

**Arkansas
Ron Harrell**

History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
During the 1992-93 academic year.
2. By whom?
Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE).
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?
All of the examples listed above, as well as institutional coordination (our State Board is a coordinating board); to provide legislatively mandated information to the General Assembly concerning enrollments, SSCH, athletics, state-supported scholarship programs, etc., and other reporting purposes such as Perkins, SREB, and similar activities.

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
All public (four year and two year) and to a certain extent private institutions.
2. Are any independent institutions included (number or percentage)? What about proprietary institutions? Are different kinds of data or different schedules for data collection used for any of these institutions?
Yes, we have 11 institutions – but these submit data in the fall and limited information on graduates.
3. Are there plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions? Please explain.
We are just now starting to collect "transcript" level data from our institutions and we are talking about incorporating into the SUR the private for profit intuitions.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, end of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?
We collect 8 times per year – twice per term (fall, spring, summer 1 and summer 2). We use the census date for on-schedule courses (those that have start dates that coincide with the beginning of the term) and those courses that start after the census date we collect in the second cycle of the term. Again, we are now starting to collect transcript level data (grades for courses).
5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?
No.

6. Is non-credit enrollment or instructional activity covered (e.g. ABE, ESL, GED, other job-related continuing education activity, etc.)? If so, is this in a separate database and what data elements are captured?

Yes, we collect workforce oriented courses (ESL, GED, and ABE) in the same database. However we do not collect at the same level of detail – we know how many people took certain courses but we do not ID those students. So, we know how much training was done in terms of contact hours, how many students were served, and which institutions were responsible for the training, but we do not have student unit record data associated with the information.

Data Management and Manipulation

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?
ADHE/Planning and Accountability – we collaborate within the agency and with a group of representatives from each institution (private and public).
2. Are SSNs used as a key link? If they are not, what is used instead? Are there immediate or long-range plans to discontinue use of the SSN as a key link?
Yes, and there are no plan to discontinue the use of the SSN.
3. Can campuses access datasets (unit records) themselves -- access in what terms (results, unit record data after it has been cleaned, unit-record data value added). If yes, who has access and how is this managed?
No, not at this point.
4. How do you handle privacy and FERPA issues? Do you have an explicit privacy policy and/or policies governing the use of SUR data by third parties such as institutions and researchers?
Yes we do have a statement and we follow FERPA.
5. Have any FERPA or privacy issues come up recently in your state? If so, how have they affected your ability to use student record information?
No.
6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?
We are working with K-12 (we will be able to share data through a “black box identifier”) and UI wage so that we can consistently share data – but it is still a few months away.
7. Have you cooperated with other state higher education agencies to share data? If so, please explain.
Not yet, but we would like to (particularly with Texas, Louisiana, and Tennessee).

Reporting and Use of Data

1. What kinds of statistics and reports are generated regularly using SUR data?
Annual report for Perkins data, graduation rates, and retention rates (see web site). We are also starting to track through our SUR the career pathways project – which is a project designed to help poor adults find, take, and pay for workforce training (this can be ESL, GED, ABE, workforce training or for credit course).
2. If graduation and retention statistics are generated for institutions (or for the state or system as a whole), how are they calculated (e.g. IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey method, other methods)?
We don't do this directly – we collect data for IPEDS reporting and send data back to institutions so that they can generate statistics – it would be better if we did it, but right now we do not.
3. What kinds of research projects have recently been undertaken by the state or system using SUR data resources?
The last two years we have started to work with state agencies to do ad hoc reports such as the percentage of recent post secondary graduates who are employed in the state of Arkansas. We have also started working on tracking students into employment through their major.
4. What are the biggest challenges you face with respect to using SUR data resources for analysis and reporting?
Staffing – we need to hire more people, I would like to do more reporting, more comparisons, more data analysis, but there is not enough time or staff to do it – so even though we are collecting more data, I feel that we are not using it to the full advantage.
Salary – we need to pay more, we have quite a bit of turnover because of salary. Also, the folks may have the technical skills (or these skills can be learned) but we still have the problem staff understanding higher education issues.

Overview

1. Have there been any significant developments in regards to your SUR system since 2002?
Nothing that I haven't covered above.
2. Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not addressed?
No.