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Student Information Portal Assessment

The “SIPA” Project

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Purpose of the Project

SIPA is designed to study state, regional and national level student information portals promoting college access. The overarching goal is to collect information about these portals; to define, document, and categorize the findings; to evaluate the effectiveness of state, regional and selected national portals; and to offer recommendations from these findings for the future development and support of portals.

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Portal Selection Criteria

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- Site must pertain to multiple institutions (for example site contains information on all institutions in state, or all public institutions, etc.)
- Site must focus on college access (can include focus on traditional high school/college student, graduate student and/or adult learner/degree completion)
- Site must provide at least one service beyond general information on going to college (such as online applications or high school course planning)
- Institutional sites linked from SHEEO agencies or state sites simply were excluded
- Sites could not be commercial (such as www.u101.com or www.CollegeBound.net)

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Our Portal “N” = 81

- Includes...
- Statewide sites (can include all institutions, statewide public, statewide private, statewide, two year, etc.); several states with multiple portals
- Private/independent college association sites
- National sites (Methodist, Baptist, Historically Black Universities, etc.)
- Portals were not found for Idaho, North Dakota, Wyoming and Washington, D.C.

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Portal Categories

- Portals were reviewed and mined for information themes and categories.
- **10** categories were established and then further divided into sub-categories if necessary.
- Each category or sub-category was then organized into appropriate variables according to the information available on the site.

115 Variables we are studying

Portal Categories

Categories include:

- Portal Configuration Data (9)
- Middle Grades and High School Planning (12)
- College Pre-planning (24)
- College Admission (10)
- Career Planning (14)
- Financial Aid (15)

Portal Categories Continued

- In-College Services (9)
- Other Student Populations (6)
- Distance/Online Learning (5)
- Other (includes any other information that does not relate directly to other categories) (11)

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Portal Configuration

- 9 Variables
 - Account Creation
 - Other Language Translations
 - Technical FAQ
 - Handicapped access
 - Portal Services during College
 - Portal Services after College

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Middle Grades and High School Planning

- 12 variables
 - Career Information for Middle Grades Students
 - College Aspirations for Middle Grades
 - Personalized Academic Planner
 - College Planning Timeline
 - Information on Dual Enrollment
 - Events/College Fairs
 - Add Your Advisor or Counselor

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College Pre-Planning

- 24 variables that apply directly to college admissions (as compared to planning)
 - College Admissions Test Preparation
 - Going to College Overview
 - College Profiles
 - College Criteria Search
 - College Cost Information
 - First Year Transition
 - Student Life

College Admission

- 10 Variables
 - General Application Procedures
 - Online Applications (link to the institution's website application)
 - Online Applications (one application that can be submitted to many institutions)
 - Third Party Application Service
 - High School Transcript Service
 - Application Submission Confirmation
 - Application Tracking
 - Application Fee Payment Transmittal

Career Planning

- 14 variables
 - General Career Information
 - Career Lists
 - Career Information for Parents
 - Career Self-Assessment Tools
 - State Level Career Data
 - Information on State-Designated “High Need” Careers
 - Resume Tools

Financial Aid

- 15 variables
 - Financial Aid Overview
 - Federal Financial Aid Information (loans, grants, scholarships)
 - State Financial Aid Information (loans, grants, scholarships)
 - Scholarship Search
 - College Savings Plans
 - Financial Aid/Loan Calculators
 - Link to FAFSA
 - FAFSA Data Transfer (Transfers applicable data from portal profile to FAFSA Application)

In-College Services

- 9 variables
 - Transfer Planning/Articulation Tools
 - General Transfer Student Information
 - Links to Other State Sites/Tools on Transfer Credit
 - College-to-College Transcript Services
 - Developmental/Remediation Services

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Other Students Populations

- 6 variables
 - High School Diploma/GED
 - Adult Learners
 - Degree Completion
 - Special Populations
 - Graduate Education

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Distance/Online Learning

- 5 variables
 - Distance/e-learning
 - Online course/program catalog

Other

- 11 Variables
 - Information for School Counselors
 - Information for Parents
 - Multi-Media Information
 - Workforce Development Information
 - Prior Learning Assessment
 - News or “What’s New” Feature
 - Post-college Information
 - Web 2.0 Technologies (Blogs, Chats, etc.)

Each Variable

- Classified as a...
- Tool
 - Performs a function for the user on the portal that provides individuals results which can be retained
- Service
 - Allows a user to interact with information on the portal but does not retain results for later use
- Information
 - Any general static textual or graphic content

Most Common Variables

- Going to College Overview
- Additional College Access Resources and Links
- Financial Aid Overview
- Federal Financial Aid Information:
Loans/Grants/Scholarships
- General Admissions Information
- College Planning Timeline
- College Admissions Test General Information
- College Profiles/Listings/Types of institutions
- College Cost Information
- Financial Aid Planner Timeline

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Preliminary Findings

- Series of opinion questions
- Respondents asked to rate as
 - Very Effective (3)
 - Effective (2)
 - Not Effective (1)
- Scores between above 2 positive
- Scores below 2 negative

Portal Goals

- Provide easier access to information
 - 2.5
- Increase # of students going to college
 - 1.9
- Promotion of Higher Education Services
 - 2.1
- Centralized information clearinghouse
 - 2.3

Portal Challenges

- Funding
 - 1.9
- Partnerships
 - 1.7
- Marketing Awareness
 - 2.0

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Marketing Strategies

- Online Advertising
 - 2.3
- Mailings to parents
 - 2.3
- Print Materials
 - 2.2
- College Fairs
 - 2.2
- Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)
 - 2.1/1.8

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Institutional Participation

- Most state portals
 - Include all in-state public institutions
 - Most optional/some required
 - Most in-state private institutions
 - Optional for private institutions
 - Private institution-focused portals do not include public institutions
 - Limited inclusion of proprietary institutions
 - Very limited inclusion of out-of-state institutions

Portal Metrics

- Page Views
- Site Visits
- Accounts Created
- Online Applications
- Institutional Participation
- Time spent on site
- Traffic origination points
- Applications Submitted
- Students with degree plans

Transfer Information

- Less than half of the respondents indicated they had transfer information
 - Majority simply provided information (not a tool or a service)
 - Information was general in nature
 - Some provided links to tools elsewhere
 - Several noted “in our plans...”
 - Very few with transcript services

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Thank You...

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