



## **FAQs for *The ECAR Study of Students and Information Technology, 2009***

### **1. What is this study all about?**

*The ECAR Study of Students and Information Technology, 2009*, continues the work of the EDUCAUSE Center of Applied Research (ECAR) studies that were published on this topic from 2004 to 2008. This study explores undergraduate experiences with information technology. These undergraduates include freshmen and seniors at four-year institutions and all students at community colleges.

### **2. Who is conducting this study?**

The study is being conducted by ECAR. The principal investigators are Dr. Gail Salaway at ECAR ([gsalaway@educause.edu](mailto:gsalaway@educause.edu)) and Judith Borreson Caruso at ECAR and the University of Wisconsin–Madison ([judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu](mailto:judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu)).

### **3. What is the primary source of data for this study?**

*The ECAR Study of Students and Information Technology, 2009*, will be based primarily on responses to a survey of freshmen and seniors at four-year institutions and all students at community colleges at approximately 100 higher education institutions. The survey will include roughly 50 questions that will take students about 15 minutes to complete. The survey will be administered by ECAR and will be open to students for approximately seven weeks. Please note that students who participate in the survey and provide their e-mail addresses will be eligible to win a gift certificate from Amazon.com, provided by ECAR.

### **4. What about qualitative interviews?**

ECAR would like to interview some students in focus groups at a few institutions. If you are interested in having your students participate, please let Judy Caruso know. For these interviews, ECAR will provide food and beverages to the students. ECAR will also interview some instructional support staff and higher education administrators.

### **5. Why should my institution participate?**

The primary benefit of participating in this study is to gain an understanding of how your students use technology, their assessment of their technical skills, the extent to which they use information technologies in their courses, and their perspectives about the impact of IT on their academic experience. Participating institutions will receive a report that compares their students with students of similar institutions. Institutions will also receive the responses of their students in digital form so that they may do further analysis. These items should be available in the August/September 2009 timeframe.

### **6. When will the results be published?**

The study is expected to be published in the fall of 2009. A complete schedule for the study can be found in item 15.

## **7. What do I have to do to participate?**

Each participating institution will be required to select and provide to ECAR the name and e-mail address of the individual who will be the primary contact for this study. Because this study surveys a sample of students, institutional participation requires the support of the institution's senior leadership. The study has been deemed exempt from full institutional review board (IRB) approval processes at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. For the purposes of this study, we encourage institutions to use the UW–Madison exemption available at <http://www.educause.edu/ECAR/Reference/StudentStudy>. If your institution cannot or chooses not to use it, you will need to provide your institution's approval by February 2, 2009, to Judy Caruso.

Each participating institution selects a sample of its freshmen and seniors and sends e-mail invitations to participate in the survey directly to those students. For community colleges, the sample can include students of any class standing. Institutions will likely wish to send a reminder to the students approximately one week after the initial invitation. Information on sample size and institution enrollments must be provided to the study's principal investigators for inclusion in the analysis. It is recommended that institutions modify ECAR's generic e-mail invitation and make it appealing to their students to participate in the study, in order to increase response rate. In past years' studies, those institutions that sent out a reminder invitation about two weeks after the initial invitation also increased their response rate.

## **8. What do I need for approval at my institution?**

The UW–Madison IRB exemption supports the research methods for the ECAR study and its principal investigators. The IRB officials at that institution have reviewed the study and deemed it exempt from full federal IRB approval processes. Institutions are encouraged to use the UW–Madison exemption. Simply notify Judy Caruso that you accept this exemption.

Those institutions that cannot or choose not to accept the UW–Madison IRB exemption will need to provide institutional approval by February 2, 2009, to Judy Caruso. For use in this process, ECAR provides a summary of the study, questions for institutional representatives, the UW–Madison exemption, qualitative interview questions, and the student survey. These documents should simplify the task of securing approval at your institution. If additional information is needed, you may contact Judy Caruso ([judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu](mailto:judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu)).

## **9. My institution doesn't have IRB approval requirements. Is there anything I need to do?**

No. Just inform Judy Caruso that you accept the UW–Madison exemption.

## **10. May I add my own questions to the survey?**

Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate additional questions.

## **11. If my institution participates this year, will it have to participate every year?**

No, but you are certainly welcome to do so! Each year, institutions are invited to participate for that year. For those institutions that participate over multiple years, it is possible to identify longitudinal trends.

## **12. How do I know what is a good sample for my institution?**

Contact the individual who does survey sampling at your institution and ask what sampling is required to obtain a good response for your institution. We recommend oversampling seniors and males because these students tend to underrespond in proportion to their numbers.

For those institutions that don't know what denotes a good sample for the institution, we recommend sampling a good portion of freshmen and seniors for four-year institutions or a good portion of general students at community colleges.

**13. Why are you only surveying freshmen and seniors at four-year institutions?**

Freshmen and seniors are included in this study because they represent a continuum of the undergraduate experience. With freshmen in early spring, we get a good sense of their IT use and skills upon entry into college. With seniors, we get a good understanding of how their IT skills have changed as a result of their undergraduate experience.

**14. Will my campus have access to information about our students?**

You will receive a digital copy of your students' responses without any confidential data, such as the open-ended comments and e-mail addresses. You will also receive a report for your institution that shows how your students compare with other participating institutions.

EDUCAUSE maintains high standards regarding the treatment of all survey information. In keeping with these high standards, EDUCAUSE does not retain personally identifiable student information. The data will reside at EDUCAUSE in a secure location. Data will be protected using appropriate data security standards.

**15. What is the schedule of the study?**

The proposed schedule is as follows:

1/16/2009	Deadline for expressing interest
2/2/2009	Notice of participation using UW–Madison exemption or IRB approval completed and forwarded to Judy Caruso ( <a href="mailto:judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu">judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu</a> )
2/16/2009	Determine student sample and send information on sample and student enrollment to Judy Caruso ( <a href="mailto:judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu">judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu</a> )
2/23–4/13/2009	Send e-mail invitation to students
2/23–4/13/2009	Student survey period
Fall 2009	Publication of study
9/1/2009	Data to institutions

**16. May I prevent students at my institution from receiving one of the gift certificates?**

No. The monetary incentive is provided to ensure a good response rate. Our experience in the past has been that institutions that do not provide the incentive have greatly reduced response rates.

**17. Can my institution provide our own prizes?**

No. In order to protect students' anonymity, institutions will not know which of their students participated in the survey. The only prizes awarded will be by EDUCAUSE.

**18. Who may I contact for additional information?**

Contact Judy Caruso ([judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu](mailto:judy.caruso@cio.wisc.edu)) or Gail Salaway ([gsalaway@educause.edu](mailto:gsalaway@educause.edu)).