




Deputy Commissioner
Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Educational Technology

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To: BOCES District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public Schools
Principals of Public Schools
Charter School Leaders

From: Ken Wagner 

Subject: Using Where Are They Now? Reports for Local Program Review and Planning

As part of its ongoing review of college readiness and postsecondary outcomes, the Board of Regents discussed at its November meeting the postsecondary enrollment of New York's students in two- and four-year colleges and universities. Following this discussion, the presentation made to the Board and data files that provide postsecondary enrollment percentages within one year of the fourth year of high school for the 2006, 2007, and 2008 cohorts of each of our public high schools and districts were posted at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20141117/home.html>.

Postsecondary student enrollment reports (SIRS 601-604) have been available to authorized personnel in schools and districts since February 2014 via the Level 2 Reporting environment (L2RPT). Reports can be viewed by grade 9 cohort or by graduates within the cohort and are disaggregated by whether the postsecondary institution is a two-year or four-year, public or private, in-state or out-of-state school. Additional information regarding college persistence and college completion will become available over time through annual report updates.

For many years, schools in New York State have gathered information about students' intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution following high school, and the Department includes these post-graduation plans in the School Report Card. However, self-reported intentions in the senior year of high school may not reflect subsequent actual college enrollment and matriculation. The tracking of actual postsecondary outcomes for local program review and planning purposes through surveys, alumni nights, phone calls, etc., is a time-intensive process for individual schools and districts.

Where Are They Now? Reports

Where Are They Now? reports are based on postsecondary enrollment data provided by the National Student Clearinghouse matched with high school enrollment records reported by schools and districts through the Student Information Repository System (SIRS). The National Student Clearinghouse provides reporting and verification

services for over 3,600 colleges and universities¹, representing over 98% of the nationwide student enrollment in public and private postsecondary institutions.²

Although there are reasons why the results for a particular school may be slightly higher than what is contained in the Where are They Now? report³, these reports can be an important tool in your ongoing efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of student pathways through a K-12 course of study and beyond, and can supplement other sources of statewide information, such as the school report card, the graduation rate, and aspirational performance measures.

How to Use the Where Are They Now? Reports

The Where Are They Now? reports provide authorized school personnel with secure access to useful information for local program review and planning, consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other state/federal laws and regulations. As described above, reports provide enrollment information, disaggregated by institution type, and will provide persistence and completion information as reports are updated annually over time.

Examples of questions that can be addressed through review of these reports include:

- Are there students who reported they intended to go to college, but did not actually enroll?
- Are there students who reported they did not intend to go to college, but did, in fact, enroll?
- Are the types of institutions chosen by your students (two- vs. four-year, public vs. private, in-state vs. out-of-state) consistent with your expectations?
- Are the college courses of study chosen by your students consistent with your expectations?
- Which students persisted in college from year to year?
- Which students completed their college programs?
- Are there particular K-12 or high school courses of study or other local programs that appear to impact observed patterns in college enrollment, persistence, and completion?

When reviewing the Where Are They Now? reports, there will likely be students who were expected to enroll in a postsecondary institution but did not do so for a variety of

¹ See http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/enrollment_reporting/participating_schools.php.

² See <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/about>.

³ A small percentage of institutions do not participate in the Clearinghouse or block student-level reporting. A small percentage of students enrolled in participating institutions block student-level reporting or are not included by their institution because they do not receive financial aid. In some cases, student data may not match correctly between the Clearinghouse and SIRS. The Department is exploring options to supplement these reports with locally verified reports of postsecondary enrollment and/or additional information provided directly by SUNY and CUNY.

reasons. A growing body of research refers to this as the “**Summer Melt**”, whereby as many as one in five college-intending students do not enroll in a postsecondary institution the following fall.⁴ Summer Melt is much higher among students from low-income families or who are first-generation college-bound.

There are a number of barriers that arise during the summer following high school graduation. For example, there may be an unmet need between available resources – including financial aid – and the full cost of college attendance. In addition, students are often required over the summer to complete paperwork for registration, housing, financial aid, health insurance, and immunizations. These tasks can be a confusing barrier for students who may not have access to guidance counselors or adults to help them navigate the process. Providing a few hours of summer support can increase student enrollment by about three percentage points overall – and by eight to 12 percentage points for low-income students. This summer support may provide lasting impact on subsequent college persistence.⁵

Additional Resources

The Center for Education Policy and Research at Harvard University has conducted extensive research on why college-intending students do not matriculate to a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation.⁶ They have published a number of resources, including *The Summer Melt Handbook* (see <http://cepr.harvard.edu/cepr-resources/files/news-events/sdp-summer-melt-handbook.pdf>), which advises schools to utilize information from the National Student Clearinghouse in addition to other sources, such as student exit surveys, transcript requests, guidance counselor surveys, and direct collaboration with colleges. Specific templates for a Summer Melt local action plan can be found at <http://cepr.harvard.edu/sdp/resources/summer-melt/sample-forms.php>.

Thank you for your continued assistance with this important and challenging work. If you have any questions or comments about the Where Are They Now? reports, please contact the Office of Information and Reporting Services at dataquest@mail.nysed.gov.

⁴ See Castleman, B., Page, L. (2014) *Summer Melt: Supporting Low Income Students Through the Transition to College*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard Education Press.

⁵ See http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/15_Castleman-Forgotten_Summer.pdf.

⁶ For comprehensive resources on Summer Melt, including research and case studies, see <http://cepr.harvard.edu/sdp/resources/summer-melt/index.php>.