Postsecondary Data Collaborative and Workforce Data Quality Campaign Applaud Bipartisan, Bicameral College Transparency Act

The Postsecondary Data Collaborative (PostsecData) and the Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC), in cooperation with the undersigned organizations and individuals, applaud Senators Hatch (R-UT), Warren (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA), and Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Mitchell (R-MI), Polis (D-CO), Garrett (R-VA), Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Stivers (R-OH), Panetta (D-CA), Dunn (R-FL), and Upton (R-MI) for championing transparency through their introduction of the College Transparency Act, which would create a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary data system. Supported by four members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and two members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, this bipartisan bill would help students, policymakers, and institutions to make informed choices by providing better information about college access, success, costs, and outcomes.

The research is abundantly clear: Investing in a college education pays off.[1] But while college is worth it on average, students, policymakers, and institutions cannot answer crucial questions about which postsecondary programs provide an adequate return on investment for which students. Students and taxpayers have a right to know what they can expect in return for their college investment. Yet, existing policies prevent us from answering basic questions, such as:

- How many low-income, adult, transfer, and part-time students earn a postsecondary certificate or degree from a particular institution?
- How much do students borrow, and can they repay their loans?
- How long does it take students to complete college, on average?
- How many non-completers from a particular college never reenroll, and how many transfer to finish their degree at another institution?
- Do students go on to succeed in the workforce?

Answers to these questions would help students and families choose programs that demonstrate strong outcomes, while helping policymakers and educators to implement policies and practices that help more students succeed. For the marketplace to function effectively, all these stakeholders need access to high-quality information that reflects all types of students and can look at outcomes across state lines. The federal government—with its access to existing data, including on employment and earnings—is uniquely positioned to compile that information, while reducing institutional reporting burden.

The College Transparency Act would reform federal policy to create a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary data system that would:

- Empower all students to make more informed choices about where to spend their precious time and money,
- Only be used to help students,
- Protect student privacy and adhere to best practices in data security,
- Reduce reporting burden for colleges and universities by replacing the student components of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS),

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[1] College Board, Education Pays 2016, https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2016-full-report.pdf

- Better steward taxpayer dollars,
- Uncover equity gaps so colleges and universities can change policies and practices to better serve underrepresented students, and
- Align education with labor market demand and help employers identify programs that are effectively preparing students for the workforce.

The bill is laser-focused on protecting students' privacy. It includes protections that limit data disclosures, prohibit the sale of data, penalize illegal data use, protect vulnerable students, prohibit use of the data for law enforcement, and safeguard personally identifiable information.

The College Transparency Act represents broad consensus among students, colleges and universities, employers, and policymakers that a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student data system is the only way to give students the information they need to make informed college choices. It builds upon previous bipartisan, bicameral efforts to strengthen national data systems through the Student Right to Know Before You Go Act. We urge policymakers to pass legislation to create a postsecondary data system that gives the right people the right information to make the best possible decisions about higher education.

AccessLex Institute

Achieve Atlanta

Achieving the Dream

Advance CTE

American Association of Community Colleges

American Educational Research Association

Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund

Aspen Institute College Excellence Program

Association for Career and Technical Education

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Association of Public Data Users

Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board

Bottom Line

California EDGE Coalition

Campaign for College Opportunity

Center for American Progress

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Cobb Chamber of Commerce

College Now Greater Cleveland

Colorado Center on Law and Policy

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

Dallas County Community College District

Data Quality Campaign

Democrats for Education Reform

Excelencia in Education

Five Star Development, Inc.

Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education

Georgia Department of Education

Global Resource Management, Inc. (GRMI)

Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce

Holder Construction Company

Indiana Institute for Working Families

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

Knowledge Alliance

Learn4Life

Lehman College of The City University of New York

Louisiana State University

Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition

MCCI Medical Group

Metro Atlanta Chamber

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute

National Association for College Admission Counseling

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

National Council for Workforce Education

National Skills Coalition

New America

New Growth Group, LLC

New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP)

Nexus Research and Policy Center

Partners for a Competitive Workforce

Policy Matters Ohio

Postsecondary Analytics

Public Insight Corporation

Rebuilding America's Middle Class

Scholarship America

Skills2Compete Colorado

SkillWorks

Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board

Student Veterans of America

The Bell Policy Center

The Education Trust

The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)

Third Way

uAspire

UNCF

Veterans Education Success

Virginia Community College System

Workforce Data Quality Campaign

Workforce Solutions Group

WSP USA

Young Invincibles