National Student Clearinghouse™ Research Center™
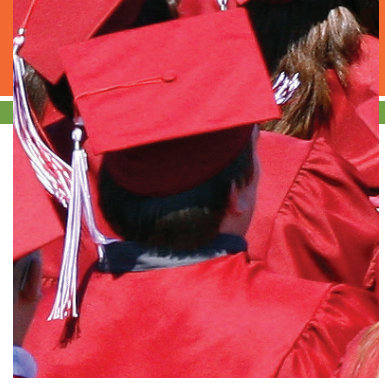
Postsecondary Data Partnership

Wanted: Better Data for Better Student Outcomes

There is growing recognition among the nation's colleges and universities that access to better data fosters interventions and program improvements that facilitate better outcomes for students. Access to meaningful data is especially impactful in making informed, data-driven decisions especially for students facing hurdles getting into and getting through college: low-income and first-generation students, students of color, and adult learners.

Thousands of institutions are participating in dozens of voluntary data-driven initiatives (i.e. Achieving the Dream) designed to more fully capture student progress and outcomes than are available in existing state and federal data collections. In 2016, the Institute for Higher Education Policy released a review of these efforts that revealed growing consensus around a key set of metrics.

Colleges and universities committed to closing, or have already **closed their completion gaps**, such as Georgia State University and Delaware State University, point to **improved data gathering** and analysis as the foundation of their efforts.

One of the **biggest barriers** to improved data gathering and utilization by colleges and universities is the **cumbersome process of collecting key data** and metrics and **reporting them** for voluntary and mandatory data collections. Currently, institutions must submit data – much of it similar – to multiple agencies and organizations including: federal and state governments, accrediting bodies, and national initiatives. The **result is** a complicated web of data exchanges that entail a **significant amount of duplicated effort**.

This complicated web of data exchanges taxes institutional and organizational resources, resulting in more time spent on data collection and reporting, rather than data analysis and application to student needs. It also means fewer resources and time spent on data utilization to help students, faculty, and campus leaders improve outcomes.

The Postsecondary Data Partnership

PDP simplifies, streamlines, and enhances data gathering and reporting by using existing resources at the national level by partnering with the National Student Clearinghouse for student reporting, education verifications, and outcomes research, such as tracking student enrollments and degree completions, including students who transfer across institutions and states. Building on its current capacity, the PDP will serve as a hub collecting, verifying, and reporting data back to participating institutions and organizations. This will help colleges and universities more efficiently gain a fuller picture of student progress and outcomes, meet various reporting requirements, and focus more of their resources on using data to help students succeed.

This effort, named the Postsecondary Data Partnership, has had three phases:

- Phase 1 (2017): Built and implemented an initial pilot with select participants from institutions and initiatives that partner with the Bill & Melinda Gates and Lumina Foundations.

- Phase 2 (2018): Expand the Partnershp to institutions involved in reporting to initiatives, associations and organizations. Expand reporting to online interactive analytical intelligence tool for both institutions and partners for reporting.

- Phase 3 (2019 and beyond): Focus on further participation in and sustainability of the Partnership, transitioning it away from direct foundation funding.

Building the Partnership

The core elements of the Partnership already exist, which includes the Clearinghouse's commitment and processes to maintain the integrity of student records. The Clearinghouse services are designed to facilitate compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, The Higher Education Act, and other applicable laws. Our educational partnership will include: a) adding additional data submissions with expanded data; and b) supplementing the Clearinghouse's technical and staff capacity to process and package data and create reports. Support for these efforts was provided by the Gates and Lumina Foundations.

Colleges and universities, especially those participating in one or more voluntary student success initiatives, were invited to join a test phase of the Partnership Pilot in late 2017. Institutional participation was voluntary.

The Clearinghouse and its partners succeeded in the initial pilot and the Clearinghouse is now in the process of onboarding the additional partners within the Lumina and Gates Foundation network!

How the Postsecondary Data Partnership Works

Step 1: Participating colleges and universities submit data to the Clearinghouse, including:

- Data they already send on a regular basis (e.g., enrollment, degree awards every 30-45 days)

- Data relevant to reporting requirements for initiatives in which they participate that are also part of the Partnership Pilot (e.g., student progression, disaggregates such as race/ethnicity)

Note: Only the Clearinghouse has access to personally identifiable information about students as part of the Postsecondary Data Partnership Pilot.

Step 2: The Clearinghouse processes and validates the data and generates online interactive analytical dashboard reporting which includes access, progression, and completion among others.

Step 3: The Clearinghouse provides online interactive analytical dashboards of de-identified student-level data files to:[1] participating institutions (reflecting the full range of data submitted).

Neither BMGF, Lumina, nor initiatives receive personally-identifiable information about students. They only receive aggregate institution-level data with the express permission of the colleges.

Step 4: The Clearinghouse sends summary reports to relevant organizations and agencies (reflecting data pertinent to specific reporting requirements and appropriately de-identified or aggregated, as necessary).

[1] Public interfaces will not be available as part of the first phase of the project (2017), but will be built into the second phase of the project (2018), as will post-college outcomes.

For More Information

If you would like additional information about the Partnership Pilot, please contact **PDPService@studentclearinghouse.org**.

For questions about the participation of the Gates Foundation or Lumina Foundation, please contact:

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