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UTD-ERC Assists in Creating First Nationwide Research & Reporting System Connecting High Schools to Postsecondary Outcomes

Richardson, Texas (Mar. 31, 2010) – The University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center (UTD-ERC) will work with the National Student Clearinghouse and others in the development of a groundbreaking high school research and reporting system that will allow participating high schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to better measure the academic success of their students after they graduate. The pilot, called “Tracking Postsecondary Outcomes for High Schools,” aims to develop high-quality, actionable, data-driven reports linking K-12 and postsecondary data that can be used by schools, districts, and states to improve the college readiness and success of their students.

Supported by a \$2.9 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the pilot is a collaboration among the Clearinghouse, the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, College Summit, MPR Associates, and state and local education agencies in Florida, Georgia, and Texas. The pilot will build on the Clearinghouse’s unique database containing college enrollment and degree information nationwide, to develop actionable reports linking student-level K-12 data with postsecondary outcomes, as well as a web tool and related professional development.

The resulting product will be an expansion of the Clearinghouse’s StudentTracker for High Schools system, which will address the urgent need within the education community for a standardized method for measuring the actual educational outcomes of students once they finish high school. Currently, there is no universally accepted way to determine the postsecondary attainment of high school students. As a result, U.S. policy makers and educators are unable to uniformly assess the performance of the nation’s secondary school system and make information-based decisions on policy and program improvements.

"This grant represents an incredible opportunity for the Clearinghouse and our participating institutions to contribute to a greater understanding of the country’s educational efforts," said Clearinghouse President Rick Torres. "Most importantly, by providing an accurate and consistent way to measure student achievement, we enable educators to better prepare the nation’s students to compete and succeed."

Over the next 16 months, the Clearinghouse, its partners, and organizations from three pilot states, including the UTD-ERC, will conduct data matching tests, redesign reports, develop new analysis tools, create professional development materials, and obtain user feedback. “We are pleased to be involved in this important project,” said Jim Parsons, Assistant Director of Texas Schools Project, the organization that manages the UTD-ERC. “Providing user-friendly tools that allow educators and policymakers to assess postsecondary student outcomes will be highly beneficial in many ways.”

The Texas school districts participating in the pilot include Austin, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, McAllen, and San Antonio. All Texas school districts also are eligible to use the current version of StudentTracker for High Schools at no charge. Interested parties should email Joe Roof, the Clearinghouse Regional Director for Texas, at roof@studentclearinghouse.org.

The University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center is managed by Texas Schools Project, one of the premier education research institutions in the country, which is part of the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences.

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