

The College Transparency Act of 2017
Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA),
Bill Cassidy (R- LA), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)

Section-by-Section

Sec 1: Short title: College Transparency Act

Sec 2: Postsecondary Student Data System

- (1) Purpose: Directs the Commissioner for Education Statistics to develop and maintain a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student data system. The goals of the system are to provide accurate, complete, and customizable information for students and families, while supporting transparency, institutional improvement, and analysis of federal student aid programs. The system shall reduce reporting burdens for institutions by allowing the data compiled through the system to meet current reporting requirements and reducing duplicative reporting to various agencies.
- (2) Data elements: Directs the Commissioner to work with key stakeholders to determine required data elements to be included in the system and to reduce any duplicative reporting.
 - Establishes that, at a minimum, data elements must include the data currently reported by colleges to calculate the information within the student-related surveys in The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
 - Establishes that, at a minimum, the data collected must allow for reporting student enrollment, persistence, retention, transfer, and completion measures for all credential levels and across institutions and programs. This data shall be disaggregated by a number of important student characteristics.
 - Includes prohibitions on sensitive data, including citizenship status and religion.
- (3) Linkages: Directs the Commissioner to coordinate with other federal agencies, including Census Bureau, Social Security Administration, Treasury, Defense, and Veteran's Affairs, to ensure consistent reporting of certain categories of data and to produce valuable information on student earnings and outcomes.
 - Allows for an analysis of outcomes of students receiving veterans and military education benefits.
 - Prohibits the creation of single Federal database at the Department of Education.
- (4) Publicly Available Information: Directs the Commissioner to make the summary information about colleges and majors available to the public on a user-friendly website for students, families, and the public. At a minimum, this information must include measures of student access, completion, costs, and post-collegiate outcomes for each college and major disaggregated by student characteristics.

(5) **Permissible Disclosures for non-public information:** Directs the Commissioner to create a secure process for providing program-level, non-personally identifiable data on currently on formerly enrolled students back to institutions that participate in this postsecondary data system. This is to be used solely for the purposes of institutional improvement and program evaluation.

- Allows researchers with appropriate credentials to access non-personally identifiable information for data analysis.
- Creates a process through which states may access only institutional-level aggregate data for participating institutions located in their state.
- Prohibits any sale of student data
- Prohibits the Commissioner from allowing any other federal agency to use data collected by this data system.
- Prohibits any personally identifiable information in this system from being used by law enforcement or any outside entity.
- Prohibits the creation of a summative Federal ranking or ratings system

(6) **Data Submission:** Requires colleges and universities that participate in the federal student aid program to participate in this postsecondary data system. Allows institutions that do not participate in the federal student aid system to voluntarily participate in this postsecondary data system..

(7) Prescribes unlawful willful disclosure penalties.

(8) Directs the Commissioner to produce and update guidance and regulations relating to privacy and security to protect from unauthorized access, use, and disclosure.

Sec 3: Repeals the prohibition on a student data system

Sec 4: Aligns institutional requirements for data collection and submission

Sec 5: Transition provisions

- Establishes effective date as two years after enactment of this Act.
- Directs the Secretary and the Commissioner to ensure that transition and implementation of this system reduces reporting burden for institutions.