

Institutional Research
Standard Definitions
for Reporting

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

To establish a set of Institutional Research (IR) reporting standard definitions in order to keep IR reporting more consistent and to communicate more effectively with end users. This will allow our office to better support academic research and decision-making. This is our initial step in preparing for future online reporting efforts.

Guidelines

To establish standard definitions, we follow the guidelines below:

- Consider theoretical accuracy and data availability,
- Each Measurement should include two aspects: definition and method,
- Provide an example or template to demonstrate the definition and the corresponding methods.

Measurements

- Enrollment
- Academic Performance
- Retention and Persistence
- Graduation
- Transfers (out)
- Course Taking Behaviors

Each of these measurements can be reported at the following levels:

- Aggregate (college-wide)
- Immediate (division/department, program, major, subject/discipline, course or class)
- Individual level (student)

We report all measurements established at the aggregate (college-wide) level on a regular basis (see Appendix 1-1, Measurements Template) and can provide reports at the other levels as requested.

ENROLLMENT

Official Full Time Student Equivalent Enrollment Headcount (FTSE): Official FTSE Enrollment Headcount is based on data provided to us at the 45th day and will be reported in the Enrollment table.

Official FTSE enrollment (unduplicated headcount) is reported on a regular basis as provided after the 45th day. Official FTSE enrollment is reported by ethnicity, age group, and/or other special populations. We can also provide this report by other subgroups such as programs and/or majors if needed. Included within this report are demographic characteristics of students enrolled within any certain term or year.

Three types of enrollment reports

Enrollment data will be reported by our office in three different ways:

- Overall enrollment: includes overall enrollment data by term and academic year (see Appendix 2-1 template)
- Fall to Fall enrollment: includes fall to fall enrollment data by term and academic year (see Appendix 2-2 template)
- Spring to Spring enrollment: includes spring to spring enrollment data by term and academic year (see Appendix 2-3 template)

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Our office will report several measurements of academic performance; course enrollment, grade distribution, course success (including the number and percentage of credits received), course retention, course failure, course withdrawal, course dropout. For those measurements that are similar to or the same as each other, we have provided further clarifications (see Appendix 3-1 Academic Performance Template):

Course Enrollment: The number of students who enrolled in one course at a certain census date. Enrollment headcount will be the duplicated headcount since one student may take more than one course.

Significant census dates: first day of the course, add or drop deadline, 45th day

Enrollment Headcount (standard enrollment headcount) will be calculated as follows, unless otherwise specified:

Using table, "A_STUDENTCADCREDITS"

Setting up "Current Status" AS "A (Add)" or "N (New)", that is, the students whose current status are "X", "C", "D" or "TR" should not be included in the standard enrollment HC.

If specific census date is requested, then Enrollment Headcount will be calculated as follows:

Using table, "A_STUDENTCADCREDIT"

Setting up "Current Status" AS "A" or "N" regardless of "Current Status Date"

Setting up "Current Status" as "C", "D", "X" or "TR", meanwhile, setting up "Current Status Date" as ">census date" (later than the census date).

Grade Distribution: The final grade received in any course.

Grading Systems (see AWC catalog for details):

- Grading system I: A, B, C, D, F
- Grading system II: CR (Credit), NC (No Credit), AU (Audit), I (Incomplete), W (Withdrawal), NS (No Show), R (Repeat), IP (In Progress)

Grade distribution is the base in calculating the following academic measurements:

Course Completion: Refers to those students that finish a course with grades of A, B, C, CR, NC, D or F or without grades (W, IP, I, NS).

Course Completion Rate: Refers to the percentage of students that complete the course.

Calculation:

- The numerator is number of students who received grades of A, B, C, D, F, CR and NC
- The denominator is the number of students who received grades of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, W or NS

Course Success: Refers to those students that finish a course with grades of A, B, C, CR or without grades (NC, W, IP, I, NS, D, F).

Course Success Rate: Refers to the percentage of students that succeeded in a course/received credits.

Calculation:

- The numerator is number of student who received grades of A, B, C or CR.
- The denominator is the number of students who received grades of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, W or NS.

The Annual Institutional Benchmark defines success rate as the ratio of the number of students who received the grades of A,B,C,CR or I to the number of students who received grades of A,B,C,CR,I , D,F or NCR.

Course Retention Rate: The same as the course completion rate.

Course Failure Rate: The percentage of students who fail in a course.

Calculation:

- The numerator is the number of student who received grades of NC, D and F.
- The denominator is the number of students who received grades of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, W or NS.

Course Withdrawal Rate: The percentage of students who received grade of W.

Calculation:

- The numerator is the number of student who received grades of W.
- The denominator is the number of students who received grades of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, W or NS.

Course Dropout Rate: The percentage of students who drop a course.

Calculation:

- The numerator is the number of student who received grades of NS and W.
- The denominator is the number of students who received grades of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, W or NS.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

Retention: Measures the degree of which a student cohort enrolled in one period of time and continues enrolling in sequential periods of time in one year at the same institution. Retention rate is a short term measure that covers only one year and thus may be adjusted accordingly as noted below.

In terms of basic cohort and the periods of time, we regularly report two versions of retention rates as follows. The periods of time usually considered only include fall semester and spring semester.

- **FTSE Related Headcount as Cohort** (see Appendix 4-1 Table): Student cohort is defined as the students who enroll at the 45th day of one semester, and then consist of FTSE related unduplicated headcount.

The periods of time considered in this type of retention report are: fall to spring, fall to fall, and spring to fall. Therefore our office will provide sequentially three retention rates for those periods.

- **First-time, Degree-seeking (FTDS) Students as Cohort** (see Appendix 4-2 Table): Student cohort is defined as the first-time, degree-seeking students enrolled at the 45th day of one semester, and then a part of FTSE related unduplicated headcount.

The periods of time considered in this type of retention report are: fall to fall. The first-time, degree-seeking students' fall to fall retention rate is consistent with the definition of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Adjustments and Calculations:

When calculating the retention rate, we consider the following factors:

The number of graduates during the related periods of time: there are a significantly larger number of graduates that will continue enrolling in the sequent semester. Meanwhile, there are some graduates that will not enroll in the sequent semester. For the most accurate retention rate, we consider the latter and make adjustments when calculating the retention rate.

Some exceptions in terms of IPEDS: the basic cohort may be adjusted for students who left the institution for any of the following reasons: died or were totally and

permanently disabled; to serve in the armed forces (including those called to active duty); to serve with a foreign aid service of the Federal Government, such as the Peace Corps; or to serve on official church missions. These are exclusions, and may be subtracted from the cohort prior to calculating the retention rate. The fall cohort does not include those students who transferred into the institution.

Note: due to the difficulty of receiving the data on exceptions and to keep the calculation simple, we will usually ignore the exceptions above when calculating the retention rate.

Calculation:

- The numerator is the number of students in the cohort in one semester who re-enroll in the sequential semester PLUS the number of graduates in the cohort.
- The denominator is the number of students in the basic cohort in one semester.

Persistence: Measures the long term degree of which a student cohort enrolled in one period of time and continues enrolling in more than one sequential year at the same institution. Persistence rate is a long term measure that covers more than one year.

In terms of basic cohort and the periods of time, persistence rates are regularly reported follows (see Appendix 4-3 Persistence template):

- The student cohort is defined as the first-time, degree-seeking students enrolled at the 45th day of the fall semester.
- The periods of time considered are: fall to fall for more than one year. Therefore, persistence rates will be reported as the first-year, second-year and third-year (fall to fall) persistence rate.

Calculation:

- The numerator is the number of students in the cohort in one fall semester who continue enrolling in the sequential fall semesters.
- The denominator is the number of students in the basic cohort in the fall semester.

Other Considerations:

When calculating the persistence rate, we do not make adjustments like we do in calculating the retention rate above, so to reasonably evaluate the persistence rate, we will consider other factors that may have great impact on the persistence rate, such as graduation, transfer out, employment or other placements. At this point in time, due to data availability, we report the persistence rate along with the graduation rate data (see Appendix 4-4 Detailed persistence template). We will integrate the transfer and employment data into the persistence report as it is available to us.

Comparisons between Retention and Persistence

In IR practice, retention and persistence tend to have similar or the same meaning (both of them measure the percentage of students who continuously enroll at the same institution) and are often used interchangeably, ultimately causing confusion when responding to IR data requests. Here we differentiate retention and persistence to reduce the confusion. “Retention” measures the short term (one year) performance of continuous enrollment of students. “Persistence” measures the long term (more than one year) performance of continuous enrollment of students. In other words, institutions retain students and students persist in an institution.

We suggest that for internal retention studies the two versions of retention rates noted above should be applied and that the first-time, degree-seeking student fall to fall retention rates should be used for external reporting. Particularly because, the first-time, full time and degree-seeking students’ fall to fall retention rate is most common used for external and annual reporting.

When make retention or persistence comparison or analysis, be careful to identify that the basic cohort and the periods of time related are consistent with each other.

GRADUATION

Graduate Headcount

Graduate: A student that receives a credential (certificate and/or associate degree) at a given period of time.

Duplicated Graduate HC: A graduate is counted for every credential (certificate and/or associate degree) received. The duplicated graduate HC is equal to the number of credentials awarded.

Unduplicated Graduate HC: A graduate is counted only once regardless of the number of credentials (certificate and/or associate degree) received. The unduplicated graduate HC is equal to the number of graduates in a given time.

Graduate HC can be reported for special subgroups such as: degrees, majors, program or ethnicity and so on (see Appendix 5-1 Graduate HC Template).

Graduation Rate: The basic cohort used for calculating graduation rate is the first-time, degree-seeking students in fall semester, broken down into full time, first time and degree seeking cohort and part time, first time and degree seeking cohort (see Appendix 5-2 Graduation Rate template). The basic time periods for calculating graduation rates are one-year, two-years and three-years.

Calculation:

- The Numerator is the number of graduates in the given time period(s)
- The Denominator is the number of students in the fall cohort.

The three-year (150% completion time) graduation rate for full time, first time, degree seeking student cohort is the most common graduation rate. This is the graduation rate that is required by IPEDS.

TRANSFERS (out)

We regularly report three types of transfer data. The first two reports (see Appendix 6-1 Transfer Template) include transfer-out headcounts and the corresponding transfer percentages by universities and colleges that students transferred into for two populations, enrolled students and graduates. The last is the official transfer rate report.

Student Transfer Headcount Enrollment: The unduplicated headcount of students who enrolled in a semester or year at AWC and transferred into other colleges or universities at the same or sequential semesters or years.

The transfer percentage of enrolled students is the percentage of student transfers headcount enrollment in the total enrolled students in a semester or year.

Graduate Transfer Headcount: Refers to the unduplicated headcount of graduates who graduated in a semester or year at AWC transferred into other colleges or universities at the same or sequential semesters or years.

The transfer percentage of graduates is the percentage of graduate transfer headcount in the total number of graduates in a semester or year.

Official Transfer Rate: Total number of students who are known to have transferred out of the reporting institution within 150% of normal time to completion divided by the revised cohort minus allowable exclusions. This rate is required by IPEDS and is the most common measurement for transfer. It also is consistent with the industrial standard.

The basic cohort is the first time, full time, degree seeking students enrolled in a given year. The related period of time is within the 150% of normal completion time or three years (see Appendix 6-2 Official Transfer Rate Template).

Allowable Exclusions:

Those students who may be removed (deleted) from the basic cohort according to the Student Right-to-Know legislation. These include students who died or were totally and permanently disabled; those who left school to serve in the armed forces; those who left to serve with a foreign aid service of the federal government, such as the Peace Corps; and those who left to serve on official church mission.

Note: Due to the availability of data, we will not make such adjustments when reporting.

Comments:

Transfer reports highly depend on the availability of data. The best effort is made to integrate the various data sources in order to generate the various transfer reports. Transfer data may not be available for some specific subgroups.

COURSE TAKING BEHAVIORS

We try to capture the characteristics of course taking behavior for a typical or average AWC student who enrolled in a semester or year by establishing the ten measurements noted below. The measurements may reflect the number of classes attempted/completed/dropped, the number of credits attempted/gained (see Appendix 7-1 Course Taking Behavior Template).

Maximum Number of Classes Attempted: The maximum number of classes that a student attempted in one semester or year.

Average Number of Classes Attempted: The average number of classes that a student attempted in one semester or year.

Maximum Number of Classes Completed: The maximum number of classes that a student completed in one semester or year.

Average Number of Classes Completed: The average number of classes that a student completed in one semester or year.

Maximum Number of Classes Dropped: The maximum number of classes that a student dropped out with grades of NS and W in one semester or year.

Average Number of Classes Dropped: The average number of classes that a student dropped out with grades of NS and W in one semester or year.

Maximum Number of Credits Attempted: The maximum number of credits that a student attempted in one semester or year.

Average Number of Credits Attempted: The average number of credits that a student attempted in one semester or year.

Maximum Number of Credits Gained: The maximum number of credits that a student gained in one semester or year.

Average Number of Credits Gained: The average number of credits that a student gained in one semester or year.