Commonly Used HEA Terms and Definitions

The following list tries to describe succinctly commonly used terms, names, and acronyms related to the Higher Education Act (HEA).

General Terms and Issues

- **HEOA**—The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 was the legislation that most recently reauthorized the original HEA.

- **IPEDS**—Acronym for Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System. The IPEDS data collection system is in fact a system of multiple surveys, submitted by institutions to the Department of Education (ED) throughout the year; some are submitted in the fall and some are submitted in the spring. The surveys collect information on such things as student enrollment and completion data, institutional finance, and faculty. Institutions must participate in IPEDS in order to participate in federal financial aid programs.

  IPEDS currently serves as the most comprehensive source of institutional data for the federal government. Potential changes and discussions of potential changes to IPEDS result in very detailed conversations. A number of current proposals regarding student outcome measures are related to changes to IPEDS.

- **HBCU’s**—Historically black colleges and universities

- **HSI’s**—Hispanic-serving Institutions

- **MSI’s**—Minority-serving Institutions

- **NSLDS**—National Student Loan Data System. The federal database maintained by the Department on federal student loans. Individual borrowers can access the database to keep track of individual loans.

- **Link to Compilation of the entire HEA (not HEOA)**—The entire text of the complete HEA, including the most recent changes to the statute, is available on line here: [http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/chapter-28](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/chapter-28).

Title I Terms and Definitions

- **IHE**—Institution of Higher Education. Sections 101 and 102 of the HEA include the various definitions of “IHE” for different purposes.

- **College Navigator**—A web-based tool created and maintained by Education that enables the public to search for and compare individual institutions, using search parameters. The Navigator provides information about costs and financial aid, as well as about retention and graduate rates of individual institutions.
The site also contains the College Affordability and Transparency Lists, mandated by the HEOA of 2008, which attempts to show the most expensive institutions as well as the institutions with the biggest price increases over a period of time in various sectors of higher education.

- **NACIQI**—The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity is the federal entity, whose membership is appointed by various policy makers, that approves both institutional and programmatic accrediting agencies. Individual institutions must be accredited by institutional accrediting agencies approved by NACIQI in order to become eligible for federal student aid programs. NACIQI is not the same as the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

**Title II Terms and Definitions**

- **TQP**—Teacher Quality Partnership program in Title II of the HEA. A competitive program designed to enhance the training of teachers, the Administration has attempted to eliminate or change the program in a number of ways in recent years.

**Title IV Terms and Definitions**

- **FAFSA**—The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the form that students and families must fill out in order to apply for federal student aid programs. The contents of a completed form determine the size and nature of a student or family’s financial aid package, which could include a combination of grants, work study, and loans. Students must fill out this form in order to become eligible for a Pell Grant.

- **Triad**—The “triad,” in the context of the HEA, refers to the three parts of the quality control/quality assurance system in higher education: the federal government; states; and, accreditation. The federal government sets eligibility requirements and standards for participation in federal higher education programs. State governments and entities are responsible for consumer protection. The accreditation system is charged with reviewing the quality of academic programs and offerings.

- **FSA**—The Office of Federal Student Aid is the entity within the Department of Education responsible for administering the federal student aid programs.

- **HEP**—A number of federal higher education programs do not technically count as “federal student aid” programs. Instead, they are technically “Higher Education Programs.” For AAU institutions, programs in this category include TRIO, GEAR-UP, as well as GAANN and Javits and international education programs.

- **PPA**—Program Participation Agreement. Section 487 of the HEA requires institutions to meet a number of conditions in order to become eligible for participation in the federal programs.
student aid programs, including, but not limited to, those associated with accreditation, fiscal eligibility, and data disclosures.

- **Section 485**—The section of the HEA that includes the myriad of disclosure requirements imposed on institutions of higher education. Requirements include those covering topics as disparate as graduation rates, vaccinations, peer-to-peer file sharing, and campus crime.

- **90/10 Rule**—Intended as a way to curb abuses in the for-profit sector, Section 487(a) states that for-profit institutions may not derive more than 90 percent of their revenues (not profits) from the federal government (10 percent must come from non-federal sources). However, the 90-percent threshold does not include educational benefits derived from educational programs supported by Veterans Affairs or Defense, i.e. the GI Bill or Tuition Assistance. Until the 1998 amendments, when the requirements were made more generous for the for-profit sector, it was known as the “85/15 Rule.”

- **Prior-prior year**—Currently, financial aid packages for a given academic year are determined by students’/families income levels and tax filings from the “prior” year, or the year before a student enters a program. As a potential means to get more students and families to think about paying for college earlier, a number of individuals have argued for a change in the aid system to use “prior-prior year” figures, those numbers from essentially two years before a student enters a program.

- **R2T4**—(This is not the droid you’re looking for!!) “R2T4” is the acronym for the phrase/issue of return of Title IV funds by institutions to ED. This is an issue for institutions and students with respect to students who receive federal student aid and withdraw or do not finish an academic term.

- **Experimental sites**— Section 487A of the HEA allows IHE’s that meet various institutional performance standards with respect to Title IV funds to administer the federal funds using alternative, less burdensome, methods. Institutions must be chosen by ED in order to participate in these “experimental” programs.

- **LEAP**—A need-based grant program which has not been funded since FY2010. States are required to match a portion of their federal allocations.

- **ATB**—Ability to benefit. Until very recently, a limited number of individuals who neither graduated from high school nor passed the GED had been eligible for federal student aid by taking and passing certain “ability to benefit” (ATB) exams. As a result of the most recent changes to Pell eligibility, ATB students are no longer eligible for federal student aid.

**Title VI Terms and Definitions**
Title VI programs—Collectively, Title VI programs are the international education programs supported by the HEA. The scope and size of the different programs vary, and include such programs as the National Resource Centers (NRCs), Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS), and Centers of International Business Education and Research (CIBER).

Title VII Terms and Definitions

FIPSE—Fund for the Improvement for Postsecondary Education.