



News

Vol. 19 - June 2002

From the President



Dennis Jones
NCHEMS President

From its earliest days, NCHEMS has championed the idea that the likelihood of sound, strategic decisions emerging from any decisionmaking process could be increased if relevant information were brought into the process at appropriate times. Indeed, much of the history of NCHEMS can be described in terms of our focus along the data → information → knowledge and information application continuum.

In its earliest days, NCHEMS focused on the basic building blocks of data item definition and categorization. This work was done in the early 1970s and produced the *Program Classification Structure*, the *Higher Education Finance Manuals*, the *Facilities Inventory and Classification Manual*, and the *HEGIS Classification* and its successor, the *Classification of Instructional Programs*. It is likely that few of the current cadre of institutional researchers and higher education data analysts recognize the seminal work done by NCHEMS in devising the data conventions that form the basis of data collection, reporting, and analysis throughout American higher education. While these conventions have been modified somewhat over the course of the last 30 years, the original NCHEMS work is still very much in

evidence in today's higher education data "language."

The second stage was the conversion of this data into information through use of models—e.g., the Resource Requirements Prediction Model (RRPM), the Student Flow Model—and analytic conventions that were designed to help decisionmakers deal with the key issues of the day. The issues have changed, as has the technology that allows us to manipulate data and convert it into information. However, NCHEMS has continued to develop "good practices" with regard to use of information in support of strategic decisionmaking.

Subsequent stages have seen us deal with organizational theory as it reflects on the ways in which information is used in different organizational and decisionmaking contexts and with the use of information in state policymaking for higher education. Over the past 15 years, in particular, NCHEMS staff have applied the concepts developed in work with innumerable institutions and state agencies on the full range of strategic issues in higher education. In the process we have developed a great deal of hands-on knowledge in how to use information in identifying problems and framing responses to them.

We are now taking this experience, combining it with technology, and creating a new service for those engaged in policy formulation and implementation at the state level. With the gracious support of the Ford Foundation, NCHEMS is in the process of creating a National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis—a one-stop source of information sets we believe will be particularly useful to analysts and decisionmakers alike. At the core, the information sets are keyed to those in *Measuring Up 2000*, with the addition of the capacity to "drill down" to regional and county levels to provide additional perspective on the key issues about which policy will be made. The

Measuring Up framework will be augmented by key financing indicators and other measures beyond those contained in the Report Card.

The main article of this newsletter is devoted to a description of what we intend to achieve in this arena and the reasons why we have embarked on this rather daunting endeavor.

We have been very fortunate to acquire the services of Patrick Kelly to translate these plans into a Web-based reality. Patrick comes to us from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education where he was in charge of creating the information support system for one of the most innovative and information-savvy state higher education agencies in the country. We welcome Patrick, his wife Michelle, and their new son Aaron to the NCHEMS family.

On another personnel note, it gives me great pleasure to announce that Ken Mortimer will be joining NCHEMS as a Senior Associate as of July 1. Ken has many years' experience as both a scholar and a practitioner of higher education management, having served as president of both Western Washington University and the University of Hawai'i. Since the NCHEMS mission is to bridge the gap between research and practice in strategic decisionmaking, Ken's exhaustive research background as well as his considerable experience as an institutional executive make him ideally suited for the roles he will play at NCHEMS.

I have been privileged to work with Ken for many years in his role as chairman of the NCHEMS Board. I now welcome the opportunity to work with him as a colleague.

More information about both Patrick and Ken can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Developing the National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis

With support from the Ford Foundation, NCHEMS is pleased to be developing the National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis—an information infrastructure for statewide policymakers. Through the work of a small staff, the guidance of an advisory board, and the creation of a “super information” Website, the Information Center will be the only comprehensive “one-stop-shop” for state-level higher education data and information.

Much of the data and information reported by the Information Center will be organized specifically to help state-level higher education policymakers and analysts make sound policy decisions. The full use of the Information Center’s Website will be free of charge.

The Center will provide data and information to support the implementation of state higher education policies that are developed around social and economic needs, as well as the needs of institutions.

How Will the Information Center Address the Needs of Policymakers?

The Information Center is being designed to address several problems facing higher education policymakers. First, there is presently no widely accepted understanding of the array of data needed to generate and implement a public agenda for higher education within a given state. Institutions and state agencies routinely provide and compile data about individual institutions—especially information that relates directly to funding decisions. But they lack information that focuses on the needs of clients and beneficiaries of higher education, and how those needs are actually being served.

Second, sources for much of the data needed for sound higher education policy development are outside the direct control of higher education institutions and agencies. Only data about providers of higher education are within the purview of the higher education establishment itself. Data about clients are found elsewhere—in the U.S. Bureau of the Census, state Departments of Public Instruction, Departments of Labor and Commerce, etc. The Information Center will integrate data from multiple sources and present them in ways that are more useful for state policymakers and analysts.

Third, there is a deficit of state-level higher education policy analysts and analysis. In this complex environment, policy-relevant information must be constructed, not merely compiled. Further, much of the information must be derived from sources that differ markedly from state to state. Both activities demand an uncommon level of analytic expertise, as well as a common understanding of the most productive kinds of analyses to undertake. But analysts skilled at working in this complex environment are in very short supply.

What Will the Information Center Provide?

Through the operation of a user-friendly Website, the Information Center will provide state policymakers and analysts timely and accurate data and information collected from well-respected sources and provide links to other useful information. Specifically, it will provide a broad coverage of data and information regarding:

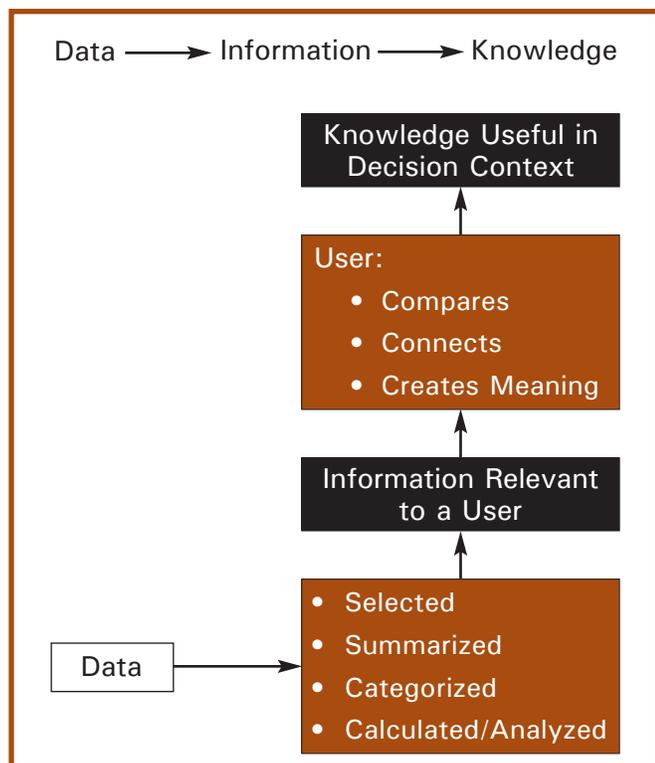
- Preparation for college
- Transition from high school to college
- College participation and completion
- Transition from college to work
- Benefits of higher education
- Higher education finance

The Center will also provide other useful information as needed (e.g., projections of high school graduates and the adult population).

Using information available from the Center, State policymakers will be able to quickly and easily compare their states to others across the U.S. and, where possible, analyze data by county so they can identify problem areas within their borders. Like *Measuring Up 2000: A State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*, the ability to benchmark against other states will help policymakers establish priorities based on comparative weaknesses. To this end, the availability of data and information at least at the state level will be the criterion for inclusion.

The Information Center will not only compile information but also provide a “road map” tying information to common policy decisions, thereby decreasing the complexity of generating the information needed to make higher education policy decisions.

The Center will provide access to contextual information that is useful in the quest to create or reform higher education policy. For each measure reported on the Information Center’s Website, there will be links to additional information that will help the user apply the information in the context of policymaking. The end result is turning data into information, and information into the knowledge needed to make well-informed policy decisions.



How Will the Information Center Promote the Development of New Information?

Another important set of activities will be associated with the development of the Information Center. These involve efforts to develop new information sets. There are key gaps in basic data to support higher education policymaking at the state level. Among the most critical missing pieces are measures for:

- 12th grade academic proficiencies
- Adult literacy (full state coverage)
- Collegiate student learning
- Cost effectiveness of higher education
- Adequacy and equity of institutional funding
- Civic engagement outcomes

Many of the “missing” information sets will require work by and coordination with other organizations such as the federal government, testing companies, etc. Funds for this project will be insufficient to underwrite development work done elsewhere. However, a major task of project staff—working within the framework of a strategic plan—will be to work with the philanthropic community and other organizations to ensure that key information sets are created and maintained. New information will be added to the Information Center’s Website as it becomes available. The advisory board will help to set priorities for the development of new information sets.

A related activity will be the reproduction of well-established information sets that have been developed in the past but are either in jeopardy of continuation or have ceased production all together. Among these are:

1. Kent Halstead’s work in calculating measures of state tax effort and capacity and the profiles of state higher education finance, and
2. Hal Hovey’s work in projecting state and local budget surpluses/shortfalls and in estimating the levels of funding needed to maintain current state services of various kinds.

Project staff will work in the coming year to ensure the funding needed to replicate these information sets and recruit, if necessary, organizations to take a leadership role in these activities.

The Future of the Information Center

To ensure the success of the National Information Center, funding is required to develop its infrastructure, maintain its long-term operation, and develop new

information sets that are vital to the development of higher education policy. The funding provided by the Ford Foundation is sufficient to develop the infrastructure of the Information Center and to maintain its operation out to December 2003. NCHEMS staff is seeking funding for its long-term operation and maintenance to 2010. Funding for the development of new information will be sought and packaged as discrete projects.

Patrick J. Kelly

NCHEMS is pleased to announce that Patrick Kelly has joined the staff. Patrick was hired as a Senior Associate in February 2002 and will serve as Director of the National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis—an exciting new project at NCHEMS discussed in the main article.

Before joining NCHEMS, Patrick worked for six years at the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (previously named the Council on Higher Education). His most recent position at the Council was Senior Associate for Information and Research. He worked with higher education leaders to design performance indicators to measure progress toward postsecondary education reform, conducted research studies for statewide higher education policy initiatives, and coordinated the analysis and reporting of data and information in support of many other Council projects. Prior to working at the Council, Patrick was a Research Associate at the National Center for Family Literacy based in Louisville, Kentucky.



Patrick is working on his Ph.D. in Urban and Public Affairs at the University of Louisville where he also earned a Master's degree in Sociology. His undergraduate studies were completed at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His areas of specialization and interest include research and statistical methodology, policy analysis, and program evaluation.

Directory

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NCHEMS Membership

All institutions, state agencies of higher education, and systems offices are eligible for NCHEMS membership. Each campus in a system must join in order to realize the membership benefits.

The key to the NCHEMS network is your own liaison officer. Each member organization appoints an individual who coordinates communication with NCHEMS. This individual can also serve as the hub of your own internal network of department chairs, deans, administrators, and executives.

Because the NCHEMS Subscribing Membership Program provides benefits not just for one individual but for your entire organization, your liaison officer can ensure that full use is made of discounts on NCHEMS publications, products, and services. The liaison officer is also a vital link in communicating your institution's needs and interests to NCHEMS. The Center, of course, serves the entire higher education community and all are invited to participate in its programs and receive its newsletter. The activities of the liaison officer in a member institution contribute to this existing network by strengthening lines of communication and ensuring systematic distribution of the Center's latest publications, tools, and services.

For more information and membership forms, go to the NCHEMS Website: www.nchems.org

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Kenneth P. Mortimer

As of July 1, Ken Mortimer will join NCHEMS as a Senior Associate. As part of the NCHEMS staff, Ken will be available to assist higher education leaders on a broad range of topics including planning, institutional governance, and effective academic staffing policies and procedures.

Ken's academic and leadership experiences make him uniquely qualified for the roles he will play at NCHEMS. After getting his doctorate in higher education at Berkeley, Ken became a Professor of Higher Education and Public Administration at Penn State. He also served as Director of the Center for the Study of Higher Education and as Vice President and Vice Provost at that institution before leaving to serve as President of Western Washington University in 1988. He served as President of the University of Hawai'i and Chancellor of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa from 1993 to 2001. He is both a scholar and a reflective practitioner. At NCHEMS, Ken will participate in Research and Development projects, participate as a faculty member in NCHEMS seminars, and consult with college and university leaders on a wide range of governance issues.



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