



## Understandings Regarding the Use of Information Gathered for HEDS

The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium is a not-for-profit organization of private colleges and universities that assists member institutions in planning, management, institutional research, decision-support, policy analysis, educational evaluation, and assessment by assembling and sharing a mutually agreed-upon and regularly updated set of information, and by providing other services as directed by the Board. HEDS members have an interest in assuring appropriate confidentiality for the data they provide through Consortium activities. They also have a proprietary interest in that information, since they are assuming the internal costs of compiling it and paying the HEDS Office for its collection, analysis, and distribution. HEDS has an interest in assuring that this information is not made available to third parties without appropriate permission and compensation, and HEDS members conduct their activities with the following understandings:

Primary HEDS data-sharing activities involve information that is either not available through other public sources or that is shared earlier with the Consortium than publicized by third parties. HEDS members agree that they will use these data from other institutions received through HEDS only for their own internal planning and management, and not for external publication. For instance, it is appropriate to use such data in presentations to senior administrators or a board, but not for admissions publications or news releases. Even within the institution, HEDS members shall use discretion in how data for other institutions are used. It is usually appropriate to share data fully with senior administrators and trustees, but it may not be appropriate to provide hard copy to faculty committees, and is almost certainly advisable to share data with students only when institutional identities are masked.

Exceptions are data that HEDS may directly download from public sources (such as IPEDS), purchase from third party vendors, or collect from members as third party reports (e.g., NACUBO Endowment; AAUP Faculty Salary).

**The HEDS representatives at each institution must assure that anyone to whom data are given understands their confidential character and the ground rules governing their use.**

Under the "fair play" ground rule, a HEDS institution is entitled to receive information from other members only in those areas and for those years for which it has provided comparable information.

While HEDS surveys and reports usually identify data with the institutions from which they came, some HEDS reports will, by request of HEDS members, provide data only in a masked or aggregated form. In those cases, HEDS shall maintain the confidentiality of the institutional data except where specific permission for release is granted by the participating institutions. For unit record data from surveys, confidentiality must be assured for both institutions and individuals.

HEDS explicitly recognizes the value of research and publication in higher education. Accordingly, any HEDS member may undertake and publish studies using HEDS data in professional associations and publications so long as appropriate confidentiality is preserved. At a minimum, participating institutions may not be identified by name without their permission. Institutions are advised to create comparison groups of three or more institutions instead and report peer information based on a group.



For specific research studies, participating institutions may seek permission from the Board of Directors to receive larger data sets that are not generally made available to institutions.

Finally, in all data sharing activities, members are reminded of the Association of Institutional Research's Code of Ethics (<http://www.airweb.org/AboutUs/LeadershipAndGovernance/Pages/CodeofEthics.aspx>).

As the primary contact and duly authorized agent from the institution named below to the HEDS Consortium, I hereby signify that I understand and agree to follow the guidelines stated in the Understandings above.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Version 7/30/2013