

Georgia
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History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
The unit-record data system for the University System of Georgia Board of Regents was established in 1983.
2. By whom?
Created by the system office.
3. For what purpose?
The original purpose was to improve efficiency in responding to federal reporting requirements; however, data are now used for many purposes, including federal, regional, and System reporting, policy development and analysis, monitoring of policy implementation, providing System-level feedback to institutions (for example, for System-wide retention and graduation-rate reporting), and primarily for research to improve education.

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
The 35 institutions in the University System of Georgia (USG) are included; thus, all public higher education institutions in Georgia (research universities, state universities, and two-year colleges). Private institutions' data are not included. Technical college data are not included.
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?

Type of Data	Reporting Cycle
Student data	Semester census date Lagged elements such as cumulative GPA or hours earned are collected in the following semester. Beginning this Summer 2006, data will be collected in a data warehouse with mid-term census date data (same as now) and cumulative data collected at the end of the term
Course-level data	Semester census date
Financial aid data	Fall collection only; census date (for previous year)
Continuing education—aggregate level only	Once each CE quarter (not unit level)
Faculty data	Linked to courses; will be linked to students in warehouse—frozen snapshot December 1 of each year

5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?
Yes—beginning in summer 2006, data will be extracted into a data warehouse. The cumulative data elements will be reported at the end of the term, rather than in the subsequent term.
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?
Unit-level data on CE courses or students are not collected by the University System. Institutions roll up data and report the aggregate numbers of participants and courses. The aggregate data collection is in a separate data base.

Data Management and Manipulation

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?

Roles for data management are formally defined, and in this area there are three major roles. For student data, the Office of Strategic Research and Analysis has the authority to change data elements and definitions. It seeks input from a committee of registrars, directors of admissions, and others, and the recommendations go through a formal change review process managed by the Office of Information and Instructional Technology. The Office of Student Affairs defines System-wide “business practices” that should be shared by all institutions to result in accurate data. All except one institution in the USG use the same institutional student information system (SCT Banner); however, there was no common implementation of the software. Establishing common business practices was fundamental to improving data accuracy. The third role is that of the Office of Information and Instructional Technology. They extract the data from the institutions and ensure that data are extracted as defined, and they organize data into the warehouse structure.

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, SSNs are the key link. Institutions store and use an alternate student identification number for functional purposes, but the SSN (or Tax ID) is used for linking records over time and across institutions. There are processes in place to record SSN changes (corrections). The student ID is also collected.

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?

Institutions can access their own data. In current form, they can have a duplicate copy of the data for their institution after editing. Beginning this summer, they can access their unedited and edited data in the warehouse.

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 have explicit practices on privacy and FERPA, and we have a data policy use document (but it is in draft form and under review). We do not share data with a third party, except for a few well-defined projects that are governed by legal agreements that meet FERPA requirements, with educational agencies. For example, we provide feedback data to the high schools that sign confidentiality agreements. We have data-sharing agreements with the governing board office for technical colleges in Georgia (DTAE) and with the State Department of Education (DOE).

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?

There are currently no issues, but there is increasing concern over privacy and identity theft. Several years ago, there was discussion of having a non-educational state agency collect student-level data from state agencies, and there were concerns over that project. The plan was not implemented.

6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?

There are several data-sharing agreements in Georgia. An agreement with DOE allows for the USG to receive student-level data on high school graduates. A separate agreement with the Georgia Department of Labor allows for the USG System Office to receive UI Wage data. There is an agreement with the Department of Technical and Adult Education to exchange data on students who leave one system and enroll in the other. With each agency, we have agreed to not share the data with institutions and to have the agency review reports from the data before they are made public. The data-sharing agreements have worked very well in Georgia.

As for who is responsible for the match, the Office of Strategic Research and Analysis is responsible for the agreement and the exchange; the Office of Information and Instructional Technology actually merge the files.

7. Have you cooperated with other state higher education agencies to share data? If so, please explain.

See above—cooperated with DTAE and DOE.

Reporting and Use of Data

1. What kinds of statistics and reports are generated regularly using SUR data?

There are over 1,000 existing reports from student data, called the Student Information Reporting System (SIRS) in Georgia. Many of the reports are available under the student tab at: <http://www.usg.edu/sra/>

A portal that allows for user-defined (with limited parameters) reports on enrollment, retention, graduation rates, and degrees conferred is available at:

https://dss.usg.edu:3377/portal/page?_pageid=903,1,903_53317&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

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)?

The USG uses the IPEDS method. Definitions specific to our data systems are at: http://www.usg.edu/sra/students/grad_ret/definitions.phtml

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

The focus of research this past year has been on retention and graduation. Many of these reports are not yet on the web. One new report on graduation rates (a graduation rate matrix for cohorts and years) is attached.

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

The current structure of the data system, essentially one large table, was becoming unwieldy for programming, especially for longitudinal analysis. The warehouse should make data extraction more efficient.

The largest challenge though is lack of resources for programmers and research analysts. This means that reports that should take a short time to program instead take days. Analysts are dependent upon the programmers.

Overview

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

The USG Data Warehouse has been developed since 2002.