StudentTracker for Colleges & Universities FAQs

What is StudentTracker?

StudentTracker® is the only nationwide source of college enrollment and degree data. Nearly 3,600 colleges and universities — enrolling over 97% of all students in public and private U.S. institutions — regularly provide enrollment and graduation data to the Clearinghouse. Through StudentTracker, you can query our participating institutions' student data to perform all types of educational research and analyses — quickly, easily, and affordably.

What is StudentTracker Premium Service?

The standard StudentTracker service is a file-based solution that returns outcomes in a simple file structure (one term per row, but multiple rows per student), so institutions can perform their own analyses.

Our StudentTracker Premium Service is analysis ready, which helps reduce the amount of analysis needed by the institution. Premium Service also includes more web-based applications, including file re-runs, institutional-level Research Center reports, and data visualizations. We will also start including industry credentials in Premium Service in 2018. Long-term, Premium Service visualizations will be provided via a business intelligence tool that will enable institutions to perform custom analytical reporting.

How can I use StudentTracker?

- Identify enrollment trends and patterns
- Track transfer student enrollment nationwide
- Improve your ability to target, recruit, and retain students
- Assist with federal reporting requirements
- Verify and correct cohort default rates
- Determine a student's financial need level
- Plan curriculum modifications and institutional alliances
- Conduct academic assessments
- Identify students who are concurrently enrolled
- Perform accurate longitudinal and other outcome analyses

Why should I use StudentTracker?

Unlike traditional methods of data collection that have inherent data quality issues, such as surveys, StudentTracker results are based on actual enrollment and degree records provided by participating collegiate institutions. StudentTracker matches your records against our participating institutions' postsecondary student enrollment and degree records. You can receive updates on your students year after year, through their participation in higher education.

Higher education officials rely on StudentTracker because it:
- Utilizes enrollment and degree information obtained every 30-45 days from nearly 3,600 collegiate institutions that enroll 97 percent of all students in public and private U.S. institutions.
- Tracks students through their entire collegiate experience
- Provides detailed degree information if you participate in our free DegreeVerify service
- Is very cost-friendly

How much does it cost to participate?

For information on pricing, contact your regional relationship manager.

What data is used to populate StudentTracker?

The submitting institution or system provides the Clearinghouse with a student request or query included in a batch process, known as student detail rows or query of students. The institution is responsible for obtaining proper consent from the student to query the student's previous or future educational enrollment history.

The Clearinghouse will return a Control Report, Aggregate Report, and Detail Report.
The information populated in the Detail Report is from the Enrollment Reporting and degree verification files submitted by our over 3,600 participating reporting institutions.

How can StudentTracker help me with IPEDS reporting?

StudentTracker is a valuable tool for understanding student outcomes for both previous and future enrollment periods. However, StudentTracker cannot populate your required IPEDS reporting or answer most of the questions. Institutions use StudentTracker to help reconcile their responses around the following survey materials:

- Completions
- Graduation rates
- Outcome measures
- Fall enrollment

With the changes to the 2017-2018 collection, institutions are required to report on a FULL-YEAR cohort, as opposed to the fall cohort, for the period July 1, XXXX – June 30, XXXX. You can identify the enrollment dates from our Detail Reports and should ensure you use these dates when providing your search date.

Our data can help institutions determine the number of degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who are first-time entering or non-first time entering. This information is found under the Outcome Measures survey component within IPEDS.

How will I know if a student has blocked his or her record?

FERPA blocks are collected in each institution's Enrollment Reporting file and applied only to that institution. It's possible for a student to block some records at one institution while not blocking any records at a different institution.

Your Control Report shows the number of students in your StudentTracker Submission File whose records were blocked, identifying them "No Records Found." If your submission file has only one student whose records are blocked with all other student records found and returned, we will suppress your Aggregate Report to honor the student's request.

Single student search adheres to the same FERPA blocking rules, unless the search is for financial aid purposes or is a consent-based search (meaning you obtained the student's permission to perform the search).

Are there institutions that have blocked the release of all enrollment records from StudentTracker?

Institutions can elect to block all student enrollment records from being released in StudentTracker queries. However, only a small list of institutions have opted to block all students, including:

- Babson College (002121), MA
- Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine (041672), PA
- Medical College of Wisconsin (024535), WI
- Midwestern University (001657), IL
- New York Medical College (002784), NY
- Toccoa Falls College (001596), GA

Does StudentTracker comply with FERPA privacy regulations?

Like all Clearinghouse programs, StudentTracker is designed to facilitate an institution's compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, The Higher Education Act (FERPA), and other applicable laws.

What types of searches can I perform with StudentTracker?

With StudentTracker we ask that you classify each of your searches in one of the following query types:

- **Longitudinal Cohort (CO)**: Primarily used for the purposes of reporting to Student Achievement Measure (SAM) or Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). This query type uses your search date and looks forward, hence, you may want to select a period in the past (less than 16 years) to run a holistic student enrollment record for reporting.
- **Declined Admissions (DA)**: Searches enrollment of former applicants who chose not to enroll at your institution or you elected to not accept the student for admissions. This query type uses your search date, presumably the first semester the student would have enrolled at your institution and looks forward.
- **Prior Attendance (PA)**: Historical enrollment of pending applicants to your institution. This is the query type used to find prior educational records from your prospective students for the purposes of validation or verification, hence this search uses your search date and goes backwards.
- **Subsequent Enrollment (SE)**: Concurrent enrollment of current students and subsequent enrollment of prior students. This query type allows you to understand if your current or prior students are dual enrolled or continuing to enroll in educational institutions after being enrolled at your institution, hence this search uses your search date and goes forward.

What are the different StudentTracker reports?

Control Report: Overview of your search results. Postsecondary institutions with over 1,000 students that do not participate in our Enrollment Reporting service, and for which we cannot return enrollment data, are listed at the bottom of the report.

The Control Report provides the following:
- Total number of students in your request file
- Total students with no response data available
- Total students found and included in the Aggregate Report
- Total students with at least one record found for Detail Report
- Total students with initial enrollment or degree records blocked
- Total students with partially blocked enrollment/degree records
- Total students with complete enrollment/degree history blocked
-

Aggregate Report (generated for DA, PA, and SE queries) provides the most commonly attended institutions, based on the search begin date provided. This information is based on a student's initial enrollment and initial degree.

- DA and SE queries: Record must have a term end date greater than the search date. Initial enrollment is determined by the earliest term begin date.
- PA queries: Record must have a term end date earlier than the search date. Initial enrollment is determined by the latest term begin date.

Cohort Report (generated for CO queries) is provided in place of an Aggregate Report and offers a summary of the retention and completion rates of a cohort group by academic year and institutional category. This report has also been expanded to help support the Student Achievement Measure (SAM). For more information, please refer to the Cohort User Guide.

Detail Report provides all postsecondary term information that the Clearinghouse was able to return based on the student's FERPA block indicator and your search variables. Each row contains information on one postsecondary term or, if available, a degree. For questions about reviewing the reports, please refer to the Detail Report Guide.

What is single student search?

Single student search is a manual search of our student database recommended for searches of fewer than 12 students. Results are inclusive of all data available for the student and are not limited to the most recently certified record or search date/search type. As a result, you will see several rows for each term the student attended. The multi-row display helps a) financial aid professionals view the student's full enrollment status in order to determine financial aid eligibility and b) organizations see how students are progressing in their enrollment. Using single student search can reveal trends, such as when a student starts with full-time enrollment, but drops to half time or less than half time.

The ability to use single student search is based on the query access permissions assigned to the user's profile. Please contact your institution's Clearinghouse user administrator for access, if needed.

Using single student search, I noticed a number of students who have a "W" or "N/A" status, what does this mean?

A "W" status in the single student search does not necessarily mean that the student has withdrawn from the institution. It can mean the student was enrolled but did not return for an additional term. Whenever you see a "W" status, you should compare the status first started and term end dates. If the dates are the same, it means the student completed the term but did not re-enroll in (or was not retained by) that institution. An "N/A" status can be returned at the discretion of the institution where the student was enrolled. An institution can elect to release or withhold the enrollment record and enrollment status.

Will I receive data on individual students?

Yes. You will receive individual student data that you can combine with your own data elements to produce further analyses, evaluations, and trend projections. To receive detailed degree information, you must be an active participant in our DegreeVerify service, which is free to institutions.

How do I know if my file was successfully received by the Clearinghouse?

You will receive an email from the STAuto-Notify mailbox at the Clearinghouse with "StudentTracker File Accepted from Organization ID ######-##" (your IPEDS School ID) in the subject line.

If your file was not received successfully, the subject line will read: "StudentTracker File Unable to Load for Organizational ID ######-##" (your IPEDS School ID).

How do I log into StudentTracker?

- For batch submissions, log onto your Clearinghouse FTP account
- For single student search or StudentTracker Premium Service, log onto our school secure site and select the Research Services tab

If you have questions about school secure site access, contact the Clearinghouse User Administrator at your institution, who can add users and assign the respective roles for StudentTracker.

Why doesn't my Detail Report include students who I know are enrolled at institutions that report to the Clearinghouse?

The Detail Report returns records that have been found in our database that also meet the search type and the search date criteria you provided. Only *one* record for *each* enrollment term that the school reported for the student is included in the Detail report: the most recently certified record(s) in the database that met the search date criteria for the search type.
The most common error is providing the wrong search date for the requested query. Please follow the query type search date guidelines below.

- Longitudinal Cohort (CO), Declined Admissions (DA), and Subsequent Enrollment (SE) queries locate enrollment records with a **term end date equal to or LATER than the search begin date** and/or degree records with an **award date equal to or LATER than the search begin date**

- Prior Attendance (PA) queries locate enrollment records with a **term end date equal to or EARLIER than the search begin date** and/or degrees records with an **award date equal to or EARLIER than the search begin date**

How does the matching logic work?

Single Student Search: Uses first three characters of the first name, last five characters of the last name, and Social Security number or date of birth.

Batch Process Search: Leverages Oracle Business Intelligence and matching through a two-step process.

1. Logic Path: Matches student record based on the following criteria by order of importance:
   - Social Security number, previous SSN, StudentTracker profile, school ID + student ID
   - Full name (first, middle, last) + date of birth
   - Name (first, last) + date of birth
   - Swap name + date of birth
   - Full name + address
   - Previous full name + date of birth
   - Last name + date of birth
   - First name + date of birth
   - No match
2. Match is verified by weighted node.

Our match rate is approximately 94 percent accurate, which accounts for the 2.4 percent of student enrollment files for institutions that are not participating with the Clearinghouse and approximately 3.6 percent expected matching errors. Matching errors can be caused by a number of factors, including duplicate student records, missing Social Security numbers, and Enrollment Reporting submission errors.

Are my reports located under the File Submission Log?

No, your reports (Control, Aggregate, and Detail) are not available on the File Submission Log, which is located on the Research Services tab of our school secure site. The File Submission Log only provides "Errors/Warnings," so your submission team can repair the submission files, if needed.

Screenshots are provided on pages 11-12 of the StudentTracker for Colleges and Universities User Guide.

After logging onto our school secure site, follow these steps to view your errors:
- Select the Research Services tab
- Select File Submission Log to view your submission files. You can change the view using the filters option.
- Errors/Warnings are shown as an italicized set of numbers in the sixth column. For example, 15/0. The first number, "15," indicates there are 15 errors in the file. The second number, "0," indicates that no warnings were issued for your file submission.
- Select the Errors/Warning italicized field to display a new screen that reflects the type of error, section, description, proposed solution, affected records, and affected rows

Please correct the "Errors" based on our proposed solution and resubmit the file. Files for which "Warnings" were issues were processed and the results returned. However, you should make those necessary changes in future file submissions.

Are there any differences in the results between the batch (FTP) process and single student search?

Yes, single student search has a different match logic than our batch request. Single student search provides a repository of all student records received based on an exact match of the name and date of birth provided. Often, we recommend that you search by Social Security number for stronger match results.

Alternatively, the batch process matching logic uses a number of factors and only returns the last enrollment records for a given student. The Social Security number is an optional field in the batch request.

Based on the two different search methods, if you are seeking a student's historical enrollment pattern over time, you can see the course status change for an academic semester using the single student search.

We are actively working on ways to apply the batch logic to single student search.

What should I do if I submit a Prior Attendance (PA) query and the results come back with a number of institutions that the student did not disclose?

When sending Prior Attendance (PA) queries, you should also send a few additional data elements in your Student Detail Rows file, including:

- Column B: Social Security number (should only be provided for PA queries on non-enrolled students)
- Column D: Middle initial

- Column G: Date of birth

Alternatively, you can perform a single student search to see all of the records. Although without the optional items above, there could be a matching error in your reports.

How long does it take the Clearinghouse to populate my results for a batch request and return the three reports (Control Report, Aggregate Report, and Detail Report)?

The Clearinghouse returns the results via reports sent to your FTP mailbox as early as 15 minutes up to five business days. The timeframe is determined by the time of year and number of incoming inquiries to the Clearinghouse.

Are there any established relationships between the Clearinghouse and student information system providers (e.g., Ellucian) for StudentTracker to automate the collection of student outcomes?

No, the Clearinghouse does not have any established relationships with third-party student information system providers for our StudentTracker for Colleges and Universities service.

What is the requester return field in the StudentTracker request file?

The requestor return field is an optional field in the layout (column "L" of the student detail rows) that an institution can populate with information, such as student ID. We take the information located in column "L" of the student detail rows of your request file and return it in column "F" of your Detail Report.

Since we do not accept Social Security numbers for CO, DA, or SE queries, institutions often elect to use the requestor return field to match the student back to their respective student information systems.

What is the file layout for the StudentTracker request file?

The file layout is on pages 22-24 of the StudentTracker for Colleges and Universities User Guide.

When is the most up-to-date fall enrollment available for StudentTracker?

Data from our participating Enrollment Reporting institutions is used to populate the StudentTracker queries. Generally, 95 percent of student data is available by November 1 and as much as 60 percent by September 30. We recommend waiting until after mid-October to pull StudentTracker reports as at many institutions students have until mid-October to withdrawal from classes. As a result, a student's enrollment status (e.g., full-time) could change after mid-October.