



# Improving Measurement of Productivity in Higher Education

*Panel on Measuring Higher Education Productivity: Conceptual Framework and Data Needs, Committee on National Statistics, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council*

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Higher education is a linchpin of the American economy and society: teaching and research at colleges and universities contribute significantly to the nation's economic activity, both directly and through their impact on future growth; federal and state governments support teaching and research with billions of taxpayers' dollars; and individuals, communities, and the nation gain from the learning and innovation that occur in higher education.

In the current environment of increasing tuition and shrinking public funds, a sense of urgency has emerged to better track the performance of colleges and universities in the hope that their costs can be contained without compromising quality or accessibility. *Improving Measurement of Productivity in Higher Education* presents an analytically well-defined concept of productivity in higher education and recommends empirically valid and operationally practical guidelines for measuring it. In addition to its obvious policy and research value, improved measures of productivity may generate insights that potentially lead to enhanced departmental, institutional, or system educational processes.

*Improving Measurement of Productivity in Higher Education* constructs valid productivity measures to supplement the body of information used to guide resource allocation decisions at the system, state, and national levels and to assist policymakers who must assess investments in higher education against other compelling demands on scarce resources. By portraying the productive process in detail, this report will allow stakeholders to better understand the complexities of--and potential approaches to--measuring institution, system and national-level performance in higher education.

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