



## STUDENT IDENTIFIERS

Since the beginning of the CIRP Freshman Survey in 1966, HERI has asked respondents to enter a student identifier.\* The Social Security Number (SSN) has always been HERI's identifier of choice, and the relevant instruction on the survey form asked students to **“PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER”**.

Over the years, some institutions have asked HERI if they could have the students enter a locally generated student identifier in place of the SSN, and we have been happy to accommodate them provided the local identifier fit within the space available. As more and more institutions have moved away from using SSN as their student identifier, we decided to make the accommodation more formal. Starting with the 2004 Freshman Survey, the relevant instruction on the survey form asks the student to **“PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR ID NUMBER (as instructed).”**

Although this new wording of the instruction explicitly gives your institution more choice about which student identifier to use, it also places a new responsibility on you. Whether you choose to continue using the SSN or switch to a locally generated identifier:

### **YOU MUST INSTRUCT YOUR STUDENTS WHICH STUDENT IDENTIFIER TO ENTER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED**

Failure to give this instruction to students may result in the students entering no identifier at all, or different students entering different identifiers. Either of these outcomes would reduce the long-term value you can derive from the results of the survey.

### **PLEASE NOTE AN IMPORTANT CHANGE TO THE IDENTIFIER FIELD ON THE SURVEY INSTRUMENTS**

In previous surveys, the student “gridded” his/her student identifier on the instrument. This “grid” allowed for no more than nine characters, all numeric. In recognition of the fact that many institutions use letters in their student identifiers, we have changed the field to allow for up to 13 characters of any type. **IF YOUR STUDENT IDENTIFIER IS LESS THAN 13 CHARACTERS LONG, PLEASE INSTRUCT STUDENTS TO ENTER THEIR IDENTIFIERS STARTING WITH THE LEFTMOST BOX, LEAVING ANY UNUSED BOXES BLANK.**

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\* HERI uses this student identifier for three purposes:

- To link the responses of individual students to our follow-up surveys to the responses they made on the Freshman Survey, providing a longitudinal file by which changes in student activities, attitudes, and goals can be measured.
- To allow institutions to merge data from the Freshman Survey to data they keep on the students throughout their college careers, allowing similar sorts of longitudinal analyses.
- To help locate current addresses of students for the purpose of administering long-term follow-ups.