

INFORMATION FOR USERS OF STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY DATA AT UW-MADISON

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to describe the processes, policies and practices that shape the student race/ethnicity data available for operational and analytic use at UW-Madison.

For federal reporting purposes, UW-Madison is required to collect and report race/ethnicity values using prescribed rules. These collection and reporting rules influence how race/ethnicity values are stored in UW-Madison’s student information system database (ISIS) and the type of students for whom race/ethnicity information is relevant. How race/ethnicity values are stored in turn influences what values are available for the data warehouse (InfoAccess) and what values are made available to end users.

Before using student race/ethnicity data for analysis, communication with students, and/or decision making, users of race/ethnicity data should understand:

- the source of race/ethnicity data and its limitations
- why race/ethnicity data should be used in conjunction with citizenship information
- why some students have multiple race/ethnicity values (and the reasons others don’t)
- options for aggregating multiple race/ethnicity values into a single value

DATA COLLECTION

Admissions Application Question

Starting in 2008, UW-Madison applicants responded to a revised question about race/ethnicity on applications for admission. The revisions corresponded to changes to the federal requirements for data collection and reporting on student race/ethnicity. The biggest adjustment is that students now have the option of selecting more than one race value. Other changes affect how the application question is worded, what values are available for applicants to select, and how the question is presented. The table below summarizes the major changes between the “old” question and the “new” question.

Differences Between “Old” and “New” Race/Ethnicity Questions on Applications for Admission

	“Old” Application Question (prior to 2008)	“New” Application Question (2008 on)
Method of data collection	Not dictated	Must be from “institution’s own survey instrument”
Question Wording	Up to each institution	Prescribed
Number of Questions	One	Two
Distinction between “race” and “ethnicity”	Not made	1. Ethnicity question is asked first 2. Race question is asked second
Required categories (definitions provided in the Appendix)	African American/Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, White	Q1: Hispanic Y/N Q2: (Select one or more) African American or Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White
“I choose not to respond” allowed?	Yes	No
Number of categories that can be selected	One and only one	One or more
Board of Regents Subcategories Used	Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian and/or Vietnamese combined).	Cuban (Hispanic/Latino), Mexican/Mexican American/Chicano (Hispanic/Latino), Puerto Rican (Hispanic/Latino), Cambodian (Asian), Hmong (Asian), Laotian (Asian), Vietnamese (Asian)

Because many currently enrolled students entered UW-Madison before the application question changed, student race/ethnicity values are a mixture of responses to the “old” and “new” questions. Some students have had the opportunity to select multiple race/ethnic values while others entered UW-Madison when the “select one and only one” policy was in effect. Plans to resurvey currently enrolled students (highly encouraged but not required by the federal guidelines) are under development and will likely be implemented in the 2009-10 academic year. However, this resurvey cannot be mandatory and will therefore not change race/ethnicity values for students who entered UW-Madison under the “old” question and choose not to update their information. It will also not impact records of previously enrolled students (of interest for historical analysis). In short, race/ethnicity data will be a mixture of values from the “old” and “new” questions for a very long time.

Admissions Application Processing

The student race/ethnicity values that are stored in ISIS are influenced by the federal guidelines AND the structure of the ISIS database table where race/ethnicity values are stored. Federal guidelines dictate that the race/ethnicity that is reported on federal forms be “from the institution’s own survey instrument” and that race/ethnicity be “self-reported” by the student.

The ISIS database table where race/ethnicity values are stored does not have a source field. Without intervention, race/ethnicity values from test score loads (for example, when students submit ACT or SAT scores to UW-Madison before they have applied for admission) would be mixed with race/ethnicity values from applications for admission. Thus, race/ethnicity values from different sources would be combined in one table and would be indistinguishable. This would not enable us to ensure that standard reporting of student race/ethnicity is based on values from an application for admission (as required) and that the values were the most recent reported by the student (also implied by the federal regulations). One potential solution to the “no data source” problem would be to load only race/ethnicity values from applications for admission. However, student race/ethnicity from testing agencies is used for identification of and communication with prospective minority students and is the foundation of campus diversity initiatives making this potential solution untenable.

For these reasons, before race/ethnicity values from an application for admission are loaded into ISIS, all previously existing values (for example, from test score loads, previous applications etc.) are first deleted. Then the race/ethnicity values from the current admission application are loaded. This ensures that the values available for operational use, reporting and analysis are the most recent values supplied by students and, for enrolled students, are from an institution’s survey instrument. It also ensures that race/ethnicity data is available about prospective students who have not yet applied for admission.

The example in the table below shows the flow of race/ethnicity values for a hypothetical student who applies for undergraduate admission, stops out and is later readmitted, and then applies to Graduate School at UW-Madison. This is one example of how race/ethnicity values can change for the same student over time.

Steps in Loading Race/Ethnicity Data from UW-Madison Applications for Admission

Step and Action	Data Source	Response Taken	Notes
1 Submits ACT Score	ACT Inc.	Race value entered into ISIS	To avoid overwriting information from an institution’s survey instrument, values are only loaded from testing agencies if the student does not already have values in ISIS
2 Applies for Undergraduate Admission	UW application	Delete any values from Step 1 Add UW application values	
3 Leaves for more than one semester, applies for readmission	UW application	Delete values from Step 2 Add values from application for readmission	
4 Submits GRE Score	ETS	None	Because race/ethnicity values already exist in ISIS for this student, values from test score loads are ignored.
5 Applies for Graduate School at UW-Madison	Law School Application	Delete values from Step 3 Add values from Law School application	

APPROPRIATE USE OF RACE/ETHNIC DATA

Identification of students for communication purposes, campus services for minority students, analysis and reporting should never be done based on race/ethnicity values alone. Race/ethnicity is only relevant for domestic (non-international) students. Therefore, in order to identify students based on race/ethnicity, citizenship status also needs to be considered.

Students' self-reported race/ethnicity combined with their citizenship status determines their official race/ethnicity for student services eligibility, reporting, communication purposes. This practice is used by colleges and universities nationwide.

These reporting conventions are illustrated in the table below. The values across the top row are the race/ethnicity values in ISIS and the values down the side column are citizenship values in ISIS. The values in the non-shaded cells indicate how race/ethnicity should be reported for each combination of race/ethnicity and citizenship values (for simplicity, this example is for students with only one race/ethnicity value).

For example, an Asian student from China who is attending UW-Madison on a temporary visa (Alien – temporary) is an “international” student. An Asian student who is a citizen of the United States (native or naturalized) is considered “Asian”. Note that some non-citizens (permanent residents, refugees, and undocumented students) are domestic students. For this reason, the citizenship flag (found on many data views) that is simply a Y/N value is not sufficient for use in race/ethnicity reporting.

Reporting Conventions for Student Race/Ethnicity

Citizenship Information		Race/Ethnicity Values in ISIS					
Citizenship Status in ISIS	Citizen?	American Indian (AI)	Asian (AS)	African American (BL)	Hispanic (HI)	Not Specified (NS)	White (WH)
Native	Y	AI	AS	BL	HI	NS	WH
Naturalized	Y	AI	AS	BL	HI	NS	WH
Perm. Resident	N	AI	AS	BL	HI	NS	WH
Refugee	N	AI	AS	BL	HI	NS	WH
Unknown (including “undocumented”)	?	AI	AS	BL	HI	NS	WH
Alien - Permanent	N	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.
Alien - Temporary	N	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.	Internat.

The computed “diversity” field on many InfoAccess data views has already combined citizenship with race/ethnicity. The “targeted minority” and “minority” flags available on some data views also take citizenship into account.

REPORTING MULTIPLE RACE/ETHNICITY VALUES

Before the recent revision of federal guidelines, data collection and reporting were identical (one race/ethnicity was collected and that one race/ethnicity was reported). Now that multiple values are possible for each student, reporting and analysis are more complicated. Because we often need one value to avoid double counting (two race/ethnicity values no longer necessarily means two students) entities that need to communicate with students or report race/ethnicity data are developing new procedures. Several of these options are described below.

Federal Reporting Method

Under the new DoE guidelines, students who are Hispanic/Latino are reported as such (with other race/ethnicity information disregarded). Non-Hispanic students are reported by race/ethnicity (if they indicated only one) or in an aggregate category of “more than one race” (if they have indicated more than one race/ethnicity value).

Primary Value Reporting Method

Prior to the release of the Federal reporting guidelines, UW System institutions adopted a reporting convention based on a “primary” race/ethnicity value. For students with multiple race/ethnicity designations, one of them is determined to be “primary” (administratively, not by the student) and this is the race/ethnicity that is used for reporting. Although any number of methods could be used to designate one race/ethnicity as primary over others, UW System institutions agreed to base the order on the population demographics of Wisconsin (based on the 2000 census). The smallest population groups are given the highest chance of selection as primary.

Students with multiple race/ethnicities are reported based on whichever race comes first in the following list: Cambodian, Cuban, Vietnamese, Laotian, Puerto Rican, Hispanic (Other), Hmong, American Indian, Mexican/Chicano/a, African American/Black, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Asian (Other), White. Most InfoAccess data views with “one row per student” report this “primary value”.

Flag Method

An alternative to both the federal methodology and primary value is to rely on “flags” that are computed for many InfoAccess data views. If you don’t need to know a specific race/ethnicity but want to identify students in commonly-needed populations, you can rely on the flag. Common flags are:

1. Minority: Domestic students who are Asian (Cambodian, Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotian or Other Asian), African American or Black, Hispanic (Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a, Cuban, Other Hispanic), American Indian, or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.
2. Targeted (under Plan 2008) Minority: This is the same as the minority flag except that it does not include the “Other Asian” or the Native Hawaiian students.

Example of Race/Ethnicity Data Reporting based on Responses to Application for Admission For Domestic Students

Response to Application Question	DoE Methodology	Primary Value	Minority Flag	Targeted Minority
Q1: Hispanic = Y Q2: White	Hispanic	Hispanic	Y	Y
Q1: Hispanic = Y Q2: White and Other Asian	Hispanic	Asian (Other)	Y	Y
Q1: Hispanic = N Q2: White	White	White	N	N
Q1: Hispanic = N Q2: White and Other Asian	More than one race	Asian (Other)	Y	N
Q1: Hispanic = Y Q2: Hmong	Hispanic	Asian (Hmong)	Y	Y
Q1: Hispanic = N Q2: Hmong	Asian	Asian (Hmong)	Y	Y
Q1: Hispanic = Y Q2: Hmong and White	Hispanic	Asian (Hmong)	Y	Y
Q1: Hispanic = N Q2: Hmong and White	More than one race	Asian (Hmong)	Y	Y

APPENDIX

The following entities influence the collection and/or reporting of student race/ethnicity at UW-Madison. Following is a brief description of each entity and its role.

1. The U.S. Department of Education (DoE): The DoE dictates how race/ethnicity values are collected (how our application question must be presented and worded) for the purposes of compliance with DoE reporting requirements. Most universities, UW-Madison included, only have one place in their student information system (ISIS at UW-Madison) for race/ethnicity values. For this reason, the federal reporting requirements dictate the parameters of all race/ethnicity data collection at UW-Madison.

2. The UW System Board of Regents (Board of Regents): The Board of Regents also has a stake in (and governance authority over) race/ethnicity issues as they relate to UW System institutions. The Board of Regents can influence the collection of race/ethnicity values to meet its own needs as long as it is within the parameters of the federal requirements. In addition to the race/ethnicity categories required by the DoE, the Board of Regents also requires several subcategories that are of interest for Plan 2008 and eligibility for state financial aid programs.

3. UW System Administration/UW HELP (Higher Education Location Program): The undergraduate application for admissions (as well as the electronic application that loads data into each institution's student information system) is common to all UW institutions. For this reason, collection of race/ethnicity values needs to be coordinated among UW institutions.

4. Individual UW-Madison Admitting Offices: UW System Administration coordinates the implementation of race/ethnicity data collection for the "common" applications. These include the system-wide undergraduate application for admission and a graduate application for admission (used by all UW institutions EXCEPT UW-Madison). Because there is an expectation that all applications for admission ask the same race/ethnicity question and process the values in the same manner, there is further coordination to do at UW-Madison because of the number of other admitting offices (Medical School, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine, Law, Executive MBA, Audiology, Division of Continuing Studies etc.). This adds a level of complexity at UW-Madison that is not experienced at other UW institutions.

5. UW-Madison's "Campus Community": Campus Community is the UW-Madison entity that "owns" student race/ethnicity" and other biographical/demographic data. Campus Community is an ISIS governance group coordinated by the Registrar's Office. Any changes to biographical data process or procedures needs to be approved by and coordinated with Campus Community.

Following are the federal definitions of the required race/ethnicity categories.

1. Hispanic or Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

2. American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains a tribal affiliation or community attachment.

3. Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

4. Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

5. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific islands.

6. White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.