

## HEDS Statement of Understandings: Principles & Values Statement

*Adopted by HEDS member institutions on 06/18/2021*

The Statement of Understandings (SOU) is a core document for HEDS. The SOU is meant to capture the reasons and rules for how we share data, knowledge, and expertise. Sharing is in our name—the Higher Education Data SHARING Consortium—and our mission identifies sharing as the way we work to advance liberal arts education, inclusive excellence, and student success. The SOU has two components: (1) this document, the Principles & Values Statement, which captures the reasons for how and why we share data, knowledge, and expertise, and (2) an [Operative Statement](#), which provides specific guidance and details about sharing for the current set of information and resources available to HEDS members. Together these two documents describe the *why* and *how* of sharing in HEDS.

This document provides the philosophical underpinnings for how we should work with one another in the consortium to share data, knowledge, and expertise. The following guideposts were used to develop the principles and values:

1. We want to promote the use of HEDS data to help institutions implement their missions, improve liberal arts education, advance inclusive excellence, and support student success.
2. We want to promote the easy exchange of knowledge and expertise within and across member institutions.
3. We want to promote sharing data, knowledge, and expertise, but we also need to value the rights of member institutions, and individuals at member institutions, to control how information that may identify their data or practices are shared at or across other HEDS institutions.

### **Collaboration**

HEDS recognizes that the creative process to develop ideas, processes, or actions is enhanced through working with members who have diverse perspectives. We learn more about ourselves as we work with other individuals and other institutions in the HEDS community to provide perspective. Working with these colleagues prevents isolated thinking and allows us to see our impact on student success in new and different ways. The contributions of other HEDS institutions reduces burden as well; collaboration leads to more efficient processes and practices that benefit us all. We value collaboration not only for the opportunity to share, but also to build a stronger higher education community as we learn from one another's ideas and strengths to address the challenges in higher education writ large.

### **Representation and context**

HEDS works to overcome inequities in higher education through a continuing invitation for students and institutions to define and redefine their measures of success. It is often not what happens to a student but how that student understands their experience that is important. Similarly, institutions are called upon to produce accurate, timely, and thorough information and policies within the context of their institutional history and experience. As HEDS member institutions pursue success for their students, they are supported by other members with empathy and openness to their institutional context.

### **Mutual respect**

HEDS aspires to maintain a supportive community. Actions and decisions related to HEDS materials and undertakings should be grounded in community benefit and mission fulfillment rather than individual gain. Members are mindful of power and privilege dynamics, and approach their work with a constructive, broad-minded attitude. Individuals at HEDS member institutions strive to recognize and

mitigate potential conflicts of interest, and work toward an environment where all members, and individuals from member institutions, feel welcomed and are treated fairly and with courtesy.

### **Stewardship**

The handling and usage of HEDS information and resources is grounded in responsible and wise management. HEDS members and staff recognize the value we can contribute to inclusive excellence and student success, both central tenants of the HEDS mission. Data stewards have a shared commitment to the protection and oversight of the information entrusted into their care; they are accountable for not only their own data concerns, but those of the larger organization. They are guided by the following principles, establishing norms or shared rules and ideals for how individuals work:

**Honesty** – the objective and impartial presentation of data and information. Individuals at HEDS institutions who use HEDS information and resources seek to truly understand these assets through accurate representation, interpretations, and analysis. They seek to mitigate common mistakes, fallacies, and bias.

**Confidentiality** – an assumption of desired privacy and an obligation to the people behind the information. Members understand and practice behaviors that protect information during collection, use, storage, and sharing. They follow their institutional and HEDS organizational procedures to prevent unintentional, unlawful, or unauthorized access or disclosure. When individuals at HEDS institutions are uncertain about how to handle HEDS data or information, they will seek direction from HEDS before taking any further action.

**Transparency** – availability and communication of information and its meanings, perspectives, and approach. HEDS members are committed to the accessibility of accurate, quality information to empower others to make informed decisions. In order to foster inclusive excellence, we share truth as well as gaps and opportunities for improvement. Transparency in higher education can take several forms: context, sharing facts and information, student-level records, methodologies or approaches, or results/findings.

There can be tension among these principles, and the HEDS community strives for an appropriate balance. Members are intentional when making decisions and can rely on the community for guidance and support.