

**West Virginia  
Jim Barton**

**History**

1. When was the student unit-record (SUR) system established?  
Unit level data has been collected by West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission dating back to 1979, but our current system and general file composition dates back to 1998. We undertook a massive database upgrade several years ago, and only retained records from 1998 on.
2. By whom?  
By the prior iterations of our current SHEEO Agency. I believe it was the WV Board of Regents at the time, then the State College and University System, then the WV Higher Education Policy Commission.
3. For what purpose (e.g., resource allocation/funding formula, IPEDS, tracking student retention/ graduation, tracking students across institutions)?  
Primary reasons for unit-level data collection included policy analysis and accountability reporting in most of the above-mentioned areas. Uses of these data evolved over time, as cross-institutional tracking and financial aid recipient performance (among other things) emerged as areas of interest.

**Coverage**

1. What institutions are included in your SUR system?  
Our SUR contains ALL public institutions, both 2-year and 4-year.
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 change in terms of the unit-level database. Some limited information about PROMISE scholars who are graduating from private institutions is currently being negotiated for collection.
4. When are data of which type collected (e.g. term/quarter/semester census date, annual, end of term, etc.)? Other reporting cycles?  
The data for the SUR database is collected each term (semester).
5. Are there plans to collect data more frequently or on a different cycle?  
Not at this time.

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?  
Summary information of this type of enrollment is collected through our Community and Technical College System central office.

## **Data Management and Manipulation**

1. Who has authority over changing data elements and definitions?  
Changes are coordinated through the Director of Research and Technology as prescribed by system chancellors, vice chancellor for administration, or legislators.
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. There are no long-term plans to discontinue SSN usage, as our state performs several matching reports that require that element as an identifier. Accountability for transfers among 2-year and 4-year schools, as well as post-graduation retention for needs-based and merit aid programs are key examples.
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 at this time. We are currently implementing the SAS Business Intelligence architecture to facilitate pro forma reports and limited "build your own" reporting capabilities.
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 generally refer to FERPA and GLBA language as our guidance on privacy matters. SUR data is restricted to authorized personnel in-house, and only summary (perturbed) data are produced as general output. In-house personnel generally produce ad hoc requests for researchers and external organizations. Exceptions (such as discrete data exchanges) are handled through case-by-case usage agreements, which we can produce if desired.
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?  
Some institutions have begun probing the discontinuance of SSNs as key fields. West Virginia mandates by law accountability that relies on SSN matches, deferring the arguments in at least the short term.
6. Do you link SUR data within your state to other databases?  
The two primary external data matches are with the State Department of Education to obtain grade information for state-level aid applicants, as well as a Bureau of Employment Programs match to report on the number of postsecondary graduates that

have remained to work in the State. High school grades are generally used for the sole purpose of verifying qualification for aid programs. The BEP data exchange is governed by an extensive usage agreement.

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

No such activity in the recent past. With the exception of independent colleges and universities, virtually all in-state higher education data collection falls within our collection umbrella.

## Reporting and Use of Data

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

We have a standard battery of reports displayed at: <http://www.hepc.wvnet.edu/reports>  
Ad hoc reports to support focused policy issues for council, commission, legislative, and institutional requestors are frequently generated.

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 start with the IPEDS graduation rate calculation, but utilize our added capacity to show transfers among institutions. Our most liberal measure accounts for the completion of any form of degree at any of our institutions within the specified timeframe. The CTC system has also begun requesting 5-year and 6-year CTC graduation rates to account for the substantial non-traditional populations at those institutions.

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

I am attaching to this message a copy of a recent retention report generated for a recent conference. Otherwise, our standard battery of reports represents the thrust of our efforts.

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

Lack of programming time, lack of staff resources, complexity in defining and collecting data files on an annual basis.

## Overview

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

No.

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

Not at this time.