

By Ken Redd and Kristin Witters

IMPEDS

Understanding IPEDS and APPA

How many students are enrolled in higher education institutions? How much do students pay to attend college? Where do public colleges and universities get their revenue and how much do they spend? And how many faculty and administrators are employed by higher education institutions? These and many other questions have long been on the minds of students, families, policymakers, and others who are interested in higher education issues. Fortunately, answers to these and many other questions are available from a convenient source: the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

But what is IPEDS? Many APPA members may not be fully familiar with this database. In this article, we provide a basic overview of the IPEDS data and answer some key questions about this well-used and valuable set of public data on higher education students and institutions.

WHAT IS IPEDS?

IPEDS (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>) is a system of surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Prior to the adoption of the IPEDS surveys, data on higher education in the United States was collected via the federal Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) Series. HEGIS data, collected from 1966-67 through 1985-86, were designed to provide comprehensive information on various aspects of postsecondary education in the United States, U.S. territories, and Department of Defense schools outside the United States.

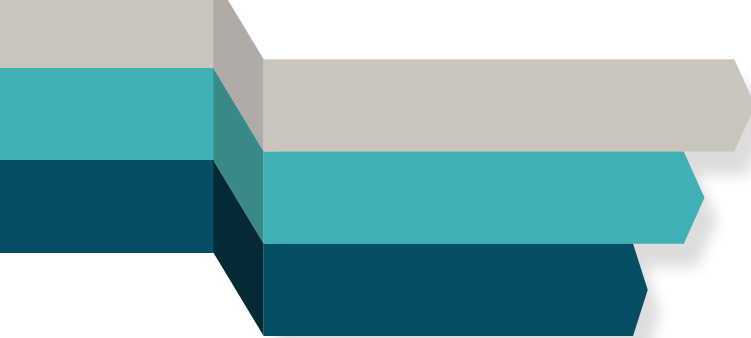
HEGIS reported data collected from public and private two-year and four-year institutions and included eight component

surveys: Earned Degrees/Completions, Employees, Finance, Residence and Migration, Salaries, Fall Enrollment, Institutional Characteristics, and Libraries. For further information on HEGIS, see "The History and Origins of Survey Items for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System" (available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012833.pdf>), a report produced by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC).

Beginning in 1985-86, IPEDS replaced HEGIS and has since become the major federal source for data on college enrollments, degree completions, graduation rates, and other information. Various federal statutes (such as Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended) require that nearly all postsecondary education institutions in the United States and its territories participate in the IPEDS surveys. Due to this mandatory requirement, IPEDS has data on more than 7,000 public, private for-profit, and private nonprofit colleges, universities, and vocational/technical schools.

The IPEDS surveys are completed in three cycles (fall, winter, and spring) beginning in early August of each year. The fall cycle includes the surveys that collect data on Institutional Characteristics, Completions (number of degrees and certificates awarded by your school), and 12-month student Enrollment. The winter collection will include surveys on Student Financial Aid, Graduation Rates, Admissions, and Outcome Measures—the newest IPEDS survey, which provides additional measures of student success. And the spring survey cycle includes Fall Enrollment, Finance, Human Resources, and Academic Libraries.

The data collection for the 2015-16 academic year opened on August 5, 2015. Data from the 2015-16 cycle will generally be



come available for public use within 18 months after the survey data collection begins. IPEDS data are typically reported by each school's institutional research office. Many public and private nonprofit institution systems have an IPEDS coordinator who assists in data reporting efforts.

WHAT DATA DOES IPEDS COLLECT?

Each IPEDS survey component collects valuable U.S. post-secondary data. For example, the Institutional Characteristics survey provides information on institutional location (city, state, urban, rural, etc.), control (public, private nonprofit, or private for-profit), tuition and fee prices by student level (undergraduate, graduate, and professional), and other important identifiers. Human Resources surveys collect the number of faculty and administrative staff employed at postsecondary institutions, by level, race/ethnicity, gender, and other factors.

The Fall Enrollment collects the number of students enrolled on campus by gender and race/ethnicity and by attendance status (full- and part-time). Finance is used to report institutional revenue and expenditures by types and sources—such as state and federal appropriations, private gifts and contracts, etc. Student Financial Aid provides the financial aid and average net prices of college paid by first-time undergraduate students who are enrolled full-time for the full academic year.

WHO USES IPEDS?

By federal law, all IPEDS data must be made available to the public once it is approved for release by NCES. Due to the public nature of IPEDS data, and because nearly all schools are required to complete the surveys, they are useful for a variety of needs. Increasingly, IPEDS serves as a source of consumer information about higher education. Prospective college students and their families can view IPEDS data on NCES's College Navigator website (<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>) to compare colleges by enrollment, prices, financial aid, and other factors.

Additionally, policymakers at all levels use IPEDS data to examine schools for their progress toward certain college goals. The Fall Enrollment data, for instance, may be used by policymakers to see if schools are enrolling students of different gender or ethnic groups, while the data from the Graduation Rate survey are sometimes used to see if schools are meeting state goals for enrolling and graduating students within four or six years of entering college.

Many higher education researchers also use IPEDS. Researchers can get data on any school within the IPEDS universe by going to the IPEDS website and searching the Use the Data portal

(<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Home/UseTheData>).

This free service allows researchers to look up and download data for an individual school or a group of schools of any size and type. Researchers can analyze national, state, local, and other trends for the schools they are studying.

IPEDS data are also often used by associations. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), for instance, uses the data annually in order to calculate membership dues and to conduct research on enrollment, financial, and other trends for schools in our membership. For example, the IPEDS data allow NACUBO's staff to produce research without having to send a number of individual surveys to members, thus saving time and providing added benefits to chief business officers and others within the membership.

APPA INSTITUTIONS AND IPEDS

Now that you have an understanding of the definition of IPEDS, the history of the data collection, and the impact on your institution, let's explain the impact it has on you and your institutional membership with APPA and your region.

There are several higher education niche associations that use IPEDS data in various aspects. The majority of these associations use the data to calculate membership dues and for research purposes. In the future, APPA will use it to offer members an enhanced member experience, but for the time being we will use it to calculate dues and for benchmarking such as the Facilities Performance Indicators (FPI) survey and report.

Membership in APPA is organizational for our institutional members. This means that if your institution holds a membership, all staff at your institution may receive member benefits. In our database, each institution has a unique identifying number called a "unit ID." This is how we are able to match your data to your institution each year. Each institutional member, if they are self-reporting and hold their own accreditation, must hold its own membership with APPA and its corresponding region. Membership is not held by the system/district/main office and extended to the institutions or branch campuses within their district.

The IPEDS data does not apply to APPA's Canadian, Mexican, or international, or K-12 institutional members, so those schools provide comparable data to APPA.

APPA FOUR-YEAR AND TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

As a nonprofit educational association, APPA uses the selected fields of the available dataset that your institution has reported to the U.S. Department of Education and uploads it to our database. If you are a four-year institution, your full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) and gross institutional expenditures (GIE) are then applied to the dues matrix accordingly. If you are a two-year community or technical college, we simply use your GIE data. In the past, APPA used a range for the FTE and GIE information to calculate your dues. All current members renewing for the 2017-18 membership

year will have a specific data point (FTE value and GIE value) applied to the matrix.

For this year (2016-17 membership year), if you are a two-year institution, you might have noticed a change in your dues structure. In response to a request by the APPA Community College Engagement Group and a discussion by the Membership Committee, we created a separate dues matrix based solely on the GIE and applied it in our 2016-17 dues renewal procedures.

Over the next few months, APPA staff will be reexamining the current four-year dues matrix and the ranges and rates to better reflect the current status of higher education. Currently, APPA has been using FY 2008-09 data. Moving forward, however, we will be using the most recent data available to us from IPEDS in January of the corresponding year. The data is typically delayed by one to two years, so it will generally not be the current (fall) fiscal year data. This means that although we cannot guarantee a change in dues rates next year (increase or decrease), it will set the foundation for us to move forward more effectively as an association to better serve our membership.

APPA RESEARCH AND IPEDS

Higher education institutions are always trying to strive to be the best and benchmarking their institutions with comparable institutions. The IPEDS data will aid APPA in comparing and contrasting data between institutions that are members and nonmembers. In addition, it will provide your institution with the data output to make decisions on a daily and yearly basis.

This data will be used specifically for the Facilities Management Evaluation Program (FMEP) and the FPI. Using this data as a benchmark can assist in justifying increased funding in regards to facilities on a campus. Updating the IPEDS data in the APPA database assists members in completing a successful benchmarking report. We hope that having this large volume of data will provide our members with a more seamless experience as the end user.

In addition to the tools provided by APPA, NCES provides institutions with the opportunity to use their own data. IPEDS produces a premade Data Feedback Report for each institution yearly, using the latest reported data. This report saves institutions from creating their own graphs and tables; online training tool videos are available to you and your institution by visiting the Use the Data Web page on the IPEDS web-

site (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Home/UseTheData>) and clicking on the first link, Overview of IPEDS Data.

OTHER QUESTIONS?

The data can be a bit overwhelming if you do not interact with it on a frequent basis. IPEDS comes with a user-friendly help desk to assist you in answering any other questions about the various IPEDS surveys. Questions may be sent by e-mail to ipedstools@rti.org or asked over the phone at 866-558-0658.

Also, APPA staff is always available to assist members and nonmembers in understanding the data collected by APPA for your institution, how APPA uses the data to calculate your membership dues, or how the data is translated to the FPI or FMEP. Questions regarding APPA membership or surveys can be sent to membership@appa.org. ☎

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