

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Institutional Characteristics

Academic Year and Net Price Data

for Program Reporters

Tutorial Script

2023-34 Data Collection Cycle

On behalf of the Institute of Education Sciences', IES, National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to this tutorial on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Institutional Characteristics survey component, also called IPEDS IC. The purpose of this tutorial is to explain how NCES calculates academic year costs and average net price for program reporting institutions. After completing this tutorial, you will know:

- The primary data items collected on the IPEDS survey used to calculate academic year costs and average net price for program reporters;
- How academic year length affects the calculation of academic year program costs; and
- The formula NCES uses to calculate the average net price published on College Navigator.

There are four primary data items, besides program costs, used to calculate total cost of attendance and net price for the program and for the academic year:

1. Total length of the program in clock or credit hours;
2. Total length of the program in weeks;
3. Total length of the academic year in clock or credit hours; and
4. Total length of the academic year in weeks.

Correctly reporting the length of the academic year will allow NCES to calculate your institution's average net price of attendance accurately, since it will align cost of attendance data reported in the Institutional Characteristics survey component with financial aid data reported in the Student Financial Aid Survey component. The academic year length and academic year average net price are displayed on College Navigator, the Department's searchable postsecondary institution website used by students and parents. The academic year length reported to IPEDS and the academic year length used to determine Federal Pell Grant awards are the same; therefore, Keyholders should contact their institution's Office of Student Financial Aid to determine the appropriate academic year length to report to IPEDS.

Now, let us consider how reporting the length of an academic year affects the calculation of academic year costs by considering two institutions, IPEDS College and NCES Institute. IPEDS College operates on an academic calendar of 900 clock hours. Its largest program, Medical Assisting, is 1,800 clock hours, and tuition is \$10,000 for the entire program. Therefore, the program takes the equivalent of two academic years to complete with an academic year cost of \$5,000 a year.

NCES Institute operates on a similar 900 clock hour academic year and offers the same Medical Assisting program. Although it charges the same tuition as IPEDS College, \$10,000, the length of the program is only 1,350 clock hours. Therefore, although both institutions charge the same tuition, NCES Institute charges more per clock hour, which also calculates to more per year—\$6,667. While NCES Institute will have a higher academic year cost on College Navigator, the total program cost is the same as IPEDS College since students only attend 1.5 academic years and pay \$3,333 for the second year.

Now let us turn our attention to average net price. The IPEDS Glossary lists the following for Average Net price:

The Higher Education Act, as amended (2008), defines institutional net price as "the average yearly price actually charged to first-time, full-time undergraduate students receiving student aid at an institution of higher education after deducting such aid." In IPEDS, average institutional net price is generated by subtracting the average amount of federal, state/local government, or institutional grant and scholarship aid from the total cost of attendance. Total cost of attendance is the sum of published tuition and required fees (lower of in-district or in-state for public institutions), books and supplies, and the weighted average for room and housing and other expenses.

Recall, cost of attendance data are collected on the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey component, and financial aid data are collected on the IPEDS Student Financial Aid survey component. These data items are used to calculate average net price.

Here is the formula NCES uses to calculate average net price:

$$\text{Total cost of attendance} - \text{Average federal, state, local, and institutional grant and scholarship aid} = \text{Average net price}$$

After NCES calculates average net price for institutions, the data are posted on College Navigator to help students and parents compare average net price across postsecondary institutions. College Navigator provides the average net price for students beginning college who attend full time also known as full-time, first-time students.

For more information on program costs at your institution, contact your institution's Admission's Office, Registrar, or enrollment services manager. Contact the financial aid office if you have questions about the cost of attendance.

This concludes this tutorial on Institutional Characteristics – Academic Year and Net Price Data for Program Reporters. Now, you should be able to:

- List the primary IPEDS data items used to calculate academic year costs and average net price for program reporters;
- Explain how academic year length affects the calculation of academic year costs for program reporters; and
- Recognize the formula NCES uses to calculate the average net price published on College Navigator.

If you have questions about reporting your institution's data to IPEDS or the IPEDS Data Collection System, contact the IPEDS Data Collection Help Desk at (877) 225-2568 or send an email to Help Desk staff at ipedshelp@rti.org. For assistance using IPEDS data tools, contact the IPEDS Data Use Help Desk at (866) 558-0658 or ipedstools@rti.org.