

Reforming College Scorecard

Issue: Reduce duplicative Department of Education programs.

Background: College Scorecard is one of the many consumer-facing tools maintained by the Department of Education. It is subject to the following significant shortcomings:

- It only covers students who received federal financial aid, leaving out a substantial number of students;
- It calculates earnings from students who completed their degree and students who dropped out, producing a misleading picture of the value an institution's degree program;
- The data are not disaggregated at the programmatic level, even though earnings vary dramatically across majors, often more than they vary across institutions; and
- Since the Scorecard is not mandated in statute or regulation, there is no guarantee that it will be maintained or updated.

The creation and maintenance of the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) College Navigator is required under the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1015a), and the 2008 reauthorization of the law also required the creation of the College Affordability and Transparency Center (CATC). The College Affordability and Transparency Center acts as an umbrella for the many consumer tools the Department of Education is required to maintain: College Navigator, College Scorecard, Net Price Calculator Center, the College Affordability and Transparency List, 90/10 Information, and State Spending Charts. Many of these linked sites sit on top of more complicated databases that attempt to help consumers investigate various aspects of colleges with varying degrees of ease.

The College Scorecard, as noted, is not required by statute or regulation, and is not mentioned in the bill. Consolidating the College Scorecard and College Navigator would streamline consumer-facing data and mitigate the complexity of current consumer-facing tools. Furthermore, doing so would enable NCES to undertake a series of technical review panels to decide, with input from the higher-education sector, how to consistently measure the metrics of interest.

Recommendation: The Veterans Education Project recommends the 116th Congress consolidate the College Scorecard and College Navigator, and ensure the College Scorecard attains a permanent home with NCES, an agency that exists to provide educational data.