

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND DECISION SUPPORT
POLICY ON INSTITUTIONAL DATA REQUESTS
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Overview

Institutional Research and Decision Support (IR&DS) encourages and supports the use of institutional data, analysis, and research for decision making, in keeping with Stanford University's educational mission. The primary purpose of this document is to be a useful resource for anyone needing institutional information to support a project, initiative, or presentation. It describes and explains guidelines for the use of institutional data including criteria for fulfilling data requests, limitations, confidentiality, and sensitivity, as well as self-service options, and availability of other resources.

IR&DS and other departments with data stewardship responsibilities, including but not limited to the Registrar's Office, Student Affairs, and the Office of Undergraduate Admission and Financial Aid, follow the guidelines in this document when considering requests for data. A "data request" is defined as a request for information about Stanford University students, courses, faculty, finances, research, or staff that is going to be used to support the administration of the University.

IR&DS has access to a wide variety of data in a range of formats, such as detailed administrative data, survey results in both summary and unit record form, and summarized statistics. Much of this data is "owned" by other offices at Stanford and often contains highly confidential and sensitive information. Thus it is important to articulate the policies and guidelines that affect the use of this information.

Criteria

- The main criterion for fulfilling a request for data is that the information will be used for University administrative purposes, such as a request from a faculty council, administrative office, or committee. This could be any committee composed of Stanford faculty or administrative staff, such as the WASC steering committee, CUAFA or any other Faculty Senate committee, a task force on Undergraduate Education, a Program Review committee, a Dean's office, and the like.
- In determining what can be provided, IR&DS needs to be mindful of institutional priorities and deadlines. IR&DS also needs to consider the time and effort required to prepare a special request against the usefulness the data will have in support of the education and research missions of the University. Listed below are the highest priority items within IR&DS responsibilities.
 - Federal, state, and accrediting agency reporting, where compliance is mandatory.
 - Requests by members of the Board of Trustees, Deans, senior administrators, faculty representatives of standing committees, or to support institutional planning and exploratory analysis.

- Requests by departments or programs for use in educational assessment or program review.
- Regular reporting to Stanford University’s consortial partners (such as COFHE) and a limited set of nationally- and internationally-recognized college guidebooks.
- Requests for data to support personal research or classroom usage by individual members of the university community are handled on a case-by-case, and a time-available basis. If the requested data is readily available and the confidentiality requirements are met, IR&DS will then work with the requestor to make the appropriate data available. IR&DS encourages the use of data that is already collected and available rather than individual members having to collect it independently. Please refer to “Other Resources/Self Service” section of this document for the list of resources of available data.

How to Request Data

- IR&DS staff will work with data requestors to focus in on what is needed to complete data request and clarify any definitional issues, however all data requests to IR&DS should include the purpose of the project and how the data will be used. Providing as many details as possible about the project and the needed data will help IR&DS work much more effectively, thus also benefitting the requestor.
- For consistency, efficiency and effectiveness purposes, it is very helpful if the recipient of the data can provide IR&DS with the findings and analyses created from the requested data. This allows IR&DS to follow-through that the data was used properly and for its intended purpose. Similarly, IR&DS requests that we be notified if the data is going to be used for a purpose other than what was originally specified.

Limitations

- Unless the data is publicly available, the results of studies using Stanford administrative data should not be made public, or published, without the approval of the committee or person that initiated the study, in consultation with IR&DS.
- To protect privacy, unless there is a clearly demonstrated educational need to have personally identifying information, IR&DS will present information only in summary form; or if it is in unit record form, it will be provided with any personal identifiers stripped from the records. FERPA and other privacy rules pertain, and in some cases, it may be necessary to get [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) approval before survey data is shared beyond the original purpose. *Please note that Stanford cannot use confidential survey responses to target individuals for action or intervention.*
- For data requests that involve comparative data, IR&DS is bound by confidentiality agreements with our consortial data sharing partners, such as the Consortium on Financing Higher Education

(COFHE). In most circumstances, IR&DS is not able to provide comparison data by institution with the institutions identified by name. However, IR&DS may be able to compare Stanford University to institutions X, Y, or Z (names masked) or to a group (e.g., co-ed colleges, women's colleges, Ivy League schools, or core peers). However, if the information is obtained from a public database, such as the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), IR&DS can share the information with institutions identified by name.

Other Resources/ Self Service:

- IR&DS has core institutional data and summary survey results available on the IR&DS website at: <http://irds.stanford.edu/>. This includes the Common Data Set, a collection of commonly requested key indicators about Stanford that is published at the beginning of each academic year since 1998. This data can be found at <http://ucomm.stanford.edu/cds>. Data from the Stanford Statistics book is also available on the IR&DS website.
- The IR&DS Decision Support System is an excellent source of self-service data, particularly for financial information. Contact dss-support@lists.stanford.edu or visit the IR&DS website to find out more.
- IR&DS has the knowledge and the expertise to consult on survey design, questions, or methodology depending upon current workload.
- If you have questions about the types of data IR&DS can provide, and in what format it can be shared, please ask one of the IR&DS staff.

Those requiring general information or those who have questions about this policy are encouraged to contact any IR&DS staff member; contact information is available at <http://irds.stanford.edu/contact.html>.