



Tuition vs. Price of Attendance Tutorial Script



IC Survey Component 2019-20 Data Collection Cycle

This tutorial explains the difference between tuition and price of attendance, also known as cost of attendance. Tuition is defined as “The amount of money charged to students for instructional services.” Required fees are defined as “Fixed sum charged to students for items not covered by tuition and required of such a large proportion of all students that the student who does not pay the charge is an exception.” Tuition and required fees are only one portion of total cost of attendance, which also includes room and board, books and supplies, and other expenses. Cost of attendance includes the amount of tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and other expenses that a full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking student can expect to pay to go to college for an academic year.

All institutions provide data on tuition and cost of attendance, but academic and program reporters do not submit the same information. In addition, cost of attendance data are used in conjunction with Student Financial Aid data to calculate an institution’s net price.

Academic reporters submit average tuition and required fees data for both full-time and part-time undergraduate and graduate students for an academic year. Academic reporters must also indicate whether they charge differently based on student residence; and, if so, must report the tuition for each residence type. For part-time undergraduate and graduate students, academic reporters report the cost per credit hour. Tuition data for selected Doctor’s-Professional Practice programs, such as medicine and law, are collected separately.

Program reporters, on the other hand, report tuition and required fees for their 6 largest programs for the entire length of each program, and only report in-state tuition and fees.

Program and academic reporters with full-time, first-time undergraduate students report cost of attendance data. Both reporter types must provide data on different living arrangements, as applicable to their institution.

Academic reporters provide cost of attendance data for a full academic year, while program reporters provide these data only for their largest program. The tuition and fees as well as books and supplies are reported for the entire length of the program, while living and other expenses are reported for 4 weeks.

Note that revisions to the Institutional Characteristics price of attendance can only be made in the Student Financial Aid component and not in the prior year revision system.

For more information on the material presented in this tutorial, please contact the IPEDS Help Desk.
