POSTSECONDARY
Electronic Standards Council

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Michael Sessa
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Re: Letter of Intent

Dear Michael Sessa:

I am pleased to submit this letter to notify PESC that the **AACRAO SPEEDE Committee intends to work collaboratively with the higher education community to develop the following standard XML High School Transcript**.

A high-level description of the proposed standard is as follows:

We intend to develop and eventually submit for approval a national standard format for a high school or school district to use to send an XML version of a high school student's educational record (transcript) to a postsecondary educational institution or to a state or other approved agency.

Please see the attached Business Case which discusses the historical overview, justification, description of the planned collaboration, and other information.

I am excited and pleased to be a part of this initiative and look forward to our continuing collaboration in pursuit of higher education standards.

Sincerely,

Bruce R. Marton

5/13/2008

The Business Case for the development of a PESC Standard for an XML format for the High School Educational Record (Transcript)

In the early 1990's, the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) funded the development of a national standard format for the electronic exchange of the student educational record (transcript) among the K12 and postsecondary education communities.

The postsecondary community was represented by the AACRAO SPEEDE Committee. The K12 community was primarily represented by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Although the initial intent was to have two standard formats (one for the K12 transcript and one for the postsecondary transcript), when we sought approval for the standard from the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) X12, they would only approve a single standard for all of the education community (K12 through postsecondary). This combined standard Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) format was approved in the early 1990's and is known as ASC X12 EDI Transaction Set 130, or TS130 for brevity.

This standard is now in use by a significant number of postsecondary institutions in the United States and Canada. Approximately 700,000 postsecondary transcripts are exchanged electronically in this format through the University of Texas at Austin Internet Server in the ASC X12 EDI format each year.

However, the number of high school transcripts exchanged in the ASC X12 EDI format is only a very small percentage of the postsecondary transcript volume.

Although the number of transcripts exchanged electronically is growing significantly each year, it was felt by the community that an alternative format should be explored.

PESC commissioned this exploration by creating the XML Forum to determine if an XML standard format might result in significantly increased use of an electronic exchange of student educational records.

It was felt that the perceived complexity of the process of implementation of the EDI standards was one of the reasons that the EDI format was not being used by many schools. The wide and inexpensive availability of XML software tools and the already existing and pervasive use of XML by many schools' information technology staffs made the XML process appear to have a much better chance of rapid acceptance and implementation.

The early efforts of the XML Forum emphasized the creation of standard core components. Once this work was significantly accomplished, PESC agreed to develop an XML Standard Format for the College Transcript to demonstrate that this could be done. However, no attempt was made at that time to expand the scope to include the K12 educational record.

Once the XML College Transcript was approved, the need for an XML High School Transcript was soon recognized by the postsecondary community as well as several vendors who serve the entire K12 through postsecondary communities.

Since the experience of the AACRAO SPEEDE committee showed that there were far more similarities than differences between the high school educational record and the postsecondary record, it was agreed to ask PESC to form a work group of interested parties from both communities to work on the creation of the XML High School Transcript. It was agreed at the outset that the scope would be limited primarily to the academic high school record that was needed by the postsecondary community. Those portions of the records maintained by high schools or school districts for internal use or for exchanging with other high schools or districts would not normally be included in this format.

The work group is to be composed of the AACRAO SPEEDE Committee, representatives of educational software vendors, representatives of state agencies interested in the electronic exchange of educational records, and others who may be interested in the project.