

Unified Educational Enterprise Data Technical Review

Background

A Unified Education Enterprise (UEE) team of stakeholders and experts convened in August to discuss the education sectors data system connections and disconnects and to begin answering questions on technical data elements, systems, and uses of data in an integrated education enterprise data system. The team is using the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) framework as a way to look at data systems to address data sharing, tracking, and success at all levels (student, institution, and system). In the SHEEO Framework, there are five core processes to be addressed in a PK thru -16 integrated system:

1. Identify shared benefits
2. Reconcile technical differences
3. Assure student privacy
4. Enable effective use by key constituencies
5. Plan for long-term sustainability

The UEE team focused on the shared benefits and technical differences, in terms of a longitudinal data warehouse that would create a system of systems, integrating Oregon's education sectors data. Oregon will apply for the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) federal grant this fall to support development and implementation of Oregon's "PK-20 into the workforce" system of systems, also known as ALDER (Advancing Longitudinal Data for Educational Reform). ALDER will enhance the ability to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, and use education data, including individual student records. The data systems developed with funds from this grant will help with data-driven decisions to improve student learning and success, as well as facilitate research to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps. This SLDS grant is the fourth in a series of data system grants awarded by the US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES), beginning with the first in November of 2005. ODE has received two of these grants, the first in June of 2007 and the second in March of 2009.

As follow-up to the August UEE team meeting, groups were convened to review the systems that support student self advising or movement between the sectors. Each group explored what is working, what is not working, and what needs to happen. A summary of the systems reviewed and conclusions follows.

Admissions Systems

Common admissions systems reviewed include:

- **IDTS** (Integrated Data Transfer System) – electronic transmission of student transcripts between and among high schools, community colleges, and universities to support student progression from high school to college and between postsecondary institutions.
- **OFAX** (Oregon Financial Aid Exchange) – OFAX exchanges enrollment information between schools for students who are enrolled at more than one eligible institution. It ensures financial aid and enrollment data will move seamlessly between institutions and across sectors, meeting critical deadlines, and promoting student retention and

completion. This is particularly critical for students' participation in the growing number of cross-sector, dual-enrollment, and co-enrollment programs.

- **OSAC** (Oregon Student Assistance Commission) is the repository for all financial aid data for Oregon residents and for those attending an Oregon school. The database contains parent and student information for the last ten years and is used to determine eligibility for federal (Pell Grant and subsidized Stafford Loan) and state (Oregon Opportunity Grant) financial aid.
- **OSTX** – Oregon Students' Transcript Exchange (OSTX) application was developed by ODE for electronic record exchange between two schools or districts. When a record is updated and validated, exchanging the record between two schools takes the same time as an email.
- **Essential Skills** may need additional review at a later date. The OUS perspective on the Essential Skills is that it has been added to OUS Admissions Policy. If a student demonstrates certain levels of proficiency above the minimum requirements, the institutions will offer accelerated admission (using OAKS, SAT, ACT, etc.). PASS (Proficiency-based Admission Standards System) allows students a means for admission through proficiency.

Student Self-Advising Systems

The student self-advising systems reviewed include:

- **ATLAS** (Articulation Transfer Linked Audit System) – Oregon's initiative to create a centralized degree audit and articulation program that eases students' progress from one Oregon school to another. Students can use this statewide system to see how course credits transfer among community colleges and OUS universities, and to conduct degree audits online.
- **Career Pathways** – A Career Pathway is a coherent, articulated sequence of rigorous academic and career courses, commencing in the ninth grade and leading to an associate's degree, and/or an industry-recognized certificate or licensure, and/or a baccalaureate degree and beyond. A Career Pathway is developed, implemented, and maintained in partnership among secondary and postsecondary education, business, and employers. Career Pathways are available to all students, including adult learners, and are designed to lead to rewarding careers
- **Articulation Agreements** – An officially approved agreement that matches coursework between schools and helps students make a smooth transition when transferring from institution to institution.
- **Degree Audits** – A computer-generated analysis that enables the student and adviser to assess the student's academic progress and unfulfilled requirements. The audit is a valuable tool for academic planning and course selection because it matches the courses that the student has taken with the requirements of the degree program or anticipated program.
- **Education Plan and Profile** – The education plan and profile assists students in pursuing their personal, educational, and career interests and post-high school goals. The education plan serves as a "road map" to guide students' learning throughout school and prepare them for next steps after high school. The education profile serves as a "compass" that documents students' progress and achievement toward their goals and helps them to stay on course.
- **CIS** (Career Information System) – CIS is a career development resource used for self-advising in multiple settings, including secondary and post-secondary classrooms,

WorkSource Oregon Centers, and academic and life planning advising. It is a complete system of information with comparable and related information linked in meaningful ways, encouraging individuals to consider a full range of options in setting goals and developing plans.

- **OLMIS** (Oregon Labor Market Information System) – QualityInfo (www.QualityInfo.org) allows electronic access to a wide range of labor market information through articles, reports, breaking news, and tools such as the Occupational Information Center, Educational Information Center, Skill Explorer, and Occupational Explorer, all of which are particularly focused on individuals and businesses interested in career exploration and planning. Other tools are targeted to a variety of different audiences, including policy makers, education program planners, businesses, the workforce system, and news media.

Summary

The areas most in need of attention in admissions systems are ODE's OSTX application for the electronic transmission of transcripts, and the need for a mechanism to track Essential Skills for high school graduation, community college considerations, OUS admissions and success in college or career. It became clear during this discussion that some community colleges see an increased need to access student transcript data to facilitate student success and that it should not be assumed that community colleges are not in need of transcript data. Another issue in Oregon is the only way to track student career success is with a SSN that is not in ODE's OSTX. Another area that needs scrutiny, especially from a community college point of view, is OSAC's OFAX system for sharing of financial aid data for co-enrolled college students.

The UEE team concluded that the student self-advising areas to be most in need of development, improvement, or increased use were ATLAS, particularly at Oregon community colleges, and a web portal through which many of the tools for students could be accessed. A web portal would also serve to connect currently unconnected systems such as the Education Plan and Profile on the secondary level, Career Pathways at the community college level, and ATLAS at the community college and university levels.

In the following section, a set of general recommendations corresponding to the areas identified in this Summary are set out. Next Steps are purposely left blank, pending UEE discussion and prioritization.

Recommendations

1. OSTX: OUS and CCWD should provide feedback from their member colleges and universities to ODE in order to bring this application on line in a way that best serves students, tracks their success, and best empowers schools, community colleges and OUS to do so.

Next Steps:

2. Essential Skills: mastery of (and measurement of) key student proficiencies touches all education sectors; in order to best serve students, all sectors need to be aligned on

essential skills, particularly in the areas of admission standards and college/university course placement.

Next Steps:

3. Transcript Data: whether through OSTX or some other means, Oregon community colleges see an increasing need for access or viewing of a high school student transcript data (though not necessarily accepting the full transcript into the college's data base). Also the college tracks students into careers as well as further education. For connecting to the Oregon Labor Market Information only a SSN is used. There is no SSN field in OSTX.

Next Steps:

4. ATLAS: Although ATLAS currently has full functionality at six of seven OUS institutions and partial functionality at a seventh, only Mt. Hood (full functionality) and a handful of other community colleges (partial functionality) enjoy that status. While there are several challenges to doing so, UEE should support efforts to expand degree audit systems that can connect with ATLAS to more community colleges and increase its functionality at those already using it with students on a limited basis.

Next Steps:

5. Web Portal: a web portal to assist student to see the array of options, the pathways and the resources for colleges/universities and encourage the student to learn and self-advise where appropriate is important. This portal would also engage parents, families, teachers and counselors in the further development of a college-going culture in Oregon that continues to be highly desirable if Oregon is to meet the 40-40-20 goal.

Next Steps:

6. OFAX: There is a need for a "version two" of OFAX that moves from labor-intensive, case by case review of student financial aid data to a true statewide system, with – among other features – systematized, regular transmission of student financial aid data.

Next Steps:

Submitted by Krissa Caldwell and Joe Holliday, November 11, 2009