

# NCES DOVE UPDATE

DATA ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE NCES TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL (TRP) ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

NCES is currently developing or revising four surveys that contribute to the DOVE system—the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), Education Longitudinal Study (ELS) First Follow-up, and National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF). Throughout these survey efforts, one theme has dominated—the need to cut. In this environment, it is difficult to get many of our new questions on vocational education added to the survey instruments, but thus far, it seems that our requests are receiving fair consideration along with competing ones. We plan to provide more details about changes being made to each survey in future editions of the DOVE Update. This Update focuses on changes that have been made to the NSOPF to date.



## THE REVISED NSOPF SURVEY

The previous (1998–99) NSOPF took 52 minutes to administer on average. The current version of the 2003–04 instrument (the field-test version) is estimated to take 35–40 minutes to complete. The goal is to reduce the survey completion time to 30 minutes after field testing.

Because the NSOPF instrument was reduced in length, not many questions could be added. Nonetheless, a number of our proposed questions were added, a testament to the validity of our concerns and the responsiveness of the NSOPF staff. Perhaps more importantly, the survey appears to be more “inclusive” overall, with skip patterns and wording that should make the survey more “user-friendly” to part-time and vocational-technical faculty.

### What We Have Gained

A number of specific items, which focus on vocational education, were added to the faculty survey:

- Whether the faculty member has previous and current work experience outside of postsecondary education, and whether this work experience is related to his or her current teaching assignment.
- The question about teaching methods now includes oral presentations; group and team projects producing a joint product; laboratory, shop, or studio assignments; and service learning, co-op experiences, or assignments requiring interactions with the community or business/industry.
- A question asking about the extent to which faculty members meet with other faculty to plan and coordinate instruction or curriculum; talk with students about their career plans or provide career guidance to students seeking employment; meet with business or industry representatives to develop, improve, or revise curriculum; and call or meet with business and industry representatives to develop employment opportunities for students.
- A question about training or professional development to devel-

op new or improved curricula; learn how to use new instructional practices, educational technology, and student performance data to improve curricula or teaching; and keep up with the skills and knowledge required of students in the workplace.

- Opinion questions (which were severely cut overall) on whether part-time faculty are treated fairly; the quality of equipment and facilities available for classroom instruction; and institutional support for teaching improvement.

### What We Have Lost or Not Gained

The following are questions that we wanted to add, but have not been included in the new faculty survey:

- For faculty who worked outside of education, the name of the occupation in which they worked.
- Faculty reports on how they stay current in their field and their ratings of institutional support for this activity.
- Faculty members' descriptions of the characteristics and qualifications of their students.
- Whether faculty members were hired due to their work experience.
- Some aspects of teaching practice (e.g., use of workplace simulations and case studies; use of performance-based assessment; emphasis on mathematical and scientific concepts; coordination with employers and other vocational-technical faculty).
- Ratings of the emphasis given to teaching versus research (on the previous NSOPF), and to academic versus technical education.

In addition, the previous NSOPF collected some useful information that will no longer be available:

- The subject areas of specific classes taught.
- Some work history information, such as the number of non-teaching jobs held and the first job held outside of teaching.
- Faculty ratings of several institutional conditions, including classroom, lab, and office space; availability of teaching assistants; computer facilities; and secretarial support.

### NSOPF Schedule

The plan is to collect field-test data in fall 2002 and to collect full-scale data in fall 2003 and summer 2004, and to release the data file by December 2004—an ambitious schedule. The goal is to collect 24,500 interviews from 1,000 postsecondary institutions (a larger sample than that used in previous years), with half the data collected via CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviews), and half via the Internet. Note that less-than-2-year and for-profit institutions are not included in NSOPF.

Data from the last NSOPF, administered in 1998–99, will be included in Vocational Education in the United States (2005), but the 2003–04 NSOPF data will not be available for that publication. We will consider publishing a separate report on data from the 2003–04 NSOPF after Vocational Education in the United States (2005) is released.