the public wishing to attend the meeting at 8:30 a.m. outside of the main entrance to Jefferson Hall and escort them to the meeting location. Please note that all vehicles and persons entering the installation are subject to search and/or an identification check. Any person or vehicle refusing to be searched will be denied access to the installation. Members of the public should allow at least an hour for security checks and the shuttle ride. The United States Military Academy, Jefferson Hall, is fully handicap accessible. Wheelchair access is available at the south entrance of the building.

Written Comments or Statements: Pursuant to 41 CFR 102–3.105(j) and 102–3.140 and section 10(a)(3) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the public or interested organizations may submit written comments or statements to the committee, in response to the stated agenda of the open meeting or in regard to the committee's mission in general. Written comments or statements should be submitted to Mr. Nagle, the committee Designated Federal Officer, via electronic mail, the preferred mode of submission, at the address listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section. Each page of the comment or statement must include the author's name, title or affiliation, address, and daytime phone number. Written comments or statements being submitted in response to the agenda set forth in this notice must be received by the Designated Federal Official at least seven business days prior to the meeting to be considered by the committee. The Designated Federal Official will review all timely submitted written comments or statements with the committee Chairperson and ensure the comments are provided to all members of the committee before the meeting. Written comments or statements received after this date may not be provided to the committee until its next meeting.

Pursuant to 41 CFR 102–3.140d, the committee is not obligated to allow a member of the public to speak or otherwise address the committee during the meeting. However, the committee Designated Federal Official and Chairperson may choose to invite certain submitters to present their comments verbally during the open portion of this meeting or at a future meeting. The Designated Federal Officer, in consultation with the committee Chairperson, may allot a specific amount of time for submitters to present their comments verbally.

James W. Satterwhite Jr.,

Army Federal Register Liaison Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[Docket No.: ED–2025–SCC–0382]

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2025–26 Through 2026–27; Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS)

AGENCY: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Department of Education (ED).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: On November 13, 2025, the Department of Education published in the **Federal Register** a submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and approval, with a request for public comment, related to the Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS) to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2025–26 through 2026–27. This document revises the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** provided in that notice.

DATES: These revisions apply to the notice published on November 13, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Matthew Soldner, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Room 5C133, Washington, DC 20202. Telephone: (202) 453–7441.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Department's November 13, 2025, notice (90 FR 50940) requested OMB's review of, and public comment related to, the Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS) to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 20256–26 through 2026–27. This document revises the discussion provided there in accordance with the remand in *Massachusetts* v. *U.S. Dep't of Educ.,* Case No. 1:26–cv–11229 (D. Mass. 2026).

Implementation Timeline

The Department's implementation timeline for ACTS—which currently results in its collection launching during the 2025–26 Winter Collection period—is driven by a confluence of public policy goals, operational factors, and statistical purposes.

The primary purpose of the ACTS collection is to provide transparency to consumers about college admissions practices hence the name ''Admissions Consumer Transparency Supplement'' (see: Presidential Memorandum; *https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/ensuring-transparency-in-higher-education-admissions/*), (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 16); (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 11, 13, 18–20); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Although admissions cycles vary, many students and their families are making application decisions in late fall and early winter (see: *https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/apply-to-college/college-application-timeline-12th-grade*). As such, institution-level data on admissions practices have the potential to be most valuable to students and families between summer and early fall (*ibid.*).

Here, the Department seeks to make admissions transparency data available to students and parents as quickly as possible—ideally to inform decision-making for students as they are applying to colleges. The public is best served if that data can be made available as soon as possible so students and parents can be informed as they decide where to apply before critical fall application deadlines. To achieve that goal, the Department must take its first available opportunity to collect data on outcomes associated with institutions' admissions practices.

Operationally, the Department's first available—and most logical—opportunity to do so is as part of the IPEDS 2025–26 Winter Collection. The Department believes that the timing of the ACTS component should align to the timing of the Winter Collection because (a) the ACTS component seeks to understand the outcomes associated with institutions' admissions practices and (b) the IPEDS Admissions component is currently included in the IPEDS Winter Collection. Notwithstanding this conceptual link, the Department believes these collections are operationally linked in their execution on campus. To the extent the latter are a disaggregation of the former, the foundational data required to complete the IPEDS Admissions component and the admissions-related elements of ACTS are fundamentally the same. The Department determined that modifying the existing Admissions component to capture the admissions-related data elements that are now part of ACTS would be more disruptive to institutions, the Department's data collection contractor, and the integrity of the existing IPEDS survey system, than the development of an operationally separate component. The Department believes that, as ACTS moves from its inaugural year to become a regular feature of the IPEDS landscape, the co-occurrence of these two components has the potential to reduce burden and improve data quality. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 6); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at pages 13, 15, 18, and 22); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 5); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Taken together, the Department's public policy goals and IPEDS operational considerations informed the development of the ACTS component's timeline as first described in the 60-day notice (90 FR 39384). Comments received in response to the 60-day notice highlighted additional factors that reinforced to the Department that the initial Winter timeline was necessary to meet its secondary purpose: to collect data that will enable policymakers and researchers to address longstanding questions about outcomes associated with college admissions practices. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 11 and 20); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at pages 16, 19, 20, and 21); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 39); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Regarding the secondary purpose, two factors are in opposition: (1) statistical approaches by which policymakers and researchers can estimate the effect of *SFFA* v. *Harvard* on universities' admissions demand data spanning multiple years, however (2) institutional data retention policies have the potential to limit access to the data researchers need to credibly conduct and contextualize such estimation.

Prior to the publication of the 60-day notice, the Department anticipated that the most likely approaches to estimating the effect of *SFFA* v. *Harvard* on admissions practices would demand multiple years of ACTS data both before and after the court's decision (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 9, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Although a variety of such estimation methods exist, a foundational approach is known as the interrupted time series (ITS). The notion behind ITS and similar designs is that the effect of an outside event (exogenous shock) can be estimated by calculating the change in the level and/or trajectory of an outcome of interest *prior* to an event occurring compared to its level and/or trajectory *following* an event's occurrence. If we are willing to assume (or can credibly demonstrate) that the pre-policy level and/or trajectory would have continued unabated but for the policy's introduction, any difference between what would have been *projected* to occur and what *did* occur is the policy's effect. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 9, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Although confidence in the validity of time series analyses can be affected by multiple factors, one important factor is the extent to which the pre-policy and post-policy level and trend is accurately estimated. Generally, more observations pre- and post-policy lend accuracy and credibility to that estimation. (*https://cteresearchnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/CTERN-STI20-CITS-508.pdf* at page 7).

For the Department to collect the number of pre-*SFFA* v. *Harvard* data points needed to support credible analyses and future policy decisions, the Department determined that at least three years of pre-policy data would be needed. *SFFA* v. *Harvard* was decided in June 2023, clarifying the unconstitutionality of race discrimination in university admissions. As such, the Department determined that its impact would be first felt in the 2024–25 admissions process. Given the Department's prior conclusion that at least three years of pre-policy data were needed to support useful analysis, (see Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 9, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*), this meant data from 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 would be required. Notably, the Department made it clear in its 60-day notice that the data requested for these (and earlier) years pertained not only to admissions outcomes but also to institutionally malleable factors that might affect student decision-making in the admissions process (*e.g.,* the amount of student financial assistance awarded to prospective students) and admissions processes' downstream outcomes (*e.g.,* completions and graduation rates).

Commenters to that 60-day notice expressed concern that institutions' records retention policies might prevent institutions from providing these data for all years required by the ACTS collection. In evaluating the potential impact of this issue, the Department sought to identify which aspects of the ACTS collection might be affected by statutory or regulatory requirements related to records retention. The Department determined that such requirements might result in some institutions being unable to report data related to federal student aid awards made four or more years prior to the current financial aid year. In this case, this meant that financial aid data might be available for only the 2025–26, 2024–25, 2023–24, and 2022–23 school years—placing potentially important contextual data for 2021–22 admissions ''at risk'' of being unreportable. That these and other important data might be lost should ACTS implementation not occur as part of the 2025–26 cycle further reinforced the Department's rationale that ACTS should proceed as planned.

Data Elements and Quality Assurance

IPEDS data are currently collected and processed by RTI International (RTI), which has participated in the IPEDS data collection for more than 20 years. (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at page 13, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). RTI supports the ACTS collection by providing tools to permit institutions to aggregate student-level data using either an online aggregator portal or statistical computing code, collecting the aggregated files in the IPEDS Data Collection System, performing quality assurance checks on collected data, generating provisional and final data files for public release, producing tables and figures based on that data for public release, maintaining IPEDS websites, and running the IPEDS Help Desk to provide assistance to institutions. To facilitate the ACTS component, NCES added new resources to the existing data collection contract with RTI. This includes funds to support training of staff to answer institutions' questions during the ACTS submission process and to respond to an increased number of calls and emails via the HelpDesk.

In developing the contents of the ACTS component, the Department sought to minimize burden on institutions by building upon longstanding IPEDS variables and definitions. (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at pages 14–15, and page 22); (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 6, 7, 16–17, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*), Examples include: (1) variables on total applicants, admits, and enrollees disaggregated by sex on the current IPEDS Admissions component; (2)

variables on 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of SAT and ACT scores; (3) variables on the number of degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates awarded aid, as well as the number of first-time, full-time students receiving such aid, on the current IPEDS Student Financial Aid component; (4) variables on the number of first-time, full-time students receiving aid by various income levels on the current IPEDS Student Financial Aid component; (5) variables on degrees conferred on the current IPEDS Completion component; and (6) variables on graduation rates on the current IPEDS Graduation Rates component.

Although the bulk of the variables upon which the ACTS collection is based already exist within IPEDS, the collection itself is not duplicative. Indeed, what distinguishes the present collection is its intentional disaggregation. Disaggregation, including by race-sex pair and quintiles of admissions test scores, is central to the transparency goals of the collection itself. As we discuss in more detail below, absent this level of disaggregation, potential applicants and their families would be unable to make a data-informed decision about their likelihood of admission to the school or schools of their choice.

Despite the extensive reliance on existing IPEDS instrumentation, several commenters to the Department's 60-day notice expressed concerns about the quality of data that would be generated in response to the ACTS collection and the Department clarified there are procedures in place to ensure data quality, including those that will detect and correct errors in the data (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at page 15, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Here, the Department clarifies that there are two distinct quality assurance steps within the ACTS collection—and that the ''mid-2026'' quality assurance process referred to in its 30-day notice is the second of the two.

The first quality assurance/quality control step, where the values of selected ACTS variables are compared to similar, previously reported values from other IPEDS components, takes place after data are uploaded by the institution to the IPEDS Data Collection System and prior to an institution's finalization of their ACTS submission (also known as ''locking'').

The second quality assurance step takes place after the ACTS data collection concludes and locked data is migrated from the Data Collection System to RTI's operational systems for processing and analysis. This second step emphasizes the discovery and correction of unlikely, implausible, or logically inconsistent data values and consultation with institutions to co-evaluate the accuracy of submitted data. Because the ACTS data had not been collected at the time the Department filed its 30-day notice, and because migrated data would not be available for inspection until well after the closing of the ACTS collection, the Department necessarily deferred any substantive discussion of steps RTI might take in this second quality assurance step in order to tailor the process to the specific circumstances uncovered following submission. A complete summary of this second step will not be available until *all* ACTS data collected during the 2025–26 IPEDS collection are processed and inspected, anomalies detected, institutional consultations completed, and corrections (if needed) implemented. In general, key steps include but are not limited to quality review of the data prior to migration, testing of migration routines, developing derived variable specifications, and confirming derived variables are correctly calculated. These same quality control procedures are used across all other IPEDS survey components.

Justification of Data Collected Regarding Undergraduate Students

Neither the Presidential Memorandum nor the Secretary's Directive sought to exhaustively enumerate the specific variables needed to achieve the goals and purposes of the ACTS component. Rather, the full enumeration was determined by the Department. The Department believes that each variable included in ACTS, and each year of data for which those variables are gathered, are necessary to achieve the collection's purposes and goals.

As described above, the first purpose of the ACTS collection is consumer transparency. (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 19–20); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 16); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*); (see: Presidential Memorandum; *https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/ensuring-transparency-in-higher-education-admissions/*). Fundamentally, the Department sought to ensure that students and families could understand their likelihood of admission—either through early action, early decision, or regular admission—to college based upon their (1) race and sex, (2) admissions test scores, (3) high school performance, and (4) family income. The Department intends to use the ACTS data to generate a variety of institution-level admission rate metrics (*e.g.,* the likelihood of admission for a student in a specific race-sex pair in a specific admissions test score quintile) where it can do so without risking the privacy of individual students, in accordance with the Department's longstanding privacy policies. Absent this level of disaggregation, potential applicants and their families would be unable to make a data-informed decision about their likelihood of admission to the school or schools of their choice based upon their unique circumstances. The contractor responsible for quality checks is also responsible for the initial disclosure review, implementing privacy protocol techniques such as suppression of data that would expose protected information about students.

The second purpose of ACTS, as stated above, is to permit policymakers and researchers to begin to address longstanding questions about the role of race in college admissions. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 11); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at pages 16, 19, 20, and 21); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 39); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). This includes additional contextual information about which students enroll, the financial aid students receive upon enrollment, and the outcomes associated with their enrollment (*e.g.,* graduation and degree completion). To that end, the ACTS collection gathers additional data elements, disaggregated similarly to those listed above, included below.

Contextual variables provide additional detail about the demographic characteristics of enrolled students and potential indicators of their readiness to pursue college-level coursework. Examples of contextual variables include enrollees' (1) Pell grant eligibility (a proxy for low-income status), (2) parental education, (3) need for remedial coursework, and (4) enrollment in other forms of non-credit instruction. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 15–16); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at page 14–15); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Data on students' financial aid awards once enrolled have the potential to shed light on institutions' use of them, if any, to shape the characteristics of their incoming class, (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 4–

5, 14–15, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Variables related to financial aid include (1) awards of institutional aid overall, (2) awards of merit-based institutional aid, (3) award of need-based institutional aid, (4) award of any form of financial aid, and (5) total cost of attendance.

Finally, ACTS gathers data that has the potential to provide a more fine-grained picture of the academic outcomes yielded by institutional admissions practices. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 15); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at page 14–15); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Variables related to students' academic outcomes include (1) graduation rates, and (2) cumulative grade point average. Notably, IPEDS already collects data from institutions on counts of degrees conferred that is already disaggregated by field of study and awardee's race and sex. Again, although these variables already exist within IPEDS, the ACTS collection is not duplicative because it is intentionally disaggregated in ways not captured by other IPEDS components, such as by race-sex pairs rather than merely by race and sex individually.

Justification of Data Collected Regarding Graduate Students

The Department collects a similar set of ACTS data regarding graduate student admissions, (contextual data listed above for undergraduates are not collected for graduate students). However, unlike undergraduate data, which are collected at the level of the institution, graduate data are further disaggregated by broad field of study. The Department does so because it is aware that while undergraduate admissions are usually a centralized function housed within a single office, graduate admissions may be separately administered at the level of a college or Department. As a result, while an institution may have a uniform set of admissions practices for undergraduate students, those practices for graduate students may vary widely across its academic units. The Department believes that the value of the ACTS data would be significantly diminished for graduate student applicants and researchers should this potential variability not be taken into account, and as such requires further disaggregation by broad fields of study despite the additional burden it may present to institutions. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 17, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Justification for Proceeding Directly to Full-Scale Collection

As discussed earlier, the Department's impetus for aligning the ACTS component to the IPEDS Winter Collection is driven by several factors, including a desire to make the resulting data available to families at a useful point in their admissions decision-making process and to ensure the availability of time series data that support fulsome analysis of institutional practice both before and after *SFFA* v. *Harvard.* The Department acknowledges that this is not its typical practice, which usually presents the first year of any new IPEDS collection as optional for eligible respondents. However, in this instance, the Department believes the potential value of the ACTS data to consumers—and the potential for that value to be lessened should one or more years of data become unavailable due to records retention policies—merits variation from typical practice.

The Department believes this variation can be undertaken without risk to the data collection itself. Throughout the development of the ACTS collection, the Department has been confident in institutions' ability to provide high-quality data in response to its request. As noted above and elsewhere, much of this confidence derives from the Department's belief that much of the data included in the ACTS collection are reported elsewhere in IPEDS. (See: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 5); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-Day Comment Responses at pages 14–15); (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 7 and pages 16–17); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). These familiar data elements are not new, and many have been collected for several years, after having been initially defined in collaboration with IPEDS stakeholders via the Technical Review Panel (TRP) process and subsequently refined across multiple cycles of collection (see: *The History and Origins of Survey Items for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System,* available at *https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/pdf/NPEC/data/The-History-and-Origins-of-Survey-Items.pdf*). Similarly, the Department has been confident in RTI's ability to develop a data collection methodology that promoted both efficiency and data quality. RTI is a longstanding partner to the Department in the collection, processing, and analysis of IPEDS data.

Given the time-sensitive nature of the ACTS collection, the potential for the value of the ACTS data to diminish should collection be delayed, and the Department's confidence at the time it filed its 30-day notice that both institutions and the Department's data collection contractor were prepared to successfully execute upon the collection's requirements, the Department determined to launch the collection on its initial timeline.

Privacy Concerns

The Department takes its privacy obligations seriously, including those based in the Privacy Act and the Education Sciences Reform Act. As is noted in materials filed as part of the Department's 30-day notice, (90 FR 50940); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at pages 22, 24, and 26, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*), all IPEDS data apart from the ACTS component are initially collected in aggregate form (that is, the level of data collected by the IPEDS Data Collection System is a unit other than an individual student). As part of the ACTS collection, the Department proposes a two-step data collection methodology. In the first step, the institution prepares a student-level data file in accordance with a template provided by RTI which is then either (a) aggregated locally using statistical code provided by RTI or (b) uploaded to RTI's aggregator tool to be aggregated within their system. In the second step, the institution uploads the aggregated data file to the IPEDS Data Collection System, (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at pages 10–11); (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 3–4); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

At no time is the Department in possession of student-level data that it believes constitutes a record as defined by the Privacy Act. All Department contractors are expected to abide by applicable law and regulation in the conduct of their work on behalf of the Department. This includes the contractors' stated obligations to protect sensitive data and information and Privacy Act-protected information ''from unauthorized access, use or misuse by its contractor employees, prevent unauthorized access by others, and report any instances of unauthorized access.''

Above, the Department outlines its justification for collecting data at the level of disaggregation required by the ACTS component. Briefly, the

Department believes that such data are necessary not only to fulfill the consumer transparency goals of the collection but also to permit high-quality research on the effect of *SFFA* v. *Harvard* on institutional admissions practices. The Department acknowledges, however, that the level of disaggregation sought by the ACTS collection may have the potential to create novel data privacy risks that are not typically seen elsewhere in the IPEDS collection depending upon how those data are made available.

In materials filed as part of the Department's 30-day notice, we note the need to ''prepare for the circumstance in which small cell sizes may inadvertently create the opportunity for the identification of an individual and their circumstances'' and that various statistical disclosure limitation (SDL) techniques are available to it to mitigate potential disclosure risks, (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 4, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Also as noted there, the Department could not conduct a complete risk analysis of the ACTS data until their collection and processing. Consistent with its obligations under the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), NCES has no intention of releasing an ACTS data set to the public or publishing tabular data from that dataset that have not been deemed safe to release by the Institute of Education Sciences' (IES's) Disclosure Review Board (DRB). (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at pages 25–26); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 4); (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 10–13): (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at page 19); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). In consultation with NCES, RTI will analyze the privacy risks associated with the generation and potential release of data files arising from the ACTS collection. After having done so, RTI will outline steps to be taken to minimize the risk that any data files that NCES might choose to release, including (a) public data files that may be made generally available via the IPEDS Data Center, (see: *https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data*) and (b) restricted-use data files issued to qualified researchers through NCES's Restricted Use Data Licensing Program, (see: *https://nces.ed.gov/statprog/instruct.asp*), could be used to identify individual students. Steps may include coarsening of data, perturbation of data, or other techniques to limit the risk of disclosure. (See: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at pages 26, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). That plan will be reviewed by the IES DRB for sufficiency. Once approved, RTI will implement the plan and submit a record of their activities to the DRB. Only once the DRB determines the plan has been faithfully executed and the resulting data are ''Safe to Release'' would NCES do so. (See: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 26); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 4); (see: Appendix E FRN 60-day Comment Responses at page 19); (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 11–13); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

Any statistical outputs (*e.g.,* tables or figures containing counts, averages, percentages, rates, correlations) arising from the ACTS data published by NCES, as well as any statistical outputs that might arise from qualified researchers' use of licensed, restricted-use data should it be made available, will be separately reviewed for disclosure risk via the disclosure risk review (DRR) process prior to publication. This process is designed to minimize the risk that analytic products created using ACTS data files inadvertently identify individual students. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 12–13, 24); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 4); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at pages 26 and 37); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

The Department has designed the IPEDS ACTS data collection process to ensure consistency with Privacy Act requirements. As the Department noted on page 25 of the IPEDS data collection Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3, ''the data collected in the student-level file does not contain any Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Institutions will assign their own ID numbers, distinct from the student's Social Security Number or institutional identification number, to be used in the Student ID field.'' (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 25, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Pseudonymization substantially reduces the risk that collected data could be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. Furthermore, RTI will not retrieve the pseudonymized data by personal identifier; RTI will only use the pseudonymized data to generate aggregated data and will destroy all raw data once quality control activities are completed. Finally, as noted in the Department's response to public comments from the 60-day comment period, ''NCES routinely implements privacy protections elsewhere in consultation with the IES Disclosure Review Board. These protections—which can include, but are not limited to, suppression, perturbation, and tiered access to data—are designed to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of information about individuals. NCES will determine the most appropriate disclosure avoidance approach for the ACTS data following its collection and implement that approach prior to any public release of data arising from it'' (see: Appendix E FRN 60-Day Comment Responses at page 19, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). These steps ensure that the IPEDS ACTS data collection will not trigger the Privacy Act by: (1) substantially eliminating the risk that any collected data could be deemed a ''record'' under the Privacy Act and (2) eliminating the possibility that any collected data could be deemed to be maintained in a ''system of records'' under the Privacy Act.

Data Availability

As noted above, the Department believes that much of the data included as part of the ACTS component is already reported elsewhere in IPEDS or, as is noted in the Department's 30-day notice, otherwise available to institutions, (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part B Revision 3 at page 5, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). Nonetheless, the Department acknowledges that some institutions may be unable to report individual ACTS data elements or may, due to records retention policies or other factors, be unable to report one or more years of ACTS data. That this circumstance might present itself was specifically addressed by the Department in response to comments from the 30-day comment period: ''As noted in the collection materials accompanying the ACTS, NCES requires institutions report only those ACTS data they have available. NCES does not anticipate institutions collecting new data in response to the ACTS component. Users should review the codebooks accompanying the collection to identify the reserve code that indicates a variable is not available for reporting (*e.g.,* a ''−1'' value).'' (see: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at pages 6–7, *https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*). The Department went on to explain that assistance will be available as needed to institutions as they navigated the submission process, writing ''[a]s always, the IPEDS HelpDesk remains available to assist institutions who experience difficulties submitting their ACTS data.''

Burden Calculation

As is required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Department sought to estimate the burden associated with the ACTS component. To develop the estimate, the Department first reviewed the burden estimates associated with existing survey components as outlined in Supporting Statement Part A Change Package 102925, (see: Supporting Statement Part A Change Package 102925 at page 33, *https://www.regulations.gov/document/ED-2025-SCC-0382-3465*). There, the Department noted the estimated average institutional burden hours associated with most IPEDS components ranged from 6 to 9 hours each—effectively, one business day. The Department then imagined what was, effectively, the worst-case scenario: rather than taking eight *hours* to gather the data needed to complete the most recent years' worth of ACTS data and manually enter it into the Data Collection System, it took eight *weeks* (320 hours). Given the frequent reliance on data elements used elsewhere in the collection, the Department viewed this scenario as unlikely. The Department again assumed what it felt was the worst-case scenario for collecting all required prior years' data: that, taken together, lessons learned from preparing the first year of data would only reduce the burden by half (or 160 hours). In total, then, the Department initially theorized the worst-case scenario for the ACTS collection was 480 burden hours (60 business days) per institution using the data collection methodology used for other IPEDS components, in which IPEDS data are initially collected in aggregate form.

The Department then considered the burden-reduction impact of the alternative data collection methodology proposed for the ACTS collection, in which institutions prepare student-level data files in accordance with a template which are then either (a) aggregated locally using statistical code provided by RTI or (b) uploaded to RTI's aggregator tool to be aggregated within their system. Although it was impossible to precisely quantify the potential reduction in burden the methodology represented, the Department felt that it was dramatic, exceeding 50 percent. Ultimately, the Department concluded that a reasonable estimate of the burden was five weeks (25 business days) of full-time work (8 hours) each day to complete the ACTS component, or 200 total hours per institution. Notably, the Department's proposed timeline for the ACTS collection—which ran from December 18, 2025, through March 18, 2026—included 65 business days. (See: Appendix F FRN 30-day Comment Responses at page 21); (see: ACTS Supporting Statement Part A Revision 3 at page 32); (*https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202508-1850-001*).

The Department's Capacity To Collect and Process Data

As mentioned above, the Department has sufficient resources to administer the ACTS survey and utilize the results, by primarily relying on contractors to manage, collect, and process the data for IPEDS. This has been common practice for the bulk of the years IPEDS data has been collected dating back to the 1980s. The support of contractors in substantial data collection efforts is common practice in the Federal government. Between the current contracting service utilized by the Department, and another contractor whose services for IPEDS will overlap with the current contractor for the next year, the Department will retain support for the services needed to collect and process IPEDS data.

Matthew Soldner,

Acting Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board, Oak Ridge

AGENCY: Office of Environmental Management, Department of Energy.

ACTION: Notice of open meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces an in-person/virtual meeting of the Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB), Oak Ridge. The Federal Advisory Committee Act requires that public notice of this meeting be announced in the **Federal Register**.

DATES: Wednesday, October 14, 2026; 6–8 p.m. EDT.

ADDRESSES: Department of Energy (DOE) Information Center, Office of Science and Technical Information, 1 Science.gov Way, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831. This meeting will be held in-person at the DOE Information Center and virtually. To receive the virtual access information, please send an email to: *orssab@orem.doe.gov* at least two days prior to the meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Melyssa P. Noe, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management (OREM), P.O. Box 4067, EM–94, Oak Ridge, TN 37831; Phone (865) 241–3315; or Email: *Melyssa.Noe@orem.doe.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose of the Board: At the request of the Assistant Secretary or Field Managers, the Board may provide community-based advice and recommendations concerning any EM program activities, such as clean-up activities and environmental restoration; waste management and disposition; excess facilities; future land use and long-term stewardship; communications; and budget priorities. The Board also provides an avenue to fulfill public participation requirements outlined in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERLA), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), Federal