



STATEMENT OF POSTSECONDARY DATA COLLABORATIVE
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PostsecData Partners Commend Department of Education for Data Transparency

Partners Offer Praise, Call for Continuous Improvement and Student Unit Record System

As members of the Postsecondary Data Collaborative (PostsecData), a group of organizations committed to the use of high-quality postsecondary data to improve student outcomes, we applaud the Department of Education for releasing an abundance of new data on higher education alongside the redesigned College Scorecard. The new measures of college access, success, affordability, and workforce outcomes can inform decisions made by students, policymakers, and institutions in ways never before possible.

Of critical importance, these data disaggregate many new outcomes, including debt and repayment, by low-income and first-generation status to provide information on how our nation's most vulnerable students fare at individual institutions. Additionally, for the first time, students can see data on earnings of typical students leaving each college and university, informing decisions about college choice and student borrowing.

The data release is detailed, well-documented, and accessible to analysts, researchers, and developers—the very people with the knowledge and skills needed to translate complex information for students and policymakers. Over the coming months, we aim to share our collective expertise about postsecondary education with app developers to promote quality tools that answer students' most pressing questions.

While we enthusiastically support this data release, we also recognize a need for continuous improvement in data quality. For example, institution-level data provide important signals about performance and outcomes, but program-level data – particularly for earnings – are necessary to help students decide not only where to attend college, but what to study. Also, because of restrictions on which data the Department can access, many of the measures are limited to only federally-aided students, omitting the 43 percent of college students who do not receive federal aid. Furthermore, the student facing Scorecard omits institutions that primarily grant certificates, overlooking a core group of higher education institutions, including many community colleges.

To remedy these remaining problems, we urge creation of a well-designed, student unit record system that protects student privacy and security. Such a system could enhance data quality by incorporating data on non-aided students, allowing for program-level reporting more easily, measuring student mobility more effectively, and managing institutional reporting burden.

As experts explore the data in more depth, we hope the Department will remain open to dialogue about ways to enhance data quality even further in future data releases. We are encouraged by the Department's persistence in evaluating the wealth of data at its disposal and commend its commitment to transparency in support of student success.

This statement is supported by the following organizations:



Association for Institutional Research (AIR)
Association of Public Data Users
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Campaign for College Opportunity
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Complete College America
Consumer Action
Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)
The Education Trust
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