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A Paper Commissioned by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative

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INTRODUCTION

A small and diverse segment of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) universe includes colleges and universities that offer only degrees above the baccalaureate level. These graduate-only institutions are colleges or universities that offer programs in a variety of fields, including acupuncture, medicine, law, theology, business, and psychology.

In 2009-10, there were 315 graduate-only institutions in IPEDS enrolling over 170,000 students.[1] Eighty-five percent were private, not-for profit institutions; 10 percent were private, for-profit institutions; and 5 percent were public institutions. Sixty-six percent of these institutions offered a PhD as its highest degree; 31 institutions offered a medical degree. Almost half (46%) enrolled fewer than 250 students during the year.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) expressed interest in understanding better the data needs of graduate-only institutions and whether there should be changes made to the data collected by and reported for these institutions in IPEDS. This paper summarizes data collected from graduate-only institutions in IPEDS, identifies other organizations that collect data related to such institutions, and assesses whether changes should be made to the IPEDS data collection to meet the data needs of these institutions. Specifically, this paper addresses the following research questions:

1) What data do graduate-only institutions report to IPEDS and other organizations?

2) To what extent do IPEDS data meet the needs of policymakers, consumers, and graduate-only institutions?

3) To what extent should data collected through IPEDS be modified to address the data needs of graduate-only institutions, and what would be the impact on reporting burden for these institutions?

[1] Graduate-only institutions were identified in IPEDS by selecting institutions that were located in the United States and in the institutional category "degree-granting, graduate with no undergraduate degree."

FINDINGS

IPEDS Provides Descriptive Information about Graduate-Only Institutions, However Other Data Must Be Used to Address Some Key Issues

Graduate-only institutions report data to all but the following three IPEDS components: Graduation Rates (GR), Graduation Rates 200 (GR200), and Student Financial Aid (SFA), which collect data on cohorts of undergraduate students only, as shown in table 1. For the other six IPEDS components, the amount of information reported by graduate-only institutions varies based on whether the component collects data on undergraduate students. For example, graduate-only institutions do not report data in all sections of the Institutional Characteristics (IC) component. IC collects data on institutions' admissions policies and the number of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students who applied and were admitted, and there is no comparable information collected on graduate students' admissions or selection for graduate school. Data collected in the Human Resources and Finance components are not based on award level, so the elements that graduate-only institutions report in these two components are the same elements reported by other institutions.

Table 1. Examples of types of data collected from degree-granting graduate-only institutions through each IPEDS component

IPEDS Component	Examples of Data Collected
Institutional Characteristics	• Organizational structure—level and control, system information, calendar • Educational and Degree offerings • Religious affiliation • Website • Estimated Fall Enrollment • Student Services • Tuition and Fees (also for Doctor's programs, professional practice)
Completions	• Awards conferred for each 6-digit CIP code and program level/length combination by race/ethnicity and gender
12- Month Enrollment	• Unduplicated 12-month count of graduate students enrolled for credit by race/ethnicity and gender • Postbaccalaureate credit hour activity at the graduate level, including any doctor's-professional practice activity
Human Resources	***For those with more than 15 full-time employees*** • Employees by assigned position, full- and part-time staff, medical and non-medical school • Full-time instructional staff by contract length/teaching period and by tenure track • Salary outlays by contract length/teaching period, gender, and academic rank • Full time instruction/research/ public service staff and by tenure track, race/ethnicity and gender • Other full time staff by race/ethnicity and gender • Part time staff by race/ethnicity and gender • New hires by faculty status, race/ethnicity and gender

	For those with less than 15 full-time employees • Full- and part-time professional and non-professional staff by race/ethnicity and gender • Full-time instructional staff by contract length/teaching period and by tenure track and salary outlays by contract length/teaching period
Fall Enrollment	• Full- and part-time student enrollment by race/ethnicity and gender • Full- and part-time student enrollment by age and gender
Finance	***Different forms for public and private institutions*** • Revenues and Expenditures • Scholarships and Fellowships • Endowment Assets • Debt and Assets
Graduation Rate Graduation 200	No data reported, component only collects on undergraduate students
Student Financial Aid	No data reported, component only collects on undergraduate students

Source: Analysis of IPEDS component materials

Conversations with representatives at graduate-only institutions indicated that they generally did not have problems reporting IPEDS data. A few institutions have sent staff to IPEDS trainings and found them helpful in understanding data reporting requirements. One institution did report receiving inconsistent information from the IPEDS Help Desk regarding how best to report certain awards unique to schools of law.

IPEDS data can be used to describe key characteristics of graduate-only institutions, such as enrollment, program completions, and staffing trends; however, to address questions about institutional selectivity in the admissions process, how graduate students finance their education, or the length of time it takes graduate students to complete a program of study, other sources of data must be analyzed. To fill the gaps in understanding graduate education, data collected by accreditation agencies or organizations that represent specific fields of study could be used. For example, theological seminaries, which represent just over a third of graduate-only institutions, report data on a number of topics to the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Some of the data collected by ATS are similar to data collected in IPEDS (e.g., faculty and institutional revenues), while other data are related to areas not covered by IPEDS, such as applications, acceptances, and enrollees in each master's and doctoral program and the number of years it took graduates to complete each program. Each year the association uses the data for its fact book and institutional peer profile reports made available to members.

Other associations representing optometry, medical, and law schools also collect data that are not collected in IPEDS, such as data on admissions, student financial aid, and retention and graduation as shown in table 2. While the data reported to these entities provide information on topics not covered by IPEDS and are posted publicly on the organizations' websites, they are not as easily accessible as IPEDS data. In addition, data on organizations' websites were not from the most recent academic year.

Table 2. Other organizations that collect data on admissions, financial aid, and retention and graduation from graduate-only institutions

Organization Collecting Data	**Type of Data Related to….**		
	Admissions	**Financial Aid**	**Retention & Graduation**
Association of Theological Schools (ATS) *Represents graduate schools in US & Canada that offer graduate, professional theological degrees in Christian & Jewish faiths (includes non-Title IV schools)*	• Number applications, acceptances, and enrollees in each degree program	• None	• Completions in each type of master's degrees, by number of years it took to graduate and gender
Association of Schools & Colleges of Optometry *Represents 20 schools of optometry.*	• Number applicants by gender. • Number accepted by residency • Applicants' average GPA. • Average age • Number applicants in & out of state and international. • Admission requirements for each school.	• Percent of O.D. students that received financial aid. • Average award for resident & non-resident student. • Number that received grants and average grant amount by types of grant programs. • Number and percent of students and average amount received: (a) through state contract agreements, (b) federal work study (c) federal loans, (d) campus-based health professions, institutional, & loans for disadvantaged students. • Average student indebtedness	• Number graduates of O.D. program by gender and race. • Number of students that left O.D program by reason for leaving (academic, financial, illness, personal, disciplinary, & other)

Table 2. Other organizations that collect data on admissions, financial aid, and retention and graduation from graduate-only institutions

Organization Collecting Data	Type of Data Related to….		
	Admissions	**Financial Aid**	**Retention & Graduation**
American Psychological Association *Accrediting body for graduate & doctoral programs in psychology.*	• Average incoming students' GPA and GRE score. • Number of master's credits transferred, if applicable.	None	• Average number of years to complete by program (i.e. clinical, counseling, etc.)
Association of American Medical Colleges *Represents accredited medical schools in the United States and Canada.*	• Number of applicants--1st time and reapplying, by gender. • Number admitted by gender. • Number applicants by residency specialty program and gender. • Number applicants, enrolled, & graduated each year for M-PhD program. • MCAT scores for M-PhD	• Percent of graduates with debt. • Average medical school debt by private & public college	• Number of graduates by race & gender at each school since 2002.
Association of American Law Schools **American Bar Association** *Represents schools of law from most large universities and freestanding law schools*		• Total institutional grants & scholarships awarded in the year. • Average amount borrowed by public and private institutions	• Total attrition by year in school and gender. Number of JD and LLB awarded by gender or whether minority student.

Source: Analysis of selected organizations that collect information from graduate-only institutions

There Are Limitations in Using IPEDS Data for Institutional Comparison or Consumer Information

Having relevant data for benchmarking or comparison purposes is important for institutions and for students and their families as they explore options for graduate education. However, IPEDS is not the primary source of data for these purposes due to the limitations in the data elements collected from graduate-only institutions in IPEDS, the inability to create adequate institutional comparison groups using IPEDS data, and the institution-level—rather than program-level—focus of IPEDS data.

IPEDS Data Feedback Reports (DFR) are one source of institution-level comparison data in key areas such as student enrollment, degrees awarded by level, number of faculty by position and average salary by academic rank, and core revenues and expenses. DFRs are sent annually to institutions and contain data they reported in IPEDS and data for a comparison group of institutions. Comparison groups are selected by the institution or by NCES, if the institution does not specify a comparison group, based on institutional characteristics. The purpose of the DFR is to provide institutions an annual report that could be used for benchmarking and peer analysis.

Officials at a few graduate-only institutions reported that the information in the DFRs is useful for recruiting and enrollment purposes. However, to answer questions about topics such as year-to-year retention and graduation, student indebtedness, development and fundraising, and physical plant facilities, institutions utilized data from other sources, since such data are not collected in IPEDS.

A more critical issue with using IPEDS data for comparison purposes among graduate-only institutions is the inability to create adequate comparison groups. Several institutions reported that the comparison groups created for DFRs were not appropriate for their institutions. For these institutions, DFR comparison groups are often too broad and include institutions that are not truly comparable. For example, the DFR for SUNY College of Optometry included 32 comparison schools that were selected using the following two characteristics: ***Carnegie Classification of Special Focus Institutions—Other health professions schools*** and ***highest level of offering is postbaccalaureate and enrollment of a similar size***. Using these characteristics resulted in a comparison group that included some for-profit colleges and colleges from different disciplines such as acupuncture and oriental medicine, chiropractic medicine, psychology, nursing, and anesthesia. A SUNY official indicated that he tried to customize the comparison group to include only colleges of optometry, but the number of institutions was too small to make any meaningful comparisons.

Another challenge in creating adequate comparison groups is that truly comparable institutions for some graduate-only institutions are schools embedded within larger university systems. As one official at a college of psychology explained, "our school is more like departments at a university." The official tried to create customized comparison groups within IPEDS, but it resulted in a too small sample. To perform meaningful benchmark analyses, the college created three separate comparison groups using data from its professional organization. The comparison groups were created using a number of variables, such as type of psychology program, Carnegie classification, enrollment size, location, length of study, and special licensure.

The issue of comparing freestanding colleges with schools that are part of a larger university was echoed by representatives of a law school and a college of optometry. Both schools have also utilized data from professional associations for comparison purposes. A representative of a

theological seminary also noted the challenges in creating comparison groups in IPEDS highlighting that even within a group of institutions offering similar degrees there are certain characteristics—such as the manner in which the seminary is funded or theological differences—that are important to consider when comparing institutions. Additionally, he noted that IPEDS data are not collected from all theological seminaries because some institutions choose not to be a part of Title IV programs, whereas data from the professional association would include those schools.

Consumers looking for information on graduate education are often focused on specific programs of study, and the institution-level collection of data through IPEDS can limit the utility of IPEDS for consumer information purposes. Data collected from graduate-only institutions are posted on College Navigator and available to consumers; however, consumers cannot compare these data with graduate programs that are part of a larger college or university. There are a number of other sources of information about graduate education that consumers can access, such as websites geared towards specific professions (e.g., medical schools; professional organizations representing graduate education programs; and national rankings and guides). For example, each year *U.S. News and World Report* gathers data on schools of business, law, and medicine with a focus on providing information useful to consumers or students considering graduate school. The *U.S. News and World Report* rankings include similar data on admissions collected by other organizations, such as scores on admission tests and percent of applicants admitted, as well as information on applicants' prior work experience and most popular undergraduate majors of medical school applicants. There is also a focus on outcomes after graduation, such as the starting salaries of business and law school graduates and the percent employed in different regions of the U.S. For medical school graduates, there are data on graduates' movement into primary care specialties.

Modifications to IPEDS May Not Address Challenges Faced by Graduate-Only Institutions in Using IPEDS Data

IPEDS could be modified to collect additional data from graduate-only institutions to provide more information related to student financing of graduate education and outcomes such as retention and graduation. According to representatives of a few graduate-only institutions and reviews of data collected by other organizations, these institutions are already reporting data on these topics and could likely be incorporated into the IPEDS data collection. The data element most commonly reported, and in a fairly similar format, is student indebtedness.

Given the federal investment in graduate education through its loan programs—about $34 billion in 2010-11—having data collected from institutions that serve only graduate students may be useful to policymakers. IPEDS could also collect data on student outcomes, such as retention and

graduation, using current data collections at other organizations as a starting point for such a collection.

While having such data would provide more insights into graduate-only institutions, it would not address the current limitations in using IPEDS data for institutional comparison and consumer information purposes. Given the issues encountered by graduate-only institutions in creating meaningful comparison groups, there would still be limitations in how institutions could use new data elements for benchmarking or comparison purposes. Moreover, there would not be comparable data from programs embedded within larger universities, unless IPEDS was further modified to collect certain data elements by degree and award level. Such an approach would improve the comprehensiveness of data on graduate-level students, but it would add reporting burden to a larger universe of colleges and universities.

Before adding new data elements to IPEDS, NCES could explore ways to make IPEDS a better source of data for institutional comparison by enabling graduate-only institutions to create more refined comparison groups. One approach could allow institutions to select comparison groups based on degree completions within specific Classification of Institutional Programs (CIP) codes. Using this approach would require using CIP codes at the 4-digit level to identify different programs of study, particularly those within CIP code 51—Health Professions and Related Programs. If this approach was used then a school that primarily offered acupuncture programs could select schools that primarily made awards in the CIP code 51.33—Alternative and Complementary Medicine and Medical System as a possible comparison group. An alternative approach could be used to add a new data element in IC that would allow institutions to select primary programs of study at the four-digit CIP code level. This variable could then be one of the characteristics used to create DFR comparison groups. Using this approach would allow graduate-only institutions to have more control over which program of study should be used to be included in a DFR group.

While these changes will improve the ability for some types of institutions to create comparison groups, it will not address the issue of too small comparison groups for other institutions types, such as optometry and chiropractic medicine. If NCES made changes to how comparison groups are created, some follow-up work could be done to see if it increased the utility of IPEDS data for institutional comparison.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

The consultant reviewed data elements reported by graduate-only institutions in IPEDS and information included on the U.S. Department of Education's College Navigator website and in IPEDS Data Feedback Reports (DFR). The consultant also reviewed data reported by graduate-only institutions to accreditation agencies, associations, and other organizations. To understand better the characteristics of graduate-only institutions and to identify institutions for in-depth interviews, the consultant analyzed IPEDS data using several variables such as DFR comparison group category, average enrollment size, and institutional sector. The DFR comparison group category is an indicator used to create comparison groups in the DFR/Executive Peer tool when institutions do not provide their own comparison group. The DFR comparison group category variable also provides insights into the types of programs offered by the institution. Table A-1 shows the distribution of graduate-only institutions within each DFR comparison group category. Some of the DFR comparison group categories were combined due to the small number of institutions in the group. For example, the category ***Medical Schools*** includes both public and private, not-for-profit institutions since there were just 6 public institutions.

Table A-1. Number and percent of graduate-only institutions and average 12-month unduplicated headcount in 2009-10, by Data Feedback Report category comparison group

Data Feedback Report category	Number of schools	Percent of schools	Average enrollment
Theological seminary, offers PhD	76	24%	449
Other health professional school, highest level of offering postbaccalaureate	57	18%	428
Theological seminary, no PhD	34	11%	138
Schools of law	32	10%	965
Other[a]	29	9%	271
Medical schools and medical centers, public and private-not for profit	27	9%	1,509
Other special focus institutions	19	6%	467
Private not-for-profit, non-degree-granting[b]	12	4%	30
Non-Title IV degree granting- for-profit and not-for-profit	7	2%	247
School of art, music, design	7	2%	150
Masters colleges and universities- (smaller, medium, & larger programs), public and private not-for-profit	5	2%	662
Doctoral/research universities- private, not-for-profit	4	1%	1,023
Private research university	2	1%	4,497
Schools of business management	2	1%	1,235
Private, for-profit-academic year—non-degree granting	1	--	47
Public non-degree granting	1	--	45
Total	315		

[a] "Other" includes all institutions that were not in a Data Feedback Report comparison group category and in these categories: schools in Puerto Rico, for profit-not Carnegie-highest degree is Masters, and not-for-profit—not-Carnegie.
[b] Includes institutions in the following categories: Private not-for-profit-program reporter- non-degree-granting-largest program-health; Private not-for-profit- academic year reporter- non-degree-granting; and Private not-for-profit- program reporter- non-degree-granting.
Source: Analysis of IPEDS, Institutional Characteristics 2009-10

About 81 percent of all graduate-only institutions were in the following categories:

(1) Theological seminary, offers PhD;
(2) Other health professional school, highest level of offering postbaccalaureate;
(3) Theological seminary, no PhD;
(4) Schools of law;
(5) Other; and
(6) Medical schools and medical centers, public and private-not for profit.

Within the categories of ***Other health professional schools*** and ***Other***, the consultant further analyzed the characteristics of institutions in those groupings. Of the 57 ***Other health professional schools***, 70 percent were private, not-for-profit institutions; 26 percent were for-profit institutions; and 4 percent were public institutions. The consultant then went to each

institution's website to determine the primary educational programs offered and further classified the institutions by program of study, as shown in table A-2.

Table A-2. Number and percent of institutions in the ***Other health professional school, highest level of offering postbaccalaureate*** comparison category group, by primary program of study

Primary Program of Study	Number of institutions	Percent of institutions
Acupuncture	25	44%
Psychology	9	16%
Optometry	6	11%
Chiropractic	5	9%
Anesthesia	3	5%
Naturopathic Medicine	2	4%
Podiatry	2	4%
Allied Health/Anesthesia	1	2%
Midwifery	1	2%
Pharmacy	1	2%
Psychology/ministry	1	2%
Social Work	1	2%

Among institutions classified as ***Other***, 74 percent were private, not-for-profit and 26 percent were private, for-profit institutions. The types of programs offered by institutions in this group were not concentrated in one discipline but were spread across a range of disciplines. Nine of the 29 institutions offered acupuncture or oriental medicine programs, 4 were theological seminaries or rabbinical schools, and the primary program of study at the remaining 9 institutions covered a range of disciplines, such as psychology, fine arts, and computer sciences.

When selecting institutions for more in-depth examination, the consultant identified institutions within each of the top 6 DFR comparison group categories. Due to differences in the primary programs of study among institutions classified as ***Other health professional schools,*** the consultant identified institutions with different programs of study. The consultant contacted 12 institutions through emails and subsequently interviewed 6 different institutions, listed in table A-3. During the interviews the consultant gathered feedback on the IPEDS data reporting process, information on how IPEDS data and related products are used at the institution, other sources of data the institution utilized for benchmarking or comparison purposes, and whether other data could be collected through IPEDS to meet institutions' data needs and the potential impact of collecting additional data through IPEDS. While the information gathered from a small sample of institutions cannot be generalized for all graduate-only institutions, the experiences of those institutions are informative when considering the unique mission, organizational structure, and student characteristics of graduate-only institutions. The institutions represented a cross-

section of graduate-only institutions, and there were enough commonalities in the observations and insights that allow for some conclusions to be drawn.

Table A-3. Graduate-only institutions interviewed for study

Institution	State	12-month Enrollment	Data Feedback Report comparison group category	Primary Program of Study
Dallas Theological Seminary	Texas	2,312	Theological seminaries- Bible colleges- and other faith-related institutions- offers PhD	Theology
Tai Sophia Institute	Maryland	607	Other health professional school, highest offer postbaccalaureate	Acupuncture & oriental medicine
Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology	Massachusetts	458	Other health professional school, highest offer postbaccalaureate	Psychology
Des Moines University-Osteopathic Medical Center	Iowa	1,874	Medical schools and medical centers- private not-for-profit	Medicine
SUNY College of Optometry	New York	302	Other health professional school, highest offer postbaccalaureate	Optometry
Thomas M. Cooley Law School	Michigan	4,422	Schools of law	Law