

Independent Institutions' Information Resources Committee
July 17, 2006
10:00 a.m.

Members Present

Ms. Carol Bickley
Ms. Barbara Broome
Ms. Tamara Burgess
Ms. Kendra Burnette
Ms. Clarissa Davis
Mr. Randy Dill
Ms. Sandy Dowdle
Ms. Christine Goforth
Mr. Jack Hamilton
Mr. Rock McCaskill
Mr. Don Pierce
Ms. Pam Ponder
Ms. Lucy Quinn
Ms. Letticia Ramlal
Mr. Raymond Ruff
Dr. Mary Gene Ryan
Ms. Betty Williams

CHE Members Present

Ms. Camille Brown
Dr. Tajuana Massie
Ms. Stephanie Reynolds
Ms. Sandra Rhyne
Ms. Melissa Santilli
Ms. Karen Wham

Guests

Mr. Jake Jacobs, SDE
Mr. Tom Olsen, SDE
Mr. Charlie FitzSimons
Mr. Wayne Landrith

The Independent Institutions' Information Resources Committee (IIIRC) met in the first floor conference room of the building housing the Commission on Higher Education on July 17, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Brown called the meeting to order and immediately moved to the South Carolina Longitudinal Data System presentation.

Ms. Brown turned the meeting over to Mr. Tom Olsen and Mr. Jake Jacobs to discuss the South Carolina Longitudinal Data System. Mr. Olsen began by explaining that last year a project was begun that assigned id numbers to all students in South Carolina public schools. The number and the project is called SUNS which stands for Student Unique Number System. As soon a student is enrolled into a S.C. public school they are assigned a unique number and that number stays with the student throughout their K-12 career. If a student leaves the public school system and goes to the private school system but then returns to the public school system at a later time, that same number will be retrieved and will continue to be associated with that student to track that student's progress. South Carolina is one of the first states in the nation to be able to automate the assignment of these numbers. The advantage we have over most states is that all of our public schools use the same student management system, SASI. Because all of the schools are using the same system, the process has been made a lot easier for assigning numbers and automating the process.

Prior to the use of SUNS we were dependent on SSN or SASI permanent ID number. SASI permanent ID number is a number that is assigned to a child when they are put into the SASI database. This number does not follow a child from one school district to another school district. The problem with SSN is that a family may have five children in school, and the parents may give the school one SSN for all five of those children. The SUNS number finally gives us a way to make sure that we can track a child through out their career. We started assigning numbers in spring 2005 and right now we are at about 98% complete.

Ms. Brown asked, "When do you anticipate having the SUNS numbers included on the students transcripts?" Mr. Olsen answered, "We have not set a date. Some districts will start using it this year. We have not issued any guidance to the districts at this point as to when they need to start putting the numbers on the transcripts."

Ms. Brown informed the group CHE wants to be able to collect the SUNS number from the institutions. It will not replace the SSN but be an additional data field that CHE collects. No timeframe has been established for higher education to do this, but probably taking place within the next couple of years.

The question was asked, "What's the amount of mobility between districts?" Mr. Olsen stated this had not been measured so it would be difficult to quantify that information. However, lots of movement occurs in areas where there are multiple districts within the county or large metropolitan areas as well as migrants.

The SUNS project laid the groundwork for the longitudinal data system (LDS). The purpose of the LDS is to establish a data warehouse that will house all of the information collected from the public schools every year. Currently there are four quarterly collections from the SASI database of each school that are uploaded to the Department of Education's database. LDS money is helping us build a data warehouse that will be accessible not only to Department of Education but to the rest of state government and to the educational community throughout the state. The data will be available at student level for those who are authorized to see that individual data and will also make available aggregated data for anyone who has been authorized by the superintendent of education to see that kind of information. The goal is to combine data from several sources in order to get a true picture of how the student is impacted. Not just by the classes they take, but their social environment as well.

The question was presented as to what kind of privacy issues does the Department of Education perceive with this system? Mr. Olsen stated that the first issue is that under FERPA the Department of Education is not allowed to share the data. FERPA states that the Department of Education can only share that data with other educational institutions where they have partnership agreements and only with the knowledge of the parents.

One of the problems school districts have is they run many different applications like the library system, school cafeteria, and transportation. The student demographic information has to be entered separately in each of those applications. Another goal of

this grant is to use the school's interoperability framework (SIF) to automate that process. The SIF standard allows for the electronic exchange of information between different applications. Using the centralized student database (SASI), it will be able to automatically supply to all these other applications. It can also go the other way. The cafeteria system can capture information related to the child's free and reduced lunch status and that information can be returned to SASI. This will reduce the amount of data being entered (no longer requiring duplicate entries) and thus reducing errors in the information. SASI does not allow a lot of data edits be incorporated into the application. With the automation of the data collection, edits will be added that will improve the quality of the data.

Ms. Brown asked, "With the SASI system does the software reside in each district, locally or is it real time back to the Department of Education?" Mr. Olsen answered, "At the school level, SASI is installed at each school. There is a district level installation as well. Each night a process called district integration is performed, which at the district level goes out and scans each database at the school, extracts the information, and consolidates it into a single database at district level. This is the source of the quarterly data extracts at the state level. But the detailed data is actually originated and resides at the schools."

Ms. Brown asked, "Does each of the school districts have the ability to tailor their system? If you have an update to SASI does it automatically flow down to the district?" Mr. Olsen answered, "Unfortunately, it does not automatically flow down. However, they are required to install updates. Some districts take a little more time in doing that than others."

Another major goal of the LDS project is to eliminate paper transcripts with student records as much as possible. SIF will be used to create an electronic system that allows the transmission of student records between schools and districts. Also, several vendors have applications that allow automating the transmission of the transcripts from high schools to higher education. A Request For Proposal is planned with the intentions of adopting one of those applications statewide to allow for the elimination of paper transcripts. A committee is being formed with input from higher education to define the standards for the transcript.

Mr. Landrith asked, "Going forward, have you given any thought to including the private day care sector. As I understand it there are about 36,000 students now in that segment." Mr. Olsen answered, "Not at this point. We have our hands full just with the public schools. We do think that the process may start this year with the pilot that is going to be conducted for early childhood. We have a feeling we are going to be requested to start assigning student unique numbers to children who are in private day care and private pre-K programs. If that happens, that will start the process and I'm not sure how many years that will take. It is a process that will ultimately have students from private schools getting SUNS numbers. If someone can figure out, how we can get the private schools to use an application or database that can allow us to generate this electronic transcript then we will be able to do that. But I think that is a long way off."

One of the purposes of this presentation is that we are trying to elicit questions from our audience and get some feedback as to what kind of information would be beneficial in this database. We know we can collect the data and we how to build a data warehouse. We want to find out beyond the data collections we are already responsible for, how this data can be beneficial to others.

One of the other things we have talked about doing is making it possible for a teacher to get a better overall view of the students in his/her classes. At the beginning of the school year the teachers will be able to use this data warehouse to get a snapshot of their class rosters with information on those students most recent test scores. The public will be able to get a better understanding of how our public schools are doing academically by comparing one school to another school.

Finally, the US Department of Education has an initiative underway that all data the State Department of Education collects will be required to be sent to the U.S. Department of Education electronically. In the past individual offices within the State Department of Education generate reports, and those reports were sent to the US Department of Education. This will meet another of our goals included in this grant.

Ms. Brown stated, “We have been working with the State Department of Education answering questions and discussing both the SUNS and the transcript piece. “ She asked, “Are you planning to do some more detailed meetings in order to determine what type of information higher education entities are interested in obtaining from this database system?” Mr. Olsen responded that we are hoping to start it out of conversations like today’s presentation/meeting and then follow up with more detailed meetings. We are already looking at planning for local level focus groups comprised of teacher and administrators to give us a better idea of what they would like to see out of this database and the kind of questions that they have to be able to answer. I’d like to do the same thing with higher education.

Ms. Goforth asked, “The first thing we will want to know is what kind of data you are collecting? What is available for us to use? Will we be able to use something like the PEER Analysis system and see averages by district or by school for certain test scores so that this information will enable us to service our students better? Also, so that we can see how well they are doing before they come to our school.” Mr. Olsen answered; “I think I will be in a better position to answer those questions in September because a project we are working on right now includes doing a complete data inventory and to build an enterprise level data dictionary. That will give us a method or means to publish a more accurate list of the information we are currently collecting. We are still looking at some other data sources where we don’t have access.

Mr. FitzSimons stated, “As you can see there is some interest in this topic by our independent colleges. Either fortunately or unfortunately our national position in the independent college sector is to not support a student unit record data system. One of our primary concerns is privacy. Tell me what you have built into or are planning to build into this system in respect to privacy controls and protections beyond the random

identifier?” Mr. Jacobs responded, “We are installing several different security features and will allow only certain persons to have access to the data. We are working with a security expert to get certified security access in place.”

Ms. Brown further expounded upon Mr. FitzSimons’ question by telling Mr. Jacobs that more questions must be answered regarding the releasing of the data due to the FERPA laws. Mr. Jacobs responded, “We collect data on all the students. However, we don’t share that data on a student level with anyone. We only share aggregate data. Anyone desiring to get information on the student level must be approved by a higher level authority. And according to FERPA, the only way we could give out the student level data is if the person requesting the information were contracted by our agency.” Mr. FitzSimons stated, “The national perspective is not so much concerned over the releasing of the unit record data as much as someone breaking into a system and obtaining the student level data without authority.” Mr. Jacobs answered, “As mentioned previously, we are putting in place different security measures, including multi-level firewalls. The system we are looking at would require someone to go through three levels of firewalls to obtain access to student level records. Ms. Brown asked for other questions, and with no other questions moved on to the next topic of discussion. This presentation can be found on our web site at the following address:

http://www.che.sc.gov/Finance/CHEMIS/IIIRC/2006/SC_LDS.ppt.

Ms. Brown asked for approval of the minutes of last year’s minutes. There were no corrections to the minutes from July 20th, 2005.

Ms. Brown asked each member of the group to introduce themselves and discuss what was happening on their campus.

Ms. Brown moved on to discuss changes in IPEDS for the 2006-2007 school year. She briefly reviewed the statistics on the schools affected by the hurricane. She polled the group regarding the new human resources survey form. The group agreed that the new survey was easier and more convenient. She reviewed the non-compliant statistics and noted the national improvements over the past several years. On the institutional characteristics, they have added an enrollment estimate. The fall enrollment for degree granting institutions has a new column for transfers into the institution, and since CHE collects this information from you, we will upload that information for you. When you send us your enrollment information, in addition to the edit report that you normally receive from us, we are adding an IPEDS enrollment report. That way as you are sending your enrollment data you can see what will be uploaded to IPEDS and make any corrections immediately instead of having to wait until it is uploaded to IPEDS before resending your file to us with changes. Still we have no answers from IPEDS regarding the race code changes. Many institutions have contacted us and mentioned that software companies are working on it. However, IPEDS has not made a final decision. The IPEDS collection schedule was reviewed. She reminded the group that enrollment is due to CHE in the fall collection versus when IPEDS collects enrollment in the winter. There was a TRP panel that met regarding the first professional degree to consider changing the definitions of a first professional degree.

On the PEER Analysis tool they are going to add a category variable. If you are familiar with the Carnegie classifications – this is a revision of the Carnegie classifications. Ms. Goforth stated, “The Carnegie classifications have just exploded. The new classifications are just micro. You no longer have the broad categories.”

In September, your President will be receiving a feedback report on your institution compared to your peers. If you did not update your peers, then the peer group will be a random group that IPEDS generates for your institution, or they will use your peer group from the year before. IPEDS has revised some of the reports and key holders will receive an electronic copy of the reports. This is also the basis for the Executive PEER tool versus the full PEER tool.

Ms. Reynolds provided details on the beginners IPEDS training. The class is scheduled for July 25th beginning at 9:00 a.m. and will last until approximately 1:00 p.m. The class will take place at Midlands Technical College Airport Campus.

NCES has updated the COOL website. The web address has changed but the old address still works. Ms. Brown previewed some screen shots of the new COOL website. They are also working on a new interface for the PEER Analysis System however it is not available yet.

The reauthorization bill has not been approved. The NCES student unit record data collection initiative is dead for now. Since they did not get this student unit record data system, they are now using the term ‘huge IPEDS.’ However the reporting details of such a system are unknown at this time. There was continued discussion of the pros and cons on the national student unit record system

Ms. Goforth made an announcement regarding an Independent Institution IR group that meets quarterly for training and information exchange between the institutions. For more information you may contact the group Chair, Don Pierce at Furman University.

Ms. Brown introduced the new browser upload process, which beginning this fall will be for all data sent to CHE (Completions, Scholarship and Enrollment). We will send you the web address before time to start sending data – it is a secure site. She went through screen shots and the directions for uploading files through the browser. For details please see <http://www.che.sc.gov/Finance/CHEMIS/IIIRC/2006/ProcedureUploadingData.pdf>

The reporting schedule for CHE data submission was reviewed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.