

NEWS RELEASE
March 23, 2010

Community asks students to stand up and be counted

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Campus and community leaders are working to ensure an accurate count in the 2010 U.S. Census and are encouraging Purdue University students to take part.

Census forms arrived in mailboxes last week while many at Purdue were away on spring break. During a news conference Tuesday (March 23) on the Purdue campus, West Lafayette Mayor John Dennis and others urged those students to complete the forms and return them listing their campus address.

"Our student population was undercounted in the last census," Dennis said. "Each individual listed in the census is worth up to \$40,000 in federal money returned to the community during a 10-year period. Had they been counted better last time, that would have translated into funding for a number of projects to enhance the infrastructure and quality of life for those living on and near campus."

Kristin Shrack, vice president of Purdue Student Government, said an accurate count can impact the quality of life for students. Companies analyze demographic information from the census when determining where to locate. "There are many businesses that cater to a student population, and we want them to know that we have thousands of potential customers in West Lafayette," Shrack said.

Harry Brown is Purdue's census coordinator. His major task is to convince students to be counted at their campus addresses rather than at their parents' addresses. "Many students believe they should be counted in their home towns, but they live here at least nine months out of the year, and the Census Bureau views Lafayette/West Lafayette as their place of residence," Brown said. "An accurate count is very important to Purdue and the surrounding community."

Many international students also are unaware that they should be counted in the census. "We are trying to communicate to them that the census does not involve citizenship, but residency," Brown said. "International students are a vital part of our community, and we want them reflected in our census."

Purdue student Ruben Daniel Torres is from Panama, but says he will fill out the census form. "Much research work is done based on census information, and this information helps to determine university grant and loans programs," he said. "Therefore, the census is not just important for U.S. citizens but also for foreign citizens who live and study in this country."

Mark Everson, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Administration, is directing census outreach efforts for the state of Indiana. "A short count can jeopardize our political representation in Washington, cut funding benefits to which Indiana is entitled and lead to flawed public policy," he said.

Census forms arrived at households last week. Census workers will go to residence halls, fraternities and sororities, and other group housing beginning April 1 to count those living there. In some cases, the actual count will be accomplished at a group meeting of the residents at each location. In other cases, census workers will visit each room in the group residence and ask individuals living in the room to complete a form.

Writer: Mike Piggott, 765-494-9386, piggott@purdue.edu