Federal Changes to the Reporting of Race/Ethnicity

In Fall 2010, federal changes to the collection and reporting of race and ethnicity became mandatory. These changes, developed by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB), have had a substantial impact on the data practices of institutions across the country, including Pomona College. The key changes include:

- Two-question collection format: The race/ethnicity question is now asked in two parts. Individuals are first asked whether they are Hispanic (yes/no). Regardless of their answer to this question, all ethnicities may also select one or more of five races (Asian, Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native).
- Hispanic now trumps all: Those who respond "yes" to the first question are reported as Hispanic only, regardless of whether they also select one or more races.
- Two or more races: Those who respond "no" to the first question and select more than one race in question two are reported to IPEDS only as "two or more races." This is a new reporting category.
- Asian/Pacific Islander: Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders are now reported separately from other Asians.

Implementation of the new federal categories

Methods of implementing the new federal mandates have varied by population at Pomona. Faculty were given the option of re-identifying based on the new categories in a survey administered by the Dean's Office in Spring 2010. Those who did not respond are now reported as "Unknown" race/ethnicity.

Similarly, staff were invited to update their identification by the Office of Human Resources. For those who did not respond, their previous designations are "mapped" onto the new categories and carry over in this new reporting schema.

For students, the Common Application began collecting race/ethnicity with the new format beginning with entering cohort 2009. For continuing students, the designations they selected when they applied are "mapped" onto the new categories and carry over in the new reporting schema.

Implications of these changes

Institutions across the country transitioned to the new categories between academic years 2008-09 and 2010-11. During this transition period, some institutions used the old OMB categories, some used the new categories, while others used a mixture of both. For this reason, peer comparisons of race/ethnicity are largely unreliable over the years that cover this transition period. At Pomona, our use of the new reporting categories began in 2010-11.

Further, these changes introduce a discontinuity in all longitudinal Pomona trends. The new data collection mechanisms and the new data categories make it impossible to compare data collected after this transition with data available from earlier reporting periods. In general, the new schema has the effect of increasing the proportion of "Hispanic" while decreasing the proportion of "Black" and "Asian." Current race/ethnicity data moving forward will be presented in the new 2010 format, unless noted otherwise. Historical data will rely on trend-lines of 2009 and earlier until enough years of the new format are compiled and can be meaningfully compared, and peer comparisons will not be presented for unstable transition years.