

## **Vincennes University Office of Institutional Research Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What does “institutional research” mean?**

Institutional research is a broad category of work done at schools, colleges and universities to inform campus decision-making and planning in areas such as admissions, financial aid, curriculum, enrollment management, staffing, student life, finance, facilities, athletics, and alumni relations.

### **What does the Office of Institutional Research at VU do?**

Our office provides data to support compliance-reporting, accreditation, decision-making, and strategic planning processes for VU. This includes:

- Federal and state compliance reports
- University reports on the student population
- Survey administration
- Reports and information for program accreditation, audits, external surveys, and other projects

### **What kind of information is available through IR?**

We provide information on many topics. The most common are:

- Enrollment
- Graduation rates
- Time-to-degree completion
- Student retention
- Degrees conferred

For assistance, please contact us.

### **What is VU’s “official census date”?**

October 15 is VU’s official census date for fall enrollment.

### **Where does IR get its data?**

Most of our data comes from the student information system (Banner). Our office also maintains a small warehouse of point-in-time data tables.

### **What is the difference between official and unofficial numbers?**

Official data are those reported to IPEDS and to the state; data is extracted at specified times in the semester, e.g. October 15. Reports using data drawn at a different time may not match official reported numbers, but may be more appropriate for your specific purposes. Generally, unofficial data are for internal uses only.

### **What is your enrollment?**

Unfortunately, it’s not that simple! Enrollment counts depend on many variables. These can include campus, student type (specific populations), point-in-time or time period, full-time versus part-time, etc.

### **Why do reports show different enrollment totals?**

There are many ways to calculate student enrollment and other metrics like graduation rates, degrees awarded, etc. Definitions and requirements vary among agencies and projects. For example, some agencies consider full-time at 15 credit hours; others use 12 credit hours.

### **What is the difference between point-in-time data and real-time data?**

The student database is “live”, i.e. it is always changing! Point-in-time data refers to data extracted on a specific day and time and then saved in our IR warehouse.

### **Why is official data available so late in the semester?**

Enrollment at any institution is a moving target. Students enroll during the drop-add process, and some drop over the course of the semester. In addition, some courses start later in the term. The official data reported to IPEDS is based fall enrollment at October 15.

### **What is a cohort?**

To provide information such graduation rates, VU tracks the progression of select groups of students (cohorts) at VU. A common cohort is first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen entering in the fall of a particular year.

### **What is a retention rate?**

A retention rate is the percent of students in a cohort returning for their second year at the institution. Typically, a cohort consists of students entering VU as full-time, first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates in a particular fall term. For example, the retention rate for the 2010 cohort is the percent who entered in the fall of 2010 and returned in the fall of 2011.

### **What is a graduation rate?**

A graduation rate is the percent of students in a cohort completing their program within a specified time period. On-time completion rates are typically calculated for time periods of expected degree completion, and include 100%, 150%, and 200%. For an Associate-seeking student, on-time graduation at 100% is two years; 150% is three years; and 200% is four years.

### **What is an academic year?**

The academic year at VU starts in the fall and includes the subsequent spring and summer terms.

### **When is VU’s fiscal year?**

Our fiscal year is July 1 – June 30.