19 – 22, 2009 in New Orleans, LA. Please contact the SHEEO office if you have suggestions for topics you would like to see addressed at the 32nd Data Conference.

Associate Commissioner's Remarks

Tom Weko, the new NCES Associate Commissioner for Postsecondary Studies, welcomed the group by thanking the participants for their attendance, and especially for their work the other 361 days of the year "when you do essential activities," such as ensuring data quality and addressing non-response to surveys. He thanked SHEEO for organizing "this critically important meeting."

Weko began with a discussion of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and NCES' role in IES. NCES is one of four centers within IES, along with the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, National Center for Education Research, and the National Center for Special Education Research.

Perhaps the most important change facing IPEDS comes from new demands from both Congress and the Secretary of Education. Both indicated to NCES that IPEDS will face new challenges, providing information to meet the needs of families and students as consumers of higher education. To respond to these needs, NCES has developed the College Navigator, a college search tool – available both in English and Spanish -- that has received heavy usage and much praise for its consumer friendliness. NCES is also looking at developing other tools and changing the user interface to make it easier for users to find the data/tools they need. A goal is to let all users reach out to data without having to pay a heavy cost in learning the tools.

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).

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In addition to the redesign of data tools, NCES is also focusing on the redesign of its National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, NPEC. The coop has been given a new mission and focus – to provide the sort of continuity and long-term focus that may be lacking in the Technical Review Panels (TRPs) that support the IPEDS data collection contractor.

- Technical review panels have been ephemeral: they are convened for two days, but do not provide a long-term view of the IPEDS data collection.
- TRPs do not look at IPEDS as a data collection system; rather, they focus on an individual collection – and within that, on a few data elements.
- TRP moderators were often challenged to moderate a meeting with the benefit of background materials to brief or orient panel members.

Since its reorganization the new National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) has:

- Served as a standing body of experts who provide technical review panels with a core of continuing members;
- Provided a “research and development” arm to IPEDS, developing background papers that provide a foundation of evidence to TRP members; and,
- Identified long-term and crosscutting IPEDS data issues that were beyond the scope of individual technical review panels.

Given the importance of SHEEO agencies to the work of IPEDS, six SHEEO agency professionals have been selected to serve as NPEC members.

Annual IPEDS Workshop

A key component of the annual Data Conference is the **IPEDS Workshop**, a forum for IPEDS staff to provide updates on recent developments and preview future directions. It's also an opportunity for the data providers, collectors, and users to discuss IPEDS issues face-to-face. Following a review of the 2007-08 data collection year, attendees were reminded that reporting is mandatory for all institutions who receive Title IV federal student financial aid and that there are penalties of up to \$27,500 per violation for noncompliance. Six institutions were fined in 2006-07 for a total of \$76,250. This is a substantial drop from earlier years and reflects a lot of follow-up both during and after the collection periods. NCES is now sending an email or letter to the CEOs of all institutions who lock their surveys at least four weeks before the close of each collection; the letter references the keyholder by name.

The proposed changes for 2008-09 were then presented. These changes will collect more detailed student financial aid data, eliminate the first-professional degree category, revise the finance data collected for both GASB and FASB institutions, and introduce the phased implementation of the new race and ethnicity reporting categories. The additional financial aid data will distinguish between Pell and other federal grants as well as distinguish various loan types; this information would be available through College Navigator thereby providing more information on college costs to consumers. Eliminating the first-professional degree classification will more accurately distinguish research-focused doctoral degrees from professionally focused doctor's degrees. This change was based on suggestions from an IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP) and will be optional in 2008-09 and mandatory by 2010-11.

The finance changes are designed to provide more comparability of finance data from different education sectors and ultimately improve the utility of financial information. Final guidance on reporting the new race and ethnicity categories has finally been released. Institutions are encouraged to begin collecting data in the new format and reporting it as soon as possible even though implementation won't be required until Fall 2010. Collection requires the use of a new 2-question format and reporting aggregate data in 9 categories. Substantially more information was presented at a subsequent session and a separate article on that session is available elsewhere in this issue.

Elise Miller then presented an overview of the anticipated changes in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The best summary of the impact HEA will have on IPEDS can be found in two links of the "News Room" section of the IPEDS web site:

http://nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/news_room/twk_Changes_and_7_28_2008_187.asp

http://nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/news_room/ana_Changes_to_8_22_2008_188.asp.

A review of various IPEDS Research and Development activity was then presented. The national Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) now provides an R&D function for NCES by reviewing IPEDS-proposed activity and suggesting new projects. One of the existing IPEDS projects is the creation of a minimum data set (MDS) which was recommended by a previous NCES Taskforce for IPEDS Redesign. Lack of federal interest and demands coming from Congress, OMB and others means NCES no longer plans to pursue the MDS. Another recent IPEDS study looked at the quality of available finance data; the study was prompted by both internal changes in IPEDS and external changes in accounting standards. Several lessons and recommendations emerged from the study including concerns that eZ-Audit (an existing federal web application that provides a paperless, single point of submission for financial statements and compliance audits) is not comprehensive enough for IPEDS and that attention to continued improvements in the IPEDS Finance collection system are warranted. IPEDS modifications are also likely as result of a recent Human Resources Data Quality Study and a Graduation rate Data Quality Study.

A review of the updates to the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) currently underway was presented by Michelle Coon. Following a description of CIP codes and uses, Coon noted the CIP was last updated in 2000 and there have been substantial changes in the number and variety of postsecondary education programs. Similarly, some instructional programs no longer exist. The updates include adding new CIP codes as well as providing illustrative examples. The CIP will only be published electronically in the future and will be available by June 2009 on the NCES website.

The IPEDS Workshop concluded with a demonstration of various IPEDS data use tools including the new College Navigator, an announcement of an Online Data Center, a presentation on training opportunities from the Association for Institutional Research, and a question and answer session.

Much more information on these topics and others, including the 2008-09 data collection calendar, can be found at the IPEDS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds>.

The IPEDS Workshop slides are at: <http://www.sheeo.org/network/presen2008/IPEDS-08.ppt>

The Help Desk presentation is at <http://www.sheeo.org/network/presen2008/IPEDS-RTI-08.ppt>

The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) presentation is at <http://www.sheeo.org/network/presen2008/AIR-08.ppt>

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A Report from the IPEDS Help Desk

IPEDS produces some of the most current and accurate postsecondary education data available. To ensure that IPEDS data are as dependable as possible, reporting standards and requirements change frequently. While these changes produce higher-quality data for IPEDS consumers, keeping up with them can be a challenge for state IPEDS coordinators and keyholders. As a solution, the IPEDS Help Desk, operated by RTI International, was created in July 2000. Jamie Isaac and Janice Kelly-Reid, of RTI International, presented a report on 2007-08 Help Desk activity at the IPEDS Workshop.

Help Desk Activity

The IPEDS Help Desk is a call center with a staff of 16-18 specially hired and trained Help Desk Agents, who provide a wide range of services to state keyholders. Much of their time is devoted to responding to questions via email and phone. During the 2007-08 collection years, more than 24,000 emails and calls were received, and more than 21,000 calls were initiated by Help Desk staff. Agents also make prompting reminder calls during the last two weeks of each collection. Then, once the survey is locked, Help Desk agents review, edit, and migrate all collected data.

Last year, RTI conducted research to determine the most effective ways to serve Help Desk users, and as a result has improved a number of its business practices. Training and resources are now being targeted toward schools that are most in need. Now, instead of making reminder calls to all schools, only historically late respondents are contacted before the collection deadlines. In addition, RTI has been tracking keyholder turnover, so staff are better able to prepare for the additional training necessary to bring new keyholders up to speed on reporting requirements. Research shows that in 2007-08, approximately 20% of keyholders were new to the position.

These improvements are all a step in the right direction, but RTI reports that the final week of collection continues to be extremely busy and a heavy burden on the collection system.

Data Tools Help Desk

In addition to the IPEDS Help Desk, RTI also operates the Data Tools Help Desk. Open since 2007, the Data Tools Help Desk assists IPEDS users and others by familiarizing them with the IPEDS data tools and assisting with outputting data files. They provide assistance with the following tools: Peer Analysis System (PAS), Executive Peer Tool (ExPT), College Navigator, Data Analysis System (DAS), and other NCES data sources and publications.

The IPEDS Help Desk operates weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (EST), and evenings and weekends during the final ten days of each collection.

Race and Ethnicity Reporting Changes and Their Impact

In October of 2007, the U.S. Department of Education issued final guidance on implementing 1997 Office of Management and Budget standards on maintaining, collecting, and reporting racial and ethnic (R/E) data. Mary Sapp, Assistant Vice President for Planning and Institutional Research at the University of Miami, and Carol Yoakum, Assistant Director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, co-presented a plenary session entitled "Race and Ethnicity Reporting Changes and Their Impact," to address upcoming changes, challenges, and impacts at institutional and state levels.

New Approaches to Collection and Reporting

Beginning in the 2008-2009 collection year, IPEDS will adopt new aggregate categories for reporting R/E data. Institutions will have the choice of whether or not to implement these categories until the 2010-2011 collection year, when it will become mandatory.

The Department of Education encourages, but does not require, institutions to re-survey current students and staff to allow them to re-identify their race or ethnicity.

The current IPEDS reporting category follows a "5+2 model". Five race and/or ethnicity categories are provided (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White), along with "race ethnicity unknown" and "non-resident alien." Together, there are seven reporting categories of aggregated data. The new reporting standard follows a "7+2 model", wherein there are nine reporting categories of aggregated data, which are as follows:

1. Non-resident aliens
2. R/E unknown
3. Hispanics of any race

Race for non-Hispanics:

4. American Indian or Alaska Native
5. Asian
6. Black or African American
7. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
8. White
9. Two or more races

In this new reporting model, "Hispanic trumps race," or in other words Hispanics are reported by ethnicity as opposed to race, and "non-resident alien trumps all race and ethnicity."

Impact at the Institution Level

Institutions should anticipate a unique set of impacts resulting from changes in R/E collecting, reporting, and storing. In many cases, decisions will need to be made on whether to re-survey continuing students and/or employees, whether to store with binary vs. detailed codes, or how to deal with non-comparable peer data during the transition. Another challenge, if not clarified preemptively, is making sure your institution is in sync with the timelines of non-institutional organizations, such as the financial aid system, and organizations that collect data on R/E, such as U.S. News and Student Clearinghouse.

Planning ahead is imperative and a good way to begin is to set a timeline for the transition to mandatory reporting in 2010. Meetings, brainstorming, and initial IT work should begin in 2008 so that modifications to the existing system can begin in 2009. Many of the impacts and challenges of the R/E change can be lessened or curtailed if institutions simply start early and communicate often. Begin implementing changes sooner rather than later, and involve everyone from IR to IT, Admissions to Financial Aid, and HR to Affirmative Action.

Impact at the State Level

Race and ethnicity changes will impact state agencies differently than institutions. A great deal of variation exists across states in terms of how they utilize and report IPEDS data. Some simply view the data; others upload it; while some download and use the data on a regular basis. The number of institutions in each state will also have a significant impact on how R/E changes are dealt with.

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Each state must decide how to deal with the data they collect from their institutions. Those that receive unit records as opposed to aggregate data will have additional challenges and work. When publishing the data, notations and footnotes may be necessary to explain changes in categories and formats.

Anticipating how R/E changes will affect policymakers' abilities to use state data, as well as looking ahead to how trend data will be impacted in 2010 may seem daunting, but this type of foresight and planning is vital to a smooth transition.

The R/E changes will inevitably result in challenges for states and institutions, but once they are fully implemented the results will be more accurate and dependable data. In the meantime, communication and sharing of best practices between institutions and states is encouraged as a way to work through questions. IPEDS, AIR, and SHEEO are all working to provide formal information and resources to assist in the changeover process.

The SHEEO Race and Ethnicity website can be found at: <http://www.sheeo.org/ipeds/race-eth-home.htm>

The AIR Race and Ethnicity website can be found at: <http://www.airweb.org/page.asp?page=1500>

The IPEDS Race and Ethnicity website can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/reic/resource.asp>

KNOWHOW2GO

The United States is generating lower degree attainment levels versus other countries, and it is not serving its populations equally, said Melanie Corrigan, the Director of National initiatives for the American Council of Education, in her presentation, "College Access Research and Marketing: How KnowHow2GO is Reaching Underrepresented Students." The KnowHow2GO campaign was developed to deliver a "wake-up call" to disrupt the mindset that college happens by chance and to promote action steps for preparing for college.

With research starting in 2005 and an initial launch in 2007, KnowHow2GO has focused on low-income 8th-10th graders as although 9 in 10 8th graders may intend to go to get a degree, it doesn't seem to happen. The public service campaign has manifested itself through public service advertising, interactive websites, and a plethora of national, state and regional partnerships. Its primary goal was to "provide low-income and first-generation students, their parents and other adult influencers (teachers, mentors and coaches) with information and resources to help them prepare for college." Preparation included four main action steps: Be a Pain (be persistent), Push Yourself (take the right classes), Find the Right Fit (find the right school), and Get Your Hands on Some Money (apply for financial aid).

To attract the attention of this media-heavy generation, the first year presented TV and radio ads echoing the message "You can't dream your way into college. There are steps you need to take." Billboards were placed in high traffic areas, like Pentagon Mall, at major events, like Taste of Chicago, and in amusement parks, like Six Flags.

In year two, the new marketing underlying message became "push yourself – take the tougher courses." Testing showed high favorability for all types of advertisement, with a large number of students going to the website after experiencing an ad.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the program, research found that there has been a significant improvement in the number of respondents who plan to get a college degree after experiencing KnowHow2GO's message. And while the overall number of students who reached out to someone for preparation assistance didn't increase, for those students who did reach out, they did so to a wider pool of people.

The future of the marketing campaign includes a co-branding effort with state partnerships. States would get the marketing materials for free while they try to consolidate efforts from all sectors to work together in the campaign.

An electronic copy of this presentation can be found at: www.sheeo.org/network/netmeet/netmeet08.htm

CALIFORNIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Every March, the California Community College (CCC) System produces the "Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges" (ARCC) report. This 800-page report takes about six months to produce and is generated in partnership with the California Department of Finance, California Legislative Analyst's Office, the California Secretary of Education, and local Community College Boards of Trustees.

Patrick Perry, Vice Chancellor of Technology, Research and Information Systems for the California Community Colleges, presented the history of the system's accountability reporting, as well as the development of this current reporting framework. Prior to 1998, California Community College accountability reporting was simple, using fact books. In 1998, the "Partnership for Excellence" Report (a partnership between the State and the CCC system) was created using five metrics to measure system and college-level performance. These metrics included:

- Annual volume of transfers to the California State University system or the University of California system;
- Annual volume of awards/certificates;
- Rate of successful course completions;
- Annual volume of vocational education course completions; and
- Annual volume of basic skills improvements.

Using volume metrics at the time was very useful for a growing community college system. However, the State's response to Partnership for Excellence was critical: it made it hard to compare colleges, the designation of "adequate progress" was ill-defined, and results only looked good because the community college system was growing.

After Arnold Schwarzenegger became governor, he signed a bill that developed a new accountability system in 2004, now known as Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges (ARCC). Discussion went back and forth between the California Community College system and state stakeholders in order to agree on types of metrics, how to make comparisons, types of collaboration in reporting, and the decision to not pay for performance. To implement the accountability framework, the California Community College system office developed a Technical Advisory Workgroup comprised of representatives from the community colleges, institutional researchers from the Community Colleges' Research and Planning Group, as well as representatives from the California Department of Finance (DOF) and the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO).

The final report contains thirteen metrics in four areas that contain both college-level and system-level metrics:

- Student Progress & Achievement – Degree/Certificate/Transfer;
- Student Progress & Achievement – Vocational/Occupational/Workforce Development;

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- Pre-collegiate Improvement/Basic Skills/ESL; and
- Participation

One major outcome of this report was the CCC systems' creation of their own hybrid graduation/transfer rate (Student Progress & Achievement Rate or SPAR) as opposed to using the poorly-constructed federally-defined rates in the IPEDS-GRS (Graduation Rate Study). Another major advancement in the ARCC report was their ability able to perform wage studies and evaluate what the real value is for an AA/AS degree.

Peer grouping is a new technique introduced in ARCC that compares colleges based on external factors beyond their control, such as the age of students or socioeconomic status of students served at each institution. Historically, peering was defined by comparing colleges in the same region, similar demography or similar size. The downside of the new peering methods, however, has been that the process can be complex and somewhat confusing since the traditional notion of a "peer" is being redefined. However, a major positive of the peer clustering exercise is that college performance rankings were eliminated.

Overall, the ARCC has helped to bring about more system resources to the California Community College system, has increased the trust between all of the stakeholders and partners, and has educated all those involved in the process.

An electronic copy of this presentation can be found at: www.sheeo.org/network/netmeet/netmeet07.htm

VOLUNTARY SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) is an initiative by public 4-year universities to supply basic, comparable information on the undergraduate student experience to important constituencies through a common web report – the College Portrait. The goals of the VSA are to demonstrate accountability and stewardship to the public through information that is transparent, comparable and understandable and to measure education outcomes so that effective educational practices can be identified and enhanced, explained Christine Keller in her presentation, "Responding to Calls for Greater Accountability: The VSA."

The VSA is sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and was developed by over 80 higher education leaders from 70 public universities. The developments and implementation are funded in part by the Lumina Foundation.

The College Portrait consists of a five-page web reporting template organized into three primary sections: 1) student/family (consumer information), 2) student experiences and perceptions, and 3) student learning outcomes. The majority of the data elements selected are from currently available data sources with established definitions and reporting conventions. The data elements included in College Portrait were identified and evaluated based on input from student/family focus groups, feedback from the higher education community, and research on higher education.

The Student/Family Information section contains demographic characteristics of students and institutions, enrollment sizes, class sizes, progress rates, post-graduation plans of seniors, and cost of attendance. The Student Experiences and Perceptions section presents more institution-specific assessments and information from national student surveys. The Student Learning Outcomes section also includes institution-specific assessments and educational outcomes along with results from a pilot project to measure learning gains in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and written communication.

As of October 2008, 309 universities from 48 states are participating in the VSA, and over 200 College Portraits are posted on the new consumer-oriented website – www.collegeportraits.org. For more information on the VSA project, go to www.voluntary-system.org.

An electronic copy of this presentation can be found at: www.sheeo.org/network/net-meet/netmeet08.htm

RANKINGS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Kevin Carey, from Education Sector - an independent, nonpartisan think tank, presented his community college ranking project in the session, "Rankings in Community Colleges." Data was primarily gathered from federal graduation rate statistics and from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) since most community colleges participated in this survey, the data was public and open, and the results were already tabulated into five "benchmark" categories - Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners.

In comparing the benchmarks, an empirical weighting system was applied so the most consistent predictors of success were given the heaviest weight. This resulted in the following order: Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Ratio, Support for Learners. This order turned out to be consistent with the December 2006 CCSSE Validation Study's findings including that "Active and Collaborative Learning was perhaps the most consistent predictor of student success across studies and across measures."

Only the top 30 community colleges (out of over 500) were published in the final rankings. No patterns were discovered indicating that institutions with a higher ranking had more money – per-student spending for the top 30 was virtually the same as the overall average for all the community colleges (and far less than for 4-year institutions). Most higher-ranked colleges were actually in more challenging environments, such as having higher poverty levels or greater part-time student enrollment. Smaller colleges seemed to fare better. And, as most of the top community colleges were relatively young, it simply showed that "excellence doesn't take centuries to achieve." A good example of this was Cascadia Community College, which was founded in the 2000. Cascadia ranked second overall and first in the most important indicator, Active and Collaborative Learning, as it had been thoughtfully designed to incorporate the best student learning practices.

As the results were analyzed, notable conclusions included that community colleges do not have as much differentiation between them as 4-year institutions do. As well, quality mattered most for the students who were least prepared prior to enrollment. More engagement led to better grades for those who were least prepared as contrasted to 4-year institutions where students who come in best prepared seemed to get the most support.

Results were published in the Washington Monthly and can be found at www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0709.ccrankings.html. The full results of the top 30 can be downloaded, and a description of the methodology is also available.

An electronic copy of this presentation can be found at: www.sheeo.org/network/net-meet/netmeet08.htm

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Transitions at SHEEO

Jeffrey M. Stanley, Senior Policy Analyst, joined SHEEO in July 2008. Prior to this position, Mr. Stanley served as the Associate Commissioner for Policy and Planning for the Indiana Commission for Higher Education from 2000-2008. Mr. Stanley was the primary staff person in overseeing the development of the Commission's strategic plan, *Reaching Higher: Strategic Directions for Higher Education in Indiana*. From 1995-2000, Mr. Stanley worked for Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). During his time there, he was directly involved in the reorganization of the programmatic and structural components of an entire division of student support services, and he designed the highly successful annual Top 100 IUPUI Students award program. Additionally, Mr. Stanley has worked in Indiana's child welfare system providing services to neglected and abused youth. Mr. Stanley is a graduate of Purdue University and earned his MSW from the Indiana University School of Social Work.