

Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS)

What is ACTS?

- The White House issued a [Presidential Memorandum](#)¹ on August 7, 2025, that called for greater transparency in college admissions. On August 15, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) [announced](#)² a new, extensive data collection—the Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS)—that would be added to the existing Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the federal data-collection system used by colleges and universities to report institutional characteristics, enrollment, graduation rates, financial aid, and other essential data.
- ACTS is the largest expansion in IPEDS history, adding thousands of new data fields. The Department estimates that this collection will require each institution 200 hours to report, which is more than twice the reporting burden of the rest of IPEDS combined.

What data is being collected in ACTS?

- **Institutions covered:** Four-year colleges and universities with selective admissions - approximately 2,200 institutions.
- **Years required:** Seven academic years (2019–2026). This includes retrospective data, an approach avoided in other new IPEDS collections.
- **Data required:** Highly detailed, disaggregated reporting on applications, admissions, enrollment, and aid—including race-sex pairings; GPA and test score quintiles; family income ranges; Pell eligibility; parental education (first-generation status); application round; and additional characteristics. Graduate and professional program data must be reported by field of study (CIP code).

Why is this data being collected?

- The new ACTS survey component is meant to ensure race-based preferences are not used in university admissions processes.

What is the timeline for data collection?

- ACTS data collection opened on December 18, 2025, and will close on March 18, 2026.
- Unlike the process for changes to other IPEDS collections, institutions did not receive the data elements in advance of the collection and did not have time to prepare.

What are the potential consequences for non-compliance?

- The Department may initiate a fine action or other administrative action, such as a limitation, suspension, or termination of eligibility to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs, against institutions that do not comply with the requirement to complete and submit their IPEDS surveys which includes the ACTS component.

¹ White House. (2025, August 7). *Ensuring transparency in higher education admissions* [Presidential Memoranda]. The White House. Retrieved from

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/ensuring-transparency-in-higher-education-admissions/>

² U.S. Department of Education. (2025, August 15). *Agency information collection activities; comment request; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2024-25 through 2026-27*. Federal Register,90(39384). Retrieved from

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/15/2025-15536/agency-information-collection-activities-comment-request-integrated-postsecondary-education-data>

What barriers are institutions facing that could affect data quality and integrity?

- The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) [released a survey](#)³ to better understand the experiences of colleges and universities as they work to submit data for the ACTS. The survey received 390 responses from a variety of institutions including public, private non-profit, and private for-profit schools.
- Nearly nine in ten respondents identified one of four primary barriers affecting timely and accurate submission: (1) staffing capacity; (2) data availability or quality; (3) interpretation of definitions or requirements; and (4) timing or uncertainty related to evolving guidance. Below is a breakdown of the survey responses:
 - Almost all (99%) respondents said staffing capacity and workload constraints were a challenge to submitting their data. Stretching campus resources may lead to poor data quality.
 - 87% of respondents identified a deadline extension as the most helpful additional support at this point in time
 - 59% of respondents were very concerned or somewhat concerned that their institution will be able to submit accurate data by the proposed deadline
 - 71% of respondents believe data availability across systems will pose a moderate or major challenge

How could evolving processes and guidance impact data quality and integrity?

- Institutions report that key aspects of the ACTS implementation environment have continued to evolve during the collection window. Upload templates have been revised; definitions and guidance have been clarified; and technical tools, including submission scripts and aggregation tools, have been updated or delayed. Overall, these changes have strengthened the collection. For example, the decision to allow a blank value for the sex variable improves accuracy and reduces forced reporting.
- At the same time, each update requires institutions to revisit files and reassess validation procedures. In a first-cycle collection of this scope and complexity, compressed timelines combined with evolving systems and guidance increase the likelihood of inconsistent interpretation and avoidable validation errors.

Our Ask:

- **Extend the deadline to submit data from March 18, 2026 to June 18, 2026**
Institutions are facing significant technical challenges that hinder their ability to submit accurate and complete data by March 18. Many of those hurdles lie outside institutions' control. Extending the deadline to June 18 would give institutions more time to navigate these significant and unprecedented implementation challenges and help strengthen the quality and accuracy of the data.

Resources:

- ACTS Survey Materials- <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/package?surveyid=17&instructionid=30156&formid=901&faqid=28>
- ACTS Template Submission Files (RTI) - <https://acts.rti.org/templates>
- FAQs (RTI) - <https://acts.rti.org/faq>

³ Association for Institutional Research. (2026, February 6). *ACTS progress and barriers survey report*. Retrieved from <https://www.airweb.org/publication/acts-progress-and-barriers>