

Voices from the Field



California

Background. California's postsecondary education landscape is one of the largest and most diverse in the country – the community college system alone consists of 73 districts, 112 schools and more than 2.9 million students. With the decision to collaborate in establishing an internet nonprofit, the California community colleges, the two California public university systems and their K12 colleagues began a process that led to successful data sharing and developed a strong foundation for the future.

The Internet Connection. The complexity of California's education environment meant that many similar processes and systems needed to be created simultaneously. Initially, internet connection was the responsibility of the individual education systems. In 1998, the California Community Colleges, the California State Universities, the University of California system and the California Department of Education (K12) came together to form an internet nonprofit to coordinate their internet connections. This step led to certain economies of scale – for example, the California Department of Education had the best scheduling system for video conferencing so now all of the systems pay the Department to manage this function, saving all of the systems money in the process. Working together on the internet nonprofit also provided an umbrella under which collaboration and data sharing could begin to develop.

Developing a Common Application.

The California Community Colleges is more of a confederation of colleges. While they have a small chancellor's office, each college has significant local authority. From 1999 through 2000, the Chancellor's Office and the community colleges joined forces to conduct a study concluding that a common application and electronic transcripts were needed. Through trust building and a thoughtful, collaborative process, the California Community Colleges and their Chancellor's Office created a common application that is now used by 107 of the 112 community colleges in the State. The common application not only supports the admissions process throughout the system but it also creates a consistent entryway for student data to come into the community college system.

Electronic Transcripts. In 2003, the California Community Colleges began to develop electronic transcripts. A steering committee was formed to ensure a thorough, collaborative process within California's postsecondary education community. The steering committee now includes representatives from the California Community Colleges, the California State Universities, the University of California system and private institutions. The electronic transcripts they created encompass all of the data the old paper transcripts included and can be shared among higher education institutions within and across systems. Efforts were made to normalize transcript data to ensure common understanding of the information between institutions. This was a significant step because it allowed "many-to-many" data relationships for the first time. A simple implementation process was created to facilitate an institution-to-institution network. Community colleges, which have significant IT resource challenges, were able to create an ASCII file of data and upload to the transcript exchange which provides an ability to translate and download to a four year institution in the PESC xml format. In terms of federal reporting requirements, the individual community colleges must upload data to their Chancellor's Office, and the common application and electronic transcripts have helped create an efficient process while improving and maintaining the integrity of the data included in this reporting.

Conclusion. As California works to develop a P20 system, there is interest and opportunity for using CEDS. The California Community Colleges' development of a common application and the broader postsecondary education community's creation of electronic transcripts provide an excellent foundation for advancing the effort to share and compare data to support student outcomes.

The CEDS Initiative is made up of stakeholders from all levels and sectors of education in a collaborative effort to develop the Common Education Data Standards. The initiative consists of a two-pronged approach:

- The CEDS Stakeholder Group is coordinated by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is responsible for prioritizing the scope of the CEDS based on community feedback, reviewing existing data definitions and standards, developing new data definitions and standards when necessary, publishing draft CEDS elements for comment, incorporating comments and finalizing each version.
- The CEDS Consortium, facilitated by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), participates in the development of the standards and is responsible for their advocacy, communication, adoption and implementation. The Consortium is comprised of representatives from CCSSO, SHEEO, Data Quality Campaign (DQC), SIF Association, Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education (ex officio).

The Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) Initiative, a coalition of education stakeholders, is working together in a collaborative effort with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to ensure that common definitions of key data elements become commonly and voluntarily adopted and widely used within and across K12 and postsecondary sectors. CEDS will increase the ability to share and compare data consistently, allowing more informed decision-making at all levels and better educational outcomes for all students through early childhood, K12, postsecondary completion, and the workforce.

commoneddatastandards.org

