IHEP STATEMENT ON COLLEGE SCORECARD IMPROVEMENTS

Washington, DC – Yesterday, the U.S. Department of Education announced new improvements to the College Scorecard. IHEP Vice President of Policy Research, Mamie Voight, released the following statement:

“Yesterday, the Department of Education took several important steps to enhance the College Scorecard, empowering students and families to make well-informed choices about their postsecondary education. As an organization that continually advocates for the use of high-quality data to improve student outcomes and promote equity, the Institute for Higher Education Policy commends the Department for maintaining and strengthening this key consumer tool. In particular, the addition of data on outcomes for part-time and transfer students, on institutions that primarily grant certificates, and preliminary program-level data on student debt makes the information even more useful and reflective of today’s students.

“From student parents to student veterans to low-income students working to make ends meet, many of today’s students do not follow the traditional pathway of first-time, full-time students. Yet, all students deserve to be counted, which is why we applaud the Scorecard’s addition of graduation rates for transfer and part-time students. In the future, we urge policymakers to strengthen these outcomes data further by reporting the types of institutions to which students transfer and their outcomes after transfer, offering more timely measures of completion, and reporting outcomes disaggregated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

“We also commend the Department for continuing steps to provide students with program-level information by releasing preliminary data on student loan debt by field of study. We hope that the Department will continue to add program-level data, especially on post-college earnings, to the analytic files and the consumer tool to help students choose not only which institution to attend, but also which program to pursue.

“While these actions are a step forward for students, they also shine a light on a major barrier to transparency: the current ban on student-level data. Under current law, the College Scorecard’s data will continue to be limited by, for example, omitting from earnings metrics about 30 percent of college students—those who do not receive federal financial aid. The bipartisan, bicameral College Transparency Act would solve these problems. It would overturn the ban on student-level data, empowering students and families to make well-informed choices about their education, allowing policymakers and institutions to craft evidence-based policies and practices to help students succeed and to close equity gaps, and helping employers build the talent pipeline they need to grow the economy.

“This week’s improvements to the College Scorecard are an important step forward. But, to fully address the information needs of today’s students and to generate the type of data necessary to
unveil and address racial and socioeconomic inequities, lawmakers should pass the College Transparency Act."