University of Wisconsin Whitewater | Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning

Information for data-driven decision making

Guide to Academic Program Reporting

Introduction

This document provides a concise overview of the various ways in which IRP provides information on student enrollment in academic programs on campus. Academic program reporting is complicated by several factors (many of which are discussed below). The purpose of this document is to help the UW-Whitewater campus community understand how and why academic program reporting differs from other types of IRP reporting, and why different techniques are sometimes used to report information regarding the major or college affiliation of UW-Whitewater students.

Duplicated versus Unduplicated Headcount

Most IRP reporting focuses on an unduplicated headcount of individuals, in which each student is counted only one time. In contrast, academic program reporting focuses on the number of students who have declared a specific major. When a student chooses to double major[1] (or in the rare case triple major), s/he must fulfill the coursework and other requirements associated with both majors. Because undergraduate students at UW-Whitewater can and do double major, the total number of students by major will be greater than the unduplicated headcount[2] of student enrollment at the university that year. In order to provide an accurate representation of the departmental resources being used by students, it is necessary to count student participation in each major and college with which they are affiliated.

Unduplicated Headcount Reports and Academic Program (College) Affiliation

It is important to note that there are some instances in which IRP reporting that is focused on an unduplicated headcount will report information on college or major affiliation. In such cases, IRP will utilize the information associated with a student's **first major** – the academic plan code found in the first major field associated with a student's record.[3] This means that only one major (and its associated college) will be affiliated with each student, even if that student has more than one major.

Despite the name, the first major field is NOT necessarily associated with the first major a student declared or even the most recent major a student declared. Instead, when a student has two major, Academic Advising generally follows the practice of determining which major should be coded in this first position by college affiliation. The majors affiliated with the College of Business and Economics are prioritized first, followed by the majors affiliated with the College of Education and Professional Students. The "other" major is placed in the

[1] The number of students who double major at UW-Whitewater each year is small (ranging from 3.5 – 4.7 % annually over the past ten years).

[2] Almost without exception, graduate students at UW-Whitewater are affiliated with a single major. However, graduate students may earn certificates and licenses while completing their graduate degree. As a result, headcount duplication in the graduate student population occurs when majors, certificates and licensures are listed in the same report.

[3] There are three major/minor fields associated with each student record (as well as three corresponding sub-fields), allowing for students to declare up to three majors (or two majors and a minor, or one major and two minors, etc.).

second major position. As a result, major reporting that only the majors in the first major position systematically under-counts the non-COBE major of students with double majors associated with the more than one college. For this reason, unduplicated headcount reporting of majors and/or college affiliation of students by first major is limited to the annual Fall Profile, New First Year Students by Major Declared at Entry report, and the New Transfer Students by Major Declared at Entry report.[4]

College versus Major Level Reporting

A student's college affiliation is determined by their major. Therefore, the impact of duplicating the headcount by major differs depending on the level at which reporting occurs. This means that a student who is majoring in Accounting and Finance (for example) will only be counted once if the reporting is focused at the college level – since both the Accounting major and the Finance major are associated with the College of Business and Economics (COBE). However, that same student will be counted twice if the reporting is focused at the major level – once in Accounting and once in Finance.

That said, a student who is double majoring in majors that are not affiliated with the same college will be counted twice at both levels of reporting. For example, a student majoring in both Accounting (which is affiliated with the College of Business and Economics) and Spanish (which is affiliated with the College of Letters and Sciences) will be counted twice in both a report focused at the college-level as well as once focused at the major level.

Majors versus Degree Type

UW-Whitewater offers nine different undergraduate degree types.[5] Some majors (such as Accounting) are only associated with a single degree type (in this case, a BBA). Many majors, however, are associated with multiple degree types.[6] In such cases, the requirements for completing a major may vary by the degree type a student wishes to earn.

In terms of major reporting, this causes a particular problem for the College of Education and Professional Studies (COEPS). The COEPS offers several majors that are education specific – such as the Communication Sciences & Disorders major and the Special Education major. However, a student can major in a much wider range of subjects and still earn a BSE – which requires substantial coursework in and resources from the COEPS. Many students seeking a BSE (and especially those who are planning to work in secondary education) will have a major affiliated with the College of Letters and Sciences (such as History). For this reason, a report is produced that includes academic plan code, which indicates whether a student is pursuing teaching credentials, and is therefore also using COEPS resources (the academic plan code with include the acronym BSE, such as EDBSEHIST).

Majors and Emphases

In most majors, it is possible (or required) to pursue an emphasis within a particular major. For example, students majoring in Art may choose to pursue an Emphasis is Graphic Design or in Art History. Emphases are always linked to a particular major. Some emphases have similar (or even identical) names; however, each emphasis is unique to a particular major. Therefore, an Honors emphasis in History is likely to associated with different requirements than an Honors emphasis in Chemistry. For this reason, emphases are never reported in

[4] The Fall Profile provides an aggregate snapshot of the university population on the 10th day of the fall semester. First year students are unlikely to declare more than one major when they first enroll for classes.
[5] These include: AAS, AA, BAAS, BA, BBA, BFA, BM, BS, and BSE.
[6] For example, at UW-Whitewater, a student can earn a BA, BBA, BS, or BSE in Economics.

the aggregate, but rather only in association with a particular major. Because a major can only be associated with a single emphasis, reporting at the major and emphasis level will be duplicated, but the number of emphases in a particular major should not exceed the total number of individuals associated with that major.

Minors versus Majors

UW-Whitewater offers over 120 undergraduate minors. Unlike emphases, a student's minor is independent of the major(s) s/he is pursuing. Students often combine majors with minors in very different fields in order to diversify their knowledge and experience. For that reason, it is not unusual for a student's minor to be affiliated with a different college than their major(s). In academic program reports focused on minors, headcount can be duplicated multiple ways. In reports focused solely on minors, a student with more than one minor will be counted in each minor with which s/he is affiliated. When reporting lists the number of majors associated with each minor, a student with a double major *and* a minor will be counted in each major with which s/he is affiliated.[7]

Degree-Seeking versus Non-Degree Seeking

Generally speaking, academic program reporting focuses on degree seeking students. However, some reporting includes non-degree seeking students (such as high school students taking college level courses, or community members who are auditing courses). Most of these non-degree seeking students do not have a major field associated with their record. However, Special Non-Degree Full Credential (SPFC) students are an exception – these students are sometimes assigned a major on their student record. In academic program reporting, where the activities of all students are of interest, these SPFC students are sometimes counted in the majors with which they are affiliated. One example of this type of reporting is the Program Review dashboard, which is used by programs undergoing their five-year review to complete a self-study report; this dashboard considers all students who utilize the resources provided by that program.

[7] It should be noted that although minors are affiliated with specific departments, IRAP does not usually report on participation in minors in terms of college affiliation, since college affiliation is determined by a student's major.