

2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students
Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09)

Supporting Statement
Request for OMB Review (SF83i)

Submitted by
National Center for Education Statistics
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Preface

This document has been prepared to support the clearance of study data elements and procedures under the *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995* and *5 CFR 1320*, for the *2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09)*. BPS:04/09 is being conducted through the exercise of Option 2 of the 2004 National Study of Faculty and Students (NSOFAS:04) for the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) by RTI International¹(RTI), with its subcontractor MPR Associates, Inc. (MPR), under contract number ED-02-CO-0011.

This submission requests reinstatement of the previously obtained clearance for the 2004–06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, (BPS:04/06; OMB No. 1850-0631). This submission describes procedures and instruments planned for both the field test and full-scale data collections for BPS:04/09. However, an additional OMB package will be submitted prior to the full-scale study to update procedures based on results of the field test.

The base year for the BPS:04/09 longitudinal study was conducted as part of the 2004 *National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:04)* in which sample members were identified for membership in the BPS:04 longitudinal cohort. The first follow-up interview with the cohort, BPS:04/06, was conducted in 2005 (field test) and 2006 (full-scale). Data collection for the second follow-up, BPS:04/09, will be conducted in 2008 (field test) and 2009 (full-scale).

Subsequent sections of this document respond to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) instructions for preparing supporting statements to Standard Form (SF) 83-I, as follows:

- Section A Justification (Part A)
- Section B Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods (Part B)
- Section C Overview of Analysis Topics and Survey Items

Additional documentation is provided in the accompanying appendices:

- Appendix A Bibliography for the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study
- Appendix B Technical Review Panel
- Appendix C Confidentiality Agreements
- Appendix D Introductory Letters to Students and Parents
- Appendix E Sample Design for NPSAS:04 Full-Scale Study
- Appendix F Sample Designs for the BPS:04/06 and BPS:04/09 Full-Scale Studies
- Appendix G Linkages to Extant Data Sources

¹ RTI International is a trade name for Research Triangle Institute.

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- **Justification**

- o **Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary**

- **Purpose of this Submission**

The Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) longitudinal study series represents a departure from previous longitudinal studies of college-age cohorts in that it starts with a cohort of individuals beginning their postsecondary studies, regardless of when they completed high school. Consequently, information will be available from BPS about *nontraditional* postsecondary students who have delayed continuation of their education after high school because of military service, family responsibilities, or other reasons. Nontraditional students continue to represent a growing segment of the postsecondary student population.

The BPS study series also makes it possible to trace the paths of first-time beginning (FTB) students throughout the entire system of postsecondary education over a number of years, capturing transfers, coenrollment, and periods of nonenrollment (stopouts). Unlike the typical retention and attainment studies of entering freshmen at a single institution, BPS allows for the study of student persistence and attainment anywhere. About one-half of all beginning students attend more than one institution in the 6 years after they began their postsecondary education, so the information about student progress and degree completion available from a single institution provides an incomplete picture of the student experience.

BPS is one of several studies sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education to respond to the need for a national, comprehensive database concerning significant issues in access, choice, enrollment, persistence, progress, and attainment in undergraduate postsecondary education, in graduate and professional school access, and in consequent rates of return to society. The base for this information system is the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), a recurring survey of a nationally representative, cross-sectional sample of postsecondary students. The NPSAS surveys have been implemented every 3 or 4 years since 1986–87.

First-time beginning students are identified as part of the NPSAS and are then followed from initial entry into postsecondary education through completion of their education and entry into the workforce. NPSAS:90 was the base year for the first BPS study, which included two follow-up interviews over 5 academic years (BPS:90/92 and BPS:90/94). NPSAS:96 was the base year for the second BPS study, which included two follow-up interviews over 6 academic years (BPS:96/98 and BPS:96/01). The current BPS study began with the cohort of beginning students identified in NPSAS:04. The first follow-up occurred 2 years later, in 2006 (BPS:04/06), and the second and final interview will describe the cohort 5 years (also 6 academic years) after the start of postsecondary education (BPS:04/09). This submission concerns the final follow-up with the BPS:04 cohort, BPS:04/09, which will be conducted 6 academic years since the sample first entered postsecondary education.

- **Legislative Authorization**

BPS:04/09 is conducted by NCES within the Institute of Education Sciences, in close consultation with other offices and organizations within and outside the U.S. Department of

Education. BPS is authorized under Section 153 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law [P.L.] 107-279, Title 1 Part C), which requires NCES to:

“collect, report, analyze, and disseminate statistical data related to education in the United States and in other nations, including:

(1) collecting, acquiring, compiling... and disseminating full and complete statistics on the condition and progress of education, at the preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels in the United States, including data on—

(E) educational access to and opportunity for postsecondary education, including data on financial aid to postsecondary students;”

Section 153 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 further states that:

"all collection, maintenance, use, and wide dissemination of data by the Institute, including each office, board, committee, and Center of the Institute, shall conform with the requirements of section 552A of title 5, United States Code [which protects the confidentiality rights of individual respondents with regard to the data collected, reported, and published under this title]." (Section 153)

▪ **Prior and Concurrent Related Studies**

The full longitudinal studies program of the NCES, of which BPS is one longitudinal series, has been designed to address the following six topics:

- Undergraduate Access and Choice of Institution,
- Persistence,
- Progress,
- Attainment,
- Graduate/Professional School Access, and
- Rates of Return to Individuals and Society

A prior and continuing approach by NCES has involved the High School Cohort Studies (HSCS). This approach is coordinated with elementary and secondary education, and involves following a particular high school cohort over a long period. *High School and Beyond* (HS&B) and the *National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972* (NLS:72) provided some information on these six issue topics. In addition, the *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988* (NELS:88) and the *Education Longitudinal Study of 2002* (ELS:2002) provide additional information on choice and access to postsecondary education. The High School Cohort Studies, while accurately reflecting educational and employment outcomes for a particular age group, do not accurately reflect *all* postsecondary students because of the actual diversity in age and background of these students at any one point in time. For this reason, NCES started the Postsecondary Longitudinal and Sample Survey Studies (PLSSS) program, which involves cross-sections of students attending postsecondary education at specific points in time, regardless of age. This program incorporates base-year data from the cross-sectional NPSAS and extends it through two longitudinal components: BPS and *Baccalaureate and Beyond* (B&B). The chronology of the previous administrations of NPSAS and its associated longitudinal components is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Chronology of NPSAS and its longitudinal components

Base year	First follow-up	Second follow-up	Third follow-up
NPSAS:90	BPS:90/92	BPS:90/94	—
NPSAS:93	B&B:93/94 ¹	B&B:93/97	B&B:93/03
NPSAS:96	BPS:96/98	BPS:96/01	—
NPSAS:2000	B&B:2000/01	—	—
NPSAS:04	BPS:04/06	BPS:04/09	—
NPSAS:08	B&B:08/09	B&B:08/12	

— Not applicable.

¹ Includes transcript study.

NOTE: NPSAS = National Postsecondary Student Aid Study; BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students; B&B = Baccalaureate and Beyond.

Undergraduate access and choice of institution. The issues associated with undergraduate access and choice of institution involve how, when, and why students enroll in postsecondary institutions. *Waiting to Attend College: Undergraduates Who Delay Their Postsecondary Enrollment* (Horn, Cataldi, and Sikora 2005) looks at students who delay enrollment into postsecondary institutions. Their characteristics and outcomes are discussed and compared to students who do not delay enrollment. The data used in this report were gathered from multiple datasets such as NPSAS, NELS, and BPS. *The Profile of Undergraduates in U.S. Postsecondary Institutions: 2003-04* (Horn and Nevill 2006) presents data on institution choice, attendance status, and degree program. Analyses of access and choice frequently focus on timing of the decision to enroll, application rates, timing of enrollment, enrollment status (by institution type), and field of study. The areas of interest with regard to these decisions include basic demographic characteristics, the influence of family and peers, high school preparation, participation in special programs in high school, postsecondary characteristics, and financial aid offers.

Of special interest at the postsecondary level is high school preparation. The NPSAS and the BPS datasets provide information on many of these issues. *Bridging the Gap: Academic Preparation and Postsecondary Success of First-Generation Students* (Warburton, Bugarin, and Nunez 2001) uses BPS to examine high school preparation among first-generation students (those students whose parents had no college education) as it relates to enrollment, persistence, and attainment after 6 years. *Mapping the Road to College: First-Generation Students' Math Track, Planning Strategies, and Context of Support* (Horn and Nunez 2000) also focuses on first-generation students, but uses NELS to examine academic preparation as well as parental support and other factors related to attending and persisting in postsecondary education. Drawing on findings derived from a number of datasets including NELS, BPS, and B&B, *Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students* (Choy 2002) provides a snapshot view of research in postsecondary education. The report covers factors associated with persistence and attainment such as parent's education and academic preparation. Finally, *Community College Students: Goals, Academic Preparation, and Outcomes* (Hoachlander, Sikora, and Horn 2003) draws from a number of data sources and focuses on students who choose to attend community colleges and examines their degree goals, persistence, and attainment.

Persistence. The issues related to persistence include how and why students continue their enrollment in postsecondary education. Topics included in this area are related to periods of

enrollment, transfer, attendance intensity (full or part time), and field of study. Analyses of NCES data concerning postsecondary persistence have been presented in a number of reports, including the following that, using NELS, follow a cohort of traditional students from high school through postsecondary education: *Entry and Persistence of Women and Minorities in College Science and Engineering Education* (Huang, Taddese, and Walter 2000) and *Postsecondary Attainment, Attendance, Curriculum, and Performance: Selected Results From the NELS:88/2000 Postsecondary Education Transcript Study (PETS), 2000* (Adelman, Daniel, and Berkovitz 2003).

The BPS study series allows similar investigations based on all students within a postsecondary education (PSE) cohort (who vary in terms of both age and experience) rather than on a high school cohort (which is homogeneous with regard to age); the *Descriptive Summary of 1995–96 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Three Years Later, With an Essay on Students Who Started at Less-Than-4-Year Institutions* (Berkner, Horn, and Clune 2000) and the *Descriptive Summary of 1995–96 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Six Years Later* (Berkner, He, and Forrest-Cataldi 2002) present comprehensive analyses of persistence among members of the 1995–96 BPS student cohort 3 and 6 years, respectively, following initial entry into postsecondary education. *High School Academic Curriculum and the Persistence Path Through College* uses BPS to examine persistence as it relates to high school preparation. Two cohorts of students who first enrolled in postsecondary education in academic year 1989-90 or 1995-96 are discussed and compared in *College Persistence on the Rise? Changes in 5-Year Degree Completion and Postsecondary Persistence Rates Between 1994 and 2000* (Horn and Berger 2004). This report examines, compares, and tracks the differences in student characteristics and rates at which students in the two cohorts either persisted or completed a degree within 5 years from when they first enrolled.

Progress. Issues of progress in postsecondary education are related to field of study, grades, length of study, transfer between colleges, and timing of college leaving. Topics related to major field of study are of special interest, particularly for education, mathematics, and science majors. Students who attended multiple institutions during their postsecondary education are discussed in *The Road Less Traveled? Students Who Enroll in Multiple Institutions* (Peter and Cataldi 2005). This report profiles students who were co-enrolled, transferred, or attended 2-year institutions and tracks their persistence, attainment, and time-to-degree. Reports such as *Short-Term Enrollment in Postsecondary Education: Student Background and Institutional Differences in Reasons for Early Departure, 1996–98* (Bradburn 2002) focus on students who left postsecondary education before completing a certificate or degree and provides an analysis of the factors associated with attrition, while reports such as *Community College Transfer Rates to 4-Year Institutions Using Alternative Definitions of Transfer* (Bradburn, Hurst, and Peng 2001) focus on attendance patterns and, specifically, students who transfer between institutions. *Moving into Town--and Moving On: The Community College in the Lives of Traditional-Age Students* (Adelman 2005) uses data from several different datasets including NELS, NLS, and BPS to develop transcript-based portraits of traditional-age community college students.

Attainment. Attainment issues involve rates of program completion, degree attainment, and receipt of licenses and certificates. NCES analyses focusing on a cohort of students who graduated high school together and entered postsecondary education within a few years include: *Entry and Persistence of Women and Minorities in College Science and Engineering Education* (Huang, Taddese, and Walter 2000) and *Postsecondary Attainment, Attendance, Curriculum, and*

Performance: Selected Results From the NELS:88/2000 Postsecondary Education Transcript Study (PETS), 2000 (Adelman, Daniel, and Berkovitz 2003). Both of these reports use NELS data to follow a cohort of high school students. Following the cohorts longitudinally, as through the BPS and B&B series, provides analysts an opportunity to focus on a cohort of beginning students (as in BPS) or bachelor's degree recipients (B&B) rather than a group of traditional students that are homogenous with respect to age. The *Descriptive Summary of 1995-96 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Six Years Later* (Berkner, He, and Forrest-Cataldi 2002) describes postsecondary persistence and attainment within 6 years of initial enrollment in postsecondary education of students who began their postsecondary study in the 1995-96 academic year. *Placing College Graduation Rates in Context: How 4-Year College Graduation Rates Vary With Selectivity* (Horn 2006) highlights how graduation rates of comparable 4-year institutions vary with institution selectivity and size of the low-income population enrolled.

The B&B series, which follows a cohort of bachelor's degree recipients, provides information on time-to-degree. The most recent cohort attained their baccalaureate degrees in the 1999-2000 academic year, and *A Descriptive Summary of 1999-2000 Bachelor's Degree Recipients 1 Year Later, With an Analysis of Time to Degree* (Bradburn, Berger, Li, Peter, and Rooney 2003) provides an overview of time-to-degree and other factors related to bachelor's degree attainment. *Gender Differences in Participation and Completion of Undergraduate Education and How They Have Changed Over Time* (Peter and Horn 2005) examines the rates and differences of undergraduate participation and completion among the different genders of undergraduate students. This report provides an analysis of student demographics, enrollment characteristics, and early employment outcomes of bachelor's degree recipients.

Rates of return. Rates of return refers to the relative payoff of postsecondary education to individuals and society. This issue may involve analyses of earnings streams in the case of individuals, such as *Credits and Attainment: Returns to Postsecondary Education Ten Years After High School* (Zucker and Dawson 2001), which examines the economic and social impact of college course taking. *From Bachelor's Degree to Work: Major Field of Study and Employment Outcomes of 1992-93 Bachelor's Degree Recipients Who Did Not Enroll in Graduate Education by 1997* (Horn and Zahn 2001) examines rates of return in terms of employment outcomes for bachelor's degree recipients in various academic fields. *Students Entering and Leaving Postsecondary Occupational Education* (Hudson, Kienzl, and Diehl 2007) examines who enters postsecondary occupational education, the extent that occupational students persist in postsecondary occupational education and attain their credential goals, and the labor market outcomes for occupational students who earn credentials. Rate of return to society may be addressed through analyses of special benefits to society as through employment in public service professions such as teaching and voluntary participation in community service. The longitudinal studies will allow sufficient time for rate of return issues to be addressed with the BPS and B&B cohorts as they enter the workforce.

▪ **Study Design**

The BPS:04/09 field test sample will consist of students who were eligible to participate in the field test of NPSAS:04 who first began postsecondary education during the 2002-03 academic year at a postsecondary institution in the United States, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico. Similarly, the full-scale sample will consist of students eligible to participate in the NPSAS:04 full-scale study who first began postsecondary education during the 2003-04

academic year at U.S. institutions. The BPS:04/09 second follow-up study for which clearance is requested will involve a web-based interview conducted in phases: the first phase—the *early response* period—will allow sample members to complete a self-administered interview or conduct a telephone interview, if needed. Interviews completed during this first phase, which covers the first 4 weeks following notification about the study, will be eligible for a monetary incentive (see section B.10 for a discussion of proposed experiments to evaluate the impact of various incentives.) During the second phase—*production interviewing*—outbound calls will be made by call center staff to sample members who did not complete the interview during the first 4 weeks of data collection. When necessary, the final *nonresponse conversion* phase of interviewing will allow specially trained interviewers to target sample members who refused to participate in the interview or were difficult to locate. These sample members will be eligible for a monetary incentive for interview completion.

Like the BPS:04/06 field test, the original design for the BPS:04/09 field test includes computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) as a component of the nonresponse conversion phase. Typically with CAPI, field interviewing staff conduct interviews with sample members who reached the nonresponse conversion phase of data collection and whose last address is within one of several geographic clusters created from the sample. However, because its brief data collection period did not allow sufficient cases to reach the nonresponse conversion phase, the BPS:04/06 field test forced cases to the field to ensure a sufficient number was available to fully test field procedures. Of the cases sent to the field for CAPI during the BPS:04/06 field test, 56.5 percent were forced to the field. In light of the BPS:04/06 field test experience, therefore, the CAPI effort will be omitted from the BPS:04/09 field test. RTI will still have an opportunity to test its field procedures as part of the field test for the B&B:08/09 study, which will target a similarly aged, postsecondary population. CAPI will be used as originally designed during the BPS:04/09 full-scale data collection.

Additional data for the BPS:04/09 field test and full-scale student samples will be obtained from a variety of extant data sources. Student financial aid data will come from the Central Processing System (CPS), which houses and processes data contained in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms; these data will be obtained through file matching/ downloading with this system. Data will also be obtained from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), Pell loan and grant files, and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). As part of data collection, these files will be used to assist the process for eligibility determination. The files will also be included directly or as derived variables in producing the final study data file. A description of matching procedures and the security measures in place for the linkages to extant data sources is provided in appendix G.

o Purposes and Uses of the Data

The BPS study series is the only nationally representative sample of all students beginning postsecondary education for the first time, including nontraditional students who do not enter postsecondary education immediately after high school, and students in short-term vocational programs as well as those in academic ones. It is also the only study that makes it possible to trace the paths of these students throughout the entire system of postsecondary education over a number of years, rather than focusing only on their experience at the first institution attended.

BPS:04/09 will be the third data collection with students who first entered postsecondary education in 2003–04. The NPSAS:04 survey served as the first, base-year data collection in which the BPS:04/09 sample was identified and initially interviewed. In addition to the usual information about student background, enrollment, and educational financing gathered for all students in NPSAS:04, the BPS cohort members were asked about the reasons for their college choice, satisfaction with the institution, participation in activities, and academic experiences during the first year. This survey data was augmented with self-reported information about their high school curriculum and grades by matching records with the admissions test files from the College Board (SAT) and ACT. The BPS:04 study series, therefore, includes a great deal of data about the high school performance of college freshmen that may be analyzed in relation to their later experiences.

The second data collection with the BPS cohort was conducted in 2006, the third academic year after the sample began postsecondary education. The BPS:04/06 interview was designed to update information on postsecondary enrollment since the base year, as well as demographic characteristics, finances, debts, and income, and goals. In addition, the interview collected information on students' experiences while enrolled and as they transitioned to employment. The public use data files from the BPS:04/06 survey were released in June 2007.

BPS:04/09, the second follow-up interview, will be conducted in the sixth academic year since the cohort entered postsecondary education. At the time of the first follow-up (2006), about 15 percent of the BPS sample members had completed programs (primarily vocational certificates and associate's degrees), about 50 percent were still enrolled, and about 35 percent had left without a degree. Assuming that patterns for this cohort are similar to those of BPS:96/01, the majority of those who completed a vocational program, transferred between institutions, and left postsecondary education without a degree did so during the first 2 years. Among the issues to be addressed in the second follow-up are rates of degree attainment and time-to-degree for those still enrolled since 2006, and transition to employment for those no longer enrolled.

- o **Research Issues Addressed in the 2009 Student Interview Data Elements**

- **Persistence and Attainment at 4-year Colleges**

Unlike the typical study of retention of entering freshman at a single institution, BPS allows for the study of student persistence and attainment anywhere. This is increasingly important because, as the BPS:96/01 study showed, about one-third of all beginning students transfer from the 4-year institution where they started. BPS is the only survey that allows the frequently cited high college dropout rate to be put into a proper perspective: although one-half of all 4-year college freshmen did not complete a degree at the institution where they started, nearly three-fourths did continue or completed a postsecondary degree somewhere within 6 years. BPS:04/09 will provide data to compare the 6-year persistence and attainment rates of 4-year college freshmen with the BPS:96/01 cohort. These issues are addressed in parts A and B of the data elements.

- **Persistence and Attainment of Community College Students**

Students who begin at community colleges have much lower persistence and attainment rates than those who begin at 4-year colleges. An appropriate (and fair) comparison of the two requires an emphasis on the diversity of the community college student population and their broader range of reasons for enrolling. Several questions in the earlier interviews allow us to identify those students who are not enrolled to get any certificate or degree, those who intend to transfer into a bachelor's program with or without a degree, and those who have certificate or associate's degree goals. The focus in BPS:04/09 will be on those attempting to complete academic transfer programs. Community college students with baccalaureate goals may take longer to complete them because of the problem of transferring credits, and they are also more likely to attend part time and to have stopout periods. These issues are addressed in parts A and B of the data elements.

- **Nontraditional Student Persistence**

The BPS:96/01 data indicate that nontraditional students have the same rates of completion as traditional students in vocational certificate programs at less-than-2-year institutions, but have much lower rates of persistence if they attend community colleges or 4-year colleges. A recent analysis of this data found that if nontraditional students persisted into the second year, their further persistence and attainment were the same as that of traditional students. BPS:04/09 will collect more information about those nontraditional students who persisted, and some of the reasons they were successful. These issues are addressed in parts A, B, and C of the data elements.

- **Traditional Student Persistence and Work While Enrolled**

BPS:04/09 will continue to focus on the impact of employment while enrolled among traditional students, which was an important part of the base-year (2004) and first follow-up (2006) interviews. All of the recent NPSAS and BPS surveys have found that the vast majority of students work while enrolled, and many of them work more than 20 hours a week even when they are enrolled full time. The negative effect of working more than 20 hours on academic performance has been shown in several studies, and the effect on traditional student persistence and attainment continues to be a major issue. These issues are addressed in part C of the data elements.

- **Financial Aid and Student Loan Debt**

One of the major federal policy concerns is the relationship between student persistence and attainment and financial aid among low-income students. The supplemental data in part D of the data elements will help address the relationship of federal Pell grants and federal Stafford loans and persistence. Several new data elements in the interview collect information about student awareness of the new National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (National SMART) grants program, and the impact on the behavior of students who received them. There are also items that ask about the types of student loans received (including private loans), total loan debt, and repayment.

- **Postbaccalaureate Transitions**

For those who have completed a bachelor's degree by the time of the second follow-up, the issues will be similar to those in B&B:08/09, that is, how they made the transition to the labor force and the characteristics of their first jobs. For the relatively small number in the sample that may be expected to have continued their education in graduate school, issues of interest will include financing of graduate education and relationship to employment and career goals. These issues are addressed in parts E and F of the data elements.

- **Rate of Return from Sub-baccalaureate Programs**

More than one-half of the BPS:04/09 students began at 2-year or less-than-2 year institutions offering vocational certificate and applied associate's degree programs. A major research issue addressed in BPS:04/06 was how much the education and training that the students received contributed to their ability to find related employment or advancement in a position. In the 2009 interview, these former students will be interviewed again with a focus on the level and stability of their employment and earnings, and the relationship of their education and the jobs that they hold. These issues are addressed in part F of the data elements.

- **Current Demographics, Disabilities, Personal Goals, Civic participation**

Parts G through J of the data elements address other issues of interest: the respondent's marital status, living arrangements, income, and debt after leaving school (with or without a degree); disabilities; and personal goals (which may be compared to their responses in prior years). The positive impact of postsecondary education on voting and community service is addressed using the civic participation segment of the data elements. Of particular interest is whether the college experience results in greater involvement in voting and community service activities, the reasons for participating in community service, and satisfaction with the opportunities for community service available at colleges.

- o **Use of Information Technology**

To improve the efficiency of data collection, the BPS:04/09 interview will be administered using three data collection modes. During the first 4 weeks of data collection, a self-administered interview will be available for respondents with computer access. If the self-administered interview is not completed, those cases will be eligible for interview using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). During the BPS:04/09 full-scale data collection, in order to interview sample members who did not complete either the self-administered or CATI interview, field interviewers will attempt to interview nonrespondents in the field, using CAPI. Although administered in multiple modes, the instruments used for interviewing will contain the same question wording, item order and logic, and range/consistency checks.

The multimode approach planned for BPS:04/09 offers several advantages that keep participant burden at a minimum while ensuring collection of high-quality data. First, the wording and presentation of subsequent interview questions can be tailored to reflect answers already received in the interview, as well as information collected from other sources and preloaded for use during the interview. Second, online help screens will be available to provide respondents with more in-depth explanations of questions and examples of the categories of

answers listed. Both self-administered respondents and CATI and CAPI interviewers (once field interviewing is underway) will have access to the same help screens. Finally, regardless of mode, respondents will be able to complete a portion of the interview and return to complete the interview at a later time, rather than requiring the interview to be completed in a single session.

0 Efforts to Identify Duplication

Since the inception of NPSAS and in the planning for the BPS study series, NCES has consulted with other federal offices, such as the Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education, the Planning and Evaluation Service, the Congressional Budget Office, the National Science Foundation, and the Office of Management and Budget. In addition, consultations with nonfederal associations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) confirm that the data to be collected through the NPSAS and BPS study series are not available from any other sources. These consultations also provided, and continue to provide, methodological insights from the results of other longitudinal postsecondary student studies and assure that the data collected through BPS will meet the needs of the federal government and other relevant organizations.

o Method Used to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses

Sample members for BPS:04/09 are individuals, and direct data collection activities via self-administered interviewing, CATI, and CAPI will involve no burden to small businesses or entities. Some small businesses, such as for-profit schools and other organizations, may be contacted to obtain current addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of sample members who cannot be located through any other sources. Procedures to minimize burden to these agencies and organizations will be implemented based on the results of NPSAS and prior BPS follow-up studies. Specifically, no organization or agency will be contacted for student locating information until all other avenues of tracing have been exhausted for a student. In addition, requested information will consist entirely of key data that are routinely available to administrators and managers of these small businesses and entities (e.g., telephone and address information contained in student directories or the files of school registrars, alumni offices, job placement programs).

o Frequency of Data Collection

[P.L.] 107-279 requires that longitudinal studies of beginning postsecondary students (BPS) and graduating seniors (B&B) be based on NPSAS now being conducted every 4 years. The rationale for conducting NPSAS, with follow-up studies through the BPS and B&B series in alternating NPSAS base years, is based on historical need for information on financial aid programs and persistence and attainment in higher education. In particular, the large-scale and rapid changes in federal policy concerning postsecondary student and special support services and other interventions necessitate frequent studies to ensure that policy decisions are based on current information. Policy and program changes affecting elementary and secondary education may also have an ultimate impact on postsecondary enrollment and attainment.

Repeated surveys are also necessary because of rapid changes in the postsecondary environment itself. The size, age, preparation, ability, and financial strength of the student population have changed, and will continue to change because of changes in the size of the

traditional postsecondary-age population and the increased likelihood of some demographic groups to seek postsecondary education (e.g., women, minorities, and older students). Changes in the demographic characteristics of students may affect their ability to finance postsecondary education. Repeated surveys will allow researchers to determine whether the increased reliance on federal student loans and reliance on credit may have increased debt burden and reduced plans for further education, such as graduate studies.

0 **Special Circumstances of Data Collection**

No special circumstances of data collection are anticipated.

o **Consultants Outside the Agency**

In recognition of the significance of BPS data collection, several strategies have been incorporated into the project work plan that allow for the critical review and acquisition of comments relating to project activities, interim and final products, and projected and actual outcomes. These strategies include consultations with persons and organizations both internal and external to the NCES, the U.S. Department of Education, and the federal government.

Previous BPS implementations have benefited from a standing federal review panel composed of staff from several offices in the Department of Education (OPE and OPP) and representatives of OMB and CBO. Members of this panel also belong to the Technical Review Panel (TRP) for BPS:04/09. The membership of the TRP (see appendix B for a List of TRP Members) represents a broad spectrum of the postsecondary researchers, economists, and members of the financial aid community. Panel members serve as expert reviewers on the technical aspects of the study design, data collection procedures, and instrument design, especially item content and format. The TRP reviewed the draft data elements presented in Section C during their September 2007 meeting.

0 **Provision of Payments or Gifts to Respondents**

In this section, we describe our plans for improving cohort response rates through the payment of incentives. We propose to offer two different types of incentives during the BPS:04/09 field test, including an embedded experiment designed to reduce data collection costs by encouraging sample members to respond early in the data collection period and to respond by the most cost-effective approach (a web-based, self-administered interview). We will conduct an experiment to determine the effect that a prepaid incentive has on participation rates. We will also offer a nonresponse incentive to reduce the potential for nonresponse bias.²

▪ **Early Response Incentive**

During the BPS:04/09 field test, three incentive groups are proposed for comparison during the early response period: a promised incentive of \$30 and \$5 prepaid in cash with a promise of a \$25 check. The Tests of Procedures and Methods section of this document (section B.4) discusses this experiment in detail.

² This nonresponse incentive was approved by OMB and used effectively during other studies sponsored by NCES, including the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:04) and the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06), which serves as the base-year and first follow-up interviews for BPS:04/09.

While we will encourage all sample members to complete a self-administered interview via the Web, help desk staff will be trained to administer the telephone interview. If, for some reason, a sample member calls in because he or she cannot complete the self-administered interview, help desk staff will conduct a telephone interview and the sample member will still be paid the early response incentive.

- **Production Interviewing Incentive**

Once the early response period ends, telephone interviewers will begin making outgoing calls to the remaining sample in what is referred to as the *production interviewing phase*. During this second phase of data collection, we will not offer any incentive for completed interviews.

- **Nonresponse Conversion Incentive**

In the final phase of data collection, the *nonresponse conversion* period, a \$30 incentive paid by check will be offered to sample members who refuse to be interviewed and who cannot be otherwise contacted.

- **First Follow-Up Nonrespondents**

In addition to the proposed incentive groups, we plan to offer a \$20 differential to sample members who were nonrespondents to the last interview. Consistent with the ELS:2002 first follow-up, we intend to offer first follow-up nonrespondents a higher incentive payment than other sample members. Prior round nonrespondents typically are more difficult to include in the follow-up study, yet they play a vital analytic role in reducing bias.

- o **Assurance of Confidentiality**

NCES assures participating individuals and institutions that any data collected under BPS and related programs shall be in total conformity with NCES's standards for protecting the privacy of individuals.

BPS:04/09 is authorized under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law [P.L.] 107-279, Title 1 Part C), which requires NCES to:

“collect, report, analyze, and disseminate statistical data related to education in the United States and in other nations, including:

(1) collecting, acquiring, compiling... and disseminating full and complete statistics on the condition and progress of education, at the preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels in the United States, including data on—

(E) educational access to and opportunity for postsecondary education, including data on financial aid to postsecondary students;”

Section 153 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 further states that:

"all collection, maintenance, use, and wide dissemination of data by the Institute, including each office, board, committee, and Center of the Institute, shall conform with the requirements of section 552A of title 5, United States Code [which protects the confidentiality rights of individual respondents with regard to the data collected, reported, and published under this title]." (Section 153)

The assurance of confidentiality plan for BPS:04/09 was developed by NCES and RTI jointly. BPS:04/09 will conform totally to federal regulations, specifically the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (5 USC 522a), Privacy Act Regulations [34 CFR Part 5b], Section 506(d) of the General Education Provisions Act, as amended by the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments of 1988 [P.L. 100-297], and NCES *Standards and Policies*, which denote separate laws to protect the confidentiality of individually identifiable information collected by NCES: the Privacy Act of 1974, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, and the USA Patriot Act of 2001.

The plan for maintaining confidentiality includes notarized nondisclosure affidavits obtained from all personnel who will have access to individual identifiers (copies of the agreement and affidavit are provided in appendix C). Also, personnel training will cover several topics, including the meaning of confidentiality; controlled and protected access to computer files under the control of a single database manager; built-in safeguards concerning status monitoring and receipt control systems; and a secure, staffed, in-house computing facility.

Furthermore, the Department has established a policy, OM:5-101 (last updated July 7, 2005), regarding the personnel security screening requirements for all contractor employees and their subcontractors. The contractor must comply with these personnel security screening requirements throughout the life of the contract. There are several requirements that the contractor must meet for each employee working on the contract for 30 days or more. Among these requirements are that each person working on the contract be assigned a position risk level. The risk levels are high, moderate, and low based upon the level of harm that a person in the position can cause to the Department's interests. Each person working on the contract must complete the requirements for a "Contractor Security Screening." Depending on the risk level assigned to each person's position, a follow-up background investigation by the Department will occur. Materials related to these security features are provided in appendix C.

All data transferred for the BPS study will be transmitted through a secure server at NCES that has been used successfully and without incident on the NPSAS:08 field test and BPS:04/06 studies. Procedures have been put into place for using the server to transfer confidential data. The system requires that both parties to the transfer be registered users of the NCES Members Site and that their Members Site privileges be set to allow use of the secure data transfer service. These privileges are set up and carefully controlled by NCES' Chief Technology Officer (CTO). This service has been designed by ED/NCES specifically for the secure transfer of electronic files containing personally identifying information (i.e., data protected under the Privacy Act or otherwise posing risk of disclosure) and can be used for NCES-to-Contractor, Contractor-to-Subcontractor, Subcontractor-to-Contractor, and Contractor-to-Other-Agency data transfers. The party uploading the information onto the secure server at NCES is responsible for deleting the file(s) after the successful transfer has been confirmed. Data transfers using this system will include notification to IES, the NCES CTO, and the NCES Deputy Commissioner as well as the NCES project officer. The notification will include the names and affiliations of the parties in the data exchange/transfer and the nature and approximate size of the data to be transferred.

We will use this electronic system for submitting data containing potentially identifying information (such as SSNs, names and dates of birth of our sample members) along with their survey ID (not the same ID that is available on the restricted-use data). As an additional precaution, we will use WinZip (at least version 10), with the highest level of encryption

available (currently FIPS approved 256-bit AES encryption) and a strong password to further protect the file.

Additionally, RTI maintains a standing Committee on Human Subjects to ensure that all Institute surveys of human populations comply with applicable regulations concerning informed consent, confidentiality, and protection of privacy. This group serves as the Institute's Institutional Review Board (IRB) as required by law (45 CFR #46). RTI policy requires that the IRB independently review and approve the study design, instruments, and procedures, and monitor the study annually to ensure that sample members' rights are fully protected.

Study notification materials sent to students (see appendix D) will describe the voluntary nature of the BPS:04/09 survey and convey the extent to which respondent identifiers and all responses will be kept confidential. Similarly, the scripts to be read by interviewing staff will be very specific in the assurances made to respondents and contacts.

o Sensitive Questions

The BPS:04/09 student interview contains items about earnings, assets and debts, and marital and family status. Federal regulations governing the administration of these questions, which might be viewed as "sensitive" due to personal or private information, require (a) clear documentation of the need for such information as it relates to the primary purpose of the study, and (b) provisions to respondents which clearly inform them of the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and (c) assurances of confidential treatment of responses.

The collection of data related to income, earnings, assets, and indebtedness is central to understanding key policy issues driving this study. One issue concerns access to and successful completion of postsecondary education. Information about financial assets and liabilities can play an important role in explaining whether one starts and persists in the postsecondary program, and whether and at what level financial aid is available. In addition, information about income, earnings, and assets are vital labor force variables and provide important indicators of the rate of return of educational experiences to the respondent.

The collection of information about marital and family status also facilitates the exploration of key policy issues. Social and economic support provided by spouses can play an important role in promoting the postsecondary education of respondents and the development of successful careers. On the other hand, having a large number of dependents (with or without, but particularly without, partner support) can be a significant restraint on attainment. The information gathered in these areas will allow researchers to assess levels of support and dependency and will allow policy analysts to make inferences about what types of social policies might be useful to remedy problems that are detected.

Several procedures have been implemented to provide assurances to respondents about the voluntary nature of participation in the study and the confidential treatment of survey responses. A discussion of these procedures appears in section A, item 10, above.

o Estimates of Response Burden

Burden estimates for the data collection activity are provided in table 2, and estimated costs to respondents are presented in table 3.

o **Estimates of Cost**

There are no capital, startup, or operating costs to respondents for participation in the project. No equipment, printing, or postage charges will be incurred to respondents.

Table 2. Maximum estimated burden on respondents

Data collection activity	Sample	Expected response rate (percent)	Number of respondents	Average burden per response (in minutes)	Range of response times (in minutes)	Total burden (in hours)
BPS:04/09 Field Test						
Student interview	1,137	76	865	25	15–60	360
Student reinterview	150	90	135	10	5–15	23
Total	1,287		1,000			383
BPS:04/09 Full-scale Study						
Student interview	18,644	84	15,693	20	15–60	5,231

NOTE: BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students

Table 3. Maximum estimated costs to respondents for the BPS:04/09 field test and full-scale implementations

Data collection activity	Sample	Response rate (percent)	Number of respondents	Average burden (in minutes)	Total burden (in hours)	Rate per hour (\$)	Total cost (\$)
BPS:04/09 Field Test							
Student interview	1,137	76	865	25	360	10	3,600
Student reinterview	150	90	135	10	23	10	230
Total	1,287		1,000		383		3,830
BPS:04/09 Full-scale Study							
Student interview	18,644	84	15,693	20	5,231	10	52,310

NOTE: BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students

o **Costs to Federal Government**

A summary of estimated costs to the federal government for BPS:04/09, shown in table 4, are categorized by field test, full-scale survey, and total costs. Included in the contract estimates are all staff time, reproduction, postage and telephone costs associated with the management, data collection, analysis, and reporting for which clearance is requested. A more detailed breakdown of contract costs is provided in table 5.

Table 4. Individual and total costs to NCES for the BPS:04/09 field test and full-scale implementations

Costs to NCES	Amount (in \$)
BPS:04/09 Field Test	
Salaries and expenses	\$55,610
Contract costs	1,676,389
Total	1,731,999
BPS:04/09 Full-scale Study	
Salaries and expenses	142,375
Contract costs	5,044,019
Total	5,186,394
Total costs	
Salaries and expenses	197,985
Contract costs	6,720,408
Total	6,918,393

NOTE: BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students. NCES = National Center for Education Statistics.

o **Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs**

The field test student interview from the base-year study (NPSAS:04) took approximately 33 minutes to complete for FTBs. The BPS:04/06 field test took approximately 25 minutes to complete. With changes in the types of information to be collected, we anticipate that the second follow-up interview will also take about 25 minutes for the field test. For the full-scale study, we will try to develop an instrument requiring less than 20 minutes to administer.

o **Publication Plans and Time Schedule**

The formal contract for BPS:04/09 requires the following reports, publications, or other public information releases:

- *A First Look* and a descriptive report of significant findings for dissemination to a broad audience.
- A detailed field test working paper and a full-scale methodological report describing all aspects of the study design and data collection procedures for the field test and full-scale data collections.
- Complete data files and documentation for research data users.

- Special tabulations of issues of interest to the higher education community, as determined by NCES.

Table 5. Contract costs for BPS:04/09

Study area and task management		Budgeted amount (in \$)
Total		\$6,720,408.00
110	Post-award conference	16,057.00
120	Schedules	21,096.00
130	Monthly reports	159,478.00
140	Integrated monitoring system	591,927.00
150	Technical review panels	403,481.00
Field test (FT)		
210	Sampling	56,036.00
220	IMT/OMB forms clearance	63,030.00
231	Instrumentation	597,055.00
232	Tracing	92,228.00
234	Help desk/telephone/field interviewing training	120,865.00
236	Web/CATI data collection	204,179.00
237	Data processing	119,562.00
240	Methodology report	82,851.00
Full-scale (FS) data collection		
310	Sampling	48,341.00
320	IMT/OMB forms clearance	32,775.00
331	Instrumentation	458,503.00
332	Tracing	356,268.00
334	Help Desk/CATI/field interviewing training	494,053.00
336	Web/CATI/CAPI data collection	1,862,627.00
337	Data processing	148,987.00
338	Weighting, imputations, and nonresponse bias analysis	151,658.00
340	Methodology report	98,858.00
Descriptive reporting		
410	<i>First Look</i> report	163,905.00
420	Data analysis system	93,047.00
430	Additional special tabulations	93,093.00
440	Descriptive report	184,174.00
460	Final technical memo	6,274.00

NOTE: BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students. OMB = Office of Management and Budget. CAPI = computer-assisted personal interviewing. CATI = computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

The operational schedule for the BPS:04/09 field test and full-scale study is shown in table 6.

Table 6. Operational schedule for BPS:04/09 field test and full-scale studies

Activity	Start date	End date
BPS:04/09 Field Test		
Finalize student sample	9-27-2007	11-16-2007
Self-administered Web/CATI data collection	3-24-2008	6-30-2008
Process data, construct data files	7-1-2008	8-29-2008
Prepare methodology report	5-2-2008	7-30-2009
BPS:04/09 Full-Scale		
Finalize student sample	8-1-2008	9-30-2008
Self-administered Web/CATI data collection	2-24-2009	9-14-2009
Field CAPI data collection	6-15-2009	9-14-2009
Process data, construct data files	9-15-2009	3-30-2010
Prepare methodology report	5-2-2009	7-30-2010
<i>First Look</i> report	4-30-2010	7-30-2010
Descriptive report	8-30-2010	11-19-2010

NOTE: BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students. CAPI = computer-assisted personal interviewing. CATI = computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

o Approval to Not Display Expiration Date for OMB Approval

The expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection *will be displayed* on data collection instruments and materials. No special exception to this request is requested.

o Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification statement identified in the Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions of OMB Form 83-i.