

# The Standard

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## Inter-Organizational Task Force to Advance Electronic Authentication and Authorization for Higher Education

The Board of Directors of the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC) is pleased to announce the launch of an inter-organizational eAuthentication/eAuthorization (EA2) Task Force. Representatives from eleven associations and from the U.S. Department of Education, who will serve as Task Force Members, will plan and seek implementation of common eAuthentication/eAuthorization technologies and practices to enable trusted exchange of data among colleges and universities and the federal and state government departments and agencies, and suppliers. Based on widely used open standards, a decade of development, and the successful experience of several projects, the EA2 Task Force expects the results of their work to sharply improve service to students, faculty, and the public; and, to improve security and lower unit costs.

Task Force Chair Charles Leonhardt, Principal Technologist at Georgetown University, states, “The first charge is identifying barriers to broad implementation of the availability technologies and standards. Then we can prioritize the tasks to make most use of current technology and available resources.”

Rob Abel, CEO of IMS Global Learning Consortium, adds, “More and more colleges and universities are using IMS specifications for exchanging learning services and for enterprise integration. We are pleased these will be part of a broad implementation initiative.”

PESC’s Executive Director Michael Sessa states, “Projects currently in production – NCHelp’s widely implemented Meteor Network, PESC’s suite of electronic XML transcripts, JSTOR’s Shibboleth implementation in the U.K. for electronic journals, and CRC’s broadening implementation in financial aid for examples – have demonstrated feasibility, reliability, and security of electronic data transfer. These experiences can be the basis for large-scale implementations.”

“eLearning is being implemented widely to improve our teaching and learning.” Mr. Leonhardt continues. “Now we are integrating eLearning with library and administrative systems and, via the Web, global collaborations and access to information worldwide. The EA2 infrastructure will permit immediate implementation of these trusted exchanges.”

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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 more information about subscriptions, advertising, and article submission, please visit [www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org). © 1997 – 2007 PESC.

EA2, from page 1

Representatives serving on the Task Force include:

- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO)  
Nancy Krogh, Registrar, University of Idaho
- Educause  
Steve Worona, Director of Policy and Networking Programs
- Electronic Authentication Partnership (EAP)  
David Temoshok, Director of Identity Policy and Management, U.S. General Services Administration
- IMS Global Learning Consortium  
Rob Abel, CEO
- Internet2/InCommon  
Ken Klingenstein, Director of Internet 2 Middleware Initiative
- Liberty Alliance  
Brett McDowell, Executive Director
- National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)  
Ellen Blackmun, Director of Technology Initiatives and Distance Learning
- National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP)/Meteor  
Tim Cameron, Project Manager
- Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC)  
Charles Leonhardt, Principal Technologist, Georgetown University, Task Force Chair  
Adele Marsh, Vice President of Industry Initiatives, AES, representing the PESC Standards Forum for Education
- Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA)  
Larry Fruth, Executive Director
- State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)  
Hans L'Orange, Director, SHEEO/NCES Network and Director of Data and Information Management
- U.S. Department of Education  
Charlie Coleman, Director, CIO Application Development, Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA)

**Note:** the E-Authentication Initiative of the U.S. General Services Administration has joined the Task Force. Deputy Program Manager Georgia Marsh, who has served as a speaker at the Annual Conference on Technology and Standards for the past few years, will serve as the official member on the Task Force.

The inaugural meeting of the Task Force is set for Tuesday March 6, 2007 at the National Center for Higher Education, One Dupont Circle NW, in Washington, D.C. and will run from 9am – 3pm.

Organizations that are members of any of the eleven associations may send representatives to attend and observe Task Force meetings; and those wishing to attend must register in advance by completing and submitting a Registration Form available at [www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org). The first report from the EA2 Task Force is expected late summer of this year.

**Early Bird  
Registration  
Ends Friday  
March 9, 2007**



Members and/or Affiliates from the Consumer Bankers Association (CBA), the Education Finance Council (EFC), the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP), and the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC) are eligible for the discounted registration rate of \$500 for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Technology and Standards. The non-Membership rate is \$750. Hotel reservations can be made now by contacting the Wyndham Washington directly at 202-429-1700 or at 800-996-3426 or online at [www.Wyndham.com](http://www.Wyndham.com). The Wyndham Washington is located at 1400 M Street NW in Washington, D.C. A conference rate of \$185 has been reserved for single/double hotel rooms. If calling for reservations, the group name is "PESC"; for online reservations, use "0422648ESC." The cut-off date to receive this discounted hotel rate is March 30, 2007. Conference registration is also available online at [www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org).

The conference begins at 8:30am on Monday April 23, 2007, includes six general sessions that will feature prominent and authoritative speakers, eighteen concurrent sessions, and concludes by noon on Wednesday April 25, 2007. The detailed agenda for the conference is posted on the PESC website at [www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org).

## SIFA and PESC Develop Systemic Data Partnership for Education

The Boards of Directors of the Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA®) and the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC) are pleased to announce a new cooperative partnership. These two member-driven associations generate technical standards and specifications to enable interoperability among educational software applications—with SIFA’s core competency in pK-12 schools and PESC’s core functionality geared towards postsecondary institutions. Building on these competencies, this partnership will create clarity along the entire education data pipeline by addressing the data needs within and between pK12 and postsecondary education. This agreement clarifies the roles of each organization and sets a new paradigm for the entire education community.

Despite the historical data gap between pK-12 and higher education, what the sectors have in common is their focus on student level information. This partnership seeks to leverage that shared focus in the different sectors and respond to the growing desire to bridge the data gap; working toward comprehensive pK-16 or pK-20 student level data systems.

In the jointly developed white paper entitled “Leveraging the Power of Interoperability for a Comprehensive Educational System,” SIFA and PESC outline their core competencies, emerging partnership activities, and the educational marketplace impact. Collaboration between SIFA and PESC is the first step to enabling comprehensive interoperable data systems. The partnership will also seek to collaborate with state departments of education and the U.S. Department of Education, to ensure that all educational data interoperability needs are met.

“This partnership bridges pK12 and higher education and concentrates our attention on the holistic success of the student,” said Pete Nalli, Director of Architecture and Software Development at Datatel and Chair of the PESC Board of Directors. “When you include additional stakeholders such as the U.S. Department of Education which has continuously supported both organizations, we’ve created a foundation on which we can now support that goal,” Mr. Nalli continued.

Each Association is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2007, and each organization has been built through open processes and a collaborative spirit. This partnership between SIFA and PESC will extend these open processes and expand the spirit of collaboration to generate bi-directional, comprehensive record exchanges between pK-12 and postsecondary institutions. Leveraging the prior and future work of each organization will only make the implementation of specifications and standards stronger. SIFA and PESC recognize that each organization’s intended audience is different and therefore requires unique specifications and standards; however, leveraging these established tools will further enable the vision and mission of each organization.

“Together SIFA and PESC will be able to better address the needs of students as they move within pK12 systems and transition to higher educational opportunities. This is an ideal partnership for education as a whole” says Doug Hamlin, Co-Chair of the SIFA Board of Directors.

### New PESC Member

We welcome the following organization to the PESC Membership:

Dartmouth College – Institute for Security Technology Studies  
PESC contact is Scott Rea, Director, HEBCA OA  
[www.dartmouth.edu](http://www.dartmouth.edu)

“I wanted to thank you and the entire sponsorship for the [Annual] Conference. This was the most interesting and useful conference I have ever attended. The combination of industries on the speaker panels provided the necessary diverse aspects to make the information valuable and applicable... I have worked outside of student aid for approximately 11 years and my recent return was 3 weeks prior to this conference. I feel that this was excellent training for me...I am learning what systems [our partners] have in place in addition to the procedures we have here – then determining how we can make improvements or integrate programming to benefit the students and the schools. Again, the conference provided me with a lot of information to help answer those questions as well as which direction to go in to ask more questions.”

- Conference Attendee, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference on  
Technology and Standards

## Public Comment Period Closes Thursday March 8, 2007 for Online Loan Counseling

With the development work completed and submitted on October 20, 2006, XML Online Loan Counseling entered its 30-day public comment period on Thursday January 25, 2007 and public comments are still be accepted. The complete submission can be accessed at <http://www.PESC.org/Workgroups/OnlineLoan/>. Public comment period expires at the close of business on Thursday March 8, 2007. All comments, from the PESC Membership and the public, must be made in the form of an e-mail to the PESC Executive Director at: [Sessa@PESC.org](mailto:Sessa@PESC.org). The comment e-mail should clearly identify the:

- 1) Responder name and appropriate contact information;
- 2) Source of the comments, i.e., whether the comments are individual or represent those of a group the responder represents;
- 3) Nature of the responder's interest in the standard (what is the issue and why is it important?);
- 4) Element(s) of the proposed standard with which issue is taken;
- 5) Changes suggested to resolve the issue(s).

The Implementation Guide, Instance Document, Schema, and corresponding version of Core Main are all posted on the PESC website at <http://www.PESC.org/Workgroups/OnlineLoan/>.

Loan counseling is required under the Higher Education Act of 1965 for all students receiving federal student aid. Counseling is administered by an institution (or the institution's service provider) and occurs twice, when the student initially receives aid (called "entrance counseling") and then before the student graduates (called "exit counseling"). With advancements in technology, counseling can be conducted online and a number of service providers provide online loan counseling products to institutions and borrowers. Currently, these providers use proprietary file layouts. Institutions, guarantors, lenders, servicers, and others retrieve or receive loan counseling records from these service providers. If these entities are using multiple providers though, identification and matching of data elements and records and data integrity in general become significant challenges.

In addition, the ability to upload files to financial aid management system (FAMS) is complicated, as the layouts don't follow industry standards.

### The Process

Within 30 calendar days after the close of the public comment period, the Change Control Board (CCB) of the Standards Forum for Education will address and consider all public comments and make, in consultation with the Online Loan Counseling Workgroup any necessary revisions. All public comments are posted to the PESC website during the review process. The CCB's consideration period expires on Thursday April 19, 2007 unless extenuating circumstances exist which require further deliberation.

Once any changes resulting from the public comment period have been incorporated, the CCB will recommend to the Standards Forum's Steering Committee and the PESC Board of Directors that the Specification be submitted to a vote by the PESC Members. The Board will have seven (7) calendar days to approve the submission or refer it back to the CCB with specific instructions for further work. The PESC office will issue electronic ballots to the official contacts of voting Member organizations.

Completed ballots, including the reason(s) for any rejection, shall be returned to the PESC office via e-mail attachment, fax, overnight delivery, or U.S. Postal Service within ten (10) business days. PESC staff is responsible for the tabulation of the ballots; acceptance of the Specification as a standard requires an affirmative vote of at least 80% of all votes cast. Once the Members accept the Specification, the Board of Directors will within seven (7) calendar days ratify the vote, publish/post all necessary documents and communications, and implement version control on all documents. Approved standards are freely accessible on the PESC website ([www.PESC.org](http://www.PESC.org)).

## UT Austin Internet Server "SPEEDEs" Along

- 76,411 TS130 Transcripts
- 62,763 TS131 Acknowledgements
- 20,261 TS997 Functional Acknowledgements
- 102,281 TS189 Admission Applications
- 19,723 TS138 Test Score Reports

312,924 total transactions for January 2007

\*\*\* highest single month, ever!! \*\*\*

# Technology Tidbits and Standards Snippets

**Availability of 2007-2008 Specifications for Software Developers** – From G. Kay Jacks, General Manager, Application, Operations and Delivery Services, Federal Student Aid, Posted 01-23-2007 – The Central Processing System (CPS) is pleased to announce the posting of the final version of the Specifications for Software Developers for the 2007-2008 cycle. This version, except for including the final ISIR Record Description/Data Dictionary in the Appendix, is the same as and replaces the draft version posted in September 2006.

The final version of the 2007-2008 Specifications for Software Developers is available in PDF format on the Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) Web site, located at <http://ifap.ed.gov>. For readers who are viewing this message electronically on IFAP, the document is provided as an

attachment to this message. Otherwise, to view, print, or download the document from IFAP, go to <http://ifap.ed.gov> and click on “Application Processing Materials” from the right side of the home page. The specifications will also be available in the next several days from the Federal Student Aid Download (FSAdownload) Web site, located at <http://fsadownload.ed.gov>. To locate the specifications for viewing or downloading from the FSAdownload home page, select the “Technical References and Guides” link, then select “2007-2008” under “CPS Test System.”

If you have questions related to the specifications, please contact Teri Hunt, ORC Macro International, by e-mail at [Teri.Hunt@orcmacro.com](mailto:Teri.Hunt@orcmacro.com) or at 301/572-0263.

<http://ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/0122NASFinal0708.html>

**Members Approve OpenDocument Version 1.1 as OASIS Standard** – OASIS, the international standards consortium, announced that its members have approved version 1.1 of the Open Document Format for Office Applications (OpenDocument) as an OASIS Standard, a status that signifies the highest level of ratification. The result of a unique collaboration between advocacy groups for the disabled and open source and commercial software vendors, this new version of the standard provides key accessibility enhancements to ensure that the OpenDocument format (ODF) addresses the needs of people with disabilities.

"The changes made in version 1.1 mean that OpenDocument now meets and even exceeds the accessibility support provided in other office file formats, as well as that specified by the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines," said Dave Pawson of the U.K.'s Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB). "OpenDocument 1.1 is a practical XML format that is readily transformable to the DAISY digital talking book standard for people with print impairments. The clear specification of OpenDocument v1.1 will remain usable long after commercial and proprietary formats have been condemned to the dustbin."

OpenDocument 1.1 supports users who have low or no vision or who suffer from cognitive impairments. The standard not only provides short alternative descriptive text for document elements such as hyperlinks, drawing objects and image map hot spots, it also offers lengthy descriptions for the same objects should additional help be needed.

"We are thrilled with the progress to date," said Curtis Chong, president of the National Federation of the Blind in Computer Science. "Our views have changed over time. OpenDocument is no longer a thing to be feared, as we once thought. The OASIS process exemplifies what should be done if true accessibility to both a document format and the tools to manipulate it are to be achieved."

In addition to text documents and spreadsheets, OpenDocument defines presentation format. "Navigating through slide presentations poses particular difficulties for blind users. Often, the keyboard navigation order does not match the visual flow of the slides," explained Don Harbison of IBM, co-chair of the OASIS ODF Adoption Committee. "OpenDocument 1.1 adds a provision for the author to define a logical keyboard navigation order."

Other OpenDocument accessibility features include the preservation of structural semantics imported from other file formats, such as headings in tables, and associations between drawings and their captions.

The new version of OpenDocument reflects the work of the OASIS OpenDocument Accessibility Subcommittee, which is made up of accessibility experts from IBM, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), RNIB, Sun Microsystems, and others. The Subcommittee's recommendations were incorporated into the OpenDocument specification by members of the OASIS OpenDocument Technical Committee, which includes representatives from Adobe Systems, IBM, Intel, Novell, Sun Microsystems, and others.

"On behalf of our Committee, I would like to especially thank the RNIB, the ICI, and the other organizations and individuals who helped us analyze the OpenDocument specification, identify deficiencies, and develop enhancements for improving its accessibility," said Michael Brauer of Sun Microsystems, chair of the OASIS OpenDocument Technical Committee.

"Version 1.1 is an important milestone in the evolution of the OpenDocument OASIS Standard," said Erwin Tenhumberg of Sun Microsystems, co-chair of the OASIS ODF Adoption Committee. "This release clears up several issues that the OASIS Accessibility Subcommittee and the community had identified early on. Version 1.1 addresses the features required by today's document-centric applications while taking document formats to a completely new level."





## **SIFA and PESC – Leveraging the Power of Interoperability for A Comprehensive Educational System**

To address the needs of student data enterprise wide, the Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA<sup>2</sup>) and the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC) acknowledge each other's core competencies and functionalities and will collaborate for data needs that overlap between pK12 and postsecondary education. This agreement clarifies the roles of each organization and sets a new paradigm for the entire education community.

### **Partnership Rationale**

Unique challenges for data interoperability exist within and between pK-12 and postsecondary education. While the data should focus on the student at the various levels, complexities for each educational setting arise. As we move towards a more comprehensive, systemic educational system within the United States, these two technical standard setting organizations, along with the U.S. Department of Education, understand the need to collaborate, ensuring that all educational data interoperability needs are met. One of the essential elements that is critical to the statewide longitudinal data systems identified by the Data Quality Campaign is the "ability to match student records between the pK-12 and higher education systems."

### **Partnership Purpose**

It is vital to acknowledge that SIFA's core competency is within pK-12 schools and PESC's core functionality is geared towards postsecondary institutions. Given the similar nature of the SIF Specification and the PESC Standards, and the desire to leverage the work of each organization, SIF and PESC will work together to generate bi-directional comprehensive records exchanges between pK-20 and postsecondary institutions.

The initial focus of the partnership will be:

1. Formation of a collaborative work group with participating members of both organizations to analyze and align the standards as appropriate.
2. Creation of a proof-of-concept for electronic records exchange between pK-12 and higher education utilizing both the SIF Specification and PESC High School XML Transcript.
3. Review the possibility of posting all specifications and standards in a single XML Registry and Repository for the education community.
4. Identifying other short-term opportunities to address data flow needs between schools and postsecondary education.
5. Developing a long-term action plan for collaboration between SIFA, PESC and the U.S. Department of Education. This action plan focuses on interoperability between the

comprehensive landscapes of educational applications, which requires that any overlapping data elements match.

This initial communication includes a brief overview of each organization as well as a formal intent to accomplish the initial foci listed above. Leveraging the prior and future work of each organization will only make the implementation of specifications and standards stronger. SIFA and PESC recognize that the intended audiences are different and therefore require unique specifications and standards; however, there is the common understanding and acknowledgement that leveraging these established specifications and standards, where applicable, will further enable the vision and mission of each organization.

## **Background**

Education in the United States has typically been segregated between the needs within and between institutions of higher education and within and between pK-12 schools. A growing trend exists to bring these two sectors together to work toward comprehensive pK-16 or pK-20 systems. Numerous impetuses for this systemic view are apparent including preparing students for college and work and holding the entire educational system accountable against one common infrastructure. According to a report by the Education Commission of the States (2002) the charge for this type of system must be student-focused, comprehensive, and lead to the improvement of student flow and increased student achievement through improved collaboration and coordination across education levels.

This convergence is becoming more apparent from a systemic perspective, particularly from a data needs viewpoint. As more students leave high school and enter institutions of higher education, a need for a seamless data exchange between these systems exists. There are data formats and associations that exist to enable the seamless exchange of this data to occur. Interoperability to enable this exchange is fundamental to reduce data entry, increase data quality and decrease the time to exchange records.

Two such organizations, the Schools Interoperability Framework Association and Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council, generate technical standards and specifications to enable interoperability between educational applications. SIF, the specification developed by SIFA, focuses on the development of data objects and a secure Web-based infrastructure, Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA), for exchanging those objects. This enables interoperability between educational applications for pK-12 schools. PESC has similarly focused on interoperability between educational applications for higher education.

As each Association celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2007, it is important to focus on the established work accomplished by both, to outline the developing partnership and collaboration opportunities and to make clear to the marketplace the role each entity plays in “systemic interoperability” for education.

## **SIFA**

Since 1997 the Schools Interoperability Framework Association has been defining the technical blueprint for interoperability between schools’ educational applications. These collaboratively

defined data model, infrastructure and data objects have been generated uniquely for schools, districts and states by end users and vendors. The SIF Implementation Specification is an open standard that any technology providers or schools can develop to and implement. The specification development process gathers the various stakeholders, from end users to developers, to ensure accurate identification of issues and solutions development for data requirements in today's educational landscape. With over 400 members, SIFA's vision has been to enable schools to better utilize technology in a manner that leverages the promise and capabilities of interoperability between disparate applications.

The Data Model portion of the SIF Implementation Specification defines the XML structure within the context of schools for assessment, data warehousing, food services, grade book, HR/finance, infrastructure, instructional services, library automation, professional development, special programs, student information services, student record exchange, transportation and vertical reporting. In addition, SIF defines the SOA for guaranteed message delivery of data interoperability using defined infrastructure and architecture protocols. Finally, the SIF Reporting Web Services Specification was introduced in the October 18, 2007 to enable web services outside of a SIF implementation to interface and request data as needed.

Other SIFA Activities include:

- Third party validated Certification Program
- National pK12 Data Model Development
- Technical Assistance supplier for federal Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program

## **PESC**

On August 18, 1997, 29 representatives of 16 higher education associations, administrative software vendors, the U.S. Department of Education, institutions, student financial aid lenders, secondary markets, guaranty agencies and servicers gathered at the National Center for Higher Education in Washington, D.C. to explore the creation of a partnership to promote and facilitate the use of standards for data sharing. At that time, several major factors relating to standardization were emerging and the higher education community had reached the point where centralized organization was needed. The conclusion of that meeting resulted in the agreement to form the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC).

On August 4, 2000, the PESC Board of Directors founded the Standards Forum for Education. XML development and applications were emerging in all industries, but PESC identified an absence of any single organization responsible for developing XML business standards for the postsecondary community. The community embraced the Standards Forum for Education and together worked to develop and produce the first PESC approved standard, the XML Postsecondary Transcript, in July of 2004. PESC continues to govern all EDI transaction sets already developed, is converting those transactions sets to XML, and is developing a number of other transactions in XML as well. In addition, PESC hosts a number of national meetings and conferences each year and is tracking, educating, and training the higher education community on other important issues related to technology and standards, such as web services and electronic authentication.



PESC has successfully created the environment envisioned in 1997 and now, with its largest Membership in its history, continues to serve the needs of the higher education community. As the benefits of standards are realized, the need for more standards increases along with the needs for proper information, education, and training.

### **Additional Information**

- United States Department of Education – <http://www.ed.gov>
- SIFA – <http://www.sifinfo.org>
- SIF Implementation Specification – <http://www.sifinfo.org/sif-specification.org>
- PESC – <http://www.pesc.org>
- PESC Standards – <http://www.pesc.org/info/approved-standards.asp>

### **References**

Education Commission of the States (2002). *The Case for P-16: Designing an Integrated Learning System, Preschool Through Postsecondary Education*. Washington, DC, Education Commission of the States. <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/34/99/3499.pdf>

### **About SIFA**

**SIFA** is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of over 400 schools, districts, states, the U.S. Department of Education, international government agencies, software vendors and consultants who collectively define the rules and regulations for educational software data interoperability. The SIF Implementation Specification enables diverse applications to interact and share data efficiently, reliably, and securely regardless of the platform hosting those applications. SIFA has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For more information, visit <http://www.sifinfo.org>.

### **About PESC**

**PESC** is a non-profit, community-based, umbrella association of colleges and universities; professional and commercial organizations; data, software and service providers; and state and federal government agencies. PESC's mission is to lead the establishment and adoption of data exchange standards in education. The goals of the mission are to enable the improvement of institutional performance and foster collaboration across educational communities in order to lower costs, improve service, and attain system interoperability. For more information, visit [www.pesc.org](http://www.pesc.org).



## National Transcript Center

### **First-Ever SIF Electronic Transcript Produced by National Transcript Center**

#### **Wyoming School District Launches New Era in Student Record Exchange; District's SIF Data Translated to SPEEDE EDI and PESC XML.**

AUSTIN, TEXAS, February 3, 2007 – The National Transcript Center (NTC) announced today that it has produced the first electronic student transcript using the Schools Interoperability Framework Association's (SIFA) 2.0 Student Record Exchange (SRE) specification. To date, no other company has successfully produced this type of transcript.

In conjunction with this milestone, NTC also announced that it is the first system to translate the new SIF standard into the most popular data formats used by postsecondary institutions. NTC's translation engine successfully converts SIF 2.0 SRE data into both SPEEDE/ExPRESS Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council's High School Extensible Markup Language Transcript (PESC XML) formats.

This ushers in a new era of student record exchange. Instead of sending paper transcripts or PDF pictures of transcripts, school districts around the country will soon be sending SIF-compliant electronic data through the National Transcript Center. NTC also facilitates the exchange of file attachments and includes a printable PDF presentation of the transcript data. This approach is of tremendous value to receiving institutions, which strongly prefer to receive raw data rather than receiving paper transcripts or PDF pictures which require laborious re-keying of information.

Translating between data standards has tremendous implications for school districts and colleges. Using the National Transcript Center, sending and receiving institutions no longer have to utilize the same data standard. Through NTC, a high school can send an electronic transcript in SIF and a college can receive that transcript in either SPEEDE/ExPRESS EDI or PESC XML.

To demonstrate its SIF 2.0 capabilities, NTC successfully converted the transcript data of Riverton, Wyoming high school students to the SIF 2.0 SRE specification. The SIF 2.0 SRE was then translated into both SPEEDE/ExPRESS EDI and PESC XML.

Mark Johnson, president of the National Transcript Center commented, "Dr. Craig Beck and the outstanding team of data analysts in Riverton could not have been more impressive. Ten years from now there's a real possibility that almost all of the high school transcripts in the U.S. will be sent using the SIF standard, and people will remember that it was the pioneers in Riverton, Wyoming who forged this path."

"Our district is committed to continuously improving the workplace for our administrators and the customer service for our students," said Dr. Craig H. Beck, superintendent of Fremont County School District #25 in Riverton, Wyoming. "Using SIF and NTC together is a prime example of how our district finds ways to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and increase information flow."

"This is a very important Proof-of-Concept demonstration," stated Dr. Barbara Clements, chief standards officer of NTC. "NTC was built around a powerful data translation engine that links multiple standards and data formats. We look forward to the release of SIFA's test harness to demonstrate our compliance and translation capabilities with the v2.0 Student Record Exchange specification."

NTC, through its parent company ESP Solutions Group, is an established leader in the education standards community and has long supported the efforts of SIFA. Several SIFA board members and task force leaders are employees of NTC and ESP Solutions Group.

### **About the National Transcript Center**

The National Transcript Center was established to improve the efficiency, reliability, cost, and security of academic transcript exchange for K-12 schools, state education agencies, colleges and universities, and co-academic organizations. Based in Austin, Texas, the National Transcript Center is a highly secure and highly scalable trading network. NTC offers privacy and identity protection that far exceeds today's offerings.

For more information on the National Transcript Center, please visit <http://www.transcriptcenter.com/>.