

TICAS Proposal for Improving Cumulative Debt Data in the CDS Financial Aid Survey (Section H)

Background: TICAS uses data collected from the CDS questions on cumulative student debt for our widely publicized annual report on the debt of graduating seniors, the most recent of which is "[Student Debt and the Class of 2012](#)," our data website, College InSight (<http://college-insight.org>), as well our advocacy work around college affordability. Minor changes in these cumulative debt questions would substantially improve the ability of data users like us to aggregate institution-level data to look at state- and national-level averages, as well as identify trends in nonfederal loan borrowing.

Summary of proposal:

We recommend adding the following questions to the CDS Financial Aid Survey:

- Number in graduating class, defined for this set of questions.
- Number of graduates who borrowed, for each type of student loan (federal and nonfederal loans combined, federal loans separately, nonfederal loans separately).
- Questions about nonfederal loans (state, institutional, and private):
 - Number in class receiving nonfederal loans, as mentioned above.
 - Percentage of class receiving nonfederal loans.
 - Average per-borrower cumulative undergraduate indebtedness in nonfederal loans.

See page 2 for a mock-up of what these changes would look like in the survey and page 3 for a copy of how this section appears in the 2014-15 CDS.

To improve consistency in the data, we also recommend clarifying in the instructions that:

- Colleges should report the arithmetic mean as the "average" loan amount borrowed
- The graduating class should include *all* bachelor's degree recipients who started as first-time students at the same institution
- These questions are *only* for bachelor's degree recipients.

Justifications:

- Collecting data on the number of students in the graduating class and the number of borrowers taking out each type of loan:
 - Would allow data users like TICAS to more accurately weight their state and other aggregate averages.
 - Would provide consumers with important contextual information on the number of students represented in the average debt figures.
 - May reduce reporting errors by making it easier for respondents, publishers, and data users to spot inconsistent answers (e.g., if the number of students with any loans is lower than the number with specifically federal loans).
- There is an important need for annual college-level data on cumulative nonfederal loan borrowing, which is currently not available from other sources. Breaking out nonfederal loans would provide consumers with a more complete picture of student borrowing at a college.
- These additional data elements would not substantially increase reporting burden because colleges already need to pull those data to answer existing questions. *See examples on page 4.*

Mock-up of Proposed Changes, Using 2014-15 CDS

Note: These are the graduates and loan types to include and exclude in order to fill out CDS H4, H5a, H5b, and H5c.

Include:

- * 2014 undergraduate class: all students who started at your institution as first-time students and received a bachelor's degree between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.
- * only loans made to students who borrowed while enrolled at your institution.
- * co-signed loans.

Exclude:

- * students who transferred in.
- * money borrowed at other institutions.
- * parent loans
- * students who did not graduate or who graduated with another degree or certificate (but no bachelor's degree).

H4. Provide the number of students in the 2014 undergraduate class who started at your institution as first-time students and received a bachelor's degree between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. Exclude students who transferred into your institution.

H5. Number and percent of students in class (defined in H4 above) borrowing from federal, nonfederal, and any loan sources, and average amount borrowed.

	Number in the class (defined in H4 above) who borrowed	Percent of the class (defined above) who borrowed (round to nearest 1%)	Average (mean) per-undergraduate-borrower cumulative principal borrowed, of those in the first column (round to nearest \$1)
a) Any loan program: Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized, institutional, state, private loans that your institution is aware of, etc. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans.		%	\$
b) Federal loan programs: Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans.		%	\$
c) Institutional loan programs.		%	\$
d) State loan programs.		%	\$
e) Private alternative loans made by a bank or lender.		%	\$

For Reference: Cumulative Student Debt Questions in 2014-15 CDS

Note: These are the graduates and loan types to include and exclude in order to fill out CDS H4, H4a, H5 and H5a.

Include:

- * 2014 undergraduate class who graduated between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014 who started at your institution as first-time students and received a bachelor's degree between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.
- * only loans made to students who borrowed while enrolled at your institution.
- * co-signed loans.

Exclude:

- * those who transferred in.
- * money borrowed at other institutions.

H4. Provide the percentage of the class (defined above) who borrowed at any time through any loan programs (institutional, state, Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized, private loans that were certified by your institution, etc.; exclude parent loans). Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans.

_____ %

H4a. Provide the percentage of the class (defined above) who borrowed at any time through federal loan programs--Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans. NOTE: exclude all institutional, state, private alternative loans and parent loans.

_____ %

H5. Report the average per-undergraduate-borrower cumulative principal borrowed of those in line H4.

\$ _____

H5a. Report the average per-undergraduate-borrower cumulative principal borrowed, of those in H4a, through federal loan programs--Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans. These are listed in line H4a. NOTE: exclude all institutional, state, private alternative loans and exclude parent loans. \$ _____

Examples illustrating how these changes will not add much reporting burden

Colleges already have to pull data on cohort sizes to calculate the percent and average figures in the existing questions.

H4. Provide the number of students in the 2014 undergraduate class who started at your institution as first-time students and received a bachelor's degree between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. Exclude students who transferred into your institution. **C (#)**

H5. Number and percent of students in class (defined in H4 above) borrowing from federal, non-federal, and any loan sources, and average amount borrowed.

	Number in the class (defined in H4 above) who borrowed	Percent of the class (defined above) who borrowed (nearest 1%)	Average (mean) per-undergraduate-borrower cumulative principal borrowed, of those in the first column (nearest \$1)
a) Any loan program: Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized, institutional, state, private loans that your institution is aware of, etc. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans.	B (#)	A (%)	\$

$$\text{A (\%)} = \text{B (\#)} \div \text{C (\#)}$$

Colleges already have to pull data on nonfederal loans to answer the existing questions on total borrowing.

H5. Number and percent of students in class (defined in H4 above) borrowing from federal, non-federal, and any loan sources, and average amount borrowed.

	Number in the class (defined in H4 above) who borrowed	Percent of the class (defined above) who borrowed (nearest 1%)	Average (mean) per-undergraduate-borrower cumulative principal borrowed, of those in the first column (nearest \$1)
f) Any loan program: Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized, institutional , state , private loans that your institution is aware of, etc. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans.		%	\$
g) Federal loan programs: Federal Perkins, Federal Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized. Include both Federal Direct Student Loans and Federal Family Education Loans.		%	\$
h) Institutional loan programs.		%	\$
i) State loan programs.		%	\$
j) Private alternative loans made by a bank or lender.		%	\$