

Oregon (University System)
Student Centralized Administrative Reporting File (SCARF)
Bob Kieran

History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
SCARF is 16 years old, but we have data for the last 30 years.
2. By whom?
Oregon University System (OUS).
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?
IPEDS reporting, State Board of Higher Education Reporting, and OUS planning and policy (e.g., curriculum planning, enrollment studies).

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
All OUS 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?
No.
3. Are there plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions? Please explain.
No. We currently have a data exchange with Oregon community colleges. We would not report on their data, but we expect to integrate it into a Web-interface database with reports and some limited access to unit record level data. We also could integrate summary data for analysis from NCES or other sources.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, end of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?
Each quarter, five times a year for enrollment data.
Once per year for degrees data.
5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?
Not currently.
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?

Non-credit is not collected on a unit record basis. We do ask for a written report to publish in our Fact Book every other year, but when we tried to classify the nature of non-credit, it became unwieldy and subject to interpretation.

Data Management and Manipulation

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?
The Office of Institutional Research, the chancellor and the board.
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 — but, internally, students are matched with a unique personal identification number.

Yes, to the extent reasonable. The Oregon Dept. of Education (ODE) has been using a single internally-generated identifier that follows an Oregon P-12 student throughout their educational life in Oregon. Transferring schools does not create a new identifier. We will begin collecting this number on our application in 2007. And when a student is admitted to an OUS school, they get an internally generated number that we use for most of our data work. However, this number is not system wide, so if a student transfers from UO to OSU, they get a different ID number. So we need to collect SSN and use it to find inter-OUS transfers. Also, a few of our schools did not implement their data systems well, and they have created one identifier in Student, and a different identifier in Human Resources, so when a faculty member is listed as a teacher of a section in Student and we want to tie them together with their HR records to calculate cost of instruction, we need to use 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?
Not yet, but it is planned. Three levels of access: public (already created reports), OUS parties with passwords (point-and-click selection of cohort for boilerplate reports), trusted OUS users (unit record at table level access, SQL*Plus, etc., to create new reports).
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?
Follow federal guidelines pretty strictly. Get legal approval before any data is shared. We have a boilerplate agreement but I have not used it recently. The state agencies that share data do so by legislative decree, and so there is no other formal document other than our agreement to participate in the system.
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?

Our legislators are currently looking at changing current policy – the driving factor was stolen bank records with personal identifiers (I believe it was one of the largest data losses ever reported). The legislation may well affect OUS. We also are moving forward with a data sharing plan and are seeking legal opinions ourselves.

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

Participating in Oregon Shared Information System of 10 state agencies contributing to common database (e.g., corrections, military, employment, etc.). We can generate reports, but participating agencies cannot directly access unit-record data from other agencies. We participate as a state system in the National Student Clearinghouse. We provide some data directly to other Oregon agencies for required state and federal reporting. We will pilot test a virtual P-20 data warehouse structure during 2007-09 linking P-12, community college, and OUS data.

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

With the success of the National Student Clearinghouse, we no longer need to share with neighboring states.

Reporting and Use of Data

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

Annual enrollment reports; annual fact book (e.g., student demographics, academic preparation and performance; annual institutional profiles; annual retention and graduation studies; cost of instruction reports, and faculty salary 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)?

Six years is the OUS standard, but we can tell from these reports how many graduated in two, three, four, five and six years. We also do freshman-sophomore retention annually.

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

Policy analysis and development; performance measuring; board requests; central IPEDS reporting; accountability; academic performance reporting and sharing with other state agencies via an eleven-agency shared database.

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

Biggest challenges: with a major Board change the Chancellor's Office was reduced roughly by half. It doesn't appear any expectations were cut by that amount, however. We were well into moving ahead into some great areas for data use, collaboration, assessment, feedback to high schools, alignment of curriculum studies, etc. We are still

headed there, but more slowly. They also moved all our IT to one campus, which has resulted in technological changes that we must deal with.

Overview

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

Since 2002 we have changed our data submission format back to flat files, though we still use secure FTP we have automated our data validity checks, generate error reports automatically, give campuses a possibility to commit or resubmit the data. Our Data Dictionary is online, and very useable.

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

We are starting to reach the point at the national level where everyone has their own numbers: SHEEO and SHEFO, Grapevine, IPEDS, HigherEd.org, Educational Trust, etc. I know there will never be one great source, but part of the redundancy could be eliminated if data were available in a more timely fashion and more consistently.