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Nine Major Higher Ed Groups Endorse Student Achievement Measure as Effort Builds to More Accurately Track Graduation Rates at Colleges

Student Achievement Measure (SAM) Provides a More Comprehensive Way to Measure Student Progress & Degree Completion at Individual Institutions than Federal Rate

Washington, DC – Nine prominent national higher education organizations today formally endorsed the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) as a far more accurate and complete way to track student progress and graduation at colleges and universities than the graduation rate that the federal government publicly reports.

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), the College Board, the National Association of System Heads (NASH), National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS), the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), Urban Serving Universities (USU), the U.S. Education Delivery Institute (EDI), and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) are publicly offering their support and encouraging their institutional members to sign-up and participate in SAM -- a web-based transparency initiative led by the six, national presidential higher education associations.

“The support of these key higher education organizations underscores the ability of SAM to fill the gaps left by the federal graduation rate and to more accurately track student progress and graduation at institutions across the country,” SAM Executive Director Christine Keller said. “By failing to count transfer students and part-time students, the federal government’s graduation rate provides information that is potentially misleading to the public and fails to give institutions credit for their role in educating these students. We are grateful for the endorsements of these prominent higher education organizations and look forward to successful partnerships with them.”

SAM includes the outcomes of students who attend multiple institutions, as well as those who transfer-in and transfer-out. Nationally, more than one in five students who complete a degree do so at an institution other than the one where they started, and 15 percent of students had previously attended college in at least one other state, according to a recent study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. SAM also includes those students still enrolled and working toward a credential. SAM provides an improved measure to better account for the success of all these students.

“SHEEO and its members have long sought to provide more meaningful and comprehensive student success measures and reporting, particularly with respect to graduation,” SHEEO President George Pernsteiner said. “For some years, we have lamented the inadequacy of IPEDS graduation data, especially pertinent now that most students attend two or more institutions during their college careers. That is why I am so excited to endorse the efforts of six major higher education associations to introduce the Student Achievement Measures (SAM). I sincerely hope SAM will change the conversation.
Participation in SAM continues to grow with more than 400 colleges and universities tracking the progress and completion of 400,000 more students than would be possible using the federal government methodology.

Multiple university systems and all of their campuses have committed to participating in SAM. Both the State University of New York (SUNY) system, the largest system to participate in SAM with 61 eligible campuses including public and private institutions as well as 2-year and 4-year colleges, and the University of Hawai‘i System, which was the first system to fully participate in SAM, have played an integral role in driving more schools and systems to participate in SAM.

“This new, more comprehensive measure of student progress and completion is an important tool as public higher education institutions nationally seek to be totally transparent and accountable to current and prospective students,” said SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher. “SAM will provide a clearer and more accurate measure of graduation rates, and we are proud to have every SUNY campus participating in this important initiative.”

University of Hawai‘i Interim President David Lassner said, "One of the strengths of the University of Hawai‘i System is the ability of our students to move freely among our community colleges and universities. The IPEDS measures simply don't allow us to capture the success of students in such an environment. SAM gives us a much more accurate and therefore actionable view of the success of our students and our campuses in supporting them."

SAM has two reporting models – one for students enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs and one for students enrolled in associate degree programs or certificate programs. The models include transfer students, part-time students, full-time students, and the outcomes of students who enroll in multiple institutions. Additional information on SAM can be found at: [www.studentachievementmeasure.org](http://www.studentachievementmeasure.org).

The Student Achievement Measure is a joint initiative of six national higher education presidential associations: the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU). Funding for the SAM Project is provided in large part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional funding for the SAM project is provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, APLU and AASCU.

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