

# Archived Information

## **SECRETARY SPELLINGS' ACTION PLAN ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **"MYTH vs. FACT"**

**MYTH:** The Secretary's Action Plan Included "A Controversial Plan To Keep Long-Term Records On Students That Would Track Performance From The Time They Enter The System In Grade School To Show How Their Educations Progress."-*Washington Post, 9/27*

**FACT:** Secretary Spellings Has Not Called For A System To Track Students From The Time They Enter Elementary School. Most states already measure higher education student learning. Her plan will enable colleges and universities to collect and analyze performance data without compromising the privacy rights of students.

- **To improve the academic performance of college students, we must first be able to measure that performance.** The Commission on the Future of Higher Education calls current data systems "limited and inadequate," making it difficult to "obtain reliable information on students' progress through the educational pipeline."
- **Already, more than 40 states have privacy-protected higher education information systems in place.** The Secretary's Plan would connect those existing islands of data so parents, students and policymakers can weigh and compare institutions of higher learning. It would also provide incentives for every state to become part of the reporting system.
- **There is a clear and growing need to measure and improve performance:**
  - "Employers report repeatedly that many new graduates they hire are not prepared to work, lacking the critical thinking, writing and problem-solving skills needed in today's workplaces."- Commission on the Future of Higher Education
  - "Many students who do earn degrees have not actually mastered the reading, writing and thinking skills we expect of college graduates."- Commission on the Future of Higher Education
  - "Over the past decade, literacy among college graduates has actually declined."-Commission on the Future of Higher Education
- **"The information would be closely protected. It would not identify individual students, nor be tied to personal information."**-Secretary Spellings

**MYTH:** The Report Of The Future Of Higher Education "Proposes One-Size-Fits-All Measures Which, If Adopted Uncritically, Could Cripple America's Complex System Of Colleges And Universities-A System That, Imperfect As It May Be, Is The Envy Of The World."-*Allentown Morning Call, 9/27*

**FACT:** The Secretary's Plan Will Not Create A National System Of Higher Education. It is designed to improve the way we measure the performance of higher education, changing from one primarily based on inputs (financial resources, number of

students enrolled, etc.) to one primarily based on results (student academic performance, graduation rates, etc.).

- **The Secretary's Plan is voluntary.** It is based on financial support and incentives to states and institutions of higher education that measure and report results.
- "Institutional quality is measured primarily through financial inputs and resources. In today's environment, these measures of inputs are no longer adequate."-Commission on the Future of Higher Education
- "Parents and students have no solid evidence, comparable across institutions, of how much students learn in colleges or whether they learn more at one college than another."-Commission on the Future of Higher Education
- **"We neither envision, nor want, a national system of higher education. On the contrary, one of the greatest assets of our system is its diversity, something we must protect and preserve."**-Secretary Spellings

**MYTH: "Some Critics Are Suspicious That The Drumbeat For 'Accountability'-From The Administration That Created The Testing Regimen Of No Child Left Behind-Will Lead To Government Intrusion And A Narrowing Of Higher Education To What Can Be Quantified And Compared."**-*Christian Science Monitor*, 9/28

**FACT: The Plan Would Not Impose The No Child Left Behind Act On Colleges And Universities.** Instead, it would expand the Act's successful accountability principles to our nation's high schools, in order to better prepare graduates for the rigors of college.

- **The Commission on the Future of Higher Education calls "inadequate preparation" one of the major barriers to college access.**
  - About 40 percent of college students end up taking at least one remedial education course.-Commission on the Future of Higher Education
  - The estimated cost to taxpayers of remedial courses is over \$1 billion annually.-Commission on the Future of Higher Education
- **The Plan envisions aligning high school standards with college expectations, in part by increasing access to college-prep classes.**
  - The Department of Education is working with Congress to enact President Bush's proposal to train 70,000 additional teachers to lead Advanced Placement-International Baccalaureate math, science and critical-need foreign language courses over the next five years. It would increase the number of students taking AP-IB tests to 1.5 million by 2012, tripling the number of test-takers who get a passing grade.
  - According to the College Board, nearly half a million students who were ready for AP calculus did not take it or have access to it.
- **"Ultimately, we pay the bill twice, because students don't get what they need in high school."**-Secretary Spellings

**MYTH: "Some Higher Education Officials Fear [The Secretary's Plan] Will Lead To Standardized Testing At The Collegiate Level And Trample On Students' Privacy."-McClatchy Newspapers, 9/26**

**FACT: The Plan Would Provide Matching Funds And Incentives To Colleges, Universities And States That Collect And Report Student Learning Outcomes.**

As the Secretary noted, no current ranking system directly measures this critical information.

- The Plan also envisions working with the accreditation community to recommend changes to the standards for recognition that would place a greater emphasis on results.
- ***"To succeed, this effort must be led by colleges and universities themselves. We must be careful not to harm the autonomy and creativity that has made them the envy of the world."***-Secretary Spellings