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# New Jersey County Colleges Noncredit Data Collection Survey

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## Project Background

Adults seeking further education have long shown keen interest in noncredit education. An estimated 4 million people enroll in noncredit programs annually, and surveys have found that at least half of adults interested in further postsecondary learning seek an alternative to college degree programs<sup>1</sup>. Policymakers also recognize the potential value of noncredit and related programs. A 50-state scan identified state-led initiatives in 28 states, totaling at least \$3.8 billion, in support for attainment of short-term credentials.<sup>2</sup>

Given the growing interest and public investment in short-term alternatives to college degree programs, policymakers and practitioners generally agree on the importance of a strong evidence base to inform decision-making. Yet state collection and analysis of noncredit data remains inconsistent and difficult to use for policymaking purposes, making direct comparisons across states dauntingly hard. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers regularly encounter varying definitions, an absence of educational or labor market outcomes data, and overall data quality issues.<sup>3</sup> At the most basic level, very little is known about the characteristics of noncredit programs, such as their instructional time, instructional format, requirements for entry, linkages to further education, awarding agencies, cost, and credential types awarded. Better data on noncredit offerings within

<sup>1</sup> Jacoby, T. (September 2021). *The indispensable institution: Taking the measure of community college workforce education*. Opportunity America. <https://opportunityamericaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FINAL-survey-report.pdf>; Strada. (2020, September 16). *Public viewpoint: Interested but not enrolled: Understanding and serving aspiring adult learners*. <https://cci.stradaeducation.org/pv-release-september-16-2020/>

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, S. (2023). *A typology and policy landscape analysis of state investments in short-term credential pathways*. HCM Strategists. <https://hcmstrategists.com/resources/a-typology-and-policy-landscape-analysis-of-state-investments-in-short-term-credential-pathways>

<sup>3</sup> D'Amico, M. M. (2017). Noncredit education: Specialized programs to meet local needs. In K. B. Wilson & R. L. Garza-Mitchell (Eds.), *Forces shaping community college missions* (No. 180, pp. 57–66). New directions for community colleges. Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20281>; Erwin, M. (2019). Noncredit enrollment and related activities (NPEC 2019). National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, with US Department of Education funding; Romano, R. M., & D'Amico, M. M. (2021, July/August). How federal data shortchange the community college. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 53(4), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2021.1930978>

states will help inform ongoing measurement efforts and ensure those efforts are more grounded in the realities of noncredit delivery, financing, and learner outcomes.

With support from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)/National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) and key partners at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Michigan, and University of California–Irvine are working with state leaders from across the country as part of the State Noncredit Data Project (SNDP). The SNDP examines noncredit data to achieve three key goals:

- Develop an inventory of consistent operational definitions for state-level noncredit data elements to better understand the noncredit data infrastructure.
- Collect and examine noncredit course/program-level data to explore noncredit offerings and their associations with enrollment rates, outcomes, instructional characteristics, and financial arrangements.
- Uncover the drivers of noncredit offerings and produce relevant policy implications.

In addition to this analysis, the SNDP convenes a Learning Community of states on data for noncredit education and non-degree credentials. The Learning Community is designed to bring together state leaders to share current practices related to state noncredit data. Through our research and convening, SNDP seeks to lay the groundwork for common definitional language for future data collection and analysis efforts to improve the value and quality of noncredit programs and non-degree credentials.

## Methods

This report is one in a series that explores the noncredit data infrastructure of US states and presents descriptive analyses of those data at the course/program and provider level. The findings presented in these reports were reached using a multi-phased collaborative approach with leaders in partner states. The first step was to engage with state partners about the context for noncredit and related data collection. This ongoing engagement included regular conversations, offline questions, and the collection of relevant policy and process information on noncredit categories, determinants of noncredit success, instructional characteristics, finance, and related topics. The engagement process has been critical to understanding the state’s noncredit landscape and data collection.

The next step was to develop a robust inventory of each of the data elements potentially available from state agencies and organizations. Through engagement with state partners, cross-state meetings, a review of prior literature and resources,<sup>4,5,6</sup> and program-level data analyses with our first three research states (Iowa,

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<sup>4</sup> D’Amico, M. M., Morgan, G. B., Robertson, S., & Houchins, C. (2014). An exploration of noncredit community college enrollment. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 62(3), 152–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2014.953438>; D’Amico, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> IPEDS. (2021–22). Glossary. <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary>

<sup>6</sup> Jacoby, T. (2021). *The indispensable institution: Taking the measure of community college workforce education*. Opportunity America. <https://opportunityamericaonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/FINAL-survey-report.pdf>

Louisiana, and Virginia), the project team created a noncredit data taxonomy<sup>7</sup> for the organization of relevant data elements. The key elements in the taxonomy—(1) purpose and design, (2) outcomes, (3) demographics and enrollment, and (4) finance—guide the organization of available data elements in the present report and the subsequent analyses on providers and programs that follow. In this next phase of the project, the project team is working with an additional group of states (including South Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, and Tennessee) to understand the nature of their noncredit data.

To better understand the data as reported at the state level, this brief examines processes for data reporting at the individual institutions. SNDP research partners and learning community participants at state agencies and systems have shared that they often lack information on colleges' noncredit data. Developing an understanding of how colleges organize delivery of noncredit education helps practitioners and policymakers to understand how noncredit data may be collected and stored. This New Jersey report is the first in our series of state noncredit data snapshots to examine how colleges collect data that they report to the state. A separate report provides details on noncredit data collected by the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (NJOSHE).

County colleges report data uniformly for NJOSHE, including required data elements for its Student Unit Record (SURE) system<sup>8</sup> and customized-training reports.<sup>9,10</sup> The NJOSHE research department provides data templates and a codebook for the SURE system, which have not changed significantly since NJOSHE began collecting noncredit data in 2007.<sup>11</sup> NJOSHE requests both noncredit SURE data and customized-training data to be submitted in October of each year, in processes that are separate from college reporting on credit-bearing education.<sup>12</sup>

New Jersey's county colleges have full autonomy of governance. Not only do they operate their own institution-level boards of trustees, the colleges collectively oversee the distribution formula for state funding of their institutions. To better contextualize the noncredit data reported to NJOSHE, we conducted a survey of institutional research (IR) directors at New Jersey county colleges. We asked about their noncredit data as well as the data collection and reporting processes at their institutions. The survey was fielded by EERC

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<sup>7</sup>D'Amico, M., Van Noy, M., Srivastava, A., Bahr, P., & Xu, D. (2023). *Collecting and understanding noncredit community college data: A taxonomy and how-to guide for states*. Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center. [https://sites.rutgers.edu/state-noncredit-data/wp-content/uploads/sites/794/2023/11/State-Noncredit-Taxonomy\\_EERC\\_11.17.23.pdf](https://sites.rutgers.edu/state-noncredit-data/wp-content/uploads/sites/794/2023/11/State-Noncredit-Taxonomy_EERC_11.17.23.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. (2024). *Office of Research and Accountability: Student Unit Record (SURE)*. Official Site of The State of New Jersey. <https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/research/SURE.shtml>

<sup>9</sup> New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. (2024). *Office of Research and Accountability: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*. Official Site of The State of New Jersey. <https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/research/IPEDS.shtml>

<sup>10</sup> NJOSHE develops postsecondary education policy and provides coordination for higher education institutions, including oversight for noncredit education offered by New Jersey's postsecondary institutions. While New Jersey's 18 county colleges are largely locally governed and managed by independent boards of trustees, all belong to and jointly govern the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC) to represent their interests. NJCCC also receives and distributes state operating aid to county colleges according to a formula agreed upon by its member institutions.

<sup>11</sup> New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, *Student Unit Record (SURE)*, *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*.

<sup>12</sup> The department has several SURE codebooks for credit-bearing education. See New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, *Student Unit Record (SURE)*.

between December 2023 and March 2024 in partnership with NJOSHE. This report presents data from 13 responding institutions.<sup>13</sup>

The SNDP survey team emphasized three general areas of interest for exploration. The first area centered on how noncredit education was organized at the institutional level, including each college's organizational approach to noncredit programs, the focus of those programs, and its budgeting practices. The second area of interest was understanding the actual data on noncredit education being collected as part of each college's annual noncredit submission to NJOSHE's SURE database. This included questions about whether there is overlap between data colleges report for the SURE system and those they report as customized training and whether they collect any noncredit data outside of SURE for internal use, particularly around credential awards. Finally, the survey team was interested in the types of systems and processes the colleges use to collect, store, and compile noncredit data. The survey included questions on which offices participate in managing noncredit data at the college, the systems they use to manage it, what times of year they collect it, and the specific challenges they face in their data-collection efforts.

## Findings

The findings from this survey help to make sense of the data collected by NJOSHE and other data available at the state's county colleges to provide insights on ways to improve current data collection efforts. We present findings on the following topics: organizational context for noncredit data, noncredit data elements, and noncredit data collection processes.

### *Organizational Context for Noncredit Data*

*Noncredit education is integral to most colleges' strategic plans.* Across states and within New Jersey, noncredit education spans a wide range of course content areas.<sup>14</sup> As such, noncredit education may play an important role within New Jersey colleges' strategic plans. Nearly all IR directors identified noncredit course/program initiatives as integral components of their institution's current strategic plans, with eight IR directors reporting that their college uses noncredit data to generate internal reports for such planning.

Respondents reported a range of fields in which noncredit programs are important to their college's strategic plans. The fields most commonly cited in this context were in healthcare (e.g., allied health, health IT, pharmacy tech, medical assisting, and CNA programs) and technical fields such as advanced manufacturing, aseptic processing and biotechnology, industrial maintenance, welding, energy, renewable energy, green energy and solar, electronic vehicles, and robotics.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> There are 18 county colleges in New Jersey, with one sponsoring two campuses that report data separately.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, SNDP's first cross-state report and the broad areas covered in our report of NJOSHE's data systems (D'Amico, M., Van Noy, M., Srivastava, A., Bahr, P., & Xu, D. [2023]. *The state community college noncredit data infrastructure: Lessons from Iowa, Louisiana, and Virginia*. Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center. <https://sites.rutgers.edu/state-noncredit-data/wp-content/uploads/sites/794/2023/08/The-State-Community-College-EERC-8.2023.pdf>).

<sup>15</sup> Five IR directors identified additional areas, with one each covering casino/gaming; Cisco and tech certifications for industry; electrical technician and engineering; HVAC; hospitality; IT and cybersecurity; mechatronics; supply chain; teacher certification; transition to credit; and unspecified others.

*Some colleges incorporate noncredit education into their pathways and stackable credentials.* Helping students in noncredit programs more easily transfer to (or concurrently enroll in) for-credit study is an important goal for many colleges and policymakers. Colleges have sought to build pathways from noncredit to for-credit study, making it possible for students to pursue further education by “stacking” noncredit and credit courses together.<sup>16</sup> We found that New Jersey county colleges seek to support pathways toward degrees and provide specialized credentials that students can build upon for further education and career qualifications. Some IR directors reported that their college has noncredit educational pathways in place, with one noting that noncredit education plays a vital role in making pathways and stackable credentials work at their college. At two colleges, these types of pathways are a goal but do not currently exist. Of those IR directors who did not report that their college has pathways in place or as a future goal, one noted their college previously attempted to institute noncredit pathways but was unsuccessful, and another reported their college had decided to award credit for prior learning in some fields.

*Colleges are more likely to have centralized than decentralized oversight for noncredit education.* County colleges organize noncredit in varying ways depending on the characteristics of their programs, courses, staff, and faculty. Most IR directors who responded to the survey (8 of 13, or 62%) reported that their college has a specific institutional unit that oversees its noncredit activity. In all but one case, this oversight unit consisted of a workforce development department, which sometimes works in conjunction with a continuing education or academic affairs department; the exception was one college at which noncredit education is overseen by an assistant vice president. Three IR directors reported that noncredit education is decentralized within their college. Among those, one IR director reported the career and technical education/workforce development division oversees some programs while others are decentralized; another noted that their college offers relatively little noncredit education; and another noted that multiple parts of their college contribute to workforce and noncredit education. Finally, one IR director reported more of a hybrid format that features some centralized synthesis from a coordinator within a decentralized structure.

*Budgeting methods for noncredit education vary across institutions.* Since New Jersey does not provide dedicated state funding for noncredit education, institutions budget for noncredit education in a variety of ways depending on their structures and sources of funds.<sup>17</sup> IR directors reported a variety of budgeting methods for noncredit course and program expenses. Several reported that their college’s workforce department has its own operating budget. Others reported that budgeting for noncredit at their college follows decentralized processes by the departments offering the courses. The majority of IR directors (62%) reported that their college has specific units or divisions that oversee noncredit course and program budgeting. A few IR directors reported decentralized budgeting.

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<sup>16</sup> Center for Occupational Research and Development. (January 2021). *Introduction to stackable credentials*. US Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/file/introduction-to-stackable-credentials.pdf>; Bailey, T., & Belfield, C. (2017, April). *Stackable credentials: Awards for the future?* Community College Research Center. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/stackable-credentials-awards-for-future.html>

<sup>17</sup> D’Amico et al., State Community College

*Few IR directors reported financial information on revenue and expenses, but those with this information reported that noncredit activity at their college generated revenue.* Noncredit education may generate revenue through individual student course registrations or customized training supported by employers. Most IR directors did not report on revenue or expenses, but two provided totals for both revenue and expenses related to noncredit education at their college. At both colleges, revenue for individual noncredit courses were considerably larger than for customized training (\$1.4 million versus \$300,000 at one college, and \$2,966,146 versus \$187,921 at the other). Both realized surpluses of about \$300,000 from noncredit activity including individual courses and customized training.

### *Noncredit Data Elements*

To shed light on the current data captured by these institutions, the survey examined the noncredit data elements colleges collect, including both those they report to NJOSHE as well as any additional elements they may collect for other purposes (e.g., internal use). We also examined the consistency of these data elements with NJOSHE definitions.

#### *Colleges define course content categories consistently with NJOSHE's definitions.*

Two broad data elements in SURE classify noncredit offerings: types of noncredit courses and target audience for course or program. NJOSHE requests that colleges classify their noncredit offerings according to their content as either career enhancement or avocational. According to the SURE codebook: Career enhancement is defined as courses that are “intended for building skills and can be used for career development and/or can lead to certification”; and avocational courses as those “intended for personal development.”<sup>18</sup> Although NJOSHE provides these definitions, it does not confirm with colleges that the data it supplies are categorized according to the same definitions. IR directors responding to our survey reported that their college’s definitions for avocational and career enhancement offerings are consistent with the NJOSHE definitions. One respondent further specified that their college’s definition for career enhancement is “professional development courses providing a certificate or notarized document of completion that increases skills within specific industries.” Two respondents’ colleges defined avocational as “noncredit offerings excluding career.”

*Colleges consistently define the target audience of youth/children, while definitions vary for general adult populations and senior citizens.* NJOSHE requests that institutions identify noncredit course or program target audiences for SURE data, categorized as either general adult population, senior citizens, or youth/children. They do not define these three target audiences in their data codebook beyond the names of the categories. With this definition left up to the colleges, IR directors reported a variety of approaches to defining target audiences, including age categories, course content intended for specific ages, and marketing efforts targeted to specific ages. Survey respondents consistently defined youth/children as under the age 18. However, those reporting on definitions for the general adult population and senior citizens varied in their approach. Some respondents said

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<sup>18</sup> New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. (2023, July). *Noncredit Open Enrollment Data File Handbook* [Version 3.1]. State of New Jersey. <https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/documents/pdf/research/NoncreditDataDictionary.pdf>

their college defines courses targeted toward the general adult population as those not specifically intended for senior citizens or youth. One respondent reported that general adult courses at their college are for all students at that institution. Others used a variety of categories for the general adult population based on age: 18 and over, 18–59, and 18–64. For senior citizen–targeted courses, some respondents reported age-based categories including greater than or equal to 65; greater than or equal to 60; and “course dependent and over 55 at times.” Others defined these offerings as courses marketed through a senior-specific program; courses eligible for a senior discount; content geared towards seniors; and course subject codes that identify the courses as senior-oriented.

*Noncredit data are in units of analysis of students, courses, and/or programs.* NJOSHE collects noncredit data at student-level units of analysis but does not collect data by programs or courses. The noncredit SURE codebook refers to courses as the units for categorization of content in the student-level data. All thirteen IR directors reported that their college has data with units of analysis as courses or students within courses. One of those IR directors said their college’s data could also be organized by course sections with start dates, and two others said their college is able to report data with programs as units of analysis.

*A few colleges utilize CIP codes for their noncredit data.* The National Center for Education Statistics’ Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) provides information on the field of study of noncredit programs.<sup>19</sup> Established national classification systems such as CIP codes can provide consistency across institutions within a state to measure common program offerings. We asked respondents whether their institutions have CIP code data for their noncredit education. IR directors from only three of 13 county colleges responding to the survey reported that their college uses CIP codes to categorize noncredit offerings.

*Some colleges maintain data about students’ receipt of funding for noncredit education.* Because New Jersey does not currently have dedicated funding for noncredit education, funding for noncredit education varies widely across the county colleges.<sup>20</sup> Common noncredit funding sources include student tuition, WIOA, and external grants. Less than half the IR directors reported that their college collects data on the sources of funding received by students in noncredit programs.

*Some colleges maintain related data on credentials associated with their noncredit programs, and a few track student completion of those credentials.* Noncredit education may be categorized based on whether it leads to an external certification, licensure, or other recognized credential or award. Although only five IR directors reported that their college maintains data categorizing their noncredit offerings by whether they lead to these types of credentials or awards, the majority report that their institution offers formal or informal awards to students who complete noncredit programs. These types of awards range from institutional certificates or awards (seven colleges); industry certifications (three colleges); licenses associated with noncredit offerings (two colleges); and apprenticeship certifications (one college). A few respondents reported that their college tracks student outcomes, including two colleges that reported they track the awards manually; one college

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<sup>19</sup> D’Amico et al., State Community College.

<sup>20</sup> D’Amico et al., State Community College.

that tracks with Elevate, which is a type of class registration software; and another that tracks some but not all credentials awarded.

*There are overlaps with data some colleges provide to NJOSHE for SURE and customized training.* NJOSHE collects data separately for its SURE system and customized training reports with separate instructions and processes for college, and without asking colleges to report whether there are overlaps between the data they report for these two types of requests. Several IR directors stated that there is some overlap between the data they report for the SURE system and the data they report for customized training.

*Some data elements are more commonly viewed as strongest or weakest among SURE-reported data elements.* To begin to understand how much variation there is across data elements and across colleges in terms of strength of data, we asked IR directors to identify their colleges’ strongest and weakest noncredit data elements among those that NJOSHE requests that they report to SURE. Their responses are detailed in Table 1. We defined strength as reliability, with data elements that colleges are able to report on consistently for most student records. Answers varied with regard to which elements IR directors felt were the strongest at their college. Target audience, course content, clock hours, and zip code were most frequently mentioned, with five or more IR directors reporting each of these elements. Conversely, we defined weak data elements as unreliable: fields or columns that colleges are not able to report on consistently for most student records. Weak elements would be those that colleges frequently leave completely blank or impute values to due to not having matching information within their noncredit data system(s). With some variations in specific data elements, IR directors most frequently reported that demographics and student identifiers were their weakest.

*Table 1: New Jersey Community Colleges’ Strongest and Weakest Data Elements in the NJ SURE Noncredit Open Enrollment File*

Strongest data elements	Weakest data elements
Target audience (7)	Race/ethnicity (7)
Clock hours (6)	Sex (6)
Course content (6)	Date of birth (5)
Zip code (5)	SSN (5)

### *Noncredit Data Collection Processes*

Across states, colleges’ noncredit data systems are likely to be more variable and less advanced than those for credit-bearing programs. Historically, noncredit education has not had the reporting requirements that have driven the development and standardization of data systems for credit-bearing programs. IPEDS,<sup>21</sup> for example, requires data for credit-bearing education from institutions that participate in federal financial aid systems that do not support noncredit education. To understand the current infrastructure for noncredit data collection at the institutional level, we asked IR directors about the types of systems and processes they use to collect, store, and compile noncredit data.

<sup>21</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds>.



*Colleges often have multiple departments and people collecting, storing, and compiling noncredit data.*

Given differences in organizational structure for noncredit education across colleges, with some having a centralized unit and some having decentralized courses or programs, it is not surprising that there are variations in colleges' processes for compiling noncredit data. Nearly all IR directors responding to the survey reported that several people or departments are involved with compiling noncredit data, overseeing noncredit activity, and submitting data at their college. IR staff are involved in reporting to NJOSHE's SURE system at 11 of the 13 participating colleges. Nine IR directors report that their workforce development departments, sometimes connected to continuing education or lifelong learning, are also involved in compiling data, and two report involvement from career and technical education. Six IR directors report that departments within their college compile their customized training data; five of these describe a scenario in which the IR department collects data from a different department in which it is compiled. That process may be followed by a joint review of the data by both departments. One respondent who reported that IR was the only department involved in processing noncredit data at their college noted that their college does not regularly provide customized training, but when it does, the IR department receives information directly from training providers.

*Colleges use a variety of data systems to manage and report noncredit data.* IR directors reported that their colleges use a variety of data sources and systems to compile the student unit record data needed for the SURE Noncredit Open Enrollment Data File<sup>22</sup>. The most common systems were Ellucian Colleague (used by six) and Excel spreadsheets (used by five, often in conjunction with other systems). Ellucian Elevate and Informer 4 were each used by two. Other systems that at least one college used included ACEware, Banner, Destiny One, Black Rocket (for bootcamp data), Kourier, Lumens, and Anthology Student. One noted using workforce records/reports. IR directors also described a variety of systems used by their college to compile data for NJOSHE's customized training reports. These included Destiny One/Modern Campus, Banner, and Ellucian Colleague, as well as internal spreadsheets and manual data processing.

*Colleges compile noncredit data for NJOSHE during summer or fall months.* IR directors consistently specified a month or range of months during the summer or fall as the period during which their college compiles noncredit course enrollment data. Those time periods generally spanned two to three months and took place between July and November. As reported above, NJOSHE requests data from the colleges in October of each year.

*Some colleges have special processes when collecting or processing data for minors.* Processes for collecting data for those under age 18 vary across colleges. Colleges collect parent data/information or K–12 data in lieu of specific student information for minors. When asked to further describe how their colleges handle collecting data for minors, four IR directors reported collecting data solely from parents/custodial guardian, with some describing parental or guardian consent or permission requirements. Two IR directors reported that their college collects data from a combination of high school guidance counselors and some or all parents. Two IR directors

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<sup>22</sup> New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. (2023, July). *Noncredit Open Enrollment Data File Handbook* [Version 3.1]. State of New Jersey. <https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/documents/pdf/research/NoncreditDataDictionary.pdf>

reported that their college does not have an age-related policy; one of those IR directors described collecting information from all students when it is voluntarily supplied and the other explained that their college does not distinguish between data collection efforts for different age populations. One IR director's college obtained data from a third party other than high schools. One IR director reported that their college masks data, and another commented that their college collects very limited data for this population.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Collecting and compiling student-level data may be challenging for multiple reasons. Noncredit education often does not follow the same course and program structures as credit-bearing education and thus requires a different approach to data collection. Based on this review of institutional-level practices for collecting and reporting noncredit data, a few key takeaways emerge that can serve as priorities for building the noncredit data infrastructure.

*Missing information is among the more common challenges for colleges in compiling noncredit data for the SURE system.* IR directors reported specific challenges that their colleges face with noncredit data compilations for NJOSHE's SURE system. Missing data was the most frequently reported, with six IR directors identifying it as an issue. This trend aligns with findings from many other states, where missing data are particularly common for demographic variables.

*Issues related to data collection processes, including lacking or incompatible software systems, were commonly reported.* Working across different systems and lacking appropriate software were common challenges reported by three IR directors. Similarly, one IR director reported working across multiple data sources and formats at their college was a challenge. Two IR directors reported facing challenges related to data entry errors and issues.

*Some challenges relate to the broader institutional context for noncredit education.* IR directors noted several challenges related to the broader institutional context for noncredit. These include the decentralized nature of noncredit education; administrative reluctance; a lack of dedicated resources for data collection; and a framework that makes it difficult for noncredit to fit within existing data systems set up for semester-based courses. These challenges move beyond the technical issues of how to create data collection processes and point to broader institutional questions and issues around noncredit education.

With rising interest in noncredit education, states and their colleges have an opportunity to review and align systems. In reflecting on these data, they may find opportunities to learn from each other's practices and develop systems to better track students in noncredit education. These efforts can help inform their strategic planning more effectively and help contribute to the overall understanding within states and their institutions.

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## The Education and Employment Research Center

Rutgers' Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) is housed within the School of Management and Labor Relations. EERC conducts research and evaluation on programs and policies at the intersection of education and employment. Our work strives to improve policy and practice so that institutions may provide educational programs and pathways that ensure individuals obtain the education needed for success in the workplace, and employers have a skilled workforce to meet their human resource needs. For more information on our mission and current research, visit [smlr.rutgers.edu/eerc](http://smlr.rutgers.edu/eerc).

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STEM and Technician  
Education



Noncredit Education and  
Non-Degree Credentials



Education and Labor  
Market Connections



## Rutgers' School of Management and Labor Relations

Rutgers' School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR) is the leading source of expertise on the world of work, building effective and sustainable organizations, and the changing employment relationship. The school is comprised of two departments—one focused on all aspects of strategic human resource management and the other dedicated to the social science specialties related to labor studies and employment relations. In addition, SMLR provides many continuing education and certificate programs taught by world-class researchers and expert practitioners. SMLR was originally established by an act of the New Jersey legislature in 1947 as the Institute of Management and Labor Relations. Like its counterparts created in other large industrial states at the same time, the Institute was chartered to promote new forms of labor-management cooperation following the industrial unrest that occurred at the end of World War II. It officially became a school at the flagship campus of the State University of New Jersey in New Brunswick/Piscataway in 1994. For more information, visit [smlr.rutgers.edu](http://smlr.rutgers.edu).

