

Our Conventions for Class Size Benchmarks

Seeking Consistency and Common Understanding

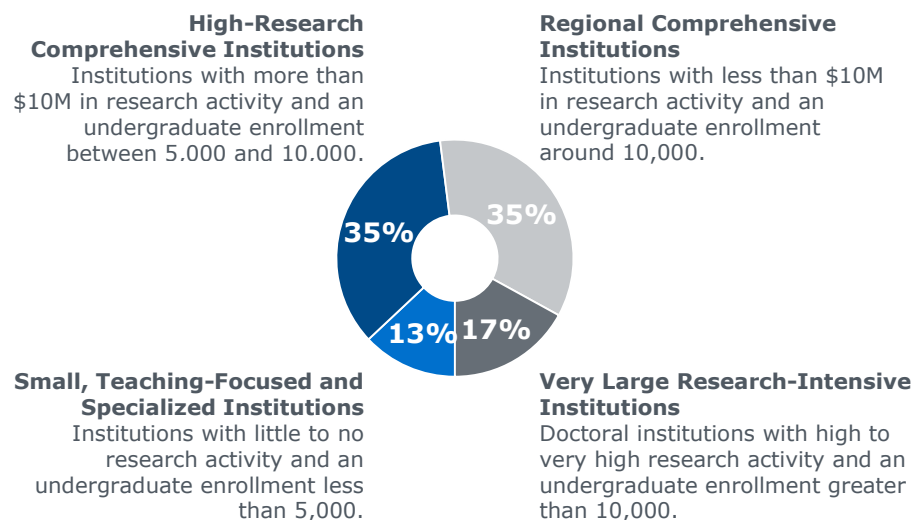
Much of the value of APS's endeavor to generate discipline-level benchmarking data is in standardizing data definitions for cross-institutional comparisons, organizing the data into relevant peer cohorts, and presenting the data in a consistent manner so that readers over time can instantly interpret the "so whats" of the benchmark distributions. This has required us to make choices about what definitions and presentation formats to use. We've tried to keep things as simple and broadly applicable as possible, but inevitably we will count or define something in a way different from the way your campus does. Our hope in this overview is to provide a common understanding of our key nomenclature and how to read and interpret our data findings, so we can spend more time together analyzing trends, and less time explaining methodologies.

Creating the Student Benchmark Dataset for Class Size

To transform individual member data into the APS Student Benchmark Dataset for Class Size, we first identified all members who have completed the APS data validation and configuration process. We then developed a standardized data dictionary and transformed each member's data into comparable data points. The resulting dataset includes 44 APS members' data from 2011- 2015 academic years. This dataset will grow as more member's data are validated.

Defining Cohorts for Comparison

We divided the 44 institutions in the dataset into four cohorts, based largely on student body composition and research activity as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Learning.



Defining Key Terms

While day-to-day usage of these terms may vary by campus or individual, we use the following terminology to describe the data and insights.

Courses vs. Sections

Course

The unique teaching moment where a student registers in and can receive student credits for completing.

ENG101 - Composition and Writing I

Section

Within each course – the individual scheduled class where students and teacher interact.

ENG101A ENG101B ENG101C

Course Types

Discussion

Where students prepare and present their original written work for discussion or critique.

Laboratory

Where students engage in practical aspects of the course topic.

Lecture

Where the instructor gives lectures with minimal student-teacher interaction.

Academic Year

2011 Fall 2010; Spring 2011; Summer 2011

2012 Fall 2011; Spring 2012; Summer 2012

2013 Fall 2012; Spring 2013; Summer 2013

2014 Fall 2013; Spring 2014; Summer 2014

2015 Fall 2014; Spring 2015; Summer 2015

Other Conventions

Class Size

The number of students enrolled in a section at an institution's set census date.

Maximum Class Capacity

The maximum number of students allowed to enroll in a section.

Completion Rate

Earned student credit hours divided by attempted student credit hours.

Depicting the Data

We present data in a number of formats, including graphs that show median, 25th percentile, and 75th percentile. An example is illustrated below.

