

**Attention: Information No Longer Current
(Alert archived November 2011)**

Alert #9

Subject: Redesign of IPEDS Surveys

Prepared: October 1998

Summary

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) surveys are slated for major changes by the year 2002. Some changes will be incorporated as early as Fall 1998. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) recently had planned an in-depth re-evaluation of IPEDS forms, but new Congressional mandates and other externally driven changes have accelerated the review schedule. The result is that NCES will implement both externally mandated changes while considering other substantive, definitional, and procedural changes. This redesign is an opportunity to rethink what types of data can best be used to communicate information to policymakers and consumers about cost and price and how these data might relate to other measures. The redesign also provides an opportunity to help institutions in their efforts to collect timely, consistent, and relevant data to analyze their own effectiveness and efficiency in comparison with peer institutions.

NCES undertakes two studies. The first study is sponsored by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) and led by Dr. Roslyn Korb, NCES Program Director. This study was launched in May 1998 with an "umbrella" group to address overall IPEDS policy. Three working groups have emerged to deal with existing IPEDS surveys: finance, costs, and financial aid; faculty and staff; and students. A fourth working group will examine the universe of postsecondary education institutions that should be required submit IPEDS surveys.

The second study, under the direction of Dr. Samuel Peng, Director of Professional Development and Training in the Office of the Commissioner of Education Statistics, is an internal review of NCES postsecondary data collection efforts. This NCES postsecondary redesign team will incorporate the results of the external review overseen by NPEC into a report that will be sent to the Commissioner of Education Statistics for his action.

The redesign of IPEDS will attempt to address the issues below.

- * respond to externally mandated changes and additions to IPEDS surveys
- * identify and propose solutions to problems related to the collection and dissemination of IPEDS data (e.g., Web-based collection and dissemination of data, clarity and completeness of instructions and definitions, validity and comparability of data, other issues related to data

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quality, the timely publication of IPEDS reports, ease of use of reports)

- * consider changing the content of IPEDS surveys (i.e., adding or deleting items and/or surveys and modifying definitions and instructions)

- * increase the utility of IPEDS data for policy makers, decision makers, and researchers and assess whether IPEDS needs to be modified to respond to the changing postsecondary education environment (i.e., consider adding new domains of data to respond to a perceived need for these data)

- * consider how the reporting burden can be kept to a minimum (e.g., through electronic submission of data, judicious timing of survey collection instruments, use of definitions that are consistent with other surveys, coordination of federal and state collection efforts, attempting to time the collection of new data topics so as to ensure that institutions have enough lead time to supply the requested data, and not introducing all of the new items at the same time)

Required Changes. Congress mandated that NCES collect data related to the price of postsecondary education and financial aid for undergraduates, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) created new standards related to the reporting of race and ethnicity, and changes in financial accounting standards are underway.

Student charges and financial aid. The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 include a requirement that the Commissioner of Education Statistics develop a uniform methodology for reporting the cost of postsecondary education. In particular, standard definitions must be developed for tuition and fees, price of attendance (i.e., student expenses), average financial aid by type of assistance (i.e., federal grants, state grants, institutional grants, and loans), and the number of students receiving each of these types of assistance. These four sets of measures relate to undergraduate students only. NCES is planning to use items from the Common Data Set for collecting data on undergraduate expenses and financial aid. The proposed new measures are posted at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/newicitems.html>. Institutions participating in Title IV programs will be asked to provide data on an annual basis for these cost-related measures beginning with the fall 1999 Institutional Characteristics Survey. (See a forthcoming AIR Alert describing the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 and AIR [Alert #1](#) describing the Common Data Set for more information.)

New race and ethnicity codes. The second federal ruling that will impact IPEDS reporting is a new standard issued in October 1997 by the OMB that sets forth new standards for collecting race/ethnicity data from individuals on all federal surveys, which will impact the collection of aggregate data on IPEDS. Currently race/ethnicity is reported using a single-question with five categories of response: black, non-Hispanic; American Indian/Alaskan Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; Hispanic; and white, non-Hispanic (plus race/ethnicity unknown and nonresident alien). The new standards will require that ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino versus non-Hispanic/non-Latino)

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be reported independently from race and that respondents also be instructed to select one or more race classifications from five categories: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, white. Changes in terminology and in definitions of racial categories have also been made. Presently it appears that race/ethnicity data would need to be reported in IPEDS according to the new standards starting in fall 2002, with optional reporting according to these new codes available in 2000. These changes will probably require changes to institutional databases for student and employee data and surveying all students and employees using the new race/ethnicity classifications. NPEC, NCES, and the National Science Foundation (NSF) appointed a separate policy panel to address in detail issues related to these new mandates for race/ethnicity. This group met March 17-18, 1998 and will meet again in spring 1999. (See AIR [Alert #6](#) for more information about these changes.)

New finance form for public institutions. New standards relating to how private institutions report financial data were implemented for the IPEDS forms in 1997. Some of the changes included reporting tuition and fee revenue net of institutional aid, recognizing pledges as income at the time the pledge is made rather than when it is received, and allocating operations, maintenance, and depreciation to functions. The new standards mean that reporting is more complete in certain areas (e.g., depreciation). However, financial reports for private and public institutions are no longer comparable and time series data have been disrupted. It is anticipated that new standards for public institutions will be issued by the Government Accounting Standards Board in 1999, with full implementation required for reporting IPEDS finance data for fiscal year 2002.

Revised CIP codes and other changes. Changes to the CIP codes also will appear on IPEDS forms in 2001, although these will be minimal. Further, an examination of definitions and instructions will be made to ensure they are consistent across IPEDS forms and also with other major non-IPEDS national studies.

Current Status

The three NPEC content-oriented working groups will meet in fall 1998 and spring 1999 to address external mandated changes; examine specific definitions and instructions; and consider possible additions, deletions, and other changes to the IPEDS surveys with which each group is dealing (student, faculty/staff, and finance/cost). The fourth working group, which will make recommendations about which institutions should be included in the universe of IPEDS institutions, also will meet in fall 1998. All four working groups will also consider and provide feedback to NCES relating to some common issues.

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Web-based collection of data. NCES is planning to start collecting data electronically via Web-based forms that would include edit checks, permit customizing survey items to institution type, and allow institutions and states either to input data directly through a Web browser or to export their data. The goal is for Web-based submission software to be available by 2001, with the possibility that the Institutional Characteristics data will be collected via the Web as early as 2000. In response to the amendments to the Higher Education Act, NCES is also planning to establish a Web page for each institution that is eligible for Title IV funding.

The working groups will work with NCES staff to develop an implementation schedule that will attempt to spread out the collection of surveys throughout the year, which may require shifting data among current surveys in order to accommodate the new collection cycle. They will also offer suggestions on how best to communicate information about impending changes to IPEDS.

Possible new items. In addition to the mandated changes mentioned above, some additional topics are being proposed by various sources for inclusion in IPEDS. For example, the working group dealing with the student surveys was asked to consider the issues below which have been developed in response to Congressional interest in providing higher education data by institution to the public.

- * admissions data for entering freshmen classes (e.g., total applications and acceptances, test scores)
- * an unduplicated count of Title IV eligible students enrolled during the financial aid year (July 1-June 30)
- * parents' education
- * time to degree
- * fall-to-fall retention rates for full-time first-time degree seeking undergraduates (from the Common Data Set)
- * educational intent of community college students
- * average starting salaries for graduates, employment rates (and to what extent jobs are in an area related to the field of major)

Some Common Data Set items that relate to issues of quality may be added to this list. Other proposed additions the student working group is considering include information relating to the following areas:

- * non-credit activity
- * use of technology-mediated instruction
- * double majors at time of degree
- * more detail about full-year enrollment
- * preliminary fall headcount by level (due October 1)

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The list of topics for consideration by the finance and faculty/staff working groups is still being developed.

Schedule. The goal is for the NPEC working groups to have draft recommendations for discussion at the April meeting of American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the May meeting of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR). The internal NCES redesign team will use the recommendations from the four NPEC working groups plus input from other NCES-sponsored hearings to produce an interim report in spring 1999 and a final report for the Commissioner of Education Statistics by late summer 1999. The interim report will be available on the Web for comment. It is anticipated that most of the changes to IPEDS forms will be made by the 2002 collection cycle, with some of these changes showing up as early as 1999.

Implications for Institutions

Submission of IPEDS data is one of the requirements for participation in Higher Education Act Title IV (federal student financial aid programs). In addition, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 include a provision for the Secretary of Education to impose a fine of up to \$25,000 per survey on those institutions that do not submit IPEDS surveys in a timely fashion.

NCES Web page tracking institutions that have submitted IPEDS surveys. In response to Congressional concerns about the timeliness of IPEDS data, NCES will establish a Web site listing all institutions submitting (and not submitting) IPEDS surveys, starting with the Institutional Characteristics and Completions surveys in December. The site will be updated as forms come in. Institutions that have not yet submitted their 1998 IPEDS forms or whose states have not yet done so for them should send them in right away if they want to be listed under the "submitted" section of the Web site.

Institutions will be required to report IPEDS data using new forms that will be phased in over the next four years. It is important that institutions monitor proposed changes, provide input into the process, and are prepared to provide the requested data, some of which will be completely new or will require substantial changes in reporting format and may require changes in institutional databases for student, employee, and financial information.

Opportunity to provide input to working groups. The working groups are currently in the process of compiling a master list of proposals and have not made any final recommendations on these issues. They are very interested in hearing from institutions about 1) how difficult it would be for institutions to provide the new data under consideration, 2) what factors relating to collection, analysis, or reporting may affect data quality, 3) whether additional items, particularly those

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related to cost, price, and quality, should be considered, and 4) other suggestions and comments. The working groups are also considering deleting some items and changing definitions and instructions and would like feedback about these proposals as well.

Institutions should take advantage of several opportunities summarized below for input to the IPEDS revision process.

* NCES will be posting a short customer survey about IPEDS at <http://nces.ed.gov/ncesnew.html>

* Each working group will develop a series of questions to guide its work. Web-based forms will allow interested parties to provide feedback relating to issues under consideration (including possible new data items and items being considered for deletion from the forms). Preliminary questions for the working groups focusing on student and financial data are currently posted. Questions for all the working groups will be posted and updated as the groups meet, with notices in the Electronic AIR as the lists are updated.

* AIR and the Florida State University College of Education, with assistance from NCES, are providing an opportunity for institutions to address issues related to the redesign of IPEDS forms at the eighth annual AIR Colloquium. The Colloquium, which also serves as the second of AIR's new series of "Town Meetings on National Data," will be held in Tallahassee, Florida, from January 28-30, 1999. NCES staff and NPEC working group chairs will be present to hear input from participants.

* The interim report of the NCES internal redesign team will be available for comment in spring 1999 at <http://nces.ed.gov/ncesnew.html>.

Timeline (note that current targets for release of IPEDS forms may change)

1966 NCES starts collecting data from institutions of higher education using Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) forms

1981 Review of HEGIS forms initiated

1986 New IPEDS forms introduced to replace HEGIS forms and universe expanded to include all postsecondary institutions

1992 Higher Education Act amended to include statement that institutions must submit IPEDS forms "in a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the Secretary" as a condition for Title IV eligibility

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October 30, 1997 New OMB standards for the classification of federal data on race/ethnicity issued

January 1998 NPEC steering committee approves project to study IPEDS surveys

March 17-18, 1998 NPEC/NCES/NSF Policy Panel on Race/Ethnicity holds first meeting

May 1998 Decision to conduct internal NCES study of higher education surveys

May 27-28, 1998 NPEC umbrella group for IPEDS meets

October 7, 1998 President Clinton signs the Higher Education Act Reauthorization bill, which includes mandates for the collection of price and financial aid data for undergraduates through IPEDS plus a separate study of the costs of higher education for institutions

Fall 1998 First meetings of NPEC working groups dealing with students; finance, costs, and financial aid; faculty and staff; and the IPEDS universe

December 1998 NCES Web site tracking submission of IPEDS surveys by institution

January 28-30, 1999 Seventh AIR Colloquium, Tallahassee, FL

Spring 1999 NPEC/NCES/NSF Policy Panel on Race/Ethnicity holds second meeting

Spring 1999 Second meetings of NPEC working groups

April 1999 Preliminary recommendations of working groups due

April 18-21, 1999 AACRAO meeting, where presentation and discussion of student working group recommendations will occur

May 30-June 2, 1999 AIR Forum, where presentation and discussion of all working group recommendations will occur

August 1999 Recommendations of NCES internal team to be completed

September 1999 Target for inclusion of new data on student charges and financial data on Institutional Characteristics survey

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2000 Target for inclusion of new race/ethnicity categories on IPEDS forms

2000 Target for availability of Web-based software for Institutional Characteristics data

2001 Target for availability of Web-based software for other IPEDS survey data

2001 Target for inclusion of new CIP codes on IPEDS forms

2002 Target for new finance form for public institutions

2003 Mandatory reporting of new race/ethnicity categories

Additional Resources

Summary of this Alert for senior administrators [Alert 9a](#)

NCES customer survey about IPEDS (available by early December 1998)

<http://nces.ed.gov/ncesnew.html>

Questions from NPEC working groups <http://www.fsu.edu/~air/ipedsrev.html>

Interim report of NCES Postsecondary Redesign Team (available spring 1999)

<http://nces.ed.gov/ncesnew.html>

Definitions for price and financial aid for undergraduates, as required by Higher Education Act

<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/newicitems.html>

Information about the AIR Colloquium

Web site tracking submission of IPEDS surveys by institution (available in December, 1998)

<http://nces.ed.gov/ncesnew.html>

Higher Education Amendments of 1998 <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/HEA/sec101C.html>

Policy Panel on Racial/Ethnic Data Collection <http://www.fsu.edu/~air/ipedexec.html> and [Alert 6](#)

IPEDS <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>

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NPEC <http://nces.ed.gov/npec/> and [Alert 3](#)

Common Data Set [Alert 1](#) and <http://www.collegeboard.org/gp/html/commondataset.html>

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