

# **Institutional Characteristics (IC)**

## **First-time Students**

### **Tutorial Script**

## **2024-25 Data Collection**

On behalf of the Institute of Education Sciences, IES, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to this tutorial on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Institutional Characteristics survey, also called IPEDS IC. The purpose of this tutorial is to define first-time student for IPEDS reporting purposes and identify survey components where data are collected for this student demographic.

After completing this tutorial, you will be able to:

- Define first-time student for IPEDS reporting purposes;
- Discuss why IPEDS collects data for this student group; and
- List the survey components where data are collected on first-time students.

For IPEDS reporting purposes, a first-time student is defined as:

“A student who has no prior postsecondary education experience (with exceptions) attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. This includes students enrolled in academic or occupational programs. It also includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer session, and students who entered with advanced standing (college credits or recognized postsecondary credential earned before graduation from high school)”.

On the other hand, students enrolled in secondary school, or pursuing a high school diploma or recognized equivalent and taking postsecondary college-level courses at the same time are not first-time students for IPEDS reporting purposes. These students, which include home-schooled students, are not first-time postsecondary students because they have not earned a high school diploma or recognized equivalent. They are non-degree/certificate students for IPEDS reporting purposes. However, they are considered first-time students if they enroll after earning a high-school diploma or other recognized equivalent. Please review the IPEDS Survey instructions and Q&As carefully for information on reporting students taking courses at the secondary level who transition to postsecondary degree/certificate seeking students.

A student who has prior postsecondary experience before attending an IPEDS reporting institution is also not a first-time student for IPEDS reporting purposes. They are non-first-time students for IPEDS reporting purposes. An example of non-first-time students include students who transfer-in from another postsecondary institution—also called non-first-time entering enrollments in the Fall Enrollment (EF), 12-month Enrollment (E12) and Outcomes Measures (OM) survey components.

Data on first-time, degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students is collected in multiple

IPEDS survey components. Information reported on the Institutional Characteristics survey component is used to determine survey questions an institution must answer in other survey components.

Data collected on first-time students is published on College Navigator and other College Affordability and Transparency Centers. For example, selection considerations, test scores, acceptance rates, and admission yields for first-time undergraduates are collected on the Admissions, or ADM, survey component for selective institutions—institutions without open admissions policies for most students.

Attendance status, enrollment level, and retention rates are collected annually on the Fall Enrollment, or EF, survey component. Residency and high school graduation status are collected in even years.

Institutions with first-time, full-time degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students report cost of attendance data on the Cost survey component. Financial aid awards for first-time, full-time degree or certificate seeking undergraduate students are collected on the Student Financial Aid, or SFA, survey component. These data items are combined to calculate the average net price published on College Navigator.

Data reported in Fall Enrollment Survey component is also used to determine the Graduation Rate, or GR, Survey cohort for the corresponding year. Lastly, first-time student attendance level is one of several attendance levels used to complete the Outcome Measures, or OM, survey.

This concludes this tutorial on Institutional Characteristics – First-Time Students. This tutorial:

- Defined *first-time student* for IPEDS reporting purposes;
- Explained why IPEDS collects data for this student group; and
- Identified the IPEDS survey components where first-time student data are collected and used.

If you have questions about reporting your institution's data to IPEDS or the IPEDS Data Collection System, contact the IPEDS Data Collection Help Desk at (877) 225-2568 or send an email to Help Desk staff at [ipedshelp@rti.org](mailto:ipedshelp@rti.org). For assistance using IPEDS data tools, contact the IPEDS Data Use Help Desk at (866) 558-0658 or [ipedstools@rti.org](mailto:ipedstools@rti.org).

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