

Washington (Universities)
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History

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?
2000. Beta testing started in 1999.
2. By whom?
The Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment Statistics (PCHEES) database was established by the six public baccalaureate institutions.
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?
In order to track enrollment statistics at the public baccalaureate institutions in the state.

Coverage

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?
Six public baccalaureate institutions: University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington University, Eastern Wash University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen State College. This system also captures data for the branch campuses of the University of Washington (Bothell and Tacoma campuses) and Washington State University (Vancouver, Tri Cities).
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 independents and no proprietary institutions.
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?
Data are reported to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) roughly one week after the 10th day of each new quarter (fall, winter, spring, summer). Under contract with the six public baccalaureate institutions and OFM, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) receives an electronic copy of the entire database each quarter, after OFM has added the new institutional data and made corrections/revisions to previous quarters.
5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?
There are no planned changes to the frequency and/or cycle of reporting. However, beginning some time in the fall of 2006 to January 2007 period, outcome data including credits attempted/earned and degrees awarded will begin to be reported by the institutions.

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?

ABE, ESL, and other non-credit programs are predominantly offered by the state's community and technical colleges. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) tracks these enrollments and completed this survey under different cover, submitting it separately.

Data Management and Manipulation

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

An oversight committee made up of representatives from OFM, the HECB, the public baccalaureate institutions, and the Council of Presidents (a group representing the presidents of the baccalaureate institutions) meets quarterly to review data definitions, evaluate the need to change/add data elements, and implement changes. The Council of Presidents role is solely to facilitate effective communications with the baccalaureate 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?

Yes, the PCHEES database does contain SSNs and they are used as one part of establishing links or matches to other data. However, reporting social security numbers to institutions of higher education is not mandatory, thus using this data element exclusively to link does not provide a comprehensive approach. Therefore, first name, last name, and birth date are used in conjunction with SSN to establish links. This is especially relevant if/when linkages are established with the K-12 system unit record database maintained by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). OSPI does not use SSNs; rather, they assign students a unique identifier. Thus, matching to this database would have to be accomplished in a different manner (typically first name, last name, birth date, school attended).

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, campuses cannot access the unit-record portion of PCHEES. They can access standard reports and can ask staff from the OFM to run ad hoc queries, but they are not granted access to the unit-record data.

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?

Since the HECB has only recently received the PCHEES unit-record database, we are still in the process of developing these policies and procedures. We are currently developing a policy based on U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, Statistical Standards Program. Only HECB staff is allowed access to the data.

Each staff person who has access to the PCHEES database must sign an affidavit of non-disclosure and abide by the interagency agreements between the public baccalaureate institutions, OFM, COP, and the HECB. A draft copy of the NDA is attached to this email. Currently, neither the HECB nor OFM is able to share data with other parties unless permission is explicitly granted by the baccalaureate institutions through appropriate data sharing and research agreements.

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 privacy or FERPA issues have come up.
6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?
The HECB does not currently link data. However, there is a significant interest in doing so. The HECB must convene the Data Advisory Group which oversees linkages across systems. Membership of the group includes representatives from the HECB, OFM, COP, SBCTC, and public and private baccalaureate institutions. Once this group agrees that the linkages should take place, they are also responsible for facilitating the process of making it happen, typically through assigning responsible staff at each of their institutions/agencies. Any such linkages would require data sharing and research agreements with the baccalaureate institutions which would need to be consistent with FERPA requirements.
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?
The Higher Education Enrollment Report (HEER) is the standard report produced by the Office of Financial Management from PCHEES. The report can be accessed at: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/hied/heer/2005/default.asp>
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 PCHEES database does not currently contain outcomes. This data will begin to be reported by institutions in fall 2006 to January 2007 period. .
3. What kinds of research projects have recently been undertaken by the state or system using SUR data resources?
The HECB has not completed any research projects based on PCHEES, given the short amount of time we've had access to the unit record data. However, OFM completes the Application Match Study which can be accessed at <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/hied/appmat/default.asp>

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

Staff resources for analysis: The HECB made a supplemental budget request for IT and research analyst FTEs in the most recent legislative session. The request failed, so our agency is left to conduct the analysis with existing resources.

Data configuration/structure: The HECB gets an electronic copy of the PCHEES database from OFM, which gets the raw data from institutions. If the HECB detects errors we must work through OFM which would work with the institutions to revise the data. Corrections to the data are not incorporated until the next quarter.

Linking data across systems: The HECB does not currently link data with any other unit-record database in the state. Gaining agreement among system offices and various state-level departments, designing linkages, and implementing changes is time consuming and potentially difficult

Coordination with institutions: According to our data sharing agreements with OFM and the institutions, the HECB must send any reporting out to the institutions for their review. If errors are detected, the HECB must work through OFM to update their database and then have OFM transmit the corrected database (in its entirety) to the HECB.

Overview

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

The most significant change is that the HECB now has access to unit record enrollment data. As was mentioned early, OFM receives data from the institutions under data sharing and research agreements to create the PCHEES database. In February of 2006 the HECB was granted access to an electronic copy of the PCHEES database which we now store in-house. Previous to establishing these agreements, the HECB worked with OFM to conduct research and analysis. The addition of outcome data to the PCHEES database in the near future is also a significant development. No new formats for data submission and/or reporting of outcome data have been adopted. In 2002, the coding of race data was changed to conform to Census 2000 definitions.

2. Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not addressed?
No.