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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).

AIR 2008 Forum Updates

The 2008 Forum was a record breaking conference with premier educational opportunities, national media coverage, and 1,738 higher education decision makers in attendance. If you presented at the Forum and have not already submitted your paper or presentation in PDF format to Missy Wiggins at mwiggins@airweb2.org, please consider doing so. This will make your presentation available to Forum attendees who may have missed your session or AIR members who were not able to attend the Forum this year.

In addition, consider taking advantage of these opportunities:

- Visit <http://airweb.org/eaton.html> to download Dr. Judith Eaton's Plenary Session titled "Accreditation, Adaptability and the Future."
- You do not want to miss the national media coverage that the 48th AIR Forum and many presenters received. Check out <http://airweb.org/forumnews.html> to see what others are saying about the Forum.
- If you did not attend the Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, it is not too late to complete an evaluation of the Forum. Please take a few minutes to share your input with us by visiting <http://www.gravic.com/cgi-bin/rws4.pl?FORM=2008AIRForumOverallEvaluation> to complete the online evaluation.

Plans are already well underway for the 2009 Forum in Atlanta, Georgia, May 30 - June 3. The 49th Annual Forum will focus on "World Class IR." Visit <http://airweb.org/annualforums2009.html> for updates.

Thanks to all who contributed to the 48th Annual Forum. We look forward to seeing you next year in Atlanta!

Sincerely,

The AIR Staff
air@airweb2.org

ACS OMB Update

Comment Request for Proposed Addition to American Community Survey

The clearance package for the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Part of the clearance package is the addition of a Field of Degree (FOD) item for a person's

bachelor's degree.

The notice of the clearance package was posted in the Federal Register on May 28 at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-11858.pdf>, beginning on the bottom of page 30602.

If approved, the FOD question would be included in the 2009 ACS, and the data would probably be available to the public in the Fall of 2010.

If you wish to write OMB in support of the addition of the Field of Degree (FOD) item to the ACS, you have until June 27 to provide such comments to Brian Harris-Kojetin, OMB Desk Officer either by fax (202-395-7245) or e-mail (bharrisk@omb.eop.gov).

The ACS is sent to a small percentage of the U.S. population on a rotating basis. It is used to fill in the gaps between each 10-year census. Information about the ACS is available on <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

Higher Education Data Policy Committee (HEDPC)
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NCES Publications

The Condition of Education 2008

The National Center for Education Statistics within the Institute of Education Sciences has released "The Condition of Education 2008," a congressionally mandated report that provides an annual portrait of education in the United States. The 43 indicators included in this year's report cover all aspects of education, from early childhood through postsecondary education and from student achievement to school environment and resources. Among the report's findings:

- This year, public school enrollment is expected to approach about 50 million students. Total public school enrollment is projected to set new records each year from 2008 to 2017, at which time it is expected to reach 54.1 million.
- Minority students make up 43 percent of the public school enrollment overall and 48 percent in the South and 55 percent in the West.
- In 2005–06, about a third of Black students and a third of Hispanic students attended high-poverty schools compared with 4 percent of White students.
- Average reading scores of 4th- and 8th-graders were higher in 2007 than in 1992.

- Average mathematics scores increased 27 points for 4th-graders and 19 points for 8th-graders between 1990 and 2007.
- Among public high school students in the class of 2005, about three-fourths graduated on time.
- Since 1970, women's undergraduate enrollment has increased over three times as fast as men's. Currently, women make up 57 percent of undergraduate enrollment.
- In 2006, young adults with a bachelor's degree earned about \$11,000 more than those with an associate's degree, about \$16,000 more than those who had completed high school, and more than twice as much than those who did not earn a high school diploma.

The full text of "The Condition of Education 2008," along with related data tables and indicators from previous years, can be viewed at:

<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>.

Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2006; Graduation Rates, 2000 and 2003 Cohorts; and Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2006

This First Look presents findings from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) spring 2007 data collection, which included four components: Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2006; Graduation Rates, 2000 & 2003 Cohorts; and Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2006. These data were collected through the IPEDS web-based data collection system. Findings include: In fall 2006, Title IV institutions in the United States enrolled a total of 18 million individual graduate and undergraduate students; 62 percent were enrolled in 4-year institutions, 37 percent in 2-year institutions, and 2 percent in less-than-2-year institutions. Graduation rates of bachelor's-seeking students at 4-year institutions were higher at private not-for-profit institutions than at public or private for-profit institutions (table 6). For example, the 4-year graduation rate of all bachelor's-seeking students was 50 percent at private not-for-profit institutions, 29 percent at public institutions, and 26 percent at private, for-profit institutions. During 2005-06 academic year, 75 percent of the 2.7 million full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates attending Title IV institutions located in the United States received financial aid.

The full text of "The Condition of Education 2008," along with related data tables and indicators from previous years, can be viewed at:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008173.pdf>.

CIRP Institute Registration

CIRP Summer Institute and Diversity Research Institute early registration deadline-June 30

The early registration deadline for the thirteenth annual Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Summer Institute and the new Diversity Research Institute is June 30. The CIRP Summer Institute will give you a comprehensive approach to analyzing college student data and demonstrate how it applies to your campus. The Diversity Research Institute will provide you with a framework to assess institutional climate for diversity, campus diversity practices, and student outcomes. You are invited to attend both Institutes. To register today, please visit our website at <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/SummerInstitute.php> and <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/DiversityInstitute.php>.

Any questions, please call (310) 825-1925 or e-mail us at HERI@ucla.edu.

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.

Dr. James A. Thomas has accepted a position as the first Vice-President of Development for Columbia Academy in Columbia, Tenn. Columbia Academy is a Christian school with over 700 students offering grades preK-12 in Middle Tennessee. Dr. Thomas has served since 2001 as the Director of Institutional Research at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. During his tenure he has served as Vice-President/Program Chair and President of the Tennessee Association of Institutional Research (TENNAIR) and has presented at the AIR forum and at the TENNAIR conference. James's new email address is jamesthomas@colacademy.com.

Editors' Book of the Month

Marne Einarson, Cornell University (mke3@cornell.edu)

This month's book is *Outcomes-Based Academic and Co-Curricular Program Review: A Compilation of Institutional Good Practices*, written by Marilee J. Bresciani, and published by Stylus Publishing, Sterling VA in 2006. ISBN: 1-57922-141-6.

Okay, okay – so here's yet another book about student assessment! Can you tell what's on my mind? Let me start by saying that I really liked this book and plan to recommend it to senior administrators at my institution who are most engaged in thinking about assessing student learning.

Bresciani conceives of student assessment as an endeavor that should be linked with an institution's program review processes. Throughout the book, she consistently uses the term "outcomes-based assessment program review processes," which I find to be quite a mouthful. Her rationale for linking assessment and program review makes good sense; this facilitates collecting and using data for multiple purposes – for internal improvement and external accountability -- thus allowing institutions to get more mileage out of their assessment efforts. But for convenience sake in this review, I will refer to this endeavor simply as "assessment."

Bresciani's compilation of good practices in assessment is based on seminal publications from the literature, and her own study of colleges and universities known and respected for their assessment efforts. A panel of eminent assessment scholars identified institutions that exemplify good practice criteria from the literature; these institutions were asked to complete a survey of their assessment practices and provide an illustrative case study. Study results are interspersed throughout the book.

So what's so great about this book? Here are the aspects that I found most compelling:

Bresciani emphasizes that the true value from assessment stems from the self-reflection it (ideally) promotes within an institution – discussions in which people really think about what their program or service is about, how well it is working in terms of contributing to intended student outcomes, and what needs to be improved. It is this systematic critical inquiry and reflection that matters – not the doing of assessment for assessment's sake. This suggests that an important measure of the effectiveness of an assessment approach is the extent to which it encourages such reflection – rather than the number of outcomes

identified or amount of data collected.

Bresciani stresses the need for institutions to pick and choose assessment practices and policies with care; they must fit institutional culture, values, and readiness to engage in assessment. She offers many ideas of how institutions might engage in a meaningful and organic assessment process but strenuously avoids being prescriptive. Excerpts from case studies and sample documents from a diverse range of "good practice institutions" are interwoven throughout to provide rich illustrations of assessment principles in action. The result is a book that is much less of a "how to" for assessment than a demonstration of what assessment looks like in a variety of institutional settings.

For me, the most helpful portion of the book is the chapter on "Key Questions to Consider When Implementing [Assessment]." Here, Bresciani provides a set of basic steps that institutions should consider when implementing their own assessment process; each is accompanied by related questions for institutions to consider and debate. For example, questions posed with the step "articulate expectations for assessment" include: Why are we engaging in assessment? What is the value for me or my program? How do I learn how to do this? What resources are available? What is the timeline? What if I don't do it? These questions may facilitate implementation in at least two ways. One is that they certainly make it clear that there is not one "correct" way for assessment to happen. So while it may almost always make good sense to establish a committee to begin planning assessment, the appropriate size, membership, and charge of that committee is likely to vary widely across different institutions. More importantly, the process of debating these questions (and additional questions that will subsequently emerge in these discussions) should help faculty and staff effectively customize generic recommendations to fit the needs and characteristics of their particular institutional context.

Bresciani also offers some useful nuggets of advice. She points out that mounting, sustaining and evaluating an assessment approach is not a linear process. She states, "Because the process is not at all linear, you may find your institution moving forward in some categories and backward in others. This is a dynamic process that requires flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, and a constant commitment to genuine reflection that resonates from program faculty and staff." (p. 64). This "messiness" is certainly true of my experiences with assessment; it's akin to the clumsiness and occasional backsliding associated with trying to learn any new habit. Acknowledging that this is an expected part of the process can help allay concerns about how well assessment efforts are progressing.

In a related vein, Bresciani suggests that it is very important for institutions embarking on assessment efforts to be flexible – to be prepared to adjust; to find a balance between common expectations and customizing elements of the

process to fit the needs of individual departments and programs; to think of the big picture but actually start with very small steps (e.g., focusing on one outcome in an assessment cycle). As she says, "If you take one piece of information from this book, let it be "to remain flexible in the implementation process." (p. 117).

Sounds like very good advice to me ...

Technical Tips from the Field

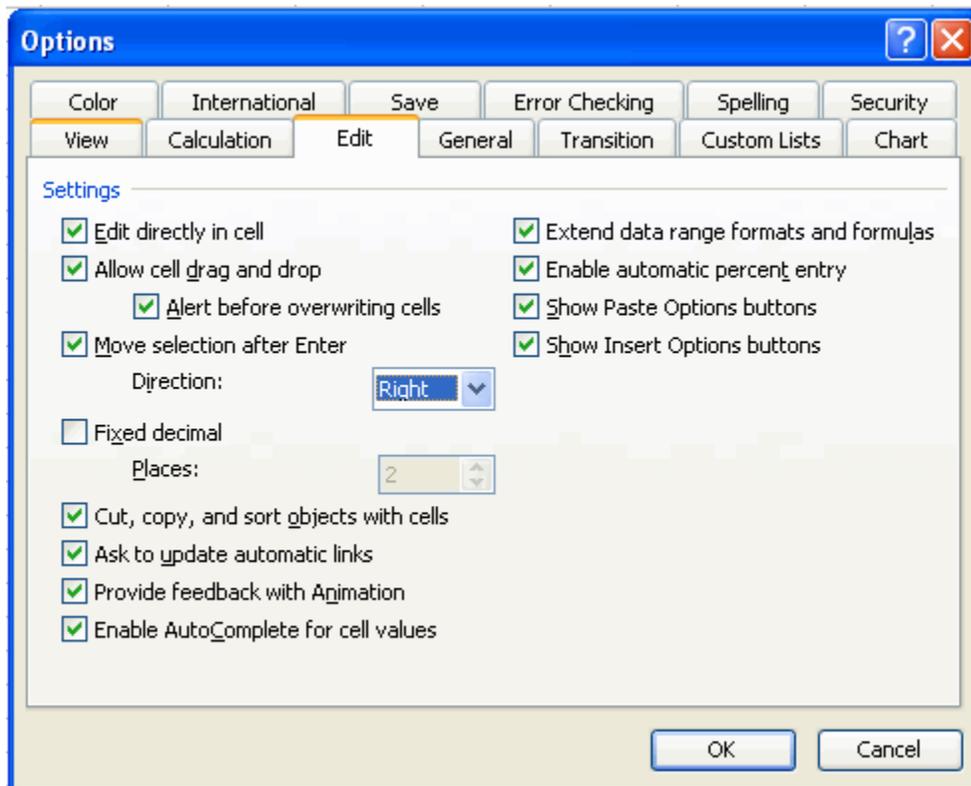
Excel – Changing Data Entry Cell Direction

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.

Ever have one of those tables where the data flow left to right across columns instead of going down a column? Every time you would hit the enter key, you move to the cell below when you really wanted to move to the right? There is a simple fix that will allow you to adjust the cell direction after hitting the enter key.

Select Tools/Options and then the Edit tab. From the "Move selection after Enter Direction" drop down list, select the desired direction.



Adjusting the move direction will save you time and frustration!

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](#)

The summer night is like a perfection of thought.

~ Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), American poet

Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under the trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.

~ John Lubbock (1834-1913), English biologist and politician

Be intent upon the perfection of the present day.

~ William Law (1686-1761), English divine

I wonder what it would be like to live in a world where it was always June.

~ L. M. Montgomery (1874-1942), Canadian author