

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

The first meeting of the U.S. Department of Education's Committee on Measures of Student Success (Committee) was held on Wednesday, October 20, 2010 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
- Ms. Alisa Federico Cunningham, Vice President, Institute for Higher Education Policy
- 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
- Dr. Sharon Kristovich, Higher Education Consultant
- Mr. Harold Levy, Managing Director, Palm Ventures
- Ms. Geri Palast, Executive Director, Campaign for Fiscal Equity
- 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
- Dr. Belle Wheelan, President, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges

Invited guests included:

- Dr. Eduardo Ochoa, Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education
- Dr. Thomas Weko, Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education
- Mr. Dane Linn, National Governors Association
- Mr. Kent Phillippe, American Association of Community Colleges
- Ms. Andrea Sykes, Laurium Evaluation Group

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Thomas Bailey, Committee chair, called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. and welcomed members to the inaugural meeting of the Committee on Measures of Student Success.

Senior officials from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) also welcomed Committee members. Dr. Eduardo Ochoa, Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education greeted the Committee and emphasized its role in meeting the President's goal of the United States having the most educated workforce in the world by 2020. He shared that achieving this goal will require a large percentage of the population to have some postsecondary education—whether a certificate, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. Dr. Ochoa discussed the critical role that two-year colleges will play, as these institutions provide workforce training, prepare students for transfer, and offer opportunities for lifelong learning. Given the complex mission of two-year degree-granting institutions, developing better measures of student success is important and these measures need to accurately gauge how institutions are progressing in meeting these multiple missions.

Dr. Thomas Weko, Associate Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) also welcomed the Committee and echoed the importance of its work, noting the prominent role that two-year institutions play in the United States postsecondary education system. He asked the Committee to think about the five measures of student success that prospective students and families need and want to know about and how two-year institutions should disclose that information. Dr. Weko suggested that the Committee think broadly and not limit its recommendations to data that are already being disclosed and reported to the Department, but to think about information that students and families would need. He also discussed the number of efforts related to student success already underway and asked the Committee to be mindful of how its recommendations might fit within the larger context of this work. He also mentioned that the Committee should consider how its recommendations would affect institutional reporting burden.

Following remarks from Department officials, Dr. Bailey provided some background information about graduation and completion rates as they are currently being used by researchers and policymakers. He shared with the Committee a chart prepared by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (<http://higheredinfo.org>) showing graduation rates derived from data reported by institutions to NCES. He noted that these graduation rates may be dismissed because of limitations in how they are calculated, but he asked the Committee to think about what can be learned from the data as they

are currently collected. Dr. Bailey also spoke about how the Committee could build on other efforts already underway.

Dr. Bailey noted three groups of outcome measures that he would like the group to consider:

- Progression measures, such as the percentage of students who progress through courses, transfer, or graduate;
- Employment outcome measures, such as how much a student has earned after college; and
- Student learning outcome measures that indicate how much a student has learned during college.

Committee members then introduced themselves and provided some background on their experiences and their vision for the work of the Committee. Members discussed how students and their needs should be at the center of any discussion about success measures. Some expressed an interest in how current measures gauge the success of low-income and racial and ethnic minority students. Others emphasized the importance of developing student metrics that more accurately reflect the comprehensive mission of two-year institutions and the diversity of students that these institutions serve.

Members also discussed the role of states, K-16 systems, and accrediting agencies in measuring various facets of student success. One member noted that while many other organizations have efforts to measure student success, data collected and made public by the federal government are often more trusted. Thus, according to the member, the Committee should recognize its ability to bring more credibility to the conversation of measuring student success. As a reminder, members also noted the importance of not placing onerous burdens on two-year institutions and developing measures that will be useful to students and families.

Session 1: Defining the Issues

Ms. Andrea Sykes, President of Laurium Evaluation Group and technical writer for the Committee, presented the background paper prepared for the Committee's first meeting. Ms. Sykes discussed the statutory language creating the Committee, the two focuses of its work, a more detailed discussion of how graduation rate data are collected and reported, efforts by NCES to improve the reporting of graduation rate data, and a summary of external efforts in the field to develop alternative measures of student success.

Ms. Sykes also discussed how graduation rates are both a reporting and disclosure requirement. Each year institutions must report on the graduation and completion rates of a specific cohort of students in the Graduation Rate Survey (GRS) of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Institutions with a mission to prepare students for transfer also report a transfer-out rate in the IPEDS GRS component.

Following the presentation, Committee members discussed issues related to calculating and disclosing graduation or completion rates by two-year degree-granting institutions. In general, members noted the limitations of the current graduation or completion rates reported by two-year institutions to the Department through IPEDS.

Other major themes of discussion included:

Defining Success

Some members questioned how “success” is defined in the Student Right to Know Act (SRK) and discussed the importance of including post-college measures such as employment. For instance, a student who leaves an institution without completing his or her program to take a well-paying job would consider him or herself a success, while current statutory measures, would not consider the student successful. Similarly, one member stated that if success is only defined as completion or progression and not learning, then it creates perverse incentives for institutions to change standards for completion or graduation.

Student Populations Excluded from Current Measures

Members noted that the cohort of students used in the IPEDS GRS component is full-time, first-time students, which represents only a small percentage of most two-year institutions’ student populations. Part-time, non-degree, or non-credit students—which are not included in SRK—typically comprise a large percentage of their student population, and are not being included in cohorts used for graduation rate reporting.

Transfer and Other Student Enrollment Patterns

Members recognized one of the many roles for two-year institutions is to prepare students for transfer. As such, they expressed an interest in strengthening the reporting of transfer-out rates reported by institutions to IPEDS. However, they noted challenges in sharing data across institutions on students who have transferred and earned a degree.

Members also discussed other patterns of student enrollment including “reverse transfer” students (students who transfer from a four-year college transfer to a two-year college) and concurrently

enrolled students who attend two-year and four-year institutions simultaneously or are simultaneously enrolled in high school and college.

Some members suggested that the period of time for counting when a student completes a program (currently at 100, 150, and 200 percent of the normal program completion time) is inadequate for capturing those students who may be enrolled part-time or who may be taking only one course at a time. However, one member noted that recent research has found that including transfer-in students in the cohort used to calculate graduation rates would increase graduation rates more than would extending the duration that cohort members are followed.

Further, the Committee engaged in a discussion about the role of student intention in identifying eligibility for inclusion in a cohort of “degree- and certificate-seeking students” defined by SRK. While some members believed that gathering data from students on whether they intended to pursue a degree or not would be a better way to assess success, other members indicated the poor reliability of intent measures and suggested utilizing student behavior as the basis for measuring success instead.

Remedial Education

Members noted that measures currently used by the Department do not capture the progress of students who are underprepared for college and need remedial education. Some mentioned the importance of measuring student progress to different momentum points through the “remediation ladder” and recognizing student achievement of these momentum points as successes for the institution.

Student Learning Outcomes

Committee members provided contrasting perspectives on recommendations related to student learning outcomes. Some Committee members felt that it was more appropriate for states, accrediting agencies, and faculty to address student learning outcomes. Other members thought the Committee should at least publicly recognize the importance of measuring student learning outcomes.

Student Success Data Reported to Other Sources

Committee members expressed an interest in learning more about what data states currently collect, what institutions report to accrediting agencies, and how those do or do not overlap with current federal reporting and disclosure requirements.

Dr. Bailey concluded the session by summarizing the key issues discussed by the Committee and emphasized the need to set priorities, identify availability of data across institutions, and noted that the Committee will need to determine whether measures that can be reported by most institutions, but not all institutions, would be worthy of discussion.

Session #2: Surveying the Landscape

Representatives from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the National Governors Association (NGA) were invited to present on their respective organizations' initiatives related to the measurement of student success. Dr. Bailey shared that the presentations were arranged so that Committee members could become familiar with external efforts related to measures of student success already underway and determine how the Committee's recommendations could fit within those efforts.

Mr. Kent Phillippe, Associate Vice President, Research and Student Success, AACC, discussed the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). The VFA is a collaborative effort "by community colleges for community colleges" to design alternative success measures for two-year institutions. Mr. Phillippe noted that the intended audience for the VFA measures is local and state officials, federal entities, and funders. The three key measures in the VFA include those related to (1) student persistence and outcomes; (2) workforce, economic, and community development outcomes, and (3) student learning outcomes.

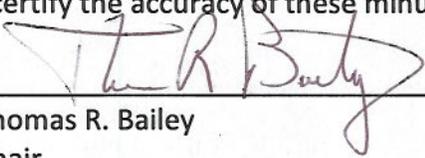
Mr. Dane Linn, Director, Center for Best Practices, NGA, discussed how the NGA's Complete to Compete effort has focused on developing completion, efficiency, and effectiveness indicators to be used by states to measure student success at all institution types. Fifteen states have agreed to report data on the completion metrics. NGA will be encouraging more states to report on these measures after the November elections when they convene the new group of governors. NGA hopes that the metrics will evolve over time and will be releasing a technical guide for states to use in reporting data for the measurement of these metrics.

Following the presentations, Committee members engaged in a discussion about how their work relates (or does not relate) to what AACC, NGA, and others are currently implementing. One member noted that if the Committee can coalesce around specific measures, then it would be a reliable and consistent framework for a national conversation. Committee members concluded the conversation with a brief discussion on the appropriateness of prioritizing metrics.

Next Steps for the Committee

Dr. Bailey stated that the Committee will meet again on February 9-10, 2011. The Committee members discussed forming working groups and how these groups would proceed. There was discussion on whether each group should focus on a set of measures or groups of students. Based on input from the Committee, one working group will focus on progression measures and the second group would look at alternative measures, each considering groups of students and those who might be missing from the conversation, such as concurrently enrolled students or other outliers. By February, each group will produce a draft product for the Committee members to review and discuss at the meeting. NCES staff will provide background materials and can support the working groups as needed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.



Thomas R. Bailey
Chair

11/29/10

Date