



# **DataOnDemand**

## ***How-To Guide***

### Benchmarking Department Size

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# Benchmarking Department Size

In an era of budget cuts, benchmarking department size and structure can help with decision-making in allocating resources. DataOnDemand is already your go-to tool for benchmarking professional and staff compensation. New in 2021, CUPA-HR's comprehensive workforce database can help you quickly and easily benchmark the numbers of full-time and part-time professionals and staff positions in a department or specific functional area. This guide will help you answer questions like:

- What is the typical full-time equivalent (FTE) of a certain department at institutions like mine?
- What is the typical mix of full-time and part-time employees in a functional area at institutions like mine?



## Step 1: Prepare for the Analysis

To benchmark department size, you will use the *Professionals Department Size Report* and/or the *Staff Department Size Report* in DataOnDemand. Before beginning your analysis, you will need to gather:

- **Information on the department you're benchmarking.**  
Identify the positions within the department or functional area of interest and match these positions to CUPA-HR positions. Refer to the [Survey Participation and Information Template \(SPIT\)](#) files for position numbers and descriptions. Be sure to match your position using the CUPA-HR position description as opposed to the title. If you participate in CUPA-HR surveys, this step will be simple: Though CUPA-HR does not survey every position, most of your institution's position matches will already be in DataOnDemand.
- **Information on the types of institutions you would like to benchmark against.**  
To effectively construct a comparison group, you must decide which criteria are most important. Common benchmarking criteria include institutional control (i.e., public, private) and Carnegie classification. For benchmarking department size, we suggest you include selection criteria related to institution size in some way – for instance, student enrollment (total student FTE) or total expenses.



### Example Benchmarking Goals

Throughout this guide, we'll use an example to illustrate the process of benchmarking department size. For this example, we will benchmark the size of an IT department at similar institutions. Our example institution has two key questions about IT department size:

- What is the typical FTE of an IT department at other small private institutions with a Baccalaureate award focus?
- What is the typical mix of full-time versus part-time IT employees at other small private institutions with a Baccalaureate award focus?

First, you will need to review the "Position Descriptions" tab of the corresponding [Survey Participation and Information Template](#) (SPIT) to identify the CUPA-HR positions that match to the positions in your IT department and office staff functional area. SPITs can be downloaded from the CUPA-HR website via the link above.

You identify that some of your IT positions (e.g., campus web master) are in the Professionals Survey, and some of your IT positions are in the Staff Survey (e.g., IT systems specialist). Now that you know the positions in your IT department, you can proceed to DataOnDemand to create your comparison group.



### Step 2: Create a Comparison Group

The easiest way to create a comparison group is the *New Group Wizard* in DataOnDemand. Once logged in to [Surveys Online](#), navigate through the menu to *DataOnDemand > Comparison Groups*. Click on the *New Group Wizard* button to get started.

**Comparison Groups**

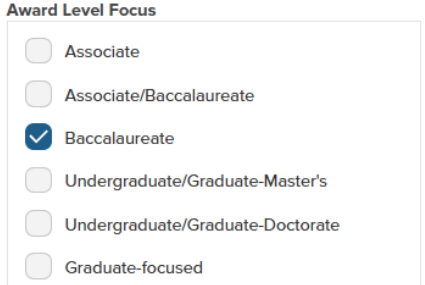
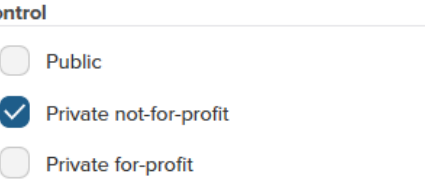

**A Comparison Group** is a set of higher ed institutions that you create for benchmarking.

**Create New Comparison Groups**

- New Group Wizard**  
Use **New Group Wizard** when you want to create a comparison group based on institutional characteristics (e.g., size, classification, research activity, operating expenses, location, etc.) or survey participation.
- New Group From Scratch**  
Use **New Group From Scratch** when you already know the names or IPEDS UnitIDs of the institutions you'd like to include in your comparison group.
- Combine Groups**  
Use **Combine Groups** when you want to combine two comparison groups you have created into one large group.



Our example institution is a small private institution with a Baccalaureate award focus that wants to benchmark against other small (i.e., student FTE < 1500) private institutions with a similar award focus. Use the settings below in the *New Group Wizard* to create a comparison group based on these characteristics.

Criteria	Location in Wizard	Selection	Example Screenshot
Include only institutions with a Baccalaureate award focus	<i>2025 Carnegie Classifications &gt; Award Level Focus</i>	Baccalaureate	
Include only private institutions	<i>Control</i>	Private not-for-profit	
Include only small institutions i.e., institutions with student FTE less than 1,500	<i>Size Variables &gt; Student FTE</i>	Student FTE less than 1,500	





















After completing these selections, click the *Search* button to refresh the page and view the table of results at the bottom of the screen. When using the *New Group Wizard*, always review the institutions identified in the search and verify that the number of institutions is large enough. In general, the more institutions in your group, the more reliable data you can generate.

150 Institutions Meeting Filter Criteria

Institution Name	2025 Classification	Control	Highest Degree Awarded	Award Level Focus	Affiliation	Student FTE	Faculty FTE	Staff FTE	HR FTE	FT Faculty Union	Adjunct/PT Faculty Union	Staff Union	Graduate Students Union
Huntingdon College (Montgomery, AL)	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small	Private not-for-profit	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate	Private Religious	888.7	67.3	135.0	0.5	No	No	No	Not applicable
Oakwood University (Huntsville, AL)	Mixed Baccalaureate	Private not-for-profit	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate	Private Religious	1376.6	256.7	181.7	2.6	No	No	No	No
Spring Hill College (Mobile, AL)	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small	Private not-for-profit	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate	Private Religious	1103.7	88.0	144.0	0.0	No	No	No	No
Talladega College (Talladega, AL)	Mixed Baccalaureate	Private not-for-profit	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate	Private Independent	727.3	52.0	122.0	3.0	No	No	No	No
Lyon College (Batesville, AR)	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences	Private not-for-profit	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate	Private Religious	657.7	45.0	121.3	2.0	No	No	No	Not applicable
Hendrix College (Conway, AR)	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences	Private not-for-profit	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate	Private Religious	1105.0	104.3	247.3	3.3	No	No	No	No

Once you are satisfied with your comparison group, add a name and detailed description of your selection criteria in the boxes below the results, then save your comparison group. This group will now appear in *Your Personal Groups*.

▼ Your Personal Groups ⓘ

Actions	Comparison Group
    	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Private Baccalaureate Focus</a>
    	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Private Institutions</a>
    	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Public Institutions</a>
    	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Small Private Baccalaureate Focus</a>

To make minor changes like adding or removing specific institutions, you can click the name of the group you just created to open group editing options. However, once this group has been used to run a report it becomes “locked” and cannot be changed by fewer than three institutions at a time. This is a privacy protection to ensure data confidentiality. Therefore, it is important to ensure that your comparison group contains exactly the institutions you want before you go to the next step.

**TIP:** The recommended minimum for most comparisons is at least 30 institutions.  
To increase the number of institutions or employees within your comparison group, use fewer criteria or broader criteria.



### Step 3: Run Your Report(s)

To benchmark department size, you'll run the *Department Size Report* (available for professional and staff positions) in DataOnDemand. Navigate to *DataOnDemand > Survey Reports* and expand the menu options for *Professionals* or *Staff*. Under *Benchmark department size*, click on the **Department Size Report**.

#### Survey Reports

Expand All

Collapse All

##### > Administrators

2025 DOD Subscriptions **expire** February 9, 2026.

##### ∨ Professionals

2025 DOD Subscriptions **expire** February 9, 2026.

> Get detailed salary information for a single position

> Compare salary data across a range of positions

> Examine more than one comparison group

∨ Benchmark department size



[Prof: Department Size Report](#)

When you click on your desired report, you will arrive at the *Report Parameters* page. For *Comparison Group*, select the new group you created in Step 2. Other settings default to our recommended settings (e.g., most recent year, output format).

Next, use the checkboxes to select the positions that you identified comprise your department (in this example, your IT department). Depending on this department, this may be a large selection of positions across several position groups.

TIP: If you plan to manually select a group of positions several times, click the "Save Selection" button to create a custom group of positions that will be shared among all users at your institution. Once the selection is saved, it will become a new option in the SELECT drop-down menu and save time for everyone at your institution.

Double check to ensure every position in your department is selected. Finally, click the *Go to Report* button at the bottom of the settings page to run the report.

### Benchmarking Departments With Professional and Staff Positions

It is common for a department or functional area to consist of a mix of professional and staff positions. If your institution subscribes to both Professionals and Staff DataOnDemand, your institution can benchmark departments that contain a mix of positions collected in our *Professionals* and *Staff* surveys.

To benchmark the size of a department with both professional and staff positions, follow the steps above for the positions that are collected in CUPA-HR's *Professionals in Higher Education Survey*, and then repeat the steps above for the positions that are collected in CUPA-HR's *Staff in Higher Education Survey*. Instead of outputting to HTML, select the option to output to CSV as shown below:

#### OUTPUT FORMAT|

HTML (Standard Web Page)  PDF  CSV

Copy and paste the data reported in the “Across All Positions Selected” row from each CSV file into a new spreadsheet and combine the data across reports. The result should look something like this:

Code/Title	Median Size	
	FT	PT
Across all positions (from Professionals Department Size Report)	X	A
Across all positions (from Staff Department Size Report)	Y	B
<b>Department Sum (includes Professionals and Staff positions)</b>	<b>X + Y</b>	<b>A + B</b>



**IT Department Example:** Returning to our example, you are interested in benchmarking the FTE of an IT department at a small private institution with a Baccalaureate award focus. Our IT department consists of positions that are collected in CUPA-HR's *Professionals in Higher Education Survey* and positions that are collected in CUPA-HR's *Staff in Higher Education Survey*. You will now run the *Department Size Report* for professionals and staff. Set your *Comparison Group* to the Small Private Baccalaureate Focus group you just created in Step 2.

## Prof: Department Size Report

### Report Parameters

Focus Institution

Demonstration University (Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Career & Technical-High Traditional) ([change](#))

Comparison Group

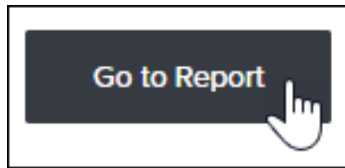
Small Private Baccalaureate Focus

Next, under *Positions to Include*, select the professionals positions in your IT department.

**Information Technology Analysts, Web Professionals, and Other End User Specialists**

- [461110] Application Programmer Analyst
- [461115] Database Programmer Analyst
- [461120] Systems Programmer Analyst
- [461140] Programmer Analyst - Supervisor
- [461150] Campus Web Master
- [461160] Web Designer

In this example, the *Comparison Group* and *Positions to Include* settings are the only changes that need to be made. This will run the report with the recommended default settings for other options. When ready to proceed, you will simply scroll to the bottom of the report settings page and click the *Go to Report* button.



Repeat the steps above with the *Staff Department Size Report* and benchmark the staff positions in your IT department.

- [612000] Engineering Technician or Paraprofessional
- [614000] IT Technical Support Paraprofessional
- [614010] Computer Network Support Specialist or Technician
- [614020] IT Systems Specialist
- [614030] Computer Operations Technician

Combine the data from the “Across All Positions Selected” rows from the *Professionals Department Size Report* and *Staff Department Size Report* into a new spreadsheet. Your end result should look something like this:

Code/Title	Median Size		Mean Size		FTE
	FT	PT	FT	PT	
Across all positions (from Professionals Department Size Report)	5	0	4.7	0.1	4.7
Across all positions (from Staff Department Size Report)	1.5	0	2.3	0	2.3
<b>Department Sum (includes Professionals and Staff positions)</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>7</b>



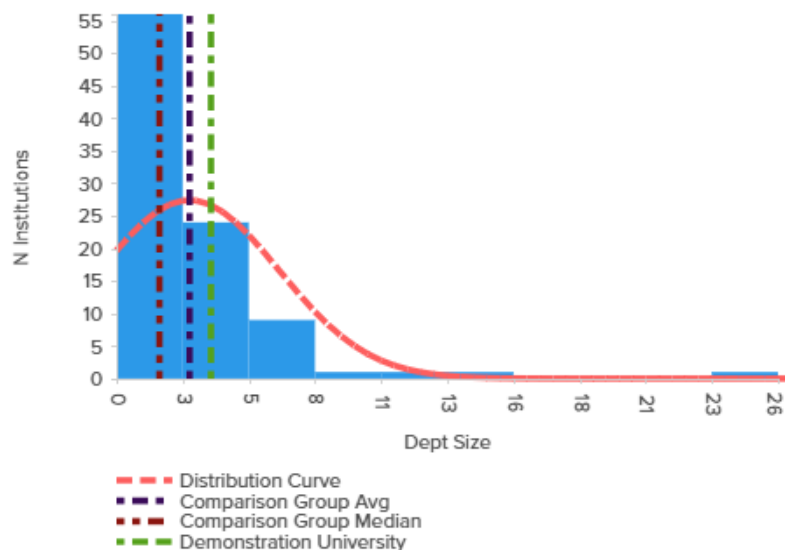
### Step 4: Interpreting Your Results

The HTML version of the *Department Size Report* produces the table pictured below, which includes the median and average full-time and part-time headcount, as well as average FTE. The “Focus Dept Size” column reports any data your own institution has reported in this survey. The grey columns to the right provide information about your comparison group institutions, including the number of reporting institutions (NI) and the number of incumbents (NP) for each position row.

Code/Title	Focus Dept Size				Median Size		Mean Size			NP	NI	FTE Percentiles				
	FT	PT	FTE	NP	FT	PT	FT	PT	FTE			5th	50th	95th		
Across all positions																

The *Department Size Report* also produces a graphic of the distribution of department FTE so you can visualize the general range and distribution of department FTEs (see below). If your institution contributes to CUPA-HR surveys, your institution will be marked in the distribution in a green.

FTE Dept Size Distribution



**IT Department Example.** To understand the typical FTE of the IT department that includes professionals and staff positions, consult your spreadsheet for the combined mean FTE of the “Across All Positions Selected” rows produced by your *Professionals Department Size Report* and *Staff Department Size Report*.

Code/Title	Median Size		Mean Size		FTE
	FT	PT	FT	PT	
Across all positions (from Professionals Department Size Report)	5	0	4.7	0.1	4.7
Across all positions (from Staff Department Size Report)	1.5	0	2.3	0	2.3
<b>Department Sum (includes Professionals and Staff positions)</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>7</b>

In this example, the comparison group has a mean FTE of 7 IT employees.

To understand the typical mix of full-time and part-time IT employees, consult your spreadsheet for the combined median FT (i.e., full-time headcount) and PT (i.e., part-time headcount) of the “Across All Positions Selected” rows produced by your *Professionals Department Size Report* and *Staff Department Size Report*.

Code/Title	Median Size		Mean Size		FTE
	FT	PT	FT	PT	
Across all positions (from Professionals Department Size Report)	5	0	4.7	0.1	4.7
Across all positions (from Staff Department Size Report)	1.5	0	2.3	0	2.3
<b>Department Sum (includes Professionals and Staff positions)</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>7</b>

In this example, the comparison group has a median full-time headcount of 6.5 and median part-time headcount of 0. You can see from consulting both the median and mean part-time headcount columns that it is not typical for the institutions in the comparison group to have part-time IT employees.



## Limitations and Considerations

When using the *Department Size Reports*, keep in mind the following:

- CUPA-HR may not collect data on all positions you consider to be part of a department, so read all position descriptions carefully.
- *Department Size Reports* are only available for Professionals and Staff Surveys. To benchmark academic department size, see the Median NP statistic in the *Faculty 2- or 4-Digit Multi-Discipline Reports*. Size statistics are not reported for administrators because most administrative positions are single incumbent.
- Some position titles such as Administrative Assistant (514000) are not classified within a single department, so headcounts may include all individuals with that position institution wide. Read all position descriptions carefully to ensure accuracy.

TIP: It is always good practice to review the professionals and staff SPIT files to ensure that all positions in department are included in your analysis.

For more details on the statistics generated in each DataOnDemand report, or for detailed information about the variety of report settings options available, visit the [Using DataOnDemand website](#).