

Changes to How UM-Flint Collects and Reports Race and Ethnicity

Per Federal Requirements, effective 2009-2010

September 14, 2009

Federal regulations are requiring the University of Michigan and all institutions of higher education to change how they collect and report data on race and ethnicity. Because the change in race and ethnicity categories will produce incomparable statistics, all University of Michigan-Flint students who answered a race/ethnicity question on an admissions application in the old format or who did not answer the question will be resurveyed with a new two-question format using the UM-Flint Student Information System (SIS).

The race and ethnicity information on file for current and former UM-Flint students was converted to the new format insofar as possible using assumptions approved by the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Beginning October 1, 2009, students to be resurveyed will see the questions on the first screen when logging into SIS. The survey asks the student to update and confirm the data we have on file in the system. This survey will display each time a person logs in until they complete the survey. It is possible to “opt out” of the survey by leaving the answers blank and submitting the survey.

The following Frequently Asked Questions were prepared by the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor to assist all U-M campuses in preparation for these changes. If you have questions about the changes, please contact Brad Maki, Director of Graduate Admissions, and Chair of the Committee on IPEDS Race/Ethnicity Tracking/Reporting for the Flint campus at 810-762-3171 or bmaki@umflint.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: Why is the University of Michigan changing the way it asks for race/ethnicity information on its admissions and employment applications?

A: The Higher Education Opportunity Act, passed August 14, 2008 (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>), requires all institutions of higher education to collect and report data on race and ethnicity in a new way, which requires asking certain new questions.

2. Q: What will change?

A: Under the new federal requirements, institutions must use a two-question format:

- a. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
 - i. ___ No, not Hispanic or Latino
 - ii. ___ Yes, Hispanic or Latino: a person of Cuban, Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture

or origin, regardless of race.

- b. What is your race? You may select one or more races: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; White

Under the requirements of the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which collects this data for the government, respondents are encouraged to answer both questions as it is critical to reporting race and ethnicity uniformly for the student population across the U.S.

3. Q: Is U-M required to make these changes?

A: Yes. The federal government requires these changes so that data collected for The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the core postsecondary education data collection program, from all primary providers of postsecondary education in the country is consistent. This mandate applies to enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty, staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid.

4. Q: How will the new required questions change what we know about race/ethnicity?

A: Data collected the new way will not be comparable to the old IPEDS categories, which allowed the selection of only **one** race category:
African American/Black (Not of Hispanic origin); Asian or Pacific Islander (includes the Indian sub-continent); American Indian or Alaskan Native (Tribe: _____); Hispanic/Latino (Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race); White (Persons not of Hispanic origin, having origin in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East); or Race Not Included Above

While the previous approach did not allow individuals to report multi-racial or multi-ethnic identities, it did capture an individual's primary racial identity. The new questions do not allow respondents to indicate a primary racial identity.

However, the fullness of diversity on campus can still be indicated using "maximum counts." The maximum count for each racial/ethnicity category would include every individual who selected a specific category, whether or not they were Hispanic/Latino or multi-racial. This kind of multiple counting will be relatively easy to explain and provides a transparent way of showing Michigan's diversity.

5. Q: How will the new questions affect counts of racial groups on campus?

A: The U.S. Department of Education is not only changing how institutions collect data on race and ethnicity but how these data are reported. Under the new

approach, institutions will not report specific race data on individuals who identify themselves as Hispanic/Latino or who identify themselves as non-Hispanic/Latino multi-racial.

For example, an individual of Cuban heritage who also identifies as being African American will be counted in reports to the U. S. Department of Education only as Hispanic/Latino. An individual who is not Hispanic/Latino and identifies as Asian and African American will be reported to the U. S. Department of Education as “two or more races,” without any additional racial detail.

The only individuals who will be reported to the federal government as African American, Native American, Asian, etc. will be those who identify themselves as not Hispanic/Latino and select only one racial category.

As a result, we anticipate the number of University of Michigan students and employees reported as Hispanic/Latino in federal reports will increase, and the reported numbers of all other race-specific categories will decrease.

6. Q: What was the U.S. Department of Education’s intent when they decided on this new approach?

A: According to the U.S. Department of Education (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>), there are multiple reasons for their decisions. It was a mandate by the Office of Management and Budget because the federal government wants to report race and ethnicity uniformly for the student population across the U.S., and they want to stop double reporting of people who identify with multiple races.

Additionally, this will make the data comparable to the U.S. census statistics. The U.S. Census Bureau has used the Hispanic/Latino question for nearly a decade.

7. Q: Is this change definite?

A: Yes. The change to the new categories is now law (Higher Education Opportunity Act). (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>)

8. Q: Must the University always report using the IPEDS guidelines?

A: U-M must follow IPEDS rules for federal reporting, but any additional detail captured on applications will be stored in University databases, and U-M schools, colleges and researchers will be able to use that information as needed.

The fullness of diversity on campus still can be indicated using “maximum counts.” The maximum count for each racial/ethnicity category would include every individual who selected a specific category, whether or not they were Hispanic/Latino or multi-racial. This kind of multiple counting would be

relatively easy to explain and provides a transparent way of showing Michigan's diversity.

9. Q: Can we ask our own questions, in addition to the IPEDS-required questions?

A: After consulting researchers, schools, colleges, and University leadership the University decided to use only the IPEDS questions in order to keep U-M race/ethnicity counts comparable within our campuses and with other postsecondary institutions.

10. Q: Why is U-M incorporating the new questions in all its admissions applications this year?

A: Federal reporting of statistics about students and employees using the new two-question format of data collection and the new reporting categories becomes mandatory in 2010-2011.

After considering mandatory federal reporting requirements, computer system upgrade schedules, and other changes to information systems for both student and HR data, this year represented the best time period for the change.

11. Q: Specifically, when will the changes occur?

A: Admissions applications on all three U-M campuses will contain the new two-question format as of August 2009. (Students who apply for admission during 2009-10 and who are admitted and subsequently enroll will be reported in federal enrollment data as of Fall 2010.) Employment applications will change in November 2009.

12. Q: Is there any way to ensure continuity in longitudinal studies given the change in categories?

A: No. The best we can do is to notate when the change in categories occurred as an explanation for shifts in counts. All other institutions of higher education data will experience the same challenge.

Individual researchers may choose to follow up with individuals who have changed their race/ethnicity identity to learn how the new IPEDS questions may have influenced their answers.

13. Q: When and how will current students, faculty and staff be given an opportunity to self-identify using the new IPEDS categories?

A: Members of the UM-Flint community will be asked to review, confirm and update as appropriate their racial/ethnic information based on the new categories using SIS starting in October 2009 through September 2010.