

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

The fourth meeting of the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) Committee on Measures of Student Success (Committee) was held on Wednesday, September 7, 2011 at 1990 K Street, NW in Washington, DC.

Established by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA), 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
- Ms. Alisa Federico Cunningham, Vice President, Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Mr. Kevin Carey, Policy Director, Education Sector
- Mr. Jacob Fraire, Assistant Vice President for Educational Alliances, Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
- Ms. Isabel Friedman, Student, University of Pennsylvania
- Dr. Millie Garcia, President, California State University (CSU), Dominguez Hills
- Mr. Harold Levy, Managing Director, Palm Ventures
- Mr. Patrick Perry, Vice Chancellor, California Community College System
- Dr. Belle Wheelan, President, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges

Invited guests included:

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

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Welcome**

Dr. Thomas Bailey, Committee chair, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and welcomed the group. He outlined the goals of the meeting, which included discussing the Committee's draft

report and determining whether the Committee would agree to accept the draft report for submission to the Secretary.

Dr. Bailey stated that the Committee's discussions have helped inform conversations about measuring student success across all sectors of higher education. He commended the Committee for identifying a set of guiding principles and for developing forward-thinking recommendations that aim to provide a more complete picture of student success at two-year institutions than is currently the case. Other members of the Committee echoed Dr. Bailey's sentiment, concurring that the limitations of the current federal graduation rate measure must be addressed. Dr. Bailey also reaffirmed the Committee's recognition that the Committee must recommend multiple measures of student success to account for a broader set of outcomes that students who attend two-year institutions achieve.

The Committee then discussed each section of the draft report.

### **Discussion of the Introduction and Guiding Principles**

Committee members suggested that the report should more explicitly state the limitations of the federal graduation rates currently collected through the Department's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the importance of gathering broader and more inclusive measures of student success. Additionally, Committee members suggested that the report articulate how such measures could be used by different stakeholders such as students, policymakers, and researchers.

Committee members also affirmed the guiding principles discussed in the previous meeting but provided additional suggestions for refining the language included in the report. For example, the Committee agreed that while recommendations should be feasible under the Department's current statutory and regulatory constraints, the Committee should also provide the Secretary with recommendations that may require changes to the law or to regulations. The Committee also added that measures of student success should be comparable across different student subgroups and across various sectors of higher education.

### **Discussion of Findings and Recommendations**

The Committee then discussed the findings and recommendations in the draft report. Committee members provided comments regarding improvements that could be made to the organization of the recommendations, such as including them more explicitly in the introduction section and incorporating a few of them under the same sections.

Committee members discussed recommendations regarding broadening the coverage of student graduation data to reflect the diverse student populations at two-year colleges. Specifically, Committee members discussed the identification of part-time, degree-seeking students; students who were not college ready; and students who received federal financial aid in the IPEDS graduation rate cohorts. Committee members discussed various methods that could be used for identifying such students, but suggested that a panel of technical experts might most appropriately identify the best approach. Additionally, the Committee discussed tracking periods for part-time, degree-seeking cohorts and suggested that NCES use data from sample surveys to identify the most appropriate tracking period. Committee members noted that where it can, the Department should use administrative databases to determine graduation rates for specific cohorts of students, such as those who received federal financial aid, to avoid placing undue reporting burden on institutions.

Committee members also discussed recommendations regarding the collection of student progression and completion data. Specifically, Committee members discussed how best to document transfer outcomes such as transfer to a two-year institution, transfer to a four-year institution, and substantial preparation for transfer. However, Committee members noted that institutional and state capacities for tracking students who transfer vary greatly, depending on the institution's or state's data infrastructure. The Committee suggested that the Department continue to incentivize improvements to state data systems through its grant programs and through the development of common education data standards. The Committee also discussed strengthening the Committee's recommendation for a national privacy-protected, student unit record system.

Regarding the Committee's recommendation for the Department to provide institutions with improved technical assistance to help them meet statutory disclosure requirements, Dr. Archie Cubarrubia, Designated Federal Official for the Committee, provided an update on technical guidance that NCES has developed to help two-year institutions meet the graduation rate disclosure requirement in the HEOA. Dr. Cubarrubia mentioned that the report containing this technical guidance was being finalized. The Committee agreed that the Department should widely distribute the technical guidance, once finalized, to help institutions meet the graduation rate disclosure requirements. The Committee also suggested that the Department develop templates—such as the Department's net price calculator template—that institutions could voluntarily adopt to help them meet statutory disclosure requirements.

Finally, Committee members suggested strengthening its recommendations to encourage institutions to collect, disclose, and report data on student learning and employment after

college. Regarding students' employment outcomes after college, Committee members discussed various ways to incentivize the collection of students' wage and debt data. The Committee suggested that the Department make available in a centralized manner data resulting from its gainful employment regulations. The Committee also suggested that the Department help increase states' capacity for sharing employment or unemployment insurance wage data and improve institutions' access to such data systems. Regarding student learning outcomes, the Committee agreed that although measuring student learning is critical, assessments of student learning are still being developed, and there are no agreed upon measures of student learning that are comparable across programs or across institutions. The Committee discussed that since decisions about quality should be left to institutions, the Department may not be served well by specific recommendations around student learning outcomes. As such, the Committee discussed how its recommendations might be worded more strongly to incentivize institutions to make publicly available outcomes of assessments of student learning that institutions already report to accrediting agencies, state higher education agencies, or voluntary accountability initiatives. The Committee also recommended that the Department convene representatives of two-year institutions to share promising practices on measuring and disclosing information about alternative measures of student success such as student learning and employment.

The Committee concluded that further revisions to the draft report were needed prior to deciding whether to accept it for submission to the Secretary. Once additional revisions are completed, the Committee will meet briefly in November 2011 to finalize its report.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.

/s/ Thomas R. Bailey  
Chair

11/29/11  
Date