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Please do not retire the Academic Libraries Survey.

We appreciate the response from NCES and the explanation of its budgetary and staffing challenges. However, we strongly disagree with the decision to retire the AL survey component from IPEDS and urge NCES to reconsider this proposal. The AL data are essential for academic libraries, higher education institutions, researchers, policymakers, and the public to understand the role and impact of libraries in postsecondary education. The AL data provide valuable information on library resources, services, expenditures, and staffing that are not available from any other source at the national level. The AL data are also used to benchmark library performance, measure library outcomes, identify best practices, and advocate for library funding and support.

The AL survey component is not only important for academic libraries, but also for NCES's mission to collect and report high-quality and comprehensive data on education in the United States. By eliminating the AL survey component, NCES would lose a key indicator of the academic environment and the learning resources available to students and faculty. The AL survey component also complements and enhances other IPEDS components, such as the Institutional Characteristics, Completions, and Finance surveys, by providing additional context and detail on the inputs and outputs of postsecondary education. Moreover, the AL survey component contributes to the international comparability and competitiveness of U.S. education data, as many other countries collect and report similar data on their academic libraries.

We acknowledge the efforts of NCES to collaborate with IMLS and other stakeholders to find a solution for continuing the AL survey component. However, we do not believe that transferring the responsibility to another agency or organization is a viable or desirable option. The AL survey component is an integral part of IPEDS and should remain within the scope and authority of NCES. Moving the AL survey component to another entity would disrupt the continuity and consistency of the data collection and reporting, create confusion and burden for the respondents, and jeopardize the quality and accessibility of the data. Furthermore, we do not think that IMLS or any other potential partner has the capacity or resources to take over the AL survey component without compromising its own core functions and priorities.

Therefore, we urge NCES to reverse its decision and retain the AL survey component in IPEDS. We believe that the AL data are indispensable for the advancement and improvement of postsecondary education and academic libraries in the United States. We also believe that NCES has the responsibility and the expertise to continue collecting and reporting the AL data in a consistent and reliable manner. We hope that NCES will recognize the value and importance of the AL survey component and reconsider its proposal to retire it from IPEDS.