

## **Report and Suggestions from IPEDS Technical Review Panel #55: Capturing and Clarifying Dual Enrollment Data**

**SUMMARY: The Technical Review Panel discussed feasible and minimally burdensome ways to collect and clarify dual enrollment data in IPEDS and considered potential changes to improve information for stakeholders. This summary provides feedback on how changes would affect data quality and reporting burden for institutions. Comments from interested parties are due to Janice Kelly-Reid, IPEDS Project Director at RTI International, at [ipedstrpcomment@rti.org](mailto:ipedstrpcomment@rti.org) by July 5, 2018.**

On March 20, 2018, RTI International, the contractor for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) web-based data collection system, convened a meeting of the IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP) in Washington, DC.<sup>1</sup> IPEDS TRP meetings are conducted by RTI to solicit expert discussion and suggestions on a broad range of issues related to postsecondary education and the IPEDS collection. Each TRP is designed to allow the public to advise and work with RTI to improve IPEDS data collection, products, data quality, and user-friendliness. The TRP does not report to or advise the U.S. Department of Education.

RTI's specific purpose for TRP 55 was to discuss feasible and minimally burdensome ways to collect and clarify dual enrollment data in IPEDS survey components to improve stakeholder information. The panel consisted of 48 individuals representing institutions, researchers, state governments, the federal government, higher education associations, and other experts.

### **Background**

The expansion of dual enrollment—in terms of location (e.g., high school, college campus, and online delivery), instructor qualification (e.g., high school teacher, college instructor), student eligibility, and funding arrangement—blurs the line between the secondary and postsecondary education sectors. Although growth in dual enrollment has been observed in all sectors of postsecondary institutions, the degree to which IPEDS measures dual enrollment is unclear. The IPEDS collection does not differentiate high school students taking college courses for credit from other students enrolled for credit at the undergraduate level or students who enter with advanced standing (earned college credit or postsecondary award before graduation from high school) from other entering first-time students. Thus, it is likely that dual enrollment affects the data and metrics comparability of IPEDS survey components, which answer questions about student enrollment and progression, institutional revenues and spending, and investment in instructional and staff support.

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<sup>1</sup> The TRP meeting was originally scheduled to be held over two days on March 20 and 21 but was shortened due to inclement weather and the closure of federal offices on March 21. This summary reflects the discussion of topics covered on March 20; the discussion of topics planned for March 21 has been placed on hold until further notice. The following topics were planned but not covered: collecting dual enrollment data in Graduation Rates and Outcome Measures, collecting dual enrollment in a possible separate survey, and final discussion on priorities, feasibility, and unintended consequences of collecting more dual enrollment data in the IPEDS collection.

The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC)<sup>2</sup> commissioned a research paper<sup>3</sup> to examine how the IPEDS collection can capture and clarify dual enrollment data, focusing on the Fall Enrollment (EF) and 12-Month Enrollment (E12) survey components. This summary captures the paper findings which were presented by the authors and the subsequent panel discussion. One finding of this exploratory research indicates IPEDS definitions and terms related to dual enrollment are unclear and inconsistent with varied institutional practices for measuring the number of high school students taking college courses and first-time-in-college students who took college courses in high school. Another finding in the paper is institutional reporting practices and reporting capacity vary, which influences how they report students to IPEDS. These findings suggest the need to clarify and expand the IPEDS collection to accommodate dual enrollment.

RTI convened the TRP to engage the postsecondary community in a discussion about how IPEDS can clarify and collect information related to dual enrollment to improve stakeholder information. The TRP was asked to review the findings and recommendations from the NPEC paper, consider potential changes to the current definitions and instructions related to dual enrollment, and explore opportunities to add new items to fill information gaps. Suggestions for data collection changes consider the capacity and resources needed to implement the change as well as the potential burden placed on data reporters.

### **Discussion Item #1: Defining Dual Enrollment**

Definitions and terms related to dual enrollment vary across (and even within) institutions, organizations, and states. Although the terms *dual enrollment*, *dual credit*, and *concurrent enrollment* are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to students enrolled in postsecondary coursework while also enrolled in secondary education, these terms have multiple definitions and may have different meanings in state and institutional contexts. For example, some states and institutions use the term dual credit to broadly refer to a course for which students can earn both secondary and postsecondary credit upon successful completion. Some definitions specify factors such as course location or delivery mode, instructor type, intake procedures, and student eligibility requirements, while others are more general and could be interpreted as inclusive of all models of college course-taking while in high school. A common element across various dual enrollment definitions is that dual enrollment refers to students enrolled in postsecondary coursework while also enrolled in secondary education.

IPEDS differentiates between dual enrollment (a program through which high school students may enroll in college courses while still enrolled in high school)<sup>4</sup> and dual credit (a program through which high school students are enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, taught at their high school, that fulfill high school graduation requirements and may earn the student college credits).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NPEC was established by NCES in 1995 as a voluntary organization that encompasses all sectors of the postsecondary education community including federal agencies, postsecondary institutions, associations, and other organizations with a major interest in postsecondary education data collection.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, J.L. & An, B.P., *Improving IPEDS Data Collection on High School Students Enrolled in College Courses* (NPEC 2017). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. Retrieved 5/24/18 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

<sup>4</sup> Students are not required to apply for admission to the college to participate.

<sup>5</sup> Advanced Placement is further defined as college-level courses taught in high school. Students may take an examination at the completion of the course; acceptable scores allow students to earn college credit toward a degree, certificate, or other formal award.

The panel discussed limitations of the current language and noted the current definition for dual enrollment refers to high school students who *may* enroll in college courses while still enrolled in high school, but it is unclear whether that includes AP and other types of college credits earned through exam, such as International Baccalaureate. Panelists noted these credits operate like dual enrollment in that students can earn postsecondary credit in high school. A key difference, however, is that high school students do not enroll in postsecondary courses when they participate in exam-based credit but earn credit by passing an exam with a qualifying score.

Panelists suggested clarifying that the dual enrollment definition should include enrollment in courses for which postsecondary credit is awarded for successfully completing the course, rather than examples of models where students may earn postsecondary credit through an examination or other means that do not require postsecondary enrollment. Panelists noted that postsecondary coursework at the remedial or developmental level would be considered dual enrollment if the postsecondary institution awards the student credit (as defined by the institution) for successfully completing the course and the postsecondary credit is recorded on the student’s college transcript. Given the multiple and varied delivery models available across and within institutions (e.g., traditional seated instruction, distance education, hybrid models), the panel suggested IPEDS clarify that dual enrollment should include courses identified as postsecondary courses, independent of course delivery mode, funding, location, or type of instructor.

The current dual enrollment definition also specifies “while still enrolled in high school.” The panel noted this language would exclude students who participate in dual enrollment but do not attend a high school, such as home schooled students or middle school students.<sup>6</sup> Panelists suggested maintaining the element of duality in the current definition of dual enrollment—high school students enrolled in college courses while still in high school—and expanding it to be more inclusive of students who do not have a high school diploma but are enrolled in *secondary* education while taking college-credit coursework.

The panel suggested adopting and slightly modifying the NPEC paper’s definition for dual enrollment and adding guidance on what to include/exclude:

**Dual enrollment:** Refers to students who enroll in college courses offered by an institution of higher education while enrolled in high school or seeking a recognized equivalent. Student performance is recorded on a college transcript and postsecondary credit is awarded for a passing grade in the course.

- **Includes:** All postsecondary courses, independent of course delivery mode, course location, course instructor, whether secondary credit is also offered, and whether the student enrolls through a formal state/local program or enrolls outside a formal state/local program.
- **Excludes:** Credit-by-exam models such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate in which the student is not enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

RTI would appreciate additional feedback on terminology and how to further refine proposed modifications to the definition of dual enrollment. For example, consideration is needed on how to clarify that the postsecondary institution must be aware that the student is also enrolled in high school or equivalent and that “seeking a recognized equivalent” does not include General

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<sup>6</sup> Several states allow middle school students and early academy students to participate in dual enrollment.

Educational Development (GED) programs, which are not part of the intended meaning of dual enrollment. Possible alternatives include amending the definition to refer to secondary students who enroll in postsecondary courses or to clarify that it applies to students who have not yet completed high school.

## **Discussion Item #2: Clarifying and Collecting Dual Enrollment Data in Institutional Characteristics**

The panel considered whether IPEDS should collect general information about institutions' dual enrollment practices and policies. Panelists noted two aspects to institution's dual enrollment participation: (1) Does an institution *offer* dual enrollment for students who have not earned a high school degree (or its recognized equivalent)? and (2) Does the institution *accept* college credits earned prior to high school graduation? Panelists questioned the value of the latter to consumers because the institution's decision to accept these credits may require institutional review or may need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Further, in some cases, dual enrolled credits earned from other institutions may be transferable but only as elective credit.

The **Institutional Characteristics Header (IC-H)** survey component collects basic institutional data on educational offerings and includes an option for "Secondary (high school)" on the list of instruction/programs offered by the institution. Panelists noted it is unclear whether this option refers to dual enrollment. They suggested replacing it with a separate, more specific question to capture whether the institution offers dual enrollment (based upon the new dual enrollment definition) to determine applicability for other survey components that collect (or will collect) dual enrollment data. The language should be consistent with the suggested definition.

In addition to collecting whether the institution offers dual enrollment, the panel discussed the possibility of measuring the extent to which the institution offers dual enrollment, by collecting the percentage of an institution's student counts who are high school students (or a recognized equivalent) enrolled in college credit for the most recent fall term. (If the percentage is greater than 3 percent, the institution should report the percentage.) Opinions of the group were that this information could be calculated more accurately through enrollment reporting instead.

The **Institutional Characteristics (IC)** survey component collects information on whether the institution accepts credit earned prior to admission through dual credit, credit for life experiences, AP credits, or none of these. Panelists discussed the value of collecting information on whether the institution offers dual enrollment and whether it accepts dual enrollment credits. However, the panel did not reach consensus on how (or if) to collect what an institution accepts in terms of college credit earned while in high school (or a recognized equivalent), given the multiple definitions of the term "dual credit" and complexity with how credits are applied to degrees. Options discussed include:

- replacing the term "dual credit" with "dual enrollment,"
- keeping the term "dual credit" and modifying the definition to further distinguish between credit earned through postsecondary courses and exam-based credit, or

- eliminating “dual credit” as an option altogether and only collect whether an institution accepts credit for life experiences,<sup>7</sup> AP credits, or neither.

### **Discussion Item #3: Clarifying and Collecting Dual Enrollment Data in Fall Enrollment and 12-Month Enrollment**

Both **Fall Enrollment** (EF) and **12-Month Enrollment** (E12) instruct institutions to include in their enrollment numbers high school students taking college courses for credit. Panelists suggested and supported collecting dual enrolled students separately in both the EF and E12 survey components to measure the increase in dual enrollment and enrollment changes over time.

Adding a new column for dual enrollment in these components would collect dual enrollment counts by gender and race/ethnicity in a manner similar to how the other enrollment counts are collected in these components. Although panelists generally agreed dual enrollment data by gender and race/ethnicity would provide valuable data for researchers to understand the demographic and enrollment intensity for this growing segment of the enrollment population, this may result in small cell sizes at some institutions. Panelists also noted that reporting this level of detail may present a challenge initially because postsecondary institutions may not have all the data readily available (i.e., some institutions are heavily dependent on information provided by high schools). However, given that institutions award academic credit to these students, panelists pointed out they should be able to obtain the information over time.

Panelists highlighted the need to maintain consistency with the suggested definition of dual enrollment, should IPEDS move forward with collecting separate data on dual enrollment.

**Fall Enrollment.** Institutions are currently instructed to designate dual enrollment students who are enrolled for credit as non-degree/certificate-seeking students. However, dual enrollment students may, in reality, be either degree/certificate-seeking or non-degree/certificate-seeking. Panelists suggested adding a new column for dual enrollment (combining both degree/certificate-seeking and non-degree/certificate-seeking) in addition to the existing two categories of students. The three columns would be:

- Column 1: degree/certificate-seeking
  - first-time
  - transfer-in
  - continuing/returning
- Column 2: dual enrollment (degree/certificate-seeking and non-degree/certificate-seeking)
- Column 3: other (non-degree/certificate-seeking).

Panelists suggested that the columns be mutually exclusive. That is, if a high school student is dual enrolled and degree/certificate-seeking, then the student belongs in Column 2, dual enrollment.

Panelists noted adding a new category for dual enrollment students will interrupt trend data. RTI would appreciate further comment on this topic to understand the costs and benefits of making such a change. In particular, is it: a) more important to maintain trend data?, b) more important to collect a

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<sup>7</sup> Credit earned by students for what they have learned through independent study, noncredit adult courses, work experience, portfolio demonstration, previous licensure or certification, or completion of other learning opportunities (military, government, or professional).

unique count of dual enrolled students?, or c) they are equally important and therefore IPEDS should collect both?

**12-Month Enrollment.** Panelists suggested modifying the existing E12 survey component by adding a column for dual enrollment students in the 12-month unduplicated count section, which would distinguish them as a separate category from undergraduate and graduate students. The three columns would be (1) dual enrollment students, (2) undergraduate students, and (3) graduate students.

Panelists pointed out that because E12 covers a 12-month period, it would be possible for a student to be dual enrolled and subsequently matriculate as an undergraduate within the same 12-month period. Further clarification is needed regarding this scenario should the collection of dual enrollment students be added to E12.

#### **Discussion Item #4: Clarifying and Collecting Dual Enrollment Data in Finance**

The **Finance** component does not specify how to account for dual enrollment tuition revenues or the expenses related to these programs. Dual enrollment funding arrangements vary: some or all tuition costs may be the responsibility of the student/parent, district, state, postsecondary institution, alternative funders (e.g., Workforce Development), or some combination thereof and may be program-dependent, raising questions about how (or if) institutions account for revenues from dual enrollment programs in their Finance reporting.

Panelists considered whether IPEDS should collect additional data on dual enrollment to parse out where revenues and expenses for these programs are reported, if at all. However, panelists noted that collecting *where* dual enrollment figures are included in the Finance survey, while minimally burdensome, would result in data with little practical utility because the survey questions would be too general. Rather, the panel believed greater value to data users would be to collect data on *how much* dual enrollment accounted for in total revenues and expenses. However, these data would not be compatible with the current Finance survey component in terms of definition or structure and the time burden would be substantial. Further discussion is needed to ensure the instructions and FAQs are adequate for reporting dual enrollment in the Finance component.

#### **Discussion Item #5: Clarifying and Collecting Dual Enrollment Data in Human Resources**

The **Human Resources** (HR) survey component draws information on the institution's investment in instructional and staff support, but in its current form the component is unable to answer questions related to dual enrollment, such as who teaches college courses to high school students and whether these instructors are paid by the postsecondary institution. For example, dual enrollment courses may be delivered by high school instructors (who may or may not be designated as adjunct faculty members) or postsecondary faculty. Panelists noted that given the variation in instructor qualification policies and contracting arrangements, adding questions on instructors teaching college courses to high school students would be burdensome for institutions to report and unlikely to result in useful data. Additionally, collecting specific data for dual enrollment is not compatible with the current HR component because the institution's human resources/payroll data are based on a November 1 census date, which may not yield relevant information on staff teaching dual enrolled students. RTI would appreciate additional feedback on calculating the student-to-faculty ratio with regards to which

students and instructional staff are excluded or included from the numerator and denominator of the ratio.

### **Discussion Item #6: Clarifying and Collecting Dual Enrollment Data in Completions**

The **Completions** survey component collects data on awards conferred in postsecondary programs of study and the number of students who earned the awards, but the instructions do not specifically address postsecondary degrees and certificates awarded to high school students in dual enrollment programs.

Panelists suggested clarifying the instructions to specify that postsecondary awards conferred to high school students/secondary students in dual enrollment programs should be included in the Completions component. This would include students who receive a postsecondary award before a high school diploma and students who complete their collegiate coursework for a postsecondary award prior to graduating high school (but receive the degree after the diploma). However, adding elements to the Completions component to specifically measure those awards that were completed as part of dual enrollment was believed to be incompatible with the structure of the current survey component.

### **Additional Consideration: Collecting Dual Enrollment in a Separate Survey**

Throughout the discussion, panelists briefly noted that adding a survey on dual enrollment would provide a place for dual enrollment activity to be accounted for without disrupting existing definitions, trends, and measures on other surveys. Further research and discussions are needed before implementing such an approach.

### **Next Steps**

Once the TRP summary comment period has closed, RTI will review the comments and will outline recommendations for NCES based on the outcome of the TRP meeting and subsequent public comment period. NCES will review the recommendations to determine next steps and submit proposed burden estimates to the Office of Management and Budget for information collection clearance. The current collection expires in 2020.

### **Comments**

RTI is committed to improving the quality and usefulness of IPEDS data as well as strategies that might be helpful in minimizing additional reporting burden. We encourage interested parties to send any comments or concerns about this topic to Janice Kelly-Reid, IPEDS Project Director, at [ipedsTRPcomment@rti.org](mailto:ipedsTRPcomment@rti.org) by **July 5, 2018**.