

Matching Student Data Without Social Security Numbers

Frequently Asked Questions

In order to support colleges and universities that may rely on using Social Security numbers for matching and data processes, we have developed the following frequently asked questions. For other questions, please contact us at higheredssn@collegeboard.org.

Q: Will other information useful for matching still be included in the data files?

A: Date of birth fields and high school (AI) will be provided on both AP® and SAT® files. In addition, addresses will still be provided for the majority of students who take SAT and all students who take AP. You can review the format for electronic score reports for College Board programs online here:

- **Advanced Placement®:** secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap-student-data-record-layout-2017.pdf
- **SAT:** The sample data file is located at collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/data-layout-sat-subject-tests-electronic-score-report-higher-ed.pdf (Note: The layout itself is not changing, and the updated layout reflecting the blank fields will be available in late summer. You will be able to find the updated layout on sat.org/highered).

Q: My university uses Social Security numbers as a unique identifier. How can I match student records without it?

A: Many colleges no longer collect Social Security numbers in recruitment and admission processes in order to protect their students. They have transitioned smoothly to matching processes based on a combination of other data elements. These processes are typically part of the data intake process and are performed through an off-the-shelf or custom algorithm.

Your software providers and/or IT team on campus will likely have experience working on data matching without Social Security numbers as this is often done for other forms of information intake, such as online interest forms, email, etc.

When having an initial conversation with your software or IT teams, consider discussing how you could use other fields to match records such as:

1. Last name, first name, or some piece of both (many processes use the first several letters); and
2. Address information
3. Birth date
4. Email (Note here that students often change email frequently, so it will be important that you use fresh data if relying on email.)

Some students are taking the SAT as part of a SAT School Day administration that does not require the same level of address information to the College Board (see Description of Data Changes for more information), a sample process that does not use postal addresses could begin with the high school (AI) code and then match using last name and first name (either full or first several letters).

Note that any process you undertake will result in some duplicate records. Depending on volume and complexity, these can be resolved through a merge/purge software or process, or by direct data entry by a staff member.

Q: How do I resolve situations where a student may use a common nickname (example: Rob versus Robert)?

A: You can maintain a first-name equivalency table as part of your matching process. This can be developed by your software provider, your IT teams, and/or internally by your own staff.

Q: What is merge/purge?

A: These software solutions are common in contact management systems and can be either stand-alone or part of a packaged product. Most of these contain at least an algorithm—of varying complexity and reliability, hence the variability in price—for matching records in one file with another. Many are customizable, so adding a high school (AI) code could enhance the match rate. Some of these include a data cleansing function that also enhances the match rate.

Q: Have you notified third-party software vendors?

A: Yes. The College Board has had direct conversations and communication with the following vendors:

- AdmissionPros
- AES/PHEAA
- Agresso/Unit 4
- Blackbaud
- Campus Mgt/Talisma
- Ellucian (*including Banner, Colleague, PowerCampus, and Recruiter*)
- EMAS
- EnrollmentRX
- Fire Engine RED
- FolderWave
- Hobsons/Naviance
- Human Capital Research
- Jenzabar EX
- Jenzabar JX CX
- Lexmark/Perceptive/ImageNow
- Nelnet (TSAC)
- Parchment
- PeopleSoft
- Populi
- Royall
- Ruffalo Noel Levitz
- SAP
- Scan
- Slate
- SONIS
- SSD/Axiom
- TargetX
- Three Rivers
- Workday
- XAP

Q: Will the data layout files change for any program?

A: No, the data file layouts are not changing. The fields will instead now be blank/null. You can review the format for electronic score reports for College Board programs online here:

- **Advanced Placement:** secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap-student-data-record-layout-2017.pdf
- **SAT:** The sample data file is located at collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/data-layout-sat-subject-tests-electronic-score-report-higher-ed.pdf. (Note: The layout itself is not changing, and the updated layout reflecting the blank fields will be available late summer. You will be able to find the updated layout on sat.org/highered.)