



New England Commission of Higher Education
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STATEMENT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS

The Commission recognizes that its dual responsibilities of quality assurance (the public role) and quality improvement (the private role) must be kept in balance. The Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*, especially Standard 4, *Educational Effectiveness and the Success of All Students*, not only speak to assessment for improving the academic program and services for students but also to the Commission's public responsibility for ensuring an appropriate level of student achievement and for making the results used and known. This part of its responsibility for being recognized by the federal government as a reliable authority on the quality of education.

To fulfill these responsibilities, the Commission has developed two data sources that provide a framework for institutions to demonstrate the achievements and success of all their students and useful information for teams and the Commission. These include the:

- I: E-series Forms (Making Assessment More Explicit):** institutions select and declare their basic approach to assessing student learning and summarize improvements made based on their findings.
- II: NECHE Data Dashboards:** A series of prepopulated dashboards based on an institution's IPEDS data (or manually entered by in institutions that do not use IPEDS). These dashboards can be accessed through the **NECHE Institutional Portal**.

The Commission approaches the goal for institutions to become increasingly explicit in the area of student achievement and success with the following assumptions:

- Given the diversity of institutions, there is no single way to achieve the goal; the system is best served when institutions can choose the method that best fits their mission;
- Greater regularity in how institutions report how they assess student learning and what they are finding out will be useful to institutions, visiting teams, and the Commission;
- It will be useful for the Commission to offer clear choices to institutions, with the understanding that the choices presented are subject to alternatives proposed by the institution and changes over time by the Commission, based on its experience;
- The Commission's approach should not only provide a framework to record how institutions are assessing student learning but also encourage greater coherence in institutional approaches and greater sharing among institutions.

It is expected that institutions will include the E-series Forms as an appendix to the institution's comprehensive self-study and interim (fifth-year) reports while also incorporating analysis and interpretations from the dashboards into their narratives. Institutions are encouraged to complete the E-series forms and engage the data dashboards early in the report preparation process so they can incorporate and reference these sources in their report.

The two sets of data sources are further explained below.

I: E-SERIES FORMS (MAKING ASSESSMENT MORE EXPLICIT)

In the E-Series forms, institutions are asked to declare their approach to the assessment of student learning and to summarize how the information is used for improvement. Four possible alternatives are listed below; if institutions wish to propose another alternative, they are invited to contact Commission staff. In all cases, the Commission expects that the alternative selected will provide the institution with the ability to present its assessment at the program and institutional level. The four alternatives are:

- **E1: Inventory:** In this alternative, the institution completes: Part A, an inventory of how programs assess student learning and use the results, and, as appropriate, Part B, an inventory of specialized accreditation. This alternative is based on a system used by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).
- **E2: College Portrait/VSA:** Here, the institution commits to the College Portrait/Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) plus program review. This alternative builds on the system developed by the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities and American Association of State Colleges and Universities; because the VSA uses institutional level data, it is augmented for Commission purposes by information on program review. While the system was developed by and for public institutions, for the Commission's purposes, it may be selected by any institution.
- **E3: Institutional Claims:** Some institutions may elect a framework in which they state claims for the success or achievement of their students and provide evidence to validate the claims. This audit approach provides the institution great flexibility in stating the claims it makes to the public about student learning and student achievement and developing credible evidence to support the claims.
- **E4: Peer Comparison:** Many institutions already have complex systems to compare themselves with peer institutions, most often on matters of resources and processes; this alternative provides the opportunity to extend those comparisons to outcomes for student learning and success. Here the institution identifies key measures of student success (e.g., transfer or acceptance to graduate school) and compares its level of performance with that of its peers.

Selecting the method: In the periodic reviews, institutions are asked to declare which of the above four methods they wish to use. Alternatively, institutions may propose a fifth system or combination of the above. Such proposals should be forwarded to the President of the Commission early in the report-preparation process. The Commission staff will review the proposal and confer with the institution.

II: DATA DASHBOARDS RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Data Dashboards present data related to student success that is drawn from the institution's IPEDS data and contains a data dictionary with details on how each field is calculated. The value of the dashboards is that they are visual and readily reveal trends in the data across years. Clearly, not every measure listed in the dashboards is appropriate for every institution and the Commission recognizes the value and importance of the institution's own goals for student success. Hence, the dashboards are designed to be a starting point for reflections and discussions about student achievement and success. Institutions are encouraged to qualify the data in the dashboards using the note feature built into the dashboards that will be available to the Commission and reviewers, and within a self-study or interim (fifth-year) report, to add institutional or more current sources of data to enrich the narrative. As always, the Commission expects that the institution's mission will provide helpful guidance in thinking about which measures of student success are most important and most useful.

In brief, the dashboards that relate to student success are:

- **Undergraduate Students FTFT** – captures trends in IPEDS retention and graduation rates within 150% of normal time to completion and 150% Total success rates which includes transfer students.
- **Undergraduate Success** – captures trends in 8-year award of degrees for full and part-time students and 8-yr Total Success which includes transfer students.
- **Demographics** – trends in student enrollment, graduation and completion rates.
- **Student Financial Aid** – provides information on tuition and fees, and net price, student loan and Pell grants.

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