

Understandings Regarding the Use of Information Gathered for HEDS

The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium is a voluntary not-for-profit organization that assists member institutions in their planning, management, and institutional research, by assembling and sharing a mutually agreed upon and regularly updated set of information, and by providing other services as directed by the Board. HEDS members have an interest in assuring appropriate confidentiality for the data they provide through Consortium activities. They also have a proprietary interest in that information, since they are assuming the internal costs of compiling it and paying the HEDS Office for its collection, analysis, and distribution. HEDS has an interest in assuring that this information is not made available to third parties without appropriate permission and compensation, and HEDS members conduct their activities with the following understandings:

HEDS members agree that they will use data from other institutions received through HEDS only for their own internal planning and management, and not for external publication. For instance, it is appropriate to use such data in presentations to senior administrators or a board, but not for admissions publications or news releases. Even within the institution, HEDS members shall use discretion in how data for other institutions are used. It is usually appropriate to share data fully with senior administrators and trustees, but it may not be appropriate to provide hard copy to faculty committees, and is almost certainly advisable to share data with students only when institutional identities are masked. The HEDS representatives at each institution must assure that anyone to whom data are given understands their confidential character and the ground rules governing their use.

Under the "fair play" ground rule, a HEDS institution is entitled to receive information from other members only in those areas and for those years for which it has provided comparable information.

While HEDS surveys and reports usually identify data with the institutions from which they came, some HEDS reports will, by request of HEDS members, provide data only in a masked or aggregated form. In those cases, HEDS shall maintain the confidentiality of the institutional data except where specific permission for release is granted by the participating institutions.

HEDS explicitly recognizes the value of research and publication in higher education. Accordingly, any HEDS member may undertake and publish studies using HEDS data in professional associations and publications so long as appropriate confidentiality is preserved. At a minimum, participating institutions may not be identified by name without their permission; data shall not be identified by name without specific institutional permission; and HEDS may not be identified as the source of the information without permission of the HEDS Board.