Student Information Portal Assessment

The “SIPA” Project

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Purpose of the Project

SIPA is designed to study state, regional and national level student information portals promoting college access. The overarching goal is to collect information about these portals; to define, document, and categorize the findings; to evaluate the effectiveness of state, regional and selected national portals; and to offer recommendations from these findings for the future development and support of portals.
Portal Selection Criteria

- Site must pertain to multiple institutions (for example site contains information on all institutions in state, or all public institutions, etc.)
- Site must focus on college access (can include focus on traditional high school/college student, graduate student and/or adult learner/degree completion)
- Site must provide at least one service beyond general information on going to college (such as online applications or high school course planning)
- Institutional sites linked from SHEEO agencies or state sites simply were excluded
- Sites could not be commercial (such as www.u101.com or www.CollegeBound.net)
Our Portal “N” = 81

- Includes…
- Statewide sites (can include all institutions, statewide public, statewide private, statewide, two year, etc.); several states with multiple portals
- Private/independent college association sites
- National sites (Methodist, Baptist, Historically Black Universities, etc.)
- Portals were not found for Idaho, North Dakota, Wyoming and Washington, D.C.
Portal Categories

- Portals were reviewed and mined for information themes and categories.
- 10 categories were established and then further divided into sub-categories if necessary.
- Each category or sub-category was then organized into appropriate variables according to the information available on the site.

115 Variables we are studying
Portal Categories

Categories include:

- Portal Configuration Data (9)
- Middle Grades and High School Planning (12)
- College Pre-planning (24)
- College Admission (10)
- Career Planning (14)
- Financial Aid (15)
Portal Categories Continued

- In-College Services (9)
- Other Student Populations (6)
- Distance/Online Learning (5)
- Other (includes any other information that does not relate directly to other categories) (11)
Portal Configuration

- 9 Variables
  - Account Creation
  - Other Language Translations
  - Technical FAQ
  - Handicapped access
  - Portal Services during College
  - Portal Services after College
Middle Grades and High School Planning

- 12 variables
  - Career Information for Middle Grades Students
  - College Aspirations for Middle Grades
  - Personalized Academic Planner
  - College Planning Timeline
  - Information on Dual Enrollment
  - Events/College Fairs
  - Add Your Advisor or Counselor
College Pre-Planning

- 24 variables that apply directly to college admissions (as compared to planning)
  - College Admissions Test Preparation
  - Going to College Overview
  - College Profiles
  - College Criteria Search
  - College Cost Information
  - First Year Transition
  - Student Life
College Admission

- 10 Variables
  - General Application Procedures
  - Online Applications (link to the institution’s website application)
  - Online Applications (one application that can be submitted to many institutions)
  - Third Party Application Service
  - High School Transcript Service
  - Application Submission Confirmation
  - Application Tracking
  - Application Fee Payment Transmittal
Career Planning

- 14 variables
  - General Career Information
  - Career Lists
  - Career Information for Parents
  - Career Self-Assessment Tools
  - State Level Career Data
  - Information on State-Designated “High Need” Careers
  - Resume Tools
Financial Aid

• 15 variables
  • Financial Aid Overview
  • Federal Financial Aid Information (loans, grants, scholarships)
  • State Financial Aid Information (loans, grants, scholarships)
  • Scholarship Search
  • College Savings Plans
  • Financial Aid/Loan Calculators
  • Link to FAFSA
  • FAFSA Data Transfer (Transfers applicable data from portal profile to FAFSA Application)
In-College Services

- 9 variables
  - Transfer Planning/Articulation Tools
  - General Transfer Student Information
  - Links to Other State Sites/Tools on Transfer Credit
  - College-to-College Transcript Services
  - Developmental/Remediation Services
Other Students Populations

- 6 variables
  - High School Diploma/GED
  - Adult Learners
  - Degree Completion
  - Special Populations
  - Graduate Education
Distance/Online Learning

- 5 variables
  - Distance/e-learning
  - Online course/program catalog
Other

- 11 Variables
  - Information for School Counselors
  - Information for Parents
  - Multi-Media Information
  - Workforce Development Information
  - Prior Learning Assessment
  - News or “What’s New” Feature
  - Post-college Information
  - Web 2.0 Technologies (Blogs, Chats, etc.)
Each Variable

- Classified as a...
- Tool
  - Performs a function for the user on the portal that provides individuals results which can be retained
- Service
  - Allows a user to interact with information on the portal but does not retain results for later use
- Information
  - Any general static textual or graphic content
Most Common Variables

- Going to College Overview
- Additional College Access Resources and Links
- Financial Aid Overview
- Federal Financial Aid Information: Loans/Grants/Scholarships
- General Admissions Information
- College Planning Timeline
- College Admissions Test General Information
- College Profiles/Listings/Types of institutions
- College Cost Information
- Financial Aid Planner Timeline
Preliminary Findings

- Series of opinion questions
- Respondents asked to rate as
  - Very Effective (3)
  - Effective (2)
  - Not Effective (1)
- Scores between above 2 positive
- Scores below 2 negative
Portal Goals

- Provide easier access to information
  - 2.5
- Increase # of students going to college
  - 1.9
- Promotion of Higher Education Services
  - 2.1
- Centralized information clearinghouse
  - 2.3
Portal Challenges

- Funding
  - 1.9
- Partnerships
  - 1.7
- Marketing Awareness
  - 2.0
Marketing Strategies

- Online Advertising
  - 2.3
- Mailings to parents
  - 2.3
- Print Materials
  - 2.2
- College Fairs
  - 2.2
- Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)
  - 2.1/1.8
Institutional Participation

- Most state portals
  - Include all in-state public institutions
    - Most optional/some required
  - Most in-state private institutions
    - Optional for private institutions
    - Private institution-focused portals do not include public institutions
- Limited inclusion of proprietary institutions
- Very limited inclusion of out-of-state institutions
Portal Metrics

- Page Views
- Site Visits
- Accounts Created
- Online Applications
- Institutional Participation
- Time spent on site
- Traffic origination points
- Applications Submitted
- Students with degree plans
Transfer Information

- Less than half of the respondents indicated they had transfer information
  - Majority simply provided information (not a tool or a service)
  - Information was general in nature
  - Some provided links to tools elsewhere
  - Several noted “in our plans…”
  - Very few with transcript services
Thank You...

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