



James Woodworth, Commissioner
National Center for Education Statistics
U.S. Department of Education
550 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Commissioner Woodworth:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the 18 undersigned members and partners of the Postsecondary Data Collaborative (PostsecData). PostsecData is comprised of organizations committed to the use of high-quality postsecondary data to improve student success and advance educational equity.

PostsecData recognizes the unprecedented time in which we are living—the full impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on postsecondary education is still unknown, and it is critical that the field use the tools and resources at-hand to enact evidence-based policies to best meet students’ needs amidst the current public health crisis. We appreciate the proactive approach of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to include additional questions on how COVID-19 has impacted students in the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey for 2020 (NPSAS:20), currently in the field.

In this time of crisis and eventual recovery, the overall importance of NPSAS:20 cannot be understated—it will be an essential resource for researchers and policymakers to understand college affordability and student financial aid in the face of school closures, economic instability, and changing institutional and state budgets. In particular, the addition of questions on the following topics will allow postsecondary stakeholders to better understand changes in distance education, financial aid, and student relationships with institutions during this tumultuous time:

- Changes to instruction (e.g., distance learning, course/term cancellation, extended mid-term breaks, persistence);
- Changes to student and family income and financial situation (e.g., basic needs security, childcare, receipt of emergency aid related to COVID-19);
- Receipt of refunds for room and board, tuition, and study abroad programs;
- Technology and adaptation to distance learning (e.g., internet access, software and hardware availability, training/assistance); and
- Perception of communication from institutions on COVID-19 response related to emergency aid, housing, coursework, healthcare, and financial aid.

Responses to NPSAS:20 from both students and institutions will be an invaluable resource as the field seeks to understand the near- and long-term impacts of COVID-19. The addition of these questions to NPSAS will prove critical to understanding how students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, and other historically underserved students are impacted by the educational upheaval caused by the pandemic.

The undersigned members and partners of PostsecData applaud NCES’ responsiveness and proactive approach to data collection in service to students and the field. If you have any questions about these



comments, please contact Mamie Voight, vice president of policy research at the Institute for Higher Education Policy (mvoight@ihp.org or 202-587-4967).

Sincerely,

Advance CTE

Alloy Engineering; METAL

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Excelencia in Education

George Washington University Institute of Public Policy

Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Higher Learning Advocates

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

Jobs for the Future (JFF)

National Association for College Admission Counseling

National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)

NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)

Student Veterans of America

The Education Trust

The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)

uAspire