IPEDS DISTANCE EDUCATION DATA: Recommendations from NPEC & TRP
May 2, 2018

Abby Miller
ASA Research, LLC
Bethesda, Maryland

For questions, please contact:
amiller@asa-research.com
Research Questions

What are the definitions of distance education (DE), and DE programs and courses?

What is the current DE landscape (e.g., institutions offering DE, range of DE programs offered, DE student enrollment)?

To what extent is IPEDS capturing the current DE landscape?

How can IPEDS DE data collection be improved to better represent the current landscape?
Methodology

- NPEC-Commissioned research on DE
  - Exploratory in nature
  - Background information for TRP
  - Sets the stage for further investigation
  - Aids in future decisions about changes to survey instruments

- Quantitative and qualitative sources:
  - Scan of recent literature
  - Analysis of IPEDS DE components from the Institutional Characteristics, Fall Enrollment, and Completions surveys
  - Informational interviews: limit of 9; representatives of higher education institutions and state agencies
Findings from the Literature: Definitions Across Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>Online Courses</th>
<th>Hybrid/Blended Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babson/e-Literate/WICHE</td>
<td></td>
<td>at least 80% of instruction is delivered online</td>
<td>between 30% and 79% of instruction is delivered online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SREB</td>
<td>more than 50% of the content is delivered electronically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>at least 70% of the coursework needed to complete the program is available online</td>
<td>at least 80% of instruction is delivered online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Computing</td>
<td></td>
<td>at least 80% of instruction is delivered online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPEDS</td>
<td>all of the coursework is 100% DE</td>
<td>instruction is 100% online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IPEDS Data Analysis

Figure 1. Percentage of all students enrolled in DE courses, by sector, 2015

Source: NCES, IPEDS Fall Enrollment survey component, Fall 2015 [provisional data, n = 4,571]
Stakeholder Interviews: Trends in DE

Interviewees reported increases in:

- DE undergraduate and graduate offerings, particularly at *public 4-year institutions*
- Business, engineering, and nursing DE programs
- Individual DE courses, including *introductory/general education and gateway courses*
- Out-of-state student enrollment, which provides additional revenue
## Stakeholder Interviews:
### Institutional/State DE Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>DE course definition</th>
<th>Hybrid DE course definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public four-year institution (large)</td>
<td>100% online</td>
<td>Faculty-defined; a “significant part of the course interaction takes place online and students can expect to spend at least as much time as they would in an on-campus section of the course.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public four-year institution (comprehensive)</td>
<td>100% online (state board of regents definition)</td>
<td>50-99% online (state board of regents definition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, non-profit four-year institution</td>
<td>100% online</td>
<td>Faculty-defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-profit online institution</td>
<td>100% online</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit online institution</td>
<td>100% online</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college district</td>
<td>100% online</td>
<td>Faculty-defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State four-year system</td>
<td>95% online</td>
<td>Hybrid: up to 50% online “Partially Online”; 51-94% online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State coordinating board</td>
<td>100% online</td>
<td>50-99% online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholder Interviews: IPEDS Feedback

- Respondents felt their data systems define DE in ways that are compatible with IPEDS data collection.
- Respondents suggested carefully considering the need for additional information, and whom that would benefit.

### DE Outcomes
- Graduation/completion rates of DE vs. on-campus students
- Disaggregate by degree program/major, race/ethnicity, and gender

### DE Populations
- IPEDS FT/FT cohort does not reflect majority of DE students
- DE students tend to enroll continuously
- Add DE items to 12-month Enrollment survey

### Hybrid DE
- Too many variations of hybrid
- Faculty often define hybrid
- Add hybrid program options to Completions survey

### DE Location
- State enrollments may not represent in-person enrollment
- IPEDS asks where students live, but institutions collect permanent address
Recommendations

1. Improved Instructions
   - Additional clarification of definitions and instructions, especially regarding hybrid coursework

2. 12-month Enrollment Survey
   - Add items to the 12-month Enrollment Survey to more accurately capture DE enrollment

3. Hybrid Data Collection
   - If there is interest in collecting data on hybrid enrollment, need to consider definition of “hybrid” to limit any additional reporting burden
Recommendations

4. Dissemination

• Add 12-Month Enrollment data to College Navigator
• Move designation of primarily online institutions to College Navigator’s “General Information” tab, instead of “Special Learning Opportunities”
• Replace primarily online institutions’ location information with “Primarily Online” designation

5. Outcomes

• Add DE course and/or program completion rates, as compared with on-campus courses/programs
• Add DE row to award level table rather than for each CIP code
TRP Recommendations

- No addition of hybrid; clarify terminology to reduce confusion.
- Clarify IC course and program offerings.
- Add DE questions to 12-month Enrollment survey.
NPEC Summary

- As postsecondary DE offerings and enrollments continue to expand, varying definitions and categories emerge.
- Based on this small sample, IPEDS DE data elements generally reflect the DE landscape well.
- Additional information may be useful, but burden must be considered.
- Rapid growth of DE will necessitate continual data collection assessment to ensure the landscape is accurately captured.
- Need to ensure ability to analyze longitudinal trends; difficult to predict future of DE.
- Moving forward, need to consider burden, uniformity, and flexibility.
Panelist Q&A

- Angela Bell, University System of Georgia
- Dan Anderson, Arizona Board of Regents