

# Defining and Supporting Rural-Serving Institutions in State and Federal Policy

2021 SHEEO Policy Conference

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# Session Overview

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Project Background

Overview of RSI Metric & Methods

Map Tool & Other Deliverables

Uses in State & Federal Policy

Discussion & Questions



# Project Background

# What Does it Mean To Be An RSI?



Facilitate postsecondary access to rural communities



Offer academic degrees and other programming that meet the unique needs of rural communities

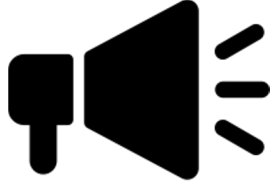


Serve as an anchor institution for rural communities

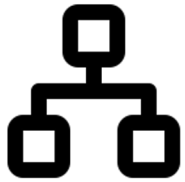
# Why We Need to Define RSIs



Facilitate and encourage research on RSIs



Advocate for policy and funding in support of the special RSI mission



Enhance the ability of institutions to do “true” peer comparisons



Measure contributions of RSIs to their students and communities

# What Do We Know about RSIs?

- Employ large numbers of people from the region and hold significant purchasing power
- Often possess a regional-service mission and have influence in the community
- Generate jobs, business opportunities, and human, social, and cultural capital for their regions
- Play an important role in shaping the self-identity of the residents living in or near campus
- Consistently among the lowest-funded institutions

# Overview of RSI Metric & Methods

# Moving from Definition to Metric

## Our approach:

- Rural-located vs. rural-serving
- Servingness should include rural-specific aspects
- Checklist + indicator vs. Index score metric

## Our limitations:

- Challenges in using a strict, enrollment-based approach
- There is no one perfect or widely agreed-upon definition of “rural”
- Data do not allow us to assess the *quality* of rural-serving



# RSI Metric: Measuring Place

A more-nuanced way to measure place

- Counties vs. County clusters
- Multiple measures
- Population and urban adjacency

## Measures

- Population size
- Rural population percentages for counties and clusters
- Non-adjacent to urban area

# RSI Metric: Measuring Place

## Two Key Data Sources: USDA & Census

### USDA ERS - RUCC Codes

- County Level, Ordinal, 1-9
- Two components
  - Size, six ordinal categories
  - Adjacency to a metro (recoded for our purposes)

### Census - Rural Population within Counties

- Captures within-county variation
- Percent of county population that is rural
- Average percent of surrounding counties that is rural

# RSI Metric: Mission/Curriculum

## Rural-specific aspects of servingness

- Credentials produced in fields of unique rural importance
- Identified through existing literature and data analysis

## Measure

- Percent of an institution's total credentials (degrees and certificates) conferred in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Parks & Recreation
- Data Source: IPEDS completions by two-digit CIP codes

# RSI Metric

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## Rural-specific aspects of servingness

- Credentials produced in fields of unique rural importance (Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Parks & Recreation)

## Index score instead of an indicator

- Better reflects the complexity of rurality and rural-servingness
- Institutions scoring above the mean are classified as RSIs

# RSI Metric: Factor Score

## Index Score Instead of Indicator

- Offers more flexibility and inclusivity
- Allows for users to adapt it for their purpose
- Institutions are scored relative to each other ( $> \text{mean} = \text{RSI}$ )

## Factor Score

- Mean: 0
- Standard Deviation: 1
- Median: -.23
- Minimum: -1.03 (CUNY College of Technology)
- Maximum: 3.13 (Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture)
- Final release will re-scale to a minimum of zero.

# RSI Metric: Example

	Appalachian State	UNC Wilmington
● County Rurality / Size	4 (of 6)	2
● Adjacent to a Metro Area	No	Yes
● % Rural in County	55%	2%
● Avg % Rural in Adj Counties	70%	38%
● % Awards in Designated Fields	9%	6%
● RSI Metric Score	1.55	-0.29

# RSI Metric

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Our RSI list includes:

- 1,230 total institutions
- 478 public two-year (56.7% of sector)
- 9 private two-year (36% of sector)
- 374 public four-year (51.2% of sector)
- 369 private four-year (37.4% of sector)

# RSI Metric: What Isn't in There

Direct measure of rural students attendance

- Not available at the institutional level
- Other data sources offer evidence that supports our approach (NPSAS data)

Measures often discussed in conversations about rural that are not unique to rural areas

- Low-income students, Adult students, etc
- Economic Impact
- Degrees in other fields (especially Education and Health)



# Map Tool & Other Deliverables

# RSI Map Tool Walkthrough

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[Map link](#)

# Other Project Deliverables

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In addition to the map, we plan to release the following:

- Complete data files
- Comprehensive data documentation
- Research briefs using the RSI list
- Instructional videos
- Webinars
- Podcasts, op-eds, and other media engagements
- Spanish-language initiative



# Uses in State & Federal Policy

# State Policy Uses

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Not all states are equally rural.

- Metric allows for customization to specific state contexts
- Identifying non-rural institutions that are still RSIs

Examine state funding policy impacts on in-state RSIs

- Performance funding formulas
- Capital appropriations
- Targeted investment in certain academic programs

# State Policy Uses

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Lens for examining system organizational changes

- Mergers/closures that disproportionately impact RSIs

Identifying broader policy & infrastructure constraints for RSIs

- Rural broadband access
- Driving distance to RSI campuses

# Federal Policy Uses

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## Dedicated education funding streams to RSIs

- Part Q of the HEA: Rural Development Grants
- Grants to address rural teacher shortages

## Non-education funding streams that can benefit RSIs

- USDA facilities grants
- HHS grants to address rural shortages in health professions
- Funding for campuses that support communities in natural disasters

# Federal Policy Uses

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Adoption of an RSI metric/designation to support research

- IES/IPEDS
- Directing research grants to RSIs to build capacity and provide student opportunity




# Discussion and Questions




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# RSI Metric: What Came Before

## Existing Literature and Norms for Measuring Rural

- Defining the Concept of Rural
  - Demography or geography in which a population of interest resides in an area defined as rural

## Past Conceptual and Empirical Operationalization

- **Population Density**
  - Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (more information to follow)
- **Distance from Metro**
- **Residual**
- **High School**
  - Related to population density
- **Identity**

# RSI Metric: Measuring Place

## RUCC

## Description

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more             |
| 2 | Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population          |
| 3 | Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population            |
| 4 | Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area        |
| 5 | Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area    |
| 6 | Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area       |
| 7 | Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area   |
| 8 | Completely rural or < 2,500 urban pop, adjacent to a metro area     |
| 9 | Completely rural or < 2,500 urban pop, not adjacent to a metro area |

# RSI Metric: Measuring Place

<u>RUCC</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Adjacency</u>
1	Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more	Yes
2	Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population	Yes
3	Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population	Yes
4	Urban population of 20,000 or more, <u>adjacent</u> to a metro area	Yes
5	Urban population of 20,000 or more, <u>not adjacent</u> to a metro area	No
6	Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, <u>adjacent</u> to a metro area	Yes
7	Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, <u>not adjacent</u> to a metro area	No
8	Completely rural or < 2,500 urban pop, <u>adjacent</u> to a metro area	Yes
9	Completely rural or < 2,500 urban pop, <u>not adjacent</u> to a metro area	No