

High Level Summary of ACTS survey information released as part of the 11/13/2025 [Federal Register Notice](#)

Disclaimer: The information in this document may change as more details become available. Not intended to be official guidance or a substitute for information from the U.S. Department of Education.

Overview & Purpose of ACTS

- Created in response to the Aug. 7, 2025 Executive Action “[Ensuring Transparency in Higher Education Admissions](#).” Following the Executive Action, the Secretary of Education issued a [directive](#) specifying the exact data elements institutions must provide.
- The Executive Action and Secretary’s Directive require data that would allow the Department to examine patterns in admissions related to race, sex, academic credentials, and financial aid.
- ACTS is a new IPEDS Component, not a modification of the existing Admissions component.
- No preview year (unlike other IPEDS survey changes) as the data collection is required to launch within 120 days of the Executive Action.
- No Technical Review Panel reviewed ACTS content. Content defined solely by the Secretary’s directive.

Reporting Institutions

- Approximately 1,660 four-year institutions in 2025-26 - public, private nonprofit, and for-profit institutions. Community colleges and less than 2-year institutions will not be required to report.
- Possible exemption if the institution: 1) admitted 100% of applicants and 2) does not award non-need-based aid.

Approximate Timeline

- To meet the 120-day timeline within the Executive Action issued on August 7, ACTS is slated to launch within the IPEDS Winter Collection cycle. The estimated opening of the data collection will be after December 3, 2025 with a closing date no later than April 15, 2026.

Burden Estimates (ACTS only)

- 2025-26: 200 hours per institution.
- 2026-27: 40 hours per institution (as prior-year data will be carried forward).

Academic Years Included

- The academic years required vary by component but typically includes the academic years 2019-2020 through 2025-2026.

ACTS Data Collection Process

ACTS will use a two-step process: 1) institutions prepare and validate student-level files and 2) submit aggregated results.

Step 1 — Prepare and Validate Student-Level Data (ACTS Aggregator Tool)

Institutions will download student-level templates (one per required year), populate them offline, and upload them to the secure ACTS Aggregator Tool, which will then perform the following actions.

- Check file structure, coding, and completeness
- Calculate required quintiles and summary statistics
- Generate the aggregate data file and a Data Review Report

Institutions will review results, correct any issues, and re-upload files until all years pass validation. No direct student identifiers are submitted; institutions advised to maintain their own crosswalks.

Step 2 — Submit Aggregated Data to IPEDS Data Collection System

Once validated, institutions upload the aggregate files into the IPEDS Data Collection System, which will perform the following actions.

- Edit checks (including comparison with prior IPEDS data)
- Requests for explanations or corrections
- Final quality control review

After all checks are resolved, institutions submit and lock the ACTS component.

ACTS Data Requirements

ACTS requires institutions to submit annual student-level data for undergraduate and graduate applicants, enrollees, and completers. The Aggregator Tool then produces the required disaggregated counts and averages.

A. Undergraduate Data Requirements

Undergraduate reporting covers first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students across the admissions, enrollment, academic progress, financial aid, and completion stages.

1. Admissions (all undergraduate applicants)

- Race/ethnicity and sex
- High school GPA
- SAT/ACT scores
- Family income
- Admissions decision and admissions round (early vs. regular)

2. Enrollment (students who enroll)

- First-time, full-time status
- Pell status and parental college attainment
- Enrollment in remedial or continuing education courses
- Tuition and required fees

3. Academic Progress

- First-year cumulative GPA

4. Financial Aid

- Institutional need-based and non-need-based aid
- Federal, state, and local aid
- Amounts awarded and received

5. Completions (undergraduate completers)

- Final cumulative GPA
- For bachelor's-seeking students: completion within 100% and 150% of normal time (where applicable)

B. Graduate Data Requirements

Graduate reporting parallels undergraduate requirements but includes graduate-specific testing and program classifications.

1. Admissions (all graduate applicants)

- Race/ethnicity and sex
- GRE/LSAT/MCAT scores (as applicable)
- Family income
- Admissions decision

2. Enrollment (students who enroll)

- Degree level (master's, doctoral research, doctoral professional practice, post-bacc certificate)
- Field of study (4-digit CIP code)
- Full-time status
- Tuition and required fees
- Financial aid status

3. Academic Progress

- First-year cumulative GPA

4. Financial Aid

- Institutional, federal, state, and local aid — amounts awarded and received

5. Completions (graduate completers)

- Final cumulative GPA