New Website Helps Shaw Administrators Support Student Access and Success Efforts

Project Supports National Goal of Making U.S. First Again in College Completion

WASHINGTON, D.C., Sept. 23, 2010—The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) and Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) unveiled a new website today designed to highlight and support efforts by nonprofit private colleges and universities to increase the number of at-risk students they enroll, and to boost the retention and graduation rates of various student populations. Shaw University, the first historically black college of the South, is a member of both associations.

The website is the central component of Blocking Blocks to 2020, a national initiative organized by NAICU and CIC to help the nation meet President Obama’s call to make the United States first in college completion by 2020.

The website provides opportunities for campus professionals working on the front lines of student access, retention, and completion to learn from the experiences of other colleges and to mine for practices and policies that fit their individual institutional missions and student populations. The website will also serve as an information resource for consumers and policymakers who are interested in what colleges are doing to not only reach out to students from diverse backgrounds, but boost their chances of earning a degree. The number and diversity of institutions and programs represented on the website will grow, as NAICU continues to gather and post material from colleges and universities.

At the moment, the Building Blocks to 2020 website provides summaries of 535 existing or proposed programs at 250 nonprofit private colleges and universities. Summaries of programs can be browsed alphabetically by institution, and by state, and are searchable by 34 topics.

Up until about 10 years ago, the U.S. led the world in college completion. However, as the percentage of young adults with degrees has surged in other developed nations, the U.S. now ranks 12th in the percentage of adults 25 to 34 with an associate’s degree or higher, according to the College Board.

“Nonprofit private colleges are committed to doing their part to make the U.S. first in the world in college completion again, and are redoubling their efforts to increase the number of graduates from all backgrounds,” said NAICU President David L. Warren. “Given the productivity of the nonprofit private sector in graduating students — we enroll 19 percent of all students, but award 26 percent of all degrees — our institutions will be a crucial part of helping the nation reach the 2020 goal.”

“For any group of students you want to follow — top students in high school, first-generation, low-income, high-income, or minority — nonprofit independent colleges
have the best record of graduating students in timely fashion, thereby helping to fulfill President Obama’s goal that many more Americans will have high-quality college degrees,” said CIC President Richard Ekman.

In the next year, NAICU and CIC will ask all private colleges to report on their progress toward meeting self-identified goals in producing more college graduates; increasing graduation and/or retention rates; increasing success with at-risk students, and/or increasing graduates in areas of national need. The two associations will issue a milestone report summarizing the sector’s progress. NAICU and CIC will release additional milestone reports periodically.

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