

Improving the IPEDS Student Average Net Price to be More Relevant for Consumers

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Introduction

Paying for a college education is one of the most expensive decisions a person will make. Having reliable, understandable data to compare the costs at different institutions is essential for students and families who are deciding which college they can afford. This paper details how the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) can make these cost estimates more useful to consumers. This paper provides an overview of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) cost of attendance (COA) collected in the Institutional Characteristics (IC) survey component, which is used in conjunction with the financial aid data collected in the Student Financial Aid (SFA) survey component to calculate an institution's average net price (ANP).

The institution's ANP gives first-time, full-time college students an idea of how much it costs to attend an institution, after grant and scholarship aid is subtracted from the COA estimate. The ANP is available to the public on the federal College Navigator, College Scorecard, and College Affordability and Transparency Center (CATC) websites to help consumers understand college affordability. This paper is intended to prompt discussion into ways NPEC and NCES can revisit the methods used to collect COA and ANP data via IPEDS to make these data simpler, more valuable, relevant, reliable, and comparable for consumers.

Organization

This paper provides a history and background on IPEDS COA and ANP, including legal reporting requirements mandated by federal statute. It continues with a discussion of the current limitations and explores other areas not defined within the federal statute. Finally, this paper offers recommendations for consideration by NPEC and NCES, followed by concluding remarks. A comprehensive list of acronyms used throughout this paper can be found in Appendix E.

Background

The IPEDS SFA survey component was developed in 1999 to satisfy requirements under the 1998 amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 and included data concerning tuition and fees applicable to full-time undergraduate students, the total expenses associated with attending college as a full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate student, the average financial aid received by undergraduate students, and the count of students receiving each category of aid. In 2000, price information was moved to the IC survey component. The passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) in 2008 called for colleges to make more information available to consumers by requiring the Secretary of Education to collect and publish consumer information on college costs, including net price (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-310). This began in 2009 for first-time, full-time students.

The HEOA required institutions to report on three prior academic years (2006, 2007, 2008), providing net prices for:

- First-time, full-time undergraduate students awarded any gift aid;
- Undergraduate students awarded Federal Title IV aid¹ (including net price calculated by income category); and
- Undergraduate students paying the in-state tuition rates (in-district or out-of-district)² at public institutions.

These various outcomes fulfilled statutory regulations requiring ANP only be calculated based on full-time students enrolled in a post-secondary institution for the first time. The IC 1984-85 survey component was the first IPEDS survey component to collect institutional data and contained the COA for first-time, full-time students.

Based on the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and with input from education experts, NCES currently requires the COA be published on the College Navigator website in this manner for these entities:

- Academic reporter institutions (i.e., those that enroll students on a traditional calendar year schedule for most programs) report tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board, and other costs for the academic year;
 - Public institutions report the COA separately based on their in-state, in-district, and out-of-state tuition rates;
- Program reporter institutions (i.e., those that enroll students continuously at different points during the year) report tuition and fees for the largest program (based on enrollment) for the entire program length and one month of costs for all other COA components.

In addition, financial aid offices use estimates for books and supplies, room and board, and other expenses to determine financial need. Estimated expenses are determined by the student's living arrangement. On-campus and off-campus students' costs include room and board and other expenses. Students living at home typically do not have room and board costs but may have other expenses. Other expenses include the amount of money (estimated by the financial aid office) needed for laundry, transportation, and entertainment. Estimates for books and supplies are included for all living arrangements — on campus, off campus, and off campus with family (see Exhibit 1).

¹ Title IV aid includes Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant, Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG), National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant (SMART), Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant, Federal Work Study (FWS), and the Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loan programs.

² While in-district is not part of the federal statute, Sec. 32(h) provided flexibility for the Secretary to work with institutions and other experts to develop the net price calculator, which provides the leeway needed for using in-district cost.

Exhibit 1. Charges for Full Academic Year by Living Arrangement

Charges for full academic year	On-campus	Off-campus (not with family)	Off-campus (with family)
Tuition and fees	X	X	X
Books and supplies	X	X	X
Room and Board	X	X	
Other Expenses	X	X	X

Source: Author's analysis of IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>.

The COA collected in the IC survey component, and financial aid awards and student counts collected in the SFA survey component, are used by NCES to calculate institutional ANP. Specifically, NCES generates ANP by:

- Adding tuition and fees, books and supplies, the weighted average for room and board, and other expenses collected in IC survey component; and
- Subtracting the average gift aid amount collected in the SFA survey component from two student groups: 1) those awarded federal or state gift aid or gift aid from the institution, and 2) those only awarded Title IV gift aid.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this paper:

Research Question #1 (RQ.1): How do consumers use measures of average net price?

Research Question #2 (RQ.2): How can IPEDS collect additional data to improve the current student charges and average net price information?

Research Question #3 (RQ.3): Are some student populations overlooked by the current average net price reporting?

Research Question #4 (RQ.4): What changes are needed in regards to timing, consistency and accuracy to improve average net price as a consumer information tool?

Research question #5 (RQ.5) What would an IPEDS average net price survey component look like if it were administered separately from the SFA survey component?

Methodology

This NPEC paper is unique in that it evaluates the two IPEDS survey components currently used to derive ANP. This posed some challenges that were overcome by:

- Mastering how the IC and SFA survey components are integrated from both within the IPEDS collection and across different survey calendar years;

- Conducting research to identify experts with an understanding of survey data, including COA, IC, and SFA, along with consumer needs; and
- Not focusing solely on the opportunity to upend more than one IPEDS survey, but rather to balance improvements against the institutional burden.

Literature Review

To answer these research questions, I explored the development of the IC and SFA survey components using *The History and Origins of Survey Items for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2022-23 Update)* by McNeely (2018). Next, I reviewed published articles addressing the challenges of college affordability. Considering ANP is a consumer-facing topic, I decided to include both higher education policy literature and consumer-oriented articles.

Expert Interviews

The literature review informed the broad spectrum of the nine informational interviews I conducted — ranging from senior policy advocates to college access partners — to better understand how to improve ANP while balancing the institutional reporting burden. I included input from NCES survey director staff, the IPEDS Help Desk, and NPEC committee members. See Appendix A for the interview protocol.

Exhibit 2. Expert Interviews

Interviewee	Category/description
1	Private non-profit education policy analyst
2	Nationally-recognized expert in student financial aid
3	College cost transparency advocate
4	Student financial aid guidance counselor
5	IPEDS Keyholder – program reporter institution – Trade school
6	IPEDS Keyholder – academic reporter institution – 2-year public
7	IPEDS Keyholder – academic reporter institution – 4 year private
8	IPEDS Keyholder - academic reporter institution – 4-year public
9	Enrollment management administrator – 4 year private

Environmental Scan

The Institute of Education Sciences, the arm of the U.S. Department of Education that oversees IPEDS, carries out its mission by disseminating information that meets high standards of quality, integrity, and accuracy (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2010). Looking at the current concerns of the higher education community, I determined a critical need to improve the IPEDS ANP to make college costs more transparent and understandable to consumers, starting with the way IPEDS ANP is developed and promoted. This decision was reinforced when I compared when IPEDS institutions' ANP data are made available to the public relative to the timing of when institutional net price is provided. In addition, colleges and universities provide data cost information to other publishers not collected by NCES. Many students and families use these

data sources to compare costs. These resources could be explored to improve the IPEDS ANP and help the Institute of Education Sciences carry out its mission.

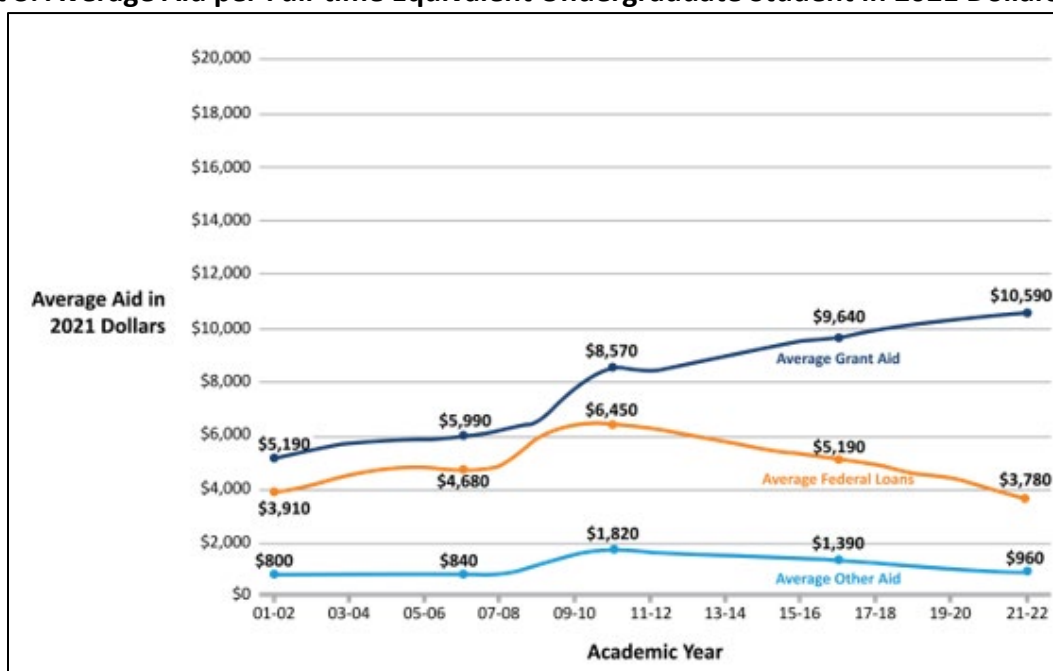
As result, I analyzed the following governmental and non-governmental sources:

- Federal Government Sources
 - College Affordability and Transparency Center (CATC)
 - Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Prior-Prior Year submission
 - IPEDS Survey Components – Institutional Characteristics (IC), Admissions (ADM) Graduation Rates (GR), Outcome Measures (OM), Fall Enrollment (EF) and 12-month Enrollment (E12).
 - Net Price Calculator
- Non-Government Sources
 - College Board Big Future Survey (CB)
 - Common Data Set Initiative (CDS)
 - National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP)
 - *U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges*

Research Question 1: How do consumers use measures of average net price?

RQ.1 Literature Review

Each year aspiring students turn their attention to enrolling in a higher education institution for the first time or returning for continued post-secondary education. Between 2001 and 2021, average grant aid (dark blue line on Exhibit 3) per full-time equivalent undergraduate student more than doubled — from \$5,190 to \$10,590 (Ma & Pender, 2022). See Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3. Average Aid per Full-time Equivalent Undergraduate Student in 2021 Dollars

Source: Exhibit 3 is reproduced from Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid (College Board, 2022). Retrieved from: <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/trends-in-college-pricing-student-aid-2022.pdf>.

The composition of financial assistance varies by student. To keep a college education affordable to more populations, despite rapidly rising tuitions, federal and state policies have expanded grants and loans to more individuals. Currently, families with substantial incomes can receive grants, tax benefits, and loans from colleges, states, and the federal government. One study (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013) suggested the abundance of financial aid programs, developed with good intentions, has nevertheless created overly complex eligibility and application requirements for financial aid programs, which may hamper their effectiveness. In addition, the study indicated aid programs pose challenges for policymakers striving to maintain consistency across programs. They are forced to make the guidelines lengthy and complicated, making it appear as if they do not have simplification and clarity as their top priorities. Added to this is the wide range of options students have when selecting a college. As noted by a recent study (Skinner, 2018), information gaps may restrict students' ability to determine which colleges they could attend.

Families, particularly those with no prior college attendance by a parent, may not have the financial literacy, or the English language skills, to understand the guidelines. There is also evidence students cannot accurately estimate college costs (Avery & Hoxby, 2006).

Many students are likely to form their preferences for colleges during the application process, when information about important factors, such as the actual COA, is difficult to find. Often, students' college-related decisions are not based on accurate, complete information and are made more difficult by a lack of transparency in financial aid offers. This lack of transparency only worsens the growing student loan debt crisis (Vetter, 2023).

These conditions contribute to a broad population of students who do not know what they will have to pay for out-of-pocket (Kelly, 2011). By making ANP publicly available on government websites like the College Navigator, and private industry websites like College Board, NCES can help students better identify the universe of colleges they can afford.

RQ.1 Interviews

As a corrective measure, one study (Kelly, 2011) recommends using guidance counselors to gather pertinent data that can help parents and students make more informed decisions. During an interview, a PHEAA Access Partner³ said when families question the value of earning a post-secondary degree or certificate, it is often due to concerns about affordability. In a recent survey conducted by New America (NORC at the University of Chicago, 2019), 43% of respondents said they believed Americans cannot get an affordable, high-quality, post-secondary education.

In another interview, a financial aid transparency advocate described how families he works with share a common belief that college is not affordable for them. They base this belief on their experience with other families who cannot figure out how, or if, they can close the education cost gap. This advocate noted the following trends among college bound families.

- Some families feel out of their depth in a process that feels intentionally designed to hide the actual cost to the very end of the admissions process. (This suggests the public is not getting the information they need in a timely and meaningful way to help them to make informed decisions.)
- Many families wish they had understood the costs sooner in the admissions process, and not wasted their time and effort investigating certain colleges, only to learn they were financially out of reach.
- Other families experience a lack of transparency because the sticker price they see on public websites is outdated.
- Those who wish to enroll part-time rarely find a COA on any website that considers their circumstances.

To add to the confusion, institutions are also challenged by a complex mix of regulations, funding, and reporting requirements that make it difficult to ensure financial aid is a transparent process.

The ANP published on College Navigator, based on data collected from the IPEDS IC and SFA survey components, provides consumers a first glimpse at an institution's price. IPEDS and the ANP can help families consider cost as a factor as they begin to compare schools, letting them

³ Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) Access Partner is a group of PHEAA experts committed to advancing education by offering assistance to parents, students and families in obtaining financial aid by providing relevant resources and information.

identify the universe of colleges available to them, and then, exploring each school's published net price calculator.⁴

The PHEAA Access Partners indicate providing the ANP to students who are unfamiliar with the college search process allows them to learn about financial planning and the risks of student loan debt months before they apply to a college. Partners state students rely more on the use of private websites like Niche or College Board than College Navigator due to the complexity of the College Navigator website. (See Appendix B for PHEAA Access Partners' suggestions for improving the College Navigator website.) However, they understand the ANP calculation originates from IPEDS and then IPEDS makes it available to College Board and other websites.

As families try to peer through the fog to find all the pieces of the college search, ANP plays a vital role. It provides students with a beam of light, a bit of clarity early in the process, through information that can give them a degree of control and empower them to continue the search. Improving the ANP may be one way to give more families better tools and help them find a college that meets their needs, financially and academically.

Research Question #2: How can IPEDS collect additional data to improve the current student charges and average net price information?

RQ.2 Literature Review

The federal statute definition of ANP is based on the population of first-time, full-time students (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008, amendments). Within this statute, there are opportunities to improve the ANP. The ANP is intended to assist students in identifying affordable college options, but if it is built on inaccurate data, it may do the opposite and cause more confusion. For instance, students' costs can vary greatly depending on their living situation (e.g., on-campus, off-campus). Although federal law specifies which costs should be included in COA, colleges have a great deal of discretion in how they estimate each type.

For tuition and fees, a study found that almost all institutions differentiate tuition and fees based on at least one factor, such as residency status, academic program, or institutional type (Simone, 2010). Private institutions were found to be more likely to differentiate tuition and fees than public institutions. The same study also suggests that tuition and fee differentiation can have implications for access to higher education, particularly for low-income and underrepresented minority students. Some costs, like textbooks and room and board (housing

⁴ A net price calculator is an online tool that allows students and families to estimate the actual cost of attending a college or university after considering the financial aid for which the student is eligible. The calculator considers factors such as tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, as well as the student's and family's income, assets, and other financial resources to provide an estimate of the net price of attending that institution.

and food) are applicable to all students, while others, such as childcare and disability services, are only used by students who need them.

Research indicates that nearly half of all colleges provide living cost allowances that are at least 20% above or below estimated county-level living expenses (Kelchen, Goldrich-Rab & Hosch, 2017). This could cause COA estimates to vary widely by institution. Students might mistakenly exclude a college from consideration due to the specific way that it calculates its COA.

In addition, The Institute for College Access and Success identified (at the time of this paper) that room and board charges are not included in COA in IPEDS for students living at home even though colleges estimate these costs and use them in their own financial aid packages (Fung, 2020). Since a larger proportion of students attending community colleges live at home, compared to students attending other institutional types, excluding room and board costs from federal COA estimates has a greater impact on net prices at community colleges than at other institutions.

According to a 2015 survey of low- and moderate-income Wisconsin students, 39% of those who lived at home in 2015 had to pay rent (Goldrick-Rab & Kendall, 2016). Students attending two-year institutions are not the only ones dealing with this issue. Across the nation, there are more than 1,000 colleges where at least half of the students reside at home and are thus not reflected in the federal ANP (Fung, 2020).

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act Changes for Implementation (U.S. Department of Education, 2022) requires institutions, when calculating COA for financial aid eligibility for dependent students living at home with parents, include a reasonable standard allowance for living expenses that is not zero for the 2023–24 Award Year. Taking an opportunity to realign the IPEDS COA to better match the new Federal Student Aid guidelines would ensure consistency, particularly among students living at home.

RQ.2 Interviews

A financial aid expert suggested that excluding the room and board expenses from the COA for students living at home deflates ANP and makes financial aid processes even more difficult to interpret. Having one area of the institution complete the IPEDS IC survey component using one set of definitions for COA (excluding room and board for students living at home), while the financial aid office uses a different set of definitions for COA (including room and board for students living at home), is inconsistent and may complicate an already perplexing process.

Another advocate suggests that these conflicting definitions create doubt about the validity of the sticker price and the college's perceived honesty. In addition, he believes some competitive institutions like to adjust the COA within the institution's discretion to artificially deflate ANP.

Steering the IPEDS definition in line with the FAFSA Simplification Act helps support a more transparent process and moves toward comparability when it comes to COA, holding colleges responsible for consistency and honesty in their processes, and publishing accountability outcomes.

Research Question #3: Are some student populations overlooked by the current average net price reporting?

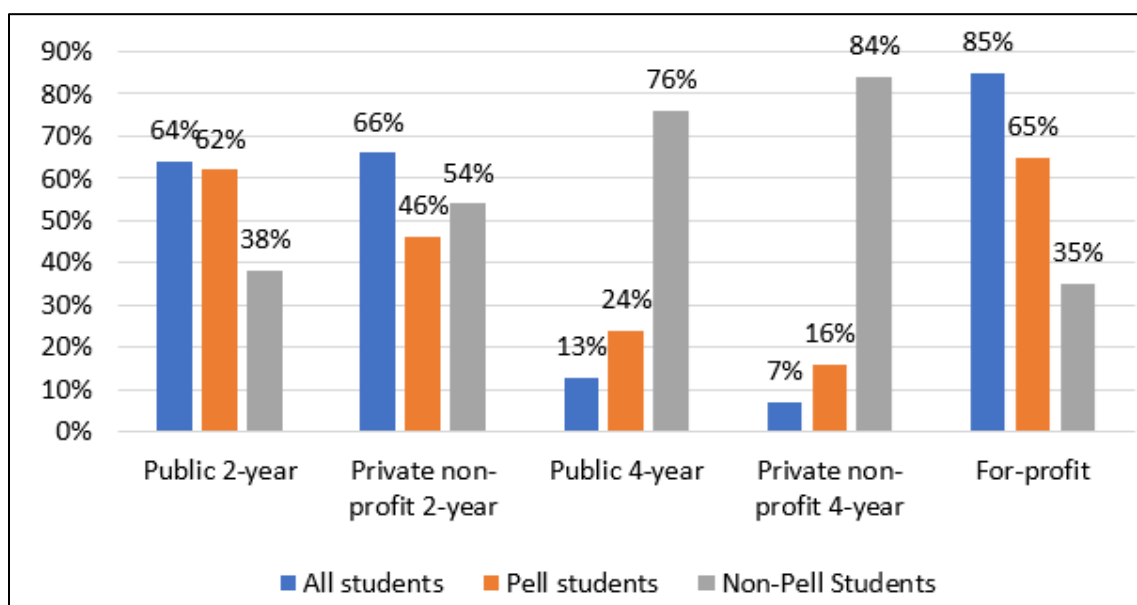
RQ.3 Literature Review

Federal statute requires that only ANP for first-time, full-time undergraduate students be calculated using data collected from the IPEDS IC and SFA survey components. But what about other populations of students?

All undergraduate and graduate students, including transfer and part-time students, are interested in learning as early as possible how much it costs to attend a college or university, especially because they are also eligible for some of the same types of financial aid (Complete College America, 2022). In fact, some of these student groups outnumber the total number of first-time, full-time freshmen. These factors make it appropriate to explore the possibility of including ANP for other student types beyond the federal statutory requirement.

For example, community college student populations are disproportionately made up of first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students who attend part-time (Smith, 2018). Exhibit 4 demonstrates that community colleges and for-profit institutions attract the majority of part-time students regardless of financial need (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)

Exhibit 4. Enrollment of Part-time Students by Sector – IPEDS Outcome Measures 2019



Source: Author's use of IPEDS Use the Data tool (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019) retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>.

The higher education community is aware that closing achievement gaps among minority students depends in large part on supporting part-time students' success in community colleges (Smith, 2018). As a result, there has been a concerted effort to provide better support for these part-time students.

First generation, low income, underrepresented, minority students are most likely attending part-time because they are also working or caring for family members, which prevents them from enrolling as full-time students. Institutions that make efforts to be sensitive to the needs of part-time students will better understand their unique life circumstances and what drives them to enroll part-time (Smith, 2018).

It appears that many part-time students' decisions about their education paths are influenced by money. This includes the need to work to pay for living expenses in addition to tuition (Complete College America, 2022).

Colleges should promote full-time enrollment whenever possible, but it is crucial for practitioners and institutions to acknowledge that not all students can enroll full-time. As a result, part-time students need systems that are tailored to their needs (Complete College America, 2022). Developing ANP for a part-time student would be more inclusive and provide important information for those who struggle to cover the cost of attending college.

This change would help these students in their decision-making process. By making it easier to understand the financial options, IPEDS will help students make good financial decisions and achieve their goals.

RQ.3 Interviews

Through my interviews, I heard a variety of opinions on which student populations should be included and which should be excluded in ANP. Although there are good reasons to include them, we should also remember — as one IPEDS Keyholder told me — to examine the data that we are already collecting, and avoid additional institutional burden, before we try to solve the problem by collecting more data from additional populations.

Some people I interviewed suggested that we are overlooking graduate students who find very few opportunities for financial aid other than student loans and may already be incurring big-ticket expenses like raising a family or paying a mortgage. This information would help them understand how much of the financial resources covering the costs would be self-help financial aid.

Other interviewees suggested that graduate tuition rates, even within an institution, are so complex that trying to create an accurate, standard ANP across institutions would be impossible. Still others proposed including transfer students, but one interviewee pointed out that transfer students' time to completion varies greatly. She said calculating an ANP for even one academic year would be difficult since transfer students typically begin with an initial or advanced standing based on their prior number of credits earned. The same could apply to

continuing/returning students. However, those I interviewed did support the inclusion of part-time students. Often, part-time students make education decisions based on their finances, including the need to earn money for tuition and living expenses.

An IPEDS Keyholder at a program reporting institution indicated that it's crucial to remember that neither full-time nor part-time attendance is required of all students. Some students enroll in college on a combination of full- and part-time schedules.

RQ.3 Environmental Scan

One way to evaluate the importance of part-time students in higher education is to review what information nationally recognized data sources require institutions to report about students enrolling with a part-time course load. I analyzed these survey materials: IPEDS IC, ADM, GR, OM, EF and E12 survey components (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2023), CDS 2022-23 (Common Data Set Initiative, n.d.), CB (College Board, 2023) and NCCBP National Community College Benchmarking Project, 2015). See Appendix C for survey detail and Appendix F for a list of acronyms. Exhibit 5 shows how frequently these organizations ask questions about part-time students across several categories in their surveys.

Exhibit 5. Question Frequency of Part-time Students Reported in IPEDS, CDS, CB and NCCBP Surveys

Survey Category	IPEDS	CDS	CB	NCCBP
Admissions	2	2	2	0
Enrollment	15	12	12	5
Retention	1	0	0	5
Tuition Charges	2	1	1	1
Financial Aid	1	18	19	0
Graduation	5	1	1	7

Source: Author's analysis of survey materials for the: IPEDS IC, EF, and OM surveys (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022)⁵; Common Data Set 2022-23 (Common Data Set Initiative, n.d.)⁶; College Board Big Future Survey (College Board, 2022)⁷ and National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP, 2015)⁸.

Institutions are clearly accustomed to reporting information on part-time enrollment to IPEDS.

- Exhibit 5 shows IPEDS already asks a variety of questions based on student's part-time enrollment status, particularly in the enrollment and completions.
- Each year since 2002, institutions have reported in the IC Header survey component whether they enroll part-time students.
- In the IC survey component, per credit charges of both part-time undergraduate and graduate students are collected.

⁵ Retrieved from: <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>

⁶ Retrieved from: <https://commondataset.org/>

⁷ Retrieved from: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

⁸ Retrieved from: <https://nccbp.org/files/nccbp-workbook-2015.pdf>

- The IPEDS ADM survey component collects data from institutions that are not open admission⁹ including the number of admitted, first-time, credential-seeking, undergraduate students who enrolled part time.
- Enrollment of part-time undergraduates is collected two times in IPEDS, by both the EF and E12 survey components, disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity.
- The OM survey component collects part-time enrollment by Pell Grant and Non-Pell Grant recipient status.
- Completion outcomes are collected for part-time students who are first-time and non-first-time (transfer) within four, six, and eight years on the OM survey component. This also includes if they were Pell Grant recipients and if they continued to enroll at the institution or transferred somewhere else at eight years.

The CDS is a joint initiative between higher education data providers and publishers, as represented by the CB, Peterson's, and *U.S. News and World Report*. It was developed to lessen the administrative workload while still providing students and families with accurate and timely data. CB provides services via their Big Future website (College Board, n.d.) to help over 7 million students annually effectively transition into college. The primary audience for *U.S. News Best Colleges* website is prospective students, parents, and alumni. Over the past year (May 2022 to May 2023), USNews.com attracted over 35 million individuals seeking information on undergraduate programs. Additionally, approximately 1.2 million students and their families utilized *U.S. News* to inquire about particular institutions or to make comparisons between different schools (Morse, 2023).

Based on the sheer number of visitors, it is not surprising that thousands of institutions provide information to be used on these college search websites. The publishers ask institutions the same key questions to gather answers to use in their publications and formulate their rankings. Many institutions rely on the CDS to share their institution's information through CB and *U.S. News* websites.

For the CDS, institutions are asked to report on part-time enrollment in several questions across several major sections. This includes admission, enrollment by gender, and the number of graduates by Classification of Instructional Program code.¹⁰ The section on Financial Aid devotes the same number of questions about first-time, full-time students as it does about part-time students, including average grants or scholarships, average loans, and average financial aid package. Part-time students are also included in the statistic for average, per borrower, undergraduate cumulative loan principal borrowed.

While the CDS can be a reliable source of financial aid information for these part-time students, the findings are not readily available in detail on publishers' websites. Typically, only the

⁹ The admission policy of the school is such that it will admit all or nearly all students who apply.

¹⁰ The U.S. Department of Education has developed a system called the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) that categorizes academic programs. Academic institutions in the U.S. use CIP codes to classify their programs, as well as courses, certificates, and degrees.

average financial aid award is shown. These data would be helpful to students exploring the possibility of enrolling as part-time, first-time students.

Even though the same kind of information used to complete the CDS is used to create the IPEDS ANP, the CDS survey does not calculate an ANP for any students, while IPEDS does this for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students only. The CB is an example of a survey that relies on the CDS. Many of the survey questions refer to question numbers in the CDS to assist institutions in completing the survey. Further, the CB has an option for institutions to upload a copy of the CDS to complete their survey.

Another nationally recognized survey is the NCCBP, which provides outcomes for part-time students. According to their website, NCCBP is “the largest, most representative, and comprehensive benchmarking initiative for two-year institutions in the United States.” Since the NCCBP started in 2004, over 400 out of 1,038 (American Association of Community Colleges, 2023) U.S. community colleges have submitted data for their credit programs.

Many of the questions institutions answer are about part-time students. These include:

- Enrollment;
- The percentage of students who returned for the next spring term; and
- Three- and six-year graduation rates.

After collecting and aggregating this information, NCCBP makes it available to institutions to let them benchmark themselves against peer and aspirational institutions for strategic planning and institutional effectiveness, particularly for part-time students. While this survey has a robust participation, it requires a fee, thus limiting the number of participants. It is not available to the public, only to participants. It also lacks any questions about financial aid, as seen in Exhibit 5.

Federal law requires colleges to report the ANP for first-time, full-time students, but other student populations, such as transfer and part-time students, also want to know the cost of attending college and may be eligible for financial aid. Providing ANP for part-time students would be more inclusive and help them make better financial decisions. This would involve more community colleges, since many of their part-time students are first-generation, low-income, or underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities. Gathering these data may be complex, but other data sources report similar enrollment outcomes and financial aid information for part-time students. These are overlooked student consumers who deserve to be better informed about college costs.

Research Question #4: What changes are needed in regards to timing, consistency and accuracy to improve average net price as a consumer information tool?

Timing

RQ.4 Literature Review

Recommendations about improving the timing of the IPEDS SFA data have been addressed in previous NPEC papers. One of them (Steele, 2011) notes that the IPEDS SFA data, which capture financial aid information, can be up to two years old when publicly released due to the one-year reporting lag and processing time. This suggests a need to adjust the timing of the data collection and/or add resources to expedite data release. The paper proposes the earlier timeline for research and policy analysis but did not address consumer need.

The NPEC (2018) paper, *Making the IPEDS Student Financial Aid Survey Data Meaningful*, discusses strategies for improving the timing of financial aid data reported by institutions in IPEDS. These would allow for more accurate and current data to be available to students and policymakers. While the paper recommends making the ANP component of the survey more meaningful by separating the ANP component from the rest of the SFA survey, it does not suggest how to achieve this within the existing IPEDS survey data collection calendar.

A report by the Urban Institute (Matsudaira, 2022) highlights the importance of timely and accurate data reporting, noting that current data systems often suffer delays. To address this issue, the report recommends improving efficiency by linking existing agency data already collected, to create a more timely, comprehensive view of all student populations. While this ambitious recommendation would be ideal, the paper does not provide a more practical, short-term solution that satisfies consumers right now. Some research suggests publishing an earlier ANP is unnecessary. A recent study (Cheslock & Riggs, 2022) notes that there has been only a modest increase each year in ANP nationally. It found that while listed tuition has been increasing steadily over the years, institutional aid has also been increasing at a similar rate, leading to little change in net price differentials for first-year students. They use this information to conclude that timeliness of the ANP is not an issue. However, families looking at several colleges that do not mirror national ANP trends as well as other undergraduate and graduate student groups could still benefit from a timelier ANP.

RQ.4 Interviews

Guidance counselors are the first point of contact for many students and their families when exploring college options. These counselors find that ANP serves a valuable purpose. It helps families create the universe of institutions that are affordable by narrowing down the possible choices, which then leads to visiting the net price calculator on each institution's website. However, guidance counselors feel that the ANP is outdated as soon as it's made public in June of each year for the following reasons:

- Students planning to enroll in August following their senior year, start their college search during their junior year in high school.
- While investigating college options at the start of their senior year, they will complete the survey forms for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is step one for everyone applying for financial aid. The colleges they apply to will use FAFSA to determine financial aid amounts for these students.

- At the same time students are investigating financial aid, they are searching other aspects of colleges with College and Transparency Center tools like College Navigator and College Score Card.
- Students and families feel the ANP data on College Navigator (typically published in June) is outdated and perceive it as inaccurate, because it is as much as three years old, relative to when high school students begin their college search.

From the interviews I conducted, college access partners, financial aid administrators, and policy analysts all noted how the available information is outdated. The financial aid administrators I interviewed indicated they would feel more invested in completing the IPEDS SFA survey component if the data they were using were more recent. While the interviewee did provide a specific solution of how to improve the timing, it would mean moving the SFA survey component to a point in time earlier in the IPEDS data collection schedule.

One administrator questioned why he is completing the IPEDS SFA survey component for Fall 2021 while the prospective families waiting outside his office door are interested in learning about ANP for the 2024–25 academic year. He suggests IPEDS is not providing consumers a timely ANP. This often leads to skepticism and escalates the difficulties families face as they struggle to close the education cost gap.

The ANP serves a valuable purpose. As noted, it helps families identify the universe of affordable institutions by using College Navigator or other college search websites that use IPEDS ANP data, before visiting the net price calculator on each institution's website. The public cannot easily see how complex a process it is to collect this information at a single point in time and make the ANP available to consumers. But it is certainly worth considering any opportunities to improve the timeliness of the ANP.

RQ.4 Environmental Scan

The ANP is the difference between the average COA reported in the IPEDS IC survey component (using a weighted average based on students' living arrangement) and the average amount of gift aid reported in the IPEDS SFA survey component for an academic year. To calculate the ANP, IPEDS integrates three survey components (IC, EF and SFA), which are collected at dramatically different times over several academic years (see Exhibits 6a and 6b).

Exhibit 6a. Timing of IPEDS Survey Data Collection

Freshman-Junior Years in High School

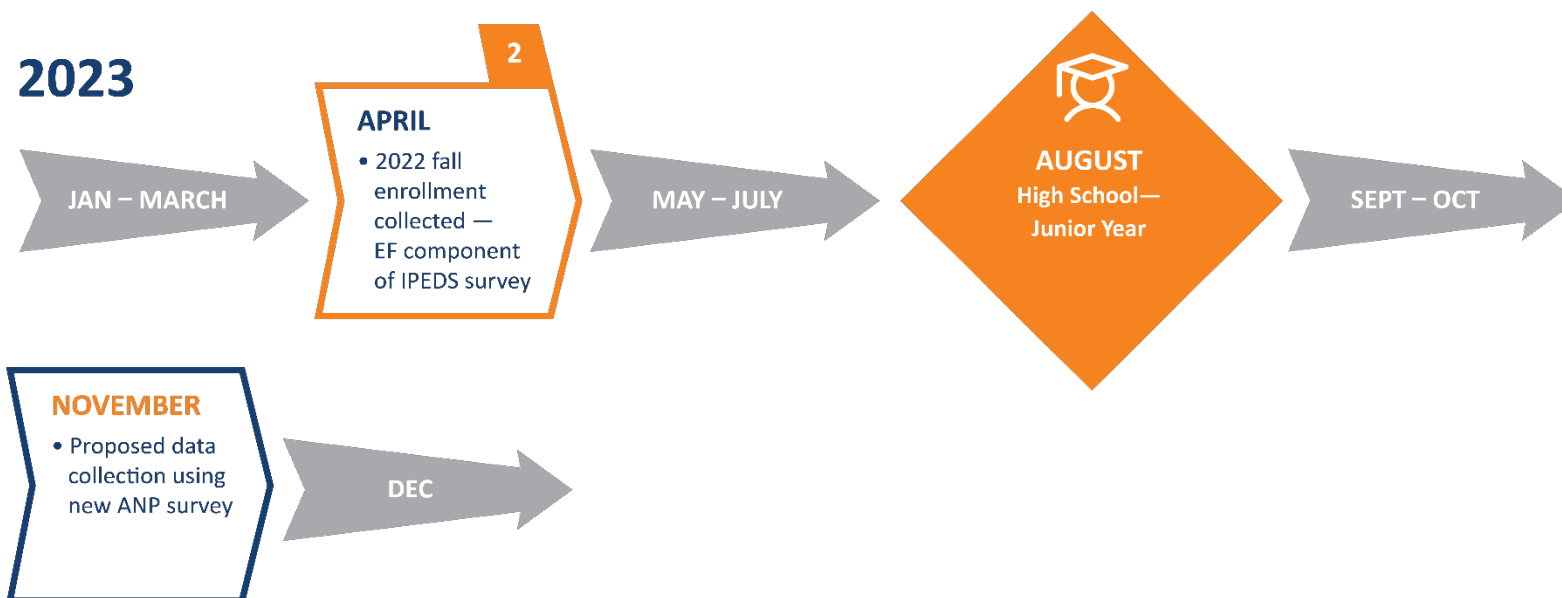
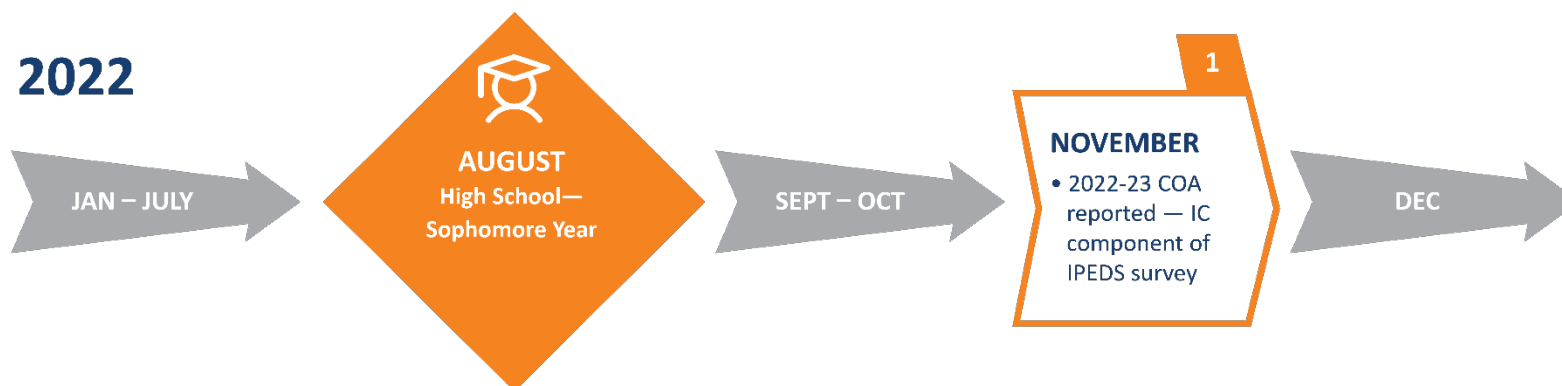
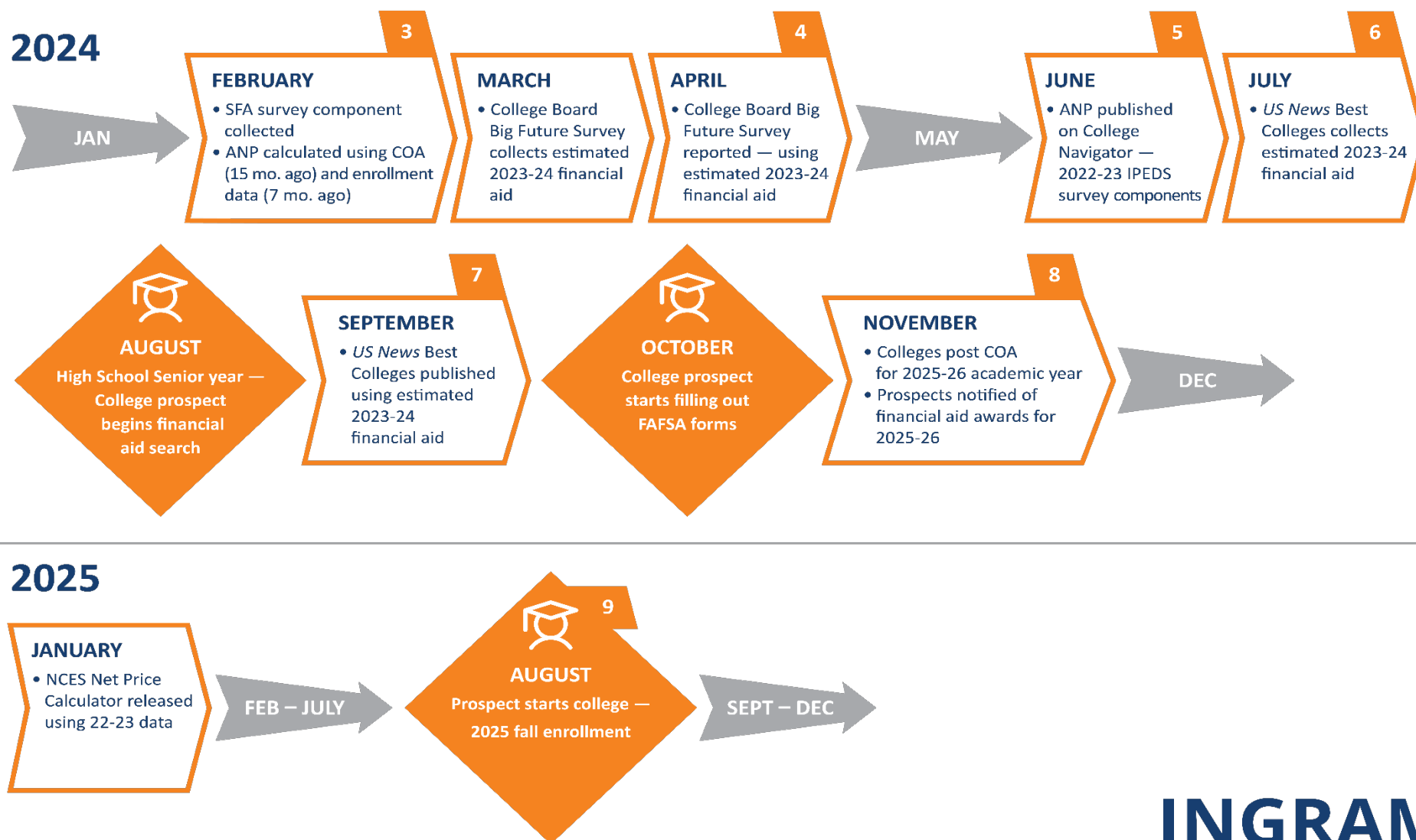


Exhibit 6b. Timing of IPEDS Survey Data Collection Senior Year in High School



Source: Author's analysis from Expert Interviews (See Exhibit.2); IPEDS IC, EF and SFA Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022); College Board Big Future Survey (College Board, 2022); *US News Best Colleges* (US News, 2022); Survey of Aid Offers (NASFAA, 2022); Net Price Calculator (NCES, n.d.).

The timeline presented in Exhibits 6a and 6b represents a student who is planning to enroll in college in August 2025, and is starting to compare schools in Fall 2022, during their sophomore year in high school. It shows the timing for when academic reporter schools complete the surveys used to develop the ANP, and when students would be able to find and compare colleges costs and apply for financial aid.¹¹

For the 2022–2023 ANP to be made public on the College Navigator website in June 2024, the process starts much earlier. Academic reporter schools must submit COA through the IC survey component between September and November 2022 (Exhibit 6a, point 1).

Then in April 2023, fall 2022 enrollment is collected through the EF survey (Exhibit 6a, point 2). But it is not until February 2024, that the SFA survey component is completed. At this point the ANP is calculated, using the combined information from IC survey component from 2022, plus the fall 2022 enrollment collected in the 2023 EF survey component (Exhibit 6b, point 3), plus the SFA in February 2024. This ANP is made publicly available on the College Navigator website in June 2024 (Exhibit 6b, point 5). At this time, students can use this information to compare colleges.

Even if the COA does not change dramatically year-to-year (as noted in RQ.4 Literature Review), the lag time still gives the perception that this information is outdated. It could be rejected by students and families who are seeking up-to-date financials to help them plan for an August 2025 enrollment. Because most families can begin filing the FAFSA starting in October 2024, by November 2024, (Exhibit 6b, point 8) they may begin receiving financial aid offers from colleges and universities (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2022).

In addition, college publications like the College Board and *U.S. News Best Colleges* collect information on a slightly different timeline. The College Board Big Future Survey collects similar information about financial aid and costs for their website in March 2024 and publishes it a month later (Exhibit 6b, point 4). *U.S. News Best Colleges* collects this information in July 2024 (Exhibit 6b, point 6) for release in September 2024 (Exhibit 6b, point 7) — targeting a student planning to enroll in August 2025 (Exhibit 6b, point 9).

Unlike the ANP on College Navigator, both *U.S. News* and College Board allow institutions to report an *estimated* 2023–24 award amount, so they are not encumbered by the lag time until ANP is published.¹²

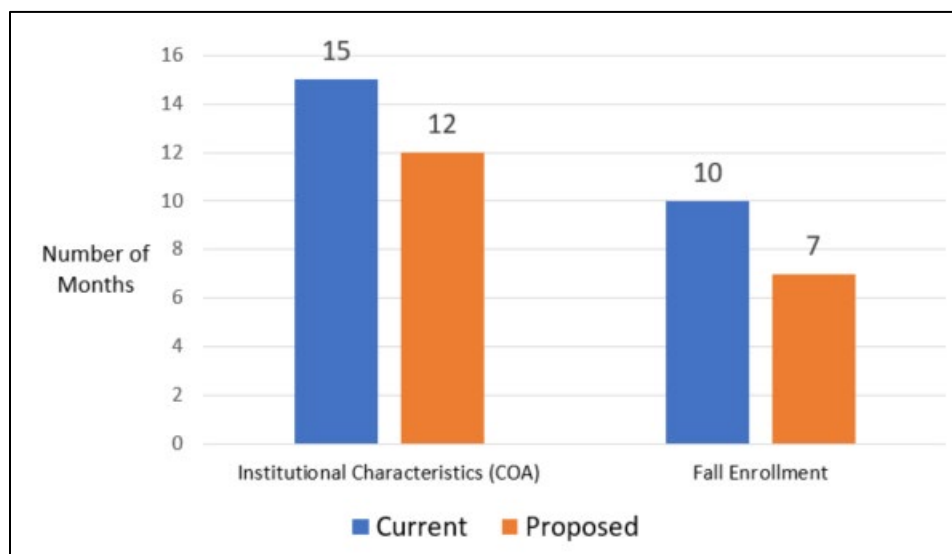
A student planning to enroll in fall 2025 has financial aid information from the prior year through the College Board or *U.S. News Best Colleges* websites. However, the financial aid information that institutions submit to the *U.S. News* and College Board is based on *estimated* financial aid from 2023–24, collected before the 2023–24 academic year has concluded. So, while a student benefits from a more recent estimated award amount, it could be less accurate than an actual award. Because these two publications report more recent financial information, many consumers may perceive ANP from IPEDS as outdated and miss the fact that IPEDS does not report an estimate and may, in fact, be more accurate than other sources. Moving the

¹¹ Program reporter institutions have a slightly different calendar. See IPEDS Data Collection Calendar for more details. <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/data-collection-schedule>

¹² The Federal Student Aid Estimator, also available to students, considers several factors like household size and income, but does not use an actual cost of attendance for a specific school.

items collected in the SFA survey that calculates the ANP to an earlier date could be a way to provide more timely information.

Exhibit 7. Number of Months Between IPEDS SFA Survey Component Data Submission and Release Dates: Current and Proposed



Source: Author's analysis of the current IPEDS Survey Calendar for IC and EF survey components (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) compared to the proposed ANP survey. IPEDS Survey calendar retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/data-collection-schedule>.

In Exhibit 7, COA data are 15 months old and Fall Enrollment data are 10 months old from the date they are carried forward from the EF survey component to the SFA survey component. The “proposed” column is based on financial aid information that would be collected in a proposed ANP survey that would be conducted in November 2023 — separate from the SFA survey. Under this scenario, if a separate SFA survey component that calculates the ANP could gather only the information needed to produce the ANP, and do it by November 2023, the ANP could be collected in November 2023 (see Exhibit 6a) instead of February 2024 and published in March 2024 instead of June 2024¹³ (see Exhibit 6b). Any earlier timeframe would conflict with when data are available and the months covering the IPEDS data collection schedule.

In considering the recommendation to publish ANP data three months earlier, in November, it is essential to evaluate the potential drawbacks that may arise from such a change. While the proposed adjustments aim to enhance timeliness and transparency, there is a possibility that data accuracy could be compromised by such a move. Currently, the ANP relies on data from the Winter survey collection (December to April), which aligns with the reporting period for the

¹³ The SFA survey component calculates average financial aid for all undergraduates and would continue to be collected during the winter collection period.

Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP),¹⁴ due in September of each year. This ensures the most accurate and comprehensive data are used for ANP calculations.

On the other hand, there are compelling advantages to publishing ANP data earlier in the year. Moving the ANP calculation due date to November, and releasing it alongside the average cost in the IC, could provide students and their families with more timely and relevant information for college decision-making well in advance of the enrollment period. Publishing the ANP earlier may improve its relevance and the perception of timeliness and accuracy.

Data Consistency

RQ.4 Literature Review

The NPEC paper *Improving the Quality and Usefulness of IPEDS Data on Financial Aid* (2018) also suggests that the Department of Education could improve consistency by providing more guidance on how institutions should report their data and ensuring the definitions of key financial aid terms are consistent across all institutions. Additionally, the report recommends the Department of Education improve the accuracy of financial aid data by providing institutions with more training and resources on how to report their data correctly. *Suggestions for Improvements for the Collection and Dissemination of Federal Financial Aid Data* (2012) identifies several challenges in the collection and dissemination of federal financial aid data, including issues related to data consistency. The report's recommendation is to establish a standardized data reporting system that would ensure consistency and accuracy across all data sources, including standardized data definitions, data quality control processes, and reporting guidelines. This would involve developing more effective mechanisms for sharing data between different agencies and organizations and promoting greater transparency and accountability in data reporting and analysis. The report by the Urban Institute (Matsudaira, 2022) also suggests ways to improve data consistency by creating a national student-level data system, and standardizing definitions and measures across institutions.

The SFA survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) offers detailed instructions, including data reporting guidelines, student group inclusion, aid types, and close to 30 frequently asked questions on student counts and financial aid, all to assist keyholders with consistent reporting.

The instructions include detailed information on the reporting period and outlines which student groups to include and the types of aid to report —Title VI, state, institutional, and private sources. If keyholders need to correct a prior year COA, the instructions explain how to make corrections to the IC survey component within the current-year SFA survey component. For corrections to other sections of the SFA survey components, the Prior Year Data Revision System is available.

¹⁴ FISAP serves as a tool for educational institutions to request funding for the Campus-Based Program in the forthcoming award year and to provide a record of their Campus-Based Program expenses from the preceding award year.

RQ.4 Interviews

Interviews with IPEDS Keyholders revealed a lack of clear understanding as to when they should capture award data for the IPEDS SFA survey component. Those who complete the SFA survey component need to capture different types of financial aid and award amounts. While the SFA survey component instructions list the reporting period for which data should be collected, there is no clear guidance in the SFA instructions as to *when* to capture these data. IPEDS Keyholders suggested that using a census date similar to the IPEDS Human Resources survey date of November 1 would help improve the accuracy by providing a time period after the reporting period but before the census date to scrub the data for accuracy and ensure consistency of reporting year over year by each institution and across institutions.

It is important to note the SFA survey component collects data on students who are awarded financial aid for most programs but collects disbursements (funds applied to the bill) for veterans' and military assistance programs. Students who do not receive financial aid pay the full COA. For these "full-payers" average net price is not collected in the SFA survey component. One IPEDS Keyholder suggested it would be helpful to add a column to report the percentage of students who receive no financial aid. Consistency could be improved using a calculated field based on all students enrolled, both those receiving financial aid and those who are not. While this information can be easily calculated by institutional researchers and data analysts, it is important to help students and their families understand the process by using simple terms to explain how financial aid is distributed to currently enrolled students.

Access Partners expressed that improved data consistency could help students and families understand what costs are considered in the average net price. Interviewees pointed out that students do not realize the ANP includes direct costs (tuition, fees, and on-campus room and board) and indirect costs (books, transportation, personal expenses, off campus room and board, and other expenses). It was suggested that when NCES reports the ANP, they disaggregate the major parts and present them in the form of a calculation. This would show the COA (including a weighted average based on students' room and board charges), minus the average gift aid, equaling the average net price.

Average Cost of Attendance – Average Gift Aid = Average Net Price

When students have a better understanding of how ANP is calculated, they will realize they may be able to reduce expenses by spending less on books, transportation, meals, or other expenses. Access Partners believe if students better understood how the ANP is calculated, they would be more apt to take charge of their financial planning and manage their college expenses.

Human Errors

RQ.4 Interviews

IPEDS Keyholders reaffirmed that IPEDS collection is complex and can be prone to errors. One person at an institution may complete the IPEDS SFA survey component that calculates the ANP while another person uses a different calculation to submit IPEDS SC. The IPEDS survey instructions try to mitigate this error by encouraging those completing the COA section of the IC

survey component to work with the financial aid office to make sure these figures align with what is used to determine student financial aid eligibility. If the instructions are overlooked, it can cause the COA and net price to misalign. And in many cases, neither person realizes what caused the error until both surveys have been submitted. Unfortunately, by then, it's more difficult to make changes to the reported data. The keyholder can make corrections to the IC through the IPEDS Prior Year Data Revision System and COA in the SFA survey component, but the changes do not update the COA or ANP published on the College Navigator website. This is because the COA and ANP are published on the website before corrections can be made for the current year and cannot be changed even if the keyholder makes changes.

Because the ANP is published annually on the College Navigator website in June of each year as preliminary data (see Exhibit 6b), there is no simple opportunity to correct this information. So, students looking for an ANP may make decisions based on unintended, incorrect information. Even if the institution discovers the error later, there is no opportunity to make the correction before it is published on the College Navigator website.

It is also possible institutions may not know there was an error in reporting. In some cases, local newspapers can pick up on the issue while writing an article about cost of attending college, based on the data published on the College Navigator website. The *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* reported that five out of six of the largest institutions in Arkansas lowered costs for freshmen (Adame, 2022). The institution that did not lower costs, according to the Arkansas higher education senior administrator, was an institution that misreported the tuition charges for the academic year by mistake.

The federal CATC also publishes net price, but it includes only the top 10% of institutions with the greatest increases in tuition and the greatest increases in net price within each sector.¹⁵ In this case, institutions are told they are on the list after the fact and are required to complete the CATC Explanation Form.

Even though they have an opportunity to explain the increase and any human error, these institutions stay on the CATC website for three years as having greatly raised tuition. Last year, an email was sent to schools on June 14, 2022, (See Appendix C, CATC Letter) to inform them they could be on the list, a list that would be posted in a few days on June 30, 2022. This alert is intended to give them time to prepare their administration to receive this negative publicity. They do not get an opportunity to correct any errors before the list is published. Even when those names are published, a study found the "naming and shaming" policy of the CATC had little impact on curbing tuition increases at public institutions and had little or no effect on private institutions (Baker, 2020).

Furthermore, interviewees stated there is a full year of opportunity for institutions to correct submissions for other IPEDS survey components that involve student data, including the GR survey component, retention rates in the EF survey component, and scholarships and fellowships data in the Finance survey component. The IPEDS Keyholder and financial aid administrators interviewed felt this was unfair, given the complexity of three survey

¹⁵ The CATC website also publishes the top 10% of institutions with the lowest tuition and average net price increases.

components (IC, EF and SFA) being used to calculate ANP, one of the most complex of any calculations created by NCES from IPEDS data submitted by institutions.

Interviewees indicated they would like an opportunity to make corrections and avoid damage to their reputations, perhaps by:

- Changing when the ANP is calculated;
- Simplifying the process by separating it from the IPED SFA survey component; and/or
- Combining the two (IC and SFA) components used to calculate ANP into one survey — avoiding the possibility of different people completing the survey component at different points in time and reducing the chance of inconsistent reporting.

We must consider the pros and cons of these possible changes: corrections to COA data in IPEDS, adjusting the timing of the ANP calculation, simplifying the process, or combining survey components. Moving the ANP calculation earlier may result in less accurate data, as it might not reflect later changes in financial aid packages and cost factors. Furthermore, altering the current ANP calculation schedule may disrupt established practices and cause confusion among institutions.

However, the proposed approach offers potential advantages. By allowing corrections, it can lead to improved data accuracy, enabling more reliable and precise information for better decision-making by consumers. Additionally, institutions can avoid reputational damage by rectifying errors promptly, maintaining credibility and trust among prospective students. Moreover, streamlining the reporting process can reduce administrative burden, saving time and resources.

Research question #5: What would an IPEDS average net price survey component look like if it were administered separately from the SFA survey component?

RQ.5 Literature Review

According to a study that surveyed parents on college sticker price, conducted by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (2011), 6 in 10 families exclude some colleges from consideration due to sticker price, but many are unaware their actual cost, the “net price”, is frequently much less than the sticker price. Even though tuition discounts are a common occurrence, there is little evidence that parents understand college costs or the distinction between sticker price and net price. The study suggested when parents are actively primed to think in those terms, most of them will be able to distinguish between sticker price and net price.

In addition, the study determined low-income parents face particular hardships in this regard because they frequently underestimate the net COA. Making comparable standardized net price data available is only one aspect of the solution. Actively educating parents to consider net price will also be a crucial piece. This emphasizes the need to create and implement strategies to explain net price to parents. Demonstrating how ANP is calculated by using costs

and financial aid amounts in an ANP IPEDS survey component will help fill this knowledge gap. Making the ANP more useful will motivate IPEDS Keyholders to make their data reporting more accurate. This has been the case in data collections in other industries, such as medicine, where combined data sets are used extensively and fed back to providers, managers, and policymakers to verify the accuracy of the data (Rothbard et. al, 1990).

RQ.5 Interviews

When interviewed about what they would like to see in an improved IPEDS ANP survey component, financial aid administrators, IPEDS Keyholders, and access partners said it should aim for increased simplicity and go beyond just collecting more information. They spoke in favor of an ANP Survey that:

- Aligns with data already collected in other active surveys that report financial aid data, like the CDS;
- Provides the percentage of students who are included in the ANP (both those who were awarded financial aid and those who were not); and
- Provides students and families with a complete picture of ANP by displaying the amount that makes up the COA minus the amount of average gift aid equaling the average net price.

When asked about the recommendation of scheduling an IPEDS ANP survey component three months earlier (see RQ.4), financial aid administrators at academic reporter institutions who complete the SFA survey component said combining IC and SFA data items needed to calculate ANP into a new separate survey component would ease their reporting burden. The SFA survey component's sections that report distribution of financial aid would remain due in February and another survey component specifically devoted to ANP could be due three months earlier.

RQ.5 Environmental Scan

As discussed under RQ.3, the CDS uses a common set of questions to collect and share data with publishers who report on college costs (*U.S. News & World Report*, College Board, and Peterson's). The CDS is separated into 10 sections, A to J. Exhibit 8 shows section H: Aid Awarded to Enrolled Undergraduates.

Exhibit 8. Aid Awarded to Enrolled Undergraduates

		Full-time First-time First-year	Full-time Undergrad (Incl. Fresh)	Less Than Full-time Undergrad
A	Number of degree-seeking undergraduate students (CDS Item B1 if reporting on Fall 2022 cohort)			
B	Number of students in line a who applied for need-based financial aid			
C	Number of students in line b who were determined to have financial need			
D	Number of students in line c who were awarded any financial aid			
E	Number of students in line d who were awarded any need-based scholarship or grant aid			
F	Number of students in line d who were awarded any need-based self-help aid			
G	Number of students in line d who were awarded any non-need-based scholarship or grant aid			
H	Number of students in line d whose need was fully met (<u>exclude PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans</u>)			
I	On average, the percentage of need that was met of students who were awarded any need-based aid. Exclude any aid that was awarded in excess of need as well as any resources that were awarded to replace EFC (<u>PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans</u>)			
J	The average financial aid package of those in line d . Exclude any resources that were awarded to replace EFC (<u>PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans</u>)			
K	Average need-based scholarship or grant award of those in line e			
L	Average need-based self-help award (<u>excluding PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans</u>) of those in line f			

Source: CDS (Common Data Set Initiative, n.d.) survey retrieved from <https://commondataset.org/>.

Using the DCS as a guide, NCES could create the ANP survey component, as suggested by interviewees (see RQ.5, Interviews). Row A, “Number of degree-seeking undergraduate students,” could be carried forward from the IPEDS EF survey component, as shown in the EF Full-time undergraduate students’ section in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9. IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey – Full-time

Part A - Fall Enrollment for Full-Time Undergraduate Students

Academic reporters report enrollment as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2022.
Program reporters report students enrolled at any time between August 1 and October 31, 2022.

Full-time Undergraduate Students

Reporting Reminders:

- Report Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race as Hispanic/Latino
- Report race for non-Hispanic/Latino individuals only
- Even though Teacher Preparation certificate programs may require a bachelor's degree for admission, they are considered subbaccalaureate undergraduate programs, and students in these programs are undergraduate students.

Men

Enrolled for <u>credit</u>	Degree/certificate-seeking			Non-degree/ non-certificate- seeking	Total, Full-time undergraduate students
	First-time	Non-first-time Transfer-in	Continuing/ Returning		
U.S. Nonresident					
Hispanic/Latino					
Asian Indian or Pakistani					

Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>.

The “First-time” column for full-time undergraduates in Part A would comply with the federal reporting statute. Similarly, based on responses to RQ.3, a new sub-section for Part-time (or Less than full-time) undergraduate students would be created in Part A with a column for first-time students as displayed in Exhibit 10. The part-time enrollment data would come from the IPEDS EF survey component as well.

Exhibit 10. IPEDS Fall Enrollment – Part-time students

Part A - Fall Enrollment for Part-time Undergraduate Students

Academic reporters report enrollment as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2022.
Program reporters report students enrolled at any time between August 1 and October 31, 2022.

Part-time Undergraduate Students

Reporting Reminders:

- Report Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race as Hispanic/Latino
- Report race for non-Hispanic/Latino individuals only
- Even though Teacher Preparation certificate programs may require a bachelor's degree for admission, they are considered subbaccalaureate undergraduate programs, and students in these programs are undergraduate students.

Men

Enrolled for credit	Degree/certificate-seeking			Total degree/certificate-seeking	Non-degree/ non-certificate-seeking	Total, part-time undergraduate students			
	First-time	Non-first-time							
		Transfer-in	Continuing/ Returning						
U.S. Nonresident									
Hispanic/Latino									
American Indian or Alaska Native									

Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022)
retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>.

The columns “Full-time” and “Less than Full-time,” which are collected by the CDS, would not be collected by the proposed IPEDS ANP survey component, based on interview feedback (see RQ.3).

Based on responses to RQ.3, I am suggesting the following changes and additions to the proposed ANP survey component (See Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11. CDS Comparison between CDS, IPEDS SFA and Proposed ANP Survey

Common Data Set Rows		IPEDS SFA (X)	Proposed ANP Survey (X)
A	Number of degree-seeking undergraduate students (CDS Item B1 if reporting on Fall 2022 cohort)	X	X
B	Number of students in line a who applied for need-based financial aid		X
C	Number of students in line b who were determined to have financial need		X
D	Number of students in line c who were awarded any financial aid		X
E	Number of students in line d who were awarded any need-based scholarship or grant aid		X
F	Number of students in line d who were awarded any need-based self-help aid		X
G	Number of students in line d who were awarded any non-need-based scholarship or grant aid		X
H	Number of students in line d whose need was fully met (exclude PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans)		
I	On average, the percentage of need that was met of students who were awarded any need-based aid. Exclude any aid that was awarded in excess of need as well as any resources that were awarded to replace EFC (PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans)		
J	The average financial aid package of those in line d . Exclude any resources that were awarded to replace EFC (PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans)		
K	Average need-based scholarship and grant award of those in line e	X	X
L	Average need-based self-help award (excluding PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans) of those in line f	X	X
M	Average need-based loan (excluding PLUS loans, unsubsidized loans, and private alternative loans) of those in line f who were awarded a need-based loan		

Source: Author's analysis comparing materials for the CDS (Common Data Set Initiative, n.d.)¹⁶; IPEDS SFA Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022)¹⁷ and a proposed ANP survey.

- Rows B, C, and D, while not required, would provide some added information. Since these data are already being collected by the CDS, it could be easily and usefully added to the proposed IPEDS ANP.
- Columns E and G would need to be combined (unduplicated) in the ANP survey, to identify grant and scholarship aid recipients, as well as the number who did not receive aid (see RQ.5 Interviews).
- Rows H, I, and J are not required, as they are not factors in calculating the ANP.
- Row K would be retained to determine the average need-based and non-need-based scholarship and grant aid. Or it could be combined (unduplicated) by reporting all gift aid, regardless of if it is need- or non-need-based aid.
- A new row, L, would report average Federal Title IV gift aid, in order to comply with statutory requirements.

While this method of calculating the average gift aid for ANP does not exactly match the CDS, it is similar enough, requiring only slight modifications to the existing CDS survey. Institutions that take advantage of completing the CDS annually (or otherwise already complete *U.S. News* and *CB* surveys without the use of the CDS), can use the same reporting functions, programming,

¹⁶ Retrieved from: <https://commondataset.org/>.

¹⁷ Retrieved from: <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>.

logic, and filters they use for the CDS and only need to make minor programming adjustments to complete the ANP, thereby reducing the institutional burden.

To include costs, modifications to the IC survey component could collect additional data on part-time student fees to create a part-time ANP, highlighted in Exhibit 12. This exhibit shows the existing IC survey component form used to collect student tuition and fees data; these would be moved to in a stand-alone ANP survey.

Exhibit 12. IPEDS IC Survey Component Tuition and Fees

5. Charges to full-time undergraduate students for the full academic year 2022-23
Please be sure to report an average tuition that includes all students at all levels (1st year, 2nd year, etc.).

	<u>In-district</u>	Prior year	<u>In-state</u>	Prior year	<u>Out-of-state</u>	Prior year
All full-time <u>undergraduates</u>						
Average <u>tuition</u>						
<u>Required fees</u>						

6. Per credit hour charge for part-time undergraduate students
Please be sure to report an average per credit tuition that includes all students at all levels (1st year, 2nd year, etc.). Do not include fees.

	<u>In-district</u>	Prior year	<u>In-state</u>	Prior year	<u>Out-of-state</u>	Prior year
<u>Per credit hour charge</u>						

Source: IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>.

The IC survey component collects COA, which is also collected by the CDS. Exhibit 13 below is from the IC survey component. This information would be included in the separate ANP survey to improve data consistency so only one person calculates the COA. The only suggested modification would be to include the cost for room and board for students living at home, as highlighted in Exhibit 13.

Exhibit 13. IPEDS IC Survey Component Cost of Attendance

1 If the 2022-23 tuition and/or fees as reported on this page for full-time, first-time students are covered by a tuition guarantee program, check the applicable box(es) under 'Tuition Guarantee'. Additionally, please indicate the maximum % increase that is guaranteed. These numbers are expected to be fairly small. Please contact the Help Desk if you are confused about these values and how to report them.

Charges for full academic year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	1 Tuition Guarantee (check only if applicable to entering students in 2022-23)	Guaranteed increase %
Published tuition and required fees:						
<u>In-district</u>						
Tuition					☐	
Required fees					☐	
Tuition + fees total						
<u>In-state</u>						
Tuition					☐	
Required fees					☐	
Tuition + fees total						
<u>Out-of-state</u>						
Tuition					☐	
Required fees					☐	
Tuition + fees total						
<u>Books and supplies</u>						
On-campus:						
<u>Room and board</u>						
<u>Other expenses</u>						
Room and board and other expenses						
Off-campus (not with family):						
<u>Room and board</u>						
<u>Other expenses</u>						
Room and board and other expenses						
Off-campus (with family):						
<u>Other expenses</u>						

Source: IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>.

Though the time period for the academic year data collection is established, there is no clear guidance as to a precise date when the data should be captured. In identifying a single, common date, we should choose one that is after any year-end accounting processes, like submitting the FISAP or an institution's annual financial audit. This would let institutions prepare for that deadline, quality check and verify accuracy of the data before submission.

We could also provide some guidance in the IPEDS instructions as to what processes should be completed before data collection is conducted and encourage institutions to establish a census date each year for consistency in reporting.

At least two average amounts of gift aid would need to be determined — one average for first-time, full-time undergraduates awarded grants and scholarships from the federal government, state, and institutions, and another average for first-time, full-time, undergraduates awarded

Title IV aid. This information is similar to what is collected in the SFA survey component but does not require disaggregating the aid by type. Institutions would only report the total aid amounts.

Data from the SFA survey component (see Exhibit 14) could be used in a separate ANP survey to collect student counts and awards for grants and scholarships from the federal government, state/local government, or the institution. This would require institutions to use the same financial aid data detail in both the ANP survey component and in the SFA survey component completed three months later.

Exhibit 14. SFA Survey Component Grants and Scholarships

Information from Part A:		YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA 2019-20	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA 2020-21	2021-22
Group 3 Full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who were awarded grant or scholarship aid from the following sources: the federal government, state/local government, or the institution (This number is carried forward from Part A, Line 03)				
01	Report the number of Group 3 students with the following living arrangements:	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA 2019-20	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA 2020-21	2021-22
01a	On-campus			
01b	Off-campus (with family)			
01c	Off-campus (not with family)			
01d	Unknown (calculated) This value is calculated using the following formula: [A03-(D01a+D01b+D01c)]			
02	Report the total amount of grant or scholarship aid awarded to Group 3 students from the following sources: the federal government, state/local government, or the institution			
03	Average grant or scholarship aid from the federal government, state/local government, or the institution awarded to Group 3 students (calculated value). This value is calculated using the following formula: [D02/A03]			

Source: IPEDS Student Financial Aid survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>

The section shown in Exhibit 15 reports the total amount of aid for students who receive Title IV aid broken out by the number of students, and the amount of aid received, based on income level.

Exhibit 15. SFA Survey Component Financial Aid Received

Information from Part A:		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Group 4 Full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who were awarded any Title IV federal student aid (This number is carried forward from Part A, Line 04)				
01	Report the number of Group 4 students with the following living arrangements:	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA	YOUR PRIOR YEAR DATA	
		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
01a	On-campus			
01b	Off-campus (with family)			
01c	Off-campus (not with family)			
01d	Unknown (calculated) This value is calculated using the formula: [A04-(E01a+E01b+E01c)]			

2021-22					
		Col. 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4
04	i Income level				
04a	\$0-30,000				
04b	\$30,001-48,000				
04c	\$48,001-75,000				
04d	\$75,001-110,000				
04e	\$110,001 and more				
04f	Total all income levels				

Source: IPEDS Student Financial Aid survey component (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022) retrieved from <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/index>

Finally, as part of the recommendation, NCES should clearly explain to consumers that the ANP is calculated using the average COA and average financial aid. Whenever the ANP is shown, it should include that information to help consumers better understand what costs are factored into the average net price.

Of course, this suggestion for an ANP survey component cannot consider all the issues that might arise in creating a stand-alone survey component. The goal is to explore the possibility of a stand-alone ANP survey and what resources might be needed, weighing feasibility, institutional burden, and the possible benefits for consumers and institutions.

Recommendations

Following this examination of how consumers use the ANP; and how cost and financial aid information are collected from IPEDS and other data sources; and through discussions with college guidance counselors, stakeholders, and policy advocates, a number of important points

came to light. All of these sources contributed to the following recommendations to improve the ANP for consumer use.

Recommendation #1 — Make the ANP more inclusive for consumers.

- Include room and board costs for students living at home with parents. At the time of writing this paper, the IC survey component excludes room and board costs for this group. It's possible those who created the IPEDS COA survey questions assumed institutions do not include room and board costs for students living at home in the COA budgets, or even that these students do not have any living expenses at all. However, living at home is not always free for students.

Paradoxically, many colleges acknowledge and include these costs in their COA estimates when calculating financial aid eligibility. So, there would be minimal institutional burden to report those same costs already used to determine financial aid eligibility to IPEDS. This would be of most benefit for students who enroll in 2-year institutions where on campus housing is not an option. Including room and board costs would also help reduce the current inconsistency of COA estimates across institutions, seen even among institutions within the same region or county. This is also an opportunity for the COA to align itself with the recently passed FAFSA Simplification Act that requires institutions to use a value greater than zero when calculating room and board for students living at home.

- Include an ANP for part-time, first-time students. First-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students who enroll part-time make up a disproportionate share of community college students. There is a national effort to improve these part-time students' success rates. Developing an ANP for part-time students would be more inclusive for these lower-income groups. By including a part-time ANP on College Navigator and in the CATC, NCES could elevate the national conversation around understanding the special circumstances in these students' lives, particularly the financial reasons underlying their choice to enroll part-time.

With IPEDS and other external surveys already collecting information on part-time students, institutions could easily provide data on part-time enrollment and financial aid, so the burden of identifying and reporting data needed to calculate ANP for these students should be minimal. Estimated burden hours should be substantially less for reporting the required data items when compared to reporting average net price data items for transfer or graduate students, where little data is currently being collected nationally.

- Publish ANP in a way that includes the COA, and separate and label direct and indirect costs to help students and families better understand what costs are factored into the ANP, empowering them to take ownership of their college financial planning.

Recommendation #2 — Improve the timeliness of the average net price for consumers and institutions.

- Publish ANP, along with the average cost and average financial aid components used in the calculation, earlier in the year. The ANP is now published in June of each year on the College Navigator website. While the data are made public annually, the ANP uses data that are 3 years old relative to the academic year when consumers would need it most. A student considering enrolling in August of 2025 would use the ANP from 2022-23. Using the IPEDS data collection schedule and factoring in when all the relevant data are collected, it is possible to move the academic reporter institutions ANP calculation due date to November of the prior calendar year — and use the Fall survey data collection — rather than February of the following calendar year, using the Winter survey data collection.
- Enhance explanations of how and why the ANP appears to be outdated. It is recommended NCES improve its communication to consumers and institutions about why the ANP may appear to be delayed, using simple graphics and plain language (similar to the timeline in Exhibits 6a and 6b). This would clearly show how and when the ANP is calculated and how this process ensures accuracy, compared to other data sources.

Include a graph with data demonstrating how the ANP modestly increases, on average, each year by sector. This would help consumers understand that while the ANP reflects three academic years prior, it can still be a useful tool to help students identify the general universe of colleges that would be affordable. It can also help institutions understand and communicate that the information they are submitting to IPEDS to calculate the ANP is still accurate and useful to consumers and researchers even though it may appear to be outdated.

- Allow more time for ANP to be reviewed by NCES. By moving an ANP survey component from February to the previous November, or three months sooner, NCES would extend the time between when the ANP is submitted and the CATC is published in June. This could allow IPEDS staff to include the ANP as part of their early summer initial review and validation process. This could also give IPEDS staff more time to follow up with institutions as part of the initial quality control process, creating more opportunity to correct issues that trigger unintentional errors and result in institutions appearing on the CATC list.

Recommendation #3 — Create an ANP survey component, separate from the SFA survey component.

- The SFA survey component currently has two primary sections, one to report on student financial aid distribution, and one to examine the net price students pay after receiving aid. For the survey's long-term viability and usefulness, it would be beneficial to separate these two sections.
- Establish a stand-alone ANP survey component to ensure consistency of data. Separating SFA into two different survey components would reduce the burden and

create an opportunity to move up ANP reporting by four months, benefiting consumers and academic reporter institutions.

- Improve data consistency by establishing a census date for financial aid data to be captured. Ensure accuracy by choosing a date that occurs after all financial audits and year-end processing have been completed.
- Minimize institutional burden by creating a new IPEDS ANP survey component with data items that already exist in the current IPEDS and the data reported in *U.S. News* and CB survey — and used by millions of families — that many institutions rely on the CDS to complete.

Conclusion

Federal aid policies and practices — the basis for data collection to produce an ANP — go through strict rule-making processes and interpretation and may be perceived as convoluted and implemented without regard to timeliness. This process seems to work against providing students with accurate information about their true expected costs early in the college search process. However, ANP has the potential to be a truly valuable part of a college search.

It is clear there are many players involved in the complex process of bringing the ANP to the public. This paper considers the strengths, weaknesses, and scope of IPEDS ANP and offers suggestions for improvement that are realistic and actionable. By reviewing the intentions of HEOA of 2008 and subsequent amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the way consumers currently use ANP, this paper reveals the benefits and challenges of creating an improved ANP for consumers. This research process has achieved several other goals.

- It provides a general overview of the current landscape of ANP information collected by NCES and other organizations.
- It provides information on how ANP is currently calculated as well as illustrative examples to help explain the complexity of calculating ANP using multiple IPEDS survey components over several years.
- By emphasizing how to improve ANP for the consumer, it shows how NCES can improve ANP for better research and institutional accountability.
- It offers ways to improve ANP while also considering institutional burden.

In all, this paper creates an effective framework for upcoming discussions about IPEDS and how to improve ANP so consumers can better use this valuable information when making critical college-related financial decisions.

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Appendix A. Interview Protocol

We appreciate your willingness to talk with us today. An independent research company, Ingram Market Analytics, LLC, is carrying out research for the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) of the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate how to improve the use of the average net price (ANP) for consumers. Specifically, we are examining elements of Cost of Attendance and Student Financial Aid collected by institutions through the Integrated Postsecondary Data System and used to calculate an average net price by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Our goal is to gain insight to the data collection and how consumers use the ANP and any recommendations you may have to improve the use of ANP.

We want to assure you your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous. In the final report, we will not disclose the names of any institutions or individual respondents without their explicit permission.

Name:

Title:

Organization:

- 1) How and why are SC and ANP currently reported to IPEDS?
- 2) Are there student populations overlooked by the current ANP?
- 3) Is there additional data that need to be collected to improve the current SC and ANP information?
- 4) What is the institutional burden with the current ANP?
- 5) How do consumers use the ANP?
- 6) How can the ANP be improved to be better for consumers and for institutions?
 - a. Examine the current ANP landscape.
 - b. Examine the schedule and how it relates to financial aid awards.
 - c. Examine the challenges institutions face in collecting and processing the data.
 - d. Examine how related organizations use, present, and share the data.
- 7) What would an IPEDS Average Net Price survey component look like if it were separate from the SFA survey?

We appreciate your valuable time and expertise in sharing your insights, which will play a crucial role in informing our work. If necessary, would you be available for further discussions or clarifications to ensure we have all the required information? We will certainly provide you with the final report upon publication, and we would like to assure you, once again, all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, and no identifying details will be disclosed.

Appendix B. Suggestions to Improve College Navigator Website

(www.collegenavigator.gov)

During their interview, the PHEAA College Access Partner agreed the College Navigator is an effective tool to assist their clients with the college search process. However, the interviewee also provided some suggestions on how to improve the College Navigator website based on how admissions counselors, students, and families use the website. Below is a list of those suggestions for consideration.

- Many first-generation students are overwhelmed by the amount of information on the main page. In addition to the existing website, provide channels that allow them to learn about the site in digestible-sized pieces of key information. The following channels were suggested:
 - New to the site: Provide a pared-down version providing options using the most frequently selected criteria, as a simpler option for those who are new to the process.
 - Affordability: Create a channel specifically devoted to affordability selection criteria (tuition and fees, ANP, etc.) and simplify the results by displaying COA, average financial aid, and ANP. Students are easily overwhelmed by the details that describe “number receiving”, “percentage receiving aid”, and “total amount received”.
 - Program of study: Create a channel that starts out by searching for a program of study, followed by more specific criteria.
 - Make the site more inclusive: Include information for part-time and transfer students, particularly when it comes to ANP.

- Display how ANP is calculated. In addition to providing ANP, include the COA, including a breakdown tuition and fees, room and board, personal expenses, and average gift aid. Adding these to the website would allow Access Partners to better use the website as a teaching tool.
- Create a short, training video introducing the simplified version of the website.

Appendix C. Comparison of Part-time Students Data Reported in IPEDS, CDS, CB, and NCCBP

Category	Survey Item	IPEDS	CDS	CB	NCCBP	Notes
Enrollment	Does your institution enroll any the following types of students	X				IPEDS IC Header
Enrollment	Per credit charge of part-time undergraduate students	X				IPEDS IC In-district, in-state and out of state
Enrollment	Per credit charge of part-time graduate students	X				IPEDS IC
Enrollment	Unduplicated count for part-time undergraduates	X				12 Mont survey by race ethnicity and gender
Enrollment	Unduplicated count for part-time undergraduates	X				12 Mont survey by race ethnicity and gender
Enrollment	All undergraduate students	X				IPEDS SFA (includes part-time students)
Admissions	Number (of admitted) that enrolled part-time	X	X	X		Admission survey
Admissions	Total enrolled full-time and part-time	X	X	X		Admission survey
Enrollment	First-time part time entering Pell recipients	X				Outcomes Measure
Enrollment	Non-first-time, full-time entering Non-Pell recipients	X				Outcomes Measure
Completions	First-time part time entering Pell recipients 4, 6, 8 year graduates	X				Outcomes Measure
Completions	Non-first-time, full-time entering Non-Pell recipients 4, 6, 8 year graduates	X				Outcomes Measure
Completions	First-time part time entering Pell recipients still enrolled through 8 years	X				Outcomes Measure
Completions	First-time part time entering Pell recipient still enrolled through 8 years	X				Outcomes Measure
Completions	First-time part time entering Pell recipient still enrolled at another institution through 8 years	X				
Enrollment	Fall enrollment for Part-time Undergraduate students	X	X	X		Fall enrollment by race ethnicity and gender
Enrollment	Fall enrollment for Part-time Graduate students	X	X	X		Fall enrollment
Enrollment	Fall enrollment by Age and Gender for part-time undergraduate students	X				Fall enrollment
Enrollment	First-time Bachelor's Cohort Retention Rate (part-time)	X			X	Fall enrollment
Enrollment	Student-to-faculty ration worksheet	X	X	X		Fall enrollment
Enrollment	Residence of first-time undergraduates by state	X				Fall enrollment - included with full-time students.
Enrollment	Total Undergraduate entering class	X	X	X		Fall enrollment - included in Part D calculation
Enrollment	Institutional enrollment undergraduate part-time degree seeking		X	X		Gender race ethnicity
Enrollment	Institutional enrollment undergraduate part-time other first year		X	X		
Enrollment	Institutional enrollment undergraduate all other degree-seeking undergraduate students		X	X		
Enrollment	Total part-time, first-time, year enrolled		X	X		gender
Enrollment	First-time first year Profile SAT/ACT Scores percentile and ranges		X	X		part-time included in total
Enrollment	High school class rank		X	X		part-time included in total
Enrollment	HS GPA		X	X		part-time included in total
Enrollment	Average age of full and part-time		X	X		part-time included in total
Financial Aid	Aid awarded to Enrolled Undergraduates need based and non need based aid		X	X		included in total dollar amounts awarded
Financial Aid	Less than full time number of degree seeking applied for financial aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Less than full time number of where determined to have financial need		X	X		
Financial Aid	Less than full time who were awarded any financial aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Less than full time who were awarded any need-based scholarship or grant aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Less than full time who were awarded any need-based self-help aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Less than full time who were awarded any non-need based scholarship or grant aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Less than full time whose need was fully met		X	X		
Financial Aid	On average the percentage of need that was met of students where were awarded any need-based aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Average financial aid package		X	X		
Financial Aid	Average need-based scholarship or grant award		X	X		
Financial Aid	Average need-based self-help award		X	X		
Financial Aid	Average need-based loan		X	X		
Financial Aid	Number of students who had no financial need and who were awarded institutional non-need-based aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Average dollar amount of institutional non-need based aid scholarship aid		X	X		
Financial Aid	Number of students who were awarded an institutional non-need-based athletic scholarship		X	X		

Appendix C. Continued - Comparison of Part-time Student Data Reported in IPEDS, CDS, CB, and NCCBP

Category	Survey Item	IPEDS	CDS	CB	NCCBP	Notes
Financial Aid	Average dollar amount of institutional non-need-based athletic scholarships		X	X		
Financial Aid	Average per-borrower undergraduate cumulative principal borrowed - any loan type - federal, state, institutional, private		X	X		included in total number of undergraduate graduating class class
Financial Aid	Financial aid available for part-time students			X		
Completions	Degrees conferred by CIP category		X	X		part-time included in degrees/cetificates conferred
Enrollment	Part-time credit headcount				X	
Enrollment	Transfer credit hours				X	part-time included in total
Enrollment	Technical/Career credit hours				X	part-time included in total
Enrollment	Developmental credit hours				X	part-time included in total
Enrollment	Part-time degree/certificate seeking in entering cohort				X	Similar to IPEDS GRS, but part-time cohort
Completions	Number completed degree or certificate in 3 years				X	
Completions	Number transferred in 3 years				X	
Completions	Number completed degree or certificate and transferred in 3 years				X	
Completions	Number completed degree or certificate in 6 years	X			X	Outcomes measure
Completions	Number transferred in 6 years				X	
Completions	Number completed degree or certificate and transferred in 6 years				X	
Retention	Credit Students at end of fall term	X			X	part-time included in total
Retention	Returned spring term				X	part-time included in total
Retention	Graduated before next spring term				X	part-time included in total
Retention	Graduated next fall term				X	part-time included in total
Completions	Career program program completers employed in related field				X	part-time included in total

Appendix D. College Affordability and Transparency Center Letter



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

June 14, 2022

Dear IPEDS Keyholders and Coordinators:

This year's College Affordability and Transparency Center (CATC) Lists are now available in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Data Collection System. To access the lists, login to the Data Collection System using your Keyholder UserID and password at <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds>. A link is on the first page.

We publicly release these lists and will do so this year on Thursday, June 30, 2022. We are informing you so that if your institution is on one of the lists, you can alert others at your institution. A copy of this letter is available via a PDF at the following URL: <http://ipedslistserv.rti.org/images/CATC2.pdf>.

More information about the College Affordability and Transparency Lists:

- **Where will the lists be posted?** When we release the lists, we will post them at <http://collegecost.ed.gov>. We will include several lists of institutions based on tuition and fees and average net price (the cost of attendance after considering all grant and scholarship aid) charged to students.
- **Why is the Department of Education posting these lists?** These lists meet requirements outlined in the *Higher Education Act* (HEA) of 1965, as amended. Per the HEA, the lists are updated annually and posted by July 1.
- **What happens if my institution is on one of the lists?** If your institution is on either of the "increase lists" for your sector (i.e., the list showing the highest increases in tuition and fees or the list showing the highest increases in average net price), you are required under the HEA to provide additional information to us through the College Affordability and Transparency Explanation Form (CATEF). We will provide further guidance on this additional reporting requirement by the end of January 2023.
- **From where do the data come?** The 2022 lists are based on data collected during the 2020-21 IPEDS data collection cycle, the most recent data that have undergone the full National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data review process and that have been publicly released

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global Competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

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via the IPEDS Data Center. Specifically, tuition and fees data came from the Institutional Characteristics survey component, which collected 2018-19 and 2020-21 charges. Average net price data came from the Student Financial Aid survey component, which collected and calculated average net prices for academic years 2017-18 and 2019-20.

- **Can I revise my data now?** No. The data used in the CATC lists have been fully reviewed by NCES and published in multiple publications. Updated data submitted in the 2020-21 Prior Year Revision System are not included in the 2022 CATC lists because a full data review of the revised data is not possible by the July 1 release date.
- **How were the calculations made?** Information on the methodology for creating the lists is included in the CATC.
- **Whom do I contact if I have questions about the methodology for creating the lists?** First, please review the methodology information available in the CATC. If you still have questions, please send them via email to the program manager, Freddie Cross, at Freddie.Cross@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Annmarie Weisman

Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Policy, Planning, and Innovation

Appendix E. List of Acronyms

ANP	Average Net Price
ADM	Admissions Survey Component
CATC	College Affordability and Transparency Center
CB	College Board
CDS	Common Data Set
COA	Cost of Attendance
E12	12-month Enrollment Survey Component
EF	Fall Enrollment Survey Component
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FISAP	Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate
GRS	Graduation Rate Survey Component
HEOA	Higher Education Opportunity Act
IC	Institutional Characteristics Survey Component
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
NCCPB	National Community College Benchmarking Project
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NPEC	National Postsecondary Education Cooperative
OM	Outcome Measures Survey Component
RQ	Research Question Number
SFA	Student Financial Aid Survey Component