

Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Alaska Student Loan Corporation

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Alaska Commission on
Postsecondary Education

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Loan Corporation

The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, funded by the Alaska Student Loan Corporation, promotes access to and success in education and career training beyond high school.

The Commission provides:

- ◆ programs creating early awareness of the importance of preparing for success in higher education
- ◆ education planning tools and resources
- ◆ advocacy and support for postsecondary participation in Alaska
- ◆ financial aid for college and career training
- ◆ education consumer protection through institutional authorization and complaint investigation

While primarily distributed electronically, *ACPE Update* will also be available in paper format upon request. Each issue will also be available online at AKAdvantage.alaska.gov. Check out the Website, or call my office at 465-6740 with your comments.

INSIDE

Higher Education Legislative Wrap-Up.....	2
Alaska Performance Scholarship Implementation.....	3
FERPA: Federal Law Changes Come at Right Time for Alaska.....	4
Data Rules!	7
Healthcare Workforce Development Strategies and Initiatives	9

State Higher Education Legislation Wrap-Up

Donna Vargas, Commission Executive Assistant

The 2011 Special Session adjourned Saturday, May 14, 2011. Although HB104, the bill that, among other things, established investment and award funds for the Alaska performance scholarship, did not get a hearing in its last committee of referral, (S)FIN, the capital budget (SB 46) passed by the Legislature did earmark \$400,000,000 from the General Fund as available to capitalize a fund for scholarships and/or education grants.

The FY12 Operating Budget received a great deal of attention from its appointed Conference Committee members and the

amended bill ultimately passed May 6 during the Special Session. In that bill, \$6,000,000 in General Funds was appropriated for Alaska Performance Scholarships and \$3,000,000 was appropriated for needs-based AlaskAdvantage Education Grants.

All bills introduced in the First Session of the 27th Legislature remain viable for the 2012 Second Session. HB104, which is in its last committee of referral, is expected to be taken up to resolve any remaining issues, including funding distributions for the performance scholarship and education grant programs, the renaming of the scholarship program to the Alaska Performance Scholarship, and the establishment of a savings and investment fund to support state financial aid.

Other Bills

HB78

An Act establishing a loan repayment program and employment incentive program for certain health care professionals employed in the state.

HB78 was introduced by Rep. Herron on January 18. The bill creates the Health Care Professions Loan Repayment program to be administered by the Department of Health and Social Services. The bill's original version called for the Commission to serve as the program's paying agent; however, through discussion with the bill sponsor's staff and primary administrative agency, Health and Social Services, the Commission's role was modified. Commission staff's role will be to validate applicants' education loan debts are qualifying education loans. After multiple hearings in the House Finance Committee, the bill was held and assigned to a work group tasked to address issues raised by the committee over the interim.



SB83**An Act providing for payments and loan incentives to public school teachers for national board certification.**

SB83 was introduced by the Senate Education Committee on February 4, 2011. The bill, among other things, establishes the National Board Teacher Certification Loan Program to annually provide a zero interest loan award of \$2,500 to eligible teachers seeking national board teacher certification. The Commission is designated to administer the loan program to educators seeking certification and make payments directly to the national certification entity. The loans will be funded by an appropriation to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED). The bill was amended and passed from the Senate Education committee. The amendment provides that receipt of a loan incentive will not prevent a teacher from receiving additional incentives from school districts or EED.

HB166**An Act relating to performance reviews and audits of executive branch agencies, the University of Alaska, and the Alaska Court System.**

Introduced by Speaker Chenault on February 23, this bill received one referral to (H)FIN. The bill provides Legislative Budget & Audit the authority to, among other things: (1) audit at least once every three years the books and accounts of all custodians of public funds and all disbursing officers of the state; (2) conduct performance post-audits on every agency of state government; (3) have access at all times to the books, accounts, reports, or other records, whether confidential or not, of every state agency; (4) have direct access to all information related to the management of the University of Alaska and have the same right of access as exists with respect to every other state agency; (5) conduct a performance review of an agency every ten years, with the first review of DEED and the University occurring in 2015 and 2016, respectively; and, (6) during each ten-year review, agencies are required to identify a minimum of 10 percent of their general fund budget authorization that may be cut. This bill passed from the House to the Senate with one referral to (S)FIN on March 25.

Alaska Performance Scholarship Implementation

Stephanie Butler, Director of Program Operations

On May 16, 2011, ACPE debuted the Alaska Student Aid Portal, or ASAP, a Web portal designed to provide Alaska students with online, real-time access to information about their Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) and AlaskAdvantage Education Grant (AEG) eligibility, as well as access to complete the single application, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and manage their grant or scholarship accounts. Post-secondary institutions will also use ASAP to certify student eligibility and order reports on grant and scholarship use at their institution. Students can securely log on to ASAP using MyAlaska, which requires possession of their Alaska state ID, driver's license, or learner's permit.

To ensure parents, teachers, counselors, and other mentors are best prepared to assist their students in taking advantage of APS, throughout the month of June ACPE and the Department of Education and Early Development jointly sponsored a series of statewide informational Webcasts on APS. More information and Webcast registration is available at APS.alaska.gov.



FERPA: Federal Law Changes Come at Right Time for Alaska

Brian Rae, Assistant Director for Research and Analysis

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, commonly known as FERPA, provides parents¹ the right to access, inspect, and challenge the education records of their minor children. It also prohibited the disclosure of a student's personal information except in very limited cases, and protected the parents' financial records from being reviewed by their child.

Within strict guidelines, student information could be shared without the parent's or student's consent; however, such sharing was limited to a small number of agencies for very specific purposes. Examples of permitted use include audits and evaluations of federally-supported education programs, legal enforcement actions, and certain educational research projects. In general, though, access to student data by another agency, even another involved in education, was prohibited.

Today, computer databases offer the ability to easily link and compare information from various sources, processing millions of records to create aggregated reports, containing de-identified data that preserves the confidentiality and privacy of a report's subjects. While FERPA provides strong protections of students' personal information, its methods are exceedingly restrictive, creating a major impediment to reporting on education and workforce development outcomes and conducting important educational research which could lead to positive changes in the education systems.

THE CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Two recent federal initiatives, America COMPETES² and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or ARRA, set goals to "build upon what works and discard what does not, to increase accountability and transparency, and to contribute to a culture of innovation and continuous improvement in education."³ Towards that end, both acts promoted multi-agency efforts to more effectively evaluate educational programs' performance. However, those efforts were directly impeded by FERPA's data sharing strictures intended to protect student information.

PROPOSED CHANGES

In a long-anticipated notice of proposed rulemaking, the U.S. Department of Education sought comments on various revisions, clarifications, and new interpretations for FERPA⁴. There are three main areas addressed in the proposed regulations.

Longitudinal Data Systems. It is readily apparent that removing impediments to statewide longitudinal data systems or SLDS was a major factor in formulating the proposed changes. (The terms "SLDS" or "longitudinal data systems" were mentioned 26 times in the 78 page document.) The most important revisions relevant to SLDS include:

- 1 Students may also access their education records once they become 18 or enroll in a postsecondary institution.
- 2 America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act.
- 3 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, April 8, 2011.
- 4 The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is online at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/ferpa-nprm-april-2011.pdf>.

- ◆ Allows non-education agencies engaged in program evaluations, audits or compliance enforcement to access FERPA-controlled student information, so long as the data are used solely for FERPA-permitted activities. However, the new regulations still preclude sharing student data with non-education agencies conducting non-education related research.
- ◆ Allows an education agency to share its students' information with a second education agency so that the second agency can evaluate its programs' effectiveness. Currently, FERPA precludes the sharing of student information unless the purpose is to evaluate a program of the supplying agency. This prevented postsecondary institutions from providing information on college freshmen back to local education authorities (LEAs) wanting to evaluate K-12 programs.
- ◆ Permits student information redisclosure subject to compliance with FERPA disclosure. Currently, LEAs provide student information to the state education authorities (SEAs), but SEAs cannot provide that information to other agencies. To conduct statewide research projects, researchers must collect information directly from every individual LEA.
- ◆ Establishes a definition for the term "education program." This previously undefined term is used extensively in FERPA, and has been subject to various interpretations. Without a definition, and given the restrictive nature of FERPA, many interpreted "education program" to include only those related to the K-12 and postsecondary environments. The proposed definition of education program is much broader, including prekindergarten early childhood education and career and technical, and adult education programs.



Increased Privacy Safeguards. The proposed changes did not lose sight of FERPA's main goal, to protect the confidential nature of student records. While allowing increased sharing and, therefore, greater access to FERPA protected data, the Department of Education strengthened specific measures to protect that data. The proposed measures include:

- ◆ Increasing FERPA's oversight and jurisdiction. Currently, FERPA has jurisdiction only of the agency collecting students' information. Now, any agency that receives USED funds is subject to FERPA investigations and enforcement procedures.
- ◆ Requiring "reasonable methods" to maintain information security and FERPA compliance, and placing the determination of reasonable methods on the agency redisclosing the information.
- ◆ Requiring written agreements when supplying FERPA-controlled information that address the information being provided, the purpose it's being used for, how long the information will be available for the recipient's use, and how the data will be returned or destroyed once the project is completed.
- ◆ Increasing penalties for FERPA violations. Under the proposed regulations, an agency disclosing information in violation of FERPA would be prohibited from accessing personally identifiable information for at least five years.

Changes to Directory Information. Directory information is student information that would not be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Parents do, however, have the ability to opt out of disclosing their child's directory information. The new proposal includes three changes in the definition and use of directory information.

- ◆ Student ID numbers are no longer considered personally identifiable information, so long as they are not the sole means necessary to access a student's information and so long as the student's social security number is not a part of the student ID number. As directory information, a student's ID may be displayed on a student's ID card or badge.
- ◆ Parents cannot opt out of the disclosure of a student's ID number when that number is also used to validate the student's identity while on school property or participating in extracurricular activities.
- ◆ Schools can enact policies that limit access to directory information. Such policies could, for example, restrict the disclosure of directory information to a company anticipating to market to students.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking may be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/ferpa-nprm-april-2011.pdf>, and information about the USED's Privacy Technical Assistance Center is found at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/PTAC/>.

Additional information on the proposed rules can be found at the Data Quality Campaign website at: <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/> and at http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Overview_FERPA_NPRM_EdCounsel.pdf.

Data Rules!

Sometimes the numbers are rank, and sometimes they aren't....

Brian Rae, Assistant Director for Research and Analysis

A continuation of our irregular and somewhat light-hearted look at certain rules that, if ignored, can lead to dangerous mishandling of information, including the possibility of reaching incorrect conclusions.

We've all heard something like this:

"The latest WBMG News / Wallup poll shows incumbent Marcus Marks leading his opponent Rodney Round by seven percentage points, with 42 percent versus Round's 35 percent of likely voters, going into this Tuesday's borough-wide race for Commissioner of Animal Control."

If I were Rodney, I'd throw in the towel on that news. Why waste campaign funds on expensive advertising when there is no way you're going to win? Maybe it's time to take that trip to Hawaii you've been putting off while it might still be considered a campaign expense....

Only occasionally, and usually spoken at a words per minute rate approaching that of John Moschitta, Jr.¹, will we hear the broadcaster add something like "with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percent."

Now, we at ACPE understand that our Newsletter readers are well educated and very bright people. Therefore, our readers know that a seven percentage point difference in two estimates with margins of error of 4.5 percentage points each means that there is no statistical difference in the polling numbers. In this case, the Commissioner of Animal Control's race is still too close to call, though the numbers make for a good news story on a slow news day and probably helped Marcus sleep better that night.

Sometimes, though, confidence intervals can really play havoc with the numbers and with a researcher's sleep. Take, for example, the results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 testing of student performance in reading. (See table next page.)

¹ John Moschitta, Jr. once held the Guinness Book of World Records title as the World's Fastest Talker, but was most famous for his legendary FedEx commercials in the early 1980s.

Statistically significantly above the OECD average		
Not statistically significantly different from the OECD average		
Statistically significantly below the OECD average		
	Country Name	On the reading scale
Rank	OECD average	493
1	Shanghai-China	556
2	Korea-South	539
3	Finland	536
4	Hong Kong-China	533
5	Singapore	526
6	Canada	524
7	New Zealand	521
8	Japan	520
9	Australia	515
10	Netherlands	508
11	Belgium	506
12	Norway	503
13	Estonia	501
13	Switzerland	501
15	Poland	500
15	Iceland	500
15	United States	500
18	Liechtenstein	499
19	Sweden	497
19	Germany	497
21	Ireland	496
21	France	496
23	Chinese Taipei	495
23	Denmark	495
25	United Kingdom	494
25	Hungary	494
27	Portugal	489
28	Macao-China	487
29	Italy	486
30	Latvia	484
31	Slovenia	483
31	Greece	483
33	Spain	481
34	Czech Republic	478
35	Slovak Republic	477
36	Croatia	476
37	Israel	474

The results are interesting . . . There's the fact that there are some "countries" that aren't really countries (like "Shanghai -China" and "Chinese Taipei"), and the fact that you have to go fairly far down the list to find the United States, tied for 15th with Poland and Iceland and just ahead of Liechtenstein in 18th.

But wait . . . Liechtenstein's score of 499 is statistically significantly ABOVE the OECD average score of 493, and so are Poland's and Iceland's, but the U.S. score of 500 isn't. That just seems wrong. (Did Liechtenstein pay off the judges?)

Actually, this is a case of confidence intervals coming in to complicate our lives. Each country's score has with it an associated confidence interval, as does the OECD average score. For the U.S., given its average score of 500, or seven points above the OECD average of 493, we can surmise that the sum of the U.S. confidence interval and the OECD average score confidence interval is greater than +/- 7 points, and, therefore, 500 is not statistically significantly different than 493. The same calculations using Poland's and Iceland's confidence intervals, on the other hand², are less than 7 points, and so their average scores are statistically significantly above the OECD averages, though they are still tied with the U.S. score.

So, where does that leave poor Liechtenstein? Sure, it scored one point less on average than the U.S., but it can prove that its score is statistically significantly above the OECD average while the U.S. cannot. Should Liechtenstein be appealing to the U.N. to take its rightful place in the PISA rankings? Or, are the rankings really not rankings, but just PISA information?

² The term "on the other hand" is a technical one used by economists to make sure all of their bases are covered and/or to allow us an escape clause to be used when our findings are later documented to be inaccurate.

Healthcare Workforce Development Strategies and Initiatives

Donna Vargas, Commission Executive Assistant

Commission members gathered in Juneau for the 2011 spring quarterly meeting held April 4. In response to the Commission's invitation, Karen Perdue, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association, and Jan Harris, Vice Provost, Office of Health Programs, University of Alaska, addressed the commission to discuss the dynamics of the healthcare industry in Alaska and strategies and initiatives for developing its workforce. As representatives of these entities, they have joined with government agencies, industry members, and training institutions to create the Health Workforce Planning Coalition, and are very much involved in the Coalition's development and implementation of a workforce plan for Alaska.

Ms. Perdue emphasized the broad range of occupations and professions in the health care industry, which represents 11 of the 15 fastest growing jobs in Alaska, requiring everything from on-the-job training to post-doctoral credentials. The industry payroll was over \$1.4 billion in 2008 and has grown substantially since then. Over 7,400 jobs were added to this industry in the last decade, and it is anticipated the growth level will continue. That growth is fueled with health reform efforts in the country that will potentially add coverage for 80,000 Alaskans; demographic shifts, including the aging population; changes in care models such as increased outpatient services; and increased technology access which has increased demand for health services.

Alaska, like other parts of the nation, has an aging healthcare workforce and professionals drawn to the state during the economic development of the early 80s are retiring. Although in recent years Alaska has benefited in its ability to recruit trained workers to fill the jobs gaps due to its insulation from the economic downturn and heavily managed care environment experienced in the Lower 48, the associated retention costs have proven to make recruitment an unsuccessful solution to filling the jobs gap. Vacancy studies have shown that temporary workers cost an employer as much as 40% more in specialty fields such as nursing, physician, physical therapy, and pharmacy, making them also a poor long-term solution to the work shortage challenge.

In order to avoid additional costs to already costly specialty areas, Coalition members assembled to identify, develop, and implement initiatives to build a strong workforce to meet Alaska's



jobs demand. Key to that plan is the access to education and training to enable Alaskans to fill specific key occupations and to draw people to the state, and industry players are working to improve on that access. Access to the preparatory math and science will help to prepare young people for the education needed to fill these key occupations. Access to professional development education will also allow people in healthcare careers to grow within the industry to fill higher-level jobs.

Access to healthcare training programs for Alaskans is being improved upon through distance education programs, such as the full distance delivery clinical doctorate program and occupational therapy program offered through Creighton University in cooperation and coordination with UAA. Continuing strides have been made through the University of Alaska and its own health academic plan to provide the programs necessary to fulfill workforce shortage needs. Program initiatives also include expanding primary care coordinated programs like the WWAMI Medical program coordinated among the University of Alaska, the University of Washington School of Medicine, and ACPE.

The Health Workforce Planning Coalition is working to refine and revise its plan to develop action plans to more closely align education and training with demand. It embraces the development efforts of other professional groups and health care organizations, and all will gain from the most beneficial use of public resources and the ability to measure progress over time in reducing vacancy rates in specific markets. While the existing and anticipated growth trends in the health care industry play a positive role in the state's economy, meeting the high vacancy rates in key occupations and in the much needed rural areas of the state is key to Alaskans' wellbeing, and the Health Workforce Planning Coalition, along with other associations, organizations, and professionals in the health care industry, are focused and dedicated to implementing strategies and initiatives to fill Alaska's workforce needs.

Roles for ACPE in supporting the Coalition plan include promoting related career awareness and exploration, encouraging engagement in rigorous college preparation in secondary school, offering low-cost financial aid to support college participation, and where appropriate, providing counsel and support regarding workforce recruitment and retention initiatives. For more information, visit ASHNA online at <http://www.ashnha.com/site/>.