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Michigan State, Cornell, and the University of Toledo Among Many Schools Enjoying DegreeVerifySM Benefits

With an enrollment of over 40,000 graduate and undergraduate students during the regular academic year, and close to 20,000 in the summer semester alone, the Registrar's Office at Michigan State University is always a busy one. Prior to signing up for DegreeVerify, staff at MSU estimated that they completed 600-800 verifications per month. This May alone, the Clearinghouse completed 851 verifications for Michigan State.



Dugald McMillan, Ph.D.,
Associate Registrar,
Michigan State University

According to Dugald McMillan, associate registrar at Michigan State University, the decision to join the Clearinghouse was an easy one. "As you can imagine, the volume of verification paperwork and the phone calls to our Registrar's Office is tremendous. The choice to go active with DegreeVerify was based on a long and satisfactory relationship with the Clearinghouse. The

Clearinghouse offered an attractive service that has helped us refocus and redirect our day-to-day office activities to provide an enhanced service to the public."

Compare The Benefits of DegreeVerify		
Benefits	Your Registrar's Office	The Clearinghouse
24/7 Accessibility	?	With Clearinghouse web site access 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, your graduates don't have to wait for a job offer. The DegreeVerify searchable database provides instant information to requestors.
Reduction in Cost and Workload	?	The Clearinghouse's state-of-the-art automated system reduces cost overhead and workload for everyone; from university registrar staff to background search firms.
Complete Audit Trail	?	Chances are the number of verification phone calls you receive are at least double what you think! With the Clearinghouse's on-line system, you can generate reports and track degree verification requests on a monthly or even daily basis.
Track Potential Fraud	?	With DegreeVerify you can track potential degree fraud at the aggregate summary level or at a detailed student level.
Revenue Generation	?	DegreeVerify offers schools the opportunity to generate verification revenue. If your school wishes to earn \$3.00 per verification, we will charge requestors the current Clearinghouse base fee, plus \$3.00. The additional \$3.00 will be passed on to you.

As the largest single source for degree information in the nation, DegreeVerify is utilized by a wide variety of clients, from background search firms and recruiters to employers. By supplying the degree data, universities and colleges are helping to build one central database for degree information. In turn, registrar offices will benefit through reduced

administrative workload, improved degree tracking procedures, and prevention of degree fraud.

"Our office made an immediate transition to DegreeVerify once it was in operation," said Dr. McMillan. "The staff understood the positive effect the program would have on our operations, and was on board immediately."

Like Michigan State, Cornell University was already an active participant in a number of other Clearinghouse programs,

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Ask the FERPA Expert

By Frances Moran

I understand that colleges must obtain students' written consent before releasing information from their education records, unless there is a FERPA exception. However, the university I work for is a traditional institution where students are financial "dependents" and parents pay the bills. Can't I release grades and other information to parents without the student's consent?

Yes. FERPA provides an exception granting the educational institution the authority to choose to release grades and other personally identifiable information to the student's parents, without consent, if the student qualifies as a "dependent" under Federal income tax law. However, it is important to remember that under FERPA, the university or college is not required to release information to a parent even if he or she is paying the student's bills, and only the student has the right to obtain information from college level records under FERPA.

What if the parents are separated or divorced – can I only release the information to the parent who claims the student as a dependent on their tax return?

FERPA doesn't distinguish between which parent takes the tax deduction (if they don't file a joint return). The educational institution has the authority to choose whether or not to release information to one or both parents, so long as the student is a "dependent" under the Tax Code.

How do I know if the student is a "dependent" for Federal income tax purposes? What if a student tells me that he is independent and not to release any information to his parents?

You may document a student's status as a "dependent" by requiring a parent seeking access to provide a copy of his or her most recent Federal income tax form. You could also require students to identify their status at the time they apply or register for school, or notify them that you will consider them "dependents" for FERPA purposes, and that you may release information to their parents, unless they advise you otherwise. For those students who have identified themselves as "independent," you should obtain a copy of the parent's tax return before releasing information from the student's record without consent.

Frances Moran is a recognized authority on FERPA and student privacy issues. She has served as legal counsel for the Clearinghouse since February 2000. Prior to joining the Clearinghouse, she practiced law with the U.S. Department of Education at the Office of the General Counsel, where she worked as primary legal counsel for the Family Policy Compliance Office. While at the Department, Frances also served as director of the Compliance and Enforcement Division in the Office of Student Financial Assistance and in administration of the Direct Consolidation Loan Program.

AACRAO Update

Regional Director, Don Gwinn, Receives Lifetime Honorary AACRAO Membership

"Dedication to service" is an appropriate way to describe Clearinghouse north central regional director, Don Gwinn. Don joined the Clearinghouse a year ago, after close to three decades with Northwestern University. A strong force in AACRAO since the 1970s, Don has been an active AACRAO leader and author. For his years of unselfish devotion to serving students, faculty, staff, and administration, Don was recognized as a recipient of a 2001 AACRAO Honorary Lifetime Membership.

Don joins another AACRAO lifetime honorary member of the Clearinghouse staff, western regional director, Melanie Bell, who was recognized by AACRAO in 1998.

We're exceptionally proud to have such committed and talented individuals on the Clearinghouse team. On behalf of all the Clearinghouse employees and the Clearinghouse board of directors, we congratulate Don and Melanie.

Announced AT AACRAO: New Clearinghouse Transcript Ordering Service to be Piloted Soon!

You heard about it at AACRAO! Over the next few months, the Clearinghouse will be piloting yet another workload-reducing service specifically designed to alleviate your office's increasing number of transcript requests. If you would like to be considered as one of the pilot schools, please call us at 703.742.7791. In the meantime, watch your mail and the Clearinghouse web site for more information.

Clearinghouse Makes a Splash at 2001 AACRAO Conference

The AACRAO conference in Seattle, April 22-25 was a flurry of activity for Clearinghouse staff. Booth traffic was heavy, and the on-screen demo of

DegreeVerify received tremendous attention. The Registrar 101 raffle was a hit, and the ticket tumbler was stuffed to the brim with entries. Congratulations to winners Marianne Stickel, of Saybrook Graduate School, California; Tinnie Collins from Lincoln University, Missouri; and Jim Thames of Dallas Theological Seminary, Texas. The lucky winners receive free tuition and travel expenses to one of AACRAO's three Workshops for Registrars: Registrar 101 sessions, sponsored jointly by AACRAO and the Clearinghouse.

Monday's presentation, New Developments in Enrollment Status and Degree Verification, was standing-room-only. The session featured three guest speakers currently utilizing the Clearinghouse's two newest services, EnrollmentVerify and DegreeVerify. Diane Barnes, associate registrar at Wichita State University, discussed key verification benefits, such as reduced workload and 24/7 requestor access. Becky Barnes, associate registrar at University of Northern Colorado, walked the audience through the process of outsourcing degree verifications, and Robert Schlossnagle, sr. vice president of operations for Kroll Background America provided a background screening firm's perspective on DegreeVerify. "Degree fraud is more prevalent than most people realize," says Schlossnagle. "In our increasingly technological age, the traditional methods for degree verification are not feasible. Automated response programs, such as the Clearinghouse's DegreeVerify service, not only gives alumni a competitive edge, but also helps to quickly identify high-risk applicants before they become high-risk employees."

If you missed the special AACRAO session, or would like your own copy of the presentations, please send an email to wheeler@studentclearinghouse.org, or call 703.733.4134.

We would like to extend our thanks to all of our participating institutions and prospective Clearinghouse participants who made the Seattle meeting our best AACRAO ever!

Stop by the Clearinghouse booth at NASFAA, and win \$250 towards your school's scholarship fund!

NASFAA to Feature Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author, Frank McCourt

July 22-24, 2001 – Nashville, Tennessee

NASFAA is just around the corner and this year promises to be action-packed. Taking place in "Music City, USA" -Nashville, Tennessee - participants will have the opportunity to listen to guest speakers, Frank McCourt, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Angela's Ashes*, and Edward James Olmos, actor, humanitarian, and U.S. Goodwill Ambassador. Also featured in this year's conference is a wide range of interesting educational programs, including the Clearinghouse session, *Enrollment Verification Enhancement*, scheduled for Monday, July 23rd from 10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. A panel of financial aid directors will discuss how Clearinghouse services can help reduce delinquencies and defaults, track concurrently enrolled students, track borrowers subsequent enrollment in other institutions, and much more. Check your conference booklet for room location.

The Clearinghouse will also be unveiling its newly enhanced LoanLocatorSM web search engine, where students can find out, at no charge, which firm is servicing their educational loans. In addition, this improved web site offers real time access to Sallie Mae and Great Lakes Higher Education Corp. databases, where loan counselors can research student loan details, such as outstanding principal, interest, and monthly payment amounts, invaluable when performing student exit counseling interviews.

Best of all, simply by visiting our booth and leaving your business card, your school will have the opportunity to win \$250 towards a university's scholarship fund.

See y'all in Nashville, ya hear!

Nashville Notables – Did you know:

- French traders established a trading post in the Nashville vicinity in 1717, and the area was first settled in 1779.
- Nashville is named for General Francis Nash who won acclaim in the Revolutionary War.
- There are 16 colleges and universities that serve the Nashville metro area.
- Due to the incredible success of the country music industry and its relationship to Nashville, the city is known as Music City, USA.

Many Schools Enjoying DegreeVerifySM Benefits

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including EnrollmentVerifySM and EnrollmentSearchSM, when it became the second Ivy League school to join the growing ranks of DegreeVerify participants in April of this year. Dartmouth University, the Clearinghouse's first Ivy League school, joined in August 2000. "Like many academic institutions, our department's goal is to provide our graduates and attendees with the best possible registrar services," said David S. Yeh, assistant vice president of academic support services at Cornell. "We've seen first hand the administrative benefits of the Clearinghouse's other programs like EnrollmentVerify and EnrollmentSearch. By utilizing the benefits of the DegreeVerify program, we ensure that Cornell graduates get the immediate recognition they deserve, since employers can now utilize the on-line degree verification site, 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week."

Even for schools with a smaller enrollment size, the advantages are tremendous. The Clearinghouse completed over 250 verifications for the University of Toledo during their second month of DegreeVerify use. Including their enrollment verifications, which the Clearinghouse also manages, the University of Toledo is saving up to 25 phone calls a day that used to interrupt the staff. As a new user of DegreeVerify, Joe DeCristoforo, registrar at the University of Toledo, has high hopes for the service. He cites, among other things, DegreeVerify's on-line research capabilities as one of the more popular elements of the program among their staff members.

"Sometimes the request for information is for a degree period that predates the school's electronic file. The on-line verification research capabilities relieve our staff of paperwork and wasted time by enabling us to input archived degree data directly to the Clearinghouse web site," says Joe DeCristoforo.

For Michigan State, the single most important benefit was the fact that DegreeVerify helped their office shift resources to provide enhanced services in other areas. "The overall reduction in the number of verifications in our office have allowed us to concentrate energies on interaction and direct contact with students, faculty, and parents," said Dugald McMillan. "The ability to improve the area of in-person customer service, as opposed to being overwhelmed with verification paperwork and phone calls, is something the Registrar's Office at Michigan State values immensely."

The Clearinghouse welcomes the opportunity to visit your campus directly and provide registrars and their staff with a live demonstration of the DegreeVerify program. To learn more or to schedule a visit, please contact the Clearinghouse at 703.742.7791.

EnrollmentSearchSM and Financial Aid; Cohorts in Success.

Overstated institutional cohort default rates and loan deferment tracking can be sore points for the financial aid administrator (FAA). Fortunately, EnrollmentSearch is proving to be an outstanding program to assist FAA's in their daily operations.

Greg Nelson, manager of student loans for Creighton University, uses EnrollmentSearch to track the subsequent enrollment of Perkins and institutional loan borrowers. Nelson likes the service primarily because it provides a "stream-lined approach" to the deferment process, and averts defaults. "I don't have to mail the deferment form to the students," said Nelson. "I can obtain a deferment instantly, lower my costs and reduce the time spent sending out forms, which reduces delinquencies."

Typically, a Perkins loan borrower who has transferred needs to have a deferment manually certified by their new institution. Using EnrollmentSearch, the financial aid office can simply query the Clearinghouse web site for a student's current enrollment information. No forms, no hassles. Queries of this nature are becoming more popular, as EnrollmentSearch achieved a record high of over 10,000 web "hits" in the month of February alone.

Often schools are faced with the potential of losing federal or state funding based on how many students have defaulted on loans issued by that school. However, it is not uncommon to find that these default records have been improperly coded. For example, the school may not be aware that the stu-

dent isn't paying on the loan because he or she is enrolled elsewhere. EnrollmentSearch is the only database service available that enables financial aid professionals to clarify or reclassify cohort default rates. Betty Long, loan collections supervisor at the University of Detroit, uses EnrollmentSearch regularly to correct student loan default records. "I've taken at least 15 students out of my cohort based on EnrollmentSearch web look ups. This service helps my university maintain the cohort and, at the same time, helps the student borrower by keeping their credit report positive and up-to-date."

To learn more about this service, please visit the Clearinghouse at the NASFAA conference in Nashville at booth #618, or contact us at 703.742.7791.



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