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Gerald A., Sacramento, CA

Thanks so much for all of your help. Your clear instructions helped me find my loan information quickly. I would love nothing more than to transfer my loans to from my current lender to Graduate School Loans. Thank you again for your help.

ITHAKA ADVOCATES ONLINE PUBLISHING BY UNIVERSITIES

- NIHIT AURORA

Scholars studying at American universities have a wide range of avenues available to them for distributing their scholarly work. The Internet has added an extra dimension to their endeavors, extending the concept of academic publishing to include “virtual” publishing.

The nonprofit group Ithaka provides a variety of services that benefit higher education. It recently published a report calling for the use of the Internet and new technology for scholarly publishing by universities in the United States.

Traditionally, universities in the United States have made use of university presses to disseminate their scholarly knowledge. Ithaka’s report, “University Publication in a Digital Age,” reviews the role of universities in the United States and their role in publishing scholarly works. It states:

- Universities should become actively involved in publishing their own scholarship and should desist from letting others publish this information for them.
- Administrators should make greater efforts to recognize the role played by university presses. Furthermore, universities should seek strategic partnerships to lower costs and extend the reach of scholarly publishing.
- University administrators and others should play active roles in rejuvenating the university publishing system by stimulating action and initiating investment.
- Existing university presses should extend their familiarity to the electronic publishing environment. Currently,

university presses are facing a variety of financial challenges. Adapting to electronic methods of publishing will help them overcome these challenges.

- Universities should collectively invest in a technological platform that can “support innovation in university-based, mission-driven publishing.”

Ithaka’s report documents that scholars are increasingly turning to online systems to locate and utilize scholarly literature. Moreover, newer publishing models are emerging following the onset of electronic publishing. These models not only reduce costs but also make published material widely available. This means that university presses will need to adapt to more cost-effective and efficient practices like shorter print runs, smaller inventories, and print-on-demand.

If these measures are taken, Ithaka argues, university-published electronic literature will become capable of offering viable alternatives to commercial scholarly publications, which present formidable competition due to their marketing power and intensive capital resources. University presses will also strengthen their traditional role as “knowledge arms” by improving their viability and financial stability.

Ithaka downplays print publishing and argues that digital publishing will give more flexibility to university presses in terms of the role they play. It also stresses the importance of the cooperation of libraries and other institutions in accommodating digital products. The report takes the view that while a significant portion of the academic community has adapted to the online environment, administrators have been slow to follow up on this trend.

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To comment to the editor, Carleen Trapp, call 626-243-1881.

THE NSSE AND *USA TODAY* INTRODUCE COLLEGE-ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

- GITANJALI HAZARIKA

Mired in controversy and escalating criticism from college authorities, rankings of institutions of higher education can be unreliable. Students and parents are forced to grope in the dark when it comes to what they pay to and what they receive from colleges. With the aim of providing prospective students, parents, counselors, and others with information on the quality of education at particular institutions, the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) and *USA Today* have devised a new accountability and transparency movement called the "Initiative to Focus on Meaningful Indicators of Collegiate Quality."

Both parties have emphatically stressed that the initiative is not another ranking system, adding that institutions will not be ranked in any manner in the final analyses. The aim of the initiative, they state, is to provide prospective students and their parents, as well as others, with some "meaningful indicators" with respect to various colleges. The NSSE has even prepared an FAQ list to answer misgivings that may arise in the minds of administrators at participating schools.

The initiative is aimed at educating people who are interested in collegiate quality. It will inform them of the effectiveness of the education provided by particular institutions based on five NSSE benchmarks: "level of academic challenge," "active and collaborative learning," "student-faculty interaction," "enriching educational experiences," and "supportive campus

environments." The initiative will also shed light on various educational activities undertaken by different schools around the country. The NSSE and *USA Today* hope to bring to light effective educational practices that have yielded good results and rich learning experiences for students at schools that have been overshadowed by bigger institutions in their regions.

Headquartered at Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning, the NSSE was founded in 1998 and is directed by George D. Kuh. In response to concerns regarding the quality of American undergraduate education and an apparent lack of emphasis on student learning, the NSSE has asked permission from about 1,000 four-year institutions "to release five benchmark scores from the engagement survey's report for their institutions to *USA Today*, which may place the data online."

Kuh stressed that the idea of the NSSE benchmark scores is to make people aware of the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and allow them to assess for themselves which institutions might have models they value. Today, with the rising demands for quality, performance, and accountability at educational institutions set by their governing boards, state and federal agencies, and accrediting organizations, the need to improve student retention and student learning is of paramount importance.

NEWS IN BRIEF

REPORT REVEALS 76% OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES RECEIVE FEDERAL AID

The Department of Education's data collection and analysis division has published its report on financial aid to undergraduates. The report states that as many as three-fourths of full-time undergraduates (76%) received financial aid, while a large number of them (60%) received federal government aid. Similarly, in its yearly *Digest of Education Statistics* for the 2005-2006 school year, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reveals that of the 54% of part-time undergraduate students who received financial aid, 38% of them received federal aid. Full-time students received \$9,899 in aid per year on average, while part-time students received approximately \$4,860 annually. The average federal aid amount was \$7,304. The annual NCES digest, published since 1962, says that more than half of full-time students took out loans to pay for their education, with the average cost of tuition at a public four-year university exceeding \$13,000 per year and the average tuition at a private four-year university costing more than \$36,000 per year.

SENATE APPROVES REWORKING OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

The U.S. Senate has approved an overhaul of the primary law governing federal aid to colleges and the students who attend them. The Senate-approved version of the act includes a condition that states college and university financial aid officers who receive anything of value in exchange for promoting a lender will be considered to be acting illegally.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act has been delayed since 2003 and still awaits the U.S. House and President Bush's consent before it becomes law. The Senate's stipulations require colleges and universities to adopt codes of conduct akin to the code New York Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo devised for governing the behavior of financial aid officers and lenders. A five-year reauthorization of the bill would also require colleges and universities to furnish detailed information on their charges and how they spend money. This move would make individual schools' fee structures more transparent, allowing for easier comparison of similar schools.

STEVE COLL TO HEAD NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION AS PRESIDENT AND CEO

Steve Coll has been appointed as the New America Foundation's new president and CEO, effective September 2007. Coll will replace Ted Halstead, the founding president and CEO of the foundation. Halstead will, however, continue to serve on the foundation's board. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the New America Foundation, which also has offices in California and New York, is a nonprofit, post-partisan public policy institute. James Fallows, chairman of New America's board of directors, said the foundation will benefit from Coll's "right combination of intellectual energy and achievement, managerial experience, and personal stature and integrity." A former managing editor of *The Washington Post*, Coll is currently a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. Coll has also authored numerous books, and he won Pulitzer Prizes in both 1990 and 2005.