

**Tennessee
Chris Brewer**

History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
Around 1991– rebuilt in 2004.
2. By whom?
Tennessee Higher Education Commission staff.
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?
The state funding formula is run off of the student information system. It is also used to answer legislative questions and track lottery scholarship recipients.

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
All public 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, not really. We do collect very limited information from private institutions regarding the Lottery Scholarship recipients (started this in 2004).
3. Are there plans to expand the system's coverage in terms of institutions? Please explain.
We would like to, but the private institutions have their own private state association and at this time do not want to collaborate with us.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, end of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?
We collect term data, not course level data and we do this 3 times per year – at the start of every term.
5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?
No.
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?
Yes, we do collect this data (credit, non-credit, and remedial) and it is stored in the same database.

Data Management and Manipulation

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?
Tennessee System Office (my office).
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?
We collect SSN to use for matching students who transfer – but it is not the key link.
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 – we have a reporting system and they have online access to about 150 reports, but if they want something more detailed (or specific) they need to contact my office.
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 do have a form that folks can fill out if they want to use data for appropriate educational research purposes – but only two people have access to the data.
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.
6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?
Not a physical link. We do have a contract with a professor that links our data with UI Wage and we are beginning to work with High Schools (they are in the process of building a database and in determining if SSN or a TN educational ID will be used –but either way, we will link with them).
7. Have you cooperated with other state higher education agencies to share data? If so, please explain.
Yes with Peter Ewell and his projects – we continue to link data with Kentucky and Mississippi.

Reporting and Use of Data

1. What kinds of statistics and reports are generated regularly using SUR data?
We have the Reporting site on the web – so over 150 reports are generated every year (demographics, projections, scholarship, etc.). We also do Feedback reports to high schools and community colleges.
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 do generate graduation and retention statistics and we use IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey Method.

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

Other than the ones we post on the Reporting site – we do ad hoc reports for the governor's office, the legislature, and of course we have been doing quite a bit on the Lottery Scholarships.

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

The number one issue is getting clean data from the institutions – some campuses do a great job and others struggle. I have been trying to get to each campus more, do some training, etc., but it remains an issue.

Overview

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

In 2004 we completely rebuilt the system – it used to be a flat file, text based system and now it is Sequel, relational database. We also created the Reporting site and the upload and error check online system, which is a system for institutions to send in and check their data.

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

No.