

Apr 15, 2014

## Dept. of Ed Announces RFI for Higher-Ed APIs

---

**THE ARNE NEEDS YOU:** What can you do with an API? That's what the U.S. Department of Education is formally asking in its new Request for Information (RFI). Similar to how TurboTax and the IRS work together to make life a little easier when it comes to filing taxes (and getting refunds), the DOE wants to help students researching and applying for colleges and seeking financial assistance.

But getting and making sense of even public information from government websites can sometimes be a confounding task. As the RFI acknowledges, the Dept. of Ed. offers over \$150 billion each year in higher-ed financial aid resources but "their utility only goes as far as the public's awareness of and access to them.

To better serve students and families, the department is seeking your input on API questions like:

- How can third-party organizations use APIs to better target services and information to low-income students, first-generation students, non-English speakers, and students with disabilities?
- What benefits to consumers or the Department would be realized by opening what is currently a free and single-point service (e.g., the FAFSA) to other entities, including those who may charge fees for freely-available services and processes? What are the potential unintended consequences?
- How could data sets that are already publicly available be made more accessible using APIs? Are there specific data sets that are already available that would be most likely to inform consumer choice about college affordability and performance?
- How can the Department prevent unauthorized use and the development of unauthorized products from occurring through the potential development of APIs?

In an accompanying blog post [[www.ed.gov/blog/2014/04/how-can-the-department-of-education-increase-innovation-transparency-and-access-to-data/](http://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/04/how-can-the-department-of-education-increase-innovation-transparency-and-access-to-data/)], David Soo (senior policy advisor at the Dept. of Ed.) is inviting "the best and most creative thinking on specific ways that Department of Education APIs could be used to improve outcomes for students."

We've got a list of some of the publicly available data sets here. Weigh in by June 2 by emailing [APIRFI@ed.gov](mailto:APIRFI@ed.gov).

## (Government) Data, Data Everywhere

<i>Relevance of data</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>A question it could answer</i>
Higher Ed Data	<a href="#">IPEDS: Integrated Postsecondary Education System</a>	System of interrelated surveys done annually by the National Center for Education Statistics. Collects from every post secondary school that takes part in federal student financial aid programs. Check out the IPEDS Data Center here.	How many and what type of students are enrolled at a postsecondary institution each semester?
	<a href="#">Federal Student Aid Data Center</a>	Includes info on the Federal Pell Grant and other student loan programs.	What's the student default rate at a given postsecondary institution?
	<a href="#">National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)</a>	Compiles research based on student-level records, financial aid, demographics, enrollment data and so on. Check out the DataLab collection.	What are the most common degrees for undergrad and graduate students? What's their demographic makeup?
	<a href="#">Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS)</a>	Follows a cohort of freshman students surveyed at three points in time: after their first year, then three and six years later.	What percentage of students starting postsecondary school finish within six years?
	<a href="#">Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&amp;B)</a>	Follows students' education and work post bachelor's degree from 1992-93, 1999-2000, and 2007-8. Includes a special emphasis on following teachers.	What percent of these students were employed a year after receiving their degree? How much did they make?
	<a href="#">MyStudentData (National Student Loan Data System)</a>	This one has information on loans for students. That said, it might take a grad degree to parse it.	
Elementary and Secondary Ed Data	<a href="#">Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)</a>	Lots of data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, English proficiency and disability. The data is collected in biennial samples. Data from the 2011-12 survey will be	How many students are taking AP tests? What are average teacher salaries in different districts?

available in early 2014.

	<b>Common Core of Data (CCD)</b>	The primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the US.	How does the student-teacher ratio differ by schools and districts?
	<b>EDFacts</b>	A centralized collection of performance data supplied by K-12 state education agencies.	What percentage of students at a school or district have reached grade-level proficiency in reading or math?
Educational Attainment and Population Data	<b>American Community Survey (ACS)</b>	A continuous nationwide survey on demographics as well as the social, education, economic and housing characteristics of the US population. Available data begins in 2004.	What is the unemployment rate for people who have achieved different levels of education?
	<b>Current Population Survey (CPS)</b>	Jointly sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the US Census Bureau, this collection includes high-profile numbers such as national unemployment.	How does educational attainment vary in the US by age, sex, race and ethnicity?
Non-Federal Education Data	<b>Common Data Set (CDS)</b>	A collaborative effort among data providers in the higher education community and publishers (eg: the College Board, Peterson's, and U.S. News & World Report) that covers students' transition into higher education. It's a collection of standards and definition of data sets, not a data set itself. Nothing to download here, folks.	