



# Undergraduate Licensed Data Set—2015 Database Overview

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Peterson's Undergraduate Database is one of the most comprehensive and complete databases in the field of higher education. Within it you will find information about over 4,600 undergraduate (both two-year and four-year) institutions throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and abroad. This database is one of the most important at Peterson's, and is critical to the production and maintenance of many products and services.

This Overview is designed to give you a broad sense of the database. A Data Dictionary, comprised of detailed descriptions of the tables and fields in the database, is available in a separate document.

## **UNIVERSE:**

The Undergraduate Database for 2015 includes 2,655 four-year and 1,960 two-year accredited colleges and universities. To be included, an institution must grant a degree at the associate's or baccalaureate level and either have full accreditation or candidate-for-accreditation (preaccreditation) status granted by an institutional or specialized accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Recognized accrediting bodies include the six regional associations of schools and colleges (Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, and Western), the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC), the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools/Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT), the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), the Transnational Association of Christian Schools (TRACS), the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE), the Council on Occupational Education (COE), the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools (AARTS), and the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). Program registration by the New York State Board of Regents is considered to be the equivalent of institutional accreditation.

Canadian institutions must be chartered and authorized to grant degrees by a provincial government, affiliated with a chartered institution, or accredited by a recognized U.S. accrediting body. Institutions from outside the U.S., its territories, and Canada that are accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting bodies are also included. Specialized accrediting bodies exist in over forty different fields, each of which is authorized to accredit specific programs in its particular field. This can serve as the equivalent of institutional accreditation for specialized institutions offering programs in only a single field (e.g., schools of art, optometry, music, theology, etc.).

Each year, Peterson's conducts a comprehensive review of the membership lists of the regional, institutional, and specialized accrediting bodies. Newly listed schools are added to Peterson's listings and surveyed, while schools no longer accredited by the above standard are suppressed in the database.

## **TIME FRAME:**

The database contains information from the most current academic year. The database is updated annually, in conjunction with the release of updated guides and electronic products. A field that shows the last year in which a survey was received and processing was completed is included with the master institution file for each school. Archived databases are available, beginning with the 1983–84 academic year. Databases from the 1983–84 through the 1996–97 academic years are stored in legacy structures; databases from the 1997-1998 academic year forward are stored in structures consistent with the current set. These databases are available as annual data sets or in a single data set, however in 1997-1998 Peterson's database underwent a major conversion and expansion, so some information is only available from 1997-1998 forward.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA VERIFICATION:**

Data collection for the Undergraduate Database begins in December and continues through June of the following year. Questionnaires are sent to the institutions meeting the criteria defined above (see "Universe"). For schools that have previously been included, responses from the preceding year are included on the questionnaires for guidance. Officials from the schools (usually institutional research personnel, admissions officers, or registrars) submit responses by confirming that pre-existing information is correct or providing new or updated information. Throughout the season, our staff reaches out to non-responding institutions by phone and e-mail to update survey information. A comprehensive data cleansing process is employed after surveys are received to verify unusual figures and resolve discrepancies. Institutions are also contacted directly to obtain missing key data elements, all toward the goal of ensuring the greatest possible accuracy and comprehensiveness of the database.

It should be noted, however, that colleges can and often do change policies as they see fit, so data in the database can be most effectively viewed as a snapshot of the universe at a particular time.

## **GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE:**

As noted above, the Undergraduate Database includes accredited institutions in the United States and U.S. territories (4,448), Canada (104), Mexico (28), and 20 other nations (35). Many institutions outside the U.S., its territories, and Canada are accredited by the Middle States regional accreditation association. The accreditation of foreign institutions is generally objective, although some variation in consistency has been noted over time.

## **DATABASE VERSATILITY AND EXTENT OF USE:**

The Peterson's Undergraduate Database is a crucial component of many products and services and is a testament to the completeness of its information. Among these are the following:

- *Peterson's Four-Year Colleges*
- *Peterson's Two-Year Colleges*
- *Peterson's How to Get Money for College: Go Beyond Federal Aid—Get Money from Your School and State*
- *Peterson's Education Supersite (Colleges and Universities Channel) at <http://www.petersons.com/>*