



# IHEP Institutional Policy Forum:

## *Getting Across the Finish Line with Project Win-Win*

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# Putting it Together:

## *Project Win-Win At The Finish Line*

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# Ground Rules

- We're not going to issue pronouncements today, or release white papers, nor pout with crisis messages, nor offer airy platitudes for the choir.
- You have, in this room, folks from 61 associate's degree-granting institutions in 9 states, and their state coordinators, who each spent 2 to 3 years putting a story together, piece-by-piece.
- They are going to share their sweat and tell you what they learned in the trenches, and challenge you to take that learning and make a real difference in the lives of students.





**Do you need all those  
musicians?**

**YES, WE DO!**

# What does Project Win-Win seek?

## What does it assume?

- Finding the eligibles: the unrecognized attainment of community college students.
- There are a lot of former students walking around empty-handed—and there shouldn't be.
- Most people think degrees just happen—they don't! You have to put a lot together to make it happen.
- So you get what we call Project Win-Win (one for the institution; one for the student).



# Why did we choose America's forgotten degree?



	Started college at age 20 or less	Started college at age 21 or more	Everybody
Started in a 4-year college and earned bachelor's anywhere	63%	21%	58%
Started in community college and earned associate's degree anywhere	21%	6%	14%

# What does this national portrait say and suggest?

- **NCES' BPS 2003-2009 is the only source you can use to get this guidance now**
- **The data underscore the key role of age at entrance on completion**
- **It's obvious where degree completion suffers the most---and pundits and politicians bang the table in predictable ways**
- **Hypothesis: Win-Win methodology will increase associate's completion by 2% across the board. That's 160,000 people.**





# Who undertook Win-Win?

Phase	States	Community Colleges	4-year Institutions
Pilot 9/09 – 5/10	Louisiana, New York, Ohio	6	3
Expansion I 9/10 – 8/13	Louisiana, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Virginia, Wisconsin	22 (includes 6 Pilot institutions)	10 (includes Pilot 3 institutions)
Expansion II 9/11 – 8/13	Florida, Oregon, Michigan	29	0

# STEP 1: Can your institution do this?

Ask your database for all students who:

- Were not enrolled in 2012/2013, or longer
- Initially enrolled any time after 2004 (and initial enrollment can be transfer-in, as it was for an average of 31% in Win-Win schools)
- Cachment period a minimum of 7.5 years
- Threshold credits in the 60-64 range (with Win-Win average transfer-in credits of 37)
- GPA threshold: Whatever required for graduation
- No Associate's earned from institution; no certificates, either.
- Did everybody observe these parameters? No. Was that bothersome? No.



# STEP 1: Identify the Universe of Interest

## Data issues

All the data mavens and flag wavers would be surprised as to how many schools have difficulty doing this because:

- They have never asked tracking questions.
- Their data systems do not contain basic variables necessary for the definition of the universe.
- They changed data systems and have yet to reconcile old and new.
- Central state agencies in Florida and Oregon defined the Universe of Interest *for* the participating institutions, and even they had problems enough to re-do the data.
- Institutions rewrote the algorithms 3 or 4 times. Students fell through the holes.



**Nonetheless, they produced  
an initial number called the  
“Universe of Interest”**

**130,630** total

**(with an institutional range of 22 to 32,000)**

**These are real people. What do you do with  
them?**



## STEP 2: Identify Students who Received Degrees or Re-enrolled Elsewhere

Match the Universe with state and NSC data to drop these students from the pool

### What happens?

- Duplicate counts when students attend more than two institutions in-state.
- State has recorded degrees from inquiring institutions and the institution does not.
- Agreements required between 2-year and 4-year state sectors to share student data. FERPA problems force new IDs for merging.



## STEP 2: Identify Students who Received Degrees or Re-enrolled Elsewhere

### What else happens?

- 40% of the schools skip the state data match because it does not include private institutions, and the agency works with the speed of a turtle in February. NSC is better.
- Yet we have national accounts that pretend state data are sacred and that students never cross state lines! NCES knows better---so does NSC. ED published the interstate migration data a decade ago---and nobody wanted to pay attention. Now they wake up!



## STEP 2: Identify Students who Received Degrees or Re-enrolled Elsewhere

Are those the only students dropped from the Universe of Interest? **No.**

- Some schools added curricular requirements.
- Some schools took out anyone with a financial or disciplinary “hold.”
- Some added residency requirements to the filter.

This is really not the stage at which to add these exclusions; it’s a better guidance to do it after Degree Audit.



## STEP 2: Identify Students who Received Degrees or Re-enrolled Elsewhere

How many were left after the matching process?

**43,136**

(the matching process ate 67% of the Universe of Interest)

- The dinner percentage would have been higher if two of our states had arranged for data exchange between 2-year and 4-year sectors. Some students thus missed turned up later. To repeat: within state data exchange is not automatic.
- And think: if 31% were transfers-in and 60% were transfers out, you have markers of the extent to which student mobility complexifies your actions. We did not ask about overlap here (a mistake on our part).



## STEP 3: The Anvil of Degree Audit, Part I



- Despite credits, GPA, etc., did they *really* qualify?
- Some institutions have developed software with degree templates; most do not have such aids.
- So you get hand-and-eye readings. These average about 10-15 minutes per case. The range is 5 -35 minutes. **10 schools had more than 1,200 cases.**
- Off-the-shelf products included SCT On-Course, CAPP (Sunguard), Degree Works, DARS, and local productions.

## STEP 3: The Anvil of Degree Audit, Part II



- But you get hand-and-eye even after an automated audit, i.e. the software does not pick up nuance.
- You can read based on the student's declared major or with the template of the default transfer degree.
- In general, the degree requirements are those currently in effect, but you must decide which catalogue is in effect for each student. This can be complicated!
- You begin to smell the problems that turned up. You will hear about them at this afternoon's panels. I am not going to steal the stories of those who forged this tough one!

## STEP 3: The Anvil of Degree Audit, Part III

So what did 60 reporting institutions come up with after Degree Audit?

- 6,455 “eligibles”
- 20,835 “potentials” (with a maximum of 9-12 credits to go)
- 15,867 “neithers”
- That’s out of 43,192 in the starting bin for these schools (Yes! It’s not exactly the same number; some folks fall in at odd times)
- But the story---and the learning---is not over.





# For the record: The demography of the “eligibles”

- Female: 54%
- White: 73%
- Black: 9%
- Latino: 3%
- Other/unknown: 15%
- Entered by age 20: 63%

*Institutions did not judge Pell grants  
to be a proxy for low-income.*



**So let's stop, get rid of the numbers, and move into the learning.**

**That's where piece-by-piece, ounce-by-ounce, really plays out!**

# How many “eligibles” actually received degrees?

- They constituted 14.9% of those who went through Degree Audit. We had predicted 16%.
- But only 4,260 of 6,455 (66%) actually received degrees. Why?
- First, 20% of them could not be located.
- That would be okay if local institutional degree award policies were not overwhelmingly “opt-in”



# What's "opt-in"? And what are the alternatives?

- Opt-in requires the student to apply for the degree, and in most cases to pay a fee for the degree, and in some cases to be registered in the term in which the degree is awarded. **41 of 61 Win-Win schools were "opt-in."**
- The dominant alternative is "opt-out," i.e. the degree is awarded unless the student actively declines. If the student is not located and contacted, the student gets the degree anyway.
- The second alternative we call "institutional override," i.e. automatic degree award.
- The higher the proportion of institutions in a system that hold to an opt-in degree award policy, the lower the degree yield, even when your percentage of "eligibles" is near the predicted level for everyone (about 16% of those who go through Degree Audit).



# Which degree should be awarded?

**The default is the A.G.S., a degree that is not as attractive to students who thought they were candidates for something else.**



# How do you find students to award degrees?

- Remember 20% of eligibles couldn't be found.
- E-mail, phone, USPS, AlumniFinder, PeopleFinder, pipl, Anchor, DMV, and something called QAS: Win-Win institutions tried a variety of locating systems. Social media don't work.
- Take a high transfer-in rate, a high transfer out rate, and folks you can't locate, and you have a highly mobile student population that complexifies tracking. A chunk of this will be military (ask Columbia College), and we don't do a good job there.



# What did Win-Win schools find to be some notable curricular barriers to awarding degrees?

- For people who have already earned 51, 56, 60 credits, remediation is not a principal barrier. Instead, we find:
- “Computer Competency” defined as Microsoft Office (and when is the last time you used Access?)
- “College-level math” defined as the default “College Algebra,” when plenty of other options exist
- P.E. and health-related course requirements
- You will hear some others, and ways they were sometimes overcome in this afternoon’s panels.





## What Win-Win learned: procedural barriers to awarding degrees?

- Separate graduation applications and fees (build the fee into regular student service fees; SUNY does this).
- Residency requirements for multi-institutional attendees (as in, “who owns this student?”), and the question of who trumps who---the state or the regional accreditor---in matters of required residency and recency.
- Imagined policies on federal financial aid and sub-bacc degrees (the only degree that shuts the door is the bachelor’s, but folks don’t seem to know that).

# What did we learn about “feeder” projects based on credit “kick-backs”?

- Problem #1 is FERPA: The student has to agree to the sharing of records within the same state system, and a third of them don't.
- Problem #2: Half of the students who do agree don't begin to qualify for associate's degrees from their community colleges of origin.
- The rate of return is low, but the effort is worthy for what it reveals.
- A lot of preparatory work is necessary, e.g. on sharing records. Classifying the undertaking as “research” may not satisfy FERPA regulations.
- You will get the details this afternoon from institutions in New York and Louisiana that went through this process.



# And what about the “potentials,” who everybody thinks will return to school?

- Some of them have already returned while you were working through.
- Some of them (so far, 16 percent) can't be found.
- Another 20 percent are missing college-level math, and are not very promising returns.
- And things called “life” get in the way.
- The content and method of the contact process is critical in this effort.



# Confession: A third of Win-Win schools did not finish their work on “potentials”

- They underestimated the time this process takes, especially if you can't find 16% and an overlapping 20% are missing required math hence are low likelihood completers.
- All Win-Win schools spent the bulk of their time on Degree Audits, and lost time for other reasons.
- The bottom line of 875 students out of 20,900 returning is disappointing, particularly given their initial profiles. You will hear some revealing stories this afternoon about what these students say when you get them on the phone.





# What have participants recommended to improve the Win-Win process in the future?

- No institution should be allowed to start until its data system passes muster.
- The initial steps to arrive at the universe for Degree Audit should take no more than 1 month (you get an accurate snapshot that doesn't require continuous re-do).
- Put the registrar in charge from the beginning.
- Hire retired Deans of Students and IR folks to do your Degree Audits. They work faster.
- Post data and their revisions directly on a centrally accessible URL with a master QC officer
- Pass over the “potentials” to advisors and admissions officers, and give them 4 months to finish.



## This one has been about learning:

- **Across 9 states and 61 institutions**
- **Because not everyone does Win-Win the same way---even in the same state...**
- **Or the same way they began to do it---in the same institution...**
- **Or with the same people with which they started.**
- **But there is a striking convergence in what they realize and how they change!**



## And, as participants would add:

- “You can’t let a machine award degrees.”
- But you can open and close windows of degree eligibility with alacrity!
- There ain’t no easy kick-back of credits for vertical transfer students.
- Do unto your current students what you have learned to do for your Win-Win students!
- You will hear more from the respondents to this presentation---and about what putting it together means on the pulses!



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