

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
* Academic advisement: Plan under which each student is assigned to a faculty member or a trained
Accelerated program: Completion of a college program of study in fewer than the usual number of years.
Admitted student: Applicant who is offered admission to a degree-granting program at your institution.
* Adult student services: Admission assistance, support, orientation, and other services expressly for
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 or community attachment.
Applicant (first-time, first year): An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be
Application fee: That amount of money that an institution charges for processing a student's application for
Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian
Associate degree: An award that normally requires at least two but less than four years of full-time
Bachelor's degree: An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary of the
Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
Board (charges): Assume average cost for 19 meals per week or the maximum meal plan.
Books and supplies (costs): Average cost of books and supplies. Do not include unusual costs for special
Calendar system: The method by which an institution structures most of its courses for the academic year.
Campus Ministry: Religious student organizations (denominational or nondenominational) devoted to
* Career and placement services: A range of services, including (often) the following: coordination of visits
Carnegie units: One year of study or the equivalent in a secondary school subject.
Certificate: See Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma.
Class rank: The relative numerical position of a student in his or her graduating class, calculated by the
College-preparatory program: Courses in academic subjects (English, history and social studies, foreign
Common Application: The standard application form distributed by the National Association of Secondary
* Community service program: Referral center for students wishing to perform volunteer work in the
Commuter: A student who lives off campus in housing that is not owned by, operated by, or affiliated with
Clock hour: A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. Also
Continuous basis (for program enrollment): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions
Cooperative education program: A program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment
Cooperative housing: College-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing in which students share room and
* Counseling service: Activities designed to assist students in making plans and decisions related to their
Credit: Recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be
Credit course: A course that, if successfully completed, can be applied toward the number of courses
Credit hour: A unit of measure representing an hour (50 minutes) of instruction over a 15-week period in a
Cross-registration: A system whereby students enrolled at one institution may take courses at another
Deferred admission: The practice of permitting admitted students to postpone enrollment, usually for a
Degree: An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official
Degree-seeking students: Students enrolled in courses for credit who are recognized by the institution as
Differs by program (calendar system): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that
Diploma: See Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma.
Distance learning: An option for earning course credit at off-campus locations via cable television, internet,
Doctor's degree-research/scholarship: A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of degree may include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M., and others, as designated by the awarding institution.
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 required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as "first-professional" and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); Law (L.L.B. or J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine (D.O); Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P.); or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.
Doctor's degree-other: A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.
Double major: Program in which students may complete two undergraduate programs of study
Dual enrollment: A program through which high school students may enroll in college courses while still
Early action plan: An admission plan that allows students to apply and be notified of an admission decision
Early admission: A policy under which students who have not completed high school are admitted and
Early decision plan: A plan that permits students to apply and be notified of an admission decision (and
English as a Second Language (ESL): A course of study designed specifically for students whose native
Exchange student program-domestic: Any arrangement between a student and a college that permits

External degree program: A program of study in which students earn credits toward a degree through
Extracurricular activities (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admissions process given
First-time student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the level enrolled. Includes
First-time, first-year (freshman) student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the
First-year student: A student who has completed less than the equivalent of 1 full year of undergraduate
Freshman: A first-year undergraduate student.
*Freshman/new student orientation: Orientation addressing the academic, social, emotional, and
Full-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, 12 or more quarter
Geographical residence (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process given to
Grade-point average (academic high school GPA): The sum of grade points a student has earned in
Graduate student: A student who holds a bachelor's or equivalent, and is taking courses at the post-
* Health services: Free or low cost on-campus primary and preventive health care available to students.
High school diploma or recognized equivalent: A document certifying the successful completion of a
Hispanic or Latino: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other
Honors program: Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational
Independent study: Academic work chosen or designed by the student with the approval of the department
In-state tuition: The tuition charged by institutions to those students who meet the state's or institution's
International student: See Nonresident alien.
International student group: Student groups that facilitate cultural dialogue, support a diverse campus,
Internship: Any short-term, supervised work experience usually related to a student's major field, for which
* Learning center: Center offering assistance through tutors, workshops, computer programs, or
* Legal services: Free or low cost legal advice for a range of issues (personal and other).
Liberal arts/career combination: Program in which a student earns undergraduate degrees in two
Master's degree: An award that requires the successful completion of a program of study of generally one
or two full-time equivalent academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Some of these degrees,
such as those in Theology (M.Div., M.H.L./Rav) that were formerly classified as "first-professional", may
require more than two full-time equivalent academic years of work.
Minority affiliation (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process for members of
* Minority student center: Center with programs, activities, and/or services intended to enhance the
Model United Nations: A simulation activity focusing on conflict resolution, globalization, and diplomacy.
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of
Nonresident alien: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country
* On-campus day care: Licensed day care for students' children (usually age 3 and up); usually for a fee.
Open admission: Admission policy under which virtually all secondary school graduates or students with
Other expenses (costs): Include average costs for clothing, laundry, entertainment, medical (if not a
Out-of-state tuition: The tuition charged by institutions to those students who do not meet the institution's
Part-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for fewer than 12 credits per semester or quarter, or
* Personal counseling: One-on-one or group counseling with trained professionals for students who want to
Post-baccalaureate certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study
Post-master's certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study of 24 credit
Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma: Includes the following three IPEDS definitions for
<i>Less Than 1 Academic Year:</i> Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary
<i>At Least 1 But Less Than 2 Academic Years:</i> Requires completion of an organized program of study at the
<i>At Least 2 But Less Than 4 Academic Years:</i> Requires completion of an organized program of study at the
Private institution: An educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental
Private for-profit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives
Private nonprofit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives no
Proprietary institution: See Private for-profit institution.
Public institution: An educational institution whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected
Quarter calendar system: A calendar system in which the academic year consists of three sessions called
Race/ethnicity: Category used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with, or belong in the
Race/ethnicity unknown: Category used to classify students or employees whose race/ethnicity is not
Recognized Postsecondary Credential: Includes both Title IV eligible degrees, certificates, and other
Religious affiliation/commitment (as admission factor): Special consideration given in the admission
* Religious counseling: One-on-one or group counseling with trained professionals for students who want
* Remedial services: Instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies
Required fees: Fixed sum charged to students for items not covered by tuition and required of such a large
Resident alien or other eligible non-citizen: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States
Room and board (charges)—on campus: Assume double occupancy in institutional housing and 19 meals
Secondary school record (as admission factor): Information maintained by the secondary school that
Semester calendar system: A calendar system that consists of two semesters during the academic year
Student-designed major: A program of study based on individual interests, designed with the assistance of
Study abroad: Any arrangement by which a student completes part of the college program studying in
* Summer session: A summer session is shorter than a regular semester and not considered part of the
Talent/ability (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students with demonstrated
Teacher certification program: Program designed to prepare students to meet the requirements for
Transfer applicant: An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for
Transfer student: A student entering the institution for the first time but known to have previously attended
Transportation (costs): Assume two round trips to student's hometown per year for students in institutional

Trimester calendar system: An academic year consisting of 3 terms of about 15 weeks each.
Tuition: Amount of money charged to students for instructional services. Tuition may be charged per term,
* Tutoring: May range from one-on-one tutoring in specific subjects to tutoring in an area such as math,
Unit: a standard of measurement representing hours of academic instruction (e.g., semester credit, quarter
Undergraduate: A student enrolled in a four- or five-year bachelor's degree program, an associate degree
* Veteran's counseling: Helps veterans and their dependents obtain benefits for their selected program
* Visually impaired: Any person whose sight loss is not correctable and is sufficiently severe as to
Volunteer work (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students for activity done on a
Wait list: List of students who meet the admission requirements but will only be offered a place in the class
Weekend college: A program that allows students to take a complete course of study and attend classes
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
Work experience (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students who have been employed
Financial Aid Definitions
Awarded aid: The dollar amounts offered to financial aid applicants.
External scholarships and grants: Scholarships and grants received from outside (private) sources that
Financial aid applicant: Any applicant who submits any one of the institutionally required financial aid
Indebtedness: Aggregate dollar amount borrowed through any loan program (federal, state, subsidized,
Institutional scholarships and grants: Endowed scholarships, annual gifts and tuition funded grants for
Financial need: As determined by your institution using the federal methodology and/or your institution's
Need-based aid: College-funded or college-administered award from institutional, state, federal, or other
Need-based scholarship or grant aid: Scholarships and grants from institutional, state, federal, or other
Need-based self-help aid: Loans and jobs from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a
Non-need-based scholarship or grant aid: Scholarships and grants, gifts, or merit-based aid from
Note: Suggested order of precedence for counting non-need money as need-based:
Non-need institutional grants
Non-need tuition waivers
Non-need athletic awards
Non-need federal grants
Non-need state grants
Non-need outside grants
Non-need student loans
Non-need parent loans
Non-need work
Non-need-based self-help aid: Loans and jobs from institutional, state, or other sources for which a
Private student loans: A nonfederal loan made by a lender such as a bank, credit union or private lender
Work study and employment: Federal and state work study aid, and any employment packaged by your