Trip Report

PESC Summit

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# Executive Summary

The status of several important education related initiatives was presented at the recent PESC Summit. These initiatives have implications for ACT’s strategy and competitive positioning. While ACT leadership is aware of the broad outlines of these programs, I hope that I can provide some additional insight into their progress and their implications for ACT’s strategy. The Summit program is available at the link below. The presentation slides will be available at the same location soon.

<http://www.pesc.org/interior.php?page_id=218>

The following initiatives may be viewed as threats or opportunities depending on how ACT responds to the challenge:

* The Common Identity and Trust Collaborative (CommIT) has strong University backing and heavy participation from the College Board. A single sign-on for College Admission services will happen even if ACT does not participate.
* To be perceived as a full participant in the Education community, ACT should consider participation in the MyData initiative. The US Department of Education is pushing this initiative to have companies like ACT provide educational data in a standard format (e.g., PESC, SIF, ed-fi) for download by students.
* The Common Education Data Standard (CEDS) is being widely accepted as a common language in the educational community. ACT should consider mapping its data to this standard. This will make it easier to partner with other data providers and to enhance ACT’s ability to accommodate data from other sources.
* The Shared Learning Infrastructure (SLI) is likely to provide a platform for products that compete with Quality Core. ACT should investigate if this technology could enhance our Quality Core offerings especially since some of ACT’s key states are participating in this initiative.
* ACT needs to closely follow the developments and interpretations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT since we wish to both share data that has personally identifiable information with institutions covered by this law.
* Finally, as the educational community becomes more standardized, ACT will need to exchange its data in a format that is acceptable to its exchange partners. ACT needs to investigate the applicability of exchange formats such as PESC standards, NIEM exchange packages, CEDS based ed-fi formats, or the School Interoperability Framework (SIF) messages to determine how ACT plays in an interconnected world.

# Common Identity and Trust Collaborative (CommIT, formerly AdmitMe)

[Your Home Page](https://spaces.internet2.edu/homepage.action)[https://spaces.internet2.edu/download/attachments/25863214/InCAdmissions?version=1&modificationDate=1316696694195](https://spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCAdmissions)

The CommIT project is a collaborative effort between PESC, internet2, and InCommon to produce a single sign-on identity for students so that they can obtain services without having to keep separate credentials for each service provider. For the initial implementation, the team is targeting services such as test scores, transcripts, admission applications, and financial add applications that are needed by students to apply to higher education institutions. A summary of the CommIT project is located at the following site:

<https://spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCAdmissions/Home>

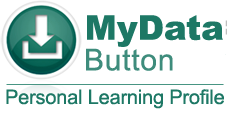
At the meeting, the CommIT team (of which I am a participant) demonstrated a set of wireframes that showed how this system would function for a student during the application process. The following URL provides access to one of the wireframes. The link below is a to wireframe example using the College Board site. ACT does get some coverage in the wireframe. Navigation is provided in this example.

<http://leadership.corporate.act.org/etrsc/Shared%20Documents1/IS2%20Flow3%20V4.pdf>

The goal for the PESC Fall Summit (October in Vancouver) is to have a prototype that will use a single identity provider using Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) assertions to authenticate users for various services. This will test the authentication mechanism and provide a reference model for implementation of the system.

ACT can play an important part in CommIT since college bound students usually start their college admissions process by registering and taking a college entrance exam. When registering for the ACT, the student will have the first opportunity to sign up for CommIT credentials. The other important role envisioned for ACT is as an identity assurance provider. Since ACT verifies the students credentials using a photo-id (and in the future a submitted photo), ACT can certify that the person matches the CommIT identifier. This level of assurance can be registered at the identity provider and then be used by other service providers to determine if certain information can be provided to the student (e.g., financial aid data). University participants in CommIT have shown interest in this level of security and believe that they would be willing to pay a fee for this service to the provider. This assurance is becoming even more important as the greater proportion of University students are being educated remotely.

# MyData Button



Richard Culatta, Deputy Director, Office of Educational Technology, U.S. Department of Education (USED), described a government initiative that would encourage schools, vendors and government agencies to provide educational data to students and their parents. This data would then be used to assemble a learning profile for the student that would guide them in their learning process. USED leadership hopes that vendors will provide tools to aggregate this data and customize guidance for the student. The types of data downloaded by the student could include test score reports, transcripts, financial aid data (FAFSA), and scholarships.

During the discussion following the presentation, it was suggested that the ideal standard for aggregation of this data would be the PESC Academic ePortfolio, which is currently under development. It was also suggested that since many of the vendors that have data needed for the MyData initiative are also participants in the CommIT project, the student could use this credential to access data for the learning profile.

The link below includes a short description of the program and includes a link to the MyData download specification (based on http multipart mime document):

<http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/technology/data-interoperability/>

# Common Education Data Standard (CEDS)

[Common Education Data Standards](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/ceds/)

CEDS is an initiative of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), PESC, School Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA), and the Data Quality Campaign. The US Department of Education (USED) is an ex officio member led by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NECS). The intent is to build a common vocabulary for the education community so that the meaning of data is consistent across the entire education community.

John Blegens, the SHEOO project manager for CEDS, presented the progress of the CEDS initiative to the meeting. He indicated that 20 states had mapped their data model to CEDS and that several other organizations had started using the alignment tool created by NCES to map their data to CEDS. The approach suggested by the CEDS consortium is for each organization to use their CEDS mapping to create a data warehouse of CEDS elements. This data warehouse approach provides data that is common to all jurisdictions without forcing them to change their transactional databases to CEDS. This then produces an interoperable data framework that allows data to be aggregated or reported over multiple institutions. John also indicated that the consortium was supporting [HEDW.org](http://www.hedw.org) for establishing data warehouse best practices.

John also indicated that Version 3 of CEDS is scheduled to be released in January 2013 and will contain elements of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) that postsecondary institutions must report to USED.

For ACT, CEDS provides a mechanism for aligning our data with the rest of the education community so that combining data with partners will be easier. In addition, by mapping to a common standard, ACT can provide better data interoperability with ACT customers and other research organizations.

# Shared Learning Infrastructure (SLI)

[http://slcedu.org/api/img/slcheader_960.png](http://slcedu.org/api/guide/devportal-guide-intro.html)

Brandt Redd, Senior Technical Officer of the Gates Foundation, described an open source initiative funded by the Gates and Carnegie foundations with participation by CCSSO and several states education agencies. The guiding organization is [SLCEDU.ORG](http://www.slcedu.org/) (Shared Learning Collaborative). The purpose of SLI is to provide personalized and individualize learning experience based upon the Common Core curriculum and individualized objectives. A set of open source application programming interfaces and tools will be provided this summer to the educational development community and it is hoped that this will stimulate the development of supplementary tools to help in the education process.

In addition, SLI supports a data store that is relevant to classroom teaching based upon the [Learning Resource Metadata Initiative](http://www.lrmi.net/) (LRMI). This technology can be used to identify the resources needed to help teachers tailor their teaching to the individual student.

This initiative could provide vendors with “standards based” services to K-12 customers that compete directly against ACT’s Quality Core offerings. It could also be an opportunity for ACT to use tools that would make our Quality Core offerings more attractive.

Brandt announced that SLI would be piloted in Illinois, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and New York. ACT has close ties with several of these states.

# National Information Exchange Model (NEIM)

**[](https://www.niem.gov/Pages/default.aspx)**

NIEM is a set of specifications for exchanging XML data between organizations. The initial implementations were related to justice and public safety but more organizations are creating NIEM domains and participating in this framework. Health and Human Services is the latest organization to create a NIEM domain.

Michelle Vidanes, Business Architect, NIEM, and David Webber, NIEM Technical Lead, Oracle , presented the structure of NIEM data exchanges and describe how new domains are created. A complete description of NIEM is provided at the link below:

<https://www.niem.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

The PESC Technical Advisor Board (TAB) that I co-chair is investigating the changes needing to be made to PESC XML schemas to comply with NIEM. TAB will be making a recommendation to the PESC Board on whether we should join Financial Student Aid (FSA) in creating an Education Domain in NIEM and taking on domain stewardship responsibility.

# Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Kathlene Styles, Chief Privacy Officer, US Department of Education provided an update on FERPA. The final regulations were just released with the intent of allowing wider data sharing without compromising student privacy. The sites below provide information on FERPA and the new regulations:

<http://www.ed.gov/ptac>

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html>

For ACT, FERPA appears to cover those transactions where ACT obtains data from higher education institutions that contain individual personally identifiable information (PII). For example, ACT receives first year grade reports from some institutions that may be covered under this act, and thus ACT must comply with the law and derived regulations for this data.

# PESC Common Data Service (CDS)

PESC is defining web services and a payment system for transferring data between institutions. The team is being led by the California Community College system that identified an internal need to transfer electronic transcripts to other California schools and increasingly, to out of state schools. The plan is to create an open source project that provides code to create end points in the transfer network. This code can then be used by Colleges to send and receive transcripts or other XML data.

While transcripts will be the first application to use this network, the same network could be used to transfer test score reports using the PESC Education Test Score Reporting XML standard. Information on this CDS task force can be found at this location:

<http://www.pesc.org/interior.php?page_id=217>

# PESC Academic ePortfolio

The Academic ePortfolio workgroup reported their progress to the Summit. This PESC workgroup is developing an XML standard that can be used by an individual to accumulate academic accomplishments and personal information that can assist the individual in life time education planning. The workgroup site is at the following location:

<http://www.pesc.org/interior.php?page_id=209>