MARYLAND LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM (MLDS)
550 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
December 11, 2015
MINUTES

The meeting of the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Governing Board was held on December 11, 2015, in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Board Room of the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. Dr. Kirwan called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and noted that a quorum was present.

The following Governing Board members were in attendance:
Dr. William "Brit" Kirwan, Chancellor Emeritus, University System of Maryland (Designee for
         Chancellor Caret)
Ms. Kelly Schulz, Secretary, Maryland Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation
Dr. Jack Smith, Interim State Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Jon Enriquez, Director of the Office of Research and Policy Analysis, (Designee for Secretary of
         Higher Education)
Ms. Tina Bjarekull President, Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association
Mr. Steven Rizzi, Vice President, PAR Government

The following staff members were in attendance:
Mr. Ross Goldstein, Executive Director, MLDS Center
Ms. Tejal Cherry, Director of System Management Branch, MLDS Center
Ms. Laia Tiderman, Data Management Coordinator, MLDS Center
Mr. Peter Hobbs, Director of Reporting Services, MLDS Center
Dr. Michael Woolley, Director of Research, MLDS Center
Dr. Laura Stapleton, Associate Director of Research, MLDS Center
Dr. Terry Shaw, Associate Director of Research, MLDS Center
Dr. Angela Henneberger, Research Coordinator, MLDS Center
Ms. Dawn O'Croinin, Assistant Attorney General for the Governing Board and MLDS Center
Mr. Charles Singfield, Data Analyst, MLDS Center
Mr. Robert Murphy, Data Analyst, MLDS Center
Ms. Jamese Dixon-Bobbitt, Executive Associate, MLDS Center
Mr. Chuck Shelton, Senior System Architect, MLDS Center

Dr. Kirwan began the meeting, stating that a quorum was present. There were no additions to the agenda.

Presentation by the Social Services Administration, Department of Human Resources
Mr. Goldstein began by noting that State law defines what constitutes permissible student data for inclusion in the system. It also specifies data that is not student data and cannot be included in the system. At the last Governing Board meeting, there was a discussion about juvenile delinquency records, which is one type of excluded data. There was a presentation by the Department of Juvenile Services about the value of allowing that data to be added to the MLDS. Another type of restricted data is records relating to Children in Need of Assistance, which includes children in the foster care system. Mr. David Ayer, Deputy Executive Director of Operations for the Social Services Administration under the Department of

Human Resources and Dr. Terry Shaw, Associate Research Branch Director for the MLDS and Professor of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore have been invited to discuss that data and the potential benefits of including that data as part of the MLDS.

Mr. Ayer, thanked the Board for the invitation and expressed his interest in working with the Center. The Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration (SSA) also has an interest in generating timely and accurate information about student performance and workforce participation. Mr. Ayer noted that his remarks will focus on SSA's child welfare services, and in particular services for foster children and how a partnership can help support the educational outcomes for those children.

Recently, SSA established a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Department of Education (MSDE) to share data under the FERPA Uninterrupted Scholars Act, which allows sharing of education data on foster children without parental consent. Mr. Ayer reviewed the following findings using that data:

- Three quarters of foster children stay in one school, which Mr. Ayer noted is a positive outcome. Dr. Kirwan asked whether the number of schools attended by the general student population would be much different, noting that Marylanders are highly mobile. Mr. Ayer responded that the number of schools attended by foster children is still higher than the general student population.
- Foster children have a higher incidence of needing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) than the general student population.
- Foster children pass the High School Assessment exam at a much lower rate than the general student population.

Mr. Ayer reiterated that SSA can use this data to gain a partial understanding of what is happening with foster children. But it is currently an incomplete picture and does not give enough insight to fully understand the achievement gaps of foster children and the factors that lead to those achievement gaps.

Mr. Ayer stated that he thinks the MLDS is the best place to bring the data from SSA and DJS together. The Center has rules and procedures to protect the data and privacy and can ensure that the data will be used wisely to increase the understanding of the populations that the various agencies serve. He also noted that this type of collaboration could help local school officials identify strategies to more effectively serve foster children. It could also provide foster care workers information to help them work more effectively with the schools.

Dr. Kirwan clarified that the education data on a foster care child is currently part of the MLDS, however what is missing and what is being asked for is a way to identify that the child is a foster care recipient. Mr. Ayer agreed with the clarification but noted that in addition to just identifying foster care children he would recommend the inclusion of additional types of information from the SSA system. This would allow stakeholders to understand the experiences the children have had and provide insight about what is going on with them through time. Accordingly, the inclusion of SSA data, DJS data, and perhaps behavioral data would provide important insights. Mr. Ayer noted that there has been a drastic reduction in the number of children in foster care over the past seven years (from approximately 10,000 to 4,800). This is because SSA is interceding at earlier points in time before things start going the wrong way. More data will help reach back to even earlier moments and continue to reduce the number of children needing foster care.

In response to questions from Ms. Bjarekull, Mr. Ayer clarified that he is not requesting individual level data from MLDS. Instead, he would use aggregate MLDS data for reporting and understanding trends.

Mr. Rizzi asked what types of data, beyond just a flag to identify foster care, should be added to the MLDS? Mr. Ayer responded that he would like to include information about the spectrum of child welfare services and interactions, including: information about investigations (up to the disclosure limitations); in home services; foster care services; demographic information; and assessments about safety and risks. This amount of detail will provide contextual background and help policy makers and service providers understand how services and programs impact outcomes. Further, it will help identify children at risk of falling through the cracks, which benefits both SSA and education. Mr. Rizzi responded that even though the stated goals are very laudable, it is beyond the legislative intent of what the MLDS is for: namely studying educational longitudinal outcomes.

Mr. Ayer responded by noting that the recently enacted federal Every Student Succeeds Act includes requirements for states to ensure certain protections for vulnerable students, such as students in foster care. This suggests that using data securely and wisely to zero in on this small but very at risk set of children is an educational concern.

Dr. Enriquez asked what MLDS data would be used by SSA and the foster families to help guide educational decision making. Mr. Ayer responded that SSA would use the MLDS data to understand the extent to which foster care children are taking advantage of educational opportunities (such as financial aid and dual enrollment), and if they are not, working to understand why and intervene to make sure the foster care children are availing themselves of these opportunities.

Ms. Bjarekull clarified that SSA is not currently obtaining data on postsecondary educational outcomes through its partnership with MSDE.

Ms. Schulz asked how much data is collected about the foster parents with whom the children are being placed, noting that such data is important for the accountability of the foster parents and the state. Mr. Ayer responded that SSA collects limited demographic and residential information, but not data on training or other opportunities the parents may be involved in to help with educational outcomes. Mr. Ayer also noted that foster parents work closely with caseworkers who routinely check in on how the child is doing developmentally and health wise. Ms. Schulz responded that metrics to assess the services and care provided to the children by the parents and the State are critical for accountability and of equal importance and priority.

Dr. Woolley noted that one of the mandates from the original Research Agenda is to look at specific vulnerable student subgroups when answering the research questions. Accordingly, adding SSA data is consistent with the research agenda since it would allow the Center to study outcomes for a specific student subgroup (foster children). Dr. Kirwan agreed with Dr. Woolley and noted that this can be done by simply adding a flag to indicate foster care participation. Adding more data than just a flag represents a significant policy change and should be something that is reviewed by the Governor or the General Assembly.

Finally, Mr. Rizzi recounted lessons he learned from concerned citizens while working on Internet related legislation in the early 2000s. People are concerned about the government building a database about all of their interactions with the government. Adding information from SSA on behavioral health to an already very comprehensive database would raise those same concerns.

Dr. Kirwan thanked Mr. Ayer for his very informative and well delivered presentation.

2015 Dual Enrollment Report
Dr. Henneberger noted that the dual enrollment report is a required report that is due to the Governor and General Assembly on December 15th of this year. Dr. Henneberger began noting that Maryland law

broadly defines dual enrollment as a student who is dually enrolled in a secondary school and an institution of higher education in the State.   Research finds dual enrollment associated with a variety of positive outcomes in college and high school.

Next, Dr. Henneberger described how the research operationalized dual enrollment using cross agency data. Specifically, she used data provided by MSDE, MHEC and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to identify students with overlapping enrollment dates (in the Fall or Spring semesters) in a Maryland public high school and a Maryland postsecondary institution.

The findings from the research include:
1. In the 2013-2014 academic year, 5,453 students were identified as dually enrolled. The range of dual enrollment rates in the counties is between 3% and 28%. In response to a question from Dr. Kirwan, Dr. Henneberger stated that students in all high school grades can dual enroll, but the dual enrollment rate being discussed only looks at 12th graders (who make up the majority of dual enrollments). In general, the number and rate of dually enrolled students is rising over the academic years presented.
2. Who is dually enrolled in Maryland:
    a. Female students are overrepresented in the dual enrollment;
    b. Students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals (FARMS) are underrepresented, but there is an upward trend in the rate of FARMS student participation in dual enrollment. Dr. Smith noted that the lowest number of students participating in FARMS occurs during high school. Therefore, the FARMS number may underrepresent the number of students because of nonparticipation by otherwise eligible students.
    c. White students are overrepresented in dual enrollment in comparison to the total population of 12th graders. Minority students (black and other) and Hispanic students are underrepresented, but there is a slight upward trend in the rate of dual enrollment for the minority and Hispanic students.
    d. Dually enrolled students enrolled in postsecondary education within one year at a higher rate than the general population of 12th graders.

Ms. Schulz asked whether there is information on the type of course work the dually enrolled students are taking; specifically is it related to career or skills training. Ms. Schulz noted that she would expect an even higher percentage of dually enrolled students to continue with postsecondary education. If students are engaged in dual enrollment for skill or career training, that could explain why more don't continue their studies. Dr. Henneberger responded that the data currently does not allow us to answer that question. In response to a question from Dr. Enriquez about whether there is a breakdown of type of postsecondary schools attended, Dr. Henneberger stated that the report does not address that question. Dr. Henneberger and Dr. Woolley clarified that the Center only receives data from MHEC on students enrolled in credit bearing courses – accordingly all dually enrolled students are students taking credit bearing courses in an in-state postsecondary institution.

Next, Dr. Henneberger explained that a second method of analysis using the MHEC dual enrollment flag was used. That dual enrollment flag is assigned by a Maryland postsecondary institution to a student in high school and is limited to in-state fall enrollments and includes high school students who are not Maryland public high school students. This analysis is the only way the Center can report on any 2014-2015 academic year activity. It also provides an update to the information presented in the 2013 and 2014 Dual Enrollment Reports. This analysis indicates similar trends as discussed above.

Dr. Henneberger noted that this is the first report using cross sector data. The benefit of longitudinal cross sector data is that it gives the researchers a high level of confidence that students are enrolled in both a high school and an institution of higher education in the State. As more years of data become

available, more analysis and examination of long-term outcomes and trends can be conducted, including degree attainment and workforce outcomes.   Finally, Dr. Henneberger acknowledged Dr. Terry Shaw, Mathew Uretsky, the MLDS Center staff and the Research and Policy Advisory Board for their assistance with guidance and completing the report.

Noting that this was the first research report utilizing the system, Mr. Rizzi asked how the system functioned: was it good, did it perform as expected, and was it useful? Dr. Henneberger responded that the system was very helpful and provides a lot of information on the topic. She also noted that the system could be more helpful if it provided easier access within the system. Mr. Rizzi stated that he thought the analysis and presentation could have been enhanced if the system had mapping capabilities. Dr. Woolley responded by noting that the team is interested in working with GIS software to conduct different types of sophisticated analysis.

Dr. Smith noted that he met with the researchers a couple of months ago. He commended them on their thoroughness of thought and planning for the report and responsiveness to his questions and concerns. He noted that the system has a way to go, but as the agencies' data continue to improve, so will the analytic tools the Center will have at its disposal.

Dr. Woolley encouraged the members to read the forthcoming report, noting that it will have a lot more information and detail. Dr. Woolley also provided the perspective that the system is like a newly built car. The engineers designed it and it is now up to the researchers to conduct the test drive. As with any new system, as they drive it they find idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies that have to be fixed.   The challenge is combining the need to test with the need to use the system for reports and web content.

Dr. Kirwan concluded the discussion by commending the team for a very good report.

Approval of Data Inventory
Ms. Tiderman began by noting that a lot of work has been done over the past year to ensure that data provided by the agencies properly aligns with the data elements listed in the Data Inventory. The Data Inventory contains corrections throughout to bring it into alignment with what is collected. Second, there are changes to the Data Inventory to keep it consistent with the Common Education Data Standards. (CEDS).   Third, MHEC has provided additional data elements which are included in this revision. Finally, the Data Inventory includes the addition of the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) data elements that will be received and have been determined as necessary to help resolve and authenticate identities.

Dr. Enriquez noted that the Center has successfully conducted a lot data reconciliation to facilitate a strong data match rate and asked whether the inclusion of the MVA data will slow down progress. Ms. Tiderman responded that the MVA data is primarily needed to be able to match K-12 records to labor data. Labor data has limited name and other identifiers and therefore linking that data relies on being able to match against a Social Security Number (SSN). However, there are fewer SSNs reported by local education agencies and the SSN data from schools tends to be less reliable. Accordingly the Center needs to pick up this data through the inclusion of limited MVA data. Mr. Goldstein noted that the Center has achieved a high match rate (88 – 90 percent). Other states that use MVA data are able to get a higher match rate (mid-90s), which results in a higher level confidence in research analyses. Dr. Enriquez clarified that he is concerned about the amount of time it will take to work through and incorporate the MVA data. Ms. Tiderman and Ms. Cherry, both responded that it will take time initially, but given the experience the task will not be overly burdensome or time consuming.

Ms. Schulz made a motion to approve the Data Inventory, which was seconded by Dr. Smith. The motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of the 2015 Annual Report

Mr. Goldstein noted that the report was sent to the Board for review a week prior to the meeting. In addition, Mr. Goldstein reviewed the draft report with the Research and Policy Advisory Board (RPB) prior to this meeting. The RPB had two recommendations. First, they recommended adding a highlights section to serve as an Executive Summary and a way to prominently display accomplishments. Second, they suggested a possible Board recommendation to continue to review excluded data sources to see what value they have and determine appropriate next steps.

Mr. Goldstein then provided an overview of the statutorily required contents of the report:
1. An update on the Implementation of the MLDS, including:
   a. An overview of the system development, the work on data loading, identity resolution, and data match rates; and
   b. Overview of other Center activities, including:
      - The data quality standards;
      - Staffing;
      - Federal Grant;
      - Research Series; and
      - Providing system access to support outside research.
2. A list of all studies performed.
3. A list of data determined to be unnecessary. This section identifies the decommissioning of the P20W system. The P20W system was designed as a proof of concept as part of the Race to the Top grant. That system is no longer needed. The decommissioning has been fully vetted by all agency partners. Since that system contains data, it is being reported in this section of the report.
4. Proposed or planned expansion of data. This section identifies the inclusion of the MVA data discussed earlier in the meeting.
5. Recommendations by the Governing Board.

Ms. Bjarekull noted her concern about the proposed recommendation and does not support it. This is a broader issue that should be considered by the general public. Mr. Rizzi noted his agreement with Ms. Bjarekull. Mr. Goldstein suggested that the recommendation could be changed to specifically include a review of not just the benefits of including the restricted data, but also a review of the drawbacks of including the data, such as privacy concerns. Ms. Schulz also stated that she is not comfortable moving forward with this action and suggested that this this decision should be reviewed by a wider audience and maybe a question for the Governor's office. Dr. Kirwan concluded that this was not a recommendation that the Board wanted to make.

In response, Mr. Goldstein noted that he had been working under the assumption that reviewing these various restricted data sources was the direction the Board wanted and therefore had planned to have a series of presentations like the DJS and SSA discussion on the other restricted data. For example, State law also prohibits inclusion of disciplinary records. The next Board meeting could include a presentation by an MSDE representative to discuss that data and whether its inclusion would provide meaningful education policy information.

Mr. Rizzi stated his opinion that other data is relevant if it relates to educational outcomes. To that end, labor data and incarceration data is relevant since they are both important outcome measures. However, data relating to medical disposition and child protective services is a line beyond the legislative mandate of looking at educational outcomes. Ms. Schulz noted her agreement and added that the Center is just now being able to research and develop reports that touch on the core function of the system. The Center should not lose focus on the main job. Once those core policy questions have been addressed then it may be time to consider expansion into different areas.

Dr. Smith recommended against the inclusion of student discipline records (such as suspensions and expulsion). From his experience this information is viewed by parents as particularly sensitive and private and its inclusion would be a mistake.

Dr. Smith also noted that while he is not necessarily in favor of adding these additional data, they represent important topics for the Board to be briefed on and understand how different students are impacted.

Ms. Schulz asked about the status of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MVA and MLDS. Ms. O'Croinin stated that the MOU has been finalized. During the planning phase Ms. O'Croinin sought input from the agencies on whether they would approve the re-disclosure of their data to MVA. Per its agreements with the agencies, the Center cannot re-disclose data without the consent of the agencies. However, re-disclosure of Center data is not necessary since MVA has agreed to provide its data to the Center.

Mr. Rizzi noted that at most Board meetings, the topic of at risk populations are discussed. Since the Board needs to understand these populations to make policy recommendations, there should be a continued effort identify appropriate information to help us better understand the various at risk populations so policy makers can make informed decisions about programs.

Noting that the Annual Report mentions probabilistic data matching, Dr. Kirwan asked whether the Center has a means to test the accuracy of the matching. Mr. Murphy stated that the MVA data will serve as a meaningful check on the match rate.

Next, Dr. Kirwan asked for clarification on whether the project to create synthetic data had been funded. Mr. Goldstein responded that it had been funded and stated that he would clarify that fact in the Annual Report. Ms. Bjarekull noted that the Board never approved the use of synthetic data. Mr. Goldstein agreed that there had not been formal approval. However, he stated that the funding is for the creation of synthetic data. How the synthetic data will be used can be determined as it is being developed.

In response to a question from Dr. Kirwan about whether a researcher who used synthetic data would be required disclose that fact, Dr. Woolley stated that the researcher could come to the Center with the analysis that the Center can run against the real data to determine the accuracy. Dr. Woolley also stated that he doesn't know at this time how to resolve an issue where the actual results differ from the results produced using synthetic data. However, part of the development plan for the synthetic data includes extensive and detailed testing to ensure the accuracy of the synthetic data and noted that synthetic data would not be released unless the researchers were satisfied with the testing outcomes.

Ms. Bjarekull reiterated her concern that the role of the Governing Board is to determine what data is necessary and what research is done with that data. Her concern is that the synthetic data represents a loss of control over that research agenda. Therefore, is the synthetic data something that the Center should be doing? Ms. Schulz agreed noting that the MLDS has a specific charge from the legislature to perform analyses for the benefit of the agencies and policy makers.

Ms. O'Croinin responded that the Center has an obligation to release de-identified, aggregate data. Such data is considered a public record and therefore its release cannot be restricted by the Board.

Dr. Kirwan noted that if the Center can meet its Public Information Act obligations with aggregate de-identified data, why does the Center need to create synthetic data? Ms. O'Croinin responded that the synthetic data would allow the Center to provide more granular information in response to data requests.

Mr. Goldstein noted that the question is whether the Center wants to provide more granular information even though it does not have an obligation to do so.

Dr. Woolley noted that people will do research on Center data, and the synthetic data will ensure that the research is of a high quality. Dr. Enriquez clarified that synthetic data could be used to satisfy public information requests and can do so with greater assurances of privacy and security. Ms. O'Croinin noted that it will be a significant level of effort for the Center to create de-identified aggregate data sets in response to a PIA requests. The request will have to be analyzed, tables will need to be created, and then the output will have to be thoroughly analyzed to ensure no identifiable information is being disclosed. Synthetic data will provide a means to easily fulfill requests with a very high degree of confidence that no personal information is being disclosed.

Dr. Woolley offered to do another presentation about synthetic data, which Dr. Kirwan accepted.

Mr. Goldstein returned to the topic of whether the Board wants to include recommendations in the Annual Report. Dr. Smith suggested a recommendation to encourage the continued to enhancement of the data that is provided to the MLDS by MHEC and MSDE, noting that both agencies' data systems are not as robust as they could be. Dr. Kirwan and Ms. Schulz both agreed that a statement encouraging data enrichment is a very positive recommendation.

Mr. Rizzi proposed modifying the first recommendation to a more general recommendation to continue to review at risk populations, including reaching out to different researchers to find out what they are interested in and how the MLDS can help them. Dr. Enriquez noted that there are various at risk populations included in the original research agenda and that the focus should remain on finding ways to address those research questions. Accordingly, Dr. Enriquez proposed shortening Mr. Rizzi's recommendation to only include the first part regarding reviewing vulnerable populations.

There was general agreement about the recommendations. Mr. Goldstein stated that he would make the proposed changes to the report, draft the new recommendations, and send it to the Board for approval.

Adjournment
Dr. Kirwan noted that the two hour meeting period had ended but the Center Report agenda item had not been addressed. Mr. Goldstein stated that the issues had been covered in the monthly reports.

Ms. Schulz informed the Board about the P20 Council which met a couple of weeks ago. The Council has seven workgroups, all of which are open to public participation. There is a MLDS workgroup that will be discussing the research agenda of the Center. Secretary Schulz encouraged the Board members to participate in the workgroups.

Dr. Kirwan reminded the members that the next meeting will be held on March 11th at 10 a.m. at the same location. Dr. Kirwan thanked the staff for the tremendous progress they have made in the system development and then adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

                    Respectfully submitted,
                    Ross Goldstein
                    Executive Director

  Approved: March 11, 2016