

VSA posts at-a-glance college profiles online

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1301/vsa-posts-at-a-glance-college-profiles-online/>

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and almost 200 other higher education institutions across the country have launched a new online tool that provides practical, relevant information to assist prospective students and parents in selecting a college or university.

An early adopter of the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), UW Oshkosh published its College Portrait, a Web-based report that presents key institutional information and statistics through a consistent, comparable and transparent template more than four months ago, leading the nation in the official unveiling of the project on Sept. 29, 2008.

The College Portrait (www.collegeportraits.org) includes descriptive data about the university, its programs and the characteristics of its students; a tool for students to calculate their estimated cost of attendance; a measure of post graduation plans; and indicators of the engagement exhibited by the campus's students in several strategic areas. Future updates will include various success measures for undergraduates, such as graduate rates and continued enrollment of students who transfer into other universities, and direct learning outcome measurement of the value added by the university to undergraduates in the areas of critical thinking, analytic reasoning and written communication ability.

“With the launching of the new College Portrait Web site, prospective students will have easy access to a trustworthy source of reliable and comparable information about nearly 200 public colleges and universities presented in a common, user-friendly format,” said Christine Keller, executive director of VSA. “The variety of information in the College Portrait allows each student to pick an institution that is a good match for him or her based on individual preferences, interests or abilities.”

The VSA is a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), funded by a grant from the Lumina Foundation. All 13 four-year universities in the UW System have created College Portraits. VSA was designed to improve public understanding of how public colleges and universities operate.

“Defining ‘quality education’ is critical for the University of Wisconsin System to benchmark educational quality for the future,” said UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard H. Wells, who chaired one of three task forces that developed the College Portrait template. “The VSA College Portrait is an important step toward improving the transparency of data among public colleges and universities, and UW Oshkosh is proud to be a leader in this endeavor.”

More than 80 higher education leaders from 70 public colleges and universities contributed to the development of the VSA program and the College Portrait template. The collaborative effort represents more than 500 public institutions that enroll 7.5 million students and award 70 percent of bachelor's degrees in the U.S. each year. To date, more than 300 universities have registered to be a part of the

College Portrait project.

“College Portrait will be an effective tool for campuses to improve higher education at every level,” Wells said. “We all need to be held accountable for making the quality of our students’ learning experience as high as it can be.”

- **UW Oshkosh College Portrait** — www.uwosh.edu/chancellor/systemofaccountability/UWOCollegeProfile.pdf
- **VSA Participants** — www.voluntarysystem.org/index.cfm?page=templates