



**National Student Clearinghouse®**  
2300 Dulles Station Boulevard, Suite 300  
Herndon, Virginia 20171

703-742-4200  
[www.studentclearinghouse.org](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org)

© 2010 National Student Clearinghouse. All rights reserved.

---

## StudentTracker Cohort Query Guide

The StudentTracker Cohort Query (CO query) was created for the VSA College Portrait's "Undergraduate Success & Progress Rate" table. It provides a summary of the retention and completion rates of a cohort group by academic year and institutional category. (For more on the College Portrait, see the "About the Voluntary System of Accountability" section in this guide.)

### Who Can Use the CO Query?

Colleges and universities that participate in the Clearinghouse's Core, DegreeVerify and StudentTracker services may use the CO query.

If you do not know if your institution participates in Core, DegreeVerify and StudentTracker, contact your Clearinghouse regional director or [service@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:service@studentclearinghouse.org).

### Submitting Your CO Query File

You can submit your CO query file using either Excel or flat file format. Instructions for preparing your query file in either format are at the end of this guide.

You can send your files to us using your Clearinghouse secure FTP account (a customer service representative will help you set up your account). Each time you successfully upload a file, a file delivery receipt will be emailed to you.

### Obtaining Your CO Query Results

You will receive an email when your CO query results are ready for retrieval from your secure FTP account. Your CO query research results include:

1. Control Report: An overview of the match rate and number of records submitted in your query provided in an .htm file.
2. Aggregate Report: A summary report contained in a .csv table.
3. Detail Report: Report of every student's enrollment in a .csv file.

For your convenience, the Clearinghouse has created a report template in Excel that you can use to complete your VSA submission and/or quickly generate graphs and charts that illustrate your cohort query results.

<http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/Tracker/docs/CO%20Query%20Report%20Template.xlsx>

You can see a sample report at

<http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/Tracker/pdfs/Cohort%20sample%20report.pdf>.

Please allow 72 hours for your request to be processed. If you do not receive your results by then, please contact us at [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

---

*If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).*

## **Cohort Query Guide, cont'd**

### **What Enrollment Record is Used for Each Year?**

Enrollment history is separated into academic years based on the search date used in the query. For example, if the CO query search date is "20010915," the academic year will be counted as 9/16/2001-9/15/2002 and shown as 2001-2002 in the report. The searching algorithm will find all terms ending on and degrees awarded after 9/15/2001. Within each academic year, enrollment and degree instances are counted based on a priority scale.

For each academic year of enrollment, one of seven degree and enrollment categories can be assigned to a student. The categories are prioritized in the table below.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Four-year degree from your institution	1
Four-year degree from other institution	2
Two-year degree from your institution	3
Two-year degree from other institution	4
Retained at your institution	5
Retained at other four-year institution	6
Retained at other two-year institution	7

The top priority is counted and the others are ignored. For example, a four-year degree from your institution is counted over all other enrollment and degree instances in a given academic year. Similarly, any degree instance supersedes a retention instance.

### **Can a Student Be Double Counted in the Four-Year Graduation Rate?**

No. Receiving a four-year degree is a terminal event in the enrollment and graduation summary table. Once a student has completed a four-year degree, all subsequent enrollment and degree records are not counted. For example, if a student completes a four-year degree from another institution and later returns to your campus and completes a four-year degree, the second four-year degree is not counted.

### **Does the CO Query Give the Same Graduation Rate as IPEDS?**

No. There are multiple differences in the process.

- StudentTracker only counts domestic students because the Clearinghouse StudentTracker database does not contain international student information.
- There may not be a match in the Clearinghouse system for a student from your cohort. The most common reason for this is poor data quality in the school's Core data submission. If for any reason a record was not loaded during the Core submission, it will not be available in StudentTracker.
- IPEDS uses October 15 as its cutoff date. The CO query uses end-of-term enrollment status. Any changes in enrollment between October 15 and end-of-term will create a counting difference.

---

*If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).*

## **Cohort Query Guide, cont'd**

### **Can I Verify Counts?**

Yes. We have prepared SPSS and SAS code that imitate the CO query logic for all non-FERPA blocked students. You can download the code and run it against the detail data that was returned to you.

- To download the SPSS code, go to [http://research.studentclearinghouse.org/content/code/Cohort\\_Query.sps](http://research.studentclearinghouse.org/content/code/Cohort_Query.sps)
- To download the SAS code, go to [http://research.studentclearinghouse.org/content/code/Cohort\\_Query.SAS](http://research.studentclearinghouse.org/content/code/Cohort_Query.SAS).

### **Which Enrollments are Counted?**

The query counts all full-time, half-time and less than half-time enrollments from two and four-year institutions. Less than two-year institutions are not counted.

### **Which Degrees are Counted?**

The query counts all bachelor's, master's, professional and doctoral degrees as valid four-year degrees and uses the degree title information when available. If degree title information is not available, the institutional type (two or four-year) is used. Associate degrees are counted as two-year degrees. Certificates, honors and awards are not counted.

### **How are Associate Degree Recipients Who Continue Their Education Counted?**

Subsequent enrollment and degree information for students completing associate degrees is counted in a second table. This allows two-year institutions to investigate four-year completion patterns and incorporate two-year completers in their outcomes measures without double counting.

---

*If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).*

## ***Cohort Query Guide, cont'd***

### **About the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)**

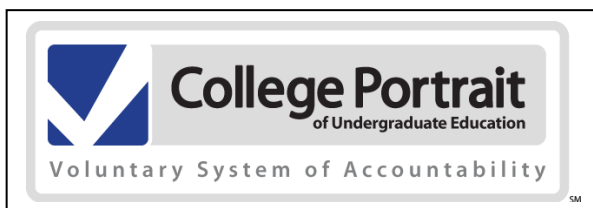
The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) is a joint project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (A·P·L·U). The voluntary initiative enables four-year public colleges and universities to provide information regarding undergraduate experience to students, families, policymakers, faculty and staff via electronic submission. The VSA increases awareness of how public institutions operate, and provides information to assist students with the college selection process.

The VSA was created in 2006 as an effort to hold public institutions more accountable for student learning and development. More than 80 higher education leaders from 70 public institutions participated in the creation and development of the VSA and its Web-based data reporting template, called College Portrait.

Through the College Portrait template, the VSA gives the public access to comprehensive reports on participating institutions, including institutional and student body characteristics, tuition, learning process, and core outcomes. The data elements included in College Portrait were identified and evaluated based on input from student/family focus groups, feedback from the higher education community, and research on higher education. The majority of the data elements selected are from currently available data sources with established definitions and reporting conventions.

Together, A·P·L·U and AASCU represent more than 525 public institutions, which enroll more than 7.5 million students. Over 94% of NASULGC and AASCU schools also belong to the Clearinghouse.

For more information on the VSA, please contact the executive director, Christine Keller, or visit [www.voluntarysystem.org](http://www.voluntarysystem.org).



---

*If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).*



**National Student Clearinghouse®**  
2300 Dulles Station Boulevard, Suite 300  
Herndon, Virginia 20171

703-742-4200  
[www.studentclearinghouse.org](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org)

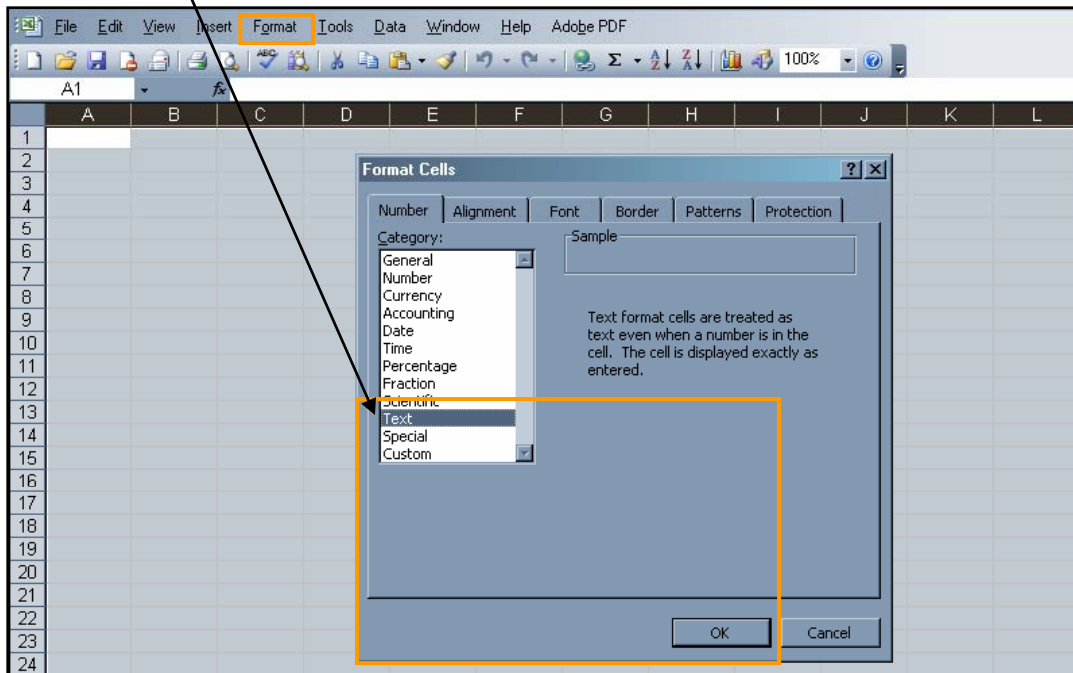
© 2009 National Student Clearinghouse. All rights reserved.

## Creating StudentTracker Research Files Using Excel

This guide will help you use Excel to format your StudentTracker research files. If you have questions or need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

### **STEP 1: FORMAT COLUMNS A-L**

- Open a new Excel spreadsheet and highlight columns A through L (columns will appear shaded)
- Select “Cells” from the “Format” menu
- On the “Number” tab of the “Format Cells” window, select “Text” and click “OK”  
(you MUST select text in order to retain the leading zeroes in your school and branch codes, which are required in request files)

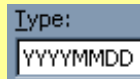


### EXCEL TIP

#### Create YYYYMMDD Format

The required date format for StudentTracker is YYYYMMDD. If your date data is already in this format, you do not need to do anything. If it is not, you will need to create a custom format in Excel. Highlight the column, right click your mouse and select “Format Cells.” In the “Category” menu of the “Number” tab, select “Custom.”

In the field under “Type,” enter YYYYMMDD and click “OK.”



If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

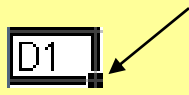
**STEP 2: ENTER DETAIL ROWS FOR COLUMNS A-L BEGINNING IN ROW 2** (see example below)

- Column A = **D1** (for record type)
- Column B = **Social Security Number without dashes** (can only be used in Pending Admission (PA) files where the applicant is seeking admissions to and intends to enroll in your institution. Do not use SSN for enrolled students [it is a violation of FERPA]).
- Column C = **First Name** of student, applicant, sibling or parent
- Column D = **Middle Initial** of student, applicant, sibling or parent.  
**IMPORTANT: Enter the middle initial only, NOT the full middle name. Do NOT enter a period after the middle initial.**
- Column E = **Last Name** of student, applicant, sibling or parent
- Column F = **Name Suffix** of student, applicant, sibling or parent
- Column G = **Date of Birth** (YYYYMMDD format) of student, applicant, sibling or parent
- Column H = **Search Begin Date**<sup>1</sup> (YYYYMMDD format) of student, applicant, sibling, parent or cohort
  - DA (searches for attendance *AFTER* the Search Begin Date)
  - PA (searches for attendance *BEFORE* the Search Begin Date)
  - SB (searches for attendance *AFTER* the Search Begin Date)
  - SE (searches for attendance *AFTER* the Search Begin Date)
  - CO (Searches for cohort retention and completion rates *AFTER* Search Begin Date; only one date can be used per file)
- Column I = **Blank**
- Column J = your **6-digit school code** (same as school code entered in B1 of the header row, see page 1)
- Column K = your **2-digit branch code** (if you don't know it, enter 00)
- Column L = any **identifier information** you would like included in the response file to aid in your analysis. **Use a period to separate multiple identifiers.**

**EXCEL TIP**

**Autofilling Columns**

To autofill columns with identical information (e.g., "D1" in column A), select the cell and drag the fill handle



down while holding both the left mouse button and Control key down.

**IMPORTANT**

Do NOT enter commas in any cell of your request or exceed the maximum column width (noted in red below each screen shot sample).

	Record Type 2 characters	SSN	First Name	Middle Initial 1 character	Last Name	Suffix 5 characters	DOB	Search Begin Date <sup>1</sup>	Leave Blank 1 character	School Code	Branch Code 2 characters	Identifier Information (use period as separator)
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
2	D1		John	A	Doe	Sr	19861003	20080501		001234	00	Student ID 1
3	D1		Paul	B	Smith		19860801	20080501		001234	00	Student ID 2
4	D1		Mary	C	Gray-Roberts		19870801	20080501		001234	00	Student ID 3
5	D1		Hector	D	Ricardo	III	19870702	20080501		001234	00	Student ID 4
6	D1		Tina	E	Wong		19860302	20080501		001234	00	Student ID 5

Max. column width: **PENDING ADMISSIONS ONLY** 9 characters

20 characters      20 characters      8 characters    8 characters    6 characters      50 characters (including separator)

<sup>1</sup>Search Begin Date must be earlier than the File Creation Date in column E of Header Row (see page 3).

If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

**STEP 3: ENTER HEADER ROW COLUMNS A-G IN ROW 1** (see example below)

- Insert a row above the detail records
- Column A = **H1** (for record type)
- Column B = your **6-digit school code** (e.g., 001234)
- Column C = your **2-digit branch code** (if you don't know it, enter 00)
- Column D = your **school name**
- Column E = file creation date in **YYYYMMDD** format (e.g., 20061015). The date cannot be in the future.
- Column F = **inquiry type** two-letter code. Enter one of these five codes:
  1. SE (Subsequent Enrollment for Previously Enrolled Students/Transfers Out)
  2. DA (Subsequent Enrollment for Prospective Students/Denied/Declined Admissions)
  3. PA (Prior Attendance for Pending Admissions)
  4. SB (Sibling/Parent Enrollment)
  5. CO (Cohort Query)
- Column G = **I** (for entity type, institution of higher education)

	Record Type	School Code	Branch Code	School Name	File Creation Date	Inquiry Code	Entity Type
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	H1	001234	00	Hometown University	20080825	CO	I

Max. column width: 2 characters

6 characters    2 characters    40 characters    8 characters    2 characters    1 character

**STEP 4: ENTER TRAILER ROW INFORMATION FOR COLUMNS A-B IN LAST ROW** (see example below)

- Column A = **T1** (for record type)
- Column B = Total number of rows in the spreadsheet, including the Header and Trailer rows

Record Type	Total # Rows	Leave columns C-L blank										
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
7	T1 7											

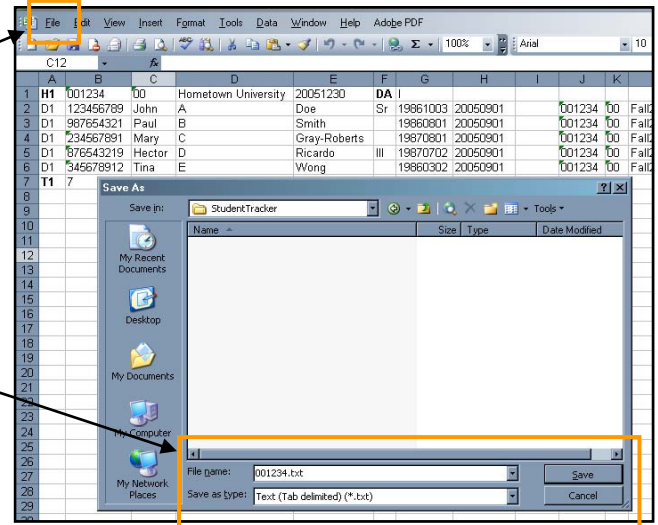
Max. column width: 2 characters

8 characters

If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

## STEP 5: SAVE YOUR FILE

- In the File menu on the main toolbar, select “Save As”
- On the “Save As” window, select the drive and/or directory where you would like to save the file
- Enter a file name (your school code should be part of the file name)
- Select “Text (Tab delimited) (\*.txt)”
- Click “Save.” Your file will be saved as a text tab-delimited file in the location you selected.



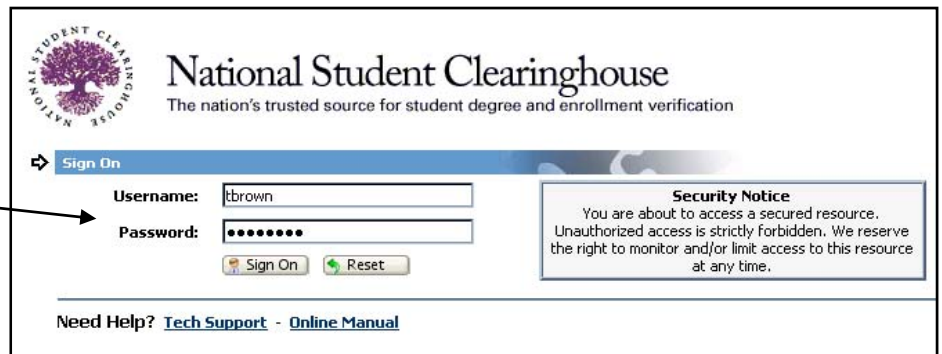
### IMPORTANT

Do NOT use these characters in your file name: ! @ # \$ % ^ & \* ( ) +

You can use underscores.

## STEP 6: SUBMIT YOUR FILE

- Go to <https://ftps.nslc.org/> to transmit your file to the Clearinghouse via your Secure FTP account.



If you do not have a Secure FTP account, visit [www.studentclearinghouse.org/ftps/default.htm](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/ftps/default.htm). For other media choices, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

If you need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).



**National Student Clearinghouse®**  
 2300 Dulles Station Boulevard, Suite 300  
 Herndon, Virginia 20171

703-742-4200  
[www.studentclearinghouse.org](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org)

© 2009 National Student Clearinghouse. All rights reserved.

## Creating StudentTracker Research Files in Flat File Format

This guide will help you use a flat file format to prepare your StudentTracker research files. If you have any questions or need assistance, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

### STEP 1: CREATE DETAIL RECORD

Create your detail record using the layout below. Each detail record must be 500 bytes in length.

**IMPORTANT**  
 Do not enter commas in any of the fields.

Field Name	Length	Start	Stop	Type*	Comments
Record Type	2	01	02	AN	Enter D1
SSN	9	03	11	N	Used only in Pending Admission (PA) files where the applicant is seeking admissions to and intends to enroll in your institution. Do not use SSN for enrolled students (it is a violation of FERPA).
First Name	20	12	31	AN	Enter first name of student, applicant, sibling or parent
Middle Initial	1	32	32	AN	Enter middle initial of student, applicant, sibling or parent
Last Name	20	33	52	AN	Enter last name of student, applicant, sibling or parent
Name Suffix	5	53	57	AN	Enter name suffix of student, applicant, sibling or parent (e.g., III, Jr, Sr)
Birth Date	8	58	65	N	Enter the date of birth in YYYYMMDD format, if known. Otherwise, leave blank.
Search Date	8	66	73	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For Subsequent Enrollment (SE) inquiry:</b> Enter the last date of attendance at your institution (YYYYMMDD). We'll search for enrollment subsequent to this date.</li> <li>• <b>For Denied/Declined Admissions (DA) inquiry:</b> Enter the term begin date for which the applicant declined or was denied admission (YYYYMMDD). We'll search for enrollment subsequent to this date.</li> <li>• <b>For Prior Attendance (PA) inquiry:</b> Enter the term begin date for which the applicant is requesting admission (YYYYMMDD). We'll search for enrollment prior to this date.</li> <li>• <b>For Family Member (SB) inquiry:</b> Enter a search date (YYYYMMDD). We'll search for enrollment for the family member subsequent to this date.</li> <li>• <b>For Cohort (CO) inquiry:</b> Enter the midpoint date of the cohort's first semester (YYYYMMDD). For example, enter September 15, 2001 as 20010915 for the fall 2001 semester.</li> </ul>

\*The type codes in this document are "A" alpha, "N" numeric, and "AN" alpha numeric.

Copyright 1997-2009 National Student Clearinghouse  
 All Rights Reserved

## Creating StudentTracker Research Files in Flat File Format (cont'd)

					We'll search for enrollment for the cohort with terms ending subsequent to this date.
Filler	1	74	74	AN	Leave blank
School Code	6	75	80	N	Enter your 6-digit school code (same as school code entered in the header record layout)
Branch Code	2	81	82	N	Enter your 2-digit branch code (same as school code entered in the header record layout). If you don't know it, enter 00.
Requestor Return Field	50	83	132	AN	Enter any data that you want returned with this record (e.g., cohort identification, unique student ID, etc.) that will help you process the Clearinghouse response file. Otherwise, leave blank.
Filler	368	133	500	AN	Leave blank

### STEP 2: CREATE HEADER RECORD

Insert a row above the detail records and create your header record using the layout below. The total header record length is 500 bytes.

Field Name	Length	Start	Stop	Type*	Comments
Record Type	2	01	02	AN	Enter H1
School/Entity Code	6	03	08	N	Enter your 6-digit school code
Branch Code	2	09	10	N	Enter your 2-digit branch code. If you don't know it, enter 00.
School/Entity Name	40	11	50	AN	Enter your school name
File Creation Date	8	51	58	N	This is the date that the file was created (YYYYMMDD). <i>IMPORTANT: The date cannot be in the future.</i>
Purpose of Inquiry	2	59	60	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enter SE for Subsequent Enrollment inquiry.</b> Searches for attendance AFTER the Search Begin Date.</li> <li>• <b>Enter DA for Denied/Declined Admissions inquiry.</b> Searches for attendance AFTER the Search Begin Date</li> <li>• <b>Enter PA for Prior Attendance inquiry.</b> Searches for attendance BEFORE the Search Begin Date.</li> <li>• <b>Enter SB for Family Member inquiry.</b> Searches for attendance AFTER the Search Begin Date.</li> <li>• <b>Enter CO for Cohort inquiry.</b> Searches for cohort retention and completion rates AFTER Search Begin Date.</li> </ul>
Entity Type	1	61	61	AN	Enter I (for Institution of Higher Education)
Filler	439	62	500	AN	Leave blank

\*The type codes in this document are "A" alpha, "N" numeric, and "AN" alpha numeric.

## Creating StudentTracker Research Files in Flat File Format (cont'd)

### **STEP 3: CREATE TRAILER RECORD**

Create your trailer record using the layout below. The total trailer record length is 500 bytes.

Field Name	Length	Start	Stop	Type*	Comments
Record Type	2	01	02	AN	Enter T1
Total Record Count	8	03	10	N	Equal to the total number of detail records, plus two for the header and trailer records.
Filler	490	11	500	AN	Leave blank

### **STEP 4: NAMING YOUR FILE**

Your file name should include your school code. You can use underscores in your file name, but should NOT use these characters: ! @ # \$ % ^ & \* ( ) +

### **STEP 5: SUBMITTING YOUR FILE**

Go to <https://ftps.nslc.org/> to transmit your file to the Clearinghouse via your Secure FTP account.

If you do not have a Secure FTP account, visit [www.studentclearinghouse.org/ftps/default.htm](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/ftps/default.htm). For other media choices, contact [studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org).

---

*\*The type codes in this document are "A" alpha, "N" numeric, and "AN" alpha numeric.*