



CSLF School Counselor eNews

November 2008

How Colleges are Responding to the Spelling's Commission Report

When Margaret Spellings was appointed U.S. Secretary of Education she had just begun the college search process with her eldest child. She quickly discovered that although there was a wide range of information on college websites, it was extremely difficult to get consistent data that could be used to compare schools. One of Spellings' first initiatives as Education Secretary was to convene the *Commission on the Future of Higher Education*. Two years ago, the commission issued a report criticizing the lack of accountability and transparency throughout higher education.

The commission called for the creation of a "consumer friendly" database on higher education which would provide users with useful, reliable information which would enable them to weigh and rank institutional performance. The types of information the commission was looking for included, college costs, percentage of students receiving financial aid, average class sizes, graduation rates, and some type of standardized measure regarding student learning. In response to the Commission's report, a number of college search engines have been created to act as an online source for comparable information. The following are a few of the newer ones.

www.ucan-network.org was created by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and had its start-up in 2007. This site has profiles on 728 independent colleges from 44 states. Each college profile contains a wide range of data elements - 47 in all. Web site users can do a number of comparison searches. Of all the sites reviewed, Ucan was extremely comprehensive and user friendly.

[Http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator) is the revamped federal higher education database. It is the largest database of its kind with information drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics. It contains the typical information one would expect to find including tuition and fees, financial aid, retention and graduation rates, programs of study, and types of athletic programs. It also includes information on campus security, including the number of on-campus criminal offences. The site is so extensive, it may overwhelm some students.

www.collegeportrait.org is a new website created through a joint effort of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. It currently has profiles for only 302 institutions and not all of these profiles are complete. The site contains the usual data elements and will allow users to do comparison searches. It also contains information on student learning by reporting scores on one of three assessment tools: the Collegiate Learning Assessment, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, or the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress. Currently, there are some states that are not participating including Massachusetts and California. Many of the nation's most selective public colleges have also declined to participate including the University of Connecticut.

Not to be left out, the Education Conservancy announced the creation of a new website that is being designed as an alternative to the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings. In September, Lloyd Thacker, President of the Conservancy, unveiled a prototype at the Annual Conference of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC). The website, called College Speaks, will be yet another entry into the widening array of college search engines.

CSLF Professional Development Series for School Counselors

Registration is closed for our November 7th program, "The Essential Financial Aid Tool Kit." We are expecting more than 50 attendees. The next program, "Opening the Doors to College Access", will be held at CSLF on January 9th. To register, visit our website at www.cslf.com

School Age Population Projected to Increase in Most States

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), public school enrollment is expected to increase nationally, approximately 10 percent between 2005 and 2017. However, there are huge differences between states. There are 37 states with projected increases with 9 of those states expecting increases of more than 15 percent including Arizona (44.8), Nevada (43.2), Texas (32.9), and Florida (28.9).

Most New England states will see a net decline in enrollments with Vermont and Rhode Island showing the steepest declines at 11.7 and 11.4 respectively. Connecticut public school enrollments are projected to decrease 6.3 percent.

The report also notes a shift in the school age population by race, noting that the steepest increases will be in the number of Hispanic students (up 39%) following by Black and Asian students (both up 26%). For more information, visit the NCES website at <http://nces.ed.gov>.

Did you know?

*In a recent NACAC survey, more than 10% of college admissions counselors admitted to looking at prospective students' online social networking sites. **They also noted that they were not impressed by what they saw.***

About Connecticut Student Loan Foundation – The Connecticut Student Loan Foundation is a non-profit corporation that administers, guarantees, and finances loans within the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and alternative student loan programs. CSLF promotes access to higher education by helping students and their families plan for and pursue a postsecondary education. CSLF has more than 40 years of experience providing assistance to students, parents, and industry partners.

About Invest in your Future – Invest in your Future (IF), CSLF's early awareness and college planning services division, provides free outreach services regarding college planning and the financial aid process. The IF program is designed to promote college access and awareness, and includes a college planning resources center and library, a toll-free hotline, community presentations, materials distribution, online resources, and much more.