

# NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE®

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## **Enhanced Meteor® Version 4.0 Offers Secure, Simplified Access to Financial Aid Information**

Herndon, Virginia, March 6, 2012 – The National Student Clearinghouse® today announced the release of Meteor® Version 4.0. Meteor connects students and financial aid professionals to real-time financial aid data. Information is comprehensive and easy-to-understand, helping students to manage their student loan debt while in school and navigate the repayment process after they graduate. The Clearinghouse acquired the Meteor Network in February 2011.

The loan information available through Meteor includes outstanding federal loans, in addition to billions of dollars in private student loans. Students and authorized financial aid professionals that use Meteor are presented with an aggregated view of the student's financial aid obligation, including a summary of the student's loans and detailed information on awards and repayments.

Secure online access to Meteor is available at no cost to students through the Clearinghouse Student Self-Service and to institutions through StudentTracker<sup>SM</sup>. State agencies, guarantors, and other student loan providers can also offer their borrowers free access to Meteor through their Web sites.

This new release of Meteor has been developed for flexibility, and is designed with growth in mind.

- **New Functionality:** Meteor v4.0 now enables data providers to include links to their online payment, deferment, and forbearance processing services allowing students greater flexibility to realize the successful repayment of their loans.
- **New Data Elements:** Several new data elements were designed to enhance the school and student's experience, enabling access providers to offer more data to the student, as well as allowing for new and enhanced services in the future.
- **Revised User Interface:** Logo and color schemes were updated. Significant improvements were made to the navigation and organization of the screens utilizing design elements that streamline the experience for managing loans.
- **Built for Growth:** Meteor v4.0 is designed with future growth in mind. A new translation layer builds in the ability to make modifications to data messaging tools. This allows data elements to be added in the future without requiring providers to upgrade to the most current version.
- **Increased Web Services Security:** Secure authentication is a paramount requirement in order to provide Meteor users with access to protected resources at a service provider. Federation authentication, when a user's single authentication credential is trusted across multiple IT systems/organizations, is the dominant movement in identity management today, and has been employed by Meteor since its inception 2000. Federation authentication is a relatively new protocol to establish identity trust between disparate systems. Federations have seen significant success, gaining momentum in financial services, higher education, government, and other

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industry segments. Meteor v4.0 uses SAML 2.0, a building block of federated identity, and the standard for exchanging authentication and authorization between security domains. SOAP, a protocol specification for exchanging structured information, is also used. These protocols allow multiple systems to exchange data securely, providing data confidentially and integrity.

“Meteor v4.0 is easy to use and very secure. These important upgrades will give students, higher education institutions, financial aid professionals, and student loan providers a much simpler experience in managing their loans,” stated Roberta Hyland, Assistant Vice President of Financial Aid Services. “This tool is one more way in which the Clearinghouse serves the higher education community efficiently and effectively.”

For more information on Meteor v4.0, please visit [www.MeteorNetwork.org](http://www.MeteorNetwork.org).

## **About the National Student Clearinghouse**

The National Student Clearinghouse (a non-profit formed in 1993) is the unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verifications. The Clearinghouse serves as a single point of contact for the collection and timely exchange of accurate and comprehensive enrollment, degree and certificate records on behalf of its more than 3,300 participating higher education institutions, which represent 96% of all students in public and private U.S. institutions. The Clearinghouse also provides thousands of high schools and districts with continuing collegiate enrollment, progression, and completion statistics on their alumni.

Through its verification and reporting services, the Clearinghouse saves the education community cumulatively nearly four hundred million dollars annually. Most Clearinghouse services are provided to colleges and universities at little or no charge, including enhanced transcript and research services, enabling institutions to redistribute limited staff and budget resources to more important student service efforts. Clearinghouse services are designed to facilitate an institution’s compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, The Higher Education Act, and other applicable laws.

In addition, the Clearinghouse provides accurate, timely enrollment and degree verifications to student loan providers, employers, student credit issuers, the U.S. Department of Education, and others who access its registry more than half a billion times annually.

For more information, visit [www.studentclearinghouse.org](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org).

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