**Industry Credentials and Education Performance Data System**
**Frequently Asked Questions**

Q:      What is the Industry Credentials Initiative?

A:      This is a landmark initiative, developed in partnership with the National Association of Manufacturers. The over-arching goal of the initiative is to create a public-private data infrastructure that connects education attainment data with industry recognized credential attainment data and, ultimately, aggregate labor market outcomes for the purposes of understanding successful student pathways to the workforce.

Q:      Who is the National Student Clearinghouse and why did the organization get involved in this initiative?

A:      Founded in 1993 by the higher education community, the Clearinghouse relieves the administrative burden and costs related to student data reporting and exchange. We are a nonprofit and leading provider of educational reporting, data exchange, verification, and research services. Education leaders rely on the Clearinghouse's unique national student data resources to better understand student pathways and outcomes in order to help students succeed. This initiative allows the Clearinghouse to add industry recognized credentials to its national student data resources to expand the understanding of successful student pathways and outcomes from education to workforce. This expanded reporting will inform education leaders, policy makers, credentialing bodies, accreditors, and eventually, parents, and students about the variety of pathways that lead to student success.

Q:      What are the benefits for credentialing bodies that participate in this initiative?

A:      When credentialing bodies submit their student level credential attainment data to the Clearinghouse, it is matched with enrollment and degree attainment data, and returned to the credentialing bodies in a student level detail file.  In addition, an aggregate level report that provides insights into the education and credentialing pathways of certificants is created. The aggregate report provides information about the most common types of institutions where certificants were enrolled, the most common programs of study, the highest education credentials attained, and demographic information. In the future, aggregate labor market outcomes from the U.S. Census Bureau will be added to the reporting.

Q:    How will industry credential attainment information help the institutions participating in Clearinghouse services?

A:    From K12 to postsecondary education, institutions are clamoring for industry credential attainment information, particularly, when those successful outcomes can be used for metrics related to program performance and student outcomes or related to higher education performance funding formulas used by, at least, 36 states.

Q:    How does the Clearinghouse protect student data?

A:    All Clearinghouse services are designed to facilitate compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Higher Education Act, and other applicable laws. The Clearinghouse is a signatory to the Student Privacy Pledge, an official supporter of Student Data Principles, meets the requirements of a trusted commerce vendor for verification transactions, and complies with AICPA's Trust Services Principles through its SOC 2 report. Further information about the Clearinghouse's privacy commitment is available here.

      The Clearinghouse has a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) and a well-established internal program focused on information security and data privacy. Credentialing bodies are welcome to request an onsite audit of the information security and data privacy program with the CISO. Email industrycredentials@studentclearinghouse.org to arrange that meeting.

Q:    What other protections are offered to students around data privacy?

A:    Under FERPA, students can request to block their records, which institutions report to the Clearinghouse, and that information will not be shared in student level detail reports. Credentialing bodies can also block any individual level data submitted to the Clearinghouse through a flag and that individual level credential attainment information will not be shared in reporting going back to institutions or other education stakeholders.

Q:    What will the Clearinghouse charge for this service?

A:    Today, this initiative is a pilot and the Clearinghouse is not currently charging for this service. The eventual pricing model will be based on recovering the Clearinghouse's costs for providing the service. An example of Clearinghouse pricing is the $1,995 per year subscription pricing the Clearinghouse charges the largest institutions, based on enrollment, for the StudentTracker® for Colleges and Universities reporting service.  This service is like the Industry Credentials service. The Clearinghouse also offers product bundle pricing where institutions pay for Verification Services, for example, and receive the StudentTracker® reporting service for free. Product bundle pricing may be leveraged in the Industry Credential service pricing model.

Q: What is the Clearinghouse's Verification Services?

A: Verification Services provides the institutions participating with the Clearinghouse the opportunity to reduce their administrative burden of responding to background screeners, as one example, to verify the degrees of students for employment purposes. That service allows the processing of multiple degree verification requests in one session. Participation in this service for credentialing bodies is not required as the Clearinghouse understands many credentialing bodies provide that service today. More information on that service is here.

Q: What data about certificants is required to participate in the Industry Credentials initiative?

A: The industry credential data specifications are outlined in the implementation guide and there is a sample file formatted to that specification titled "Data Fields with Examples" in the Resources section of the industry credential service overview on the Clearinghouse website.

Q: What is the status of integrating aggregate labor market outcomes into the Industry Credentials service and what will credentialing bodies receive back related to aggregate labor market outcomes?

A: The Census Bureau, the Clearinghouse, and the National Association of Manufacturers have been working together since early 2019 on processing and analyzing the link between education, industry certification data from the pilot participants, and aggregate labor market data. That pilot work is ongoing and results from that work will be released after going through the extensive Disclosure Review Board process at the Census Bureau. Please note that only aggregate level information will be released from the Census Bureau. It is too early in the pilot to provide any detail on the data that will come out of the Census Bureau and be provided to credentialing bodies.

Q: Who can I contact about participating in the Industry Credentials initiative?

A: Please email industrycredentials@studentclearinghouse.org.