April 12, 2005

Michael Sessa
Executive Director
Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council
One DuPont Circle – Suite 520
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Michael,

I am pleased to submit this letter that NCHELP, on behalf of the Meteor Advisory Team intends to work collaboratively with the higher education community to develop the following standard:
Common Record: Student Aid Inquiry.

This collaboration would result in the development an XML standard to be used to allow organizations the ability to respond to any type of student aid inquiry. The standard would be built on the existing PESC Core Components and would include application, origination, disbursement, repayment, default and any other related student aid data that the participants would require.

Please see the attached Business Case which includes a historical overview, justification, and a description of the planned collaboration.

The Meteor Advisory Team looks forward to working with the community to develop this standard. We believe that this is the next step for the Financial Aid Community in our move toward implementation of XML standards. If you have any questions, please contact Tim Cameron, Meteor Project Manager at meteor@nchelp.org or Judy Martin, AVP Technology Operations, at jmartin@nchelp.org.

Sincerely,

Brett E. Lief
President
National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs, Inc.

cc: Mark Putman, AVP Technology Relations
The Financial Aid community has realized the necessity of providing real-time inquiry access to student aid data. At the time the Meteor Project was started, an industry XML standard was just starting to emerge and Meteor used the standard as it existed at that time. Although collaboratively developed, the XML standard for real-time inquiry of student aid data as used by Meteor is not a fully accepted industry standard. It would be beneficial to the financial aid community to collaboratively develop a student aid data inquiry XML standard.

Currently, student aid data is exchanged in a variety of proprietary formats. These include both XML and flat files. Some of the current processes include Meteor, NSLDS, ELMNet, and other proprietary processes implemented between business partners. It is costly for organizations who participate in several of these processes to maintain each of these proprietary formats. By developing a student aid data inquiry XML standard, organizations will have the ability to leverage the development of common modules to support multiple processes. These types of standards also allow organizations to implement changes more efficiently and cost effectively.

The Meteor Advisory Team anticipates that this new standard would be developed as follows:

- PESC would assist with community notification of the project to ensure wide community support and participation. This participation could include FSA, software vendors, schools, guarantors, lenders, loan servicers and other interested parties. The interested parties will determine what the business needs are and what schemas should be developed.
- Co-chairs will be selected from the group of interested community participants. The co-chairs will be responsible for scheduling the conference calls, laying out the project plan, following the project plan, and providing written reports to the PESC Standards Forum Steering Committee.
- All interested parties will work together to identify the necessary data elements and negotiate the definitions and facets of each of the components.
- Once the components are identified, they will be reviewed to determine if the components exist in the XML Registry and Repository for the Education Community. If the components exist, they will be reviewed to ensure that the purpose and usage is consistent with the current component. If the components do not exist or the purpose or usage is not consistent, then the community workgroup will recommend the definition of a new component.
- Once that phase is completed, the components will be submitted to the PESC Submission Advisory Board for review and approval. The PESC Submission Advisory Board will then submit the components to the PESC Change Control Board for review and approval.
- After the submission is approved, technical representatives from the community will build the schema.
- The schema will be submitted to the PESC Submission Advisory Board for review and approval. The PESC Submission Advisory Board will then submit the components to the PESC Change Control Board for review and approval.
- After the schema is approved, the new schema will undergo a 30-day community comment period. Community comments will be reviewed and changes made as necessary.
- Following the community review, the PESC membership will vote to accept the new standard.
- If the PESC membership votes to accept the new standard, then the PESC Board of Directors will ratify the vote and release the necessary related documentation.