

Summary of Input received at the MPHEC's Forum on Data Collection and Research

Mount Allison University
Sackville, New Brunswick
March 26, 2013



WHO PARTICIPATED?

Institutional Researchers, Registrars, senior university administrators, students, government representatives (K-12 and PSE). See the complete list of participants [here](#).

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID ABOUT THE FORUM

What I particularly valued about the Forum was: “...The ability to discuss with other participants from other universities and get their views on common issues universities face”
“...Networking with colleagues, exchange of ideas, helping shaping MPHEC research agenda and methodology”
“...An excellent chance to network and learn about others’ perspectives”

WHAT WE HEARD

...about the Commission’s Research Agenda Overall, MPHEC data and reports were seen as very high quality (“best PSE data in the country”), and that the Commission should “keep up the good work”. Participants thought the measures project helped to fulfill the MPHEC’s mandate, and remarked that the measures on student pathways were valuable and aligned well with the Commission’s work on quality assurance. The value of MPHEC data was further characterized as validated and easy to access. One remark noted that the MPHEC’s work was changing the way universities see certain numbers.

These positive comments were balanced by the remark that it is not always clear where to find certain information and that some information shared at the Forum (e.g., preliminary statistics) is unavailable anywhere else.

When asked what is missing, participants noted that the addition of college data would mean “we’d have everything we’d need to know”.

...about the Measures of Student Progress and Outcomes The process in developing the measures – consulting with institutional researchers and registrars via the Working Group - was seen as useful. The system-level data were seen as a main source of added value and the measures presented were seen as going in the direction of increasing relevance. The list of Measures of Student Progress and Outcomes is available [here](#).

With regard to specific measures, there was interest in identifying common academic barriers – for example are there certain courses in first year that are obstacles to progress.

There was also interest expressed in:

- information about leavers
- the relationship between debt and late fee payment by students
- the relationship between high school grades and first year success/persistence
- exploring the reasons behind attrition – distinguishing between reasons of academic standing and others.
- How do living arrangements relate to pathways and outcomes (living in residence vs off-campus)
- information on the non-academic / non-university experiences during studies.

...about Reporting A key question asked of participants was “Is there interest among the institutions in sharing with each other measures and other information at the institutional level (but not publicly reported) under a data-sharing agreement?” Although some had mixed feelings, there was broad agreement expressed during the Forum that the Commission should pursue this with the institutions. It was noted that the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) model, which operates under a data sharing agreement where all participating institutions have access to each other’s data under the condition that these data are not published/restricted to internal use, has been working very well for many years.

With regard to reporting, participants noted that the shorter, theme-based reports (Trends in Maritime Higher Education) were useful and easy to read. The web-based interactive Conceptual Roadmap represented a good model/format for an infographic approach to reporting by the Commission.

...about the GO Survey Program

Participants provided input on the quality of contact information, and ways to improve response rates. Their remarks included:

Contacting graduates:

- Provide a Letter alert before survey (e-mail and/or mail); ideally this would be signed by the faculty dean to increase graduates’ sense of connection and therefore likelihood of participating.
- Conduct focus groups with students to figure out how best to contact them.
- Institutional involvement in improving the quality of contact information

Increasing awareness among Graduates/Students:

- Get student associations and alumni offices involved in making students aware of the MPHEC’s work. For example, place ads in alumni magazines
- Provide information to students during application process for graduation
- In communications, explain survey so it resonates with grads; explain role of Commission
- Have professors tell students about it

Increasing response rates:

- Incentives are needed
- Use of social media, shorter questionnaires, promise to follow-up to respondents
- Tell respondents that they can find out the results and that they’d be able to find out “where is your class now” i.e., emphasize it is not just about value to government.

REFLECTIONS

At its May 31, 2013 meeting, the Commission reflected on the purpose of the Forum, and the feedback/input provided by participants. Given the success of the event, the Commission believes that it would be worthwhile to hold a similar event in another 12-18 months (pending budget considerations) with the broader group of participants to continue to ensure that its research agenda remained on track and aligned with the needs of its stakeholders. Such an event would be separate from, and in addition to, the more technical annual forum targeted at data providers.

The Commission also agreed at its June 26th meeting that it would pilot this more technical forum as a platform for consultation on the Measures, as an alternative to the Statistical Methodology Working Group. Expanding input to include all institutions instead of just those represented on the Working Group stands to benefit both participants and the Commission, but needs to be structured to ensure it is effective.

NEXT STEPS:

Event for data providers planned for late Fall 2013 (date TBA):

Look for more information on this in the early fall: tentatively, the agenda will include discussions on the proposed definitions, methodologies and potential data/technical issues for the measures of student progress and outcomes, information/discussion on PSIS and an update on Graduate Outcomes Survey Program progress.