

**Attention: Information No Longer Current  
(Alert archived November 2011)**

## Alert #26

**Title: IPEDS Student Unit Record Data Feasibility Study**

**Prepared: October 2004**

**Type: Forthcoming Technical Review Panel Meetings**

The AIR Higher Education Data Policy Committee recommends that you share copies of this Alert with the individuals at your institution who are responsible for information technology, student records, financial aid, IRS reporting, general counsel, and completion of the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey and student data surveys, including enrollment, completions, graduation rates, retention, student financial aid, and price of attendance.

### Summary

HigherEd.org, a contractor to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), is holding a series of Technical Review Panel (TRP) meetings about its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Student Unit Record Feasibility Study. The series of TRP meetings are intended to get feedback and suggestions for the study. NCES is supporting the conduct of a feasibility study about the possibility of redesigning the IPEDS collection of student-related data to incorporate individual, student unit records.

**October 28-29** - TRP for States and Systems

**November 3-4** - TRP for Institutions

**November 9-10** - TRP for Associations, Interested Groups, and other Stakeholders

Invitations to sponsored participants to each of the three TRPs will be issued shortly. Although the project budget does not allow the contractor to pay travel costs for everyone who would like to participate, other interested parties may attend these open meetings at their own expense. The first two TRPs will be held at the Hyatt Arlington near Washington, D.C., and the location of the third will be announced shortly. Space is limited, so please indicate your desire to attend by contacting HigherEd.org at [ipeds@highered.org](mailto:ipeds@highered.org) or (540) 722-6060.

### Current Status

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The NCES is considering the possibility of redesigning IPEDS to collect IPEDS student data through individual student unit records, in place of the current institutional aggregate reports (enrollment, completions, graduation rates, and student financial aid). That is, if implemented, the IPEDS unit record collection system would completely replace the submission of institution-level data for the enrollment, completions, graduation rates, and student financial aid components; and it would replace parts of the institutional characteristics component related to price of attendance. NCES would use the unit record data to generate the existing IPEDS institutional data that make up the Peer Analysis System and the IPEDS College Opportunities OnLine Website (IPEDS COOL). Collecting unit records would allow for more information about graduation rates and other policy variables. The redesigned IPEDS offers the potential of providing aggregate reports on transfers across states or sectors, as well as more detailed data on retention. It has been suggested that it could reduce institutional burden by using the data to generate the 1098-T tax forms required by the IRS.

The feasibility study is examining all issues related to this proposal, including, but not limited to privacy, reporting burden, technical capabilities, the coordination of reporting for institutions, timing/census dates, costs (out of pocket and personnel), and implementation.

## **Implications for Institutions**

Providing input and suggestions for the feasibility study is important, since a move to student unit record system has a number of ramifications for institutions. At many campuses, information technology systems would need to be changed to provide for integrating student data across institutional units and for producing the records in the required format for submission to NCES. Concerns also may arise about data reliability if aggregate reports produced by the institution for internal and external purposes, such as governing boards, accreditation agencies, unions, bond agencies, state governmental agencies, and college guidebook surveys, do not match the data published by NCES (since NCES would still perturb data in small cells). Ways to check the accuracy of the unit-record data and/or compare IPEDS summaries with institutional reporting would need to be developed. The institutional burden in preparation for the first year of implementation would be significant. Privacy notifications to students may have to be updated. Timing of the release of IPEDS reports may also prove to be an issue. Institutions that do not currently submit these data to state agencies will want to consider the implications of state agencies wanting to obtain copies of student unit record data.

## **Timeline**

### TRP meetings

**October 28-29, 2004** - State-level TRP

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**November 3-4, 2004** - Institutional level TRP

**November 9-10, 2004** - Associations, interested groups, and other stakeholders TRP

**Additional Resources**

Contact HigherEd.org at [ipeds@highered.org](mailto:ipeds@highered.org) or 540-722-6060 to indicate interest in attending any of the TRPs.

Comprehensive information about the IPEDS Data Collection System, the Peer Analysis System, and IPEDS COOL: <http://www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds>

Coordinated by the Higher Education Data Policy Committee. All opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Association for Institutional Research.

Information Not Current