Undergraduate Financial Aid Licensed Data Set— 2019 Database Overview

INTRODUCTION: Peterson's Undergraduate Financial Aid Database is a comprehensive source of information about college-administered financial aid sources for undergraduate students. Data elements are included that describe the kinds of aid these students receive at a given institution, and how much aid of each type—need-based and non-need-based (specific characteristics, special talents or achievements)—is typically awarded, as well as self-help options like work-study jobs and various college-administered loan programs. Also included are data describing aid awarded to the entering freshman class and also undergraduate international students. Required financial aid forms and filing deadlines, notification dates, and reply deadlines are also contained in this data set. This Overview is designed to give you a broad sense of the database. A Data Dictionary, comprised of detailed descriptions of the tables and fields in the database, is available in a separate document.

UNIVERSE: The Undergraduate Financial Aid Database includes 4,096 accredited colleges and universities in the United States and U.S. territories, as well as institutions outside the U.S. and its territories that are accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting bodies. To be included, an institution must grant a degree at the associate's or baccalaureate level and either have full accreditation or candidate-for-accreditation (pre-accreditation) status granted by an institutional or specialized accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Recognized accrediting bodies include the six regional associations of schools and colleges (Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, and Western), the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE), the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools (AARTS), the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), the Council on Occupational Education (COE), and the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). Program registration by the New York State Board of Regents is considered to be the equivalent of institutional accreditation. Although the data-collection effort covers all undergraduates at typical undergraduate institutions, the universe does not include upper-level institutions. Also, a small number of institutions are excluded because they have primarily part-time or transfer student populations, are military academies that do not charge tuition, or are branch campuses where financial aid is administered through its main campus.

TIME-FRAME INCLUDED: The database contains information from the most current academic year available. The database is updated annually, in conjunction with the release of updated guides and electronic products. A field that shows the last year in which a survey was received and processing was completed is included with the master institution file for each school, as well as an academic year field

in the financial aid file that shows the year for which statistical data are reported. Archived databases are available, beginning with the 1997-1998 academic year.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA VERIFICATION: Data collection for the Undergraduate Financial Aid Database begins in January and continues through June. Peterson's Annual Survey of Undergraduate Financial Aid is sent to the institutions meeting the criteria defined above (see "Universe"). Basic questions about the availability of various types of financial aid, as well as financial aid deadlines and policies are asked for all schools in the universe. Supplemental detailed questions about how much aid is typically awarded to both freshman and undergraduates for various types of need-based and non-need-based aid are asked for all schools in the universe that are in the United States and offer bachelor's degrees.

For schools that have previously been included, responses from the preceding year are included on the questionnaires for guidance. Officials from the schools (usually financial aid or admissions officers, but sometimes registrars or institutional research personnel) submit responses by confirming that pre-existing information is correct or providing new or updated information. Throughout the season, our staff reaches out to non-responding institutions by phone and e-mail to update survey information. A comprehensive data cleansing process is employed after surveys are received to verify unusual figures and resolve discrepancies. Institutions are also contacted directly to obtain missing key data elements, all toward the goal of ensuring the greatest possible accuracy and comprehensiveness of the database.

It should be noted, however, that colleges can and often do change policies as they see fit, so data in the database can be most effectively viewed as a snapshot of the universe at a particular time.

DATABASE VERSATILITY AND EXTENT OF USE:

Peterson's Undergraduate Financial Aid Database is a crucial component of many products and services and is a testament to the completeness of its information. Among these are the following:

▪ *Peterson's Four-Year Colleges*

▪ *Peterson's Two-Year Colleges*

▪ *Peterson's How to Get Money for College: Go Beyond Federal Aid—Get Money from Your School and State*

▪ Peterson's Education Supersite (Colleges and Universities Channel) at http://www.petersons.com/