



The Electronic Newsletter of the Association for Institutional Research (e-AIR)

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Serving Institutional Research Professionals and Those Engaged in Management Research, Policy Analysis & Planning Since October 22, 1986

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The newsletter welcomes news items related to management research, policy analysis and planning; persons changing jobs or retiring; requests for help or suggestions from readers; announcements of professional meetings and conferences; comments about recent publications; abstracts of papers which authors are willing to share; job announcements; philosophical and/or humorous thoughts; and more. This online publication is available free to anyone interested in institutional research.

If you wish to subscribe, change your subscription address, or unsubscribe, go to <http://www.airweb.org/page.asp?page=133>

If you would like to submit articles, requests or information for consideration and inclusion in the newsletter, please contact Marne Einarson, Editor, at: (mke3@cornell.edu).

Persons seeking jobs in institutional research, planning, or policy analysis should plan to check the AIR web page every couple of days for new positions. Point your browser to the following URL: <http://airweb.org> (look under "Jobs")

For further information regarding the Association for Institutional Research, contact Randy Swing, Executive Director, AIR, 1435 E. Piedmont Drive, Suite 211 · Tallahassee, FL 32308; Telephone: (850) 385-4155 or via e-mail: (rswing@airweb2.org).

2008 AIR Forum

The Association for Institutional Research proudly presents:

2008 Annual Forum: Adapting to Meet New Challenges May 24-28, 2008 in Seattle, Washington

The AIR Forum is an intensive five day conference for research and assessment professionals, offering over 600 sessions on six different tracks. Whatever your needs or interests, the 48th Annual AIR Forum will have something for everyone.

The 2008 Forum theme, Adapting to Meet New Challenges, recognizes that as the population changes, budgets change, and calls for accountability increase, the institutional researcher will be vital in providing the information needed to meet these challenges.

2008 AIR Forum Tidbits:

1. 2008 **Forum Registration** is currently open. Each Forum registration includes a 2008-2009 AIR membership; Forum registration fee; a Forum attendee welcome packet and complimentary backpack; and an invitation to join AIR for a three course meal at the Wednesday Awards Luncheon. Visit www.airweb.org for more information and registration. Register before May 2, 2008 and receive an early bird discount!
2. Interested in learning more about Excel, Access or IPEDS? In conjunction with the 2008 Annual AIR Forum in Seattle, Washington, **Pre-Forum Workshops** will be offered on May 24 and 25. These half-day and full-day sessions provide attendees with an opportunity to acquire new skills or develop their area of interest. Prices range from \$65 to \$280 per workshop. Please visit www.airweb.org/pre-forumworkshops for a list of workshops and availability.
3. Get involved with AIR! Volunteering during the AIR Forum is a great way to meet new colleagues and to network. **Volunteer opportunities** are available in these areas: Forum Registration, AIR Forum Office, Employment Clearinghouse, AIR Store and AIR Publications Bookstore. Visit the volunteer Web page, www.airweb.org/forum/volunteer for more information.
4. Facilitating is also a great way to network and become more involved in AIR. **Facilitators** fulfill key roles in making the Forum program a success. Facilitators are in each session to make sure presentations function as smoothly as possible, both for the audience and the presenter. Please visit www.airweb.org/forum/facilitate for more information.
5. **Meet AIR at the Ballpark!** Join your AIR colleagues and friends at the Safeco

Field in Seattle as the Mariners take on the 2007 National Champions, The Boston Red Sox! The fun-filled game begins Tuesday, May 27th at 7:00 p.m., and AIR Forum attendees will pay a discounted ticket price. Register now at www.airweb.org/baseball.

AIR Office
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From Your 2008 Forum Local Hosts

Going to Seattle ... for the 48th AIR Forum, May 24-28, 2008!

Jerry Finch, Seattle Pacific University, 2008 Forum Local Arrangement Committee Chair (j_finch@spu.edu)

This is the ninth installment of "What is there to do in Seattle?"

In this installment I want to recommend some longer overnight side trips for those considering coming early or adding some vacation time after the Forum.

Victoria B.C.: If you are thinking about going to Canada while you are here I highly recommend Victoria. Getting there is very easy and, once there, you will feel a million miles away. Victoria has the mildest climate of the Pacific coast, and ocean and mountain views will follow you wherever you go. You can take the Victoria Clipper from the waterfront in Seattle (Pier 69 between Pier 70 and the Edgewater Hotel) and it will drop you off at the Inner Harbour in the heart of Victoria. There are many hotels within walking distance of the Inner Harbour and you can basically walk or take a tour bus to everything you might want to see or do while you are there. Here is the clipper web site:

<http://www.clippervacations.com/destinations/victoria.html> . What to see while you are there:

Inner Harbour: The sights include the historic Legislative Buildings, home of the provincial government; the Royal BC Museum; Thunderbird Park, with an amazing display of 15 impressive totem poles; and, of course, the elegant Fairmont Empress Hotel with their traditional high tea.

Butchart Gardens: Victoria is famed for its gardens, and none more so than Butchart. Over 100 years old, more than one million people visit this botanical wonderland each year for the rare, dramatic and colourful displays. You can catch a tour bus to Butchart Gardens from the harbour in front of the Empress Hotel. Plan for most of the day, go early in the morning and eat lunch at the Gardens. <http://www.butchartgardens.com/the-gardens>

Craigdarroch Castle: A leisurely 40-45 minute walk from the downtown harbor but you can also catch a local bus; transit routes 11 and 14 will drop you off at the foot of Joan Crescent, a two minute walk to the Castle's

doorstep. This is well worth seeing.

<http://www.craigdarrochcastle.com/visitor.htm>

Shopping: Victoria has a superb shopping scene. So many artists and artisans call this place home that unusual and one-of-a-kind items are everywhere. Art, crafts and foodstuffs made by local First Nations peoples are also widely available. Scores of shops specialize in imported British wares, textiles or food. A must is Rogers Chocolates:

<http://www.rogerschocolates.com/victoria-chocolates.php> .

Where to stay? Boy there are lots of hotels but my wife and I usually stay at the Executive House Hotel for it is reasonably priced and centrally located. You can check it out here: <http://www.executivehouse.com/> I always look for deals so you can just Google Victoria hotels and see who has a deal for the dates you are going.

Cascade Loop: If you plan on getting a car and doing some site seeing around the state I highly recommend doing the Cascade Loop. The Cascade Loop is a thrilling ride through the heart of Washington State. You will see some of Washington's most beautiful countryside and interesting areas. The loop is 440 miles long, encompassing magical cityscapes and spectacular landscapes, chilly alpine lakes and rushing rivers, islands and towering peaks. The byway travels through areas as diverse as they are magnificent: the salty waters of the Puget Sound, the verdant foothills of the Cascade Mountains' western slopes, the peaks of the North Cascades National Park enclosed in glaciers, and the sun-drenched expanse of the Columbia River Valley. <http://www.cascadeloop.com/>

The average trip taken on the Loop is 2-5 days. I suggest a 5 day trip and to travel in a counter-clockwise direction. Day 1, travel to Leavenworth and stay in the Enzian Inn: <http://www.enzianinn.com/rates.asp> . Day 2 travel to Coulee Dam and stay at the Coulee House Motel: <http://www.couleehouse.com/> . It is not fancy but there is a good view of the dam from the Motel. Tour Grand Coulee dam and watch the laser light show at night: <http://www.grandcouleedam.com/aboutdam.html> . Day 3 travel to Winthrop, a small western-themed town located in the Methow Valley (<http://www.winthropwashington.com/winthrop/index.html>) and stay at the River Run Inn: <http://www.riverrun-inn.com/index.htm> . Day 4 travel the North Cascade Highway and Whidbey Island to Camp Casey and stay at the Casey Inn. Approaching the Cascade Mountains via the Methow Valley, you will cross up and over the scenic Washington Pass and Rainy Pass. Traveling up to the Washington Pass, stop at the top and take in the magnificent mountain views of Liberty Bell and Early Winters Spires. The North Cascades Scenic Highway will take you through a rich diversity of broad valleys and towering forests and through a narrow river gorge with the nickname "America's Alps." The road drops down into the thick woods of the Skagit

Valley and comes out onto the coastal flats in Burlington. From Burlington, you will travel to Whidbey Island via Deception Pass -- a must stop before traveling down the Island to Fort Casey and a night at the Fort Casey Inn owned by Seattle Pacific University: <http://www.fortcaseyinn.com/> . Day 5 travel to the end of the Island and take the Clinton/Mukilteo Ferry back to the mainland and the end of your trip.

Wine Country: My recommendation here is to do the Yakima Valley and stay at in the town of Toppenish. My wife and I do the Yakima Valley annually on Labor Day. It is a weekend trip to visit wineries on Saturday and the Wapato fruit and vegetable farms on Sunday before returning to home. Here is the web site outlining all the wineries in the Yakima Valley: <http://www.wineyakimavalley.org/> . I recommend staying in Toppenish for two reasons, first it is centrally located and secondly the town has 70 (and growing) historical murals painted on walls of buildings around the city. It is fun to see if you can find them all: <http://www.toppenish.net/visit.htm> . As for a place to stay, we usually stay in the Best Western Toppenish Inn: <http://www.bestwesternwashington.com/toppenish-hotels/>.

Alaska: Seattle is a major departure port for Alaska Cruises and you are already going to be halfway there. So if an Alaska Cruise was something you were seriously thinking about doing sometime in your life you might go ahead and do it now: <http://www.alaskacruises.com/>

Travel alert:

Passports will not be required until June 1, 2009 unless you are traveling by air. If you are traveling by land or sea port and are a U.S. or Canadian Citizen, you will still be able to cross using the two document option -- an identification document and a citizenship document. For most of us that is a driver's license and a birth certificate. Here is a site that will explain in more details: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready_set_go/land_travel/chnge_in_proced.xml

Next month will be the last installment before the Forum so I will check out the entertainment scene to see what is in town during the Forum so those interested will have time to get tickets.

News from AAUP

AAUP Faculty Compensation Survey 2007-08

John W. Curtis, AAUP (jcurtis@aaup.org)

Our 2007-08 "Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession" is now in the final layout and proofing stage. The tentative publication date for the report is April 12, although that date may shift by a couple of days. We closed out data

collection for the initial published report on March 13. Any data changes received after that point will be reflected in our "Additions and Corrections" listing in July, although the data are available almost immediately for custom peer comparison reports.

All survey contacts should have received information by e-mail on about March 5 about ordering peer comparison reports for salary and compensation. You can place orders on our survey Web site at <https://research.aaup.org/fcs/default.aspx>. Peer report orders do require that you log in and provide billing information. If you don't yet have a user name and password, or if you have not previously completed billing information, use the Registration Center first. Not all of our report ordering is fully automated, so please bear with us as we try to manage the flow of requests will still finalizing our report for publication. If you need assistance, contact us by e-mail at aaupfcs@aaup.org.

We plan to make complete data files available for analysis around April 1. For the moment, there is not a Web-based ordering system for these data files, so if you would like to order one send an e-mail to the above address. The price for a complete data file is \$375 for institutions that participated in this year's survey and \$450 for nonparticipating organizations.

Finally, we bid farewell to Lee Nguyen, who has served as Research Assistant during the 2007-08 survey season. Lee will be moving on to new professional opportunities, and we wish her well—and have no idea how we'll get along without her!

Thanks again for participating in our annual survey.

AAUP Research Office

John W. Curtis, Director of Research and Public Policy
Doug Kinsella, Research Associate
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NCES Publications

Trends in Undergraduate Borrowing II: Federal Student Loans in 1995-96, 1999-2000, and 2003-04 (NCES 2008-179).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has released the report "Trends in Undergraduate Borrowing II: Federal Student Loans in 1995-96, 1999-2000, and 2003-04 (NCES 2008-179)."

The report uses data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Studies

(NPSAS:96, NPSAS:2000 and NPSAS:04) to examine trends in Stafford loan borrowing among undergraduates. Since 1995-96, borrowing of subsidized Stafford loans increased among low-income dependent undergraduates and among independent students at all income levels. The rate of borrowing any Stafford loan (subsidized or unsubsidized) increased among all but those in the lowest income category, for both dependent and independent undergraduates alike. While the average amount of subsidized loans has leveled off over time, unsubsidized loans have continued to grow both in the amount of the average loan as well as in the percentage of borrowers. Unlike subsidized loans, interest on an unsubsidized loan accrues and is usually added to the principal of the loan while the student is enrolled in school and not yet in repayment. This study found that between 1995-96 and 2003-04, an increasing proportion of both dependent and independent student borrowers at all income levels took out unsubsidized loans either alone or in addition to their subsidized loans. This was true particularly among independent students whose higher loan limits allow more of them to take out both types of loans. The Stafford loan program permits dependent students to take out both subsidized and unsubsidized loans, but the combined amount cannot exceed the maximum amount of a single loan. In 2003-04, about three-fourths (73 percent) of all dependent student borrowers took out the annual maximum amount allowed in subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford loans combined. This was an increase from 57 percent in 1995-96.

To view, download and print the report as a pdf file, please visit:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008179>

Mini-Digest of Education Statistics 2007

This publication is a pocket-sized compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of American education from kindergarten through graduate school. The statistical highlights are excerpts from the Digest of Education of Statistics, 2007.

To view, download and print the report as a pdf file, please visit:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008023.pdf>

Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2006, and Salaries of Full-Time Instructional Faculty, 2006-07

This report presents information from the Winter 2006-07 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) web-based data collection. Tabulations represent data requested from all postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal student financial aid programs. The tables in this

publication include data on the number of staff employed in Title IV postsecondary institutions in fall 2006 by primary occupational activity, length of contract/teaching period, employment status, salary class interval, faculty and tenure status, academic rank, race/ethnicity, and gender. Also included are tables on the number of full-time instructional faculty employed in Title IV postsecondary institutions in 2006-07 by length of contract/teaching period, academic rank, gender, and average salaries.

To view, download and print the report as a pdf file, please visit:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008172.pdf>

Ten Years After College: Comparing the Employment Experiences of 1992-93 Bachelor's Degree Recipients with Academic and Career-Oriented Majors

Using longitudinal data from the 1992-93 Baccalaureate and Beyond Study (B&B:93/03) representing about 1.2 million bachelor's degree recipients that year, this report examines college graduates' work experiences in 1994, 1997, and 2003, describing their labor force status, employment stability and intensity, occupations and industries, salaries and benefits, and perceptions about their jobs. It compares the experiences of graduates with academic and career-oriented undergraduate majors. About half of all the graduates (51 percent) were employed and not enrolled at all three follow-ups, but the other half moved into and out of the workforce, often to pursue further education. By 2003, some 46 percent of graduates had ever been unemployed (not working, but looking for work) since they had graduated, but unemployment became less prevalent the longer graduates had been out of college. By 2003, most graduates were settled in a job they considered a career and used their education, and the average salary for a graduate employed full time at one job, adjusted for inflation, had roughly doubled since 1994. A majority were satisfied with their pay, fringe benefits, job security, and opportunity for promotion. Compared with graduates with academic undergraduate majors, those with career-oriented majors appeared to establish themselves in the labor force earlier and relatively fewer obtained additional education.

To view, download and print the report as a pdf file, please visit:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008155.pdf>

ASHE Call for Proposals

ASHE 2008 Conference Call for Proposals

The 2008 Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference Call for Proposals is now available at www.ashe.ws/2008conference.html. Click on [Proposal Submission Portal](#) to obtain a tutorial for submitting your proposal online, information about the different divisions and formats, and changes to the preconference forums.

This year's conference theme is "Research and Practice: Embracing Connections." ASHE is a scholarly society with about 1,900 members dedicated to higher education as a field of study. It is committed to diversity in its programs and membership, and has enjoyed extraordinary success in involving graduate students in Association activities. Please visit the association's website to learn more: www.ashe.ws

The 2008 conference is being held in Jacksonville, Florida at the Hyatt Regency Riverside from November 5-8, 2008. Hotel reservations are now open at www.ashe.ws/2008conference.html. If you have any questions, please contact ashemsu@msu.edu.

Patricia L. Farrell, Ph.D.
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Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
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ACPA Conference

2008 ACPA Student Affairs Assessment Conference

The Call for programs and registration is open for the 2008 American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Student Affairs Assessment Conference. Visit <http://www.myacpa.org/pd/assessment/> for more details.

"Accountability + Assessment = A Formula for Success in Student Affairs," this year's theme, along with the ASK Standards, lay the foundation for the four day conference taking place June 18-21 in Indianapolis. After attending the conference participants will be able to:

- Articulate the 13 ASK standards.
- Design an assessment plan from start to finish.
- Implement an assessment plan from start to finish.
- Develop new assessment skills that you will use when conducting student affairs assessment projects on their home campus.

- Increase your confidence in assessment.
- Describe other student affairs assessment projects conducted in a variety of institutional types and functional areas that will help you in your own assessment work.
- Develop relationships with student affairs professionals from a variety of institution types.
- Address assessment issues specific to your institution.

The speakers we have confirmed thus far are outstanding national assessment experts:

- Peggy Maki
- George Kuh
- Terrell Strayhorn
- Jan Arminio
- Karen Solomon

In addition to these fantastic speakers, there will be 6 pre-conference workshops and a variety of concurrent programs covering a host of assessment topics all designed to help participants reach the conference outcomes.

Visit <http://www.myacpa.org/pd/assessment/> for more details regarding the Call for Programs and registration.

Gavin Henning
Chair, ACPA Commission for Assessment and Evaluation
Assessment Conference Planning Chair
gavin.henning@dartmouth.edu

RFP for Workload Study

RFP for a Workload Study at the Connecticut State University

The CSU-AAUP (Connecticut State University-American Association of University Professors) is soliciting proposals for a research project to be conducted from September 2008 until September 2009 with a completion date of December 15, 2009. The research problem: What are the obstacles to providing quality education at the Connecticut State University? The study will include quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to address issues including, but not limited to, the following:

- The changing nature of faculty workload affecting both full-time and part-time faculty
- Issues involving differential credit load across various schools and departments

- The changing nature of workload for department chairs, counselors, librarians and coaches
- The impact of a 12/12 workload on faculty recruitment and retention
- The impact on full-time faculty of the increasing use of part-time faculty
- The impact on full-time faculty of increased student enrollment
- The perspective(s) of administrators on workload issues

The deadline for application is May 1, 2008.

For a complete description of the RFP or questions regarding the application process contact Professor Virginia Metaxas via email at metaxasv1@southernct.edu or phone at (203) 392-5607.

Professor Virginia Metaxas
CSU-AAUP Interim Chair Ad Hoc Workload Committee
Department of History
Southern Connecticut State University
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e-AIR Limerick Contest

Results of the 2008 e-AIR Limerick Contest

Marne Einarson (mke3@cornell.edu)

We received a record number of limericks -- 26 creative and entertaining entries in all! This year, we offered a special category of limericks about the Forum. The winner of the Forum category is Richard Heck, former Director of Alumni and Parent Relations at Binghamton University and now semi-retired (rheck@stny.rr.com) for this limerick:

Escape to Gate's Land

In May, VPs all want facts to do battle

Making us all want to fly off to Seattle

Once there, in a pinch

We'll do it like Finch

Just meet and greet, take notes and share -- then Skidaddle!

In the "open" category of limericks, a few themes were apparent -- contributors had assessment, accreditation and workload on their minds! Ultimately, our panel of judges decided upon the following slate of medal winners:

The **Gold Medal** goes to Sylvia Reed, Director of Institutional Research at Marian College of Fond du Lac (SReed@mariancollege.edu) for this limerick:

Power

If it's true information is power

Then IR is Lord of the Tower

But when fielding disasters

For multiple masters

There's no time for power to flower.

Our **Silver Medal** goes to Kathryn Talley, Director of Institutional Research at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (ktalley@thechicagoschool.edu) for this limerick:

New Race/Ethnicity Reporting Categories

We've been asked to write items that catch

Both race and ethnicity, natch.

So we'll count all the bipeds

And send it to IPEDS

Hoping columns and rows will still match.

There are two **Bronze Medal** winners:

Amanda Udis-Kessler, Director of Institutional Research and Planning at The Colorado College (audiskessler@ColoradoCollege.edu) for:

So how are we s'posed to assess

When mostly we just have to guess

And measures direct

Are all somewhat suspect?

You see, it's a heck of a mess!

And John Williams, Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education Studies at Cheyney University of Pennsylvania (JWilliams@cheyney.edu) for:

Thirty years I've been stuck at this desk

Stacks of papers, reports ... it's a mess!

If I don't soon retire

*I might just get fired.
Either way I'll have time just to rest.*

And **Honorable Mentions** go to:

Jennifer Rachford, Director of Institutional Research at Pomona College (jlr04747@pomona.edu) for:

The Accreditation Blues
*The accreditors are here and we're stressin'.
"You must do more outcomes assessin'!!"
Faculty say
They will not play
'Cause their goals aren't conducive to testin'.*

John Williams, again, of Cheyney University of Pennsylvania for:

*The computer they say is a tool.
To not use it I'd just be a fool.
But the pencil and pad
That worked for my Dad
Still get the job done .. and that's cool!*

And two more from Sylvia Reed of Marian College:

The Power of One
*In an IR department of one
It's a challenge to get it all done.
With all day spent in meetings
And evenings on readings
Crunching data is done on the run.*

Drama
*In the IR Statistics-o-rama
There's at least one statistic with drama.
Little more than surmise
It hits 'tween the eyes.*

It's been dubbed "Inter-ocular Trauma."

Congratulations to our winners and many thanks to all who submitted limericks. They were a lot of fun to read! And finally, thanks to our panel of judges – Kathy Livingston, Susan Mullen and Alan Sturtz.

Changing Scene

A Way to Keep Up With News About Our Colleagues

This portion of the newsletter is devoted to keeping you informed about changes such as readers who relocate to new positions and/or institutions, professional recognition awards and honors, retirements, deaths, newly hired colleagues, promotions, etc. If you become aware of a change on your campus or elsewhere which should be mentioned in "The Changing Scene," please send a note with the key facts to mke3@cornell.edu. Keep it brief, but include the information you think others would like to know.

After nearly fifteen years at Bates College as Director of Institutional Planning and Analysis, **Jim Ferguson** is moving west to become the next Director of Institutional Research and Assessment at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. You can contact Jim at jfergers@carleton.edu.

Jean Chulak, former AIR Administrative Director, passed away on February 28, 2008. AIR will plant a tree in honor of Jean's service to the association in a neighborhood park close to her home in Tallahassee. For more information please visit <http://airweb.org/page.asp?page=1429>.

Editors' Book of the Month

Marne Einarson, Cornell University mke3@cornell.edu

This month, I review not a book, but a journal article -- and one published in 2002, at that! The article, titled "Assessment vs. research: Why we should care about the difference," was written by M. Lee Upcraft and John H. Schuh, and published in *About Campus*, a bimonthly publication of the American College Personnel Association.

There are a number of more recent assessment-related publications around. So why did this particular article catch my eye? My institution, like many others, is

at the early stages of planning and conducting student assessment. As a result, my IR colleagues and I have begun consulting with student affairs administrators and staff about how they might assess the contributions of their programs toward student development. These conversations usually begin by discussing program goals and identifying the experiences or outcomes that students are intended to realize as a result of their participation in the program. To be sure, translating broad program goals into a comprehensive and mutually-agreed upon slate of specific student outcomes can be a complex part of the assessment process. But the subsequent steps in designing an assessment study -- identifying appropriate participants, data collection methods, and analytical strategies -- pose much greater challenges. We typically don't have the luxury of designing conventionally rigorous research -- using longitudinal or experimental designs, for example -- and rely more on indirect than direct measures of student outcomes. Thus our assessment studies do not allow us to make definitive causal statements such as "Program X has Y effect on students." Faced with this sobering limitation, some folks have questioned, reasonably enough, just what the value of assessment is then -- or what it can tell us. And that's where the Upcraft and Schuh article comes in...

Upcraft and Schuh argue for clearly distinguishing the purposes of research and assessment. In a nutshell, research is grounded in theory, is often aimed at testing relationships and demonstrating causality, and is intended to produce findings that will extend current theoretical understanding and be applicable to a broad range of settings. Assessment, on the other hand, is guided by local issues and experiences, is more often focused on describing relationships and identifying correlations, and is intended to inform local policy and practice deliberations.

Further, as we all know and as Upcraft and Schuh so cogently describe, the institutional context constrains the design of assessment studies. Such designs are affected by limited human and financial resources and by the often short time frames dictated by decision-makers' needs for information. Even the best conceived assessment design may not unfold as planned -- students may fail to show up for focus groups, or a survey website may crash -- but assessment investigators generally have less latitude to begin again or revise a step. And assessment studies are affected by, and accountable to, the political context. Changes in organizational leadership or priorities may necessitate modifying the original assessment design or discontinuing the study altogether.

Given these realities, Upcraft and Schuh contend that it is inappropriate to apply traditional social science research criteria to evaluate assessment designs. Drawing upon Rossi and Freeman (1993), they suggest it is unreasonable to expect "perfect" assessment designs, and defend the "good enough" rule of assessment. A "good enough" assessment design may not live up to the highest standards of social science research but will employ the best methodology

possible, given the importance of the program and the available resources, and is likely to produce useful and credible results. Upcraft and Schuh caution that it is critical that assessment investigators clearly identify all limitations of the study so that these can be taken into account when interpreting assessment results.

This article has provided a useful foundation for addressing questions about the merit of assessment studies that have been raised in our local conversations. It makes a compelling case for investing institutional resources into assessment efforts despite their often unavoidable design constraints. As is pointed out by these authors and elsewhere in the assessment literature, policy and practice decisions will be made whether assessment results are available or not. We share Upcraft and Schuh's contention that "good enough" assessments constitute a much better basis for such decision making than conjecture or personal proclivities. Even if they cannot provide causal evidence of program impacts, assessment studies allow us to systematically examine relationships among students' experiences and achievements, and offer a more nuanced and contextualized basis for considering policy and practice decisions.

Rossi, P. H., & Freeman, H. E. (1993). *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Upcraft, M. Lee, & Schuh, John H. (2002). Assessment vs. research: Why we should care about the difference. *About Campus* 7(1), pp. 16-20.

Many thanks to Susan Murphy, our Vice President of Student and Academic Services, who sent the Upcraft and Schuh article my way. And to our readers: Do you have other assessment-related publications to recommend? Tell us which ones you've found to be particularly helpful.

Technical Tips from the Field

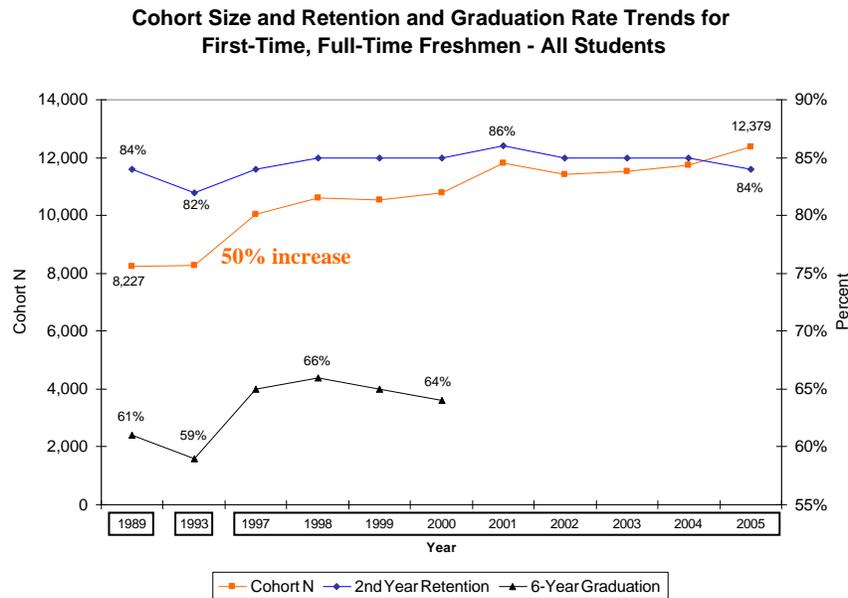
Excel Graphing: Adding a Second Axis

Gayle Fink, University System of Maryland (gfink@usmd.edu)

This corner of the newsletter is reserved for readers to share practical tips, techniques and shortcuts that can make a difference in our work. Please share your technical prowess with us and send your tips to Gayle Fink (mailto:gfink@usmd.edu). Since this is a small corner, KISS (Keep It Short and Smart) will work the best.

This past fall, I was asked to show graphically trends in cohort size, second year retention rates and six-year graduation rates for the

University System of Maryland. I first came across the approach of adding an additional axis to graphs while reviewing applications for the Maryland Performance Excellence Awards program and found it to be an effective way of communicating a lot of information when space was limited. While I am not a big fan of mixing axis scales, I found that was a quick way of getting the points across in a single slide.



Note: Retained or graduated from any USM

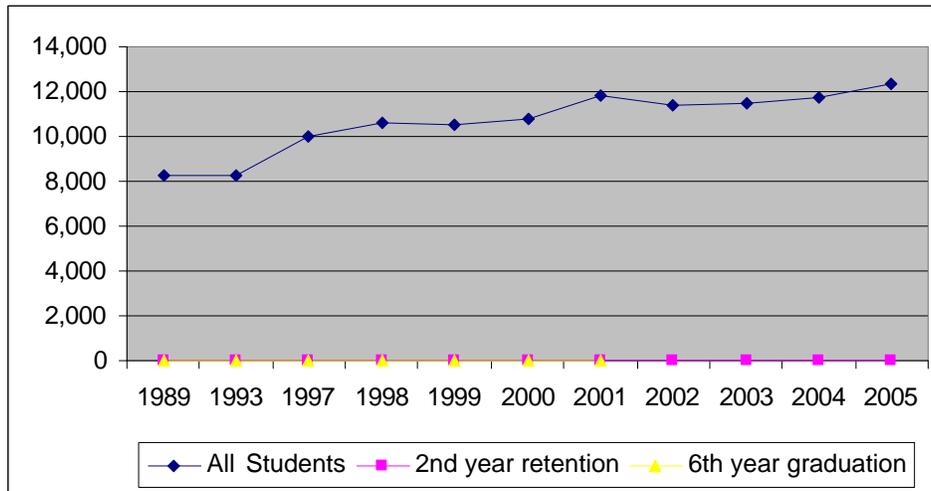
To build this table, I started with my data (see Data below).

Data:

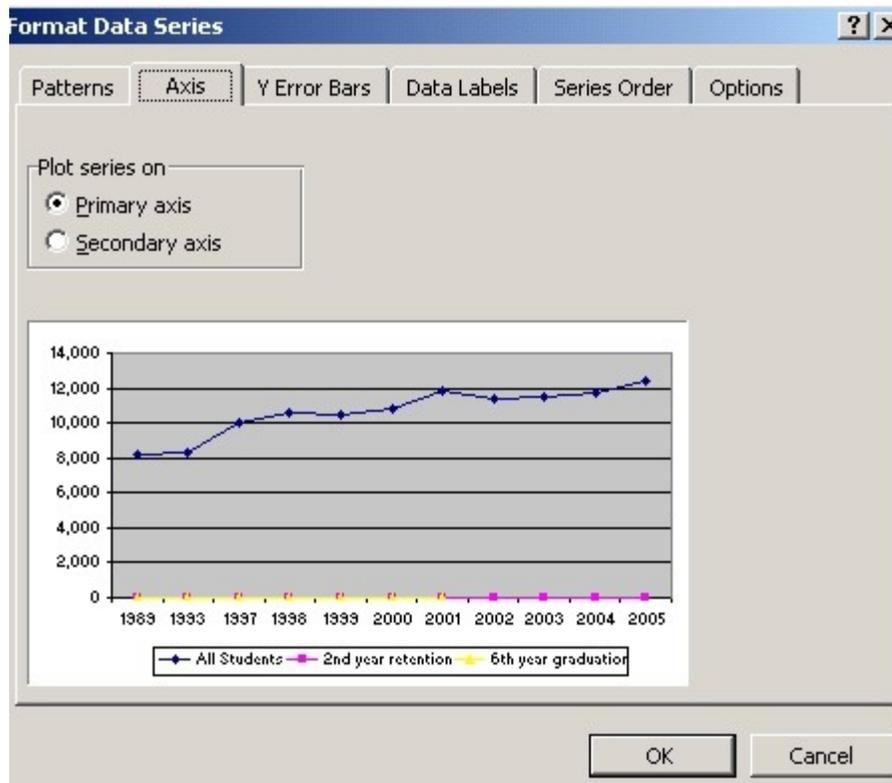
2												
3		1989	1993	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4	All Students	8,227	8,263	10,040	10,589	10,521	10,766	11,796	11,421	11,518	11,736	12,379
7												
8	2nd year retention											
10	All Students	84%	82%	84%	85%	85%	85%	86%	85%	85%	85%	84%
13												
14	6th year graduation											
15		1989	1993	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000				
16	All Students	61%	59%	62%	65%	66%	65%	64%				
18												

I started my Excel chart by selecting Insert/Chart and then selecting Line from the Standard Types options (Chart wizard step 1). Then I highlighted the data that I wanted (years, N, 2nd year retention rates and 6-year graduation rates) and clicked finish (see Chart 1).

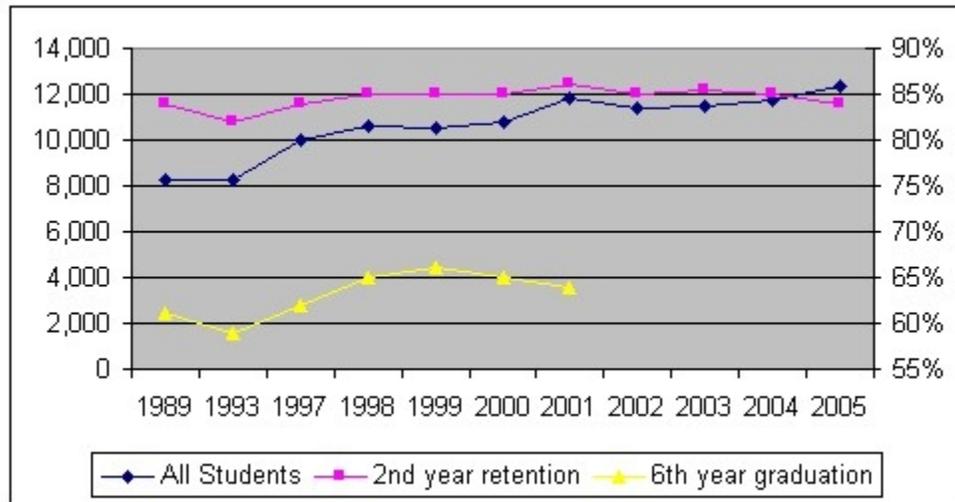
Chart 1



At this point there is no secondary axis for the retention and graduation rates. To get the secondary axis, I selected the data series I wanted on the secondary axis and right moused to select "format data series" and then clicked the axis tab. Next, I clicked on the secondary axis option. The result is below.



Result:



Play with the plot area, axis scales, and data labels to get the look you want. Hope this is helpful!

Position Listing Summary

Copy and paste this url into your browser to access the current job listings on the AIR website: <http://www.airweb.org/?page=574>.

Parting Thoughts

Reader contributions of possible future 'Parting Thoughts' are welcome. Send them to [Marne Einarson](#)

Spring has returned. The Earth is like a child that knows poems.

~ Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), German poet

April prepares her green traffic light and the world thinks Go.

~ Christopher Morley (1890-1957), American essayist and poet

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.

~ Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), American poet

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.

~ Margaret Atwood (1939-), Canadian novelist and poet

Spring is nature's way of saying, "Let's party!"

~ Robin Williams (1951-), American actor and comedian