

Comparator Institution Cohort Selection Methodology

To arrive at a list of comparators, Plymouth State gathered data from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Initial comparator institution selections were based on the following criteria:

- Public
- Regional comprehensive
- Carnegie Classification
- Total student full time equivalent approximately 5,000 – 12,000
- A portion of the cohort is part of a system
- Similar climate

A data mining Cluster Analysis was used to examine relationships between 85 IPEDS variables and reduced the initial comparator list to a pool of 28. Institutional variables were organized into meaningful structures and a taxonomy developed to determine which institutions would be included in PSU’s comparator list. Further analysis of the pool included graduate student enrollment, undergraduate retention and graduation rates, total price, ratio of students to full time faculty, highest degrees offered, degree of urbanization, and athletic league membership to produce the final list of comparators.

General Descriptors- the following information is from IPEDS 2008 and from the NCAA.

Institution (in alphabetical order)	Location	Sector	Highest Degree offered	Degree of urbanization	Carnegie Classification	Athletic membership
Bridgewater State University	MA	Public	Post Master	Suburb: Large	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
Frostburg State University	MD	Public	Masters	Town: Remote	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
Millersville University of Pennsylvania	PA	Public	Post Master	Suburb: Large	Masters-L	NCAA Div II
Plymouth State University	NH	Public	Doc	Town: Remote	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	PA	Public	Post Master	Town: Distant	Masters-L	NCAA Div II
SUNY College at New Paltz	NY	Public	Post Master	Town: Fringe	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
SUNY College at Plattsburgh	NY	Public	Post Master	Town: Distant	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
The College of New Jersey	NJ	Public	Post Master	City: Small	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth	MA	Public	Doc	Suburb: Midsize	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point	WI	Public	Doc	Town: Distant	Masters-M	NCAA Div III
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater	WI	Public	Masters	Town: Distant	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
Western Connecticut State University	CT	Public	Doc	City: Small	Masters-L	NCAA Div III
Westfield State University	MA	Public	Post Master	Suburb: Large	Masters-M	NCAA Div III

Throughout the process, there was a desire to include institutions within PSU’s list recognized as being “best” regional comprehensives selected because of the components of distinctiveness or practices for which PSU displays or aspires. To accomplish this, PSU utilized the following criteria:

- All institutions realize the benefits to students of a smaller institution with reasonable student to faculty ratio.
- Each demonstrated governance, administrative structures, mission statements, and academic goals appropriate to a regional comprehensive institution.
- Each demonstrated commitment to teaching, research, scholarship, academic inquiry and service to the community.

The final group of 12 comparators listed alphabetically above, includes both peer and aspirational institutions.

