

Obtaining a US Department of Education “IPEDS Data Feedback Report” For Your Institution

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Although it is no substitute for a thorough analysis of the financial situation of your institution, the “IPEDS Data Feedback Report” is a quick way to obtain some very basic data on your institution’s finances, including a comparison with a group of peer institutions. The report is free, and is generally sent directly to the president or chancellor of each college and university on an annual basis. Here’s how to get a copy:

1. Point your Web browser to the IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) Data Center Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>
2. Click the link in the left-hand menu for “ExPT and DFR.”
3. In the box labeled “Start here,” start typing the name of your college or university in the box labeled “Focus Institution.” After you’ve typed a few characters, a list of institution names should appear below the box, and the list will become shorter as you type more characters in the box. You can stop at any point and choose your institution from the dropdown list by clicking on the “Select” button.
4. The next screen is labeled “Comparison Group Selection.” However, for the standard report it is not necessary to complete any of the steps on this screen. (This screen is used for selecting a group of peer institutions for comparison different from the default group, which is either one chosen by the institutional administration or one assigned by the US Department of Education. See item 12 below.)
5. Near the top of the page you should see a menu bar displaying the name of your “Focus Institution,” and the options “Start over,” “Save,” “DFRs,” and “Help.” Click the link or the icon for “DFRs.”
6. A smaller window should pop up, titled “IPEDS Data Feedback Reports.” (If your Web browser is set to block pop-up windows, you may need to allow them for this Web site or for this one instance.) The window should display up to five report files for download, in the PDF format, for years 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, and 2005. (Reading files in the PDF format requires special software, but the software is already installed on most newer computers and is also available for download at no cost. If you’re not sure, the best way to see whether your computer has the software is to click on a file icon as directed in the next step. Click one of the “help” links in this box if you have problems.)
7. Open or save the report by clicking on a report icon; left click to open in your browser or right click to save on your computer. (If you open first, you should still be able to save later.)

Interpreting the report

This report is a peer comparison on a number of measures, based on data submitted to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as part of required annual reports. It compares the “Focus Institution” to a set of peer institutions, a set which has been generated

automatically by NCES or has been designated by the institution. Here are some brief highlights of what to look for regarding institutional finances (the 2009 edition of the report has been expanded significantly from previous years):

8. **Revenue:** In the 2009 edition, figure 18 shows standard revenue categories as a percent of total institutional revenues, and figure 19 shows revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE) student. In the 2008 and prior editions, figure 9 shows standard revenue categories as a percent of total institutional revenues. A key question is the extent to which the institution is dependent on tuition revenues. A very high proportion in the “other” category would also be something to inquire about.
9. **Expenditures:** In the 2009 edition, figure 20 shows standard expenditure categories as a percent of total institutional expenditures, and figure 21 calculates expenditures as an average amount per full-time equivalent (FTE) student. In the 2008 and prior editions, figure 10 shows expenditure per FTE student. The key question regarding expenditures is the proportion spent on instruction. (For 2008 and earlier, calculate an estimate by dividing the instruction figure by the sum of the category averages.) The federal data do not provide a specific category of expenditures on faculty.
10. **Staffing:** Figure 16 (11 in 2008 and prior editions) provides data on staffing, but because the employee counts are given as full-time equivalents (FTEs) they are less useful. It would be more helpful to see a breakdown of full-time and part-time, with further breakdowns for faculty by tenure status. (See the AAUP [Contingent Faculty Index 2006](#) for more data on faculty status.)
11. Figure 17 (12 in 2008 and prior editions) compares average faculty salaries, by rank. While NCES can compel all institutions to submit faculty salary data, for most institutions the data published by the AAUP are more accurate and timely. See the most current [Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession](#) for more details.
12. To ensure the comparisons are meaningful, check the group of peer institutions used in the report (listed on page 9 of the 2009 edition and page 6 of earlier editions). To generate a report using a different group of peers, return to the screen labeled “Comparison Group Selection” mentioned in step 4 above, and follow the instructions on the screen under “Method of selection.”