Trend Generator
2024-25 Collection
Tutorial Script

On behalf of the Institute of education Science's National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to this tutorial on how to use the Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS, Trend Generator.

This tutorial demonstrates how to use the IPEDS Trend Generator to quickly view and analyze frequently used variables over time. After competing this tutorial, you will be able to:

- Navigate the IPEDS Data Tools and Trend Generator homepages;
- Use national-level data trends to answer frequently asked questions about postsecondary education;
- Describe the topics covered in Trend Generator;
- Filter, limit and change how trend data is displayed; and
- Build and download data tables.

From the IPEDS home page, click Use the Data in the top middle of the page then select Data Trends (otherwise known as the Trend Generator) under Create Custom Data Analyses.

At the left of the screen is the general description of the tool: a fast and simple way to view IPEDS data over time. At the top left of the page is the Trend Generator home button. On the top right is the IPEDS home link and the Data Tools link. You can use these buttons to return to the Trend Generator, IPEDS homepage or to the IPEDS Data Tools. There is also a Trend Generator User Guide link and the phone number for the IPEDS Help Desk.

The main menu is made up of questions organized by subject area and data type. To view all the data found in Trend Generator, you can expand all the menu options by clicking the expand all button. The Trend Generator is designed to answer commonly asked questions about IPEDS data at the national level. However, depending on the question you select, you can view data by institution type, student type, or state.

From this view you can see the variety of questions that can be addressed and data that can be used to create trends over time. Questions range from the number of postsecondary institutions; to the number of students enrolled in those institutions; to outcome measures such as the number of degrees and certificates awarded, and graduation rates. Trend Generator also answers questions

about the number of employees and instructional staff; student financial aid; and institutional revenues and expenditures.

We will start by looking at a basic question – "How many students enroll in postsecondary institutions annually?" Notice as you move your mouse over the question, the information pane provides you with more details about the data. The note for this question states that all students that have enrolled in credit-bearing courses at postsecondary institutions over a 12-month period are included.

When we click on the question, the answer is revealed.

Now you have several ways to view this data. The default display is a trend line. You can click on bar, giving you the bar charts. Additionally, you can look at a table of the data by clicking on table.

You can also limit the results. This option allows you to select one or more values to limit the answer to a specific subset of data.

You can also build a new table based on your current data selections. This feature will allow you to create a table that will break the data down by rows and/or columns, and will allow you to view trends for different groups. You can also click on the Change a question button to select a different subject or question or Go Back to return to the trend line.

At the top of the trend display, you will find the Modify Years button. When you click on it, it opens a small window to view all data the years available. In this window, you can uncheck any years you wish to remove from the trend. If you would like to review only a trend of the last five years, you can click the button to Deselect All, then select only the years of data you are interested in.

You can download this data as well. When we click on the Download button, a drop-down menu allows you to download the data in Excel or comma separated value format. Follow the prompts to open the file.

The spreadsheet then opens in Excel with the table of enrollment trends. You may save or edit the file. To return to the Trend Generator, close Excel.

You can also print the information selected. When we click on this button another pop-up window opens with a printer friendly version of the trend report and bar chart. It can be very effective to use this version of the report with the official US Department of Education header.

After sending the report to your printer using the print link, click close to return to your report.

Now that we have explored all the capabilities of the Trend report, we can click on the Modify Years button to "Select All" of the years to begin with our original question.

Now we will choose to limit our results in a different way. Select "Limit Results" and choose one of the options. If we click on the button for Sector of institution, for example, a drop-down menu

allows us to select which of the 10 sectors we would like to include in our analysis.

For our demonstration, we want to limit the question to only public institutions. To do this, select Control of institution, check Public, and click Apply. The answer is now limited to only those students enrolled in public institutions.

Next, we will explore the build a table function. Since we are going to look at a breakdown of data by sector, we will need to deselect 'Public' under Limit Results. Go to Limit Results, select Control of institution, uncheck Public, and Apply. We will now build a table that provides a breakdown of enrollment by state and also by sector. Go to Build Table. For the Row variable, select State from the drop-down menu. If you did not want to break down the data any further, you would select nothing. But since we plan to break down the trend data further by sector, we select Sector of institution from the Column drop-down menu.

The table is displayed. Notice that if you select a variable in error, you may click on the Column or Row drop-down menus to change your selection. On this screen, we have several options. We can modify our table; view a trend of a particular row or column within our table; download the table; or print our output. We can also swap the row and column variables if we think that would create a more useful table.

Often, we may be interested in a particular subset of the categories within our row and column variables. For example, we may only be interested in states from within the New England region. Click on Modify categories for the Rows. Click on "Deselect all" and then select all the states within the New England area – Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. With our final selections made click on the Apply button. Our table is now displayed.

Note, if we want to select only a subset of sectors, we can follow the same procedure using the Modify categories tab for the Column. We will view only those institutions within the 2-year sector. So, uncheck Administrative unit only, the 4-year or above categories, as well as all less-than-2-year categories and click Apply.

Now we are satisfied with our table. So, let us view a trend for some of the categories within our rows and columns. To view a trend for any category, click on the variable you'd like to view the trend for. We'll to view the trend for Massachusetts, so click on Massachusetts.

This trend view has the exact same features that we reviewed when we reviewed the national trend from our original question. Again, we can look at the bar chart, look at the data in the table, edit the years in the trend, download the data, print the trend report, or close the window. Since we have already reviewed these features, we will close the window to return to our table.

Much like we did earlier with the original question, we can also restrict the table to specific subsets of data. For example, we could display data on just those institutions that are degree-granting. Click "Limit Results", and select Degree-granting status, then check Degree-granting and click Apply.

The table now displays the number of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions annually by state and sector of institution but limited by those institutions that are degree-granting institutions. We now have a few options for our trend report. The download and print buttons work the same as they have in other sections of the Trend Generator.

Our last option is to "Change the Question." This provides a drop-down menu that allows us to select a different question. We can also click on the Trend Generator button to return to the main "Trend Generator" screen.

This tool holds lots of promise for policy makers, academic administrators, institutional researchers, and other interested stakeholders. Check this tool frequently as more subject areas and questions, as well as additional variables to create tables, may be added to the tool. For questions, contact the IPEDS Help Desk.

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