



IPEDS PROGRAM REPORTERS: AN OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SURVEY MATERIALS

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INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires all postsecondary institutions that participate in federal student financial aid programs to report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid¹. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) serves as the mechanism for this data collection. The calendar systems of reporting institutions affect how they submit data. For instance, an institution that enrolls students in programs in a non-traditional timeline (such as a two-week module) cannot reconcile its enrollment levels consistently with an institution that uses a standard academic calendar, for which fall cohort depictions are often prescribed. Similar constraints exist for reporting information on graduation rates and financial aid. Ultimately, these considerations for calendar systems affect reporting standards for five of the ten IPEDS survey components: Institutional Characteristics (IC), Student Financial Aid (SFA), Graduation Rates (GR), 200% Graduation Rates GR200), and Fall Enrollment (EF).

Depending on their predominant calendar systems, institutions report to IPEDS as academic reporters, program reporters, or hybrid reporters. An institution that operates on a standard academic calendar (e.g., semester, quarter, trimester, or 4-1-4) is considered an **academic reporter**. Alternately, an institution that operates on a calendar system that differs by program or offers programs on a continuous basis (e.g., every 2 weeks, monthly, or other period) is considered a **program reporter**. Finally, an institution that operates under an academic calendar that does not fit within the standard term options is considered a **hybrid reporter**.

In the 2010 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled *Higher Education: Institutions' Reported Data Collection Burden is Higher than Estimated but Can Be Reduced through Increased Coordination*², institutions indicated that IPEDS reporting is a “relatively demanding task” and that IPEDS is “more burdensome than their other external reports” (p. 11). The GAO recommended, among other things, that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) improve and expand its communications about IPEDS-related training opportunities to include a “wider range of institutions, particularly smaller career and technical institutions outside of traditional higher education networks” (p. 29). IPEDS data indicate that nearly all program reporting institutions are 2-year or less (99%), with a majority (71%) identifying as less-than 2-year³. The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) and NCES have interest in improving data collection materials and training opportunities for program reporters in order to ensure the efficiency of data collection as well as the quality, comparability, and utility of data they submit.

NPEC commissioned this paper to examine characteristics of program reporting institutions and to develop suggestions for improving data collection materials that will, in turn, ensure data quality and reduce institutional burden associated with IPEDS reporting among these institutions.

¹ <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/about/>.

² *Institutions' Reported Data Collection Burden Is Higher Than Estimated but Can Be Reduced through Increased Coordination*, United State Government Accountability Office, August 2010. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-871>.

³ NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey, 2010.

This paper includes:

- an analysis of program reporting institutions,
- suggestions for clarifying survey component instructions and materials,
- recommendations for increasing accessibility to already established resources, and
- areas for further training for program reporting institutions.

As a function of these assorted analyses, three broad recommendations are provided in this report: (1) review survey component materials for clarity and to ensure consistency; (2) provide more online training for keyholders at program reporting institutions; and (3) increase accessibility and visibility of online resources through a new keyholder webpage on the IPEDS website.

ANALYSIS OF PROGRAM REPORTERS

An institution’s calendar system is used as the primary method for determining whether it is considered a program reporter, an academic reporter, or a hybrid reporter. However, additional guidelines are included in the IPEDS data collection materials. A secondary method for determining reporter type is based on how courses or programs are measured. An institution that “measures courses primarily by contact hours, or offers primarily occupational programs measured in credit hours”⁴ is instructed to submit data as a program reporter. On the other hand, an institution that “offers primarily academic programs measured in credit hours”⁵ should submit data as an academic reporter. Similarly, NCES advises institutions that exclusively grant degrees (versus certificates) to submit data as program reporting institutions⁶, though this is not a formal guideline and exceptions are evident.

In 2010, 35.8% (2,608) of institutions that submitted IPEDS data were program reporters. Of the 301 institutions that were new to the IPEDS reporting universe in 2010, 65.1% submitted data as program reporting institutions. Therefore, while program reporting institutions are not the majority of IPEDS reporters, they are the most common among new institutions. Examining common characteristics among program reporters, and noting how they differ from academic and hybrid reporters, informs decisions about how to improve the IPEDS reporting process for these institutions.

Table 1 presents the distributions of institutions according to assorted types of calendar systems and correlated reporting methods. Since the calendar system serves as the delineator between reporting formats, the classifications of institutions between these variables are distinct. About two-thirds (65.2%) of program reporters utilize continuous calendar systems and the remainder utilize calendars that differ by program. Academic reporters are distributed across several calendar systems while hybrid reporters fall solely within the other academic year category.

Table 1: Calendar Systems of Program, Academic, and Hybrid Reporters

Calendar System	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Continuous	65.2%	1,700	-	-	-	-
Differs by program	34.8%	908	-	-	-	-
Semester	-	-	73.0%	3,205	-	-
Quarter	-	-	20.3%	891	-	-
Trimester	-	-	3.5%	155	-	-
Four-one-four plan	-	-	3.2%	139	-	-
Other academic year	-	-	-	-	100.0%	288
Total	100.0%	2,608	100.0%	4,390	100.0%	288

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey, 2010.

As detailed in Table 2, a large majority of program reporters are for-profit (82.8%) compared to smaller segments of public (12.6%) and private, not-for-profit (4.6%). Over two-thirds (71.2%)

⁴ IC Header instructions for less-than 2-year institutions, Part B – Organization – Calendar System.

⁵ IC Header instructions for less-than 2-year institutions, Part B – Organization – Calendar System.

⁶ Conversation with NCES IPEDS Staff.

are less-than 2-year institutions, while 27.6% are 2-year institutions and 1.2% are 4-year or above. Also, 88.0% are non-degree granting and 79.2% report instructional activity using clock or contact hour systems.

Table 2: Basic Characteristics of Program, Academic, and Hybrid Reporters

Control	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Private, for-profit	82.8%	2,160	20.6%	904	88.5%	255
Private, not-for-profit	4.6%	120	40.2%	1,765	11.1%	32
Public	12.6%	328	39.2%	1,721	0.3%	1
Total	100.0%	2,608	100.0%	4,390	100.0%	288

Level	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Less-than 2-year	71.2%	1,857	2.3%	100	3.1%	9
2-year	27.6%	719	33.7%	1,480	43.1%	124
4-year or above	1.2%	32	64.0%	2,810	53.8%	155
Total	100.0%	2,608	100.0%	4,390	100.0%	288

Degree Granting Status	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Degree granting	12.0%	312	95.0%	4,170	93.1%	268
Non-degree granting	88.0%	2,296	5.0%	220	6.9%	20
Total	100.0%	2,608	100.0%	4,390	100.0%	288

Clock/Credit Hours	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Contact/Clock hours	79.2%	2,051	2.8%	113	10.0%	27
Credit hours	19.0%	491	95.2%	3,872	85.6%	231
Both	1.8%	47	2.1%	84	4.4%	12
Total	100.0%	2,589	100.0%	4,069	100.0%	270

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey, 2010.

When institutional control and level are combined into sector (Table 3), the private, for-profit, less-than 2-year institutions represent the largest share of program reporters (59.3%). However, program reporting institutions are present in almost every sector.

Table 3: Program, Academic, and Hybrid Reporters by Sector

Sector	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Private, for-profit						
Less-than 2-year	59.3%	1,546	1.4%	60	2.8%	8
2-year	22.5%	588	7.7%	336	41.3%	119
4-year or above	1.0%	26	11.6%	508	44.4%	128
Private, not-for-profit						
Less-than 2-year	3.1%	80	0.4%	17	0.3%	1
2-year	1.3%	34	3.3%	144	1.4%	4
4-year or above	0.2%	6	36.5%	1,604	9.4%	27
Public						
Less-than 2-year	8.9%	231	0.5%	23	0.0%	0
2-year	3.7%	97	22.8%	1,000	0.3%	1
4-year or above	0.0%	0	15.9%	698	0.0%	0

Sector	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
Total	100.0%	2,608	100.0%	4,390	100.0%	288

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey, 2010.

Institutional Size and Resources

Program reporting institutions are typically smaller than their counterparts – they enroll fewer students and employ fewer employees compared to academic and hybrid reporting institutions (Table 4). In particular, 56.7% of program reporters have full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollments of 200 or fewer students, and 78.2% have 50 or fewer total employees (full- or part-time). Finally, 71.6% of program reporters have 10 or fewer executive, administrative, and managerial employees, which indicate limited administrative resources.

Table 4: Student FTE and Employee Data for Program, Academic, and Hybrid Reporters

Full-Time Equivalent Student Enrollment	Program (2,608) (%)	Program (2,608) (#)	Academic (4,390) (%)	Academic (4,390) (#)	Hybrid (288) (%)	Hybrid (288) (#)
Median	163	163	1,498	1,498	820	820
200 or Fewer	56.7%	1,479	14.7%	645	15.6%	45
500 or Fewer	80.4%	2,099	26.6%	1,168	30.6%	88

Total Employees (Full- and Part-time)	Program (2,583) (%)	Program (2,583) (#)	Academic (4,352) (%)	Academic (4,352) (#)	Hybrid (285) (%)	Hybrid (285) (#)
Median	19	19	292	292	95	95
10 or Fewer	27.8%	718	2.0%	87	5.3%	15
50 or Fewer	78.2%	2,018	15.2%	662	19.6%	56

Executive, Administrative, and Managerial Employees	Program (2,583) (%)	Program (2,583) (#)	Academic (4,352) (%)	Academic (4,352) (#)	Hybrid (285) (%)	Hybrid (285) (#)
Median	5	5	64	64	23	23
10 or Fewer	71.6%	1,849	12.6%	548	14.0%	40
50 or Fewer	97.2%	2,510	44.4%	1,931	75.1%	214

Source: NCES IPEDS Fall Enrollment and Human Resources surveys, 2010.

The GAO report (2010) on IPEDS burden indicates institutional size can both increase and decrease institutional burden. Although larger institutions have higher reporting burden estimates due to larger enrollments, they typically dedicate staff to handle these reporting functions⁷. Alternately, employees tasked with completing these surveys at smaller institutions may be senior-level staff, such as department directors, deans, or chief executives. The GAO report acknowledges that at the smaller institutions included in the review, “generally the keyholder was a high-level school administrator for which institutional reporting was a minor aspect of his or her responsibilities...these staff may have less sophisticated IT skills or expertise in working with institutional data so IPEDS reporting may be more time-consuming even though they have smaller numbers of students and staff to report on⁸” (p. 15). Program reporting institutions have

⁷ United State Government Accountability Office, August 2010.

⁸ United State Government Accountability Office, August 2010.

the smallest staff sizes compared to academic and hybrid institution, and staff members' experiences with IPEDS data may also be the most limited.

A recent NCES report⁹ indicates the burden estimates by institution type and keyholder experience (Table 5). The largest burden is estimated at 4-year institutions, while the smallest occurs at less-than 2-year institutions. However, keyholders' level of experience also impact the IPEDS burden estimates. At all three institution levels, estimates of burden for new keyholders are 49% to 51% higher than estimates for returning keyholders.

Table 5: Time Burden Estimates by Institution Type and Keyholder Experience

Institution Level	Estimated Range	Estimated Average
4-year Institution		
New Keyholder	150-273 hours	212 hours
Returning Keyholder	100-182 hours	142 hours
2-year Institution		
New Keyholder	117-219 hours	169 hours
Returning Keyholder	78-146 hours	112 hours
Less-than 2-year Institution		
New Keyholder	60-108 hours	75 hours
Returning Keyholder	40-72 hours	50 hours

Source: NCES, February 2011, p. 2

Data from the IPEDS Help Desk indicate that 17.6% of program reporting institutions had new keyholders in 2011-12, the highest percentage among all three reporting types (Table 6). It is a logical interpretation that many program reporting institutions face significant challenges in efforts to comply with reporting demands because they are, on average, decidedly smaller than their counterparts, and smaller institutions characteristically face challenges in reporting data due to staffing limitations.

Table 6: New Keyholders at Program, Academic, and Hybrid Reporting Institutions

Reporting Type	Institutions with New Keyholders (#)	Institutions with New Keyholders (%)	Total Institutions
Program Reporters	439	17.6%	2,496
Academic Reporters	556	14.5%	3,836
Hybrid Reporters	49	15.1%	196
Total	1,044	15.7%	6,640

Source: RTI International, Keyholder Data, 2011-12.

An examination of additional aspects of institutional capacity (beyond staffing and enrollments) demonstrates that program reporting institutions vary relative to their counterparts in other respects. The average ratios of support staff per 100 FTE students for institutions of assorted calendar systems are depicted in Table 7. On average, program reporters typically have less administrative and professional staff per FTE student available to support the operations of the institutions compared to their academic counterparts (2.57 compared to 5.95).

⁹ *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2011-2014, Supporting Statement Part A, OMB No. 1850-0582 v.10*, National Center for Education Statistics, February 2011.

Table 7: Average Administrative and Professional Staffing per 100 12-Month FTE Students¹⁰

	Program Average	Program (N)	Academic Average	Academic (N)	Hybrid Average	Hybrid (N)
Staffing per 100 12-Month FTE Students	2.57	2,129	5.95	4,116	3.32	243

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics, 12-Month Enrollment, and HR Surveys, 2009-10.

Institutional capacity measured in a different way is presented in Table 8. Program reporters' total revenues and additions per FTE student are, on average, about one-third of the levels observed for academic reporters (\$9,997 compared to \$29,617). Therefore, program reporting institutions are smaller in terms of total scale of operations and in terms of support staff and revenues, and their available resources are more limited than those of academic and hybrid reporting institutions.

Table 8: Average Total Revenues and Additions per 100 12-Month FTE Students¹¹

	Program Average	Program (N)	Academic Average	Academic (N)	Hybrid Average	Hybrid (N)
Revenue per 100 12-Month FTE Students	\$9,997	2,129	\$29,617	4,116	\$12,967	243

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics, 12-Month Enrollment, and Finance Surveys, 2009-10.

Largest Programs

A program reporting institution's largest academic program, identified as the program with the largest number of students enrolled, is used when submitting cost of attendance and student financial aid data to IPEDS. Across all program reporters, the largest programs are Cosmetology (43.3%), Medical/Clinical Assistant (13.8%), and Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training (9.5%) (Table 9).

Table 9: Largest Programs as Reporting for Student Charges

CIP Code	Program	(%)	(#)
12.0401	Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	43.3%	1,129
51.0801	Medical/Clinical Assistant	13.8%	359
51.3901	Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	9.5%	248
51.3501	Massage Therapy/Therapeutic Massage	3.8%	99
12.0402	Barbering/Barber	2.4%	60
	Other	27.3%	1,895
	Total	100.0%	2,607

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey, 2010.

¹⁰ Administrative and Professional Staffing levels defined as sum of executive/administrative and managerial and other professionals (support services) variables. Analysis limited to institutions that reported data to 2009-10 Institutional Characteristics, 12-month Enrollment, HR, and Finance Surveys.

¹¹ Analysis limited to institutions that reported data to 2009-10 Institutional Characteristics, 12-month Enrollment, HR, and Finance Surveys.

Certificates vs. Degrees Awarded

Although there are no formal guidelines regarding how institutions should report IPEDS data based on the awarding of certificates versus degrees, it is recommended that institutions that only award degrees not submit data to IPEDS as program reporting institutions. However, there are exceptions, such as institutions that offer Associates in Applied Science (AAS) degrees. As depicted in Table 10, 38.6% of program reporting institutions do not award any degrees, while 61.8% award less than 20% of their awards as degrees. Only 5.8% award degrees only.

Table 10: Percent of Awards that are Degrees at Program, Academic, and Hybrid Institutions

Percent of Awards that are Degrees	Program (%)	Program (#)	Academic (%)	Academic (#)	Hybrid (%)	Hybrid (#)
None	38.6%	180,215	0.7%	25,015	32.5%	69,228
Less than 20%	61.8%	288,409	1.1%	29,429	47.5%	90,528
50-99%	10.0%	46,570	6.99%	261,920	30.7%	65,424
100%	5.8%	26,859	90.8%	3,403,485	13.2%	28,147
Total	100.0%	467,000	100.0%	3,747,806	100.0%	213,008

Source: NCES IPEDS Completions Survey, 2010.

Parent Systems

Almost half (46.9%) of program reporters do not have parent systems (Table 11). The largest parent systems among program reporters are EEG, Inc. (95 institutions), Regency Corporation (62 institutions), and Kaplan Higher Education Corporation (56 institutions). Three of the top ten parent systems are state systems – Oklahoma, Tennessee, and New York. The small sizes of program reporting institutions and the higher turnover rate among IPEDS Keyholders at these institutions (versus other institution types) may affect the relative burden and resulting quality of the data these institutions report to IPEDS.

Table 11: Program Reporters by Parent System

Parent System	(%)	(#)
No Parent System	46.9%	1,222
EEG, Inc.	3.6%	95
Regency Corporation	2.4%	62
Kaplan Higher Education Corporation	2.1%	56
Paul Mitchell Schools	1.9%	50
Corinthian Colleges, Inc.	1.5%	39
Oklahoma Department of Career and Technological Education	1.5%	39
The State University and Community College System of Tennessee	1.0%	26
Lincoln Educational Services	1.0%	26
New York State Education Department	1.0%	26
Other	37.1%	967
Total	100.0%	2,608

Source: NCES IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey, 2010.

Conclusion

As recommendations are developed for improving IPEDS survey component materials and resources, it is important to keep in mind the characteristics of program reporting institutions and specific challenges they may face in reporting data to IPEDS. Although program reporting institutions account for only 35.7% of the IPEDS universe, they are a growing population that is primarily comprised of private, for-profit, less-than 2-year, non-degree granting institutions.

Projections of IPEDS reporting burdens by institution level and keyholder experience through 2013-14 indicate no significant changes in time burden estimates¹². Given the reduced staff size and revenues per FTE at program reporting institutions, a key focus should be placed on providing IPEDS instructions that are more easily understood by individuals without backgrounds in higher education or data management. As higher education opportunities continue to expand in this country, the number of individuals charged with supporting this field will increase as well.

The remaining sections of this report provide suggestions for improving IPEDS data collection materials for program reporters, offer a training curriculum for keyholders at these institutions, and share information for a webpage dedicated to explaining the differences between program, academic, and hybrid reporting institutions. A substantial portion of this report is dedicated to a Federal Plain Language Guidelines (FPLG) review of IPEDS survey materials. Many of the suggestions offered are applicable to all IPEDS materials, and will thereby affect the larger higher education community and increase the quality of data submission and data use throughout the entire field.

¹² NCES, February 2011

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING IPEDS DATA COLLECTION MATERIALS FOR PROGRAM REPORTERS

Given the unique characteristics of program reporting institutions, there is a need to ensure that IPEDS data collection materials are clear and consistent, which will improve the quality of data submitted by program reporting institutions and may decrease institutional burden associated with reporting to IPEDS.

Survey resources are currently available to program reporters in the IPEDS Data Provider Center¹³. These include survey component materials (such as forms, instructions, and answers to frequently asked questions) labeled specifically for program reporting institutions; information about upcoming changes to next year's data collection; and a New Keyholder Handbook. Online tutorials that provide an overview of key IPEDS concepts are also available¹⁴, including one tutorial that describes the differences between academic and program reporting institutions¹⁵.

To explore improvements to IPEDS data collection materials for program reporting institutions, nine individuals were contacted to provide first-hand accounts of experiences submitting these data (see Appendix C for participant list). Participants are from the private and public sectors, represent a range of experience with IPEDS (from 2 years to over 20 years), and submit data on a diverse set of programs. The following general suggestions were elicited from this group of interviewees with regard to how to make the IPEDS survey component materials more accessible and useful to keyholders at program reporting institutions.

1. **Review survey component materials for clarity and to ensure consistency.** For example, a secondary method for determining an institution's calendar system is included in the IC Header component based on how courses or programs are measured. An institution that "measures courses primarily by contact hours, or offers primarily occupational programs measured in credit hours"¹⁶ should submit data as a program reporter. On the other hand, an institution that "offers primarily academic programs measured in credit hours"¹⁷ should be classified as an academic reporter. These guidelines are included within the survey submission screens for less-than 2-year institutions, but not in the other three versions of this survey component. (However, this information is included in the narrative edit resources for all four materials.) Although a majority of program reporters are less-than 2-year institutions (71%), the remaining institutions may not be submitting data under the same specifications. As one program reporter commented, "I don't think all keyholders read all the directions. They just jump right in to completing the survey. I have done this myself and realized I have had to read the directions and sometimes re-read them to thoroughly understand them."¹⁸ Another

¹³ <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>

¹⁴ <https://www.airweb.org/EducationAndEvents/IPEDSTraining/Tutorials/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁵ <http://www.airweb.org/EducationAndEvents/IPEDSTraining/Tutorials/Pages/Reporters.aspx>

¹⁶ IC Header instructions for less-than 2-year institutions, Part B – Organization – Calendar System

¹⁷ IC Header instructions for less-than 2-year institutions, Part B – Organization – Calendar System

¹⁸ Program reporter participant comment

participant noted that “instruction from the IPEDS Help Desk is the only source that has provided clarity or direction.”

2. **Provide more online training for keyholders at program reporting institutions.**

NCES should provide more targeted training directed at program reporting institutions and deliver such training online. One respondent commented, “during the first year of participation in Title IV, there should be training for new keyholders and presidents/owners of institutions...It needs to be more in-depth of an explanation of the importance of this requirement, rather than a brief mention.”¹⁹ In fact, most participants discussed a need for more training through workshops and webinars, specifically for the program reporting audience. As one individual explained, “the reports can be overwhelming at times, especially to a new person reporting the information.”²⁰ A sample training curriculum is included in Appendix A.

3. **Increase accessibility and visibility of online resources through a new keyholder webpage on the IPEDS website.** New keyholders and other administrators whose work supports IPEDS would benefit from a webpage dedicated to providing help related to data submission. Most of the resources are already available online (e.g., survey component screen shots, instructions, and answers to frequently asked questions), but the materials are not organized in a way that is intuitive and easy to navigate, especially for someone new to IPEDS. A new keyholder webpage that is properly organized, complete with links to the New Keyholder Handbook and other available resources, would be beneficial.

Program reporting institutions face additional challenges when submitting IPEDS data compared with traditional academic reporters. Because of the small sizes of many program reporting institutions, institutional staff may have limited backgrounds in higher education and data analyses. Therefore, providing resources in a straightforward manner with plain language form²¹ is essential for ensuring collection of quality data. In the future, training materials and the delivery of resources may be modified to reach three distinct groups:

1. New keyholders at new program reporting institutions or institutions newly subject to Title IV/IPEDS reporting requirements;
2. New keyholders at current program reporting institutions; and
3. Current keyholders at current program reporting institutions.

¹⁹ Program reporter participant comment

²⁰ Program reporter participant comment

²¹ www.plainlanguage.gov/index.cfm

REVIEW OF IPEDS DATA COLLECTION MATERIALS

A review of IPEDS data collection materials was conducted to explore refinements that could make the materials more accessible to users. The documents relating to the Institutional Characteristics Header, Finance, Human Resources, Student Financial Aid, and Graduation Rates surveys were reviewed for general clarity, presentation, and economy of language, as well as for adherence to specific standards set forth in FPLG. Based on this review, key elements to consider in revisions of materials include:

- Provide direct access to instructions within the survey forms. FPLG emphasizes the need to minimize cross-references (p. 83). Consistent with this, if the components of survey instructions directly relating to each segment of the survey (e.g., Finance Part B) could be embedded within the page (via pop-up windows, expandable content, or other), it would greatly enhance the accessibility of the data collection instruments. This is also consistent with FPLG guidelines for web content, which emphasize the importance of users being able to find what they need and to deliver content in small “chunks” (p. 94).
- Where possible, lengthy descriptions should be organized into tabular format (FPLG, p. 74). This allows users to quickly access information or particular points of clarification in which they are interested within a complex array of information. Descriptions of conditional responses (if/then statements), in particular, can be clarified with a tabular display.
- Avoid excessive use of acronyms; instead, spell out entries aside from the most frequently listed items (FPLG, p.33). It is recommended that no more than two or three acronyms be used in any given document, yet 10 or more can be found in some IPEDS surveys and accompanying instructions.
- Use appropriate means of emphasis. In order to address concerns of legibility and inferred tone, the FPLG standard (p. 82) is to use bold or italicized text to provide such emphasis, while avoiding the use of all caps or underlines. Visual cues to highlight the nature of data (such as indenting sub-categories) would also enhance readers’ understandings.
- Expand and enhance the use of headings (FPLG, p. 11). Frequent use of headings provides immediate context for the encompassed materials and helps users quickly locate or access the information they seek.
- Revise language from passive to active voice (FPLG, p. 20). This clarifies who is responsible and typically involves fewer words.
- Address users through direct use of pronouns (FPLG, p. 30) and change verbiage implying data requirements from “should” to “must.” (FPLG, p. 25) Both of these modifications will assist readers in determining what is required and who is required to do it.
- Conduct general editorial reviews. Inconsistencies should be addressed.

Specific examples identified within each of the survey components are presented in the subsections that follow in order to provide guidance that could improve the efficiency of data collection.

SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS HEADER (IC HEADER) SURVEY REVIEW

This section presents specific examples of issues identified in the Institutional Characteristics Header component of the IPEDS surveys for **less-than 2-year institutions** (package_12_90). The documents were reviewed for general clarity and economy of language and for adherence to specific standards set forth in FPLG. A sample of suggested refinements specific to these survey materials follows.

1. To provide better clarity and importance to the issue of reporting type, standard category terms for academic reporters, program reporters, and hybrid or other academic reporters should be added to the IPEDS Glossary. In addition, definitions for these concepts should be included in the Survey Instructions. Currently, IPEDS Survey Instructions only contain information about the type of data that are reported for each calendar option, while definitions for these concepts are found in the Narrative Edits.
2. Regarding the Frequently Asked Questions, the following additions would be helpful:
 - a. My institution offers two programs, one for a certificate and one for an associate’s degree. How should my institution be classified? (This question can also provide guidance to the issue of Associates of Applied Science [AAS] degrees, and other similar occupation degrees, if appropriate.)
 - b. My institution measures programs by both clock and credit hours, but only awards certificates. How should my institution be classified?
 - c. My institution measures programs by credit hours, but awards mostly certificates. How should my institution be classified?
3. The survey form for IC Header provides one example of inconsistent language. According to FPLG, directions should “address one person, not a group” (p. 10) and should be written to address the individual reading the document. An example is noted below.

Current:	Revised:
What is the predominant calendar system at the institution?	What is the predominant calendar system at your institution?

In other directions within the survey, singular nouns are used, creating inconsistency in the text. Further inconsistency continues in the Calendar System section of the IC Header.

4. Use of active voice is another tenet of the Plain Language review. In Part B of IC Header, question 6:

Current:	Revised:
If you answer Yes to this question, you	If you answer Yes to this question, you

will be required to provide Graduation Rates data for the 2009-10 cohort in the spring collection.	must provide Graduation Rates data for the 2009-10 cohort in the spring collection.
---	--

SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM THE FINANCE (F) SURVEY REVIEW

This section presents specific examples of issues identified in the Finance component of the IPEDS surveys for **non-degree-granting, proprietary institutions** (package_5_87). The documents were reviewed for general clarity and economy of language as well as for adherence to specific standards set forth in FPLG. A sample of suggested refinements specific to these survey materials follows.

1. Acronyms are used extensively throughout the materials, while FPLG recommends no more than two to three uses (p. 34). Instances include:
 - IPEDS
 - NCES
 - NACUBO
 - FARM
 - CV
 - GPFS
 - FDSL
 - DHHS
 - DOD
 - SSIG

2. FPLG recommends use of pronouns to address respondents directly (p. 30) and phrasing reporting requirements as “must” rather than alternatives (p. 25). Generally, the materials currently addresses “the institution” or “reporting entity” and phrase directives as “should.” Some examples from the Finance survey materials are noted below.

Survey	Page #	Current	Revised
Finance	1	To the extent possible, the finance data requested in this report should be provided from your institution's audited General Purpose Financial Statements (GPFS).	To the extent possible, you must report financial data from your institution's audited General Purpose Financial Statements.
Finance	6	The starting point for reporting should be amounts reported in the GPFS for the most recent fiscal year ending before October 1, 2012.	You must report financial data from the GPFS for the most recent fiscal year ending before October 1, 2012.
Finance	7	The reporting entity's financial accounting policies and procedures should be the	Your institution's financial accounting policies and procedures must be the basis for reporting this

Survey	Page #	Current	Revised
		beginning basis for reporting to this IPEDS survey component.	IPEDS survey component.

3. FPLG discourages use of “and/or” (p. 48). Instances appear on pages 6, 8, 9, 13, 21.
4. FPLG discouraged use of all caps or underlines for emphasis and prescribes italicized or bold font as an alternative (p. 82). Some examples of these instances appear below.

Survey	Page #	Current	Revised
Finance	7	Report all financial in WHOLE DOLLARS only, omitting cents.	Report all financial in whole dollars only, omitting cents.
Finance	9	PLEASE COMPLETE PART C BEFORE PROVIDING DATA FOR PART D.	Please complete Part C before providing data for Part D.
Finance	12	<u>Because this is a generated number, data providers are advised to compare this amount with a corresponding amount in the institution's GPFS. If these amounts differ materially, the data provider is advised to check the other amounts provided on this screen for data entry errors.</u>	Because this is a generated number, data providers are advised to compare this amount with a corresponding amount in the institution's GPFS. If these amounts differ materially, the data provider is advised to check the other amounts provided on this screen for data entry errors.

Other extensive use of underlined text appears on pages 9 through 11, though it seems to be a general editorial issue rather than an attempt to provide emphasis.

5. There are many instances in which a tabular presentation of information would provide clarity or allow for quicker reference within the instructions. One specific example from page 9 of the materials is included below, followed by an alternate, tabular display of the information:

Current:

Refer to these specific instructions for more information about reporting student grants.

01 – Pell grants (federal) – Enter the amount awarded to the institution under the Pell Grant program.

02 – Other federal grants – Enter the amount awarded to the institution under federal student aid programs other than Pell, such as Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (SEOG), DHHS training grants (aid portion only), DOD grants, Department of Veterans Affairs grants, and the federal portion of State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG). Report institutional matching funds separately under institutional grants. Do not include Federal Work Study amounts.

03 – State and local grants (government) – Enter the amount awarded to the institution under state and local student aid programs, including the state portion of State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG).

Revised: Refer to these specific instructions for more information about reporting student grants.

Survey Line	Section	Description
01	Pell grants (federal)	Enter the amount awarded to the institution under the Pell Grant program.
02	Other federal grants	Enter the amount awarded to the institution under federal student aid programs other than Pell, such as Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (SEOG), DHHS training grants (aid portion only), DOD grants, Department of Veterans Affairs grants, and the federal portion of State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG). Report institutional matching funds separately under institutional grants. Do not include Federal Work Study amounts.
03	State and local grants (government)	Enter the amount awarded to the institution under state and local student aid programs, including the state portion of State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG).

6. Tabular presentation can also assist in the presentation of if/then propositions (FPLG, p. 75). Possible revisions to one such occurrence (from page 8 of the materials) are presented below.

Current:

Audit Opinion: Check the appropriate box to indicate if the GPFS received an unqualified opinion from your auditors. If “qualified” is checked, please note in the context box the nature of the qualification. If the statements have not been audited, please check “Don’t know” and note in the context box that the GPFS are unaudited.

Revised: Check the appropriate box to indicate if the GPFS received an unqualified opinion from your auditors.

If the following is selected:	Then please note the following in the context box:
“unqualified”	(No context needed.)

If the following is selected:	Then please note the following in the context box:
“qualified”	Indicate the nature of the qualification.
“don’t know”	Note that the GPFS has not been audited.

7. Some issues are apparent in the labeling of survey fields. For example, on page 1 of the Finance survey, the notations for the date format should appear adjacent to the survey fields.

FASB-Reporting Institutions
General Information - Fiscal Year and Audit

To the extent possible, the finance data requested in this report should be provided from your institution's audited General Purpose Financial Statements (GPFS). Please refer to the instructions specific to each screen of the survey for details and references.

1. Fiscal Year Calendar
This report covers financial activities for the 12-month fiscal year: (The fiscal year reported should be the most recent fiscal year ending before October 1, 2012.)

Beginning: month/year (MMYYYY) Month: (MM) [] Year: (YYYY) []

And ending: month/year (MMYYYY) Month: (MM) [] Year: (YYYY) []

8. Assorted editorial issues are apparent in the outline that appears on page 6 of the Finance survey.

Purpose of component This section does not appear anywhere in successive contents.

Changes in Reporting

General Information and Instructions The corresponding section of content is titled "General Information and Instructions"

Coverage

Where to Get Help

Where data appears

Detailed Instructions Header

Screening questions Address the inconsistencies in capitalization.

SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) SURVEY REVIEW

This section presents specific examples of issues identified in the Human Resources component of the IPEDS surveys for **non-degree institutions** (package_1_46). The documents were reviewed for general clarity and economy of language as well as for adherence to specific standards set forth in FPLG. A sampling of suggested refinements specific to these survey materials follows.

1. Differentiate column headers in entry tables (forms) via font size, shading, or other variation.
2. Use tabular formats to economize language and organize display (FPLG, p.74). Also, for visually impaired readers, it may be preferable to hyperlink the "Occupational Category" text as it appears in the tables (FPLG, p.99). An example appears below from page 18 of the HR survey materials.

Current:

Service Occupations
 The IPEDS HR occupational category called “Service Occupations” is based on the following five occupational groups in the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Manual. (For details on the five SOC occupational groups, click on the links below.)

- Healthcare Support Occupations
 [SOC Major Group 31-0000 - <http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc310000.htm>]
- Protective Service Occupations
 [SOC Major Group 33-0000 - <http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc330000.htm>]
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
 [SOC Major Group 35-0000 - <http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc350000.htm>]
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations
 [SOC Major Group 37-0000 - <http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc370000.htm>]
- Personal Care and Service Occupations
 [SOC Major Group 39-0000 - <http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc390000.htm>]

Revised:

Service Occupations

SOC Code	2010 SOC Category/Cataegories	Details on SOC Group(s)
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc310000.htm
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc330000.htm
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc350000.htm
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc370000.htm
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	http://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/soc390000.htm

3. If/then propositions can also be organized in a tabular format (FPLG, p. 74). An example from page 1 of the HR materials appears below. The language has also been revised to reflect active voice (FPLG, p. 20).

Current:

The reporting of data by gender and race/ethnicity is optional this year as it is in even-numbered years. If you answer No, screens to report data by employment status (full-time and part-time) and occupational category will be displayed. If you answer Yes, screens to report data by employment status (full-time and part-time), occupational category, and gender AND race/ethnicity will be displayed and you must complete all applicable screens.

Revised:

In this and other even-numbered years, you have the option of whether to report data by gender and race/ethnicity.

Do you wish to report data by gender AND race/ethnicity this year?

If:	Then:
Yes	You must enter data for gender and race/ethnicity on all applicable questions about employment status (full-time and part-time) and occupational category.
No	You will not enter data for gender and race/ethnicity.

4. Use pronouns to address users directly (FPLG, p.30) and revise to active voice (FPLG, p.20). An example from page 13 of the HR survey:

Current:	Revised:
This information is being collected in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Sec. 421(a)(1) of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. These instructions correspond with the Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education, published in the Federal Register on October 19, 2007.	You are reporting information in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Sec. 421(a)(1) of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. These instructions correspond with the Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education, published in the Federal Register on October 19, 2007.

5. Remove bold font from page 14 of HR survey.

SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM THE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID (SFA) SURVEY REVIEW

This section presents specific examples of issues identified in the Student Financial Aid component of the IPEDS surveys for **private, program reporting institutions** (package_7_19). The documents were reviewed for general clarity and economy of language as well as for adherence to specific standards set forth in FPLG. A sampling of suggested refinements specific to these survey materials follows.

1. Generally, directives stated as "should" are better stated as "must" (FPLG, p. 25; an example is found on p.13 of the SFA materials).
2. Address readers as "you" and not as "the data provider" (FPLG, p. 30).
3. Expand label to data column from "2011-12" to "2011-12 Number of Students"
4. Use visual cues to indicate relationships. For example, indentation of lines on page 1 of the SFA survey would help the reader understand which groups are subsets of broader categories. An example from page 1 of the SFA survey appears below.

Current:	Revised:
01. Group 1 All undergraduate students	01. (Group 1) All undergraduate students
02. Group 2 Of those in Group 1, those who are full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking	02. (Group 2) Of those in Group 1, those who are full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking
02a. Of those in Group 2, those who were awarded any Federal Work Study, loans to students, or grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, the institution, or other sources known to the institution	02a. (Group 2a) Of those in Group 2, those who were awarded any Federal Work Study, loans to students, or grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, the institution, or other sources known to the institution
02b. Of those in Group 2, those who were awarded any loans to students or grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, or the institution	02b. (Group 2b) Of those in Group 2, those who were awarded any loans to students or grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, or the institution
03. Group 3 Of those in Group 2, those enrolled in your institution's largest program and who were awarded grant or scholarship aid from the following sources: the federal government, state/local government, or the institution	03. (Group 3) Of those in Group 2, those enrolled in your institution's largest program and who were awarded grant or scholarship aid from the following sources: the federal government, state/local government, or the institution
04. Group 4 Of those in Group 2, those enrolled in your institution's	04. (Group 4) Of those in Group 2, those

Current:	Revised:
largest program and who were awarded any Title IV federal student aid	enrolled in your institution's largest program and who were awarded any Title IV federal student aid.

Further consideration of changing the labels of these groups should also be undertaken, as naming conventions that adhere to the same level (e.g., Group 1, Group 2, etc.) imply a parallel level of specificity. Alternately, if outline numbering conventions were utilized consistently (e.g., Group 1, Group 1A., Group 1Ai, etc.) it might help the reader to understand which groups are encompassed by others. As noted in the above example, groups 2A, 2B, 3 and 4 are all subsets of Group 2, whereas one would assume that groups 1, 2, 3, and 4 would be of parallel levels, particularly since "2A" and "2B" are used as subsets of Group 2 in other instances.

- Column headers should be expanded to include references to type of data. For example, on page 5 of the SFA survey materials, "2011-12" should be expanded to "2011-12 Students," followed by a new set of headers labeled "2011-12 Amount of Aid" for the subsequent rows of data. See illustration below.

Expand column labels to specify type of data.

01.	Report the number of Group 3 students with the following living arrangements:	2011-12 STUDENTS	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA 2010-11 STUDENTS	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA 2009-10 STUDENTS
01a.	On-campus			
01b.	Off-campus (with family)			
01c.	Off-campus (not with family)			
01d.	Unknown (calculated) This value is calculated using the following formula: [A03-(D01a+D01b+D01c)]			
02.	Report the total amount of grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, or the institution awarded to Group 3 students	2011-12 AMOUNT OF AID	2010-11 AMOUNT OF AID	2009-10 AMOUNT OF AID

Add new column headers to clarify data types here. (Note that depiction does not intend to imply that space for calculated values should not be sacrificed.)

- Inconsistent with other survey materials that were reviewed, in the SFA documentation, an outline of subject areas is not provided. This should be added to assist in quick references.
- There are occasions of inconsistency between the information included in the instructions versus what appears in the actual survey forms. One example of this occurs in the SFA materials. While the instructions on pages 17 through 18 are framed according to distinct column numbers, this same numbering convention (which appears in other sections of this survey as well) is not used in the survey forms for Part B (page 2). An illustration of this issue appears below on the following page.

Instructions (pages 17-8 for Parts B):

02. Pell grants

Column 1. Report the number of Group 1 students who were awarded Pell grants. Do not include any other type of federal grant aid (e.g., Academic Competitiveness Grants).

Column 2. The percentage of Group 1 students who were awarded Pell grants is calculated for you.

Column 3. Report the total dollar amount of Pell grants awarded to Group 1 students. Do not include any other type of federal grant aid (e.g., Academic Competitiveness Grants).

Column 4. The average amount of Pell grants awarded to Group 1 students is calculated for you.

Column labels noted in these instructions should also appear in the form included below.

Revisions to Part B (page 2):

Label consistently with instructions on pages 17-18

Aid Type	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	Number of Group 1 students who were awarded aid	Percentage of Group 1 students who were awarded aid	Total amount of aid awarded to Group 1 students	Average amount of aid awarded to Group 1 students
01. Grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, the institution, and other sources known to the institution				
02. Pell grants				
03. Federal student loans				

8. The addition of headings (or highlighted lead-in sentences) would allow for quicker reference through the materials (FPLG, p. 11). An example of this type of change as it relates to an item on page 22 of the SFA materials is included as an illustration below.

Current:	Revised:
<p>Institutions should use the most recently available information regarding student living arrangement. For example, a student may have indicated on her or his FAFSA or an institutional financial aid application that she or he planned to live at home with family. But when the student enrolled, she or he decided to live on campus. Although the student may not have modified the FAFSA to reflect the updated living arrangement, the institution may have more recent information in its financial aid system indicating that the student lived on campus according to the most recent aid package for that student during the financial aid year. In this case, the institution should classify this student as an on-campus student.</p>	<p>Use the most recently available information on student living arrangement. For example, a student may have indicated on her or his FAFSA or an institutional financial aid application that she or he planned to live at home with family. But when the student enrolled, she or he decided to live on campus. Although the student may not have modified the FAFSA to reflect the updated living arrangement, the institution may have more recent information in its financial aid system indicating that the student lived on campus according to the most recent aid package for that student during the financial aid year. In this case, the institution should classify this student as an on-campus student.</p>

SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM THE GRADUATION RATES (GR) SURVEY REVIEW

This section presents specific examples of issues identified in the Graduation Rate component of the IPEDS surveys for **program-reporting, less-than 2-year institutions** (package_4_34). The documents were reviewed for general clarity and economy of language as well as for adherence to specific standards set forth in FPLG. A sampling of suggested refinements specific to these survey materials follows.

1. Remove italicized text (below) explaining the fall cohort for academic cohorts and full-year cohort for program institutions. The inclusion of this information in the survey form may lead to confusion and cause individuals unfamiliar with the IPEDS process to question their original selections.

Text to be removed:

A fall cohort is used by institutions with standard academic terms (semester, trimester, quarter, 4-1-4). A full-year cohort is used by institutions offering primarily occupational/vocational programs and operating on a continuous basis.

2. When explaining the numerous aspects of the full-time, first-time student cohort, provide details based on the order in which the data elements appear on the screen from left to right, rather than numerically (lowest to highest). Providing detail left to right may be easier to understand as English is read left to right.

Current:

- In the columns below, report the status of the full-time, first-time students reported in the cohort in Column 10.
- The cumulative number of those students who completed their program within 150% of normal time as of August 31, 2012 should be reported in Column 11.
- Report transfers-out who did not complete a program in Column 30. If the mission of your institution includes providing substantial preparation for students to enroll in another eligible institution WITHOUT having completed their programs, you should report transfer-out data in Column 30. A school is required to report only on those students that the school knows have transferred to another school. A school must document that the student actually transferred. If it is not part of your mission, you may report transfer-out data if you wish.
- Report exclusions from the cohort in Column 45. The ONLY allowable categories for this column are:
 students who died or became permanently disabled
 students who left school to serve in the armed forces (or have been called up to active duty)
 students who left school to serve with a foreign aid service of the Federal Government
 students who left school to serve on an official church mission
- Col 52 - No longer enrolled - will be calculated for you. This includes students who either dropped out or completed in greater than 150% of normal time.
- Column 55 - Completers within 100% - this is a subset of Column 11 (completers within 150%). These data are being requested so they can be preloaded into next year's Graduation Rate 200% survey form

Cohort of full-time, first-time students									
Screen 1 of 1	Cohort year 2009								
	Initial cohort	Revised cohort	Total exclusions	Adjusted cohort (10 - 45)	Completed program within 100% of normal time to completion (Column 55)	Completed program within 150% of normal time to completion (Column 11)	Total transfer-out students (Column 30)	Still enrolled (Column 51)	No longer enrolled (Column 52)
		(Column 10)	(Column 45)	(Column 50)					

Revised:

Column 10	Report the status of the full-time, first-time students reported in the cohort in Column 10.
Column 45	Report exclusions from the cohort in Column 45. The ONLY allowable categories for this column are students who died or became permanently disabled, students who left school to serve in the armed forces (or have been called up to active duty), students who left school to serve with a foreign aid service of the Federal Government, or students who left school to serve on an official church mission.
Column 55	Completers within 100% - this is a subset of Column 11 (completers within 150%). These data are being requested so they can be preloaded into next year's Graduation Rate 200% survey form.
Column 11	The cumulative number of those students who completed their program within 150% of normal time as of August 31, 2012 should be reported in Column 11.
Column 30	Report transfers-out who did not complete a program in Column 30. If the mission of your institution includes providing substantial preparation for students to enroll in another eligible institution WITHOUT having completed their programs, you should report transfer-out data in Column 30. A school is required to report only on those students that the school knows have transferred to another school. A school must document that the student actually transferred. If it is not part of your mission, you may report transfer-out data if you wish.
Column 52	No longer enrolled - will be calculated for you. This includes students who either dropped out or completed in greater than 150% of normal time.

	Column 10	Column 45	Column 50	Column 55	Column 11	Column 30	Column 51	Column 52
Initial cohort	Revised cohort	Total exclusions	Adjusted Cohort (10 - 45)	Completed program within 100% of normal time to completion	Completed program within 150% of normal time to completion	Total transfer-out students	Still enrolled	No longer enrolled

3. Limit the use of abbreviations (FPLG, p. 33). For instance, in the above example, the abbreviation “Col” is used for “Column” without explicit definition.
4. In the instructions associated with the above excerpt for program reporters at less-than 2-year institutions, the directions state: “In the columns below, report the status of the Full-time, first-time students reported in the cohort in Column 10.” However, Column 10 is for the revised cohort and the directions imply that this information should be preloaded, which it is not. Directions should be changed to read, “In Column 10, provide any edits to the initial cohort of full-time, first-time students. In the remaining columns, report the status of these students.”
5. Some of the similar inconsistencies in the outline titles versus headers for respective sections are also apparent for this survey (e.g., “Purpose” vs. “Purpose of Survey” on page 3). A full editorial review would be advisable.

APPENDIX A: TRAINING CURRICULUM

Sample Training Curriculum for Program Reporting Institutions

Objective: Multi-piece video tutorial to complement materials already available from the IPEDS Data Provider Center, New Keyholder Handbook, and new keyholder video tutorial. The program reporter video tutorial will bridge the gap between the high-level overview material in the New Keyholder Handbook and video tutorial, and the detailed instructions in the Data Provider Center. The tutorial should be developed specifically for program reporting institutions and address their needs and concerns.

Outline:

- I. **Introduction.** The introduction should discuss the importance of IPEDS data collection and how this collection benefits program reporting institutions. Using data effectively and productively reduces the perception of burden, which is a common frustration among program reporting institutions. Providing examples of how institutions can benefit from IPEDS may ease frustrations with the system.
- II. **Program, Academic, and Hybrid Reporters.** Using information from the NPEC report on program reporters, this section should explain the major differences between the three reporting options, including examples and common characteristics. It should also provide justification for why these institutions report differently. Finally, it should outline the specific differences between the submission requirements related to the Institutional Characteristics, Student Financial Aid, Fall Enrollment, and Graduation Rates survey components.
- III. **Survey Specific Details.** At a high level for each survey, the tutorial should explain the major pieces of which keyholders from program reporting institutions should be aware, as well as information from the General Instructions section in the survey component instructions. This includes answers to the following questions: What data are being reported? What is the cohort (if applicable)? What are the major definitions and variables used in the survey component?
- IV. **Resources/Help.** This section should detail additional sources of information and help, including the IPEDS Website, Data Resource Center, Survey Submission System, AIR Online Tutorials, etc. It should also provide survey specific resources (e.g., NACUBO resource documents for Finance).

APPENDIX B: PROGRAM REPORTER WEBPAGE

Based on their predominant calendar system, institutions have three options for reporting IPEDS data. For institutions that are **not** new to IPEDS, this item is preloaded and the Help Desk must be contacted in order to make changes.

1. Program reporting institutions operate on a calendar system that differs by program or on a continuous basis (e.g., every 2 weeks, monthly, or other period). Program reporters measure courses primarily by contact hours, or offer primarily occupational programs measured in credit hours. In most cases, institutions that award only formal degrees will not report data as program reporters.
2. Academic reporting institutions operate according to a more traditional semester, quarter, trimester, or 4-1-4 plan.
3. Hybrid reporting institutions offer programs with term-based cost of attendance (like academic reporters), but enroll students throughout the year (like program reporters).

For a number of IPEDS variables, such as student charges, financial aid, and graduation rates, the traditional reporting period for required data encompasses an entire academic year or fall cohort. However, for program reporting institutions with academic programs that may be only weeks in length, the traditional reporting period causes complications when attempting to analyze or compare data. Therefore, NCES introduced the program reporter option for IPEDS in 2004.

The table below indicates how an institution’s reporting calendar selection influences what data are reported in IC, SFA, EF, and GR/GR200—the IPEDS components affected by these calendar considerations²².

Survey and Components	Academic Reporter Calendar Systems	Program Reporter Calendar Systems	Hybrid Calendar Systems
Institutional Characteristics (IC)		Entire cost of the largest program	
<i>Cost of attendance for full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students</i>	Cost of attendance for an academic year	Breakdown of living expense costs per month, for students in the largest program	Cost of attendance for an academic year
Institutional Characteristics (IC)		For 2nd – 6th largest programs, total tuition & fees for the entire program	
<i>Average tuition & fees for all undergraduate students</i>	Average tuition & fees for an academic year		Average tuition & fees for an academic year
Student Financial Aid	Standard academic year	Defined by the	Standard academic year

²² IPEDS New Keyholder Handbook. NCES, p. 20.

Survey and Components	Academic Reporter Calendar Systems	Program Reporter Calendar Systems	Hybrid Calendar Systems
(SFA) <i>Reporting period</i>		institution; must fall within the period of July 1 through June 30	
Student Financial Aid (SFA) <i>Student cohort</i>	Students enrolled on October 15 , or the institution’s official fall reporting date	Students enrolled at any time within the institution’s academic year	Students enrolled at any time within the period of August 1 through October 31
Fall Enrollment (EF)	Students enrolled on October 15 , or the institution’s official fall reporting date	Students enrolled at any time within the period of August 1 through October 31	Students enrolled at any time within the period of August 1 through October 31
Graduation Rates (GR & GR200) Student cohort of fulltime, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students	Fall cohort: Students enrolled on October 15 , or the institution’s official fall reporting date	Full-year cohort: Students enrolled at any time within the period of September 1 through August 31	Full-year cohort: Students enrolled at any time during the period of September 1 through August 31

Contact the IPEDS Help Desk at 877.255.2568 if you are unsure which calendar system to select, if your calendar system differs from or requires changes from the prior year, or if you are considering selecting the “Other Academic Calendar” option.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

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