New England Commission of Higher Education
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# The NECHE Data Dashboards – A Guide for Institutions

## Overview

As part of the accreditation review process, NECHE provides institutions with eleven data dashboards based on IPEDS data. Institutions are advised to use the NECHE Data Dashboards as a starting point, supplementing them with additional and more current sources of institutional evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, adding context, analysis, and interpretation through their self-study or report.

This guide provides helpful information for institutions on how to effectively use the data dashboards when writing self-studies and reports.

**Access**: The Data Dashboards are available electronically through the NECHE Institutional Portal or can be printed and distributed. Please contact your institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer to gain access to the dashboards. It is important to note that while the NECHE dashboards are visible to individuals granted permission by the institution, reviewers and the Commission, they are not publicly available.

## Information available on each dashboard

- **All Student Enrollment:** A comprehensive view of institutional enrollment trends and patterns, segmented by Total FTE and Headcount for both graduate and undergraduate students, including a breakdown of full-time and part-time students.
- **Undergraduate Students:** The number of undergraduate students enrolled (first time, full time, and transfer students), including a summary for full-time and part-time students.
- **Graduate Students:** The total FTE and headcount of graduate students enrolled, including a summary of full-time and part-time students.
- **Distance Education:** Trends in the percentage of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in distance education courses.
- **Undergraduate Students FTFT –** Captures trends in IPEDS retention and graduation rates within 150% of normal time to completion, as well as 150% Total Success rates, which includes transfer students.
- **Undergraduate Success** – Presents trends in 8-year award of degrees for full-time and part-time students, along with 8-yr Total Success rate which includes transfer students.
- **Programs:** Enrollment trends in the programs offered by the institution together with a listing of the most enrolled programs at the institution.
- **Demographics:** Captures trends in enrollment, graduation, and completion rates by race/ethnicity together with demographic trends in instructional staff by race/ethnicity.
- **Finance:** Trends in institutional finances such as unrestricted tuition and fee revenue, total unrestricted net assets, total revenue, and expenses.

- **Student Financial Aid:** Provides information on tuition and fees, net price, and student loan and Pell grants.
- **Faculty & Staff:** The number of faculty and staff members employed by the institution.

**Please Note**: Each Dashboard includes a 'Notes' field, which institutions are encouraged to use to clarify or explain data trends or anomalies. These notes will be available to reviewers and the Commission.

## Mapping NECHE Standards with the Data Dashboards

| NECHE Standard | Relevant Data Dashboards |
|---|---|
| Standard One<br>Mission, Organization, Governance, and Planning | All Student Enrollment, Undergraduate Success, Demographics, Finance and Faculty Staff, All Students Enrollment, Finance, Demographics. |
| Standard Two<br>The Academic Program, Faculty, and Students | All Student Enrollment, Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students, Distance Education, Undergraduate Students FTFT, Undergraduate Success, Programs, Demographics, Faculty and Staff. |
| Standard Three<br>Institutional Resources | All Student Enrollment, Undergraduate Students FTFT, Programs, Demographics, Finance, Faculty and Staff.<br>* Also see NECHE Finance Forms |
| Standard Four<br>Educational Effectiveness and the Success of All Students | Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students, Undergraduate Success, Programs, Demographics. |
| Standard Five<br>Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure | *See web page links provided by the institution which are available in the Evaluator Portal under "Public Disclosure and Key Documents." |

## Discussion Starters when using the Data Dashboards:

**Discussion starters on the dashboards as a whole**

- What are major positive trends revealed in the dashboards over time?
- What major areas for improvement are highlighted by the trends in the dashboards?
- Do the overall trends identified through the dashboards align with our own understanding of the institution? Were there any unexpected observations?
- What do the dashboards reveal about the success of all students?
- What trends observed in the dashboards need to be supported, explained or qualified with additional or more current data?
    - What institutional data sources could be used to supplement and explain nuances or anomalies?

- Does the collection of dashboards sufficiently tell our institutional story? If not, what additional data sources are needed to provide a complete picture?

**Thematic discussion starters based on individual dashboards**

**Access and Enrollment**

- Examine enrollment trends (FTE and headcount) and their breakdown by the descriptors used in the dashboard.
    - Are enrollment trends (FTE and headcount) stable, growing, or declining? Do any enrollment patterns show rapid increases or declines, and how are these explained?
    - Does the institution articulate its enrollment goals? If so, what do the trends reveal about its success in achieving them?
    - What is the composition of the incoming class based on dashboard descriptors (e.g., transfer, part-time)? Does the institution define and use additional mission-centric descriptors for its student population?
    - What are the implications of observed and projected enrollment trends for other institutional areas, particularly financial projections, and institutional capacity?

**The Academic Program**

- Examine the portfolio of academic programs offered at the institution. How well do they align with the institution's mission and strategic goals.
- Discuss trends in student enrollment across the institution's academic program offerings. Which programs have the highest enrollment, and how has this changed over time? What insights do these trends offer regarding the institution's capacity to provide high-quality instruction?
- Analyze the distribution of students enrolling in distance education programs. How has the percentage of students enrolled in distance education courses changed over time? How are learning experiences and outcomes across various modalities being assessed? How are such outcomes used to improve the academic program?
- What resources and professional development opportunities are available to faculty for teaching in various modalities? Discuss the adequacy of technology resources in supporting teaching, learning, and research.

**Student Success Indicators**

- Who are our students? What is the composition of the student body using descriptors in the dashboards and mission-centric descriptors (if any)?
    - What do we know about the needs of our students especially when the data is disaggregated?
- Examine the institution's undergraduate retention, graduation and completion rates, disaggregated by descriptors meaningful to your institution. Consider the following questions:
    - What insights do trends in the institution's overall retention, graduation, and completion rates reveal?
    - What does the analysis of retention and graduation rates by specific student descriptors (e.g., transfer, part-time) reveal about the success of all students.
    - Has the institution implemented programs to improve retention, graduation, and completion rates?
        - How does the institution assess the efficacy of those strategies?
        - What are the results, and how do they inform institutional practice?
- Does the institution define student success beyond the traditional metrics in the dashboards? If so, what indicators or metrics does it use?
    - How successful are all students in relation to institutional indicators/metrics of success?
- What additional evidence or data is needed to enrich the conversation on student success?

**Financial Sustainability and Student Aid**

**Please note:** The questions in this section include financial information provided in the NECHE Data Dashboards and the NECHE Finance Forms which are attached as an Appendix to the institution's self-study or report.

- What key financial performance indicators are tracked regularly at the institution?
- Analyze the institution's trends in total revenue and expenses, e.g., were any cost containment initiatives or revenue diversification plans implemented? What is the success of those plans and initiatives?
- Examine trends in tuition and fee revenue and its interaction with student enrollment. Are assumptions used in financial forecasting in line with relevant trend data?
- Examine trends in net price and financial aid. Discuss the institution's affordability for students and the effectiveness of financial aid programs in promoting access and reducing student debt.

- How are the institution's multi-year financial plans aligned with the goals of its strategic plan? How successful has the institution been in achieving the goals of its multi-year financial plan?
- What financial risks has the institution identified and how are they managed?
- What does an assessment of the institution's cash flow and liquidity positions reveal?
- Has the institution been operating with a balanced budget (e.g., operating surplus)? If not, has a plan been developed to eliminate the operating deficit? Are our operating margins sufficient to sustain core academic and support functions?

**Faculty and Staff**

- Examine the number of instructional and non-instructional staff. Consider:
    - Are they adequate and sufficient to meet the needs and size of the student body.
    - Given enrollment trends, what are the institution's plans regarding maintaining sufficient number of faculty and staff?
- Does the institution have recruitment and workforce goals? Discuss the success of the institution in meeting its own goals or its plans to achieve them.
- Examine the balance between full-time and part-time faculty and staff. What do these trends reveal and are they adequate to meet the needs of students and the ability of faculty to engage in teaching, scholarship and research (as applicable).

## FAQs

**What is the source of the data in the NECHE Data Dashboards?**

The dashboards are based on IPEDS data and include a Data Dictionary which details how each field is calculated.

**My institution does not use IPEDS, how will we use the data dashboards?**

Institutions that do not use IPEDS will manually enter their institutional data which will be available as dashboards.

**When and how often are the Data Dashboards updated?**

The dashboards are updated annually in Early Spring. Enrollment reflects Fall of the previous year and financial data reflects the previous fiscal year.

**Can the dashboards be used for cross institution comparisons?**

The dashboards, in their current avatar, are not designed for benchmarking or comparisons across institutions.