

**U.S. Department of Education
Committee on Measures of Student Success**

The third meeting of the U.S. Department of Education’s Committee on Measures of Student Success (Committee) was held on Thursday June 2, 2011 and Friday June 3, 2011 at 1990 K Street, NW in Washington, DC.

Established by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the Committee will advise the Secretary of Education in assisting two-year degree-granting institutions of higher education in meeting the completion or graduation rate disclosure requirements outlined in the Act. The Committee may also recommend additional or alternate measures of student success that are comparable alternatives to completion or graduation rates.

The following Committee members were in attendance:

- Dr. Thomas Bailey, Professor of Economics and Education, Columbia University (chair)
- Dr. Margarita Benitez, Senior Associate, Excelencia in Education
- Dr. Wayne Burton, President, North Shore Community College
- Mr. Kevin Carey, Policy Director, Education Sector
- Mr. Jacob Fraire, Assistant Vice President for Educational Alliances, Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
- Mr. Harold Levy, Managing Director, Palm Ventures
- Mr. Patrick Perry, Vice Chancellor, California Community College System
- Dr. Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Deputy Director, MDRC
- Dr. Linda Thor, Chancellor, Foothill-De Anza Community College District

Invited guests included:

- Dr. Thomas Weko, Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics
- Ms. Andrea Sykes, Laurium Evaluation Group

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, June 2, 2011

Welcome

Dr. Thomas Bailey, Committee chair, called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the two-day meeting. Dr. Bailey reported that there would be a change in the agenda—a Department of Education official would make a presentation on the various employment measures

included in the recently released gainful employment regulations and the implications for the Committee's work. Dr. Bailey hoped that the Committee would be able to have a preliminary list of recommendations by the end of tomorrow's meeting so that a draft report could be developed over the summer. Dr. Archie Cubarrubia, Designated Federal Official for the Committee, discussed the timeframes and review process for producing a final report of the Committee's recommendations.

Session #1: Discussion of Guiding Principles

The Committee began discussion of the guiding principles that would be used to consider potential recommendations. These principles were developed based on members' discussions at the Committee's previous meetings. Dr. Bailey led the Committee through a discussion of each principle.

Guiding Principle

Committee Discussion

Multiple missions: Two-year institutions have multiple, broad missions that serve diverse student populations.

The Committee agreed with the principle without changes or modification.

Multiple outcomes: Given two-year institutions' multiple missions, multiple outcome measures should be used to document student success.

The Committee agreed with the principle without changes or modification.

Transparency: Students, families, policymakers, and researchers need more and better information about postsecondary student success, particularly at two-year institutions.

Committee members agreed that this principle is important, but there was some discussion about how to balance the type of information needed for each group. For example, a student who is trying to choose a college needs and evaluates information in a different manner than a policymaker who is making funding or policy decisions related to community colleges. The committee discussed areas where each group's information needs do converge. For example, some data, such as graduation or transfer rates, are important for students to know their likelihood of graduation or transfer at an institution, just as they are important to policymakers for accountability purposes. Despite the Committee's discussion about how best to weigh each group's needs, the members felt that the principle as written was broad enough to cover the needs of all groups.

Guiding Principle

Comparability: Although the strength of America’s higher education institutions is its diversity, certain data about student success should be disclosed or reported in a way that allows consumers to compare institutions.

Inclusion: Data on student success measures should be reported such that students, families, policymakers, and researchers have more information about populations that have traditionally been underrepresented.

Ease of burden: Recommendations for increased transparency and consumer information should be weighed against institutional burden.

Appropriate scope: Recommendations should include actions that are not duplicative of external efforts but that take advantage of the unique role that the federal government can play.

Committee Discussion

The Committee agreed that comparability of data is important; however there was discussion about the ways in which data needs to be comparable. Committee members discussed whether data need to be comparable at a national or regional level, at a program level, or based on student characteristics. Committee members agreed with the importance of comparability to help consumers make decisions and for institutions to be held accountable. The final recommendations will need to weigh this principle carefully as specific measures are developed.

The Committee agreed with the principle without changes or modification.

The Committee agreed that this principle needed to be revised. Committee members discussed the issue of recommending measures that could place more administrative and financial burden on institutions, but could be important to conveying the success occurring at community colleges. Committee members agreed that this principle would be better described as “Costs and Benefits.”

Committee members agreed that this principle should be modified. While there are many efforts underway examining measures of success for two-year colleges, Committee members do not believe it precludes the federal government from recommending similar measures. Since many of the efforts are collecting data in different ways, Committee members believe that there is a role for the federal government to improve the quality and comparability of data.

Guiding Principle

Feasibility: Recommendations should include actions that can be implemented readily with the Department’s current statutory or regulatory authority.

Forward thinking: Recommendations should also include actions that may be challenging to implement but that would be important to inform the national conversations about student success in both the short-term and the long-term.

Committee Discussion

The Committee members discussed that this principle should acknowledge the need for actionable recommendations without precluding ideas that may require new legislation.

The Committee discussed this principle in concert with the previous principle. While Committee members thought it important to make feasible recommendations, they also agreed on the importance of articulating a vision for what an ideal system for measuring success at two-year colleges would look like.

Dr. Bailey summarized the Committee’s discussion and general agreement with the principles as written, with the exception of the principle of “appropriate scope.” The Committee considered whether to rank the principles, but Committee members agreed that they should consider the importance of each principle as they consider specific recommendations. Dr. Bailey suggested that the principles would be used in the Committee’s final report as a way to frame the decisions about why a recommendation was chosen.

Session #2: Recommendations on Progression and Completion Measures

Mr. Patrick Perry, the lead of the Progression and Completion Measures working group, shared with the Committee the recommendations of the working group. The working group met twice since the February meeting and developed a list of recommendations that they believed could be implemented within the Department’s current statutory and regulatory authority. The working group’s draft report is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/third-meeting.html>.

During the session, the Committee began its discussion of the following recommendations:

***Progression and Completion Measures
Working Group Recommendation***

Committee Discussion

1. Use the IPEDS Graduation Rates 200 (GR200) survey as a vehicle for expanded and reframed outcomes reporting for two-year institutions.

Following a discussion about the GR200 form and why it was created, the Committee generally agreed with the recommendation.
2. Satisfy the need to create accountability metrics (grad rates, time to degree) for Federal financial aid (Pell, other) by expanding the data collection in the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS).

The Committee discussed the benefits of using NSLDS to help institutions calculate the graduation rate needed to satisfy statutory disclosure requirements and how using NSLDS would minimize the amount of new data that an institution would need to report. The working group reported that NSLDS collects almost all the data needed for calculating graduation rates and time to degree for students that receive federal financial aid, however NSLDS does not collect data on Pell recipients that did not receive a Title IV loan. Committee members were concerned that a large number of students might be excluded from the calculation. The Committee discussed the benefits to institutions of using an existing data collection to satisfy the disclosure requirement and think that it is an option that should be explored further.
3. Include part-time, degree-seeking cohorts in the GR200 tracking domain.

The Committee agreed that it was important to include this group in measures of graduation and transfer; however, there were concerns raised about how best to identify part-time students who are degree seeking and the best timeframe for measuring graduation or transfer. The Committee also agreed that it was important to exclude institutions that had few students enrolled part-time. Department of Education officials shared with the Committee that it could make a recommendation and suggest that NCES ensure that technical details are addressed prior to implementing any changes to GR200.
4. Provide additional clarity to the definition of “degree-seeking.”

The Committee agreed that it was important for institutions to use the same criteria for identifying whether a student was degree-seeking; however, there were concerns about altering the definition

in such a way that would affect the longitudinal nature of IPEDS data. Department of Education officials shared with the Committee that it could make a recommendation and suggest that NCES ensure that technical details are addressed prior to providing any clarification to the current definition of “degree-seeking.”

During the discussion of the Progression and Completion Measures, Mr. David Bergeron, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning and Innovation in the Office of Postsecondary Education, made a presentation on the Department’s final regulations on gainful employment issued on June 2, 2011. The regulations were finalized after two years and reviews of more than 90,000 public comments. The regulations included two employment measures that will use Social Security earnings information in concert with student loan debt data from the Department of Education: (1) debt to earnings ratio and (2) repayment rates. The measures will be calculated for 55,405 programs at all types of institutions, with the vast majority of programs at public two-year institutions. There is still discussion about how the data will be disseminated. The Committee members engaged in a discussion with Mr. Bergeron about the data, such as which employers are covered by the Social Security database, availability of earnings data to schools, students that will be included in the calculations, and how institutions’ compliance with the rule will be monitored. Mr. Bergeron noted that the agreement to obtain data from the Social Security Administration is limited to the programs covered by the gainful employment regulation. Committee members expressed an interest in exploring how such partnerships could be enhanced to improve the availability of employment data for consumer information purposes.

Following the discussion of the gainful employment regulations, the Committee continued its discussion of progression and completion measures and agreed to continue the discussion the following day. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Friday, June 3, 2011

Dr. Bailey convened the meeting at 9:02 a.m. and summarized the previous day’s discussion about the recommendations related to progression and completion measures. The Committee continued its discussion of the working group’s recommendation to clarify the definition of degree-seeking and agreed that many of the technical issues related to what is or is not considered degree-seeking behavior would need to be assessed and further discussed.

***Progression and Completion Measures
Working Group Recommendation***

Committee Discussion

5. Strengthen the reporting of transfer-out students for institutions that have transfer as a part of their mission.

The Committee agreed with this recommendation; however members discussed the difficulty institutions have in accessing data on whether and to where students transfer. The Committee considered possible recommendations it could make to improve accessibility to student data, such as strengthening linkages between state data systems or developing a national system of linking data. Committee members agreed that recommending better reporting of transfer-out would be challenging to implement if they did not also recommend better ways for institutions to access the data.

6. Create a (potentially non-mandatory) reporting element that combines the following outcomes: “lateral transfers to two-year or < two-year institutions” and “still enrolled at your institution in the term immediately after the tracking period.”

The Committee agreed that it is important for two-year colleges to be able to count students who are still enrolled as it is a measure of student progress. Since it will be incumbent upon an institution to be able to determine whether a student is still enrolled at the institution or at another institution, and the availability of such information can be limited, the Committee discussed whether or not institutions should be required to report the data.

7. Allow for an independent and discrete reporting of outcomes for awards and transfers; do not report using a hierarchy.

The Committee discussed these two recommendations at the same time since they were related. The Committee concurred that graduation and transfer are both generally positive outcomes at two-year institutions. The Committee discussed the concept of “transfer preparation” and raised concerns about how institutions might interpret the concept differently and the impact it could have on meaningful data collection. The Committee would like more information about how institutions defined transfer-preparation before agreeing to a definition.

8. Create an “any degree/certificate/transfer-prepared/transfer to a 4-year institution outcome” reporting category that unduplicates the count/rate of these higher-order outcomes for two-year institutions.

***Progression and Completion Measures
Working Group Recommendation***

Committee Discussion

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| 9. Identify remedial/non-remedial cohorts in GR200 | The Committee agreed with the recommendation to report on graduation and transfer rates for remedial and non-remedial students. While the Committee recognized that there is no common definition of classifying a student as remedial and it may be a challenge to collect detailed data on remedial students, data on remedial students would provide insights into how institutions deal with students of varying level of academic preparedness and would inform conversations at the local, state, and federal level about K-12 and postsecondary policies. |
| 10. Delineate tracking period for part-time cohorts in GR200. | The Committee agreed that if a part-time cohort is added to the GR200, there would need to be a separate timeframe to measure graduation and transfer. The Committee agreed that measuring progress at various time periods was important. |
| 11. Collect headcount by zip code in the IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey. | The Committee agreed with this recommendation in principle, but did not think it was practical to implement in the short term. |

Session #2: Recommendations Regarding Alternative Measures

Mr. Kevin Carey shared with the Committee the recommendations from the Alternative Measures working group. The working group's draft report is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/third-meeting.html>.

Prior to reviewing specific recommendations, Mr. Carey noted the challenges that colleges have when measuring student learning and employment because there is not common agreement on what should be measured, and often data related to learning and success in employment are not readily available to colleges. Despite the challenges, the working group believed that it is important for the Committee to make recommendations on how to improve the measurement of these outcomes.

Since many institutions are already collecting employment and student learning data for other entities, the Committee discussed the merits of requiring institutions to report such data to IPEDS or having institutions voluntarily report data on their own websites. Several committee members believed that

aggregating data already being collected would be a good first step, while other members were concerned about how the information would be used since it would not be comparable across institutions.

Employment Outcomes

The Committee discussed whether institutions should be required to report or disclose employment outcome data that are already collected. The Committee discussed how it could make recommendations that would complement data required to be disclosed under gainful employment regulations. Since the regulations require institutions to disclose employment rates for certificate programs, the Committee could provide guidance on how institutions could disclose employment rates for associate's degree programs. Committee members continued to weigh the costs and benefits of a voluntary or mandatory collection of employment outcome data. Several members noted that having institutions report through IPEDS data that are already collected would make the data more readily accessible, and others again raised concerns about collecting incomparable data. The Committee also discussed the challenges that institutions face in gathering the necessary data to measure employment.

Student Learning

Mr. Carey shared the working group's recommendations related to student learning outcomes. Due to complexities and variations in how to measure student learning, the working group believed that institutions should not be required to report this data. However, the Department of Education could offer incentives to colleges and provide resources and/or technical assistance to colleges that would allow them to collect data on student learning measures and report results publicly. The Committee agreed that there is still more work that needs to be done on identifying ways to measure student learning. Members discussed how the Committee could make recommendations that would help accreditation agencies and others in their efforts to encourage institutions to measure and report on student learning. The Committee agreed that there is some data readily available and comparable related to students' success on occupational licensure exams. The Committee discussed the various learning assessments used by institutions and generally agreed that many of these instruments are still in the development phase. The Committee discussed how its recommendations could influence the development of learning assessments and considered the merits of making assessment data more available and whether it should be aggregated at a national level.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of how the final report will be developed, the process for Committee members to provide input on the report, and the purpose of the next meeting scheduled in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.

/s/ Thomas R. Bailey
Chair

06/22/2011
Date