Common Data Set Definitions

- **All definitions related to the financial aid section appear at the end of the Definitions document.**

- Items preceded by an asterisk (*) represent definitions agreed to among publishers which do not appear on the CDS document but may be present on individual publishers' surve

- Additional guidance for some terms, particularly those common with the IPEDS survey, may be found here: https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary

***Academic advisement:** Plan under which each student is assigned to a faculty member or a trained adviser, who, through regular meetings, helps the student plan and implement in
Accelerated program: Completion of a college program of study in fewer than the usual number of years, most often by attending summer sessions and carrying extra courses durin
Admitted student: Applicant who is offered admission to a degree-granting program at your institution.

***Adult student services:** Admission assistance, support, orientation, and other services expressly for adults who have started college for the first time, or who are re-entering after a
American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and maintaining tribal affiliatio
Applicant (first-time, first year): An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for admission (including payment or waiving of the application fee,
Application fee: That amount of money that an institution charges for processing a student's application for acceptance. This amount is *not* creditable toward tuition and required fe
Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Kor
Associate degree: An award that normally requires at least two but less than four years of full-time equivalent college work.
Bachelor's degree: An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least four years but
Black or African American*:* A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
Board (charges): Assume average cost for 19 meals per week or the maximum meal plan.
Books and supplies (costs): Average cost of books and supplies. Do not include unusual costs for special groups of students (e.g., engineering or art majors), unless they constitute t
Calendar system: The method by which an institution structures most of its courses for the academic year.
Campus Ministry: Religious student organizations (denominational or nondenominational) devoted to fostering religious life on college campuses. May also refer to Campus Crusac

***Career and placement services:** A range of services, including (often) the following: coordination of visits of employers to campus; aptitude and vocational testing; interest invent
Carnegie units: One year of study or the equivalent in a secondary school subject.
Certificate: See **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma.**
Class rank: The relative numerical position of a student in his or her graduating class, calculated by the high school on the basis of grade-point average, whether weighted or unweig
College-preparatory program: Courses in academic subjects (English, history and social studies, foreign languages, mathematics, science, and the arts) that stress preparation for c
Common Application: The standard application form distributed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals for a large number of private colleges who are membe
***Community service program:** Referral center for students wishing to perform volunteer work in the community or participate in volunteer activities coordinated by academic depa
Commuter: A student who lives off campus in housing that is not owned by, operated by, or affiliated with the college. This category includes students who commute from home an
Comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities: Programs designed to support postsecondary students with intellectual disabili
Clock hour: A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. Also referred to as contact hour.
Continuous basis (for program enrollment): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that enroll students at any time during the academic year. For example, a c
Cooperative education program: A program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government.
Cooperative housing: College-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing in which students share food and housing expenses and participate in household chores to reduce living exper
***Counseling service:** Activities designed to assist students in making plans and decisions related to their education, career, or personal development.
Credit: Recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward the requirements for a degree, diploma, ce
Credit course: A course that, if successfully completed, can be applied toward the number of courses required for achieving a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized postse
Credit hour: A unit of measure representing an hour (50 minutes) of instruction over a 15-week period in a semester or trimester system or a 10-week period in a quarter system. It i
Cross-registration: A system whereby students enrolled at one institution may take courses at another institution without having to apply to the second institution.
Deferred admission: The practice of permitting admitted students to postpone enrollment, usually for a period of one academic term or one year.
Degree: An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies.
Degree-seeking students: Students enrolled in courses for credit who are recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or recognized postsecondary credential. At the undergradu
***Developmental services:** Instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies necessary for a regular postsecondary curriculum and educational setting
Differs by program (calendar system): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that have occupational/vocational programs of varying length. These schools ma
Diploma: See **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma.**
Distance learning: An option for earning course credit at off-campus locations via cable television, internet, satellite classes, videotapes, correspondence courses, or other means.
Doctor's degree-research/scholarship: A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertati
Doctor's degree-professional practice: A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or licen
Doctor's degree-other: A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.
Double major: Program in which students may complete two undergraduate programs of study simultaneously.
Dual enrollment: Refers to high school students enrolled in college courses for credit. In accordance with IPEDS, student performance is recorded on a college transcript and postse
Early action plan: An admission plan that allows students to apply and be notified of an admission decision well in advance of the regular notification dates. If admitted, the candida
Early admission: A policy under which students who have not completed high school are admitted and enroll full time in college, usually after completion of their junior year.
Early decision plan: A plan that permits students to apply and be notified of an admission decision (and financial aid offer if applicable) well in advance of the regular notification d
English as a Second Language (ESL): A course of study designed specifically for students whose native language is not English.
Exchange student program-domestic: Any arrangement between a student and a college that permits study for a semester or more at another college **in the United States** without
External degree program: A program of study in which students earn credits toward a degree through independent study, college courses, proficiency examinations, and personal e
Extracurricular activities (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admissions process given for participation in both school and nonschool-related activities of interest t
First-time student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the level enrolled. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended a postsecondary institution for t
First-time, first-year student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the
First-year student: A student who has completed less than the equivalent of 1 full year of undergraduate work; that is, less than 30 semester hours (in a 120-hour degree program) o
Food and housing (charges)—on campus: Assume double occupancy in institutional housing and 19 meals per week (or maximum meal plan).
Full-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, 12 or more quarter credits, or 24 or more clock hours a week each term.
Geographical residence (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process given to students from a particular region, state, or country of residence.

Grade-point average (academic high school GPA): The sum of grade points a student has earned in secondary school divided by the number of courses taken. The most common s
Graduate student: A student who holds a bachelor's or equivalent, and is taking courses at the post-baccalaureate level.
***Health services:** Free or low cost on-campus primary and preventive health care available to students.
High school diploma or recognized equivalent: A document certifying the successful completion of a prescribed secondary school program of studies, or the attainment of satisfac
Hispanic or Latino: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
Honors program: Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these.
Independent study: Academic work chosen or designed by the student with the approval of the department concerned, under an instructor's supervision, and usually undertaken outs
In-state tuition: The tuition charged by institutions to those students who meet the state's or institution's residency requirements.
International student: See **Nonresident.**
International student group: Student groups that facilitate cultural dialogue, support a diverse campus, assist international students in acclimation and creating a social network.
Internship: Any short-term, supervised work experience usually related to a student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full- or part-time, on
***Learning center:** Center offering assistance through tutors, workshops, computer programs, or audiovisual equipment in reading, writing, math, and skills such as taking notes, mar

***Legal services:** Free or low cost legal advice for a range of issues (personal and other).
Liberal arts/career combination: Program in which a student earns undergraduate degrees in two separate fields, one in a liberal arts major and the other in a professional or specia
Living learning community: Residential programs that allow students to interact with students who share common interests. In addition to living together, students may also particip
Master's degree: An award that requires the successful completion of a program of study of generally one or two full-time equivalent academic years of work beyond the bachelor's
Minority affiliation (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process for members of designated racial/ethnic minority groups.
***Minority student center:** Center with programs, activities, and/or services intended to enhance the college experience of students of color.

Model United Nations: A simulation activity focusing on conflict resolution, globalization, and diplomacy. Assuming roles as foreign ambassadors and "delegates," students conduc

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
***New student orientation:** Orientation addressing the academic, social, emotional, and intellectual issues involved in beginning college. May be a few hours or a few days in length;
Nonresident: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely.
***On-campus day care:** Licensed day care for students' children (usually age 3 and up); usually for a fee.
Open admission: Admission policy under which virtually all secondary school graduates or students with GED equivalency diplomas are admitted without regard to academic record
Other expenses (costs): Include average costs for clothing, laundry, entertainment, medical (if not a required fee), and furnishings.
Out-of-state tuition: The tuition charged by institutions to those students who do not meet the institution's or state's residency requirements.
Outside a dual enrollment program: High school students who simply enroll in credit courses through your institution and are treated as regularly enrolled college students.
Part-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for fewer than 12 credits per semester or quarter, or fewer than 24 clock hours a week each term.
Permanent Resident or other eligible non-citizen: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who has been admitted as a legal immigrant for the purpose of
***Personal counseling**: One-on-one or group counseling with trained professionals for students who want to explore personal, educational, or vocational issues.
Post-baccalaureate certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study requiring 18 credit hours beyond the bachelor's; designed for persons who have
Post-master's certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study of 24 credit hours beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of
Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma: Includes the following three IPEDS definitions for postsecondary awards, certificates, and diplomas of varying durations and credit/

Less Than 1 Academic Year : Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in less than 1 academic year (2 sem

At Least 1 But Less Than 2 Academic Years: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 1 but les

At Least 2 But Less Than 4 Academic Years: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 2 but les

Private institution: An educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental agency, usually supported primarily by other than public funds, and oper
Private for-profit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives compensation, other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumptio
Private nonprofit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives no compensation, other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assum
Proprietary institution: See **Private for-profit institution.**
Public institution: An educational institution whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials, and which is supported primarily by publi
Quarter calendar system: A calendar system in which the academic year consists of three sessions called quarters of about 12 weeks each. The range may be from 10 to 15 weeks.
Race/ethnicity: Category used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with, or belong in the eyes of the community. The categories do not denote scientific definitio
Race/ethnicity unknown: Category used to classify students or employees whose race/ethnicity is not known and whom institutions are unable to place in one of the specified racial/
Recognized Postsecondary Credential: Includes both Title IV eligible degrees, certificates, and other recognized postsecondary credentials. Any credential that is received after cor
Religious affiliation/commitment (as admission factor): Special consideration given in the admission process for affiliation with a certain church or faith/religion, commitment to
***Religious counseling:** One-on-one or group counseling with trained professionals for students who want to explore religious problems or issues.
Required fees: Fixed sum charged to students for items not covered by tuition and required of such a large proportion of all students that the student who does NOT pay is the excep
Secondary school record (as admission factor): Information maintained by the secondary school that may include such things as the student's high school transcript, class rank, GP
Semester calendar system: A calendar system that consists of two semesters during the academic year with about 16 weeks for each semester of instruction. There may be an additi
Student-designed major: A program of study based on individual interests, designed with the assistance of an adviser.
Study abroad: Any arrangement by which a student completes part of the college program studying in another country. Can be at a campus abroad or through a cooperative agreeme
***Summer session:** A summer session is shorter than a regular semester and not considered part of the academic year. It is not the third term of an institution operating on a trimester
Talent/ability (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students with demonstrated talent/abilities in areas of interest to the institution (e.g., sports, the arts, languages,
Teacher certification program: Program designed to prepare students to meet the requirements for certification as teachers in elementary, middle/junior high, and secondary school
Transfer applicant: An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for admission (including payment or waiving of the application fee, if any) and wi

Transfer student: A student entering the institution for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution at the same level (e.g., undergraduate). The s
Transportation (costs): Assume two round trips to student's hometown per year for students in institutional housing or daily travel to and from your institution for commuter studen
Trimester calendar system: An academic year consisting of 3 terms of about 15 weeks each.

Tuition: Amount of money charged to students for instructional services. Tuition may be charged per term, per course, or per credit.

***Tutoring:** May range from one-on-one tutoring in specific subjects to tutoring in an area such as math, reading, or writing. Most tutors are college students; at some colleges, they a

Unit: a standard of measurement representing hours of academic instruction (e.g., semester credit, quarter credit, clock hour).
Undergraduate: A student enrolled in a four- or five-year bachelor's degree program, an associate degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate.
Unduplicated Count of High School Students Enrolled for Credit: Include all high school students enrolled in college courses for credit within or outside of a dual enrollment prc
Undergraduate Research: Opportunities offered to undergraduate students to make original contributions in an academic discipline via the exploration of a specific research topic. I
***Veteran's counseling:** Helps veterans and their dependents obtain benefits for their selected program and provides certifications to the Veteran's Administration. May also provide
***Visually impaired:** Any person whose sight loss is not correctable and is sufficiently severe as to adversely affect educational performance.
Volunteer work (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students for activity done on a volunteer basis (e.g., tutoring, hospital care, working with the elderly or disable
Wait list: List of students who meet the admission requirements but will only be offered a place in the class if space becomes available.
Weekend college: A program that allows students to take a complete course of study and attend classes only on weekends.
White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
Within a dual enrollment program: Program within an organized system with special guidelines that allows high school students to take college-level courses. The guidelines migh
***Women's center:** Center with programs, academic activities, and/or services intended to promote an understanding of the evolving roles of women.
Work experience (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students who have been employed prior to application, whether for relevance to major, demonstration of em

Financial Aid Definitions

External scholarships and grants: Scholarships and grants received from outside (private) sources that students bring with them (e.g., Kiwanis, National Merit scholarships). The ir

Financial aid applicant: Any applicant who submits **any one of** the institutionally required financial aid applications/forms, such as the FAFSA.

Indebtedness: Aggregate dollar amount borrowed through any loan program (federal, state, subsidized, unsubsidized, private, etc.; excluding parent loans) while the student was enr

Institutional scholarships and grants: Endowed scholarships, annual gifts and tuition funded grants for which the institution determines the recipient.

Financial need: As determined by your institution using the federal methodology and/or your institution's own standards.

Need-based aid: College-funded or college-administered award from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a student must have financial need to qualify. This includ

Need-based scholarship or grant aid: Scholarships and grants from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a student must have financial need to qualify.

Need-based self-help aid: Loans and jobs from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a student must demonstrate financial need to qualify.

Non-need-based scholarship or grant aid: Scholarships and grants, gifts, or merit-based aid from institutional, state, federal, or other sources (including unrestricted funds or gifts a

Note: Suggested order of precedence for counting non-need money as need-based:

1. Non-need institutional grants
2. Non-need tuition waivers
3. Non-need athletic awards
4. Non-need federal grants
5. Non-need state grants
6. Non-need outside grants
7. Non-need student loans
8. Non-need parent loans
9. Non-need work

Non-need-based self-help aid: Loans and jobs from institutional, state, or other sources for which a student need not demonstrate financial need to qualify.

Work study and employment: Federal and state work study aid, and any employment packaged by your institution in financial aid awards.

not more than five years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes ALL bachelor's degrees conferred in a five-year cooperative (work-study plan) program. (A

ories, personal counseling; help in resume writing, interviewing, launching the job search; listings for those students desiring employment and those seeking permanent position

y enroll students at specific times depending on the program desired. For example, a school might offer a two-month program in January, March, May, September, and Novemł

on based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of de
se required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional prepa

condary credit is awarded for a passing grade in the course. Dual enrollment includes: All postsecondary courses, independent of course delivery mode, course location, course

ate. Applicants agree to accept an offer of admission and, if admitted, to withdraw their applications from other colleges. There are three possible decisions for early decision a

system of assigning numbers to grades counts four points for an A, three points for a B, two points for a C, one point for a D, and no points for an E or F. Unweighted GPA's as

obtaining permanent resident status (and who holds either a registration card [Form I-551 or I-151], a Temporary Resident Card [Form I-688], or an Arrival-Departure Record

mpletion of a program that is eligible for Title IV federal student aid. Credentials that are awarded to recognize an individual's attainment of measurable technical or industry/oc

system or the fourth term of an institution operating on a quarter calendar system. The institution may have 2 or more sessions occurring in the summer months. Some schools,

and endowment income) awarded solely on the basis of academic achievement, merit, or any other non-need-based reason. When reporting questions H1 and H2, non-need-base

cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience wit

ıration, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as "first-professional" and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or

instructor, whether secondary credit is also offered, and whether the student enrolls through a formal state/local program or enrolls outside a formal state/local program. Dua

[Form I-94] with a notation that conveys legal immigrant status, such as Section 207 Refugee, Section 208 Asylee, Conditional Entrant Parolee or Cuban-Haitian).

ccupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an industry occupation. (Generally based on standards developed or endorsed by employers or industry

D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); Law (L.L.B. or J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine (D.O); Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D.

al enrollment excludes: Credit-by-exam models such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) in which the student is not enrolled in a postsecondary inst

., D.P.); or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.