IPEDS
Use the Data Center
2020-2021 Collection Cycle

On behalf of the Institute for Education Science's National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to the Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS, Use the Data Center tutorial.

After competing this tutorial, you will be able to:

- Navigate from the Use the Data homepage to the IPEDS Data Center;
- Identify the three steps required to compare institutions;
- Select icons to get additional information on steps and variables;
- Use different options and techniques to select and compare institutions; and
- View data analysis results in different formats.

The Data Center is a one-stop shop for retrieving IPEDS data. On the IPEDS website, click on Use the Data to go to the Data Center and begin defining your analysis.

Once on the Use the Data page, you will see NCES has developed several useful resources for analyzing and viewing IPEDS data. We will present one approach here, but you may find different ways to accomplish what you want to do from the Use the Data page.

For this demonstration choose 'Compare Institutions', which will take you into the IPEDS database. We want to keep the default selection for Final Release Data, so click 'Continue'.

This page shows there are three steps in the procedure for comparing individual institutions. In Step One, we select institutions for a comparison group. In Step Two, we select a variable for the report. In Step Three, we get the output. We are beginning with Step One, so it is highlighted here.

The first step is to select a comparison institution and a group of institutions you want to compare or evaluate. Although you do not have to select a comparison institution to retrieve data, you must select one to utilize certain functions.

To do so, click "Add" and enter "Regis." Now select "Search." For our demonstration, we will select Regis University.

Now, we want to create a comparison group. This can be done in several ways and the method you use may vary depending on your data needs and the report you are generating. You can select institutions by typing institution names or Unit IDs one at a time. You can select institutions by group, or by variable. You can also upload a previously saved list.

For this demonstration, we will add the University of Denver, Colorado College, and Boston College.

Enter "University of Denver". As you type, a list of possible matches will appear, when you see the name of institution you wish to add, click the link. Repeat this step with the remaining institutions.

Once you have finished selecting your institutions to compare, click 'Continue.'

The little blue (i) icons are information buttons. Each icon provides information about the associated category or characteristic. For example, the (i) button next to 'Browse/Search Variables' tells us that we can browse the IPEDS variable tree by current year or survey, or search all variables by name or keyword. The second technique 'Choose From My Variables' is only available if you have already selected variables during the current Use the Data session. You can also 'Create Derived Variables' from existing IPEDS survey data or 'upload variables' saved in a previous session.

For our analysis, we want to access enrollment data. We can find enrollment variables in several locations in the variable tree. We want Fall Enrollment since this date provides a snapshot of enrollment in the fall term when first-time, full-time students traditionally enroll. Instead of using the Fall Enrollment branch of the variable tree, we expand 'Frequently Used and Derived Variables.'

This branch is very useful since it contains variables used often, like enrollment data. Expand 'Fall Enrollment and Retention Rates,' and the next level of 'Total, Full, and Part-time Enrollment and Fall FTE.' For Step One, select 'Fall 2018' and 'Fall 2017.' For Step Two, check 'Total Enrollment' to access the total headcount enrollment and 'Full-time equivalent enrollment.' When you are finished selecting variables from the tree, click 'Continue.'

Review the list of "My Variables." You can modify the list using the buttons provided to edit or delete individual variables or all the variables. We want to include all four variables in our report, so click the 'Continue' button to move to Step Three.

To get the report, we must answer four questions. You can either leave the default values selected or change them. The first question asks about institution name and unit ID. Unit IDs can be helpful data to have in your file if you want to link data from other analyses later. For this demonstration, we need institution name only. For the second question, we want the long variable names because the short ones are very cryptic. For the third question, you can select comma-separated format if you want to download the data and work with it using Excel, but we will just view the data on screen. For the fourth question, we do not want to include imputation and status flags.

Click the 'Continue' button to get the report.

Here is a nice, simple report comparing Regis University to three comparison institutions on four variables—total enrollment for 2018, FTE for 2018, total enrollment for 2017, and FTE for 2017.

You can modify your selections using the links provided or return to the Main Menu to explore other options in the Data Center.

This tool is invaluable for comparing statistics and outcomes and sharing information with the campus community.

You can use institutional, IPEDS, or customized comparison groups. For questions, contact the IPEDS Help Desk.

This concludes our IPEDS Compare Institutions demonstration. Please view the other tutorials in this series for additional information on IPEDS data tools.