AIR Alert

A briefing on emerging issues in higher education from the
Association for Institutional Research

Alert #9 – Update 5

Revised: July 1, 1999
Subject: Redesign of IPEDS Surveys—Update #5

Prepared: June 1999

Summary

A meeting of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative's IPEDS Redesign Work Group was held on May 17, 1999, to summarize the status of IPEDS redesign and to discuss new proposals under consideration. This Alert Update summarizes several changes and new issues that came up at the meeting.

1) The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has proposed combining the August and October collections and lengthening the data submission periods for the resulting three collections.

2) The group discussed a new proposal for collecting more detailed information for full-year unduplicated headcounts (including a breakdown by level, gender, and race/ethnicity).

3) The Web-based collection, peer analysis, and consumer information systems were demonstrated.

4) The plans for training and support were summarized.

5) The faculty and staff working group proposals were presented and will be summarized in a forthcoming AIR Alert Update once these are finalized.

A final report on recommendations for IPEDS redesign is still planned for August 1999.

Current Status

Collection Schedule. Earlier in the redesign process four collection cycles were proposed: August, October, December, and March. Feedback from institutions indicated some concerns about timing and about collecting data during the summer. As a result, NCES is proposing that the August and October collections be combined (except that the Student Financial Aid section of the Institution Prices and Student Financial Aid [IPSFA] Survey would be shifted from August to March), that the submission "window" for each collection be expanded from the

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current six weeks to more than one-and-a-half months, and that the collection dates be as follows:

- October Collection (Institutional Characteristics [IC]; Completions; Tuition, Fees, and Other Price Information from the IPSFA Survey): September 1 through October 31
- December Collection (Fall Enrollment; Staff; Salaries; Unduplicated 12-Month Headcounts and Instructional Activity from the IC Survey): December 1 through February 7
- March Collection (Finance; Graduation Rate Survey [GRS]; Student Financial Aid data from the IPSFA survey): February 16 through April 5 (with NCAA institutions required by NCAA to submit GRS by March 1)

Proposal to expand detail for unduplicated headcount. It was pointed out that although fall enrollment data are relevant for many four-year institutions, these data are not as helpful for describing activity at community colleges (which have rolling enrollments) as are unduplicated enrollments for the entire academic year. Therefore, it was proposed that a survey similar to fall enrollment be developed for the entire 12-month period (e.g., full-year enrollments of first-year and continuing students within level by gender and race/ethnicity; full-time versus part-time status would not be included as it could change during the 12-month time frame). Resolution was not reached about whether such a survey should also be completed by four-year institutions in order to provide NCES with data for the entire postsecondary population, whether community colleges could be excused from completing the fall enrollment survey, and whether such a survey should be piloted before becoming part of IPEDS. To ensure that institutions have sufficient lead time and that they have to modify computer reporting programs only once, if such a survey were added to IPEDS, it would not be until 2002, when the new race/ethnicity codes are required.

Web-based software. Three new Web-based systems were demonstrated at the meeting. Even though two of the systems are still under development and do not include a number of enhancements that will be added if funding becomes available, all were positively received by individuals attending the meeting. Shifting from paper-based to Web-based submissions should greatly speed up collection and publication of NCES summaries of IPEDS data, while allowing institutions and states to continue to maintain their existing operating procedures.

The first system, the College Opportunities On-Line (COOL) system, provides consumer information about colleges and universities to students and their parents. This site, which can be visited at http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/cool/, allows users to search for colleges and universities by entering the name of an institution and also by selecting geographic location, type of institution, programs offered, and Title IV eligibility. Currently the site displays general information, price

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(tuition and fees, room and board), fall enrollment, and completions (degree) information. Other information, including an update of tuition and other charges, student financial aid information, and the institution's Web address will be added as soon as it is available from the August 1999 IPSFA Survey. NCES also plans to add admissions requirements and other information from the Institutional Characteristics Survey after the 2000-2001 collection.

A second NCES Web-based system, which will be used for submitting IPSFA data this summer, allows data to be entered manually using an on-line form or through file upload. Both methods trigger edits for invalid data and for unusually large changes from the prior year. Once an edit has been triggered, data can be changed or an explanation can be entered into a memo field. After data have been entered, edited, and checked, they are "locked" (signifying sign-off on their accuracy). For most institutions whose data submission is coordinated through the state, the IPEDS state coordinator would also need to lock the data before they would become available for analysis (although a few states have opted not to verify and lock data for institutions in their state). During the submission period, NCES will provide follow-up via E-mail and telephone with any institution whose data have not yet been submitted.

The third new IPEDS Web-based system supports peer analysis by allowing a user to create a set of peer institutions on the basis of their similarity to a "linchpin" institution. Once peers are identified, reports can be generated that rank institutions according to specified characteristics, produce statistical summaries, or list data. The report templates can be stored for future use. As soon as an institution has submitted its IPEDS data, it can start conducting analyses using data from all other institutions that have also submitted data, but public access to data will be delayed until after NCES finalizes data files.

NCES will post a notice at http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/whatsnew.html when the new collection and peer-analysis systems are available for review (by the end of June) and hopes to receive feedback from potential users about any enhancements, changes, or "fixes."

Training and support. Several types of training and support will be provided by NCES for the new Web-based collection and reporting tools. Data providers will have access to a help desk, an on-line tutorial (currently under development), and technical assistance through a train-the-trainer program. The train-the-trainer program will be instituted this summer to develop a cadre of individuals at colleges and universities around the country who will be available to train and answer questions. NCES is also holding workshops at various national and regional association meetings in order to reach as many respondents as possible. Several forms of training will also be available to data users, including training opportunities (through the train-the-trainer programs and the AIR summer institutes dealing with NCES databases), user-friendly files, peer analysis software, and an electronic codebook.

Faculty and staff data. The faculty and staff working group is still refining some proposed matrices for collecting data about faculty and staff and for answering the question of who provides instruction. They are also clarifying definitions for faculty and staff categories. These proposals will be described in a forthcoming AIR Alert.

Implications for Institutions

NCES recently sent a letter to institutional CEOs asking that they designate an individual to be responsible for the IPSFA collection. This designated individual will receive additional information including an ID and password and will be required to register with NCES as the person responsible for submitting IPSFA data. Institutions whose data are coordinated by the state should also consult with their state IPEDS coordinator about the process their state will use.

Institutions can continue to monitor developments relating to IPEDS redesign at http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/whatsnew.html. In particular individuals who submit and analyze IPEDS data will want to watch for information about the new Web-based submission system and the new peer analysis system.

Institutions should verify their information on their site on the COOL system (http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/cool/) and be sure to submit updated IPSFA data in August because these new data will be used to update the COOL Web site.

Feedback or questions concerning the proposed change to the survey collection cycle, the proposed collection of more detailed information about 12-month enrollments, and the proposed training and support should be sent to Susan Broyles (susan_broyles@ed.gov).

Timeline

May 1999 - College Opportunities On-Line (COOL) system made available to the public

Summer 1999 - First Web-based software for collection of Institution Prices and Student Financial Aid (IPSFA); peer analysis system available

August 1999 - Final recommendations on IPEDS Redesign

October 1999 - New IPEDS reporting categories for race/ethnicity to be finalized

2000-2001 - New race/ethnicity categories added to the Web-based survey forms (optional format for institutional reporting)

2000-2001 - Web-based software implemented

2001-2002 - New CIP codes will be used for IPEDS reporting

2002 - New finance form for public institutions

2002-2003 - Mandatory reporting of new race/ethnicity for Fall Enrollment (old categories dropped); old codes should be stored for future GRS cohorts

2003-2004 - Mandatory reporting of new race/ethnicity for Completions (for the prior academic year) and Staff (old categories dropped).

Additional Resources

- Summary of IPEDS Redesign (as of 5/7/99): http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/slideshw/

- College Opportunities On-Line Site: http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/cool/

- IPEDS site with notice of latest updates: http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/whatsnew.html

- Questions related to IPEDS Student Surveys:
  http://www.fsu.edu/~air/ipedsrev/student3.htm

- Summary of March 1999 meeting of Policy Panel on Racial/Ethnic Data: available from
  http://nces.ed.gov/Ipeds/whatsnew.html

- August collection instrument for Institution Prices and Student Financial Aid:
  http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/augdraft.htm

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

- Proposal for student charges on IC Survey: http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/newicitems.html

- Draft Performance Work Statement, College Cost Study: http://ocfo.ed.gov/CONINFO/CCS.htm

- AIR Alert #9 describing IPEDS Redesign: Alert 9

- First update to AIR Alert #9: Alert 9 Update 1

- Second update to AIR Alert #9: Alert 9 Update 2

- Third update to AIR Alert #9: Alert 9 Update 3

- Fourth update to AIR Alert #9: Alert 9 Update 4

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