The effective engagement of postsecondary stakeholders is crucial to the development of a successful P-20W (preschool through workforce) data system. While many states have mandated postsecondary participation in P-20W systems, all states should cultivate strong relationships among the different P-20W institutions, ensuring that postsecondary stakeholders (e.g., for-profit colleges, four-year universities, community colleges) for instance, share in the benefits of P-20W data linkages. Such linkages can provide valuable information to help drive decisionmaking within the state, informing policy and program improvement. This Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Spotlight discusses the challenges faced and lessons learned by Washington, Connecticut, Illinois, and Maine in their efforts to engage with the postsecondary community.

Illinois: Higher Education Consortium

The Illinois Higher Education Consortium (IHEC) was established in 2011. The IHEC is a voluntary consortium of Illinois's higher education community that collaborates with the IBHE to meet its statutory requirements with regard to the mandated contribution of data.

The IHEC is controlled by the participating institutions and includes institutions from the public, private, for-profit, and community college sectors. Each sector has equal representation on the governing board and the standing committees.

"Members control their own destiny," said Robert O'Keefe of the Illinois Department of Education. "That is why so many institutions are voluntarily joining."

Currently, there are four standing committees. The Data Elements Committee determines the data elements to be collected and works on common definitions. The Data Access and Use Committee defines the process and procedures for members and external organizations to request and use the data. The Technical Advisory Committee recommends to the Governing Board the configuration of systems, hardware, software, networking, and other technical specifications necessary for the establishment and administration of IHEC. And, the Report Committee is charged with developing standardized reports for use by the members. There is cross-representation on the committees because the committees do a lot of related work.

In addition to the governing board and standing committees, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was recently assigned the role of administrating institution. In this role, the university is designated by the Governing Board to direct day-to-day operations, such as managing program staff, maintaining and sharing data from the common data file, and preparing an annual budget for the duties of the IHEC. The institution will report to the governing board and to the standing committees.

Currently, all 12 of the state's public universities, 64 private institutions, 12 proprietary universities, and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) participate in the IHEC. The participation of so many institutions allows the IHEC to bring together a wide variety of education data. For example, the ICCB alone contributes student data collected for over 10 years. With such mature data, Illinois can identify patterns and conduct long-term analysis of high school graduates entering community college.

For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program, additional SLDS publications, or for support with system development or use, please visit http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS.

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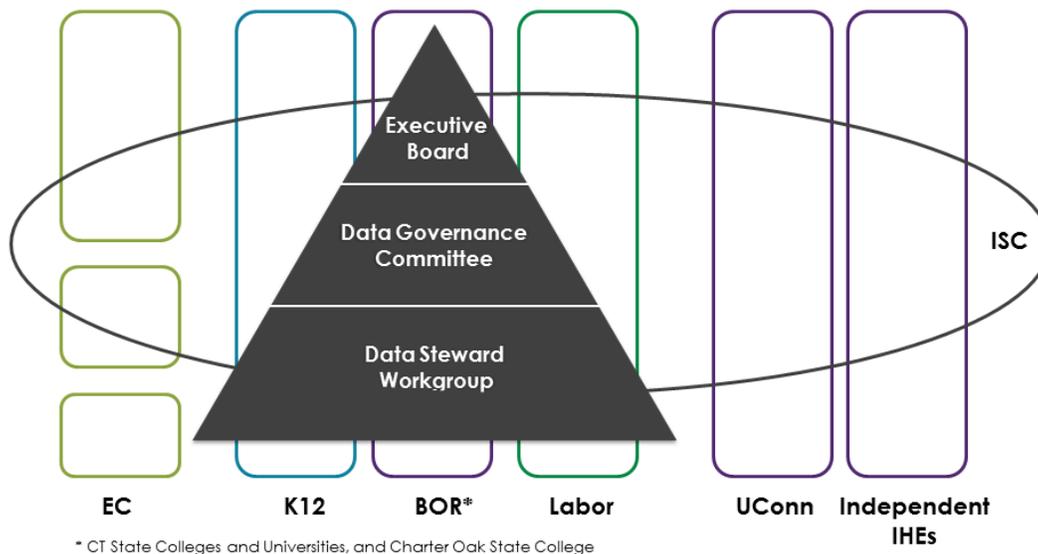
Figure 1. Connecticut's data governance structure

Connecticut: Initial Challenges to Engaging Postsecondary Institutions

Connecticut is currently developing a federated[1] P-20W data system. Rather than maintaining a centralized data warehouse, participating institutions will retain their own data. The data will then be matched through a third-party vendor when data requests are approved by the relevant institutions. The system will be piloted in 2013, with postsecondary data being a main component of the system.

After the State Department of Education (SDE) received a 2009 SLDS grant, the Department of Higher Education (DHE), the state's higher education coordinating board at the time, managed the work to link K-12 data to postsecondary and labor data. However, due to significant transitions, the leadership at the SDE was not fully engaged in the project, which made the task of unifying postsecondary stakeholders all the more challenging. In addition, trust issues among the stakeholders contributed to difficulties in establishing buy-in. Initially, the state's public postsecondary institutions were segmented because the community colleges system, state university system, and public flagship institution each had their own governing board. With a reorganization of public higher education in January 2012, three of the four separate higher education governing boards were brought together with one unifying governing body, the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR). The establishment of BOR as the governing body over all public community colleges and state universities enabled the development of common policies regarding data sharing.

[1] For more information see "Centralized vs. Federated: State Approaches to P-20W Data Systems," available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/federated_centralized_print.pdf.*

Cultivating a Grassroots Level of Change

To create buy-in among postsecondary stakeholders prior to the reorganization, the DHE focused on relationship building. The organization relayed the vision of the state's data system to other postsecondary institutions, emphasizing the benefits of linking data. Connecticut worked to encourage a grassroots approach to changing the culture of data from one of silos to one of data sharing and collaboration. By unifying postsecondary institutions and establishing relationships among them, Connecticut was able to overcome its initial challenges and move forward with its P-20W effort.

Data that Drive Policy and Program Improvement

At the inception of the grant, DHE established the Interoperability System Council (ISC) to coordinate data work across all stakeholders. The ISC works to promote interoperability across postsecondary organizations and influence policy and program improvements. The initial goals of the ISC were to include all stakeholders interested in improving cross-agency data interoperability, and to determine how to link data. The ISC was formed with institutional research directors from the SDE, community colleges, state universities, Charter Oak State College, University of Connecticut, and the Department of Labor. Later, it expanded to include technical leadership from all agencies and representatives from early childhood agencies and the Connecticut Conference for Independent Colleges. As an advisory body, the ISC does not rely on a formal voting structure, but rather uses mutual consensus and relationship building to address issues.

To build political will within the state and support among stakeholders, the ISC conducted data sharing projects. In one case, the ISC produced statewide reports on enrollment

and completion patterns and the need for remediation, as well as a series of high school reports utilizing National Student Clearinghouse data. The reports were then shared at regional college readiness forums (organized by the DHE) where education leaders were provided with a toolkit for understanding and addressing college and career readiness. Ultimately, this improved people's perception of the importance of data sharing, and showed stakeholders and policymakers the potential of quality P-20W data.

Decisionmaking Body

As agencies became ready for system implementation, Connecticut established a P-20W governance structure that follows the State Support Team (SST) recommended multi-agency model (see Figure 1): executive leadership that provides leadership to the data governance structure, a data governance committee that establishes and enforces policies related to P-20W data governance, and a data steward group that implements technical changes to support the policies. Currently, Connecticut's K12, Board of Regents, and Department of Labor are acting participants in system development and will begin sharing data when the model is piloted in 2013.

Because both SDE and BOR have recently been reorganized, gaps in staffing resulted in a few people filling overlapping roles between the Data Governance and Data Steward committees.

Initially, these committees convened only as needed. A joint team of Data Governance and Data Steward leaders now meets weekly to facilitate issue resolution and system implementation. Connecticut is currently working on creating documentation for sustaining its data system. To help promote executive engagement of the data governance structure, the state's governor will be reconstituting the P-20 Council to address related issues, such as common core implementation and teacher effectiveness.

Connecticut will use the data gained through collaboration with multiple postsecondary institutions to inform policy and program decisions within the state. Information derived from quality data can drive policy and program decisions within the state. For example, to improve college readiness of incoming students, Connecticut postsecondary institutions will examine data to optimize placement of students, improve teacher education programs, address labor market needs, and participate in statewide improvements for youth and adult learners.

Maine: Multiple Partnerships Among Stakeholders

Maine has worked with postsecondary stakeholders since the state was awarded a 2007 SLDS grant. The grant helped the state create a comprehensive data warehouse to serve as a repository of P-20 (early childhood through postsecondary) data from the state education agency (SEA) databases as well as other data sources. Postsecondary relationships further expanded with a 2009 ARRA SLDS grant, which extended the SLDS education data warehouse to include data from across P-20W (early childhood through postsecondary and workforce).

Several postsecondary partnerships exist in Maine. For example, Maine's Department of Education has a significant collaboration with the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI), a cooperative effort of the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine that analyzes education information and performs targeted research for the state legislature. Together, MEPRI and Maine's Department of Education collaborate on the design and development of the research data mart in the data warehouse and conduct longitudinal data studies. Although such analyses are clearly useful for researchers in their work for the legislature and the Department of Education, Bill Hurwitch of the Maine Department of Education expects that this research will also be useful to schools and the general public.

Success of Outcome and Feedback Reports

Maine works with the Department of Labor Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) to gather outcome reports for public universities and community colleges. These reports provide useful information regarding student outcomes, such as quarterly earnings by degree and major and additional education received.

Maine also works with postsecondary stakeholders to generate feedback reports based on certification and district/school employment data. With the information collected in the longitudinal data system, Maine will release data to teacher preparation programs. Hurwitch asserts that by sharing data with Maine's data system, postsecondary institutions will reap the benefits by receiving data about where their graduates are teaching in Maine's schools, what they are teaching, and if they have received any additional endorsements or education.

As required by recent state legislation, Maine high schools will receive feedback reports from public four-year institutions and community colleges. Similar to the feedback reports used for teacher preparation programs, these reports, which show data on issues such as remediation, will help high schools to better prepare students for college.

Accessing a Single Repository of Data

Maine notes that the continuing success of the state's engagements with postsecondary stakeholders has to do, in part, with its centralized data system. With a single data warehouse, authorized stakeholders have access to a consolidated source of standardized, quality data from across P-20W.

Washington: Creating Partnerships with Data Contributors

In 2005, Washington Learns, an initiative created and led by the governor, conducted an intensive 18-month review of Washington's entire education system. The final report spurred significant gains for education in the 2007 legislative session, creating the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) to focus on longitudinal education and employment issues across the P-20W system and provide funding to help high school students achieve graduation standards. Washington was later awarded a 2009 ARRA SLDS grant to build a data governance structure, work with the data, and build a centralized data warehouse. In 2012, Washington received a Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant to expand its longitudinal database to include all workforce data and workforce program participants.

Unlike the state's centralized and mandated K12 system, postsecondary stakeholders are not required to submit and provide data to the P-20W system. Although Washington has a long history of collecting public postsecondary enrollment data, it took the state years to build enough trust among postsecondary stakeholders for them to share those data.

Melissa Beard of the Washington Education Research and Data Center notes that the key to building relationships with postsecondary institutions is to "treat each institution like a partner."

Although communicating with multiple stakeholders has been a challenge, Beard notes that direct communication remains necessary for solidifying such partnerships. Monthly meetings are conducted with registrars and institutional researchers. When data are pulled from Washington's P-20W system for legislative purposes, the work product is first sent to all contributing agencies for verification and accuracy. Before their data are used, each institution has the opportunity to provide feedback on whether they agree with how the data are being used. When ERDC holds meetings on which data are collected, stakeholders are present. Ultimately, each stakeholder is involved in all decisionmaking around data collection and use.

A key component to encouraging involvement of postsecondary stakeholders was clearly communicating the benefits each institution would receive. One benefit Washington noted was the insights obtained by linking each institution's postsecondary data with employment data.

Importance of Data Governance

A large component of Washington's 2009 ARRA SLDS grant project was to establish a data governing body. Through the grant, Washington created a data governance committee that consisted of SEA representatives as well as local representatives from schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions.

"[A wide range of perspectives within the data governance committee] reminds users where data is coming from, the importance of it, and its origins," said Beard.

Additional Resources

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program (2012). *State Approaches to Engaging Local K12 Stakeholders: SLDS Spotlight.* Available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/spotlight_engaging_local_stakeholders.pdf.*

State Support Team (2012). *Stakeholder Engagement Plan Guide and Template.* Available to states upon request to *support@slds-sst.org.*

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program (2011). *Stakeholder Communication: SLDS Best Practices Brief.* Available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/best_practices.pdf.*

National Forum on Education Statistics (2010). *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems, Book II: Planning and Developing an LDS.* Available at *http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011804.pdf.*

Florida Department of Education (2008). *How Do You Leverage Longitudinal Data to Inform Stakeholders?* Presentation available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/LDSShare/SLDS.aspx.*

State Support Team (2012). *P-20W Data Governance Manual Template and Example.* Available to states upon request to *support@slds-sst.org.*

State Support Team (2012). *P-20W Data Governance Policy Template.* Available to states upon request to *support@slds-sst.org.*

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program (2012). P-*20W Data Governance: Best Practices Brief.* Available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/brief4_P_20W_DG.pdf.*