Protecting Students, Advancing Data: A Series on Data Privacy and Security in Higher Education

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POSTSEC DATA

Dear Reader:

At the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), we focus relentlessly on students and their needs—what they need to access college, afford college, and succeed in and after college. This student-centered ethos shapes all that we do. It drives our tireless commitment to high-quality postsecondary education data, which we know is a necessary tool to spur better college outcomes and address students' needs, especially for low-income students and students of color. This approach led us to launch the Postsecondary Data Collaborative (PostsecData) in 2014, which has since spear-headed the charge for equity-centered postsecondary data policies.

IHEP's student-driven mission is also the impetus behind our latest initiative: PostsecData's Privacy and Security Advisory Board (PSAB). Designed to keep issues of privacy and security at the forefront of postsecondary data conversations and to be proactive in addressing field needs, PSAB brings together experts in the fields of data privacy, security, and postsecondary data. Through the Board, IHEP aims to coalesce the right people to inform policies that seek to protect students' privacy alongside their right to postsecondary outcome information. We can no longer pit these rights against each other if we intend to serve students well.

Over the last year, IHEP convened the Board, composed of thirteen privacy and security experts and twelve higher education experts, to explore the most pressing data privacy and security issues of the day. Once the group identified research gaps, IHEP commissioned a three-part paper series aimed at addressing them. The full Board helped to shape the final products for maximum utility in the field, providing policymakers with updated, accessible resources with which to develop policy.

Protecting Students, Advancing Data: A Series on Data Privacy and Security in Higher Education is a three-part guide that centers privacy and security as a top priority for policymakers as they develop sound postsecondary data policy. The series provides in-depth but accessible research on current federal privacy and security laws and practices, lessons learned on policy development and implementation in one state, and concepts to expand and improve data-sharing practices in the future.

The three-part paper series includes the following briefs:

- *Protecting Privacy and Information Security in a Federal Postsecondary Student Data System* by Joanna Grama of Vantage Consulting

- *The Emergence of Data Privacy Conversations and State Responses* by Rachel Anderson of the Data Quality Campaign

- *Postsecondary Data Infrastructure: What is Possible Today* by Amy O'Hara of the Georgetown University Massive Data Institute

Students have a right to information about college outcomes. They also have a right to trust that their data are protected, secured, and used responsibly. Supported by the brainpower, counsel, and research of seasoned experts, we can ensure this is not an either/or proposition. We hope these papers—and the Board—ignite continued discussions about policies and practices that can both protect students and meet their needs.

Sincerely,

Michelle Asha Cooper, PhD