

**Kansas**  
**Dawn Ressel**

## **History**

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?  
2001.
2. By whom?  
Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR).
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?  
To provide consistent data across all institutions (and sectors) as well as being able to track students across institutions. It is also our goal, although it wasn't legislatively mandated, to be able to produce IPEDS.

## **Coverage**

1. What institutions are included in the SUR system?  
Starting in 2001, the Kansas Board of Regents started working with all public institutions in the state, State Universities, Municipal University, Community Colleges, and Technical Colleges/Schools ... 36 institutions in all. We do not work with Haskell Indian Nations University which is a public institution but it is also a federal school and does not receive state support.
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?  
None of these institutions appear in the Kansas SUR (called Kansas Postsecondary Database (KSPSD)).
3. Are there plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions? Please explain.  
There have been some minor discussions about bringing in private and independent institutions but the discussions have never been very serious. The main focus right now is to get KSPSD fully up and running for the public schools and then link this database to the K-12 unit record database at our department of education.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, end of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?  
A complete reference manual is available to the public on our website [www.kspdsd.org](http://www.kspdsd.org). Our unit is responsible for collecting data for numerous projects. In order to find the reference manual for our SUR, hover your mouse over the projects link on the upper left hand side of the screen and choose KSPSD. The page that loads should have the reference manual you are interested in.

5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?  
We do not have plans to collect the current data more frequently or on different cycles but we do plan to phase in some other data collection pieces ... possibly course and registration information, faculty and staff counts, etc.
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. We do collect ABE and ESL data but it technically is not part of our SUR. Within the agency, we do have plans to track students who complete ABE and ESL training to see how they do in our public institutions but that is currently not happening. Also, at some point in the future, GED will probably come into our system in the same fashion as the ABE (called Pablo) system. Note a reference manual for Pablo can also be found online by clicking the Pablo – ABE project.

### **Data Management and Manipulation**

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?  
The Institutional Research unit at KBOR has the authority to change elements and definitions with advice from an institutional advisory committee. Since the database is so new review and modifications are an on-going process. Some modifications have been driven by changes in KBOR policy while others are because of a misunderstanding on our part in terms of what the institution can provide us.
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?  
Currently it can be said that the SSN is used as a preliminary link. We have a rather completed algorithm that takes SSN, Name, and some demographic information to look for a student and then a KBOR ID is assigned. However, we are starting discussion to use an ID assigned in the K-12 database. This number would provide us with a kind of educational ID number for the state. Out of state students who enter postsecondary education would probably be assigned a number like this by KBOR. However, all of these discussions are VERY preliminary.
3. Can campuses access datasets themselves? If yes, who has access and how is this managed?  
Institutions do have access to the data. Aggregate reports will be available to the public. Institution representatives who have been given access to the system can see their unit record information and some aggregate information on other institutions. Online query tools should be coming online this summer making accessing the data much easier for the institutional representatives.

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?

In terms of data collection, our legal counsel has said since we are the governing or coordinating authority of these institutions, we have the right to collect the data on all students, even those with FERPA holds.

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?

As for releasing the data back to the institutions, we have had an interpretation request into OMB for close to 4 years now. We call every few months to see how the interpretation is going but we still have not received a ruling. So, our legal counsel will not allow us to give back any unit record information to an institution for things like transfer tracking. This has been a major disappointment to the institutions and something that everyone in Kansas Higher Education has been working on!

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

Currently we do have MOUs (memorandum of understanding) with the Department of Labor to provide employment tracking for our federal grant programs like ABE and Perkins. The intention is to expand this service to all the graduates from a public postsecondary school but that will not happen for another few years. We already have a MOU to share data with K-12 education, but this is the first year of their data collection so we have not shared any data yet. As I mentioned earlier, we are working very hard to create a K-20 database but specific details are not available yet.

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?

Our construction of the database might be slightly backwards but we concentrated on getting the data in first and do not have “standard” reports that we produce. In the next year or two, we will be putting a lot of attention into creating these kinds of things. Once they are created, if the report is aggregate, it will be available to the public on the website. If the report is student specific, it will only be available to an authorized user.

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)?

Again we do not have standard reports but the kind of ad hoc things we have done follow the IPEDS definitions. As for remediation, we are working on a study this spring and summer about it.

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

Just the remediation study mentioned above and a very preliminary transfer migration study. No official results or reports have been published.

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

I would say we have two major challenges. First, our staff is WAY too small. We have 5 full-time individuals for the development; web deployment and maintenance, training and institutional help desk, basic reporting to institutions, handling requests for information, and performing much needed studies for 7 very involved databases. I would like to say we are just barely keeping our head above water but I am not sure we have our heads above water. Very few of the functions I have listed above are getting the amount of attention that they really need. Our second challenge is the quality of the data. Before 2001, Community Colleges and Technical Institutions reported to our Department of Education. Although they follow standard higher education practices, no one has really monitored whether or not they all follow them consistently. It has been our position to not release information unless we feel that it is accurate. This has made our database development slow and is very difficult for non-data people to understand.

## **Overview**

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

Everything we have done on the SUR has happened since 2002. It has been created and continues to evolve.

2. Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not addressed?

Not that I can think of but feel free to contact me if you have questions about my response or anything else.