

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Powered by Publics 2023 Core Data Metrics



**APLU'S**

**POWERED BY PUBLICS**

SCALING STUDENT SUCCESS

**Core Data Metrics**

**Institutional Data Collection**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**March 1, 2024**

## Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Powered by Publics 2023 Core Data Metrics Guidelines

- 1. Why can't APLU just use IPEDs data to monitor progress?** IPEDS data do not disaggregate the data for cohorts associated with subgroups that are typically under-represented
- 2. What is the difference between this collection and IPEDS Outcome Measures?** IPEDS OM does not track students who transfer out and graduate at other institutions.
- 3. My institution already participates in SAM. Will submitting data through this process fulfill my SAM obligation?** Yes, the system is setup to automatically submit bachelor's degree data to SAM. Institutions have the option to modify the models that are published to SAM.
- 4. Is there a way to opt-out of automatic submission to SAM?** Yes, if you have already submitted data to SAM, your data will NOT be updated. If you have NOT submitted data and wish to opt-out, please send an email to [cdm@aplu.org](mailto:cdm@aplu.org) with a clear message to OPT OUT of SAM.
- 5. Will the SAM site be updated to reflect these new queries?** Yes. This happens after the collection closes in September.
- 6. When will we see the results of the data collection? How will data be displayed?** The data will be analyzed by APLU staff and VSA Analytics. Preliminary results of that analysis will be made available to participating institutions within 2 months of closing the data collection. Institutions that subscribe to [VSA Analytics](#), will also have access to institution level data for participating schools. Institutions who do not subscribe will receive a PDF file of the results.
- 7. Will analysis of the data be made public and if so, will it be institutionally-identified?** No institutional data will be made public without permission from the institution. The only data that will be made public will be data aggregated across institutions or clusters.
- 8. With whom will APLU share my institution's data?** The institution level data are only available to PxP institutions and APLU staff and contractors. Institutional data will be available in [VSA Analytics](#) only to PxP participating institutions who subscribe.
- 9. Is my institution's data secure?** Yes. The submission process is secured with a username and a password. The data files are stored behind a firewall. The only data that will be

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shared publicly at the institution level are the standard Student Achievement Metrics which are published on the SAM website. Data are also available to PxP institutions that subscribe to [VSA Analytics](#).

- 10. *How long will you keep my institution's data for?*** The data will be kept for the entirety of the project and then for 5 years after the project ends. After that time, APLU and the institutional representatives will determine if any PxP data held in storage will be destroyed or if it needs to be held. Data submitted to SAM will follow the guidelines for storage for SAM.
- 11. *My institution uses different definitions for one or more of the metrics listed here. How do I handle this?*** Institutions will typically do their best to adjust to the given definitions, however, in cases where the institution needs to maintain institutional definitions, the primary contact will notify the CDM staff at [CDM@aplu.org](mailto:CDM@aplu.org) of the definitional change.
- 12. *How should we treat data from regional campuses, which are often reported separately to IPEDS?*** Each institution that has a separate IPEDS ID should report data separately – just like you do to IPEDS.
- 13. *What about graduates from a different campus within the same university system?*** Similarly, each institution that reports separately to IPEDS should report separately to CDM. However, the SAM process allows students who graduate elsewhere to be reported as “graduated” in the CDM analysis.
- 14. *How should we handle students who transfer among regional/system campuses?*** Similarly, each institution that reports separately to IPEDS should report separately to CDM. However, the SAM process allows students who enroll elsewhere to be reported as “still enrolled” in the CDM analysis.
- 15. *What about students who start as FTFT freshmen, stop out, and then return as transfer students full time – should they be in both the FTFT and transfer student cohorts?*** They should not be counted in more than one cohort. Generally, a student should stay in the cohort that they started in. However, there are some exceptions. If the student left for a significant amount of time, such that the student was required to re-apply to the university or program they were previously in, they may start over as a transfer full-time student. But if the student left for just a semester and transferred some credits in while still being considered enrolled, then the student would continue to be in the FTFT cohort. The institution has some flexibility in determining where the cutoff

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point is for this nuanced issue. It depends on the institution's policies guiding how long a student can stop out before they need to re-apply.

- 16. *Should full-time and part-time students be combined into one group or reported separately?*** They should be combined into one group for most metrics except where it is explicitly stated to report full-time. Refer to the data dictionary.
- 17. *Are the subgroups by gender and race separated by full-time and part-time?*** No. Combine all full-time and part-time students together for the gender cohorts.
- 18. *For FTFT enrollments – do we identify them as FTFT in \*any\* semester?*** Yes. We are trying to identify the proportion of the undergraduate enrollment who started as FTFT in their current career (regardless of when they started).
- 19. *For FTFT degrees – do we look back to see if they were \*ever\* a FTFT student? What if they were 20 years ago?*** Yes. If you don't know their entering status from 20 years ago, you can estimate (or impute) the number of students who might have been FTFT or TrFT based on the students for whom you know their entering status. You should know the starting status for most students. If you have a few who you don't know, you can estimate the unknowns based on the those you do know. Apply the % of degree recipients who started as FTFT to the unknowns. You can do the same for Transfer Full Time. If you do this, we recommend you footnote the template. Please don't include an (\*) asterisk in the cells because it may cause an error; just add a note at the bottom of the table. A NOTE: if they started 20 years ago and they stopped out and re-applied to continue enrollment, then you should take their entry status from when they re-applied. The general rule is to follow your institution's entering policies and what you report to IPEDS.
- 20. *Should we report data for degree-seeking undergraduates only, or include non-degree-seeking students? Are associate's degree-seeking students included, or only bachelor's degree-seeking students?*** Please report data for undergraduate degree-seeking students only (both associates and bachelors). Non-degree seeking students should not be included in the cells; however, if you wish to add these data, please do so outside of the preformed cells. You may also add any footnotes that are appropriate.
- 21. *Are "Pell recipients" students who receive the Pell grant in their first year, or in any year?*** While typically IPEDS restricts Pell status to the student's first year, CDM will allow institutions to report students who ever received Pell. The only exception is the

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retention rate where Pell is restricted to their first academic year.

22. ***For Fall 2021 undergraduate enrollments: do we count them if they received a Pell grant \*after\* the 2021-2022 aid year?*** No. The end time would be Spring 2022.
23. ***Should we use the federal aggregation method for race/ethnicity?*** Yes.
24. ***How should we handle unknown gender identity?*** Institutions can use the same method that they use for reporting gender to IPEDS. This method may vary across institutions.
25. ***Are retention rates for FTFT students only, or do we include transfer students in the denominator?*** Retention is reported for each of the 15 subgroups – one of which is the FTFT and another is for Transfer full-time.
26. ***Is the retention rate for students who were NEW in Fall 2021?*** Yes. The retention rate is for students entering your institution in Fall 2021 and then returning next Fall (or in some cases – anytime in the following calendar year - follow IPEDS definitions to determine how you would report).
27. ***What does the “total undergraduates” field for Fall 2016 consist of? All undergraduates registered in Fall 2016, sum of all Fall 2016 cohorts, or sum of all Fall 2016 cohorts plus new Fall 2016 transfer students?*** The total for undergraduates includes all NEW full time and part time, freshmen and transfers. Do not include returning students. The remaining subgroups would be a subset of the total undergraduates entering in Fall 2016.
28. ***Are the Fall 2016 cohorts that are submitted to NSC always for new students?*** Yes. The last 5 metrics (completed at the home institution, completed elsewhere, enrolled at the home institution, enrolled elsewhere, or status unknown) are based on the Fall 2016 new student cohort that started at your institution.
29. ***Do bachelor’s degrees in 2021-2022 include summer term, and if so, would it be summer 2021 (preceding summer) or summer 2022 (subsequent summer)?*** This would be consistent with what is reported to IPEDS. Typically, the summer follows the academic year (Fall, Spring, then Summer). However, if your institution reports differently, then please remain consistent with the reporting you currently do for IPEDS.
30. ***My institution doesn’t collect data for one or more of the metrics listed here. What***

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*should I do?* If unable to submit data for any of the metrics, please email the CDM staff ([cdm@aplu.org](mailto:cdm@aplu.org)) to determine an alternative option.

- 31. *Some of the disaggregated race/ethnicity categories have a small N and students could potentially be identified. How will APLU handle this? Is there a threshold below which “no data /insufficient data” will be displayed?*** No institutional data will be shared outside of PxP institutions that will contain any cells with less than 5. In general data will be aggregated to the cluster or to the entire initiative when shared with external constituents. You may choose not to submit a metric for a group that has fewer than 5 students, if you do, please just email us to let us know – [cdm@aplu.org](mailto:cdm@aplu.org).
- 32. *If the number of records in a subcohort is less than the required minimum to submit to NSC, what should we do?*** You can choose to exclude that cohort.
- 33. *How should we treat missing data?*** In the spreadsheet, you can leave the cells blank.
- 34. *Can my institution receive more than one set of login credentials to the online portal?***  
Yes.
- 35. *Can I use the data to benchmark with peer institutions and if so, how?*** In [VSA Analytics](#) you will have special access to a PxP module that will give you access to the 14 clusters and all PxP institutions only. Other standard metrics from IPEDS and SAM are available for all institutions through the standard VSA Analytics platform where you can create custom peer groups.
- 36. *What are the benefits of sharing my institutions data? What are the risks?*** To date, CDM is one of the largest data collection efforts for public 4-year universities outside of the federal government that disaggregates data by race/ethnicity and gender. The benefits allow APLU and PxP institutions to examine national trends and explore areas where institutions have common challenges. PxP is part of a community of learning where institutions can learn from one another and co-create solutions to challenges facing student success. A possible risk is the university’s sensitivity around being transparent about these data and progress compared to peers.
- 37. *Can my institution opt-out of sharing data?*** Yes. If an institution would like to opt out of sharing data, the institution’s president would need to notify the APLU president.
- 38. *For how many years will Powered by Publics be collecting data?*** Through 2025

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*39. I don't have enough staff in my IR office to complete this data request. What support will APLU provide to institutions like mine?* APLU will work with each institution that is understaffed to provide whatever support we can to make this easy for you. We are committed to helping you find a solution to the problem.