Welcome to this tutorial on online data analysis tools for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, also known as IPEDS. IPEDS is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, and is an annual institution-level data collection system. Once data have been cleaned and processed, they are available to researchers, policy analysts, institutional administrators, and the general public.

NCES has developed a number of useful tools for analyzing and viewing IPEDS data. This tutorial will provide a general overview of several of these tools: College Navigator, the DataLab Tables Library, the Trend Generator, Data Explorer, and three functions of the Data Center: Summary Tables, downloading custom data files, and the IPEDS Data Feedback Report. Additional tutorials are available for each tool, should you want to learn more details about the specifics of each tool.

**College Navigator**

For the general public, and people interested in basic institutional information, College Navigator is the easiest resource for accessing college and university data. In fact, College Navigator was designed for prospective college students, parents, guidance counselors, and other individuals conducting college searches. The online tool has an easy-to-follow user interface and allows visitors to search for specific institutions and narrow a college search by using a variety of filters, including institution location, institution level and control, college admissions test scores, and athletic team offerings.

After selecting an institution, a profile appears with college’s directory information including website, location, types of certificates and degrees offered, and student enrollment. More detailed profile information is available by expanding the profile headers.

**DataLab Tables Library**

The DataLab Tables Library includes a database of over 5,000 tables from NCES’s postsecondary publications. Organized into 12 categories, we can search for tables by keyword, publication title, or perform and advanced search by data source, year, and table release date.

“Explore by Topic” is a quick way to drill-down to a specific set of data. Many of the 12 categories have subcategories, providing us with more detailed information.

**Trend Generator**

The Trend Generator is designed to provide users with a quick and easy means of viewing frequently accessed IPEDS data over time. Data are organized into subject areas, which are expandable on the homepage. Clicking on the major categories will drop down specific questions.
After selecting a question, you will see the answer. The page shows you the trend over time, but you can also choose to view the data as a bar chart or as a table. You may limit the results by variables to only include data from a specific subset of institutions or build a new table to further analyze the data.

**Data Explorer**

The Data Explorer tool is another place where you can access many tables from NCES. When you select this tool, the page offers you the most viewed tables. Click on any of these to access the table, or search for a table you’re interested in. You can also perform a search with specific parameters by selecting the three dots on the right side of the tool bar. You can filter your search by text, survey, collection year, data year and source.

**Data Center**

The Data Center is the most advanced of the tools, but also offers the most options for analyzing data. You can enter the Data Center from multiple links on the Use the Data page. Similar to the other tools, we can look up data on a single institution or multiple institutions. Data can also be trended for a single variable and group statistics can be calculated for a user-defined group of institutions. For example, the average enrollment of first-time, full-time students at public institutions in Pennsylvania with an enrollment over 5,000 students. For now, let’s look at three of the Data Center functions.

First, the Summary Tables function allows us to generate a wide range of pre-formatted reports related to a variety of commonly referenced IPEDS data such as directory information, price and admissions trends, student enrollments and demographics, and completion and graduation rates, for one or more institutions in the IPEDS universe.

A second function is the ability to download survey data as complete data files or custom data files. Once downloaded, the files can be imported into a variety of statistical software packages, including SAS [said “sass”], SPSS, and STATA [said “state- uh”].

Finally, the IPEDS Data Feedback Report, or DFR, is an important report provided to all IPEDS reporting institutions on an annual basis. It is a publicly available document, and each Chief Executive receives a copy of their institution’s report. Several years’ worth of reports are available in the Data Center and you can also create your own custom Data Feedback Report with variables not included in the standard DFR.

For more information, view AIR’s online tutorials for each specific IPEDS data tool. You may also want to view the Help Guide for each tool, which is available for PDF download on this page. Finally, you can contact the IPEDS Data Tools Help Desk with additional questions.