Securing Public Interest in Higher Education:
The Role of Information

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Perfect Information for a Perfect World: For Whom? For What?

- For What Audience?
  - Policy Makers
  - Consumers (Students & Their Parents)
  - The Public
  - Higher Education

- For What Purpose?
  - To inform
  - To persuade
  - To misinform
Information for the Policy Making Community

- States: (In America, States have primary responsibility for higher education)
  - Info on *Process*
    - Teaching loads
    - Faculty/Student ratios
  - Info on *Outcomes*
    - Participation and Graduate rates
    - NOT student learning
Information for the Policy Making Community

- States: (continued)
  - Info on *Process*
  - Info on *Outcomes*

- Info on *Costs* – the disconnect
  - Higher is better – peer comparisons
  - Lower is better – cost effectiveness

- Info on *Return on Investment (ROI)*
  - Returns to Students
  - Returns to Society (and the State economy)
Information for the Policy Making Community

- States – to what end?
  - Accountability
  - Inform state policy
Information for the Policy Making Community

- Federal Government
  - Historically, a federal interest; not a federal responsibility
    - Mechanism: National Center for Education Statistics -- Department of Education
  - Info on *Outcomes*- 
    - Student Right to Know – Graduations Rates
    - Personal safety – Campus Crime Reporting
    - Research Productivity
Information for the Policy Making Community

- Federal Government (continued)
  - A Possible New World – Much more activist in information
    - Info on *Outcomes*
      - Student Record Data Base
      - Student Learning
    - Info on *Costs*
      - Tuition
      - Net Price
    - Info on *Process*
      - Interest/Concern about curriculum
      - Transfer Credit
Information for the Policy Making Community

- Federal Government– to what end?
  - Accountability
  - Inform federal policy
  - Inform citizens to make wise decisions
Information for the Policy Making Community

- Institutions (to comply and convince)
  - Often data; not information
  - Confusion that information is accountability
  - Even good information is “suspect”
Information for Consumers – Students and Parents

- States
  - Consumer Information
    - XAP Mentor
    - Early Intervention
      - Aid, with guidance
      - Guidance information
  - Media Campaigns

- To What End
  - Inform citizens to make wise decisions
  - Persuade citizens to make a wise decision that is also in that states best interest
Information for Consumers – Students and Parents

- Federal Government
  - Same strategies and goals as with Public Policy Community
- National
  - U.S. News & World Report
    - News (information)
    - Profits
  - Do Gooders (Pathways to College)
    - Encourage access and success
  - Marketers -- Investment Houses
Information for Consumers – Students and Parents

- Institutional Information
  - Admissions Information
  - General Publications

- To What End
  - Marketing
  - Subjective Perception
Information for Consumers – The General Public

- States and Federal Government don’t do a lot in this domain
- National
  - ACE – Solutions
    - National Media Campaign
    - To what End
      - Convince public of Higher Education’s importance to America
      - Create a groundswell of support
  - Historically not very successful
  - Exception – UNCF – “A Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Waste”
Information for Consumers – The Higher Education Community

- Essentially a secondary target of all of the others.

- But important
  - To inform
  - To assure and reassure
  - To help appreciate different perspectives
Information Dilemmas

- Lack of Trust (NPEC)
- Deserved Lack of Trust – information with a spin
- Differences in Perception – Seeing the same information differently