

**Ohio Board of Regents
HEI Advisory Committee Meeting
January 9, 2004**

I. Welcome and Introductions

In attendance:

Eileen Doherty, Lakeland Community College
Ralph Gutowski, Miami University
William Knight, Bowling Green State University
Joan Patten, Sinclair Community College
Brian Pekarek, Kent State University
Michael Williford, Ohio University

Regents Staff:

Owen Daniels, Ohio Board of Regents
Harold Horton, Director of HEI, Ohio Board of Regents
Jay Johnson, Ohio Board of Regents
Andy Lechler, Ohio Board of Regents
David Smith, Ohio Board of Regents
Bill Wagner, Ohio Board of Regents
Melissa Sponseller, Ohio Board of Regents

I. HEI's expanded data warehouse

Harold Horton provided an overview of HEI's expanded and growing data warehouse and customer base. HEI is seeing an increasing demand for information driven by accountability, performance measures, and program evaluation at the federal, state, and local levels (Refer to Diagram handed out at meeting)...

Virtually every sector in the Ohio higher education sphere now participates in HEI. Independent and proprietary institutions submit limited unit record enrollment and demographic data to HEI on a voluntary basis. These schools also report required unit record financial aid data pertaining to State Grant and Scholarship (SGS) files. Through the automation of SGS programs, over 900 high schools submit data to HEI for the Ohio Academic Scholarship (OAS). HEI's customer base has significantly expanded to over 5,000 users at the post secondary and secondary levels.

Data sharing partnerships, largely being driven by state and federal reporting requirements, have grown from HEI's early work with ACT, ODJFS, and FAFSA data to the College Board, Ohio Learning Network (OLN, distance education data), Tech Prep, TRIO, National Student Clearinghouse, Ohio College Access Network

(OCAN), and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). ODE desires to share data with other state agencies as they redesign EMIS – however they are not using social security numbers, but dummy identifiers (state student identifiers). This will make linking to other datasets virtually impossible. A member brought up the issue of federal government restrictions and the use of federal social security numbers. He wondered at the future of using social security numbers and the impact on HEI.

National Student Clearinghouse

HEI's recent partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) will allow for institutions to receive unit record enrollment data on students who leave their institution. NSC is FERPA compliant in their data sharing collaborations with state higher education agencies. Ohio institutions will be able to access the data, but may desire to keep their existing relationships with NSC. One committee member requested that institutions have the ability to download a flat file of student data.

NCHEMS

HEI's partnership with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) is funded by the Lumina Foundation. NCHEMS is putting together a blueprint for a national student tracking warehouse whereby state higher education agencies would share data among themselves. NCHEMS desires to pilot the project in regions throughout the country and have approached HEI to serve as a host for Ohio and its contiguous states. Kentucky and Indiana state higher education agencies have expressed an interest. This data exchange would be similar to the agreement with NSC. The data would be available to institutions, which may be exceptionally helpful since NSC does not have complete information on degrees. Credit hours enrolled, current program of study, degree earned, and degree field are some of the data elements to be shared.

New Data Areas

HEI data areas have also expanded. Among the newest data areas are the Distance Learning /OLN and Academic Program data areas. In addition, the Financial Aid data area is growing with the conversion of State Grant and Scholarship (SGS) programs to the HEI environment including Ohio Instructional Grant (OIG) and Student Choice programs. Stephanie McCann is implementing the Capital Planning data area which in the past was a paper-driven process. Research Challenge was also a paper process that was recently automated in HEI. The Action Investment Fund is being revised as well.

Non-Credit Data Area

A new data area is being established by OBR staff and campus representatives from the EnterpriseOhio Network to collect data on non-credit instruction provided by EnterpriseOhio Network campuses. The proposed collection would have campuses that receive Jobs Challenge funds through EnterpriseOhio submit the Non-Credit Student Enrollment (NE) and Non-Credit Course Sections (NC) files. A pilot project is scheduled for March 2004. Some campuses from the Ohio Continuing Education

Association (OCHEA) have expressed an interest in participating in the pilot. There is long term interest in the collection of non-credit instruction statewide.

A participant asked whether all institutions could gather this information. The impact to regional campuses and community colleges was perceived to be weighty by the committee members. As of the moment, however, these files are an attempt to get a better understanding of non-credit activity generated by Jobs Challenge funds. OBR understands that the data compilation process may be difficult, but OBR and campuses are concerned about the numbers being reported in the Noncredit Instructional Revenue (NR) file. There is no current basis to address and analyze the revenue numbers in the NR file.

One member requested that a consultation be held for these new files given that these data files might ultimately involve HEI liaisons and/or campus data reporters. This would enable institutions to work with HEI to address data definitions and the collection process. Another participant noted that they would also like any such groups to explore the feasibility of compiling data. They cited that there are hardships on campuses that may require fiscal and human resource assistance tied to challenge of new submissions.

HEI Assisting in Mandatory Federal Reporting

HEI aids programs operating within the state that have state and federal reporting requirements (WIA, Perkins, Tech Prep, TRIO, etc). HEI is meeting the need of programs that might request this data from institutional research offices. The burden on liaisons has been minimized by HEI taking direct management of the reporting delegation process. It was questioned whether there exists an actual document that releases TRIO to track students. One member voiced her reservations on the current state of the student release forms for her campus. There should be standard forms utilized in the release process maintained by individual programs.

II. HEI Liaison's Issues

The subject matter for the following issues were drawn from e-mails submitted by HEI liaisons:

- a. A liaison requested an HEI policy to address changes in files. This issue was addressed by Advisory Committee some time ago, and a set policies called "Guidelines for HEI File Changes and/or Additions" has been posted on web within the last two years at <http://www.regents.state.oh.us/hei/guidelines.html#future>. One member requested that a memo be sent that directs institutions to the "Guidelines for HEI File Changes and/or Additions" or the "Summary of Scheduled File Changes and/or Additions" whenever there are pertinent changes.

HEI's collaborations have expanded beyond institutions. In many cases, HEI staff consult with these groups directly while developing data elements and definitions. The committee suggested that liaisons be involved in the input of these collaborations sooner. A committee member recommended that consultation minutes for these types of collaborations be posted to the web.

This would give liaisons an opportunity to assist or to guide the process on their campus. A participant addressed the frustration of silos on his campus. There is some dysfunction in communication on campuses, and HEI would greatly assist liaisons by communicating often. An HEI staff member stated that in the past concerns were raised by the committee of too many emails and some liaisons felt that they were buried by HEI memos. This was acknowledged, but one member stated that the pendulum must come back to center and that more communication would be helpful.

b. A liaison requested more specificity in the subject of memos regarding changes in the file submission process or data elements.

c. A liaison thought there should be some new degree of distinction between what are currently considered Enrollment Data Area files. The committee felt that this was a campus issue that involved reporting delegation. They felt that the HEI liaison should be responsible for forwarding these files to the responsible individuals. It was noted that organizational complexities vary from campus to campus.

d. A liaison noted that there is no formal process for individuals to provide feedback and wondered whether HEI is engaged in assessing quality performance indicators. A member mentioned that his campus attempts to assess customer satisfaction, response times, system growth, etc. He commended these as a good management practice, but conversely noted that they take away from other resources. One member urged against creating a response mechanism such as an electronic suggestion box since lack of familiarity with HEI may unduly affect a person's input. Another suggested that HEI utilize the services of a graduate student or consultant to create benchmarks that can be used to monitor quality. One member wondered if other states had any sort of metrics or reviews of processes in place.

An HEI staff member pointed out that the quality and value added impact of HEI's work was manifested in such documents as the Performance Report and other publications and projects. The staff member mentioned that HEI is actually in the process of exploring methodologies and consultants to examine ways in which HEI can begin to benchmark quality indicators. It was also stated that the Performance Report addresses data anomalies and increases data quality. Through the reporting process, individuals find problems within their data and fix it. One member affirmed that it is useful to see what institutions are reporting compared to one's own institution.

HEI staff are in the process of creating reports that compare critical fields against other institutions and against the same school over time. These reports would be used by data reporters and liaisons to determine if anomalies exist in their reporting

One member questioned the turn around time of independent queries run by HEI. In the past these have been addressed informally. Members suggested a special request contact link on the web and a quality control deadline for responses. One member stated that giving an HEI contact for such queries would give institutions permission to submit requests. HEI might find that they are overwhelmed. However, it was recognized that a new data reporter or liaison would benefit from making special requests more accessible.

Editor's note: HEI staff are working with the Performance Reporting staff to address this.

e. A liaison requested a more formal mechanism for discussing technical issues. One member mentioned that there were two types of issues; 1. Issues specific to particular institution, and 2. Issues that affect all institutions.

An HEI staff member noted that each data area now has an e-mail alias that allows users to submit their issues throughout the day. HEI staff respond to this alias on a daily basis and when necessary data submission documents and other documentation are reviewed and clarified as needed. Changes to data submission documents are communicated to data reporters and liaisons via e-mail. HEI will review the email alias questions in each area to find particular problem areas. The HEI Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page is organized by area and is probably not widely known about. Participants requested that attention should be drawn to the FAQ page.

A committee member pointed out that the Liaison's comments were more addressed to the issue of finding an opportunity for liaisons and HEI staff to discuss matters. An HEI staff member mentioned that HEI would consider providing more time at the Users Conference for a liaisons-only discussion.

III. OBR HEI Advisory Committee Charge and Membership

At a previous HEI Advisory Committee meeting OBR staff and campus representatives agreed that the HEI Advisory Committee would convene when there are policy issues that warrant a discussion. Members reviewed a document with the HEI's Advisory Committee's charge and membership. It was agreed that HEI takes the lead in contacting OACC and IUC when a member moves off of the committee. It was also agreed that IUC and OACC will continue to appoint the members. A question arose about expanding the committee to include non-campus members by the nature of HEI collaborations. One member noted that this might increase the complexities and length of the meetings. There should be specificity added that notes that non-campus members are non-voting. Ralph Gutowski moved that the document be accepted as amended.

Bill Knight seconded. There were no opposed.

Editor's Note: A copy of the Committee's charge and membership has been placed on the web at <http://www.regents.state.oh.us/hei/advcom/overview.html>.

IV. OBR's Research Policy and Plan

Darrell Glenn presented a plan to make HEI data more accessible to researchers through a research collaborative that is in the early stages of planning. He spoke on the merits of getting more value for the data that is currently collected. In relation to this vision, he presented a research plan which would entail the meeting of a joint group of stakeholders to discuss research projects to be addressed in a given year.

If the state begins with the research questions and creates common data sets, the end results could be presented to the outside world to address policy issues. The common data sets would be thoroughly documented and scrubbed and be available to individuals external to HEI. Collaborations could be formed with researchers who would begin to delve into the data.

Glenn opened the floor to comments:

A member stated that the current queries already run against common data sets and questioned how would the proposed data sets be different. Would individuals have access to the data set or only the interface? Glenn responded that they would have access to the data itself. Statistical packages would be able to utilize these data.

Descriptors would also have to be added to mask institution names (2-year, 4-year, urban, etc). The common sets would be able to answer many questions, but ad hoc queries would also be needed. Confidentiality rules would vary by researcher. An Ohio institutional researcher might get data leading to the positive identification of an institution, but the understanding would be that they would not be reported publicly. The integrity of the data would be assured by the scrutiny other researchers.

One member asked who would possess the product of the work. Glenn pointed out that researchers would not be precluded from publication, however OBR would receive an initial summary of the findings. Responsibility for findings is somewhat of a gray area. There are outcomes that would be undesirable, such as uncontextualized research published in newspapers.

A member wanted to insure that HEI would not ask for additional data to support research. Glenn affirmed that research would utilize data already being collected. OBR external data sources might be utilized.

Glenn stated that the research agenda should be restrained to three topics at a time. (One member noted that a topic might necessitate the production of several data sets). Glenn believes that annually setting and addressing topics would help prioritize the research's mission.

A member mentioned that what is important to the state may not be important at the campus level and if campus users are doing the research, then campuses should reap some level of benefit. There might even be different questions in the two-year sector than there are in the four-year sector. Faculty academic researchers may even expand their questions outside the limits of their own campus. HEI staff affirmed that the data sets would be updated every year. Even though the next year's topic might change, there would be the capability to address previous years' projects.

One member voiced his support for the project and the approach through a research plan or policy. He believes that the plan should include institutional representatives in a collaborative atmosphere. Another committee member expressed support for inside institutional researchers delving into the data but expressed concern for outside individuals who may appear legitimate to access data. He and his colleagues take personal responsibility for HEI data that goes public.

This member would also like to see a campus research agenda reflected in the research plan. The ownership and custodial responsibility for the data falls on Ohio institutions and government. He suggested working within the system and having OBR staff and in-state researchers have the first crack at the data. Glenn concurred and affirmed the value of starting slow.

One member suggested that including campus descriptors instead of specific names would allay his apprehensions. A participant specifically requested that people using this data would not mention campuses by name. Conclusions should not be drawn outside the scope of the defined projects. She desired pains to be taken to insure that the data are properly contextualized and researched thoroughly. Another member concurred and believes that this should be included in the research plan. Glenn does not plan to give all researchers the same amount of access. Legal counsel will be consulted.

One committee member wanted to know whether there would be FERPA issues. HEI staff noted that social security numbers would be masked and personal identity obscured even at the unit record level.

There exists the possibility that some institutions would desire to do joint research. A member noted that researchers should have approval from their institution review boards in order to participate. This would be yet another level of due diligence. Agencies are not required to fill outside requests that fall outside what data may already exist within reported form.

V. Reporting sub-terms in HEI (e-mail from 12-9-03)

- a. Jay Johnson reported that a college is encountering problems in defining the census point for their short-term courses. They have three- and five-week terms and their practice has been to report them at the 20% mark, according to the flexibly scheduled course section guidelines noted in the Course Enrollment (CN) file. Yet these courses do not meet the definition of a flexibly scheduled course section. These courses are advertised as regular classes taking six weeks for completion. The current census date policy does not adequately address these classes. Should the census point for these courses be the 20% mark or 15th day after the start of the course?

One member stated that the length of the term should determine which census date to use; whether the 15th day or 20% mark. Sub-terms meeting for fewer than than five weeks should be reported at the 20% benchmark. A class would be flexible if it met for less than five weeks.

There was some question as to whether the definition should be applied to courses or terms. One member advocated the term definition. She advertises a term that lasts four weeks and would utilize the flexibly scheduled census date. A published five week term would be the 15th day census point and courses meeting less than five weeks should use the 20% census point. Any term or course five weeks or longer would use the 15th day.

The committee suggested that a subcommittee be formed to address this issue. Brian Pekarek, Joan Patten, Lu Phillips, and Carol Jones of Miami volunteered or were volunteered.

One member desired to know what the state is getting out of reporting flexibly scheduled course sections. HEI staff noted that OBR needs to know what courses are reported on a different schedule for audit purposes. HEI also audits and monitors whether the chief academic officer has approved a course to be offered as flexibly scheduled. One member agreed and stated that one institution once offered an entire three credit hour course on a weekend. Flexibly Scheduled (FS) reporting was instituted to police and correct such abuses. One member stated that the flexibly scheduled reporting has taken away from institutional resources.

The FS is used in facilities utilization calculations. It would be impossible to calculate utilization without knowing whether a class was regular or irregular. Andy Lechler noted that without this data, it might appear that two separate classes were meeting in the same space at the same time. Some flexibly scheduled classes are irregular. For the CS file, HEI would need to know whether a course met upon a regular analog.

Johnson suggested consulting Rick Petrick and other OBR staff to discuss OBR need for the collection of FS. Provosts and others might also be consulted. Johnson stated that HEI made a massive adjustment in 1998 when it limited the collection to courses meeting 11 days or less.

VI. Use of Technology in Instructional Delivery Field in the Course Sections Taught (ST) file (e-mail 12-9-03).

- a. Stephanie McCann reported that this field has been under-reported in the ST file. McCann stated that the OLN data collection addresses forms of technology used in instruction. However, the distance learning files do not encompass every course that is taught.

McCann suggested that HEI remove this field from the ST file if the committee concurs. This will entail broadcasting a new file format.

A member clarified that this collection is based on course sections which vary by instructor and require tremendous upkeep. This new policy of not reporting technology in delivery does not preclude campuses from gathering this data for their own purposes. Two members believed that it might be possible to keep the field (as in the case with the intention field in the Student Entrance file), but to inform campuses that it is optional. It was noted that the field is used within some existing queries.

HEI will make the field optional or unknown until there is a substantive change in the file format. Reporters and campuses should be notified immediately to alleviate their compilation efforts.

VII. Should the Cohort Tracking (CT) file be a requirement?

- a. Jay Johnson stated that at the August 2003 Performance Report meeting it was suggested that the CT be required due to its importance to the graduation rate section in the report. This file was initially created to help schools increase their graduation rate by including students who transferred to another school. Many universities saw their numbers jump by 15%.

One member noted that if by not submitting CT file a campus did not affect the sector average or depress it, then it was not worth making it a mandatory submission. The IPEDS GRS figures could still act as a substitute.

VIII. Policy to handle late HEI file submissions

- a. HEI staff spend an enormous amount of time tracking down late files. While HEI is sensitive to limited campus resources, there is an increasing demand for timely data by the Governor, legislature, media, and others.

At times, to meet the demand, HEI has used data from previous years to respond to data requests.

Horton asked whether there might be some way to improve reporting timeliness. For example, IPEDS has created penalties; even penalizing for missing data elements. A member from one institution suggested an escalating progression of contacting institution administration for late data. Another member suggested withholding SSI if data is exceptionally late.

Still another member noted that the audit process should address the issue of timeliness. One member held that an overemphasis on timeline might impugn data integrity and that consideration should be given to campuses undergoing system conversions. She also noted that the process of loading files at night is seen as an impediment to submitting data in a timely fashion. Horton stated that HEI is currently exploring measures to improve load efficiencies.

One member questioned how frequently extension requests were made. Johnson answered that initially, when the system had just been created, there were minimal extension requests. Since then the frequency has increased substantially. The 2002 Student Inventory Data (SID) could not be produced until the fall of 2003 because of the lateness of key enrollment files.

A member noted that the ease of requesting extensions induces laxness on some campuses. He suggested a limitation on the number of extensions that could be requested.

IX. Charging campuses for comprehensive financial aid audits.

- a. Faulty financial aid reporting practices have caused HEI to engage in extensive financial aid audits of some campuses. As a result, HEI is considering charging campuses for comprehensive financial aid audits. Rule 02 of the OAC allows OBR to conduct full enrollment audits at the institution's expense.

The meeting was concluded at 3:00 pm.