



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

April 12, 2007

Memorandum

To: AAU Presidents and Chancellors

From: Robert Berdahl, AAU President
John Wiley, University of Wisconsin - Madison Chancellor,
AAU Institutional Data Committee Chairman

Subject: Data Collection Recommendations

Attached are proposals for improved and expanded data collection and reporting procedures for both undergraduate and graduate programs that the AAU Institutional Data Committee is recommending for adoption by all AAU universities. (*Attachments 1a - 1b*) These recommendations will be considered formally at the AAU membership meeting later this month. The recommendations have been developed by the Committee and a series of task forces engaging member presidents, provosts, graduate deans, institutional research officers, student financial aid officers, and others.

The undergraduate data collection recommendations have been developed to be responsive to external calls for increasing accountability and improved information about costs and program performance characteristics, as well as to provide analytically useful information for university administrators. The graduate program data collection recommendations are focused on Ph.D. programs and are intended to provide better inter-institutional comparative data on program performance, as well as provide improved information to prospective students and other external constituencies.

The attached documents provide descriptions of the following recommendations:

Undergraduate data collection (*Attachment 1a*)

- retention and graduation rates
- time-to-degree
- student transfers
- “net cost”—estimated actual cost of attendance
- graduating student and alumni surveys

Graduate data collection (*Attachment 1b*)

- enrollment
- completion rates
- time-to-degree
- student financial support
- student exit survey
- Ph.D. educational and career outcomes survey

The Committee is deeply indebted to the AAU Data Exchange (AAUDE), the organization of AAU university institutional research and planning officers, for its exceptional assistance in the Committee's work, both through the dedicated work of individual AAUDE members serving on the Committee and its several task forces and through the work of the organization itself, which has provided forums through its annual meetings and specially-scheduled conferences to discuss and advance our work.

Almost all of the proposed data collections will be carried out by AAUDE, which has a long-running, effective data exchange process to which these activities would be added. AAUDE is building a "data warehouse" at MIT, and these data would be stored there, accessible to all member institutions and made available to the public under procedures to be developed by AAU and AAUDE.

We should note that these data collection activities will place added workload on AAU institutional research offices and may, in some cases, require additional staff resources to carry out the full range of IR responsibilities. We think it important to raise this issue with you, and we and the Institutional Data Committee firmly believe that the benefits to individual institutions and to the AAU membership collectively from adopting these recommendations will fully repay any costs of providing the resources necessary to carry out these recommendations.

We are sending this material to all AAUDE members and hope that you can discuss these issues with them and other campus staff as appropriate before the AAU membership meeting.

cc: AAUDE members
assistants to presidents and chancellors