

**Rhode Island
Annie Messier**

History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?

The SUR in Rhode Island began actual data collection in the summer of 2001.

2. By whom?

The SUR was established by the Board of Governors of Higher Education and is operated by the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education (RIOHE).

3. For what purpose?

The primary purpose of the SUR is to provide an array of information about public higher education in Rhode Island to inform the decision making process of the Board, the state legislature, and the Governor around higher education management and resource allocation issues. The state SUR maintains a performance indicator system for the public higher education system that is charged with the task of measuring the progress of the public higher education system in meeting some of the major strategic objectives established by the Board and to periodically inform the board of activities and outcomes at each of the three public institutions of higher education.

Coverage

4. What institutions are included in your SUR system?

The Board has the responsibility for the governance and management at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC) and the University of Rhode Island (URI). The SUR system has been established for these three institutions.

5. 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 independent or proprietary institutions are included in the SUR system.

6. Are there plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions? Please explain.

There are no plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions.

7. When are data of which type collected?

The following six types of data are collected each semester for only the undergraduate student population from each institution: (1) biographic data containing all biographic and background information for each student enrolled during the semester, (2) term data containing all semester-specific information (credits, GPA, graduation status) for each student enrolled during the semester, (3) course data containing separate records for each course in which each student was enrolled during the semester. Each course record for each student contains information for that course such as course number as it appears in

the course catalog course credits, course GPA, (4) course catalog containing the course number or course code and the corresponding description or title of that course for every course offered at the institution, (5) major catalog containing the CIP code and description or title of each major field of study offered at the institution, (6) Accuplacer data (for CCRI only) containing Accuplacer test score and course placement information.

8. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?

There are no plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle.

9. Is non-credit enrollment or instructional activity covered?

The course data described in #3 include all non-credit courses in which undergraduate students were enrolled. Non-credit enrollment is identified on the SUR records. Continuing education courses are not included in the SUR. This would mean, for example, that most workforce development programs operated by these institutions would not be included in the SUR reports

Data Management and Manipulation

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

The Board has the authority to change data elements and definitions. As a matter of practice the SUR data dictionary and reporting standards are developed cooperatively with the reporting institutions.

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?

SSNs are used as a key link both across institutions and for wage record matching purposes. SSNs are collected in the SUR system. There are no plans to discontinue the collection of SSNs.

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?

Campuses are provided results from the analysis of the SUR and campuses can request any customized analysis of the SUR data. Requests for analysis are made to RIOHE and the actual analysis is done by the Center for Labor Market Studies (CLMS) at Northeastern University. CLMS works with the staff of RIOHE and each of the three institutions to develop and institute a higher education indicator system that produces a complete and accurate depiction of the activities and outcomes of the state's higher education system, to provide an impartial and objective interpretation of the results of the data produced through the indicator system, place this analysis in the context of the higher education system in general and relate the findings to economic and labor market activity in the state and region.

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?

A policy document and a confidentiality agreement for the use of the data collected in the SUR system are in force to handle privacy and FERPA issues.

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 or privacy issues have come up recently in Rhode Island.

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

In cooperation with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RI DLT), we have executed a legally binding agreement to match the SUR data with the state's UI wage records. The CLMS in cooperation with RIBGHE will prepare a data file (customized for the specific research analysis) from the SUR system and deliver the file (through the Board) to RI DLT for matching purposes. After the RI DLT matches the UI records, it will strip all personal confidential information from the matched data file and deliver it to the CLMS for analysis. The agreement also specifies that after the matched data file is delivered to the CLMS, the RI DLT will destroy the data. Analysis from the resulting data restricts the presentation of any findings that directly or indirectly identifies individual students.

We are finalizing an agreement with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to track Rhode Island public high school graduates as well as students enrolled or graduated from the state public higher education system, throughout the nation's higher education system.

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

No agreements have been made to share data with other state higher education agencies.

Reporting and Use of Data

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

A number of research monographs have been prepared regarding student retention. Regular reports are prepared on the transition from high school to public colleges in the state. A performance indicator analysis is prepared annually. These monographs and data reports are available from RIOHE.

2. If graduation and retention statistics are generated for institutions (or for the state or system as a whole), how are they calculated?

All retention and graduation rate measures are based on IPEDS concepts and measures.

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

We are now undertaking a pilot study using UI wage record data to track the employment and earnings outcomes of URI graduates in the Rhode Island labor market. We have completed one and two year retention studies and hope to use the NSC data files described above to examine the post high school enrollment, retention and graduation outcomes of RI high school graduates.

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

We have had a high degree of cooperation from the three public colleges in the state and have made great strides in bolstering data quality. Our next challenge is to tie the SUR data into both wage record and NSC data files and to produce increasing numbers of research monographs that practically informs higher education decision making.

Final Questions:

Can you give me a quick update on events affecting the SUR database since 2002?

N/A

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

No.