

Development of the 2020 HEDS New Student Survey Part of the HEDS Student Success Project

Background on the HEDS Student Success Project

In June 2019, we announced a new initiative that was designed to bring the new mission of HEDS to life. This initiative, which we've dubbed the *HEDS Student Success Project*, focuses on helping HEDS institutions identify or develop evidence-based measures and ways of working as a community that support the outcomes of our consortium's mission: advancing liberal arts education, inclusive excellence, and student success.

As we noted in our June 2020 "State of HEDS" presentation,¹ we've made progress on the HEDS Student Success Project despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19 at many HEDS institutions.

- We've interviewed students at five institutions to learn more about how they define success. One of the goals of the HEDS Student Success Project is to enhance our understanding of student success by integrating students' broader educational goals and aspirations with traditional metrics of student success, such as progress towards degree or post-employment outcomes.
- We've worked with a group of institutional researchers from HEDS colleges and universities to revise the institutional data we collect and share so that it better supports our mission. This includes developing a plan for collecting, analyzing, and sharing institutional data connected with student retention and progress towards degree. We'll be sharing the details of this work in the coming weeks.
- We're experimenting with new surveys that are aligned with our mission and designed to better engage students, more directly prompt conversations and actions on campus, as well as promote better response rates. The HEDS New Student Survey is the second example of this new approach. Our HEDS Returning Student Survey was the first.

Purpose of the New Student Survey

The HEDS New Student Survey includes two components. The first component is the survey itself. The second component is institutional data collection aimed at helping institutions see the link between their students' responses on the survey and their academic progress over the first year of college. We'll start by reviewing the survey.

The survey is designed to prompt new students to think about their goals for college, their vision for the successful life they want to lead after college, and how their experiences in college can help them move towards their vision of success. In our student interviews last fall, we learned that students' connection with their institution was based, in part, on their sense of whether their education and experiences at that institution were helping them move toward that vision of success. It is important that staff and faculty understand these broader goals, which often extend beyond their majors or even their post-graduate jobs.

This survey also asks incoming students what they worry about, so institutions can help students address those concerns. The survey asks students how much time they spent on various activities in high school, and how much time they plan to spend on those activities in college. Institutions can use this information to see how students' experiences and expectations compare to what faculty and staff know first-year students should do to be successful at their institution.

¹ Presentation given on June 22, 2020. Slides and audio file at <https://hed consortium.box.com/s/a3wci9kb84rj3zlt73t46xo7k4s98wuf>

Finally, the New Student Survey includes two scales developed by other researchers, Pascarella and Terenzini's Institutional and Goal Commitments Scale² and the Perseverance of Effort subscale from Duckworth's Grit Scale.³ We believe these scales will be useful in predicting student persistence and success.

Unique opportunities for students

Students who take the HEDS New Student Survey will have two unique opportunities: they'll be able to see the data from the survey as soon as they complete it, and they can ask to have a conversation with someone at their institution about their responses to survey questions.

When students take surveys in college, they typically don't get to see the results. We think this is one reason why students don't take surveys – the data go into a black hole, and students never hear anything else about it. We're going to do something different with this survey. When students complete the survey, they will get a link to a report that shows how all students at their institution responded to the closed-ended questions on the survey. This report will update in real time as students complete the survey. We will automatically send students a copy of their survey responses with a link to this report, so they can check back later to see the results when more students have taken the survey.

At the end of the survey, we will ask students if they want to have their survey responses forwarded to someone on campus so they can have a conversation about their goals for college and life, as well as the questions and worries they have as they think about their college education and beyond. Institutions will identify people and/or offices on campus that students may choose to have their survey results forwarded to – e.g., the student's academic advisor, staff in the advising office, the class dean, staff in career services. We understand that this requires extra work on the part of the institution. But we've added this to our survey because many of the students we spoke with last year commented that they'd never had conversations about their vision of success with their faculty, staff, or advisors.

Connecting the survey data with institutional data

The survey that incoming college students take is just one part of the HEDS New Student Survey. We will also ask institutions to provide student-level institutional data that we can merge with the survey data to further analyze factors that contribute to first-year students' retention and success. We will ask institutions to send us this institutional data at three different times: before students take the survey (data will be included in the survey panel), at the end of students' first term in college, and at the end of students' first year in college. We will use these data to identify the relationship, both across institutions and for individual institutions, between students' responses on the survey and their academic progress at their institution. This effort is related to one of the goals of the HEDS Student Success Project: to develop more useful indicators of student progress and success.

² Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1980). Predicting freshman persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from a theoretical model. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 51, 60-75.

³ Duckworth, A. L. & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91, 166-174. Also see: <https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/>

We will ask institutions to provide as much of the following demographic information as possible in the survey panel:

- Age – In years, at time of entry into institution
- Gender – Use IPEDS definitions and add non-binary, if available
- Race/ethnicity – Use IPEDS definitions
- Pell grant recipient – Yes/No
- First-generation status – Yes/No, using the institution’s definition of first-generation
- HS GPA – reported on a 4-point scale
- AP, IB, dual enrollment credits – Did the student have any of these when they entered the institution? (Yes/No)
- Expected family contribution

We will also ask institutions to provide us with the following information at *both* the end of the fall semester and the end of the first year:

- Credits attempted – The number of college credits the student was enrolled in as of the official drop/add deadline at their institution (i.e., any change after this date is reflected on the student’s transcript). This does not include noncredit developmental classes.
- Credits earned – Prior credits from Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment, and transfer are *not* counted, nor are noncredit developmental classes. Credit is earned based on institutional standards.
- GPA – Cumulative earned at institution.
- Number of courses in which students received a C or D but still earned credit.

Our goal would be to see whether, after taking into account student identity and other background information, the survey data predicted the ratio of attempted to completed credits and GPA. Please note that this work is consistent with FERPA. FERPA does not prevent institutions from sending information from students’ educational records to “organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school.”⁴ In addition, as we do with all of our surveys, we will eliminate all information that identifies individuals (name, student ID number, contact information) from our data files shortly after the survey closes and we send the data file to schools. Furthermore, we will send the data files that contain identifying information back to institutions via encrypted software.

⁴ <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>