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Hello again,

As an information professional working hard to make sure our nation's university students have what they need to succeed, I'd like to implore you to continue standardized data collection regarding academic libraries through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

As a smaller institution, my library relies on the data collected by IPEDS in order to make decisions. We've used it to conduct necessary portions of our jobs, including identifying peer libraries with whom to collaborate and to conduct peer comparisons to other libraries of our size to measure against to make sure our collections are diverse and supportive of our university's curriculum. Without this data, we would no longer be able to perform this necessary feature of our jobs as effectively. We wouldn't be able to compare our performance against that of our peers like we do annually, to ensure we're equipping our students for success in the same ways our peers at similarly-sized institutions are. This would ultimately put us and our students at a major disadvantage. While alternatives to IPEDS' academic library data exist, they require more of an investment on our part. As a smaller unit on a smaller university campus (which prioritizes an experiential liberal-arts learning experience), we will be one of the ones most affected by this change, and our service to our students will likely suffer as a result.

The Department of Education and academic libraries, overall, are generally on the same page in terms of initiatives to make higher education more affordable (in terms of things like textbook costs) for our nation's students. Which is why this decision to discontinue collecting data on academic libraries is so perplexing. Haven't we established the fact that open, affordable access to information and resources makes the experiences of our students better? Why, then, remove a mechanism that allows academic libraries, one of your biggest partners, in helping making students' education more affordable to do so by making evidence-based decisions and peer comparisons to ensure our resources are best meeting our students' needs?

At a time when many of the nation's libraries are under unprecedented pressure to provide more services than ever before while navigating increased calls to remove items reflecting diverse perspectives from their collections--and in some cases facing calls for divesting of their funds when they decide to resist censorship--this decision is especially alarming, as it shows an institutional disregard for continuing to fund a tool necessary for academic libraries to function. Once again, we are expected to continue to provide our critical services, as usual, while being drained of the tools necessary for us to do so. What is there to stop academic libraries from experiencing a stark reduction in funding on campus, if libraries like mine are unable to access this data to for evidence-based decisions to present to our governing bodies that ultimately set our budgets?

I implore you not to require us to do even more with less data to back it up. I am asking you to please continue standardized data collection regarding academic libraries through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). We need this information to support the continuation of our services, as well as justifying expanding them, in order to support our students' success.