

Appendix B

THE NPEC/AIR 2009 FOCUSED GRANT PROGRAM

The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) have announced the sixth year of their joint focused grant program. This program is designed to increase understanding and knowledge of a specific issue area identified by NPEC as critically important to the postsecondary education community and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data collection efforts. NPEC and AIR plan to award five to ten one-year grants for up to \$20,000 for dissertation grants and up to \$40,000 for other proposals focused on the theme of “student flow” in postsecondary education.

The NPEC/AIR 2009 Focused Grant Program is designed to achieve the goal of supporting innovative proposals from the postsecondary education research community that will inform research and development efforts for the IPEDS data collection. IPEDS is the core postsecondary education data collection program for NCES. Data are collected from all primary providers of postsecondary education in the country in areas including enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty, staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid.

This year, grant proposals should focus on “student flow.” Broadly defined, this could include movement from high school to various institutional sectors; movement among the various sectors, including 2-year and 4-year, public, independent, not-for-profit, and independent for-profit; concurrent enrollments in multiple institutions and student “swirling” among institutions; movement of students with various characteristics, such as racial/ethnic categories, first generation students, part-time or full-time status, low income students, adults, or children of immigrants; success and graduation rates and time-to-degree analyses for students based on various student flow patterns, and other research on student flow. The analyses could focus on federal, state or regional data. This program does not require the use of NCES or NSF databases. Nonetheless, the results of the research should have some applicability to the NCES IPEDS data collection efforts. That is, the research that is undertaken should have some potential impact on federal IPEDS data collections, and the authors of the proposals are expected to define how the proposed student flow research might affect IPEDS.

NPEC is interested in studies that focus on questions such as the following:

- Who are the students who “swirl,” e.g., enroll in multiple institutions simultaneously and move back and forth among various institutions? What are their characteristics? How successful are these students in attaining degrees compared with other cohorts? What is their time-to-degree and how does it compare with other cohorts? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?
- What data are needed to understand “student flow” and movement in postsecondary education? How do institutions and/or states track student

enrollment in multiple institutions and/or movement across postsecondary institutions? How do institutions identify and verify *first-time* postsecondary students? How do institutions verify transfers out? How do institutions measure simultaneous enrollment in multiple institutions? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?

- What is the true scale and scope of swirling enrollments, including student enrollment in multiple institutions as well as transferring among institutions? How many institutions do students' attend prior to completion? Do these "swirling" patterns affect degree attainment? How do traditional measures of success, such as graduation rates, capture the progress of students who follow these patterns? What are alternate ways to track and report progress and success among students who follow these paths? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?
- What are the patterns of enrollment in college and transfer among institutions for certain non-traditional populations, such as part-time, adult, or underrepresented racial-ethnic minorities, and how do these patterns differ from the more traditional college student population? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?

The grants can support a variety of research activities focused on student flow in postsecondary education, including:

- Data synthesis or meta-analysis of research studies that address a specific question regarding student flow;
- New analyses using national, regional, state, or institutional databases that focus on student flow;
- Literature review of available data, analyses, and research that are available regarding student flow of some specific student populations;
- Case studies that focus on one or more student flow issues;
- Studies that focus on identifying national or state level data that would be needed to help gain better insight into student flow; and
- Other creative and relevant studies.

Projects that propose the collection of data from individuals or groups or the observation of individuals or groups must include Institutional Review Board clearance to be considered.

Grant proposals will be due in January 2009 and grants will be awarded in April 2009. Grant recipients will be expected to begin work in June 2009 and two copies of a final paper will be due to AIR and NCES (one copy to AIR and one copy to NCES) in June 2010. As a condition of the grant, awardees would be expected to present their papers at the 2010 Annual AIR Forum in Chicago, Illinois. A portion of the grant funding should be reserved to cover registration and travel to the AIR Forum.