## Common Data Set Definitions

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

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

- Additional guidance for some terms, particularly those common with the IPEDS survey, may be found here: https://nces.ed.gov/collegenews/definitions/definitions.cfm

### Academic advisement: Plan under which each student is assigned to a faculty member or a trained adviser, who, through regular meetings, helps the student plan and implement an academic program.

### Accelerated program: Completion of a college program of study in fewer than the usual number of years, most often by attending summer sessions and carrying extra courses during regular semesters.

### Admitted student: Applicant who has been offered admission or a degree-granting program at this institution.

### Adult student services: Admission assistance, support, orientation, and other services expressly for adults who have started college for the first time, or who are re-entering after a break in enrollment.

### American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and maintaining tribal affiliation.

### Application fee: That amount of money that an institution charges for processing a student’s application for acceptance. This amount is not creditable toward tuition and required for admission.

### Asian: A student having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea.

### Associate degree: An award that normally requires at least two but less than four years of full-time equivalent college work.

### Bachelor's degree: An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least four years but not more than six years of full-time equivalent college work.

### Board (charges): Average cost for 19 meals per week or the maximum meal plan.

### Book fees: Average cost of books and supplies. Do not include unusual costs for special groups of students (e.g., engineering or art majors), unless they constitute a major share of expenses.

### Calendar system: The method by which an institution structures most of its courses for the academic year.

### Comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities: Programs designed to support postsecondary students with intellectual disabilities.

### Clock hour: A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. Also referred to as contact hour.

### Continuous basis (for program enrollment): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that enroll students at any time during the academic year. For example, a semester system.

### Cooperative education program: A program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government.

### Cooperative housing: Housing owned, operated, or affiliated with the institution and used by students who share a living unit and common living area.

### Credit: Recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward the requirements for a degree, diploma, or certificate.

### Credit course: A course that, if successfully completed, can be applied toward the number of courses required for achieving a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized postsecondary degree.

### Credit hour: A unit of measure representing an hour (50 minutes) of instruction over a 15-week period in a semester or trimester system or a 10-week period in a quarter system. It is equivalent to the average time required to complete one week of work at the institution.

### Cross-registration: A system whereby students enrolled at one institution may take courses at another institution without having to apply to the second institution.

### Deferred admission: The practice of permitting admitted students to postpone enrollment, usually for a period of one academic term or one year.

### Degree: An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of study.

### Degree-seeking students: Students enrolled in courses for credit who are recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or recognized postsecondary credential.

### Distance learning: An option for earning course credit at off-campus locations via cable television, internet, satellite classes, videotapes, correspondence courses, or other means.

### Doctor's degree: A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation.

### Doctor's degree-professional practice: A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license for the practice of a profession.

### Double major: Program in which students may complete two undergraduate programs of study simultaneously.

### Dual enrollment: A program through which high school students may enroll in college courses while still enrolled in high school. Students are not required to apply for admission to the college.

### Early action plan: An admission plan that allows students to apply and be notified of an admission decision well in advance of the regular notification dates. If admitted, the candidate is expected to enroll in the fall term.

### Early decision plan: A plan that permits students to apply and be notified of an admission decision (and financial aid offer if applicable) well in advance of the regular notification dates.

### English as a Second Language (ESL): A course of study designed specifically for students whose native language is not English.

### Exchange student program-domestic: Any arrangement between a student and a college that permits study for a semester or more at another college in the United States without external requirements.

### Exchange student program-international: Any arrangement between a student and a college that permits study for a semester or more at another college in the United States without external requirements.

### Extracurricular activities (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admissions process given for participation in both school and nonschool-related activities of interest.

### First-time student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the level enrolled. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended a postsecondary institution for the first time.

### First-year student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time.

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### First-year student: A student who has completed less than the equivalent of 1 full year of undergraduate work; that is, less than 30 semester hours (in a 120-hour degree program).

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### Grade-point average (academic high school GPA): The sum of grade points a student has earned in secondary school divided by the number of courses taken. The most common grade-point average is the 4.0 scale, where A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, and so on.
Unit: a standard of measurement representing hours of academic instruction (e.g., semester credit, quarter credit, clock hour).

Undergraduate: A student enrolled in a four- or five-year bachelor’s degree program, an associate degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate.

Undergraduate Research: Opportunities offered to undergraduate students to make original contributions in an academic discipline via the exploration of a specific research topic.

*Veteran’s counseling: Helps veterans and their dependents obtain benefits for their selected program and provides certifications to the Veteran’s Administration. May also provid

*Visually impaired: Any person whose sight loss is not correctable and is sufficiently severe as to adversely affect educational performance.

Volunteer work (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students for activity done on a volunteer basis (e.g., tutoring, hospital care, working with the elderly or disab

Wait list: List of students who meet the admission requirements but will only be offered a place in the class if space becomes available.

Weekend college: A program that allows students to take a complete course of study and attend classes only on weekends.

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

*Women’s center: Center with programs, academic activities, and/or services intended to promote an understanding of the evolving roles of women.

Work experience (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students who have been employed prior to application, whether for relevance to major, demonstration of ever

Financial Aid Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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