

A Primer on New Federal Ethnic/Race Data Collection and Reporting

All of higher education has moved to a new system for collecting and reporting multi-race data.

In case you missed the email, all employees and students are encouraged to check the status of their ethnic/race data and update if desired. Employees may do so via J-Ess (<https://jess.jmu.edu/>) and students via E-Campus (<https://ecampus.jmu.edu/>). We call this “re-identification” and it is NOT required. However, it may be important if you previously chose values of “Hispanic”, “Biracial”, “Asian/Pacific Islander”, “Other” or did not choose a response (“Not Specified”). All new students and new employees are given the opportunity to respond to the new federal collection system via admissions and hiring processes.

Two Question Format

New federal law requires all institutions to use a “two question format” to collect ethnic/race data for all new students and new hires to be reported in fall 2010. There is also a new report format for reporting the data. There are some special changes to the format that will affect reporting for the previous choices mentioned, above. Without re-identification, our data will contain a mix of “apples and oranges”, making it difficult to have an accurate understanding of JMU’s ethnic and racial diversity.

The two questions:

- 1) Are you Hispanic/Latino? Yes or No (the ethnicity question)
- 2) Please select one or more of the following races.
 - White/Caucasian
 - Black/African-American
 - American Indian/Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

What kind of data does the Office of Institutional Research routinely report?

- Student specific ethnic/race data are reported to the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.
- Student and employee aggregate data are reported to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
- Employee specific ethnic/race data are NOT reported to the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.

How will your selections be reported?

- If you are a temporary/non-resident alien, you will be reported as a “Non-resident Alien”.
- If you select “Hispanic-Yes”, you will be reported “Hispanic” whether or not you select any choices from the second question about race.
- If you select “Hispanic-No” and one race, you will be reported in that race.

- If you select “Hispanic-No” and more than one race, you will be reported “Multi”.
- If you select “Hispanic-No” and do not select a race, you will be reported as “Unknown” or “Unreported”.

Although the full response detail is not reported to NCES, JMU is required to retain the detail for three years for the federal Office of Civil Rights. That’s why we cannot use “Biracial” and must report it as “Unknown”.

Who should consider re-identification?

- Anybody who considers themselves to be multi-racial, but chose just one race under the old format.
- If your ethnicity is “Hispanic”, you now have the option to also select a racial value.
- If your current value is “Biracial” and you do not re-identify, we do not have the detail required and you will be reported “Unknown” or “Unreported”.
- If your current value is “Other” or “Not Specified” or does not exist, and you do not re-identify, you will be reported “Unknown” or “Unreported”.
- If your current value is “Asian/Pacific Islander”, the group is being split into “Asian” and “Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander”. If you do not re-identify, you will be reported “Asian”.
- Anybody who is simply curious about how they will be reported.

More Background

This new format was created by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1997. It is mandatory for all federal collections of person specific data. It was used in the 2000 U.S. Census and many other federal agencies are using it.

Here at JMU, a host of staff working with both the student and human resource systems have been preparing for this change for several years. Collection for both new students and staff are underway through admissions and hiring processes. “Re-identification” for existing students and staff are encouraged via E-Campus and J-Ess, respectively.