

Report and Suggestions from IPEDS Technical Review Panel #20 Changes to the IPEDS Data Collection Calendar

SUMMARY: Based on a review of the current IPEDS data collection calendar, the technical review panel suggests several changes to the collection schedule to help improve response rates, increase flexibility of responding, and disseminate data at the earliest possible date. Comments from interested parties are due to Janice Kelly-Reid, IPEDS Project Director at RTI International, at jrk@rti.org, by March 28, 2008.

On November 27-28, 2007, RTI International, the contractor for the IPEDS web-based data collection system, convened a meeting of the IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP) in Arlington, VA, to discuss the current IPEDS Data Collection Calendar and to suggest an optimal IPEDS calendar to ensure the collection of quality, relevant, and timely data. The panel members included 28 individuals representing federal government, state government, institutions, national data users, association representatives, and others. The panel suggested numerous modifications to the IPEDS Data Collection Calendar.

Background

When the IPEDS web-based data collection system was implemented in 2000, a three-collection design was chosen. It was a good transition strategy from a paper-based system to a web-based system, and simplified development of the new technology. Based on the information available at the time, it aligned the collection of data from institutions to the times when the information was available. It simplified the scheduling of IPEDS tasks at institutions and state offices. But the web-based environment makes it possible to be far more flexible than the three-collection format will allow, so the TRP was convened to explore the possibilities.

Discussion

The TRP met and discussed issues concerning the current data collection calendar and how it may be improved. The panel suggested the following approach:

- Collect some data currently collected on the Institutional Characteristics component (pricing information, header and identification information, screening questions) during the registration period.
- Have a Fall collection with approximately the same dates as the current Fall collection.
- Have all other survey components available for submission by November 15 (date approximate), with close dates staggered by survey component, and running through spring.
- Encourage early data submission by offering institutions who lock data early in the collection period an incentive of early access to tailored peer group reports.
- Reduce the number of follow-up phone calls to nonrespondent institutions by targeting those calls to institutions most likely to be in need of reminding.

Based on the suggestions of the TRP participants, the possible new data collection calendar for IPEDS is outlined in the table below.

SUGGESTED ALTERNATE DATA COLLECTION CALENDAR

Collection/ Timing	Survey Components	Opening Date*	Keyholder Close Date*	Coordinator Close Date*	Migration Completed*
Registration Period	Keyholder Registration, IC Header, IC Pricing	Aug. 1	Sept. 1	Sept. 15	Oct. 1
Fall	Completions, 12-Month Enrollment, IC Early Enrollment Estimates	Sept. 15	Nov. 1	Nov. 15	Dec. 15
“Early Winter”	Human Resources	Nov. 15	Jan. 15	Feb. 1	Feb. 22
“Late Winter”	IC Admissions, Student Financial Aid, Graduation Rates, Fall Enrollment	Nov. 15	Feb. 1	Feb. 15 (IC Admissions, SFA, GRS)	April 1
				March 1 (EF)	
Spring	Finance	Nov. 15	April 15	May 1	May 21

** Dates are approximate. Actual dates will vary by year.*

More information is provided below:

- **Registration Period**—Will open for four weeks for keyholders on approximately August 1. The coordinator close deadline will occur two weeks later. Data collected during the registration period will include keyholder registration, the IC Header (including sector, control, calendar system, awards offered, and student levels), and IC Pricing (tuition and fees and other pricing date). Other parts of the IC survey component, such as early enrollment estimates and admissions data, will be collected later in the data collection year.
- **Fall**—Will open for six weeks on approximately September 15. Coordinator close date will be 2 weeks after the keyholder deadline. Includes IC Early Enrollment Estimates, Completions, and E12.
- **“Early Winter,” “Late Winter,” and Spring**—Will **all** open on approximately November 15.
 - o **“Early Winter”**—Will close for keyholders eight weeks after the opening date (approximately January 15). The coordinator close date will be two

weeks after the keyholder deadline. Includes the Human Resources component.

- **“Late Winter”**—Will close for keyholders 11 weeks after the opening date (approximately February 1). The coordinator close date will be two weeks after the keyholder deadline for the IC Admissions data, SFA, and GRS. The coordinator deadline for EF will be four weeks after the keyholder deadline.
- **Spring**—Will close for keyholders five months after the opening date (approximately April 15). The coordinator close date will be two weeks later, on or about May 1. Includes the Finance component.

The TRP participants identified a number of benefits to using this new collection schedule. First, the calendar would give keyholders additional reporting flexibility. In addition, by opening all survey components by mid-November, the model would allow keyholders to coordinate with their institutions’ departments and plan to report IPEDS data as the institutional data become available (and earlier than the current collection periods allow).

Another advantage of the new calendar system is that it would allow NCES to update College Navigator in a timelier manner as well as make data available through the Peer Analysis System more quickly for data users. Also, if data are reported earlier, follow-up and migration activities will be more evenly spread out over the collection year than they are currently. This may alleviate issues with overloading the web servers, and allow the Help Desk staff to better distribute resources.

In order to try to encourage keyholders to report early and avoid overloading the data collection system and Help Desk the week before a keyholder deadline, the panel suggested establishing an incentive system to encourage early data reporting. One suggestion by the panel was to display within the data collection system the list of institutions that have/have not locked surveys as of a set date. Another suggestion was to reward early-reporting institutions by providing an early peer group report via e-mail. The institution would have the option of submitting a DAS or PAS query, and once all peer data had been migrated, the early-reporting school would be granted access to peer group data. The panel indicated that not only would this benefit institutions that frequently rely on peer data, but it would also help educate keyholders from institutions who are not frequent users.

What are the reporting implications for institutions?

There would be no changes to the actual data reported from institutions. Keyholders and coordinators would need to lock some survey components earlier under this alternate calendar than they are required to under the current calendar, but the data collection system would be open sooner, resulting in a longer reporting period for some components. Reporting schedules within institutions may need to be altered to accommodate earlier aggregation, cleaning, and reporting of IPEDS data. In addition, it should be noted that each state might require an earlier deadline than that specified by IPEDS.

Comments

RTI is concerned about improving the IPEDS Data Collection Calendar as well as about how to provide incentives to institutions to report to IPEDS earlier. **We encourage interested parties to send any comments or concerns about this topic to Janice Kelly-Reid, IPEDS Project Director, at jrk@rti.org, by March 28, 2008. Please include the following in the e-mail subject line: Improving the IPEDS Data Collection Calendar – Comments.**