On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to this tutorial on the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey component, also called IC.

The IC component collects descriptive information about the institution including admissions, student services, and pricing information. The Institutional Characteristics component is part of the fall collection of IPEDS surveys, which opens in early September.

Data entry must be completed and considered final by the end of the collection period, in mid-October, when the keyholder locks their data. IPEDS coordinators have an additional two weeks to review the data and lock the survey component.

Data collected through the IPEDS surveys provide a basis for postsecondary education analysis and consumer information. Any institution receiving Title IV federal financial aid is required to submit data to IPEDS, including the IC survey component. NCES is required to annually provide the Office of Federal Student Aid, FSA, with a list of Title IV institutions that did not complete their IPEDS surveys. FSA then sends out fine letters and warnings to the non-compliant institutions. Non-compliance can result in warnings and costly fines or even loss of Title IV funding. More information about fines can be found by following the link on the screen to the statutory requirements page.

The pricing information collected in the IC component includes tuition and required fees, room and board charges, books and supplies, and other expenses. This information is used for release on College Navigator, for the multi-year tuition calculator, and in conjunction with Student Financial Aid data to calculate the net price.

For some of the items on IC, context boxes are provided so keyholders may provide text to explain or clarify data entries. For example, an institution may want to provide more data about the disability services it provides.

Notes from the context boxes may be displayed on College Navigator. Much of the basic information about an institution that is displayed on the College Navigator website comes from IC. College Navigator was developed to provide comparable information to the public about postsecondary institutions and is used by students, parents, counselors, researchers and administrators from other institutions, and others.

It is always a good idea to begin the IPEDS reporting cycle early and seek help, when needed, from the IPEDS Help Desk. The knowledgeable Help Desk staff is eager to help. Response time may be longer near the end of the collection cycle.
The Use the Data portal contains frequently asked questions, a link to the glossary, data tip sheets, an archive of survey components, and other relevant information.

This concludes the tutorial for the IC survey component.