

California (Community College System)
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History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
It was established in the late 1980's, but full implementation statewide didn't occur until 1990. We generally regard 1992 data as being the first that are useable for research purposes.
2. By whom?
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?
All of the above listed are correct, as well as research, program evaluation and statewide accountability.

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
109 community colleges.
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?
No.
3. Are there plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions? Please explain.
No.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, end of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?
Same as 2002 – you can check out the web site, we list the timeline for all data.
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?
Ye we include non-credit in the same database.

Data Management and Manipulation

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, but we do have a group that represents all parties. This group gets together pretty regularly – this keeps everyone in the loop. If we have a change from the Feds we just do that and let the group know.
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 it is part of the link. We have no plans to change this as we need it to link with other state agencies.
3. Can campuses access datasets themselves? If yes, who has access and how is this managed?
Yes, after we process and clean the data it is available through our web site (it is password protected).
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?
This is not really an issue. We have worked this out in the past – we are very cautious about our data.
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 FERPA issues at the moment.
6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?
Yes, we link with California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), UI wage, military, department of social services, and the national student clearinghouse. We do not link with high schools.
7. Have you cooperated with other state higher education agencies to share data? If so, please explain.
No, not other than the national student clearinghouse

Reporting and Use of Data

1. What kinds of statistics and reports are generated regularly using SUR data?
Mostly IPEDS – state reporting. We can obtain copies from the web site. We do some other regular reporting for programs, collective bargaining, etc. We also have the DATA MART online this is a free and open database that houses most of our frequently asked for datasets. The idea is give this to the public (legislators, newspaper folks, and policy people) so that our staff is not constantly running reports.

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 use IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey method.

3. What kinds of research projects have recently been undertaken by the state or system using SUR data resources?

We are always asked to do this! Our big one right now is the ARCC Project (accountability reporting for community colleges). There is more about this project on our web site.

4. What are the biggest challenges you face with respect to using SUR data resources for analysis and reporting?

A little bit of everything. The biggest is encouraging data quality and still meeting a timeline. This is tough. We just started DEQUAT team – this is a team of 10 people who are responsible for about 10 college campuses each. It is their job to make sure our data is in on time and clean. So they will be making a lot of phone calls to ensure the objective.

Overview

1. Have there been any significant developments in regards to your SUR system since 2002?

Our big new thing is we are changing platforms – we are moving to a sequel server by March 2007 and this will keep us busy!