

Once every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau takes a snapshot of everyone residing in the United States, regardless of age, race, or citizenship. This includes international students who are studying in the U.S. on April 1, 2010, when this snapshot is taken. People should be counted where they live and sleep most of the year, so students living in on-campus housing will receive their questionnaires there.

In the decennial census, on-campus college and university residence halls, dorms, fraternities, and sororities are considered "Group Quarters." Group Quarters are places where people live or stay in group living arrangements that are owned or managed by an entity or organization (such as a college or university) providing housing and/or services for the residents. Off-campus residences where students live are not considered Group Quarters.

The form used to count people living or staying in Group Quarters is called an Individual Census Report. Each resident gets his or her own form. This form collects individual data, such as age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's census questionnaire responses with anyone, including other government agencies, courts, and law enforcement entities.

The Census Bureau works in cooperation with colleges and universities to count students living in Group Quarters (see timeline below). In order to ensure a complete count, the Census Bureau has the authority to request administrative record data from your school for those students who do not return their Individual Census Reports. Census enumeration procedures are in compliance with the Family Education Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

The Group Quarters Enumeration operation happens in three phases:

Phase 1: Group Quarters Validation (Sept. - Oct. 2009)

During Phase 1, a census taker will meet with a contact person at your school to verify that your facility has been correctly identified as a Group Quarters. During this meeting, the census taker will ask for a contact phone number for the facility, the name of each residence hall, and the maximum number of people who can live or stay there. This information will be used to determine how many Individual Census Reports will be needed for each facility on or after April 1, 2010, during Phase 3: Group Quarters Enumeration.

Phase 2: Group Quarters Advance Visit (Feb. - March 2010)

During Phase 2, a census taker will visit your college or university and meet with whomever your school has appointed as the enumeration contact person for the census. During this visit, the census taker will explain the ways Individual Census Reports can be distributed and collected, and work with your school's contact person to establish the best way to count students, while respecting your institution's security and privacy rules. At this time, the census taker will also arrange an ideal date and time for the enumeration of your Group Quarters residents.

Phase 3: Group Quarters Enumeration (April - May 2010)

During Phase 3, census takers will either deliver the Individual Census Reports to your school or collect this data directly from students living in Group Quarters, based on the previous arrangements that your school's contact person made with the census. If you arranged for a member of your institution to distribute the Individual Census Reports, the census taker will arrange to return at a later date to collect the completed forms.

