

# the Standard

news and commentary on technology and standards in postsecondary education

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## PESC XML Postsecondary Transcript Released as Community Standard

The Board of Directors and Steering Committee of PESC announced the release of the XML Postsecondary Transcript version 1.0 as a community standard, July 9, 2004. The transcript and supporting files are available at <http://www.pesc.org/info/approved-standards.asp>.

This effort marks a significant milestone and achievement for the higher education community and for PESC. Begun in May of 2000 with the publication of an educational white paper on a new technology called eXtensible Markup Language (XML), community leaders have worked hard to bring XML from a cutting edge technology to daily operations within education.

Dave Moldoff, Senior Vice President of Solutions Architecture and Infrastructure at Sungard SCT and PESC Board Member comments that “the overarching goal is not to just put out standards, but to put out standards that organizations like Sungard SCT will actually use – and we are.” He adds, “We must continue to work with and through the community so that we can all move forward together, in an organized manner.”

“The XML Postsecondary Transcript, like the EDI version, facilitates the fast, efficient and accurate exchange of information among postsecondary institutions,” states Bob Morley, Associate Registrar at the University of Southern California and Board Member of both PESC and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). “EDI had long ago demonstrated the value of a standardized electronic data exchange. The XML Postsecondary Transcript offers a new companion resource which capitalizes upon the adoption of new technology and methods in postsecondary institutions, and offers institutions more options for the standardized electronic exchange of information. The ‘hoped-for’ result will be a much more robust exchange of information among postsecondary institutions, both large and small.”

“In California’s Community College System, we’re implementing the XML Postsecondary Transcript. It will save us time and most importantly resources and money. We are looking for one way to process transcripts and this will be it,” adds Catherine McKenzie, project coordinator for the Chancellor’s Office.

As PESC’s mission is to promote the establishment and adoption of standards



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The Standard is the electronic newsletter published monthly by The Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC). The Standard covers news and events that impact information technology and data exchange; and promotes PESC’s goals of improving service, controlling costs, and attaining interoperability within higher education. For information about subscriptions, advertising, and article submissions, please visit [www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org). © 2004 PESC

**Approved**, From Page 1

to improve institutional performance, lower costs, improve service, and attain system interoperability, standards approved by PESC Members and released to the education community are available free of charge to the public. Already in the works are development efforts by the National Student Clearinghouse to add supporting transactions for requesting and acknowledging the Transcript; and Mapping Your Future is looking to develop XML transactions to support the reporting on students who have completed loan counseling sessions.

For anyone looking to communicate their specific use and adoption of the XML Postsecondary Transcript, please contact Michael Sessa or Ane Johnson directly at Sessa@PESC.org 202-293-7383 or Johnson@PESC.org 202-263-0296 respectively. For more information visit [www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org).

## New Members

PESC welcomes the following new organizations to its membership:

### **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

PESC contact is Maria Mosca, Director of Student Information Systems, [www.columbia.edu](http://www.columbia.edu)

### **PEOPLESOFT**

PESC contact is Gary Allen, Senior Product Manager, Student Financial Services, [www.peoplesoft.com](http://www.peoplesoft.com)

### **UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX**

PESC contact is Tandy Elisala, VP of Compliance & Records Integrity/Registrar, [www.phoenix.edu](http://www.phoenix.edu)

### **JENZABAR**

PESC contact is Cathy Josman, Product Manager, [www.jenzabar.net](http://www.jenzabar.net)

### **THE PRINCETON REVIEW**

PESC contact is Young Shin, EVP, Admissions Services, [www.review.com](http://www.review.com)

### **UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

PESC contact is Gregg Chottiner, AVP, Information Technology, [www.umuc.edu](http://www.umuc.edu)

## October Workgroup Summit

Hotel reservations can now be made for PESC's Fall Workgroup Summit to be held in Newport Beach, CA, on October 5 & 6, 2004.

Each October our workgroups come together face-to-face to address issues within the education community, discuss potential solutions and best practices, and to work towards common recommendations and solutions.

The Summit is a great opportunity to meet with others within the PESC membership, educate yourself on current issues, and to influence the direction of our organization.

This year all workgroups will meet consecutively: The Standards Forum for Education, Single Institutional Identifier, and Standard Student Authentication. An agenda will be posted shortly so stay tuned.

Reservations at the Marriott in Newport Beach can be made by calling 949-640-4000, and our room rate is \$125. Please use the group name "PESC Workgroup" when making your reservations.

The cut-off date for hotel accommodations is Friday September 10, 2004. Registration will begin on our website in July. Please be sure to check back often!

Note that while the Fall Workgroup Summit starts at 1:30pm on Tuesday October 5 and concludes at 5pm Wednesday October 6, PESC will hold a membership meeting on Tuesday morning from 10am – noon.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Ane Johnson, PESC's Membership Coordinator, at 202-263-0296 or [Johnson@PESC.org](mailto:Johnson@PESC.org).

# Data Transport Standard Update

BY KIM SHIFLETTE,

USA Funds and Co-Chair of NCHELP Origination and Disbursement Advisory Team, ESC

I last sent an update in April, and since then the technical folks have made some significant progress. Most notably, the ability to exchange data in .Net and Java.

The technical group held a “in person” working session in April and have stepped up the frequency of their calls to accelerate the development process. We also have a new addition to the technical leadership team, Nathan Chitty. Nathan is the new co-chair for the Electronic Exchange Advisory Team, which is leading the technical portion of this project. Nathan will work along side our long standing chair and resident java expert, John Gill. While Nathan is new from a leadership perspective, he is not new to the project. Nathan has been our resident .Net expert since the inception of this project.

We continue to educate the industry on the DTS project through various venues and conferences. DTS project was reviewed at FSA’s Spring Conference, NCHELP’s ESC conference and the Joint Technology Conference, which included presenters representing FSA, NCHELP and our very own technical expert, Nathan Chitty.

Our educational efforts have established roots. Many unrelated sessions at these conferences have referenced DTS and the need to support DTS as part of their organization’s future vision.

Finally, I will be working with Adele Marsh, my co-chair, to coordinate a future face to face meeting with the Data Transport Business workgroup. We will attempt to meet at an event most will already be attending. Details will be sent out on that front soon.

Following please find the “Progress to Date and Next Steps” document that further details our technical efforts.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

## DTS PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS 06/04/04

### PROGRESS TO DATE:

I’m happy to report the group has developed an operational DTS Java and .Net service and client to exchange data, with the exception of SOAP Headers. Specifically, it sends data and provides an acknowledgement of what was transmitted. These “in progress” services are currently available via a URL. The client side of the process will log the time sent, the size of the payload (compressed and uncompressed), the time the return was received, and the information returned by the service. This information is then stored in a file that will eventually be formatted in a spreadsheet to better represent the results and assist with further analysis.

The EEAT has re-engineered its approach to this project to allow concurrent progress on multiple fronts. The group will subdivide tasks to allow development to continue on the test applications, gathering data, security, documentation, results analysis and continuing development on SOAP Header interoperability.

### NEXT STEPS:

Finalize SOAP header format to allow for interoperability. Several key participants will be meeting this month to finalize work on this portion of the protocol.

Deploy the Java and .Net sample services to internet accessible URLs.

Build distributable packages of the services that can be deployed by anyone with one of the server platforms available to help test.

Build sample client applications (Java and .Net) to call the service listed in a drop-down list or directly entered. This client would allow sending free format text or allow the contents of a file to be read and sent (the files could be provided). The client would display the same information that it would store to the log (as described above).

There could be two versions of the sample client, one that would run on a Desktop and one that would be a web

## Data Transport, From Page 3

application. The web application would be used by those people that have the time but not the computer resources to devote to testing. This type of client would also allow those that are developing a conforming service to test it with out involvement of other members.

Build distributable packages of all sample clients.

Publish test results and recommend payload size to ensure optimal performance.

Finalize DTS Specification and supporting documentation. In July, the group will be soliciting organizations to assist with testing.

## NEXT IN-PERSON MEETING:

The Electronic Exchange Advisory Team will hold a two day face to face meeting, July 26th and 27th, in Portland, Oregon as part of the quarterly Electronics Standards Committee conference. Key topics of discussion will include the Data Transport Standard (DTS), FTP security, and Automated Encryption Key Exchange. A detailed agenda will be distributed several weeks prior to the meeting. There will also be a training session related to testing different parts of the DTS effort on the first day that you won't want to miss.

If you have any questions or would like additional information to actively participate in this project feel free to call 317 806-1212 or e-mail me at [kshiflet@usa-funds.org](mailto:kshiflet@usa-funds.org).

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## Industry Developing Entrance and Exit Data Standards

### More Participation Encouraged

BY CATHY MUELLER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MAPPING YOUR FUTURE

The development of a standard format for entrance and exit data is well underway, and many organizations in the financial aid industry are participating in this effort. Already, participants have determined the development process during a few conference calls.

However, while many organizations are participating, there may be others that have an interest in the standard who have not joined the team. Mapping Your Future <http://mapping-your-future.org> has organized this collaborative effort and encourages anyone interested in the schema to join the team.

The team has completed the first of the steps outlined during the conference calls (identifying MYF business process that involve the exchange of data) and is now in process of identifying any business process outside of MYF that involves the exchange of entrance and exit data. It is very important that as much of the industry participate in this second step as possible to ensure that all data is considered in the standard. If you have any process in place with this data, please submit the follow-

ing to Mapping Your Future:

- The type of business process (this can be general information, such as loan application or exit data retrieval)
- The type of data (entrance, exit, or both)
- The format of the data exchange.

After completion of the second step, the team will proceed with the following:

- Identify data elements.
- Develop schema and review by team participants.
- Submit to PESC for review by industry committee.

To submit business process information or for more information about this effort, contact Cathy Mueller, Mapping Your Future executive director, at [Cathy.Mueller@Mapping-Your-Future.org](mailto:Cathy.Mueller@Mapping-Your-Future.org) or (940) 497-0741 or Adele Marsh (AES), leader of the Mapping Your Future Technology Team, at [AMarsh@AESsuccess.org](mailto:AMarsh@AESsuccess.org) or (717) 720-2711.

# Technology Tidbits

## *and Standards Snippets*

■ **The long involved process of moving a “standard” through the varying processes of standards setting bodies such as W3C has lead to an ever increasing number of de facto standards**, according to a recent CNET article. These de facto standards are often derived from market demands and popular products, but critics warn that the industry may suffer in the long run. For a complete explanation of the concerns associated with de facto standards visit [http://news.com.com/2100-1013\\_3-5250780.html](http://news.com.com/2100-1013_3-5250780.html)

■ **The Federal CIO Council hopes to create a governmentwide XML schema registry**, open to all agencies, according to a Government Computer News article. While XML registries already exist at several agencies, none are capable of serving a governmentwide audience. Booz Allen Hamilton estimated that building an XML schema registry would cost about \$7.7 million, with a total operational cost of around \$59 million over a 10-year period, according to the article. For additional information visit [http://www.gcn.com/23\\_16/news/26367-1.html](http://www.gcn.com/23_16/news/26367-1.html)

■ Standards generally fall into two categories, enabling standards, which are those that help create new

### UT Austin Internet Server **‘SPEEDEs’ Along** May 2004 volume included:

- 60,797 TS130 transcripts  
Most ever in any one month.
- 41,852 TS131 acknowledgements
- 4,687 TS997 Functional acknowledgements
- 18,108 TS189 Admission Applications
- 9,964 TS138 test score reports
- 149,851 total transactions

### April 2004 volume included:

- 36,944 TS130 transcripts  
Most ever in any one month.
- 28,342 TS131 acknowledgements
- 5,812 TS997 Functional acknowledgements
- 24,618 TS189 Admission Applications
- 9,677 TS138 test score reports
- 113,364 total transactions  
17% increase in volume over April 2003.



markets, and optimizing, those that enhance an experience. **“But with the convergence of information technology with telecommunications brought about by the ever-increasing use of the Web, the lines between enabling and optimizing standards are becoming more blurred.** Are standards that limit Spam, bolster data security, and block viruses enabling or optimizing?” asks Andrew Updegrave of the Consortium Standards Bulletin in his article Standards and Wave Theory. To further explore the waves of standards that have emerged for the internet and their purpose visit <http://www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins/jun04.php#editorial>.

■ **Education technology has not lived up to its hype according to a report, “Thwarted Innovation: What Happened to E-Learning and Why,”** released last month. The authors Robert Zemsky, an education professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and William F. Massy, professor emeritus of education and business administration at Stanford claim the e-learning simply promised far more than it could ever possibly deliver. One of the impediments to keeping online learning from moving into every facet of education is the lack of a standardized format or software tool, according to Chronicle of Higher Education Article about the report.

■ **The GAO reported last month**

**that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has significantly improved SEVIS,** according to a Chronicle of Higher Education Article. While the report applauds the Department’s system upgrades and staff increased it criticizes the lack of performance measures for the availability of the database. The report also urged the Department to start collecting the SEVIS user fee, despite some question about how it should be collected. The full text of the report is available on the GAO’s website at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov).

■ **While XML has certainly simplified the way data is passed from one system to another, it deals only with the syntax and not the semantics,** according to an article by Peter Abrahams. OASIS looks as if it has solved this problem with the publication of its Committee draft of the Universal Business Language (UBL) 1.0 last month. Abrahams indicates that his initial review of the standard it shows a great deal of promise and is easily navigated. For more information visit <http://docs.oasis-open.org/ubl/cd-UBL-1.0/>.





Highlights of [GAO-04-768T](#), a report to Subcommittee on Social Security, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

In 1936, the Social Security Administration (SSA) established the Social Security number (SSN) to track workers' earnings for social security benefit purposes. Today, private and public sector entities frequently ask individuals for SSNs in order to conduct their businesses and sometimes to comply with federal laws. Although uses of SSNs can be beneficial to the public, SSNs are also a key piece of information in creating false identities either for financial misuse or for assuming an individual's identity. The retention of SSNs in the public and private sectors can create opportunities for identity theft. In addition, the aggregation of personal information, such as SSNs, in large corporate databases, as well as the public display of SSNs in various records accessed by the public, may provide criminals the opportunity to easily obtain this personal information. Given the heightened awareness of identity crimes, this testimony focuses on describing (1) how private sector entities obtain, use, and protect SSNs, and (2) public sector uses and protections of SSNs.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-768T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-768T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Barbara Bovbjerg at (202) 512-7215 or [bovbjergb@gao.gov](mailto:bovbjergb@gao.gov).

# SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

## Use Is Widespread and Protections Vary

### What GAO Found

Private sector entities rely extensively on SSNs. We reported early this year that entities such as information resellers, consumer reporting agencies, and health care organizations routinely obtain SSNs from their business clients and public sources, such as government records that can be displayed to the public. These entities then use SSNs for various purposes, such as to verify individual's identity or match existing records, and have come to rely on the SSN as an identifier, which helps them determine a person's identity for the purpose of providing the services they offer. There is no single federal law that regulates the overall use or restricts the disclosure of SSNs by private sector entities. However, certain federal laws have helped to place restrictions on the disclosures of personal information private sector entities are allowed to make to their customers, and certain states have enacted laws to restrict the private sector's use of SSNs.

Public sector entities also extensively use SSNs. All three levels of government use the SSN to comply with certain federal laws and regulations, as well as for their own purposes. These agencies rely on the SSN to manage records, verify benefit eligibility, collect outstanding debt, and conduct research and program evaluations. Despite their widespread reliance on and use of SSNs, government agencies are taking steps to safeguard the SSN. For example, some agencies are not using the SSN as the primary identification number. However, given the open nature of certain government records, SSNs appear in records displayed to the public such as documents that record financial transactions or court documents. Current GAO work under way for this subcommittee is focusing on the storage, display, and protection of SSNs in public records. Our preliminary survey data show that the types of records most likely to contain SSNs and be made available to the general public by state government entities are court records, death records, Uniform Commercial Code filings, and professional licensing records. In addition, our preliminary data suggest that responding state offices reported over 35 instances where they had no specific use for collecting SSNs. In a previous report, we proposed that Congress consider developing a unified approach to safeguarding SSNs used in all levels of government and particularly those displayed in public records, and we continue to believe that this approach has merit.