Update to IPEDS Technical Review Panel #15 Additional Comments Sought New Categories and Definitions for Classification of First-professional Degree Reporting in IPEDS

PROPOSAL SUMMARY: IPEDS should revise the reporting requirement with regard to first-professional degree programs by institutions so that institutions will report Ph.D Research Doctor's Degrees separately from Professional Practice Doctor's Degrees. Further guidance should be given to help distinguish between these types of degrees. All Master's degrees should be reported in a single category.

Background:

The IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP) on the First-Professional Degree Classification met on December 12-13, 2005. In attendance were 42 individuals, representing federal government, state government, institutions, national data users, accrediting bodies and professions. The panel considered the current reporting requirements for first-professional degree programs and options to either expand the category, to eliminate it, to redefine it, or to keep it as is.

There was general consensus that the First Professional Degree category as currently defined lacks relevance and utility because of its eclectic group of approved entry-level programs. On the other hand, the panel recognized the benefit of distinguishing graduate degree programs designed for research and scholarly careers from those designed for professional practice.

The panel then proposed a revised list of award categories and their definitions for each graduate degree level. Because of potential difficulties and definitional ambiguity in enabling institutions to report reliable data, additional comments were sought from stakeholder communities. The proposed categories and definitions were presented in detail in a document posted to "What's New in IPEDS" on February 7, 2006 (see http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/news_room/trp_technical_review_02072006_18.asp) and comments were requested.

Proposed Changes to New Categories and Definitions Based on Comments Received

Based on comments received, NCES proposes the following changes to the new categories and definitions that were developed by the TRP:

1. Combine the Master's Degree categories of "research/scholarship," "professional practice," and "other" into one Master's Degree level award.
2. Provide degree title examples (e.g. Ph.D., D.Sc.) for the "Doctor's Degree - research/scholarship" category, or limit this category to the approved degree designations used for the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates.

3. Eliminate the "entry level" qualifier in the "Doctor's Degree - professional practice" category, so as to include all professional practice doctorates, whether entry level or advanced.

When will this be implemented?

Pending receipt of comments from the higher education community and concurrence with this proposal, NCES would like to implement the new definitions and categories for reporting institutional characteristics and enrollment information with the 2007-08 data collection year. As with all changes to IPEDS, the first collection year would be optional, the second year use of the new definition would be mandatory. For completions data, implementation of the new categories would begin in the 2008-09 data collection year (reporting on awards granted between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008) as optional, becoming mandatory the following year.

For any data collections prior to the implementation date, institutions should continue to report data on first-professional degree programs under the existing definition.

Comments

NCES is concerned about how a change in data collection and reporting of the current first-professional degree classification will impact institutional data and its use in informing policy, as well as the ability to comply with these new requirements within the timeframe presented. We encourage interested parties to send any comments or concerns about this proposal to Elise Miller, IPEDS Program Director, by August 25, 2006. **Please include the following in the email subject line: First-professional TRP #15 - Additional comments**.