NATIONAL POSTSECONDARY
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EDUCATION COOPERATIVE

EXAMINING CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL OUTSOURCING PRACTICES AND THE IPEDS HUMAN RESOURCES SURVEY COMPONENT

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National Postsecondary Education Cooperative

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) commissioned this exploratory paper in February 2019 to examine the current landscape of institutional outsourcing as it relates to the IPEDS Human Resources (IPEDS-HR) survey. The IPEDS-HR survey component historically (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b) and currently collects a wealth of data on staffing patterns and practices. However, information on outsourcing contracts and funding for those efforts are not included in the collection process.

How many faculty and staff work to serve the institution and its students? This seems like a simple question, but it currently cannot be answered through IPEDS data due to institutions' varying use of outsourcing and part-time faculty. It is with this backdrop that NPEC sought to understand current outsourcing and part-time faculty-use practices as they relate to the IPEDS-HR survey through this paper. The information gathered will assist in identifying gaps in the existing IPEDS-HR collection.

Trends over the past decade show that institutions are using outsourced services and other cost reduction strategies that affect staffing patterns and employment practices for both instructional and non-instructional staff, and many are considering additional use of such practices. Outsourcing is "a form of privatization that generally refers to a higher education institution's decision to contract with an external organization to provide a traditional campus function or service. The contractor either takes over the task of compensating and managing the employees of the university, paying the group according to its standards, or replaces the university employees with its own staff" (Phipps & Merisotis, 2005, p. 1).

Over the last 50 years, use of adjuncts has grown approximately 20% to 50% (Brennan & Magness, 2018). While rates vary by sector and Carnegie Classification, the percentage of part-time faculty has increased—even when excluding for-profit institutions (American Institutes for Research, 2017; Brennan & Magness, 2018). Part-time faculty are often utilized to solve a variety of problems (e.g., unanticipated enrollments, reduced budgets) and have been commonplace at colleges and universities for decades (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016; Kezar, 2014).

Many often think of adjunct faculty as teaching temporarily—perhaps a single semester or year. The growing cadre of part-time faculty, however, often serve for multiple semesters or years and teach at multiple institutions simultaneously. Long-term use of part-time faculty has led institutions to think creatively about every aspect of the institution's costs, which has even led to outsourcing some instruction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To better understand these evolving trends and potential impacts on IPEDS data collection and use, NPEC commissioned this paper to learn more about how institutions are organizing their staffing patterns and practices.

This effort is guided by the following research questions (Exhibit 1):

Exhibit 1: Research Questions

#1	What pressures drive IPEDS institutions to create alternative staffing structures with their staffing patterns and practices and to seek out HR-related cost savings?	a.	What are the internal pressures that drive outsourcing activities?
		b.	What are the external pressures (e.g., from regional accreditors) that drive outsourcing activities?
#2	To what extent are institutions outsourcing services?	a.	What types of services are institutions outsourcing (e.g., food service, groundskeeping, maintenance, research management, IT services), and how does this affect institutional staffing patterns?
		b.	What types of vendors provide outsourced services (e.g., trade unions/organizations; private for-profit companies; and not-for-profit organizations such as universities, research foundations, or other types of entities), and how are these arrangements typically structured?
		c.	How do outsourcing practices differ by key institutional characteristics?
		d.	Can information about outsourcing be collected accurately, and what data on this practice would be valuable to the IPEDS data reporters and data users?
#3	What role does the utilization of part-time faculty play in institutional cost-saving efforts, and how is that role expected to change in the future?	a.	Are there additional data about trends in the institutional use of part-time faculty that would be of value to the IPEDS community?
		b.	To what degree are institutions using existing faculty, or other personnel, to accomplish a duty that is not currently captured in IPEDS reporting, and what is its impact on the IPEDS data collection?
#4	What data elements should be collected?	a.	Which surveys should be considered in collecting outsourcing information?
		b.	What benefits and challenges would collecting these data elements through IPEDS present?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Answering the research questions began with a high-level environmental scan and interviews with nine stakeholders. IPEDS data were analyzed, along with relevant data from reports and publications, to help identify and illustrate gaps, inconsistencies, and measurement errors in the data currently collected by IPEDS. A summary of the specific steps follows:

- *Review of IPEDS Documents*: Existing IPEDS resources and publications were reviewed, such as the IPEDS-HR instructions (current and archived), as well as the *2018 IPEDS Origins Report* (Aliyeva, Cody, & Low, 2018)*.

- *Review of Outsourcing Reports and Documents*: An environmental scan was conducted using Internet sources for relevant information regarding higher education outsourcing, including patterns, trends, and challenges. Reports and documents reviewed in the environmental scan included those developed by research organizations, think tanks, accreditation bodies, and academic researchers.

- *Interview Guide:* Prior to developing interview questions, current NPEC members were invited to provide suggested topics by email. The topics members suggested were combined with information from the environmental scan to create an interview guide.

- *Interviews:* To ensure comprehensive stakeholder input, nine (9) interviews were conducted with individuals from varying institution types (e.g., sector, size, control, degree offerings), as well as higher education organizations (e.g., accreditors). Because outsourcing may impact multiple areas of the institution, interviewing individuals with responsibility for managing outsourcing from various areas (e.g., finance, student affairs, academic affairs) was desired. To ensure a broad representation of viewpoints, interviewees were strategically selected from all sectors and multiple position levels, as shown in Exhibit 2. While their participation was anonymous, details of their institutional experience are summarized in the table.

Exhibit 2: Institution Type and Experience of Interviewees

Category/ Interviewee	Level			Control		
					Private	
	Less than Two Year	Two-Year	Four-Year+	Public	Not-For-Profit	For-Profit
Institutional Researcher/Analyst (reports and/or uses personnel data on the HR Survey)						
Interviewee 1			C	C		
Interviewee 2	C					C
Interviewee 3		C		C		
Interviewee 4		C	P	C	P	
Interviewee 5		C		C	P	
Chief Finance Officer (works with outsourcing contracts)						
Interviewee 6			C		C	
Interviewee 7			C			C
Staff Member from a Regional Accreditor (works with a policy on outsourcing and/or discusses outsourcing as part of accreditation visits)						
Interviewee 8			C	C	C	C
Senior Level Administrator (manages an outsourcing contract)						
Interviewee 9		P	C	C		
Total	**1**	**4**	**6**	**6**	**4**	**3**

Note: "C" indicates current position. "P" indicates prior experience.

- *IPEDS Data Analysis*: Both data and anecdotal evidence were examined and are included in this report:

  1. Samples for two institutions are included to demonstrate that outsourcing efforts by institutions cannot necessarily be detected in the IPEDS-HR data.

  2. IPEDS-HR data, disaggregated by faculty status and institutional type, were analyzed to better understand the degree to which part-time instructional staff are used by institutions, and the results are discussed.

3.0 FINDINGS

This section includes findings from the literature review, interviews, and IPEDS data analyses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Outsourcing?

A single, agreed-upon definition of "outsourcing" as it relates to higher education has yet to be identified. Six definitions of outsourcing from the literature are offered below to demonstrate the variability in meanings and possible options for a future definition.

1. *"Outsourcing is a form of privatization that generally refers to a higher education institution's decision to contract with an external organization to provide a traditional campus function or service. The contractor either takes over the task of compensating and managing the employees of the university, paying the group according to its standards, or replaces the university employees with its own staff"* (Phipps & Merisotis, 2005, p. 1)*.

2. *"[I]t is important to distinguish between the two terms of 'contracting-out' and 'outsourcing.' 'Contracting-out' normally refers to those services that continue to be provided in-house but have been directly contracted, whereas 'outsourcing' refers to services that continue to be procured from external providers"* (Lok & Baldry, 2015, p. 820)*.

3. *"We define contracting out as a process by which a college contracts with a private firm (not an individual) to provide instruction and related services to students attending the college. Under our definition, the students are registered at the college and, in some cases, may not know that they are taking a subcontracted course"* (Bailey, Jacobs, & Jenkins, 2004, p. 16)*.

4. *"Outsourcing, also known as privatisation, refers to the decision to get services or products from an external source* (Bekurs, 2007; Lok & Baldry, 2015; Phipps & Merisotis, 2005)*, rather than providing them in-house"* (Wekullo, 2017, p. 453)*.

5. *"Outsourcing can be defined as 'the strategic use of outside resources to perform activities traditionally handled by internal staff and resources'"* (Handfield, 2006, p. 2)*.

6. *"[A] higher education P3 is a development/deal structure in which a public or private college or university takes on a private sector partner (or partners) to share in the resources, risks, and incentives that come with the development and operation/maintenance of campus facilities"* (Brailsford and Dunlavey, 2018, p. 2).

The term "outsourcing" is often used interchangeably with other similar terms in the literature, specifically: consulting and public-private partnership (P3). However, these terms have distinct meanings and can be thought of as a continuum of the institution–service provider relationship. Exhibit 3 shows the decision-making continuum used by senior leaders when determining the appropriate staffing and service structure for accomplishing projects.

Exhibit 3: Decision-Making Continuum for Accomplishing Projects
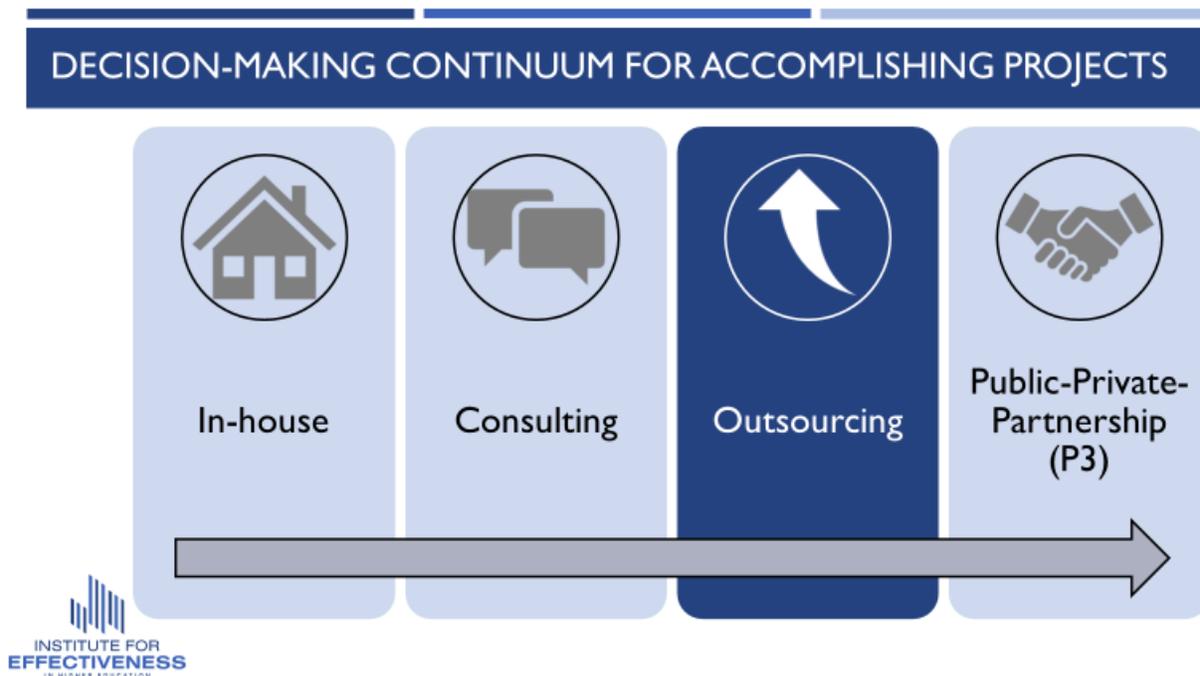
As shown in Exhibit 3:

- Use of **In-house**/existing and available employees is the first option considered because employee salaries are already encumbered. Reallocating institutional staff responsibilities to participate in new survey requests is an example of an in-house approach.

- **Consulting** includes one-time or short-term engagements to leverage additional expertise that is needed temporarily. For example, contracting with an external firm to analyze and make recommendations about the institution's accreditation preparation process could be considered a consulting effort.

- **Outsourcing** includes temporary or permanent utilization of expertise from an outside organization to perform a specific set of tasks. Hiring a company to perform the institution's IPEDS reporting functions is an example of outsourcing.

- **Public-Private Partnership (P3)** is a more complex version of outsourcing, often with an extended (e.g., decades-long) timeframe and large infrastructure commitment from the private partner. Both parties reap benefits from the partnership that go beyond

traditional fee-for-service advantages. For example, partnering with a private organization to build, maintain, and enhance the institution's predictive-analytics systems is considered a P3 arrangement.

For the purposes of this paper, the term "outsourcing" will be used to include consulting, outsourcing, and P3s.

Why Do Institutions Consider Outsourcing?

Higher education institutions have historically developed as self-contained ecosystems that ensure students' needs are met on campus. For example, many colleges and universities provide housing, basic health care services, police, cultural events, and fitness facilities, in addition to their essential academic functions. Traditionally, colleges and universities have prided themselves on finding the best talent and solving problems in-house. However, a campus that looks and functions like a small town or city is a costly enterprise.

Over the past 25 years, higher education has been subject to multiple budget cuts (State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2019) and calls to lower costs to contain student debt (Blagg, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). As a result, higher education leaders have had to 'do more with less,' while improving quality and offering the latest products and services in the field (e.g., technology, teaching pedagogy). This has led senior leaders to examine every aspect of the institution to determine how it can operate more efficiently and reduce costs, even if that means outsourcing services.

Institutions want to maintain competitive advantages over their peers, and one way of doing that is by reducing costs. In recent years, the rising cost of a college education and blossoming student debt have come under considerable public scrutiny. Government entities, taxpayers, and direct stakeholders (students and their families) want to be assured that the value of a degree is worth their significant financial investments. Reducing the cost of a degree can aid institutions in accomplishing that end.

The combination of reduced funding, increased demand for enhanced services, and desire to improve the return on investment in a college degree have prompted some institutions to turn to outsourcing. Having specialized talent on staff may no longer be efficient or effective for a college. For example, because federal financial aid is very complex—and the regulations change frequently—it can be costly to keep staff trained on the latest rules and requirements. When financial aid staff members leave, quickly finding a qualified administrator to assume the work can be a challenge for institutions. Alternatively, the institution can outsource this function to a company with extensive expertise in federal financial aid that is capable of minimizing errors and improving the student experience. As a result, outsourcing can result in lower costs and improved service for students because the company can achieve greater efficiencies than the institution.

Finally, due to state regulations, some institutions may be prohibited from offering select services that other colleges and universities offer. For example, community colleges in some states are unable to offer on-campus housing. Thus, the institution has two options: 1) not offer

any on-campus housing as required by the state, or 2) seek alternatives through outsourcing to meet students' needs.

Outsourced Areas and Functions

Outsourcing select institutional services is not new. Historically, "select non-core administrative functions . . . that a private company might perform better, faster, or less expensively, have lent themselves to outsourcing" for colleges and universities (Marks & Sparkman, 2019, p. 1). Most institutions have outsourced areas such as food service, bookstores, and housekeeping/ janitorial services for decades (Phipps & Merisotis, 2005). However, "doing more with less," means institutional leaders have had to become more creative in their dollar-stretching efforts.

To illustrate how widespread outsourcing is, a survey by UNICCO Service Company (UNICCO) and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) on outsourcing (FMLink, 2002) found that food services and bookstores were outsourced by over 50% of respondents. In addition, the overwhelming majority of institutions were outsourcing at least one service, and more than three-quarters outsourced more than one (Exhibit 4):

Exhibit 4: Frequency of Outsourced Services
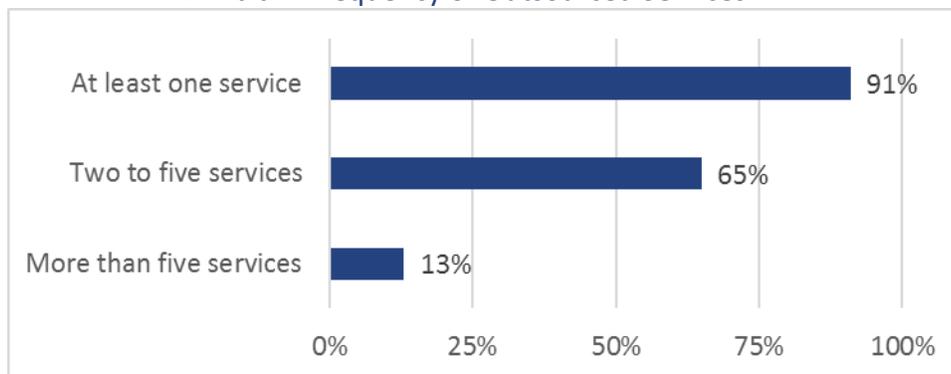
Source: FMLink. (2002). UNICCO survey finds more universities outsourcing facilities services. Retrieved from https://fmlink.com/articles/unicco-survey-finds-more-universities-outsourcing-facilities-survices.

Despite being the most recent report available from the organization, the UNICCO-NACUBO outsourcing survey is more than 15 years old, and institutional outsourcing needs and utilization have increased since then. More institutions are considering expanding the scope of outsourced services based on their unique needs. Areas of outsourcing include: billing and collection, data services (including institutional research and effectiveness), endowment fund management, financial aid, human resources, legal services, payroll, teaching, and technology support (Phipps & Merisotis, 2005).

Expanding Outsourcing into P3s

In addition to the expansion of the functions institutions choose to outsource, there are a growing number of institutions seeking a more advanced format for their outsourcing contracts. Traditional outsourcing is generally transactional: the institution receives goods or

services in exchange for payment to a service provider. In contrast, emerging P3s focus on mutually-beneficial relationships in which both the institution and service provider grow their organizations by increasing revenue.

These P3s allow for outsourcing an ever-growing list of functions, moving beyond traditional administrative activities and into academia and other revenue-generating opportunities (Marks & Sparkman, 2019), including: brand licensing arrangements, energy/power management, intellectual property acquisitions/sales, parking garage management, real estate development, and television broadcast rights.

P3s have also expanded beyond administrative functions into academic partnerships. Examples include support for online services, international student recruitment, and non-credit programs. A recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* report (Carlson, 2019) found that outsourcing has grown to include services close to the institution core, which has attracted both attention and scrutiny.

Responding to Outsourcing Growth

In the past 15 years, there has not been a large-scale study or survey dedicated to the proliferation of outsourcing in higher education. Consequently, proxy measures provide the best means to help grasp the growth of outsourcing. One way to measure higher education trends is by observing the proliferation of professional conferences. When organizations have enough members for a conference, it signals that there is interest in that area. The existence of multiple conferences signals even larger growth.

For example, the recent P3 Higher Education Summit attracted more than 800 attendees, and a large number of vendors and sessions focused on creating public-private-partnerships with college and universities. Note that this conference focused exclusively on P3s in higher education, suggesting that a niche market specifically for P3s is developing within the broader higher education outsourcing space.

Both administrative and academic partnerships are growing rapidly, as evidenced by the number of companies and organizations offering or adding outsourced services (Brailsford and Dunlavey, 2018; McKenzie, 2018). Institutional and program accreditors are among those taking note. Because of this increased use of outsourced services, accreditation bodies have begun to create outsourcing policies. For example, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) has developed an Agreement with Unaccredited Entities Policy along with an Agreements with Unaccredited Entities Guide to clarify its expectations of institutions that opt to use outsourced services. WSCUC notes that "an accredited institution bears final responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of all activities conducted in its name" (2015, p. 1).

Online Program Management

An area of outsourcing that has had considerable growth over the last decade is Online Program Management (OPMs); current market revenues are $1.5 to $2.5 billion and growing

(Hill, 2018; Lurie, 2018). OPMs are broadly defined as organizations that utilize their expertise in online instruction, students, and management to help schools develop online programs.

More specifically, OPM partners typically:

- Create functional transactional systems for finding and engaging prospective students;
- Support students, process registrations, and increase overall student retention;
- Develop and execute digital marketing strategies;
- Conduct market research and analytics;
- Provide the latest marketing technology infrastructure (Apollidon, 2019, p. 1).

As online education gains more credibility in the marketplace, online enrollments have grown across the country. Online program options offer maximum flexibility for adult learners and those who live beyond commuting distance to a college or university offering their program of interest. Now, just under 30% of students take at least one online class (McKenzie, 2018). Not surprisingly, institutions that want to take advantage of the growing interest in this evolving online educational model often need help starting and maintaining an online academic presence. An Eduventures survey found a 50-50 split between institutions that are current or prospective OPM customers and those that have not yet expressed an interest (Straumsheim, 2015).

Over the last decade, the number of OPM companies offering services to higher education institutions has multiplied dramatically. Now, dozens of companies compete for these opportunities. While some companies have defined niche markets, some consolidation seems inevitable, according to industry leaders (McKenzie, 2018). As the number of service providers increases, so too does their use across all institution types. As a result, options are increasing for outsourcing services in areas previously offered by institutions only on a small scale, or not at all, due to lack of in-house expertise.

STAFFING PATTERNS VISIBLE IN IPEDS DATA

It is important to consider the staffing patterns that are visible with existing IPEDS data and areas that do not allow us to fully answer the question: *How many faculty and staff work to serve the institution and its students?* To address the visibility of these patterns in IPEDS data, this section first discusses two institutional outsourcing samples to determine the degree to which institutional outsourcing decisions are detectable in existing IPEDS data. Second, analysis of IPEDS-HR data on part-time faculty is presented to examine the degree to which part-time faculty are used, and relevant blind-spots are discussed.

Outsourcing IT Services Sample

University of California San Francisco (UCSF) announced in July 2016 that it would outsource 97 IT positions overseas as part of cost-saving measures (Straumsheim, 2016). By February 2017, some IT employees were laid off as part of the planned transition. With this decline, we *might* expect to see a decrease in the number of employees reported in the staff category that includes IT-related personnel on the following IPEDS-HR survey in 2018 (based on a data-

capture date of November 1, 2017, in accordance with IPEDS directions). However, it is important to note that IT positions are bundled in the category "Computer, Engineering and Science Occupations." Thus, an increase in other positions in the category may occur.

Upon examining the IPEDS-HR submissions of UCSF in 2017 and 2018, the number of IT staff increased rather than decreased. Exhibit 5 shows the total number of employees from the November 2016 and 2017 census dates (see total and prior year). Based on UCSF's IPEDS-HR submission, one would not be able to determine that the institution was engaged in outsourcing IT services. Rather, evidence for the outsourcing was found only through newspaper articles. Given that many institutions are engaged in outsourcing services, and the majority of those efforts are not newsworthy, this suggests that outsourcing efforts might not be detectable in the IPEDS-HR data.

Exhibit 5: Human Resources Submission Excerpt for
November 1, 2016 and November 1, 2017 Census Dates

Institution: University of California-San Francisco (110699)

Part B1 - Full-time Non-instructional Staff by Occupational Category

Number of Full-time Non-instructional Staff
by Occupational Category

As of November 1, 2017

• Report Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race as Hispanic/Latino

• Report race for non-Hispanic/Latino individuals only

• Include both medical school and non-medical school staff

Men

Race/ethnicity	Management Occupations 11-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations 13-0000	Computer, Engineering, and Science Occupations 15-0000 + 17-0000 + 19-0000	Community, Social Service, Legal, Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations 21-0000 + 23-0000 + 27-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations 29-0000
Total (men+women)	635	1,548	1,454	483	504
Total from prior year	793	2,043	1,295	259	494

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Spring 2018, Human Resources component (provisional data).

Privatization of Athletics Sample

In June 2019, Florida State University (FSU) announced plans to privatize its athletic program. The new entity, the Florida State University Athletics Association (FSUAA), will be treated like a corporation, and the Athletics Director will serve as the CEO with a direct reporting line to the President of FSU. Other Florida institutions, such as University of Florida (UF) and University of Central Florida (UCF), classify their athletics programs as direct-support organizations.

Institutions in other states, including the University of Georgia (UGA) and Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), have similar arrangements (Romero, 2019; Shearer, 2017).
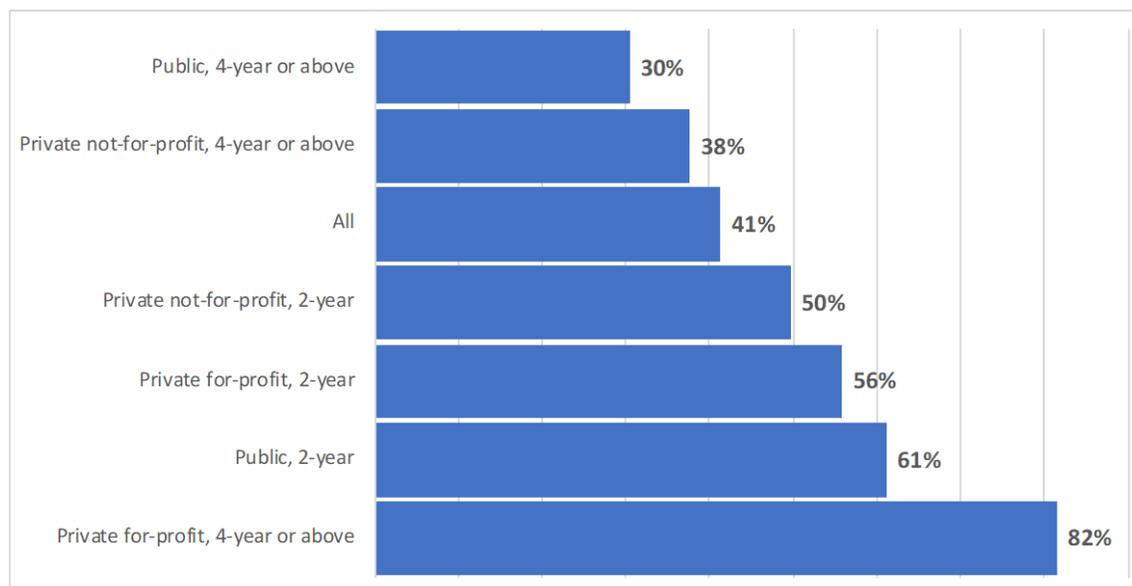
IPEDS directions instruct institutions to: "include only paid employees of your institution, recognizing that this may undercount the number of staff" (IPEDS, 2019, p. 65). Since UGA, Penn State, and FSU athletic staff are employed by corporations rather than the institutions, their employment and salary dollars are not counted in the IPEDS-HR survey and will not be unless definition changes are made. This is likely to lead to differing understandings of the true number of people and full-time equivalent (FTEs) staff performing institutional work at institutions that chose to privatize their athletic programs.

Part-Time Faculty – IPEDS Data Analysis

This section explores the use of part-time faculty as it relates to outsourcing. First, the degree to which institutions use part-time faculty is discussed. Second, three groups of faculty that are not currently captured in IPEDS-HR are identified.

While part-time faculty can serve as a cost-saving option for some institutions, they often are integrated into the institution for extended periods of time, not just one term. In an effort to understand the use of part-time instructional staff by institutional type, IPEDS data were analyzed to examine variability in use of part-time instructional staff. Among 3,756 institutions that have staff with faculty status, 41% of faculty are part-time. However, there is great variability in part-time faculty use across sectors, ranging from 30% to 82% (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Part-Time Instructional Staff with Faculty Status by Sector

Sector	Percentage
Public, 4-year or above	30%
Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above	38%
All	41%
Private not-for-profit, 2-year	50%
Private for-profit, 2-year	56%
Public, 2-year	61%
Private for-profit, 4-year or above	82%

Source: Analysis of IPEDS 2017 Human Resources and Institutional Characteristics data, 2019.

These data make it clear that use of part-time faculty is prevalent throughout all sectors. This information, combined with the author's interviews and research, suggests that there is variability within the category of part-time instructional staff that is not fully captured in the

current IPEDS-HR collection. Three groups of instructional staff that are not currently being accurately or adequately captured in IPEDS-HR have been identified as follows:

- **Outsourced instructors:** Under current IPEDS definitions, only employees paid by the institution are included in the IPEDS-HR survey. Therefore, instructors who are part of outsourcing contracts are not included in the instructor count because they are not individually paid by the institution. This also may include part-time instructors teaching high school students for college credit, but who are paid by the high school.

- **Part-time faculty teaching multiple courses or multiple terms in a year:** Some part-time instructional staff teach one course, while others teach three or more courses in a term or for multiple terms or years. Currently, IPEDS collections do not distinguish the number of courses a single part-time instructor teaches in a given year. This has an impact on FTE instructional faculty because a part-time faculty member is multiplied by one-third for calculating FTE (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c). For example, a part-time faculty member teaching two courses in a semester is multiplied by a factor of 0.33 when calculating FTE faculty; however, the faculty member's teaching load is half (0.50) of a full-time faculty member teaching four courses. It is important to note that full-time faculty are disaggregated by multiple categories (e.g., tenure vs non-tenure, length of contract, etc.).

- **Full-time staff teaching part-time:**
  - The IPEDS-HR instructions require that each employee is counted once. If an employee has two positions, the employee is to be counted in the full-time role and not in the part-time position (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). Consequently, full-time non-instructional employees who also teach are not counted as part-time faculty, and subsequently, FTE faculty are underrepresented.

  - While this group of instructors are not outsourced employees, the topic is important in understanding the ways part-time faculty are able to teach, yet not be counted in IPEDS-HR. Exclusion of these instructors from the reporting process results in an underestimation of the student-to-faculty ratio because these instructors are missing from the calculation.

  - IPEDS provides a worksheet to assist institutions with calculating their student-to-faculty ratios (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a). However, the worksheet instructs institutions to include employees as they were reported on the IPEDS-HR survey. Thus, there is no opportunity for an institution to account for those instructors who hold a full-time staff position and teach part-time.

  - Accrediting bodies, such as the Higher Learning Commission, have created their own worksheet which has a line for "total administrators or other staff NOT reported to IPEDS as instructors that are teaching a credit course(s) in the Fall" (Higher Learning Commission, 2018, p. 2). Thus, institutions are able to report a

student-to-faculty ratio that encompasses all instructors, regardless of other positions held.

INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Nine (9) stakeholders interested in the topic of outsourcing and knowledgeable about IPEDS were interviewed for this paper, all of whom welcomed the idea of IPEDS collecting data and information on this subject. Characteristics of interviewees were shown in Exhibit 2.

General Findings

- Overall, these stakeholders expressed interest in IPEDS collecting outsourcing data for benchmarking purposes. However, they recognized the difficulty in collecting such information due to the considerable variation among contracts.

- Interviewees think that outsourcing has become very common, and institutions are regularly examining potential new outsourcing options to achieve additional efficiencies, cost savings, and risk sharing.

- Multiple interviewees noted that numerous employees are not counted on the current IPEDS-HR survey in accordance with the directions, which indicate that employees who are not paid by the institution should not be included. Interviewees commented that these staff are often performing essential institutional functions and are frequently listed on their universities' organization charts. This leads to a disconnect regarding the number of employees serving the institutions. One recommendation was to count all employees who are on the organization chart, regardless of where they are funded.

- As more institutions outsource, staff eligible for data collection under the current IPEDS-HR directions represent a decreasing proportion of all staff. Thus, metrics such as dollars spent per student and FTE staff cannot be accurately inferred. Currently, this is not clearly understood by data users.

Reasons that Colleges and Universities Outsource

Stakeholders noted that institutions consider outsourcing for reasons that include cost savings, efficiency, improved student outcomes, and risk sharing, all of which can be achieved through the outsourcing of central institution activities. Stakeholders detailed the rationale for outsourcing decisions as follows:

- **Cost savings, efficiencies, and risk sharing**

  o These are the driving factors for most outsourcing decisions.

  o It is easier for a vendor to focus on one service to stay up to date on the latest trends and regulations.

- Outsourcing allows the institution to employ the right number of people at the right time without the risk of layoffs when work slows down.

- The institution avoids long-term costs of salaries, benefits, and pensions.

- Services that students want or need seven days a week (e.g., benefits, call centers, tutoring, library assistance) are likely areas for outsourcing, as it is too expensive for the institution to staff these areas during non-business hours.

- Risk and accountability are shared with another organization.

- **Focused subject matter expertise for improved student outcomes**

    - It is easier to find high quality experts and talent through outsourcing, especially in high cost areas and rural communities where it is hard to recruit qualified candidates.

    - Conversely, some smaller population areas have more limited outsourcing options for on-site services.

    - At smaller institutions where one staff member may wear multiple hats, outsourcing can provide valuable options for the campus.

    - Outsourcing allows institutional staff to focus on the work they are more passionate about and that they have greater expertise managing.

Use and Reporting of Part-Time Faculty on the IPEDS-HR Survey

Discussion of part-time faculty fell primarily into two categories: 1) lack of a definition and 2) variability with which part-time faculty are used by institutions.

- IPEDS does not have a definition of part-time faculty. Currently IPEDS notes that part-time employees are "determined by the institution" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c).

- Some institutions do not define "part-time" as it relates to faculty. Some consider a 1.0 FTE as full-time and all others are part-time, but definitions vary. For IPEDS data collection purposes, a clear definition would enhance consistency.

- Part-time faculty roles have evolved considerably over the last decade. There is an expectation among accreditors and desire among institutions to engage part-time faculty in the college or university culture and activities. As a result, part-time faculty are starting to take on more traditional full-time faculty duties, such as advising and serving on committees. They are being leveraged to assist with other activities, such as curriculum changes, program development, and site visits for program review, as well as being utilized in quasi-supervisory roles with extra administrative duties. Although more institutions are engaging part-time faculty through these roles, these additional duties are not currently captured through the IPEDS-HR data collection.

- The IPEDS-HR survey counts part-time faculty who generate credit hours. For institutions that offer non-credit instruction (e.g., community colleges), metrics such as "dollars to student FTE" over-estimate the amount spent because FTE only counts for-credit students, while dollars (from the IPEDS Finance survey) include credit and non-credit course expenses.

- One interviewee noted that there is confusion among colleagues from similar institutions regarding not-for-credit faculty reporting. Improved clarity of directions regarding which faculty should be included in the not-for-credit category would be helpful. In particular, the directions suggest that the section is for developmental courses only, but not for coursework such as ballroom dancing, dog training, or continuing education. Not everyone reports data this way, thus the data collected likely have inconsistencies.

- Interviewees noted the various types of part-time faculty. Historically, part-time faculty would teach one course for a faculty member's course release or a special topic. However, institutions are leveraging part-time faculty beyond one course. Part-time faculty are used on a temporary (e.g., one semester) or a permanent (e.g., multiple years) basis. Some teach multiple classes per term, yet they are counted as part-time, so there is little visibility into the differences within the part-time faculty cadre–unlike with the visibility provided in the full-time faculty reporting.

- The term "faculty" typically includes only those in instructional roles. Staff members who teach a course are excluded from all faculty counts, resulting in undercounting the actual number of faculty. The exclusion of these instructors has implications for the student-to-faculty ratio. When staff teach at the undergraduate level, it results in an inflated student-to-faculty ratio.

- Currently, there is no data collection regarding faculty over-loads. Faculty who work more than 1 FTE are counted as 1 FTE on the IPEDS-HR survey. As a result, metrics using full-time faculty are biased.

- At this time, IPEDS does not collect information about part-time faculty in a 12-month period. Yet, part-time faculty are utilized year-round, especially in summer and winter terms, as well as in continuous enrollment institutions.

- More detailed data on part-time faculty could face increased scrutiny from external groups (e.g., accreditors, unions, etc.), according to some interviewees.

Considerations for IPEDS as it Develops a Data Collection Plan

- Interviewees noted the need for greater clarification regarding what institutions will do with any newly collected information and how the data could be used to benefit and improve institutions. Possible standards for data collection inclusion could be:
  - Is the employee/position on the institutional organization chart? If so, then the position should be included in the IPEDS-HR survey.

- Are salary dollars for a position included somewhere in the Finance survey? If so, the personnel should be included in the IPEDS-HR survey.

◆ Specific concerns related to the data collection process:

- Breaking out outsourcing costs could be burdensome for institutions. Outsourcing contracts created using a "total cost" could be difficult to disaggregate (people vs. tools vs. travel, etc.). The process needs to be streamlined to make it manageable.

- Collecting data on the percentage of each expense category that is outsourced might result in reducing the burden on reporting institutions.

- Collecting dollar amounts does not provide much value, whereas FTE of employees is a more valuable measure, according to some stakeholders. Other stakeholders emphasized collecting total dollars spent on outsourcing contracts.

- Measuring how much cost savings were realized through outsourcing efforts, and whether those savings were seen as effective and valuable by the institutions, would address important issues if an effective method can be developed.

- Sharing the numerous caveats to IPEDS-HR data would be helpful so that end users are more knowledgeable about how to use, and not use, the existing IPEDS data, as well as any data elements related to outsourcing added in the future.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1:	**If outsourcing information is collected, create a clear definition of outsourcing.**

As noted in Section 1, the term "outsourcing" is often used interchangeably with other similar terms in the literature, specifically *consulting* and *public-private partnership (P3)*. However, these terms have distinct definitions and are better thought of as a continuum of the institution–service provider relationship used by senior leaders when determining the appropriate staffing and service structure for accomplishing projects. Points along the continuum include:

a. **In-house** use of existing and available employees is usually the first option considered because employee salaries are already encumbered.

b. **Consulting** involves one-time or short-term engagements to leverage additional expertise that is needed temporarily.

c. **Outsourcing** includes temporary or permanent utilization of expertise from an outside organization to perform a specific set of tasks.

d. **Public-Private Partnership** (P3) is a more complex version of outsourcing often with an extended (e.g., decades) timeframe and large infrastructure commitment from the private partner, and both parties benefit from the partnership.

If IPEDS collects information on outsourcing through the IPEDS-HR survey or another IPEDS survey, a taxonomy should be developed for what services ought to be included under the outsourcing umbrella. Some common services and functions considered for outsourcing include:

- ◆ Accreditation
- ◆ Bookkeeping
- ◆ Bookstore*
- ◆ Course Development*
- ◆ Data Analysis/Institutional Research
- ◆ Default Management*
- ◆ Financial Aid*
- ◆ Food Service*

- ◆ HR (e.g., benefits, Title IX)*
- ◆ Information Technology*
- ◆ Investment Oversight for Foundation Donations*
- ◆ Payroll*
- ◆ Policy
- ◆ Regulatory/Compliance*
- ◆ Residence Life
- ◆ Security – Dispatch*

* Denotes a service that is commonly outsourced due to its complexity, high levels of regulation, and ability to be efficiently repeated.

Certain instances involving outside vendors may need more clarification (i.e., they may or may not be considered outsourcing). IPEDS should make a determination about whether relationships with vendors providing these services are considered outsourcing for the purposes of this data collection effort.

These include:

- Artificial intelligence (an emerging outsourcing possibility)

- Cloud based solutions that eliminate the need for programmers

- Consultant services

- Microservices (e.g., contracts with a local city)

- Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)

- Technology solution purchases

- PeopleSoft implemented at multiple campuses

- Transfer credits from other institutions, which could be considered outsourcing, as another institution did some of the work

Clearly defining what outsourcing is, and what it is not, will aid in determining how to collect information, what information is available to collect, and which survey should collect the information. The following are sample questions for discussion:

- Are consulting services included in outsourcing?

- Are P3 agreements included in outsourcing?

- When outsourcing results in efficiencies through the use of technology, are other cost savings that result considered outsourcing?

- How do cost-savings decisions differ from outsourcing?

- Should services that are retained but not utilized (e.g., legal) be included?

Recommendation #2:	Review the edit flags.

Opportunities to collect existing information on outsourcing and edit flags could be leveraged through a review of the responses to edit flags. For example, Exhibit 7 shows an edit flag for an institution indicating that IPEDS was expecting its library staff to include college/university staff. However, in this case, the service was outsourced. While the institution has trained staff to provide and interpret library materials, they are not employed by the institution. Other edit flags could exist and provide further insights into outsourcing.

Exhibit 7: Sample Edit Flag Regarding Outsourced Services

Source	Description	Severity	Resolved	Options
Screen: Other Student Services				
Perform Edits	You have selected that your institution has a staff trained to provide and interpret library materials, but you reported 0 librarians in last year's HR component. Please correct your data or contact the IPEDS Help Desk for assistance. (Error #11332)	Explanation	Yes	Go to error screen
Reason:	uses a shared service for the library component.			

Recommendation #3:	If outsourcing information is collected, develop resource guides.

If outsourcing data are to be collected, resource guides should be provided to IPEDS keyholders and users to identify outsourcing information within their institutions. One potential resource is an institution's U.S. Department of Education's (ED) E-App, an online application that houses important information on the institution's use of third-party servicers for financial aid. This document can typically be obtained from the financial aid office or finance officer. ED requires that all third parties participating in any Title IV or HEA program be registered and comply with eligibility requirements.

> *"A third-party servicer is an individual, or a state, or a private, profit or non-profit organization that enters into a contract with an eligible institution to administer, through manual or automated processing, any aspect of the institution's participation in any Title IV, HEA program"* (Beam, Filter, & Morelli, 2016, p. 3).

Recommendation #4:	If outsourcing information is collected, consider options on the IPEDS Finance survey.

While there was considerable interest from interviewees regarding collecting IPEDS outsourcing information and data, a number of interviewees suggested that the information may be most closely aligned with the IPEDS Finance survey. In particular, interviewees noted that the chief finance officer would likely be most knowledgeable about outsourcing dollars throughout the entire institution. Additionally, since outsourcing often encompasses more than human resources (e.g., equipment, travel, technology, etc.), reporting on the entire outsourced contract rather than a subset of the outsourced service (e.g., human resources) may be a lesser burden.

IPEDS could collect the following on the Finance survey:

- Whether or not the institution participates in any outsourcing (e.g., a yes or no question).
- Whether or not each functional area utilizes any outsourcing. IPEDS could add a column to the Expenses by Functional Classification so that institutions can indicate this. Alternatively, rather than a check box, institutions could be asked to estimate the percentage of dollars spent on outsourcing for each functional area.

Recommendation #5:	Consider collecting information on part-time faculty, regardless of funding source.

No definition currently exists for part-time faculty in the IPEDS Glossary or IPEDS survey materials. Variation between states and institutions, as well as differences within institutions, can exist for part-time faculty definitions, making a one-size-fits-all definition more challenging. However, greater clarity regarding the number of part-time faculty who are utilized, regardless of funding source, would allow for a better understanding of the composition of instructors.

IPEDS could expand the part-time faculty data collection to include:

- The number of dollars spent on outsourced instruction.
- The number of people teaching courses in different increments (e.g., one course, two to three courses, four or more courses in a year).
- The number of people teaching by duration of time at the institution (e.g., up to one year, between one and three years, between three and five years, more than five years) or more generic categories such as temporary vs. permanent.
- The number of non-instructional staff who also teach one or more courses in a 12-month period.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW INVITATION VIA EMAIL

Prospective interviewees received the following email invitation to participate in the project:

Dear _____,

I am conducting a research study on behalf of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) on trends in outsourcing and human resources. I would like to include your input as an experienced higher education leader in this research and the resulting paper.

Would you be available to participate in a 45-60 minute informational interview the week of _____?

NPEC was established to provide input into the research and development for IPEDS. As such, this information may be used in part to make recommendations about information collected in IPEDS. This particular topic centers around outsourcing services and part-time faculty. More institutions are utilizing outsourcing services and part-time faculty in an effort to achieve savings and/or efficiencies, impacting the number of and composition of employees performing services at the institution. Thus, we are exploring these topics.

If you are interested and available, I'll include the interview questions in advance of our meeting.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Introduction: Thank you for your time to talk about outsourcing and part-time faculty in colleges and universities as it relates to IPEDS data collection. I sent a copy of the interview questions in advance, but if you haven't had a chance to review them, that is all right as we'll go through them on the call. I will be taking some notes during the call.

Interview Questions:

1. Colleges and universities have been outsourcing for 30+ years. Most institutions are familiar with food service, grounds keeping, maintenance, legal matters, IT services, etc. being outsourced. But now, more institutions are considering outsourcing other areas (e.g., payroll, course content development, finance, institutional research, tutoring, etc.).

    ◆ Based on your expertise and experience, what are the internal/external pressures that institutions are under which lead to outsourcing?

- What are 2-3 "new" areas where you have seen institutions are outsourcing? Can you describe or tell me a little bit about each of these examples?

- If relevant – How do groups (sectors, controls, union vs non-union) differ with respect to outsourcing? (more or less, specific areas, etc.)

2. If this study were to recommend collection of outsourcing data/information through IPEDS surveys, what information would be most useful in collecting?

- [Areas to probe: Discuss each proposed concept with the interviewee. For example, if they suggest collecting the number of people involved from the vendor, probe deeper. Will vendors be able to quantify the number of FTE for all of its clients (knowing that multiple people work on multiple client projects)? Would it be better to know the dollars spent rather than FTE?]

- What value-add do you think institutions, researchers, and other interested parties would get from knowing the amount of dollars and categories for outsourcing? Perhaps with benchmarking?

3. Part-time faculty have long been utilized as an institutional cost-saving approach (compared to full-time faculty). Recently, many institutions have been leveraging part-time faculty's "in the field experience." How do you anticipate the use of part-time faculty changing over the next 5-7 years? (e.g., use on committees, program chairs, part administrator – part faculty, etc.)

4. Are there any other comments, considerations, suggestions, areas for further exploration in the area of outsourcing that you would like to share with me?

- Elements to be considered for addition to IPEDS?

- Benefits and challenges to adding them to the current IPEDS surveys (if any)?

Wrap-up: Again, thank you for your time. I appreciate your insights and comments. This has been very helpful.

- May I follow-up with additional questions or to get clarification on anything via email after this call? You can also follow-up with me if you think of anything else.

- The paper is expected to be published around the end of the year. I can let you know when it published/posted, if you are interested.

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