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| To: | NPSAS:16 Technical Review Panel |
| From: | Jennifer Wine, Director, NPSAS:16 |
| Date: | November 21, 2014 |
| **Subject:** | **TRP Meeting Executive Summary** |

The second technical review panel (TRP) meeting for the 2015-16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16) was held in Washington, DC on August 6 and 7, 2014. This memorandum summarizes the information presented to and recommendations made by the TRP. A meeting agenda and meeting slides from each presentation are posted on the TRP website as well.

**Evolution of the NPSAS Institution and Student Samples**

For the last round of NPSAS in 2012, there was a sample of 1,670 institutions and about 128,100 students. For the full-scale NPSAS:16, the current plan is to sample 2,000 institutions, resulting in a student sample of about 126,230 students. For the field test, 300 institutions and 4,500 students will be sampled. There will be no state-representative samples in NPSAS:16.

The ten sampling strata were reviewed, as well as the estimated counts of institutions expected within those strata. The process of sampling both the field test and full-scale institution samples using the most current IPEDS data was presented. In order to minimize burden, large institutions and large systems will be excluded from the field test and any institutions sampled in the field test will not be included in the full-scale sample but will be accounted for with weight adjustments.

Items collected on the enrollments lists from the institution were reviewed. This included several items that have been added for the NPSAS:16 field test. The new items are: GPA, number of credits accumulated, account status, veteran status, race/ethnicity, gender, date of first enrollment, and first-time graduate student indicator. Panelists warned that some of these items may not be very complete or may cause some institutions to not provide a list. After the field test, we will assess the completeness of these list items and make final decisions for the full-scale enrollment list collection.

For NPSAS:16 there are plans to oversample several types of students: potential baccalaureate recipients, baccalaureate teacher majors, baccalaureate STEM majors, undergraduate students in for-profit institutions, and graduate students in certain disciplines (to be determined). It was noted that we need to consider how we will oversample teaching majors as not all will have an “education” major. We need to consider others on a “teacher path” including those with secondary education majors. In addition, we will explore the possibility of stratifying by financial aid application or receipt. Because we can only use variables reliably collected on the enrollment list or through pre-sampling matching to administrative records, new student sampling strategies are limited. Preliminary student sampling sizes were provided.

The various institution and student weighing components used for the NPSAS analysis weight were listed. Poststratification for NPSAS uses know population (control) totals for key variables in order to yield estimates that are nationally representative. They key variables used for student postratification were presented and include Stafford Loan receipt and amount, Pell grant amount, PLUS loan amount, and enrollment. New for NPSAS:16 we ~~do~~ plan to benchmark some of these totals every year so we can be aware of changing trends.

**Profile of Students**

Preliminary results from NPSAS:12 were presented to panelists to give them a more complete picture of the NPSAS respondents. This included distributions of undergraduates by enrollment intensity, age, those with dependents, immigrant generation, distance education, and net price over time. Similarly, statistics were shown for graduate students including international students, field of study over time, borrowing over time, and those receiving veteran’s benefits.

**Baccalaureate and Beyond**

NPSAS:16 will include a 1-year follow-up study of baccalaureate recipients, the 2017 Baccalaureate and Beyond study (B&B:16/17). There are several purposes of the B&B longitudinal study. It provides additional information on the path to the bachelor’s degree, including student characteristics, enrollment patterns, field of study, and cost, financial aid, and debt. In addition, in provides information on labor market outcomes, education after the bachelor’s degree, and finances. It will also provide data for college graduates who are K-12 teachers and those who majored in a STEM field.

Items specific to the potential B&B cohort included in the base-year NPSAS interview include plans for employment, additional education, and teaching. NPSAS:08 included two B&B follow-up studies. In 2009, the 1-year follow-up interview included topics such as undergraduate experiences, transition to the labor force, education-related debt and repayment, experiences of new teachers, and entry into graduate school. Furthermore, transcripts from the baccalaureate degree-granting institution were collected. For the second follow-up interview in 2012, a comprehensive employment history was collected as well as data from a number of administrative sources. This included voting data for the first time and more extensive data from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) that had not been available previously.

Demographics describing the B&B:08 cohort were presented, including race/ethnicity, gender, and highest education obtained by either parent. Additional results were shown such as institution type, number of institutions attended, time between high school graduation and postsecondary entry, time to degree, prior degree attainment, and bachelor’s degree major.

**Data User Presentations**

Several data users made presentations throughout the two-day meeting to explain and discuss how they use the NPSAS and B&B data. Examples of commonly-used variables and tables produced with those variables were shown.

One presentation illustrated how NPSAS data could be used for policy research and included tables on income and financial aid by dependency status, institution type, and race/ethnicity. A second presentation using NPSAS data presented data focusing on tuition and fees and other costs, grant aid, total debt, and state grants using dependency status and income. Panelists were cautioned to closely consider variable definitions, changes over time (e.g., rounds of NPSAS), sources of the data, and sample sizes when running their own tables.

Another presentation focused on B&B findings and considerations for 2016. Most tables used data from the first follow-up interview of baccalaureate recipients identified during NPSAS:08. Results presented included highest degree program, labor force participation versus enrollment in school, median salary by gender and highest degree, and teaching status. Also shown were the proportion of graduates who borrowed by institution type, as well as repayment status among those who did borrow.

There was also a presentation that discussed using NPSAS for inferential studies and recommendations for improvements. Suggestions were to (1) include latitude and longitude of high school on the restricted-use data file, (2) add questions to the interview to measure students among the “Big Five” personality traits in order to enhance the quality of matching analyses, and (3) revise the education experience items concerning remedial courses and student services in order to collect more usable data.

**NPSAS:12 Student Interview Item Review**

The majority of the meeting was spent specifically on the NPSAS student interview. TRP members were asked to review the interview items collected for NPSAS:12 and to recommend improvements to those items. New panelists asked for additional background information on the purpose of the study in order to help guide their feedback.

The purposes of NPSAS were presented in order of importance. First and foremost, NPSAS is a cross-sectional study conducted to meet the federal government need to understand how students pay for college. Secondly, NPSAS is used to collect data that can’t be obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Finally, NPSAS can be used for other research purposes. The longitudinal studies, the Beginning Postsecondary Study (BPS) and Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B) recently developed and operate under a Human Capital framework in order to provide focus for those studies. Traditionally, NPSAS has not had a specific framework, but it may be worth considering if it would help to focus the additional research purposes beyond understanding financial aid for postsecondary education.

After a brief overview of the data elements by section, including a screencast of a live interview, panelists discussed each item (by section) in small groups. One member from each group then reported their suggestions to the full panel. The key concerns and suggestions of the TRP members are described below, organized by section of the student survey.

**Enrollment**

When discussing the Enrollment section of the survey, panelists agreed on several revisions to promote clarity and understanding of the current items, and also to increase the breadth and relevance of information about degrees, high school attendance, and enrollment intensity. During discussions on items related to *degree program type at NPSAS institution*, TRP members suggested adding more degree options such as, “dual Bachelors of Science/Masters of Science degrees” as well as an “other specify” option to allow a wider spectrum of responses for all respondents. Panelists also suggested collecting information about “dual degrees” (respondents who are working on two degrees simultaneously).

For items about *type of associate’s degree*, panelists wanted to collect information about the intentions or goal of the degree, rather than its type. They recommended adding question wording to ask if an associate’s degree was “terminal” or “designed for transfer.” For the item *type of master’s degree* panelists advocated adding “Masters of Public Administration” to the list of response options. Additionally, they recommended combining *type of research/scholarship doctoral degree* and *type of professional practice doctoral degree* into one “doctoral degree” question, and within the new item, adding more health science degree options, since there are many. TRP members also discussed adding the following *degree program* item to the survey: type of non-degree certificate (e.g., real-estate certificates, CPR certificates, etc.).

In relation to *high school and postsecondary attendance history* items, panelists recommended revisions to questions about type of high school completion. This included updating the response option format from radio buttons to check boxes to allow for the selection of multiple responses, and also a revision of the “GED” response option to include the “ETS’s HiSET program.” Additionally, a number of items in the prior NPSAS survey contained the phrase, “after completing your high school requirements.” Panelists suggested a revision of this wording to say, “after completing high school” instead.

In discussing *enrollment intensity* questions, several panelists recommended updating question wording to collect the number of classes taken, as opposed to the part-time/full-time designation; while other panelists suggested that these items be removed from the survey entirely because when considering competency-based programs, these questions did not apply. Some TRP members, however, were interested in the reasons a respondent attended his or her institution part time, and suggested adding an item to collect this information.

Discussion on items related to *degree completion* resulted in the recommendation to remove questions about the number of months/hours of instruction completed when working on a certificate. Panelists also recommended removing first-time beginner (FTB) questions from NPSAS:12 about the likelihood of completing a degree by the expected date; the likelihood of ever completing the degree; and the likelihood of being enrolled in the next term. These items did not seem to the panel to be relevant to this cross-sectional cohort. Additionally, on the item collecting the main reason for enrolling in non-degree classes, panelists recommend changing the response option format to checkboxes to allow for more than one response, and adding an “other specify” option.

**Education Experiences**

Discussions of the Education Experiences section resulted in several suggestions for revisions and additions to improve the data collected about experiences in school, including, social experiences, academic integration, and GPA. In relation to *high school information* items, panelists felt that this information would be applicable and useful to collect from all respondents, not just those under the age of 30. Panelists suggested the following items be administered to all respondents: type of high school attended; last high school attended; high school grades; high school math courses taken; information on AP, IB, or college-level courses taken; and ACT/SAT exams taken. Some panelists suggested combining questions about the type of high school attended and the last high school attended, while others suggested keeping these items as they currently exist in the survey.

TRP members made suggestions related to advanced courses available to respondents while they were in high school. They suggested adding the following: the types of college courses respondents had taken that were not attached to their high school education; a set of financial literacy questions; the availability of AP, IB, college-level courses in high school; and amount of contact with the a school counselor.

Panelists recommended that NPSAS:12 FTB-only items about *social support for postsecondary education* be removed from the survey as they no longer related to the cross-sectional cohort. For items related to *major or field of study at NPSAS institution*, panelists recommended revisions to questions about major declaration to be more inclusive of the possibility of respondents having more than two majors. Panelists also suggested the addition of an item asking whether respondents were assigned advisors during their program.

When discussing items that were previously administered to FTBs in NPSAS:12 related to *academic integration at NPSAS institution*, some panelists advocated for a better definition of “academic success” in the questions about respondents’ confidence in their academic success prior to and after their attendance at the NPSAS institution; others suggested these questions be removed from the survey altogether. Panelists also had conflicting opinions on whether to remove or keep items about interactions with faculty and satisfaction with studies; some panelists suggested revising these items to distinguish between “inside the classroom” versus “outside the classroom”. Additionally, TRP members recommended removing questions about whether respondents knew the requirements needed to complete their degree as these items no longer seemed relevant for the cross-sectional cohort. However, panelists did suggest adding the following items to the survey: questions about respondents’ general satisfaction with their institution, research experience outside of the classroom, study abroad experiences, and academic advising services that were available and used by the respondent.

On items related to *GPA* *and course-taking at NPSAS institution,* panelists suggested adding response options to questions about remedial courses taken since high school to identify those who took English as Second Language courses. Some panelists suggested revising questions about night, online, or weekend courses to remove weekend and night references, while others suggested removing the questions from the survey altogether. TRP members also suggested the addition of items asking about the presence of a common curriculum at the NPSAS institution, (in)ability to enroll in classes and reasons why this occurred, reasons why non-degree seekers took courses (i.e., to obtain or maintain license for current job), and questions about respondents’ satisfactory academic progress (an evaluation on a student’s academic success that is done to ensure the student stays eligible for financial aid).

With regard to *social integration at NPSAS institution*, panelists suggested removing these NPSAS:12 FTB-only items which were related to interactions, social satisfaction, and inclusion at the NPSAS institution. Panelists recommended adding instead, items about the climate of prejudice and social engagement activities that respondents might be involved in, such as clubs, student government, etc.

While discussing items related to *institution services used during NPSAS academic year*, some panelists suggested including additional response options such as disability services, childcare services, and an “other specify” option so as not to limit respondents who used services not listed.

**Financial Aid**

Panelists discussed the Financial Aid section of the survey and suggested several revisions, drops, and additions to guide respondents efficiently and effectively in the collection of information about sources they used to pay for their education. While discussing items related to *benefits, grants, and scholarships in NPSAS academic year*, TRP members suggested asking whether a military respondent is active duty or a veteran or military family member before administering questions about receipt of education benefits to identify benefits that are only available to active duty military. Panelists also suggested updating response options on questions about receipt of private organization grants or scholarships to include more examples of private organizations in addition to churches, PTA, fraternities/sororities, and foundations.

In relation to questions about graduate fellowships held during enrollment, panelists suggested the question wording include a definition of a fellowship to eliminate any confusion respondents may have about the difference between assistantships and fellowships. TRP members also suggested the addition of the following *benefits, grants, and scholarship* items: whether respondents used organizations such as AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, etc. as a source of financial aid; whether respondents’ received grants from organizations such as the Bureau of Indian affairs; whether respondents’ received employer funding and circumstances in which that funding becomes a loan; and questions about crowd-funding (funding by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, typically through the internet).

For items about *loans in NPSAS academic year,* panelists discussed and advocated for adding new response options to the list of reasons why respondents did not apply for financial aid, including: privacy reasons, parental concerns, missing the deadline for applying, and ineligibility due to drug offense. When discussing items related to *total amount of loans and repayment*, panelists recommended the additions of questions about loan forgiveness programs and income-based repayment plans; whether financial aid education (i.e., exit counseling) was made available to and used by respondents; concern about long-term debt and repayment; and plans for repayment of loans. Panelists also suggested the addition of the following loan-related items: whether respondents filled out the FAFSA, whether respondents used human capital contracts (loans that the respondents pay back with a share of their income), information about cosigners for loans, and information about the interest rates on respondents’ private loans.

With regard to items about *loan avoidance*, TRP members suggested appending the list of reasons respondents had for not accepting additional federal loans with an “other specify” option. Additionally, panelists recommended the addition of items about how respondents pay their expenses (e.g., with earnings from jobs, additional loans, money from family, etc.) while enrolled in college.

While discussing items related to *institution charges and refunds*, panelists recommended revision to the question about out-of-state or out-of-district fees to capture respondents who were able to switch their in-/out-of-state status. Panelists also recommended adding an item about how respondents use any refund received from the school, such as whether they spend the money on personal expenses, books and supplies, living expenses, etc.

Finally, panelists discussed items related to *graduate assistantships in the NPSAS academic year* and advocated for collecting more information about the cost and source of health insurance for graduate assistants. More specifically, panelists suggested an additional item to collect more details if the insurance was not through an assistantship.

**Current Employment**

In discussions of the Current Employment section items, TRP members recommended dropping several questions but keeping select questions to gather more thorough information about respondents’ employment while enrolled at their NPSAS institutions. After discussing *employment while enrolled during the NPSAS academic year*, TRP members suggested revising the response options on the question about the number of jobs held at one time while enrolled to include the option “more than two jobs”. Panelists also suggested separating question wording about the number of hour’s worked while enrolled into two categories: “number of hours worked on campus” and “number of hours worked off campus.” Some panelists suggested dropping the question about whether the job was on or off campus, while others suggested the question be revised to ask whether jobs were related to the respondent’s field of study. Panelists also recommended asking whether respondents’ employers provided them with any tuition assistance.

TRP members determined the *employment prior to NPSAS academic year* items were not important to keep in the survey. This group of items was administered only to FTBs in the NPSAS:12 student interview, and thus was dropped unanimously due to cited irrelevance to the cross-sectional cohort in NPSAS:16. However, panelists had conflicting opinions on items related to *foregone wages* (i.e., the amount of money respondents could have been earning but gave up to be in school.) These items were administered only to FTBs in the NPSAS:12 survey. Some panelists suggested these items be removed from the survey entirely, while others were interested in keeping the items and argued for their relevance to all postsecondary students.

**Income and Expenses**

In the Income and Expenses section item discussion, panelists were very interested in the existing information being gathered in this section; however they recommended several item additions to more accurately determine how respondents finance their lifestyle while enrolled. Discussions of items related to *income* resulted in panelists recommending that asking for income from all sources include child support/alimony. In addition, panelists suggested that *spouse’s income* be revised to include more relationship types, such as students living with a partner or those in marriage-like relationships. The followingincome-related items were also recommended by panelists as additions to the survey: receipt of financial help from community organizations or individuals; level of financial stress; tax credits received; use of 529 savings accounts to pay for postsecondary education; and receipt of unemployment benefits.

With regard to *dependent expenses*, TRP members suggested that questions about financial support for children incorporate parenthetical text about child support to ensure respondents include it as part of their responses to the questions. Panelists also suggested adding a question about whether respondents were regularly sending money home to family and friends.

While discussingcredit card-related items, panelists held conflicting opinions on questions about credit cards as some panelists wanted these items removed, and some wanted these items revised to include the time period (e.g., during attendance at NPSAS institution) in which the cards were used or a balance was carried. A third group of panelists wanted these items to remain as they currently exist in the survey. Collectively, panelists were also interested in gathering information about the existence of cosigners for credit cards, as well as the amount of credit card debt respondents expected to accrue due to education expenses.

For items about *residency during the NPSAS year*, panelists recommended updating question wording to be more applicable for respondents enrolled in entirely online programs; specifically, the dichotomous choice between on- or off-campus residence would not apply to respondents attending online institutions that do not have a physical campus. TRP members also advocated for an item asking whether respondents were homeless during the last academic year, or during their high school education.

While discussing items related to *parents’ income and dependents*, panelists suggested revising the wording of items about parents’ marital status and parents’ income in the last calendar year to accommodate non-traditional parental genders (e.g., same-sex parents). Additionally, panelists recommended updating response options on these items to include parents or guardians who live together, but are not married.

For *discount rate* items, some panelists suggested these items be removed from the survey, as these were administered only to FTBs in the NPSAS:12 survey and no longer seemed relevant to the current cross-sectional cohort. Other panelists however, recommended keeping them in the survey as they currently exist.

**Background**

TRP members discussed Background section items and suggested several ways to collect more accurate and inclusive demographic information, particularly about languages, family background, and health. In one such instance, TRP members suggested expanding the number of options for gender identity to include more than just male and female. They also recommended allowing respondents to identify with a more specific Asian or Black group or origin.

In items about military service, panelists wanted to be inclusive of spouses and children of military personnel, by allowing these respondents to identify themselves as such. And, for the question related to *residence,* panelists suggested changing question wording from “of which state are you a legal resident?” to “of which state, district, or legal territory are you a resident?”

In relation to *languages*, panelists suggested asking a question about “best language” in addition to *first language learned.* They also advocated for adding more explicit response options, aside from Spanish and English, to the *first language learned to speak* item.

When discussing *family background*, panelists agreed to the following recommendations: revision of question wording on *parents’ highest level of education completed* from “mother” and “father” to just “parents”; updated question wording from “spouse” to “spouse/partner” in questions related to spouse education; and revision of items related to siblings to include the number of siblings, as well as the number that plan to attend college.

While discussing *disability and health items*, panelists suggested combining disability items into two or three questions instead of a series. In this recommendation, panelists were more interested in collecting information about the existence and use of services for the disability, rather than its type. However, panelists did advocate for an update to the response options in *main type of impairment* to reflect recent medical developments in terminology and identification of disabilities. Panelists suggested the term, *autism*, as one option that was missing from the current response option list.

**Baccalaureate & Beyond (B&B) items**

The NPSAS:16 survey includes items that are specifically designed for a cohort of respondents who have or will receive their bachelor’s degree within the NPSAS year. This cohort will be followed in the longitudinal Baccalaureate & Beyond (B&B) study. TRP members spent time evaluating B&B-cohort only items from the NPSAS:2000 and NPSAS:08 surveys (the last time a B&B cohort was included in NPSAS) for possible inclusion in the NPSAS:16 survey. This summary section refers only to items related to the B&B cohort in the NPSAS:16 survey.

In relation to *undergraduate information*, some panelists suggested items about *GPA while enrolled* not be included in the NPSAS:16 survey, while others recommended question wording on these items be revised from “GPA” to “grades”, and asking about GPA for each major if more than one was declared.

Several TRP members suggested not including previous NPSAS survey questions about the use of information technology as an undergraduate in NPSAS:16; while other TRP members recommended revising these items to focus more on skills needed in the STEM fields. On items about transferring credits to the NPSAS institution, panelists suggested updating question wording to capture specific types of credits attempted to transfer. Likewise, on questions about the amount of credits attempted to transfer, panelists recommended including follow-up questions such as: “Were these credits accepted for your major?”; “How many did you attempt to transfer?”; and, “How many credits were you successful in transferring?”.

Panelists also recommended adding whether education enhanced social skills and ability to earn social capital through faculty interaction, networking, and peer interaction, to the NPSAS:16 survey for the B&B cohort:. Additionally, TRP members advocated for the addition of items related to academic experiences including critical undergraduate experiences (i.e., learning communities, capstone experiences, etc.); additional enrichment experiences made available to and participated in (i.e., internships, study abroad, etc.); and plans to earn additional bachelor’s degrees, associate’s degrees, or certificates after earning the first bachelor’s degree.

When discussing items related to *graduate school plans,* panelists suggested that an item about the ways bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents collected information about their graduate programs be updated to include campus-based resources such as open houses, campus tours, etc. TRP members also suggested that items about current degrees or planned graduate degrees, be redesigned as a two stage question: first, ask the level of degree, and then ask for the degree field of study. Panelists also suggested the response options be more inclusive of all degree fields.

Panelists determined items regarding intent to be full-time students in graduate school and first choice in institution for graduate school, were unnecessary for the NPSAS:16 survey. With regard to the reasons bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents applied for graduate school, panelists suggested revising response options to include “urged by faculty member”. Panelists also recommended collapsing questions about reasons the bachelor’s degree-seeking respondent did not apply for graduate school, as well as reasons they postponed applying for graduate school, into one question.

Panelists suggested adding the following job-related items for the B&B cohort to the NPSAS:16 survey: sources used to look for a job; information on the kinds of jobs bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents are searching for; characteristics bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents find valuable in a job; goals bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents hope to achieve in their jobs; and bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents’ intent to start their own businesses.

With regard to *K-12 teaching and preparation*, panelists suggested updates to questions about whether bachelor’s degree-seeking respondents have considered teaching at the K-12 level to include the distinction between teaching in a public school versus teaching in a private school. Panelists were concerned questions about teacher preparation did not focus enough on the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields. They advocated for more STEM-specific question wording in teacher preparation items.

Finally, TRP members recommended the addition of loan and expense-related items for the B&B cohort in the NPSAS:16 survey, including: whether loan exit counseling was made available, the types of loan counseling made available, information about living arrangements, and the ability to meet current living expenses.