



# Cost of Attendance Tutorial Script IC Survey Component 2019-20 Data Collection Cycle



This tutorial discusses how to report Cost of Attendance data in IPEDS.

Cost of Attendance data are only reported by institutions that enroll full-time, first-time degree-seeking undergraduate students.

Data are collected in two survey components. The Institutional Characteristics component collects current year cost of attendance data, while the Student Financial Aid component allows institutions to revise the 3 prior years of cost of attendance data. In addition, cost of attendance is used with data collected in the Student Financial Aid component for the calculation of net price. Therefore, it is important that data are reported for the same living situations in both Institutional Characteristics and Student Financial Aid surveys, in order to correctly calculate net price.

The cost of attendance for a student is an estimate of that student's total educational expenses for the period of enrollment. The items included in the cost of attendance are determined by the Higher Education Act and are not subject to regulation by the Department of Education. Components of the cost of attendance reported to IPEDS include four elements:

1. First, tuition and fees are reported for each of three applicable groups: in-district, in-state, and out-of state students. Tuition and fees include costs of rental or purchase of equipment (including equipment for instruction by telecommunications), materials, or supplies required of all students.
2. The second element, books and supplies, may also include a reasonable amount, as determined by an institution, for the documented rental or purchase of a personal computer that the student will use for study for the enrollment period.
3. Third, room and board are reported separately, as applicable, for students that live on-campus, off-campus without family, and off-campus with family. For students living on campus, the allowance is the standard amount normally assessed most residents. For students without dependents living at home with their parents, this will be an allowance that your financial aid office typically determines. For those living off-campus but not with their parents, the allowance must be based on reasonable expenses for the student's room and board. If your institution offers room or board, but not both, you must include both the known value and an estimate for the unknown value. Inclusion of both meal cost and housing cost is necessary to generate a total cost of attendance, which is subsequently needed for Net Price calculations. For example, if your institution offers meals but no housing, in the "on-campus room and board" field you would need to enter a total that includes the cost of the meal plan plus an estimate of housing (such as a housing cost similar to that of off-campus housing). Refer to your institution's cost of attendance budgets from your financial aid office to determine estimated room or board costs.

~~4. Finally, other expenses should include any expenses beyond those already mentioned that your~~  
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institution's student financial aid office uses to determine the student budget. This includes transportation and miscellaneous expenses, and other expenses mentioned in the Federal Student Aid handbook. Per law, it should not include any expenses not allowable in the handbook.

The data used for reporting cost of attendance should come from your Office of Student Financial Aid as they use this number in their awarding process each year. To report cost of attendance for the institution as a whole, the student financial aid office will need to use an appropriate method. Different methods include a weighted average; a non-weighted average; or a median. In addition, you may arrive at these values through different processes, such as periodic surveys of your student population and local housing costs, or an annual survey of students. Regardless of the methods you use, it is important that they are applicable to your institution and stay consistent year to year. Changing methods each year could result in significant fluctuations in net price calculations.

It is important to note that academic and program reporters submit cost of attendance differently. Academic reporters report tuition, fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other expenses for an entire academic year. However, program reporters report tuition and fees combined for the largest program, books and supplies for the largest program, and room and board and other expenses for a single month.

Finally, it is extremely important to report these data correctly, as they will appear in a number of highly visible federal consumer information tools, including College Navigator, the College Affordability and Transparency Lists, and the College Scorecard. In addition, while IPEDS allows prior year revisions, at this time the timing for the release of the College Affordability and Transparency Lists, as required by law, does not allow time for the revisions to be included. Revisions will appear in the College Navigator and the Data Center, but will not be included in the College Affordability and Transparency Lists.

For more information on the material presented in this tutorial, please contact the IPEDS Help Desk.