



# Discipline-Specific Peer Analyses for Instructional Costs and Productivity

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# Introduction to The Cost Study at UD

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# History of The Cost Study and HEC

## The Cost Study at the University of Delaware

- National Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity
- A leader in the analysis and benchmarking of discipline-level instructional costs and productivity since 1996
- Available to all 4-year, non-profit colleges and Universities (U.S. and International)

## The Higher Education Consortia (HEC)

- Established in 2015 to promote consortium relationships and research using Cost Study data
- Based out of an Institutional Research Office

# History of The Cost Study and HEC

*The National Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity*

## Who...

*T/TE, other regular, supplemental faculty, TAs*



## ...is teaching what to whom...

*Student credit hours, organized class sections, online, undergrad/grad*

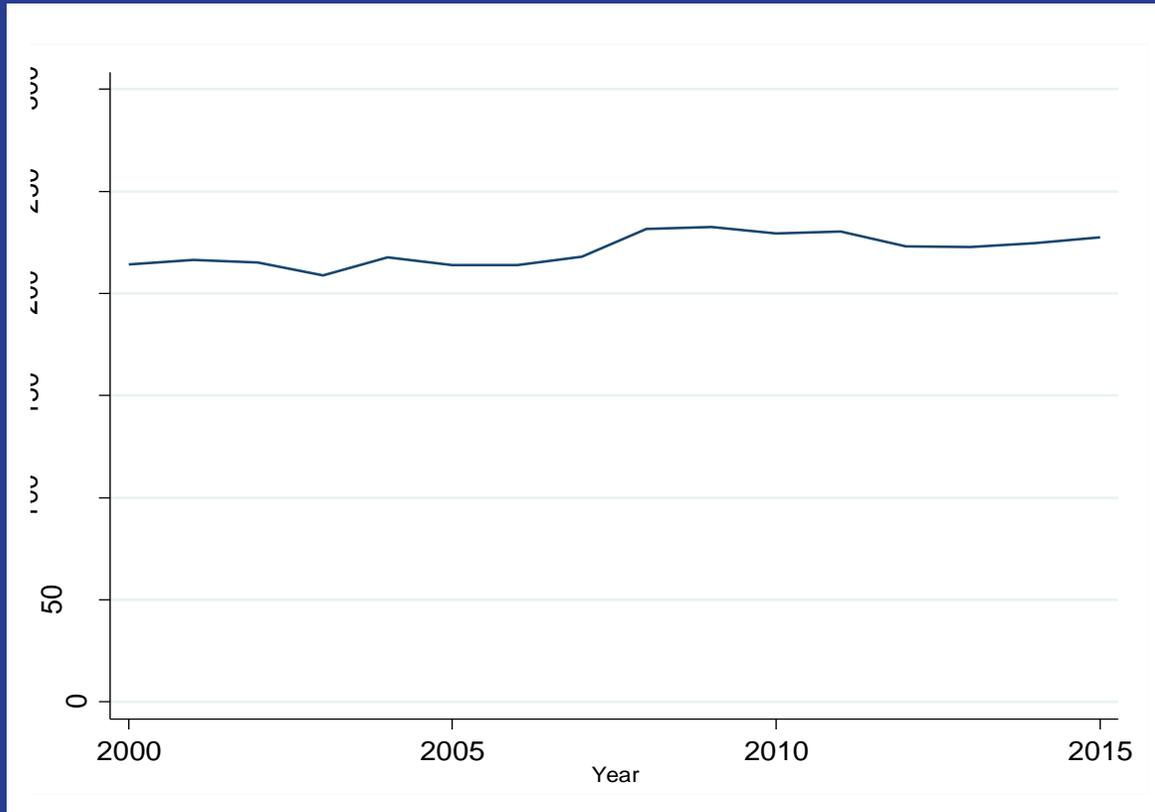


## And at what cost...

*Instructional, research, public service expense*



# Context for examining **instructional expense** - longitudinal findings



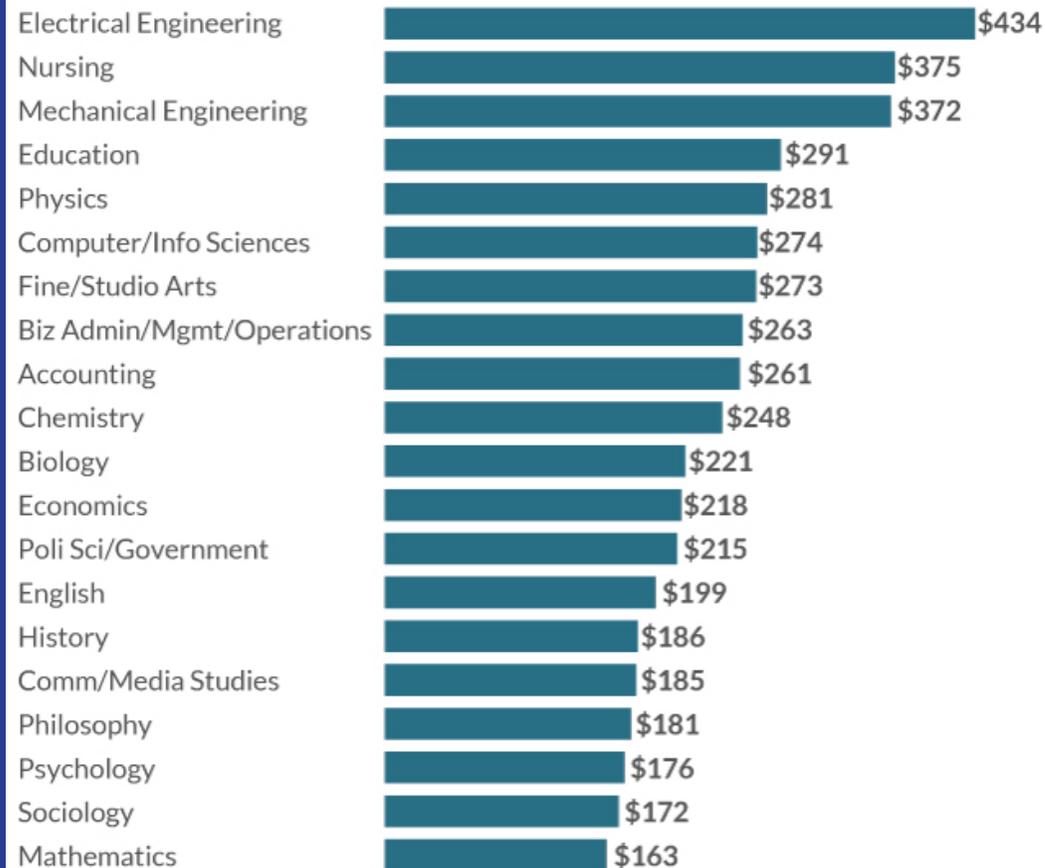
Across all academic disciplines

Weighted average Direct  
Instructional Expenditures per  
Student Credit Hour

2000-2015

### Average instructional cost

By field, per credit hour



Source: The National Bureau of Economic Research

## 2012 – 2015 Average Cost Per Student Credit Hour (2015 dollars)

“Why Is Math Cheaper Than English?  
Understanding Cost Differences  
In Higher Education”  
(2018 NBER Working Paper)

# Types of Reports Available

Institutional Reports

Comparative Reports

- 3-year-averages
- Norms
- Peer analyses
- Special Data Requests

# National Norm Reporting

## Institutional Carnegie Classification

*Research (R1&R2), Doctorate/Professional (R3), Comprehensive (M1,M2,M3), Baccalaureate (B1,B2)*



## Highest Degree Awarded

*Doctorate, Master's, Bachelor's, Non-Degree*

## Proportion of Undergraduate Degrees

*0-24% Undergrad, 25-49% Undergrad, 50-74% Undergrad, 75-100% Undergrad*



# What are Discipline Specific Peers

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# *What institutional needs drove you to request a discipline-specific peer analysis?*

## **Miami University (OH)**

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In 2020, the IR Office developed the bandwidth to conduct a longitudinal analysis of peer results

OIRE worked with Department Chairs to make adjustments to the standard peer list; this resulted in buy-in/understanding of the impact and importance of a discipline-specific analysis

## **Boise State**

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Currently involved in a program prioritization process, which includes peer comparisons of instructional expenditure data

Carnegie Classification changed twice over the last decade

Institution-level peers do not always translate to department or discipline-level peers

# Selecting Discipline Specific Peers

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# *Methods of selecting discipline specific peer groups*

## **Miami University (OH)**

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Used a conceptual approach

Reached out to our Department Chairs to gain their inside knowledge of unknown peers and programs to adjust the peer grouping or expand them

This approach also allowed Miami to find better comparisons across CIPs

## **Boise State**

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Used a data-informed approach

The comparison group is a nuanced peer analysis starting with research universities (R1/R2/R3 Carnegie classification) that offer the same highest degree as Boise State's related program

The criteria were expanded in instances where the N threshold could not be met with Research universities

# Benefits of Using Discipline-Specific Approach

Engaging department / college level administrators

Unique Programs

- Standard Peers don't offer comparison
- e.g., a small liberal arts school with an equine program

When norms are not available for a specific CIP

Interdisciplinary Programs: not easily represented by a single CIP

# Unique Programs

## Educational Psychology (42.28)

*Clinical, Counseling and Applied Psychology*

- Error Bars show standard deviation
- No values available from Standard Peer Group
- R1/R2 norms have high variability.
- Discipline Specific Group is peers more similar to our sample institution.

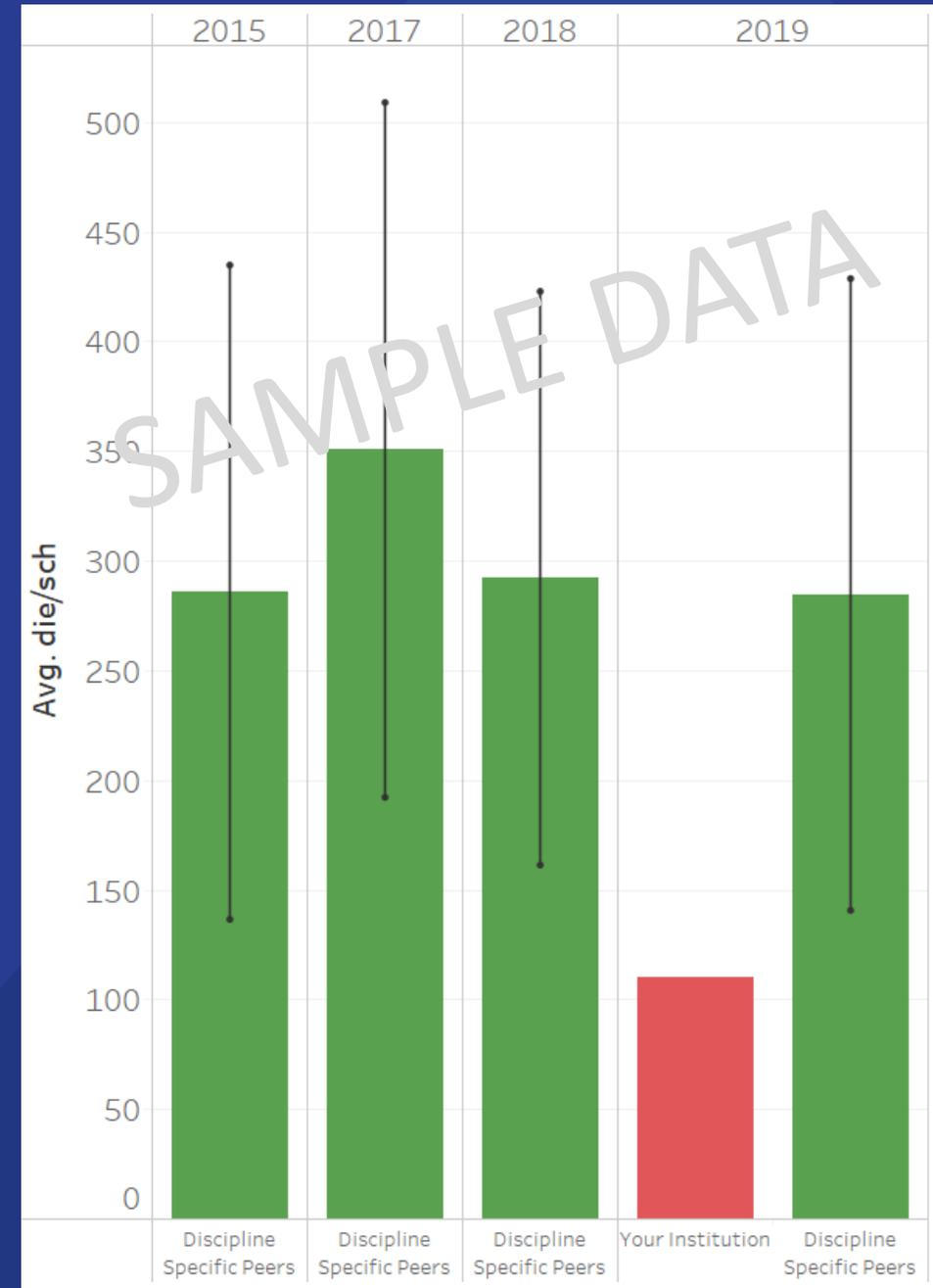


# Norms not available for specific CIP

## Commerce (52.0703)

*Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations (52.07)*

- New program for our sample institution in 2019
- Infrequently used CIP by other participating institutions
- No norms available (none of the norm groups meet the threshold of 5)
- Can use discipline specific analysis to obtain a comparison



# Interdisciplinary Programs: e.g. Kinesiology and Health (31.05)



30.19 - Nutrition  
Sciences

31.05 - Sports,  
Kinesiology, and  
Physical Education /  
Fitness

51.22 - Public Health

# *How have the peer analyses been used thus far for decision-making?*

## **Miami University (OH)**

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Built sophisticated self-service visualizations in Tableau for Department Chairs

Used peer averages to benchmark, which helped to identify unexpected fluctuations in the data

Used for Nursing program accreditation evaluation annual report

## **Boise State**

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The instructional cost peer comparison was weighted as part of the overall program prioritization calculation and quintiles

The analyses are part of an overall diagnostic and served as a conversation starter

# What's Next from The Cost Study

## Automated Discipline Specific Peer Requests in the Portal

### Discipline Specific Peer Analysis Options for Study Year 2019

[View All Refined Means](#)

**Choose Table(s):**  
*Select multiple items using Ctrl on PC or CMD on Mac*

1A ^  
1B ■  
1C ■  
1D v

**Get Refined Means**

[View Ratio Tables for a CIP](#)

**Choose CIP:**  
4.02 - Architecture v

**Choose Table(s):**  
*Select multiple items using Ctrl on PC or CMD on Mac*

1A ^  
1B ■  
1C ■  
1D v

**Get Analysis**

#### Peers in Group

- Ball State University(1786)
- Clemson University(3425)
- Kent State University (3051)
- Montana State University - Bozeman(2532)
- North Carolina State University at Raleigh(2972)
- SUNY - University at Buffalo(2837)
- University of Kansas(1948)
- University of New Mexico(2663)
- University of South Florida(1537)
- University of Texas - Austin(3658)
- University of Washington in Seattle(3798)

# *What does this type of research offer to our understanding of instructional costs and productivity at 4-year colleges and universities?*

## **Miami University (OH)**

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Dialogue has been opened between the IR office and the department chairs directly related to costs and CIP codes

Collaborating and involving the leadership in this process has also benefitted the Budget Office

Can very easily identify bottlenecks or anything amiss in the data, which can result in actionable change

## **Boise State**

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Resulted in a closer review of the data and improved data quality; working with colleagues around campus to correct misclassified data

Improved conversations with Departments around instructional costs; beginning to build out a strategy for enhanced discussion/ guided use of the data

Q & A