



Association for Institutional Research



*A project to improve the Integrated Postsecondary
Education Data System*

*Supported by National Center for Education
Statistics*



AIR/NCES Postdoctoral Policy Fellowships 2009-2010



Deadline for Proposals: April 17, 2009

Overview

The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) announces the 2009 Postdoctoral Policy Fellowship Program funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Postdoctoral Fellows will propose and conduct a research project that results in improvements to the quality, comparability, and usefulness of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

From July 2009 to May 2010, Fellows will work on their research projects in residence at the NCES office located in Washington, D.C. or the AIR office in Tallahassee, FL. In addition to conducting the research project, Fellows will be introduced to the higher education policy community through meetings, seminars, and networking opportunities to make the Fellowship a career building experience.

Topics

Applicants can choose to focus their projects on the following list of three research topics of interest to NCES:

- 1. Revisions to IPEDS Data** — IPEDS offers several ways for institutions to revise previously reported data. For instance, in the Graduation Rates Survey (GRS), data reporters are able to revise the number in the GRS cohort originally reported in the Fall Enrollment Survey. IPEDS also maintains a prior year revision data collection system that allows data providers to revise the data they reported in the previous data collection year.

In September 2005, NCES released a study that assessed IPEDS data quality by comparing information originally collected from institutions in 2002–03 and modified information collected by the prior year data revision system in 2003–04. NCES will soon release another study that examines data quality of the Graduation Rates Survey, including issues regarding revising the

original cohort. This project would build on these two studies by identifying revisions to data in recent data collections, by different institutional types; investigating why institutions revise their data; and discussing the potential implications for data quality these revisions have.

- 2. Differential Tuition Practices** — IPEDS currently collects data for a single published tuition and fee rate for first-time, full-time freshmen, and an average tuition rate for all full-time students. However, with increasing frequency, postsecondary institutions are charging students differing tuition and fee amounts dependent on program of study or other factors.

This research project would explore how prevalent differential tuition practices are at institutions, study the policies behind the practice, and help NCES better understand how these practices affect the tuition data currently collected in IPEDS, including how well that data represents what different students at institutions are charged.

- 3. Developing a Topical Research Database** – IPEDS is a complex database with many years of data, hundreds of variables, and a changing set of institutions. Recently, a project known as the Delta Cost Project used a subset of IPEDS data to develop a focused research database that allows for the examination of trends in postsecondary education, particularly in the area of college costs. To accomplish this task, the Delta Cost Project “organized data on operating spending and revenues into aggregate measures of costs per student and costs per degree/certificate produced, organized into Carnegie classifications separating public and private nonprofit institutions.”

This project would be a similar endeavor. The Fellow would select a research topic of

national significance, identify a subset of variables from IPEDS and potentially other data sources that are relevant to studying this topic, and develop a database that could be used to study trends in this research area.

OR, applicants can choose to design a project

- 4. A Topic of the Applicant's Choosing –** Applicants can offer their own research project that will contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the procedures for IPEDS data collection, data retrieval, and reporting on postsecondary institutions. The project may also aim to improve the descriptive power and accuracy of the IPEDS data collection, or expand the utility of the data once collected.
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Work and Compensation

It is expected that the Fellow will be onsite 2-3 days per week and working independently on the research project at other times. Only limited teaching, consulting and other paid work may be undertaken concurrently and may not interfere with work on the project.

Fellows receive up to \$65,000 in compensation. In addition, up to \$5,000 is provided for research related expenses and travel. Please note that benefits are not provided and the responsibility for reporting income and paying taxes rests on the Fellow.

Who Can Apply

Applications will be accepted from:

- 1) Recent doctoral recipients and/or early career researchers (postdoctoral);
- 2) Institutional research professionals on leave from a campus-based position (postdoctoral);
- 3) Doctoral candidates who have completed all course work, passed their comprehensive exam, and begun writing their dissertation; a

How to Apply

letter of support from their dissertation committee chair will be required.

Fellows must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Applications must be submitted electronically, as a Microsoft Word or PDF e-mail attachment to nmurray@airweb.org by midnight April 17, 2009. Please type POSTDOCTORAL POLICY FELLOW APPLICATION in the subject line of your e-mail. An e-mail notification will be returned within two workdays of receipt of the proposal. If the application is not acknowledged within two workdays, please contact the AIR office at (850) 385-4155 x200.

A complete application consists of:

- a cover letter detailing the applicant's relevant skills, and education, and how the work fits the Fellow's interests and anticipated career path,
- a curriculum vita or resume,
- electronic copies of up to two work samples (articles, papers, etc.),
- the names and contact information of three professional references,
- a brief summary (3-4 pages) of a proposed research approach/plan for studying one of the research topics

Applicants are encouraged to discuss the Fellowship expectations and the proposed research project with AIR staff before submitting a final application.

Interviews of Selected Candidates

Finalists will be interviewed May 14 and 15, 2009 in Washington, D.C. Travel expenses will be provided by AIR. Up to two Fellows will be selected by May 30, 2009 and are expected to begin the Fellowship by mid-July, 2009.

Questions and Additional Information

For additional information, see www.airweb.org/postdoc.html or contact the AIR Office at nmurray@airweb.org or (850) 385-4155 x200.