

# Student Financial Aid (SFA) Survey Component Overview Tutorial Script 2020-21 Data Collection Cycle

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

The SFA component is part of the Winter collection of IPEDS surveys, which opens in early December. Data entry must be completed and considered final by the end of the collection period, in mid-February, 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. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional costs, and student financial aid and stipulates, "...institutions will complete surveys conducted as part of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)...in a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the Secretary."

Institutions receiving Title IV funding (student financial aid) must complete the IPEDS surveys. Currently, there are over 6,000 institutions that submit IPEDS surveys, with a number doing so voluntarily. NCES is required to provide a list of noncompliant institutions to the Office of Federal Student Aid. Non-compliance can result in warnings and costly fines, or even loss of Title IV funding. More information about fines can be found on the Statutory Requirements page (<https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/ViewIPEDSStatutoryRequirement.aspx>).

The purpose of the SFA survey component is to collect information about financial aid awarded to various groups of students. Because SFA collects data on military service members and veterans' educational benefits, the component is split into two sections. In Section I, Keyholders will be asked to report data for undergraduate students only. In Section II, Keyholders will report data on military service members and veterans' educational benefits for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Section I asks Keyholders to report data on undergraduate students in four groups:

- Group 1 includes all undergraduate students.
- Group 2, a subset of Group 1, includes all undergraduates who are full-time, first-time degree or

certificate-seeking.

- Groups 3 and 4 are both subsets of Group 2. Group 3 includes students in Group 2 who were awarded grant/scholarship aid from the federal government, state and local government, or the institution.
- Finally, Group 4 includes students in Group 2 who were awarded any Title IV federal student financial aid, including Title IV grants, loans, or work-study.

SFA information is used to determine the average cost of attendance and average institutional net price for students. Average institutional net price is calculated for students who were awarded grant or scholarship aid from government and institutional resources and for students who were awarded any Title IV federal student aid. Net price is defined as the cost of attendance minus grant aid awarded. Net price amounts calculated in SFA are also used to populate the Department's College Affordability and Transparency lists. Therefore, it is critical that data be correct.

There are three types of reporters associated with SFA and the institution's operating calendar determines the reporting period.

Academic reporters operate on standard academic terms, such as a semester, quarter, trimester, 4-1-4, or other academic calendar system. For the SFA survey component, academic reporters:

- Report on undergraduate students who were enrolled as of October 15 or the institution's official fall reporting date; and
- Report on aid awarded any time during their academic year.

Program reporters operate on calendar systems that differ by program, or calendar systems that operate on a continuous or a clock-hour basis. For the SFA survey component, program reporters:

- Report on undergraduate students who were enrolled anytime between July 1 and June 30; and
- Report on aid awarded any time during their institutionally defined academic year, which should fall between July 1 and June 30.

Hybrid reporters enroll students on a continuous basis (like program reporters) but charge term-based cost of attendance for their programs (like academic reporters). For the SFA survey component, hybrid reporters:

- Report on undergraduate students who were enrolled between August 1 and October 31; and
- Report on aid awarded any time during their academic year.

Section II asks Keyholders to report information on military and veterans benefits. Keyholders report the number of students receiving and the total dollar amounts received for Post- 9/11 GI Bill benefits and assistance from the Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program.

For some of the items, context boxes are provided so Keyholders may provide text to explain or clarify data entries. Notes from the context boxes may be displayed on College Navigator. 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.

Information collected in the SFA survey component is posted on College Navigator, where it can be used to help students and families determine the average amounts of grants and loans awarded to students and the average institutional net price at a particular institution.

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. In addition, the IPEDS Report Your Data page contains frequently asked questions, a link to the glossary, data tip sheets, an archive of survey instruments, and other relevant information.

This concludes the tutorial for the SFA survey component.