

**2012/14 BEGINNING POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS
LONGITUDINAL STUDY: (BPS:12/14) FIELD TEST**

Supporting Statement Part A
Request for OMB Review
OMB # 1850-0631 v.7

Submitted by
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A. Justification

1. Circumstances Making Collection of Information Necessary

a. Purpose of this Submission

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education (ED), Institute of Education Sciences, is requesting clearance for data collection materials and procedures for the field test collection for the 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:12/14) first follow-up, including panel maintenance, student interview and reinterview, and administrative record matching. Following the field test study in 2013, NCES will submit a request for clearance of the BPS:12/14 full scale data collection to be conducted in spring 2014. Because only minimal changes are expected after the field test, NCES is requesting a waiver of the 60-day Federal Register Notice for the full-scale collection clearance submission.

The BPS longitudinal study is designed to follow a cohort of students who enroll in postsecondary education for the first time during the same academic year, irrespective of date of high school completion. The study collects data on student persistence in, and completion of, postsecondary education programs; their transition to employment; demographic characteristics; and changes over time in their goals, marital status, income, and debt, among other indicators. Data from BPS are used to help researchers and policymakers better understand how financial aid influences persistence and completion, what percentages of students complete various degree programs, what early employment and wage outcomes are for certificate and degree attainers, and why students leave school.

This study is being conducted under contract # ED- IES-09-C-0039 with RTI International¹ and its primary subcontractor, MPR Associates, as well as Coffey Consulting, LLC, Branch Associates, Research Support Services, and consultants Dr. Cynthia Decker and Ms. Andrea Sykes.

b. Summary of Study Design for BPS:12/14

The BPS:12/14 field test sample will consist of students eligible to participate in the NPSAS:12 field test study who first began postsecondary education during the 2010–11 academic year at U.S. institutions. The BPS:12/14 field test student interview, for which clearance is requested, will involve a web-based interview conducted in phases: the first phase—the early response phase—will offer sample members the opportunity to complete the BPS interview online with little or no intervention from telephone interviewers. During the early response phase, which will be the first 3 weeks of data collection, sample members will be eligible to receive \$30 for a completed interview.

Two central experiments will be conducted during the field test. The first experiment is designed to determine whether the estimated time burden of the interview affects the likelihood that base year nonrespondents will participate. Half of the base year nonrespondents, and all base year respondents, will be asked to complete the full, field test interview, while half of the base year nonrespondents will be asked to complete a shorter, modified version of the interview. Participation rates for the two nonrespondent groups will be compared both during the early response phase and throughout the entire data collection. All early response phase nonrespondents will move into the second data collection phase—*production interviewing*—in which outbound calls will be made by call center staff to remaining sample

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

members. Production interviewing will continue for 2 weeks without additional intervention; sample members will be eligible for a \$30 incentive for a completed interview. Throughout data collection, sample members offered the modified interview will only need to complete the shorter interview.

For the second experiment, any cases that are still nonrespondents at the end of the 2-week production interviewing period will be randomly divided into an experimental and control group, and an initial Mahalanobis distance calculated. Mahalanobis distance defines the distance between an individual case and a group centroid; cases with the larger distances tend to be those with the larger differences from the respondent group. Identifying high-distance cases and treating them strategically, such as with a higher incentive, may boost their participation, reducing bias in estimates and improving analytic power through higher sample sizes for the groups of analytic interest.

Those BPS:12/14 field test cases with the highest distances that had been assigned to the experimental group will be offered an increased incentive of \$55, with the expectation that the increased incentive will increase the likelihood of participation among cases contributing most to bias at the time. All other interview respondents will be eligible to receive a \$30 incentive. Outbound calling will continue for two weeks; at all times sample members may complete the interview online.

At the end of each of three subsequent 2-week data collection periods, Mahalanobis distances will again be calculated for remaining nonrespondents. New cases in the experimental group with the largest calculated distances at each time point will be offered a \$55 incentive; those high distance experimental cases already being offered \$55 will continue at that level. All other cases will remain at the \$30 incentive level. Outbound calling will continue for the remainder of data collection.

Throughout data collection, RTI will monitor response rates for the entire sample, and by key analytic groups to ensure that minimum rates are being achieved. Batch and intensive tracing, case review, and other techniques for tracing and interviewing will be applied as needed across the sample. While Mahalanobis distance calculations will be acted upon at four time points, the calculations will be made every week throughout data collection to better understand the dynamics of the values over time. Ultimately, this second experiment is designed to determine whether or not treatment of the high distance experimental group, i.e., the offer of the higher incentive, will reduce bias that would result if those high distance cases did not participate in the BPS:12/14 field test interview.

Additional data for the BPS:12/14 field test student sample will be obtained from a variety of administrative data sources. Student financial aid data will be matched and downloaded from the Central Processing System (CPS), which houses and processes data contained in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms. Data will also be obtained from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), which contains both federal Pell Grant and Stafford Loan data, and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) containing enrollment and degree attainment information provided by participating institutions. A description of linkages to administrative data sources can be found in Appendix A, and the security measures in place for these linkages are provided in Appendix B.

During full-scale data collection, an additional data source may be available from student records abstracted from institutions attended by members of the BPS:12 cohort (full-scale sampling specifications are presented in Appendix C). The approach for abstraction of institution records will be tested as part of the Education Longitudinal Study:2002 (ELS:2002) Third Follow-Up (OMB #1850-0652 v.10).

Although concurrent or contemporaneous collections of similar data have been successful for the purpose of determining how students pay for their postsecondary education (e.g., in NPSAS), the ELS:2002 Financial Aid Feasibility Study (FAFS) will evaluate the practicability for collecting the data retrospectively, with records that go back as far as 2004. Institutions will be asked to provide a borrowing history for the entire tenure of the identified ELS:2002 students who attended their institution. Longitudinal analysis of student financial aid records would allow examination of borrowing and debt trends over time, as well as the effects of those trends on postsecondary persistence and attainment, and decisions about work and family. The results of the feasibility study will help provide information about the quality of the data when collecting financial aid student records that span a number of years and, ultimately, inform decisions on such efforts for the BPS first and second follow-up studies which would require retrospective collection to 2011-12.

c. Legislative Authorization

The BPS longitudinal study is authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA), 20 U.S.C. § 9543) and is being conducted in close consultation with other offices and organizations within and outside the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

2. Purpose and Uses of the Data

a. The BPS Cohort

BPS:12/14 will provide data on beginning postsecondary students when they entered postsecondary education and 3 years later, describing who enters postsecondary education for the first time as well as what happens to them after their initial enrollment (for the field test, students entered postsecondary education during the 2010-11 academic year, while for the full-scale data collection, during the 2011-12 academic year). BPS is unique as the only nationally-representative study of all students beginning postsecondary education for the first time, including nontraditional students who delay postsecondary entry and students in short-term vocational programs. It is also the only study that follows students throughout the entire postsecondary education system over a number of years and, therefore, provides a much more accurate portrait of these students' persistence, attainment, and experiences than do the studies that focus solely on the first institution or rely on institution-reported data alone.

For the first time with this iteration of BPS, the study features an oversample of students in public 2-year and for-profit institutions seeking educational certificates which will provide rich new data on wage and employment outcomes for completers of subbaccalaureate educational credentials. Current economic conditions have increased interest in the relationship between subbaccalaureate credentials and employment outcomes. A recent NCES report used BPS:04/09 data to examine subbaccalaureate completers and noncompleters' labor market outcomes² but, due to small sample sizes, was often unable to detect significant differences among certificate students. Analyses of subbaccalaureate students' labor market outcomes will also be aided by BPS:12/14's expanded employment section which will collect an employment history of all jobs respondents have held since starting postsecondary education. Even more employment details will be obtained from those who have left postsecondary education.

² <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012273.pdf>

In addition to post-enrollment employment, BPS provides data on such characteristics of beginning students as demographics, high school preparation, enrollment, employment during enrollment, financial aid and borrowing, and education and career expectations. These characteristics can be examined with respect to persistence, degree attainment, and employment outcomes. Developing a better understanding of the factors related to these three outcomes is the primary purpose of BPS. To this end, BPS:12/14 will publish a First Look Report and a large Web Table compendium that will report key statistics on how students with varying characteristics performed on these outcomes 3 years after starting their postsecondary careers. A later BPS follow-up study (BPS:12/17) will explore these key outcomes over a longer period of time.

b. Current Research and Policy Issues Related to BPS

Persistence, attainment, and employment outcomes have long been important to BPS, and BPS:12/14 is more focused than ever on collecting data that are necessary for examining these outcomes. BPS:12/14 has adopted the human capital model as a research framework and now incorporates several new sets of questions that the latest research suggests are helpful in predicting the student outcomes of interest. These questions include students' earnings potential given current education, their earnings expectations after completing anticipated credentials, the extent to which they prefer current over future rewards (also known as their discount rate), and their physical and emotional health.

BPS provides key information in several areas of policy interest. The President's American Graduation Initiative and prominent funders like the Lumina Foundation and Gates Foundation have set ambitious goals to increase Americans' postsecondary education attainment over the next decade. Encouraging more students to enroll is one important part of meeting this objective, and the economic downturn has indeed resulted in higher enrollments. However, due in part to increased joblessness, the composition of enrollees has changed as well. BPS allows researchers to describe these enrollment changes and examine their relationship with students' postsecondary persistence, degree attainment rates, and employment outcomes. Data from BPS:12/14 will permit estimation of overall changes in rates of degree attainment and major field of study, particularly with respect to majors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (or STEM)—another area of focus in higher education policy. The White House's Engage to Excel initiative, for example, seeks to produce one million additional college graduates in STEM to fill the projected gaps in America's workforce. One of its primary goals is to increase the number of students who choose STEM majors and retain them through receipt of a postsecondary degree, with a special focus on engaging them during the first 2 years of a STEM-related degree program.

Since the advent of the Great Recession, the relationship between the attainment of a postsecondary credential and job prospects has become even more prominent in the national conversation. In his 2009 State of the Union address, President Obama called for every American to take at least one year of education beyond high school—including postsecondary occupational education. A recent report from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Economy (Carnevale et al, 2012)³ notes that certificates “provide the outcomes that degree-seeking students are looking for: gainful employment” (p. 35) and that they can also serve as gateways to high level credentials, such as a college degree. This

³ Carnevale, Anthony P., Rose, Stephen J., and Hanson, Andrew R. (2012) Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees. Washington, DC: Georgetown Center on Education and the Economy.

attention has brought to light certain weaknesses in our federal data collection systems, most notably the paucity of information on the labor market value of non-degree credentials, including industry-recognized certifications, occupational licenses, and subbaccalaureate educational certificates. BPS is coordinating with the Interagency Working Group on Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA) to improve federal statistical data on these credentials. Data from the BPS:12/14 full-scale study will include an oversample of students who enter postsecondary education seeking to attain a subbaccalaureate educational certificate. These data will enable researchers and policy makers better understand the effect of certificate attainment, whether as a terminal occupational credential or as a path to a degree, on employment and wage outcomes.

Tuition costs, financial aid, and student debt are also receiving considerable attention by lawmakers. The continued rise of tuition costs has prompted the Obama Administration to propose shifting campus-based aid to institutions that keep costs down. In addition, the Administration has proposed a Race to the Top for postsecondary education, with the goal of improving college affordability and completion.. , Student debt is increasingly seen as a hardship and potential barrier for college graduates, BPS can provide insight into the extent to which college costs, financial aid, and debt are related to persistence, attainment, and employment outcomes.

Finally, policymakers increasingly focus on the alignment of skills with industry needs. Whether today's graduates are well-equipped for employment is the subject of considerable debate, and BPS is well-positioned to address this discussion. Similarly, new gainful employment regulations seek to ensure that students are able to obtain jobs and earn incomes in their chosen professions that allow them to repay their loans; on this subject, also, BPS provides a considerable amount of data.

Some of the primary research and policy issues to be addressed with BPS:12/14 data include the following:

Demographic Characteristics

- What are beginning students' demographic characteristics (such as gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, age, financial dependency on parents, and income)?
- What proportion of beginning students come from key populations of interest, such as low income or first-generation college students, nontraditional college students, veterans, ethnic or racial minorities, and immigrants or children of immigrants?
- How have beginning postsecondary students' demographic characteristics (e.g., income, health, dependency status, marital status, and having dependents) changed over time?

High School Academic Preparation

- What percentage of beginning postsecondary students are recent high school graduates and what percentage have a regular high school diploma?
- What is the highest math course beginning postsecondary students took in high school?
- How did beginning postsecondary students attending different types of institutions perform in high school, as measured, for example, by grade point average and standardized admissions tests?
- What proportion of beginning postsecondary students enters postsecondary education with college credits?

- What percentage of beginning postsecondary students enroll in remedial courses when they start their postsecondary education, and in which subjects are remedial courses most commonly taken?

Postsecondary Enrollment Characteristics and Experiences

- How are beginning postsecondary students distributed across different types of institutions? Across different degree programs?
- What fields of study do beginning postsecondary students pursue, and in which do they obtain degrees?
- To what extent do students participate in online, night, and weekend courses and programs, and how does participation differ by demographic characteristics, type of institution attended, and field of study?
- To what extent do students feel a sense of belonging at their institution and how is this related to their demographic characteristics and other enrollment characteristics and experiences? How is this sense of belonging related to academic and employment outcomes?

Employment During Enrollment

- What percentage of students work while enrolled, and of them, what proportion have a job related to their field of study?
- Of those who work while enrolled, how far do they work from home and school, how many hours per week do they work, and how much do they earn?

Financial Aid and Borrowing

- What types of financial support do dependent beginning students receive from their parents when they begin their postsecondary education?
- What proportion of beginning postsecondary students receives federal Pell Grants?
- What proportion of beginning postsecondary students receives veterans or other Department of Defense education benefits?
- How does the percentage of beginning students taking out federal loans and the average amount borrowed vary by demographic and enrollment characteristics?
- What is the amount of federal loan debt students acquire per credit earned and how does this differ by students' demographic, high school preparation, and enrollment characteristics?
- What proportion of students borrows private loans, in what amount, and how does this borrowing vary by demographic characteristics and institution type?
- What is the average cumulative debt of beginning students after 3 years and what factors are related to the amount owed?
- What kinds of borrowers struggle in repayment and default on their student loans after 3 years?

Education and Career Expectations

- What degrees or certificates do students expect to attain, when do they expect to complete them, and how confident are they in these expectations?

- How much support do beginning students receive from their families and friends in their pursuit of their educational goals?
- To what positions do beginning students aspire, and what do they think they will earn in these positions?
- How close are students' predicted earnings to actual average earnings in their expected careers?
- What would beginning students do if they were not in school, and if they thought they would be working, what did they think they would be earning?
- What is students' discount rate, or, phrased another way, how large a premium do beginning postsecondary students place on more immediate versus more remote rewards?

Persistence

- What percentage of students continues their education beyond remedial coursework?
- What proportion of beginning students are enrolled in their first institution and what proportion are enrolled at any institution 3 years after initially enrolling?
- How frequently are students no longer enrolled anywhere after 3 years, and how long had such students been enrolled before they left?
- What is the rate at which students transfer between institutions, when do they transfer, and what are the most common transfer patterns in terms of the types of institutions left and entered?
- To what extent do students change their major from STEM to non-STEM fields, and vice versa?
- How do the above persistence questions differ by demographic characteristics, high school preparation, enrollment, employment during enrollment, financial aid and borrowing, and education and career expectations? In particular, how are high school preparation and institution type related to attainment?

Attainment

- What percentage of beginning students earn a certificate or associate's degree within 3 years?
- How long does it take beginning students to earn these credentials?
- To what extent are demographic characteristics, high school preparation, enrollment, employment during enrollment, financial aid and borrowing characteristics, and education and career expectations linked to attainment and time to attainment? In particular, how are institution type, transfer patterns, and debt related to attainment?

Employment Outcomes after Leaving Postsecondary Education

- What percentage of beginning students who have left postsecondary education experience unemployment spells, are currently unemployed, are employed less than full time, or are not looking for work?
- How much do beginning students who have left postsecondary education earn, and what benefits do they receive?
- How many certificate attainers continue their education and attain a degree? Are their certificates and degrees in related fields of study? What are their employment outcomes?

- What percentage of certificate attainers are employed in their field of study? How do their employment outcomes compare to those who are not employed in their field of study?
- In what occupations and industries are these students employed, and do their occupations and industries align with their field of study?
- Among beginning postsecondary students who did not enter postsecondary education directly from high school and who left postsecondary education within 3 years, to what extent does their employment before and after postsecondary education differ?
- How do the answers to this set of questions differ by demographic characteristics, high school preparation, enrollment, employment during enrollment, financial aid and borrowing, and education and career expectations as well as persistence and attainment?

Answers to these and other questions are vital if policymakers at the local, state, and national levels are to respond adequately to the changing environment of postsecondary education.

c. **Previous Agency Use of the Data**

NCES has used data from the previous cycles of BPS in a variety of publications, including First Look reports and Web Tables, which can be found in Appendix D, a bibliography of publications using BPS data. NCES also makes the BPS data collected available for use by researchers via both restricted-use data files and public-use data tools, PowerStats and QuickStats. Appendix D also displays peer-review journal publications prepared by researchers using these data.

3. Use of Information Technology

To improve the efficiency of student data collection, BPS:12/14 will use web-based student interviewing. The modes of data collection will be web-based, self-administered surveys and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). In the NPSAS:12 field test, 78.5 percent of interviews were completed online.

The financial aid record collection, if funded as part of the BPS:12/14 full-scale study, will use the same web-based system designed for the ELS:2002 FAFS. Wherever possible, improved information technology will be used to ensure the most accurate, high quality, and least burdensome institution data collection. Similar to what is currently being used on NPSAS:12, multiple options will be offered to an institution for providing student data, including: (1) uploading electronic (.csv) files to the project's secure web site; (2) downloading an Excel workbook from the project's web site, then uploading the completed file to the site; and (3) use of a web-based data entry interface. This web-based interface was recently redesigned to allow users to enter data in the manner most convenient for them.

In addition, an online video tutorial will be available to show users exactly how to navigate through the application and help screens will provide users with more in-depth explanations of the required items. The web-based application will allow error checking to be performed immediately by institution staff. An important feature of the online application is that different institution staff can complete portions of the required data entry and can complete the data entry in multiple sessions. These features reduce user burden while ensuring that the most accurate data are collected.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

Efforts to identify duplication have included NCES consultations with other federal offices, such as ED's Office of Postsecondary Education, the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Office of Management and Budget. NCES also routinely consults with non-federal associations such as the National Science Foundation, the American Council on Education, the Career College Association, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy to confirm that the data to be collected for the BPS longitudinal study are not available from any other sources. Academic researchers are also consulted, with several attending Technical Review Panel meetings along with representatives from federal agencies, associations, and academics. Beyond identification of duplication, these consultations provide methodological insights from the results of other longitudinal postsecondary student studies conducted by NCES and other federal agencies and nonfederal sources, and the consultations assure that the data collected through BPS will meet the needs of the federal government and other relevant organizations. There are no other studies in the U.S that duplicate the data produced by BPS.

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 post-enrollment experiences. 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 to 4 years since 1986–87 and serve as the base study for longitudinal cohort follow-ups, including BPS:12/14, which is the focus of this submission.

There are three previous cohorts of the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study: BPS:90, BPS:96, and BPS:04. The BPS:12 cohort is being identified from NPSAS:12 just as the previous BPS cohorts, and the Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B) study cohorts, have originated from prior NPSAS studies. Unlike BPS, which follows a cohort of first time beginning students at institutions at all levels of postsecondary education, B&B follows a cohort of baccalaureate recipients at institutions awarding 4-year degrees and above. As the B&B cohort is necessarily made up of degree recipients, persistence in undergraduate education is not an emphasis in B&B, as it is in BPS. Additionally, B&B places a special emphasis on the experiences of new elementary and secondary teachers. The chronology of the previous administrations of the NPSAS study and its associated BPS and B&B longitudinal components are presented in table 1.

Furthermore, there have been a number of related studies to BPS. For example, NCES has conducted high school cohort studies, such as *High School and Beyond* (HS&B), the *National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972* (NLS-72), the *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988* (NELS:88), the *Education Longitudinal Study of 2002* (ELS:2002), and the *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009* (HSLs:09), which follow or plan to follow students into college. While these studies accurately reflect education and employment experiences and outcomes of the high school cohorts from which they drew a sample, they are not nationally representative of all beginning postsecondary students because not all beginners enter directly from high school. In fact, according to BPS:04/09, one-third of all beginning postsecondary students were over age 19 when they entered for the first time.

Another related study conducted by NCES is the *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System* (IPEDS) Graduation Rate Survey (GRS). Unlike the High School Cohort Studies, the GRS provides data on enrollment and attainment for both recent and nonrecent high school graduates. However, its definition of beginning postsecondary students is more restrictive than that of BPS as it is limited to full-time, degree seeking, first-time postsecondary students who entered in the fall. In addition, GRS collects enrollment and attainment data from institutions rather than students, meaning it can only provide information on students’ attainment at the first institution attended and not students’ attainment at any institutions to which they transfer.

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	B&B:93/97	B&B:93/03
NPSAS:96	BPS:96/98	BPS:96/01	Administrative data update
NPSAS:2000	B&B:2000/01	—	—
NPSAS:04	BPS:04/06	BPS:04/09	Administrative data update
NPSAS:08	B&B:08/09	B&B:08/12	—
NPSAS:12	BPS:12/14	BPS:12/17	BPS:12/19¹

— Not applicable

¹ Tentative.

NOTE: BPS = Beginning Postsecondary Students; B&B = Baccalaureate and Beyond.

5. Method Used to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses

The student survey for the BPS:12/14 field test does not involve small businesses or entities. If the full-scale of BPS:12/14 involves a financial aid record collection, some small for-profit schools and other small public and private schools will likely be contacted. Burden will be minimized on these schools by working closely with a school-appointed coordinator (e.g., the financial aid administrator) before the data collection effort to identify the format in which records are kept and transmitted. To accommodate any constraints imposed by record-keeping systems, schools will be offered alternative methods of providing the requested financial aid student records as described above in the Information Technology section.

6. Frequency of Data Collection

BPS studies have been conducted periodically since 1990, as described in section 4 of this document. The BPS:12/14 field test student data collection will be conducted in 2013, 2 years after the NPSAS:12 field test from which the BPS field test student sample was selected. A future follow-up with the BPS:12/14 field test student sample is anticipated in 2016, as part of BPS:12/17, and may include an interview, administrative record matching, and student records and one-time transcript collections, if funded.

The NPSAS and its longitudinal spin-off studies, BPS and B&B, are conducted to reflect the large-scale and rapid changes in federal policy concerning postsecondary student aid—eligibility

restrictions change, sizes of grant and loan amounts fluctuate, and the balance between various aid options can change dramatically. A recurring study is essential to help predict future costs for financial aid because loan programs create continued obligations for the federal government as long as the loans are being repaid. Second, repeated surveys can capture the changing nature of the postsecondary environment. With the longitudinal design of the NPSAS survey and BPS follow-ups, representative national samples of beginning postsecondary students with similar base-year characteristics may be compared over time to determine the effects of changes in federal policy and programs. Third, repeated surveys can help researchers understand the effect of economic conditions on the employment outcomes for subbaccalaureate educational certificate holders. The new oversample of certificate seekers that will be available for the full-scale study, combined with the longitudinal nature of BPS, allows for analysis of how the value of these credentials shifts in response to market forces.

7. Special Circumstances of Data Collection

No special circumstances of data collection are anticipated.

8. Consultants Outside the Agency

Recognizing the significance of the BPS:12/14 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 NCES, ED, and the federal government.

Previous BPS implementations have benefited from a standing federal review panel comprising staff from many federal offices, including ED's Office of Postsecondary Education, OMB, and the Congressional Budget Office. Some members of this panel also belong to the TRP for BPS. The membership of the TRP (see Appendix E) represents a broad spectrum of the postsecondary community. The nonfederal 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 proposed field test study design during its meeting in June 2012.

9. Provision of Payments or Gifts to Respondents

The use of incentives is an integral part of the overall data collection plan for the BPS:12/14 field test, and is proposed for three purposes:

1. *To encourage sample members to update their contact information prior to the start of data collection.* All cases will be offered an incentive of \$10 to update their contact information via the study website prior to the start of data collection (approximately 3-4 weeks before the 2013 data collection begins). The Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 Third Follow-Up field test conducted an experiment of the effectiveness of incentives paid during the panel maintenance phase. Overall, the \$10 treatment group had a higher participation rate (25 percent) than the control group (20 percent, $t = 1.90, p < .05$). Further evaluation of the data indicated that the contact information provided largely new information not already in the study database; for 82 percent of the responding cases, at least one new address, phone number, or email address was provided for the student, parent, or both. Being able to make direct contact with the sample

student during data collection saves time and costs, and is likely to increase interview participation.

2. *To encourage early response.* Once data collection begins, all cases will be offered an initial incentive of \$30 to complete the BPS interview during the early response phase. The \$30 amount has been used for NPSAS and BPS data collections since 2004. As recently as the NPSAS:12, high propensity cases offered \$30 participated at a significantly higher rate than cases offered a \$15 incentive ($\chi^2 = 18.2244$, $p < .0001$).
3. *To minimize nonresponse bias using a responsive design approach that will be tested experimentally (see Part B, section 3.c).* After the early response phase and the first 2 weeks of outbound data collection have been completed, the responsive design approach will identify, at four time points, a subset of cases most likely to contribute to nonresponse bias. Half of the “high distance” cases will receive an additional \$25 incentive, and comparisons following completion of data collection will determine if the higher incentive was effective in bringing in interviews from cases that would have contributed most to nonresponse bias had they not participated. Such an approach will allow use of data collection resources strategically, incentivizing cases as they become high distance cases, rather than using the higher incentive amount for all cases from the start.

In general, the use of incentives during the BPS:12/14 field test will provide significant advantages to the government in terms of timely data collection and decreased data collection costs since it is likely that the large majority of interviews for which the incentives are paid will be conducted on the Web before more costly, labor intensive CATI outbound calling efforts commence.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

NCES assures participating individuals and institutions that all identifiable information collected in the BPS studies and related programs 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 [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002), 20 U.S.C. § 9573].

BPS:12/14 data security and confidentiality protection procedures are in place to ensure that RTI and its subcontractors comply with all privacy requirements, including the following:

- Statement of Work of this contract;
- Privacy Act of 1974 U.S.C. § 552(a) (2009);
- U.S. Department of Education Incident Handling Procedures (February 2009);
- U.S. Department of Education General Handbook for Information Technology Security General Support Systems and Major Applications Inventory Procedures (March 2005);
- U.S. Department of Education, ACS Directive OM:5-101, Contractor Employee Personnel Security Screenings;
- Family Educational and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (2009);
- ESRA, 20 U.S.C. § 9573 (2009); and
- All new legislation, which impacts the data collection through this contract.

To ensure that confidentiality is appropriately maintained at all times, RTI requires that vendors who assist in locating and tracing sample members follow procedures to appropriately safeguard personally identifying information. RTI’s vendor contracts outline requirements for information security

policies and assessments, security awareness training, physical and environmental security, monitoring, and access control. They also specify the means by which information may be transmitted between RTI and the contractor. Appendix B documents the data security language contained in vendor contracts.

RTI will adhere to NCES Statistical Standards (http://nces.ed.gov/statprog/2002/std4_2.asp). RTI will also comply with ED's IT security policy requirements, as set forth in the Handbook for Information Assurance Security Policy and related procedures and guidance as well as IT security requirements in the Federal Information Security Management Act, OMB Circulars, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology standards and guidance.

BPS:12/14 data security procedures require that notarized nondisclosure affidavits be obtained from all personnel who will have access to individual identifiers (copies of the agreement and affidavit are provided in Appendix F). Also implemented are personnel training regarding the meaning of confidentiality; controlled and protected access to computer files; built-in safeguards concerning status monitoring and receipt control systems; and a secure, staffed, in-house computing facility. The procedures for securing sensitive project data will include the following: physical/environment protections, building access controls, system access controls, system login restrictions, user identification and authorization procedures, encryption, and project file storage/archiving/destruction.

There are several security measures in place to protect data during file matching procedures. NCES has a secure data transfer system, which uses Secure Sockets Layer technology, allowing the transfer of encrypted data over the Internet. The NCES secure server will be used for all administrative data sources, with the exception of the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which has its own secure File Transfer Protocol site. All data transfers will be encrypted using Federal Information Processing Standards 140-2 validated encryption tools.

Furthermore, ED has established a policy regarding the personnel security screening requirements for all contractor employees and their subcontractors to secure the confidentiality of BPS respondents. The contractor must comply with these personnel security screening requirements throughout the life of the contract. The ED directive that contractors must comply with is OM: 5-101, which was last updated on January 29, 2008. 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 must be assigned a position risk level. The risk levels are high, moderate, and low, based on the level of harm that a person in the position can cause to ED'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 ED will occur.

Sample member contact materials will describe the voluntary nature of the BPS:12/14 interview and convey the extent to which study member identifiers and responses will be kept confidential. Similarly, the scripts to be read by telephone staff will be very specific in the assurances made to sample members and contacts. Contacting materials are presented in Appendix G. The following confidentiality language is provided in the study brochure that is supplied to all sample members:

The Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:12/14) is conducted under the authority of the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9543) which authorize NCES to collect and disseminate information about education in the United States. Collection is most often done through surveys.

NCES is required to follow strict procedures to protect the confidentiality of persons in the collection, reporting, and publication of data. All individually identifiable information supplied by individuals or institutions to NCES 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 (20 U.S.C. § 9573).

11. Sensitive Questions

The BPS:12/14 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, (b) provisions to respondents that clearly inform them of the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and (c) assurances that responses may be used only for statistical purposes, except as required by law (20 U.S.C. § 9573). Several procedures have been implemented to provide these assurances to respondents. They are outlined in the confidentiality agreements shown in Appendix F.

The collection of data related to income, earnings, assets, indebtedness, and long-range employment outcomes is central to understanding key policy issues driving this study. Financial assets and obligations can play an important role in student persistence in, and completion of, postsecondary education programs. In addition, information about income, earnings, and assets provides vital labor force variables and 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 students enrolling and persisting in postsecondary education and the successful transition to employment. Financial and family-related obligations also influence decisions about employment and additional education, so it is important to collect information about marital status and dependents.

12. Estimates of Response Burden

BPS:12/14 field test will involve the collection of respondent interview data by self-administered web and telephone interview. Burden estimates—including number of sample members, expected response rates, and estimated time per respondent—are shown in table 2.

Burden estimates for the FAFS will be provided with the submission for the full-scale data collection, once the final sample size and results of the ELS:2002 FAFS are known. There will be up to four methods of data collection available for providing student records data, two involve keying directly into a Web application and two involve preparing data and then uploading it to the website. At the time of this submission, average time per institution is estimated to be about 3.3 hours.

Table 2. Estimated BPS:12/14 field test cost and response burden

	Sample Size	Expected Eligible	Expected Response Rate	Number of Respondents	Ave Burden (mins)	Total Burden (hours)	Rate per hour (\$)	Total cost (\$)
BPS:12/14 Field test								
Panel Maintenance (address updates)	3,496	N/A	33%	1,154	5	96	\$10	\$960
Student Interview:								
Confirmed FTB's	2,003	N/A	82%	1,642	35	958	\$10	\$9,580

Potential FTB's - Full interview	747	80%	52%	311	35	181	\$10	\$1,810
Modified interview	746	80%	68%	406	20	135	\$10	\$1,350
Student Reinterview*	340	310	70%	217	10	36	\$10	\$360
BPS:12/14 Full-scale								
Panel Maintenance (address updates)	31,045*	N/A	33%	10,245	5	854	\$10	\$8,540
Student Interview	31,045*	N/A	80%	24,836	30	12,418	\$10	\$124,180

* - The student reinterview which, whenever feasible, is completed in the same mode as the original interview, is given to a subset of interview respondents and includes a reduced number of interview questions. See Appendix H for a list of included questions.

** - The BPS:12/14 full-scale sample will be derived from the NPSAS:12 full-scale study, which is ongoing. The sample sizes used to estimate cost and burden is based on the NPSAS:12 sampling plan. See Appendix C for more details.

NOTE: BPS:12/14 = 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, FTB = First Time Beginner Potential FTB's = NPSAS:12 non-respondents that appear to be FTB's in NPSAS:12 student records data.

13. Estimates of Cost to Respondents

Respondents will incur no costs for equipment, printing, postage or any other costs associated with participation in this study.

14. Costs to the Federal Government

A summary of the estimated costs to the federal government for the BPS:12/14 field test is shown in Table 3. 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 4.

Table 3. Costs to the National Center for Education Statistics for the BPS:12/14 field test

Costs to NCES	Amount (\$)
BPS:12/14 Field Test Study	
Salaries and expenses	\$ 111,290
Contract costs	2,845,927
Total	2,957,217
BPS:12/14 Full-Scale Study	
Salaries and expenses	333,870
Contract costs	7,508,204
Total	7,842,074
BPS:12/14 Total Costs	
Salaries and expenses	445,160
Contract costs	10,354,130
Total	10,799,290

NOTE: BPS:12/14 = 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study.

Table 4. Contract costs for BPS:12/14

Study area and task management		Budgeted amount (\$)
110	Initial meeting with NCES	38,245
120	Schedules	40,235
130	Monthly reports	367,732
140	Integrated monitoring system	471,607
150	Technical review panels	865,358
Field test (FT)		
210	FT Sampling	38,140
220	FT RIMG/OMB forms clearance	90,983
231	Instrumentation	696,220
232	Tracing	68,368
234	Training for Web/CATI data collection	126,693
236	Web/CATI data collection	393,288
237	Data processing	358,230
240	Methodology report	182,416
Full-scale (FS) data collection		
310	FS Sampling	47,419
320	FS RIMG/OMB forms clearance	56,630
331	Instrumentation	673,805
332	Tracing	402,399
334	Training for web/CATI data collection	309,055
336	Web/CATI data collection – general	2,211,376
	Web/CATI data collection – incentives	576,898
337	Data processing	720,259
338	Weighting, imputation, and nonresponse bias analysis	211,472
339	Data disclosure planning and prevention	57,574
340	Methodology report	311,049
Descriptive reporting		
410	First Look report	73,163
420	Data analysis system	440,612
430	Additional special tabulations	135,937
440	Descriptive reports	108,415
450	Respond to information requests	267,645
460	Final technical memo	12,907
Total		\$ 10,354,130

NOTE: Costs presented here do not include base or award fee. BPS:12/14 = 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study; CATI = computer-assisted telephone interviewing; OMB = Office of Management and Budget; RIMG = Regulatory Information Management Group.

15. Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs

No changes in response burden or cost are anticipated. The respondent burden shows an increase because the last OMB approval was discontinued in September 2010.

16. Publication Plans and Time Schedule

The contract for BPS:12/14 requires the following reports, publications, or other public information releases:

- A First Look report and Web Tables;

- Complete data files and documentation for research data users in the form of both a restricted-use file and public-use data tools (i.e., QuickStats, PowerStats);
- Detailed data file documentation describing all aspects of the full-scale study design and data collection procedures; and
- Special tabulations of issues of interest to the higher education community, as determined by NCES

Additional reports, including Statistics in Brief and Statistical Analysis Reports, may also be published from the full-scale data. For examples of publications using prior BPS studies, see Appendix D.

The operational schedule for the BPS:12/14 full-scale study is shown in table 5.

Table 5. Operational schedule for BPS:12/14

Activity	Start date	End date
Field Test		
Update/deliver sample specifications	7/10/2012	5/16/2013
Conduct locating and tracing activities	8/16/2012	6/28/2013
Conduct help desk and CATI training	12/19/2012	4/10/2013
Data collection		
Self-administered web interviews	3/18/2013	6/28/2013
Conduct telephone interviews of students	4/11/2013	6/28/2013
Process data, construct data files	1/28/2013	8/30/2013
Prepare data file documentation	4/4/2013	11/3/2014
Full-scale		
Update/deliver sample specifications	7/15/2013	2/11/2014
Conduct locating and tracing activities	7/23/2013	9/15/2014
Conduct help desk, CATI, and CAPI training	11/25/2013	6/11/2014
Conduct Institution Contactor training	8/12/2014	10/10/2014
Data collection		
Self-administered web interviews	2/8/2014	9/15/2014
Conduct telephone interviews of students	3/14/2014	9/15/2014
Conduct field interviews of students	6/12/2014	9/15/2014
Process data, construct data files	2/16/2013	9/4/2015
Prepare and submit reports	9/16/2014	5/16/2016
Collect student financial aid data from institutions	10/1/2014	4/15/2015

NOTE: BPS:12/14 = 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study; CATI = Computer assisted telephone interview; CAPI = Computer assisted personal interview

17. Approval to Not Display Expiration Date for OMB Approval

No special exception is requested.

18. 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 8.