

**California (University System)
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History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
1980.
2. By whom?
The University of California (UC) Office of the President.
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?
Management, analytical and operational reporting.

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
Only the 10 UC Campus (Merced was just added).
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, only as we add another CA/UC campus – which is unlikely in the near future.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, ends of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?
At a minimum 2 times per quarter (census data), but most send data throughout the term from various offices.
5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?
No, in fact we just changed our data collection to a less frequent cycle – we found that the campuses were sending data late and we were a bit worried about the quality, so after much debate we decided to collect less and hope for better quality and a more timely response. For example, we ask now that undergraduate admission data come to us every other month, in the past we had asked for this data monthly.
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?
No.

Data Management and Manipulation

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?
This is a complex question. We have the authority to propose a change, but we really want buy in from each sector (graduate, undergraduate, financial aid, and registration). We want to be collaborative, so we propose, consult, and get consensus.
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?
No, but we do have them in the majority of our records. We use the campus generated (unique and arbitrary) ID. The problem is that when a student moves from one institution to another, a new ID is generated – we then have to try and match records through the SSN# and other identifiers, but as the SSN# is not required, this is difficult. The campuses initiated this switch (not our office) and as of last year, all campuses have eliminated the use and mandatory collection of the SS#.
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.
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?
We restrict access; have password protection, a firewall, and a secure server. No, we don't have an explicit privacy policy governing the use of SUR.
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 have not come up recently in our state – we dealt with this earlier or if it is an issue, I don't know about it.
6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?
No online links, but we do have agreements with four entities (community college system of California; California State University (CSU) system; California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC); and department of finance).
We have a schedule for each of the four entities and our office downloads the data onto a secure server once per year and the entity then goes to this site and downloads the data.
7. Have you cooperated with other state higher education agencies to share data? If so, please explain.
No.

Reporting and Use of Data

1. What kinds of statistics and reports are generated regularly using SUR data?
Besides IPEDS we do the following three:

Statistical Summary of Students and Staff – annually for fall term:
<http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/uwnews/stat/welcome.html>

Student Data Warehouse:
<http://www.ucop.edu/irc/dd/css/sdw/studentwarehouse.html>

Information Digest – annually:
<http://www.ucop.edu/sas/infodigest>

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 – instead we generate the data and on our web site and folks can do “on demand” reports such as graduation and retention statistics. We provide the tools, not the reports.
3. What kinds of research projects have recently been undertaken by the state or system using SUR data resources?
Ongoing – see web site.
4. What are the biggest challenges you face with respect to using SUR data resources for analysis and reporting?
We have continued issues with timeliness and quality of data. Campuses are busy and they view the collection of data as burdensome and they don't always see the importance or value of data collection. Quality is an issue as well – we receive the data, clean it, but we can not check the data against the original source.

Overview

1. Have there been any significant developments in regards to your SUR system since 2002?
 - o tried to make web site more user friendly – so that campuses can see the added value
 - o less reporting from the campuses – so that campuses will report on time
 - o effort to increase quality of data
 - o campuses discontinued the use of SSN#
2. Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not addressed?
There is a constant tug-of-war between privacy issues and the need to track students.