

April 1, 2021

The [Postsecondary Data Collaborative](#) (PostsecData) and the [National Skills Coalition](#), in cooperation with the undersigned organizations and individuals, applaud Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Tim Scott (R-SC), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Steve Stivers (R-OH), Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), and Bryan Steil (R-WI) for championing transparency through their introduction of the College Transparency Act of 2021, which would create a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary data network. This bipartisan, bicameral bill would help students and families, policymakers, institutions and employers to make informed decisions by providing more complete information about college access, success, costs, and outcomes. This information empowers students and families to make well-informed choices about their education, policymakers and institutions to craft evidence-based policies to help students succeed, and employers to navigate the talent pipeline they need to grow the economy. Without complete, representative data that counts all students, equity will be out of reach.

The research is abundantly clear: Investing in a college education pays off.¹ But while college is “worth it” on average, students, policymakers, institutions, and employers cannot answer crucial questions about which postsecondary programs provide an adequate return on investment for which students. Students and taxpayers have a right to know what they can expect in return for their college investment. Yet, existing policies prevent us from answering basic questions, such as:

- What are national completion rates for part-time and transfer students of color?
- How do college access, affordability, and completion vary by race, ethnicity, and income?
- How much do students borrow, and can they repay their loans?
- How many non-completers from a particular college never reenroll, and how many transfer to finish their degree at another institution?
- Which students go on to succeed in the workforce?

Answers to these questions would help students and families choose programs that demonstrate strong outcomes, while helping policymakers and educators implement policies and practices that help more students succeed. For the marketplace to function effectively, all these stakeholders need access to high-quality information that reflects all types of students and can look at outcomes across state lines. The federal government—with its access to existing data, including on employment and earnings—is uniquely positioned to compile that information, while reducing institutional reporting burdens.

The College Transparency Act of 2021:

- Overturns the ban on student-level data collection in the Higher Education Act;

¹ [1] College Board, Education Pays 2016, <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2016-full-report.pdf>

- Creates a secure, privacy protected student-level data network within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) using strong security standards and data governance protocols;
- Accurately reports on student outcomes including enrollment, completion and post-college success across colleges and programs;
- Leverages existing data at federal agencies and institutional data by matching a limited set of data to calculate aggregate information to answer questions critical to understanding and improving student success;
- Protects all students by limiting data disclosures, prohibiting the sale of data, penalizing illegal data use, protecting vulnerable students, prohibiting the use of the data for law enforcement, safeguarding personally identifiable information, and requiring notice to students and regular audits of the system;
- Streamlines burdensome federal reporting requirements for postsecondary institutions;
- Provides information disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and Pell Grant receipt status to identify inequities in students' success;
- Requires a user-friendly website to ensure the data are transparent, informative, and accessible for students, families, policymakers, and employers; and
- Feeds aggregate information back to states and institutions so they can develop and implement targeted, data-informed strategies aimed at supporting student success.

The College Transparency Act represents broad consensus among students, colleges and universities, employers, and policymakers that a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student data network is the only way to give students the information they need to make informed college choices. That is why we are coming together to urge Congress to pass this bill to provide accurate, timely, and high-quality aggregate data in a user-friendly, transparent way for students and families, policymakers, institutions and employers who have a right to know answers to key questions about student access and success.

Sincerely,

AAC&U
AccessLex Institute
AccuRounds
Achieve Atlanta
Achieving the Dream
Advance CTE
American Association of Community Colleges
American Educational Research Association
AMT - The Association For Manufacturing Technology
Ann Majdic
Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund
Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
Birmingham Prosperity Partnership
Board of Regents, State of Iowa

Boston Centerless
Braven
Build UP
Business Roundtable
California EDGE Coalition
Campaign for College Opportunity
Center for American Progress
Center for First-generation Student Success
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Chicago Jobs Council
Chiefs for Change
COABE
Cobb Chamber of Commerce
College Now Greater Cleveland
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Complete College America, Inc.
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
Custom Plastics and More
CWA Southern California Council
Dallas County Community College District
Data Quality Campaign
Deans for Impact
Democrats for Education Reform
District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund
Edmit
EducationQuest Foundation
Employee Choice Academy
EmployIndy
Enlisted Association of the National Guard
Excelencia in Education
Field Crest Care Center
Five Star Development, Inc.
Future of Privacy Forum
George Washington Institute of Public Policy
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education
Global Resource Management Inc.
Greater Philadelphia Healthcare Partnership
Greater Washington Community Foundation
HCM Strategists
Higher Learning Advocates
Holder Construction Company
Indiana Institute for Working Families
Institute for Higher Education Policy
Japanese American Citizens League
Jersey City Literacy Program
JEVS Human Services
Jewish Vocational and Career Counseling Service
Jewish Vocational Service, Boston

JFF
JMPDX LLC
Jobs for the Future (JFF)
JobTrain
Kathryn Stege
Knowledge Alliance
LeaderQuest Holdings Inc.
Learn4Life
Louisiana State University
Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition
Manufacturer's Education and Training Alliance
MCCI Medical Group
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National College Attainment Network
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low income clients)
National Council for Adult Learning
National Council for Workforce Education
National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute
National Laboratory for Education Transformation
National Roofing Contractors Association
National Skills Coalition
National Tooling and Machining Association
Naugatuck Adult Education
NCHEMS
Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education
New America
New Orleans Youth Alliance
New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP)
Nexus Research and Policy Center
NOCTI
Northwest WI Workforce Investment Board
Nucleos-PortableCloud
Office of Student Government Relations, Cornell
Optimax Systems Inc.
Orleans Technical College
Policy Matters Ohio
Policy Planning Partners
Postsecondary Analytics
Pryor Education Insights
Public Insight Data Corporation
Rebuilding America's Middle Class
Results for America
Ripe Data
Scholarship America
Skills2Compete Colorado
Software & Information Industry Association

South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board
StriveTogether
Student Basic Needs Coalition - Nationals
Student Veterans of America
TechBirmingham
The Bell Policy Center
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
The Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education
The State University Of New York
The Veterans Education Project
Third Way
Towards Employment
TRC Staffing Services
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)
uAspire
UnidosUS
United Way of Central Iowa
University of Phoenix
Veterans Education Success
Virginia Community College System
WKBJ Foundation
Women Employed
Workforce Solutions Group
WSP USA
Young Invincibles