

Appendix D

Introductory Letters to Students and Parents

D.1 BPS:04/09 Information Brochure

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

What has happened in your life in the past few years? Have you earned a college degree, begun a career, or enrolled in graduate school? The Beginning Postsecondary Studies (BPS) Longitudinal Study wants to know!

Why was I chosen to participate?

You were selected to participate in BPS because you first enrolled in postsecondary education during the 2002–03 academic year. Study participants were interviewed for the first time in 2003. Now, we are contacting you for the third and final time, to find out about your experiences in education and employment during the past few years.

What is BPS about?

We are interviewing more than 1,100 people like you, selected from approximately 173 institutions, to find out about their experiences during the 6 years since they first enrolled in postsecondary education. We need your help and comments to collect information about your:

- Experience in the workforce
- Experience in, or plans for, graduate education
- Earnings and ability to repay student loans
- Family status
- Participation in civic activities

Who is conducting the study?

BPS is sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. The study is being conducted under contract by RTI International (RTI), a nonprofit research organization located in North Carolina. BPS is authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279).

When will the study be conducted?

Beginning in March of 2008, students who began their postsecondary education during the 2002–03 academic year will be contacted to complete the BPS web-based interview. Students who do not complete the self-administered web-based interview within 3 weeks will be contacted by a professionally trained telephone interviewer and asked to complete the interview over the telephone.

What have we learned from BPS?

The last BPS study, which involved students who first enrolled in postsecondary education (including community colleges, 4-year colleges, universities, and vocational schools) during the 2002–03 academic year, showed that:

- 83 percent of beginning students (who were recent high school graduates) enrolled full-time in postsecondary institutions with plans for a bachelor's degree, were still enrolled at a postsecondary institution 3 years later.
- 62 percent of beginning students, who first enrolled at a public 2-year institution and then transferred to another institution, had not yet attained a degree and were still enrolled at some postsecondary institution 3 years later.
- 50 percent of beginning independent students who first enrolled at 4-year institutions had not attained a degree and were no longer enrolled 3 years later.

- Among students who were recent high school graduates first enrolled at public 2-year institutions with associate's degree plans, 23 percent attained an associate's degree from that institution, 31 percent were still enrolled there without a degree, 24 percent had transferred elsewhere without a degree, and 21 percent had not attained a degree and were not enrolled there or anywhere else 3 years later.

Why should I participate?

Congress and other policymakers use data from BPS when they consider how new legislation will affect postsecondary students. Information from the survey helps them answer questions such as:

- What percentage of beginning students complete their degree programs?
- Do students who receive financial aid complete their programs in the same length of time as those who do not receive financial aid?
- Why do students leave school?
- Is increased financial aid associated with completion?
- How long does it take students to complete various types of degree programs?

Although participation in the study is voluntary, there is no substitute for *your* responses.

Will my answers be kept confidential?

Interview responses, combined with student record information, may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in personally identifiable form for any other purpose, unless otherwise compelled by law.

The following procedures have been implemented to ensure the confidentiality of your responses:

- Your answers are secured behind firewalls and are encrypted during Internet transmission using Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol. All data entry modules are password protected and require the user to log in before accessing confidential data.
- Project staff may be severely fined or imprisoned for disclosure of individual responses.
- Confidentiality procedures are reviewed and approved by RTI's Institutional Review Board (Committee for Protection of Human Subjects).

How do I participate?

You may complete the BPS interview in one of two ways:

1. Log in to the study website at <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps> then simply select the login link and enter your Study ID and password when prompted. If you need assistance, call the BPS Help Desk at 1-800-334-2321, or contact us via e-mail at bps@rti.org.
2. Complete the interview by telephone. If you prefer to complete the BPS interview by telephone with a professionally trained interviewer from RTI, you may call the BPS Help Desk at 1-800-334-2321.

How long will it take?

On average, the interview lasts about 25 minutes. Web interview time will vary depending on your Internet connection speed.

Are there any benefits or risks to my participation?

Your participation in BPS will help ensure the success of the study and help policymakers and educators better understand the costs and benefits of postsecondary education. There are no other known benefits to

your participation. The risk of participation in this study relates to data security and is minimal, given the strict confidentiality and security procedures in place.

How can I get a copy of the results?

Publications from previous studies are available free of charge on the NCES website at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/>. Results from the current study are scheduled to be released in 2009 and will be posted on the NCES site as soon as they are available.

Where can I get more information about BPS?

For more information on participating, visit the study's website at <http://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps>.

To make an appointment to complete the interview by telephone, or for assistance in completing the web interview, call 1-800-334-2321.

You may also contact us by

E-mail: bps@rti.org

Fax: 919-541-7014

TDD: 1-877-212-7230

If you have questions or concerns, you may contact the following:

BPS Project Director (RTI)

Dr. Jennifer Wine

1-877-225-8470 (toll-free)

jennifer@rti.org

BPS Project Officer (NCES)

Dr. Tracey Hunt-White

1-202- 502-7438

Tracy.Hunt-White@ed.gov

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, please call RTI's Institutional Review Board at 1-866-214-2043 (toll-free) or send an e-mail message to orpe@rti.org regarding IRB number 11899.

[NCES logo]

National Center for Education Statistics

Institute of Education Sciences

U.S. Department of Education

D.2 Initial Contact Letter to Parents

Date

«Cpfname» «Cpmname» «Cplname»
 «CAddr1»
 «CAddr2»
 «CCity», «CState» «CZip» «CZip4»

Study ID: «caseid»
 «panelinfo»

Dear «Cpfname» «Cplname»:

Students who first began their postsecondary education in the 2002–03 school year were selected to participate in the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. This study collects information, over time, on students' postsecondary experiences, work while enrolled, persistence in school, degree completion, and employment following enrollment. The enclosed pamphlet describes BPS in more detail and presents selected findings from prior BPS studies.

«sPfname» «sPlname» has been randomly selected to participate in the next round of BPS. We need your help to update our records for «pronoun2». «text1». ***Please take a few minutes to update the enclosed Address Update Information sheet and return it in the enclosed postage paid envelope.***

We will be re-contacting «sPfname» and other study participants beginning in early spring 2006 to ask questions about their recent education and employment experiences. Your help in updating our records will ensure the success of the study. Only a limited number of people were selected for the study. Therefore, each person selected represents many others, and it is extremely important that we be able to contact them. If «sPfname» completes the interview on the Web by the date provided «pronoun2», «pronoun1» will **receive \$«IncAmt»** as a token of our appreciation.

NCES has contracted with RTI International to conduct this cycle of the BPS data collection. Please be assured that both NCES and RTI follow strict confidentiality procedures to protect the privacy of study participants and the confidentiality of the information collected. If you have any questions about the study, please call the RTI study director, Dr. Jennifer Wine, toll-free at 1-877-225-8470.

We sincerely appreciate your assistance and thank you in advance for helping us conduct this important study.

Sincerely,



Mark Schneider
 Commissioner
 National Center for Education Statistics
 Enclosures

Go to: http://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps Your study ID: «caseid»

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education is authorized by federal law (Public Law 107-279) to conduct the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study. NCES will authorize only a limited number of researchers to have access to information which could be used to identify individuals. They may use the data for statistical purposes only and are subject to fines and imprisonment for misuse.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is 1850-0631, and it is completely voluntary. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 25 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving the interview, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20006. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual interview, write directly to: Tracy Hunt-White, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006.

D.3 Initial Contact Letter to Prior BPS Respondents

Date

«fname» «mname» «lname» «suffix»

«addr1»

«addr2»

«city», «state» «zip»

Study ID: «caseid»

«panelinfo»

Dear «fname» «lname»:

In 2005, you participated in the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) for the U.S. Department of Education that focused on your early experiences as a postsecondary student and how you paid for your school expenses that year. We are now seeking your help with a follow-up interview with you and students like you who began their education in the 2002–03 academic year. We would like to know what you have been doing since 2005, in terms of your education and your work experience. This study collects information, over time, on students' postsecondary experiences, work while enrolled, persistence in school, degree completion, and employment following enrollment.

The interview will take about 25 minutes to complete on the Web whenever it is convenient for you. When data collection begins in March, you will receive a letter that will provide specific information on how to participate. If you complete the interview on the Web by the date indicated on the letter, you will receive \$«IncAmt» as a token of our appreciation.

Your participation, while voluntary, is critical to the study's success. By law, we are required to protect your privacy. Your responses will be secured behind firewalls and will be encrypted during Internet transmission. Your responses may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law.

Enclosed you will find a brochure with a brief description of BPS, findings from prior BPS studies, and confidentiality procedures. If your contact information has changed, you may provide your new address and telephone number on the enclosed address update sheet and return it to us in the business reply envelope provided. To find out more about this BPS interview and to update your contact information online, visit the study's website at <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps/>.

The BPS study is being conducted for the U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics by RTI International. If you have any questions about the study, please call the RTI study director, Dr. Jennifer Wine, toll-free at 1-877-225-8470.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this important study. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Schneider
Commissioner
National Center for Education Statistics
Enclosures

Go to: http://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps Your study ID: «caseid»

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education is authorized by federal law (Public Law 107-279) to conduct the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study. NCES will authorize only a limited number of researchers to have access to information which could be used to identify individuals. They may use the data for statistical purposes only and are subject to fines and imprisonment for misuse.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is 1850-0631, and it is completely voluntary. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 25 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving the interview, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20006. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual interview, write directly to: Tracy Hunt-White, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006.

D.4 Initial Contact Letter to Prior BPS Nonrespondents

Date

«fname» «mname» «lname» «suffix»

Study ID: «caseid»
«panelinfo»

«addr1»

«addr2»

«city», «state» «zip»

Dear «fname» «lname»:

You have been randomly selected to take part in the 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. This study collects information from you and students like you who began their postsecondary education in the 2002–03 academic year, such as postsecondary experiences, work while enrolled, persistence in school, degree completion, and employment following enrollment.

The interview will take about 25 minutes to complete on the Web whenever it is convenient for you. When data collection begins in March, you will receive a letter that will provide specific information on how to participate. If you complete the interview on the Web by the date indicated on the letter, you will receive \$ «IncAmt» as a token of our appreciation.

Your participation, while voluntary, is critical to the study's success. By law, we are required to protect your privacy. Your responses will be secured behind firewalls and will be encrypted during Internet transmission. Your responses may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law.

Enclosed you will find a brochure with a brief description of BPS, findings from prior BPS studies, and confidentiality procedures. If your contact information has changed, you may provide your new address and telephone number on the enclosed address update sheet and return it to us in the business reply envelope provided. To find out more about this BPS interview and to update your contact information online, visit the study's website at <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps/>.

The BPS study is being conducted for the U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics by RTI International. If you have any questions about the study, please call the RTI study director, Dr. Jennifer Wine, toll-free at 1-877-225-8470.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this important study. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Schneider
Commissioner
National Center for Education Statistics
Enclosures

<p>Go to: http://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps Your study ID: «caseid»</p>

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education is authorized by federal law (Public Law 107-279) to conduct the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study. NCES will authorize only a limited number of researchers to have access to information which could be used to identify individuals. They may use the data for statistical purposes only and are subject to fines and imprisonment for misuse.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is 1850-0631, and it is completely voluntary. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 25 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving the interview, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20006. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual interview, write directly to: Tracy Hunt-White, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006.

D.5 Address Update Sheet

**Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study
Address Update Information**

Study ID: «caseid»

1. Please review your current address displayed on the left side of the address box below. Check here if all information pre-printed in this section is **correct**.....

If your address is not correct or is not current, **please update** it in the space provided on the right side of the box. To update your locating information online, visit our secure website at [//surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps](http://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps) and refer to your Study ID «caseid».

«fname» «mname» «lname» «suffix» «addr1» «addr2» «city», «state» «zip»«zip4» «sarea1» «sphone1» «panelinfo»	Name: _____ Address: _____ _____ Home phone: () _____ Work phone: () _____ Cell phone: () _____
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2. We will send an e-mail to let you know that data collection has begun. Please provide an e-mail address that we can use to contact you.

Primary e-mail address: _____

Alternative e-mail address: _____

3. Would you like us to send you a text message on your cell phone when data collection is about to begin? Please check one..... Yes No

If yes, what cell number should we use? _____

**Thank you for your assistance.
Please return this page in the enclosed postage paid envelope.**

D.6 Data Collection Announcement (No Prepaid Incentive)

Date

«fname» «mname» «lname» «suffix»

Study ID: «caseid»
«panelinfo»

«addr1»

«addr2»

«city», «state» «zip»

Dear «fname» «lname»:

Interviews for the next Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) are now being conducted. The interview will take about 25 minutes to complete on the Web whenever it is convenient for you. If you complete your BPS interview by «date», **you will receive a check for \$«IncAmt» as a token of our appreciation.**

You may access the web interview by logging on to our secure website at <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps/> using the Study ID provided below.

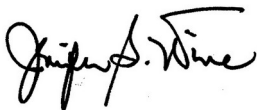
Study ID = «caseid»
Password = «password»

Enclosed you will find a pamphlet with a brief description of BPS, findings from prior BPS studies, and our confidentiality procedures. Your participation, while voluntary, is critical to the study's success. By law, we are required to protect your privacy. Your responses will be secured behind firewalls and will be encrypted during Internet transmission. Your responses may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law. If you have questions or problems completing your interview online, simply call the **BPS Help Desk at 1-800-334-2321.**

If you have any questions or concerns about the study itself, please contact the BPS Project Director, Dr. Jennifer Wine, toll free at 1-877-225-8470 (e-mail: jennifer@rti.org), or the NCES Project Officer, Dr. Tracy Hunt-White, at 202-502-7438 (e-mail: tracy.hunt-white@ed.gov).

Thank you in advance for making BPS a success.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Wine, Ph.D.
Project Director

D.7 Data Collection Announcement (with Prepaid Incentive)

Date

«fname» «mname» «lname» «suffix»

Study ID: «caseid»
«panelinfo»

«addr1»

«addr2»

«city», «state» «zip»

Dear «fname» «lname»:

Interviews for the next Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) are now being conducted. The interview will take about 25 minutes to complete on the Web whenever it is convenient for you. Please find enclosed \$5 (check/cash) as a token of our appreciation for completing the BPS interview. If you complete your BPS interview by «date», **we will also send you a check for an additional \$«IncAmt».**

You may access the web interview by logging on to our secure website at <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/bps/> using the Study ID provided below.

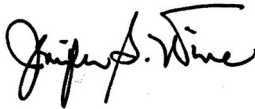
Study ID = «caseid»**Password** = «password»

Enclosed you will find a pamphlet with a brief description of BPS, findings from prior BPS studies, and our confidentiality procedures. Your participation, while voluntary, is critical to the study's success. By law, we are required to protect your privacy. Your responses will be secured behind firewalls and will be encrypted during Internet transmission. Your responses may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, except as required by law. If you have questions or problems completing your interview online, simply call the **BPS Help Desk at 1-800-334-2321.**

If you have any questions or concerns about the study itself, please contact the BPS Project Director, Dr. Jennifer Wine, toll free at 1-877-225-8470 (e-mail: jennifer@rti.org), or the NCES Project Officer, Dr. Tracy Hunt-White, at 202-502-7438 (e-mail: tracy.hunt-white@ed.gov).

Thank you in advance for making BPS a success.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Wine, Ph.D.
Project Director