



**REVISED**

**MEMORANDUM**

**May 7, 2013**

**TO: Members of the Board of Trustees**  
**FROM: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor**  
**SUBJECT: Data Transparency and Reporting**

**Action Requested**

The proposed resolution affirms current policies on assessment and approves principles on data transparency and reporting within the State University of New York.

**Resolution**

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas the nature of highly effective organizations demands timely, accurate, and meaningful data to support informed decision making and appropriate action; and

Whereas the continuous improvement of SUNY-wide student, faculty, and research services depends on the availability of critical data from all SUNY campuses; and

Whereas Board Resolution 2010-039, *Streamlining of the State University Board of Trustees Policy on SUNY Assessment*, calls for academic rigor and meeting or exceeding external standards for assessment required by federal and state law; and

Whereas SUNY Memorandum to Presidents 2010-02, *Policy and Guidance: Assessment*, calls on each campus to develop and implement a plan for regular assessment of institutional effectiveness, defined as achievement of its mission and goals within the context of the State University

of New York's mission and goals, to gauge its own progress in academic and other areas, and to meet or exceed the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE); and

Whereas the *Power of SUNY* sets out system-level strategic goals consistent with the statutory mission of the State University of New York (per NYS Education Law, Article 8, Section 351), and SUNY's *Master Plan for 2012 and Beyond, Delivering on our Promise*, affirms SUNY's longstanding commitment to transparency and accountability, with specific metrics, targets, and reporting cycles; and

Whereas the Chancellor has conferred with SUNY's leadership, including campus presidents and chief academic officers, as well as faculty and student governance, in the development of a SUNY report card, and has requested campus-level targets in consideration of overall system-level goals; and

Whereas MSCHE requires colleges and universities to make relevant information on institution-wide assessments available to prospective students, including such data as graduation and retention rates, certification and licensing pass rates, and other outcomes as appropriate to the programs offered, and that the information be provided in a manner that ensures student and public access, such as print, electronic, or video presentation; and

Whereas the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), through a series of interrelated surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, gathers information from every postsecondary institution that participates in federal student financial aid programs, with codified standards, including definitions and methodologies, that promote data consistency and comparability; and

Whereas data about State University of New York campuses and the SUNY system are available from several federal websites but are not aggregated in a single accessible location; and

Whereas the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) have co-sponsored the Voluntary System of Accountability, and the American Association of Community Colleges has developed the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, both emblematic of higher education's commitment to accountability; and

Whereas Governor Andrew M. Cuomo recently issued Executive Order No. 95, *Using Technology to Promote Transparency, Improve Government Performance and Enhance Citizen Engagement*, requiring covered state entities to make certain data available to the public in the interests of transparency and efficiency and SUNY has agreed to provide certain data for public dissemination on the New York State Open Data Website; and

Whereas there is the potential for misuse of data if proper safeguards are not instituted to assure the integrity of information and the protection and confidentiality of individuals; and

Whereas New York State law and SUNY policies and standards protect sensitive information; and

Whereas the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. §1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) protects the privacy of student education records while permitting institutions to share these records with appropriate bodies or organizations for audit, evaluation and other specified purposes; and

Whereas SUNY is committed to the protection and safeguarding of the privacy of individual student records, consistent with all legal requirements; and

Whereas the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) have developed standards for data reporting to ensure data integrity and protection of individuals; and

Whereas SUNY has an established network of institutional researchers through the Association of Institutional Research and Planning Officers (AIRPO) and other organizational supports for professional development around best practices in institutional research and assessment,

including the SUNY Council on Assessment (SCoA) and the Assessment Network of New York (ANNY); now, therefore, be it

Resolved that, consistent with current policy, each State University of New York campus, including the state-operated campuses, community colleges and statutory colleges, shall enhance quality by developing and implementing plans for the regular assessment and review of institutional effectiveness, academic programs and general education, such that the campus meets or exceeds the assessment standards set by section 52.1(b)(3) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (8 NYCRR §52.1[b][3]), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and, as appropriate, programmatic accreditation bodies; and, be it further

Resolved that the Provost of the State University of New York shall continue to review the findings of regional and programmatic accreditation bodies related to assessment on State University of New York campuses, and shall assist campuses when needed; and, be it further

Resolved that the Chancellor and Provost will work with SUNY leadership and governance to develop a plan for data reporting to address the following:

- Specifications for data reports, for both campuses and system;
- Dissemination and communication of data, i.e., how best to make it available;
- Appropriate use of data, including its application to budget allocation and presidential review;
- Enhancement of the centralized SUNY data repository for the collection, analysis and dissemination of SUNY-wide data, and for participation in the New York State Open Data Initiative;
- SUNY's level of participation in national surveys, benchmarking and assessment efforts, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement, the National Community College Benchmark Project, the Voluntary System of Accountability, the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, and others; and
- Safeguarding of datasets, to maximize, among other confidentiality concerns, the privacy of individual student records consistent with federal and state law, to ensure

appropriate use for policy development and institutional improvement; and, be it further

Resolved that the Provost of the State University shall work with leadership, faculty and others on SUNY campuses to implement this resolution, including the formation of a Data and Information Governance body, in consultation with faculty and student governance, and shall report periodically to the Board of Trustees any additional steps that may need to be taken to ensure the smooth implementation of this resolution in a fashion that enhances quality at the State University.

### **Background**

This resolution builds on SUNY policies by affirming the University's longstanding commitment to assessment for enhancing academic and other excellence. Acknowledging the gains made and the ongoing evolution of external standards in the area of assessment and data reporting, this resolution recognizes that each campus must develop assessment plans that are consistent with its mission and goals within the context of the State University's mission and goals, while maintaining academic rigor and meeting or exceeding external standards for assessment, including accurate and timely data reporting, as required by federal and state law, and that System Administration must work with leadership and governance to develop a plan for the responsible release of accurate, complete and timely information that satisfies reporting requirements and addresses the growing demand for user-friendly public access to data and assessment results.