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

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

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Next Issue Copy Deadline:
08/25/2008

Next Issue Target Publication Date:
08/28/2008

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).

Race/Ethnicity Web Resources

Coming Soon -- Race/Ethnicity Web Resources

By the end of next week, both NCES and AIR will launch Race/Ethnicity (R/E) web resources containing links to presentations, definitions, other relevant websites (such as SHEEO), etc. Both will have an FAQ section and the AIR web page will host a R/E BLOG.

Notices will be sent to IPEDS keyholders and the AIR membership when each web page is launched. Stay tuned!

Elise Miller, NCES
Jan Plotczyk, NCES
Peggye Cohen, AIR

Geographic Analysis Webinar

Webinar: Employing Geographic Information for Analysis and Presentation in Institutional Research

Increasingly, IR data contains geospatial information that enables researchers to ask where in addition to what, when, and why. Physical location can be one of the most important dimensions in visualizing certain patterns, correlations, and trends – especially in the areas of student recruiting/admissions, alumni donations, and institutional performance. This case study, using an IR dataset, will give you a "real world" understanding of how to discover geographic trends in your data. You will see how easy it is to apply one-click geo-coding/mapping to your data analysis with Tableau's 4.0 release.

For more information about this upcoming one-hour webinar being offered by Tableau Software on Thursday, August 12th at 2 pm EDT, please visit: http:// www.airweb.org/?page=1439 .

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NCES Publications

Trends Among High School Seniors, 1972-2004

The National Center for Education Statistics within the Institute of Education Sciences has released the report "Trends Among High School Seniors, 1972-2004 (NCES 2008-320)."

Using questionnaire and transcript data collected in 1972, 1980, 1982, 1992, and

2004, this report presents information on five cohorts of high school seniors. The analysis addresses overall trends, as well as trends within various subgroups defined by sex, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES). Key findings of the report include the following:

* The proportion of Black seniors who were in the highest SES quartile doubled from 1972 to 1992 (from 5 percent to 10 percent), and increased overall from 5 percent in 1972 to 14 percent in 2004.

* The percentage of seniors enrolling in calculus during their senior year grew from 6 percent to 13 percent between 1982 and 2004. The percentage of seniors taking no mathematics courses during their senior year declined from 57 percent to 34 percent over this time period.

* Seniors increased their senior-year enrollment in advanced science courses (chemistry II, physics II, and advanced biology) from 12 percent in 1982 to 25 percent in 2004.

* In each class of seniors, most of those who planned further schooling intended to attend four-year postsecondary schools, with the proportion of students planning to attend four-year schools rising from 34 percent in 1972 to 61 percent in 2004.

* In all years, higher percentages of Asian high school seniors, and lower percentages of Hispanic seniors (except in 1992), compared to other racial/ethnic groups, planned attendance at four-year institutions.

* No difference was observed between 1972 and 2004 between the percentage of seniors expecting a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. Instead, growth between these two time points was greatest in expectations for a graduate or professional degree: 13 percent of seniors expected to attain this level of education as their highest in 1972, compared to 38 percent of seniors in 2004.

* In 1972, males expected to earn a graduate degree as their highest educational level in greater proportions than did females (16 percent versus 9 percent); however, in 2004, females expected to earn a graduate degree more often than males (45 percent versus 32 percent).

* Seniors increasingly expected to work in professional occupations (growing from 45 percent of seniors in 1972 to 63 percent of seniors in 2004 expecting to work in a professional field).

To view, download and print the report as a PDF file, please visit:
http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008320

Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2008

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics has released America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2008.   The annual report profiles the status of the nation's children and youth, presenting up-to-date federal statistics in one convenient reference. The National Center for Education Statistics in the Institute of Education Sciences is one of the 22 federal agencies that participate in the Forum and contribute to the report. The report documents that mathematics and reading scores of fourth and eighth graders have increased, but shows as well that the adolescent birth rate and the proportion of infants born at low birthweight have also risen. The report also includes indicators on child poverty, health care, housing, and at-risk behavior.

You can view, download, and print the report at http://www.childstats.gov/

Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 2005-06 (NCES 2008-339)

This annual report provides basic information from the Common Core of Data about the nation's largest public school districts in the 2005-06 school year. The data include such characteristics as the numbers of students and teachers, number of high school completers and the averaged freshman graduation rate, and revenues and expenditures. Findings include: In 2005-06, these 100 largest districts enrolled 23 percent of all public school students and employed 22 percent of all public school teachers. The districts produced 20 percent of all high school completers (both diploma and other completion credential recipients) in 2004-05. Across the districts, the averaged freshman graduation rate was 69.5 percent. Three states -- California, Florida, and Texas -- accounted for almost half of the 100 largest public school districts. Current per-pupil expenditures in fiscal year 2003 ranged from a low of $5,104 in the Puerto Rico School District to a high of $18,878 in the District of Columbia Public School District.

To view, download and print the report as a PDF file, please visit: http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008339

African Higher Education Review

Inaugural Issue of African Higher Education Review Now Available

AIR is pleased to introduce the inaugural issue of *African Higher Education Review*. This online journal of studies of African higher education is a joint

venture of AIR and the Higher Education Research and Policy Network (HERPNET). The journal is intended to provide a world-wide audience for research on developments and policy in African higher education.

More information about the journal and its inaugural issue are available here: http://www.airweb.org/page.asp?page=1473

We wish to thank Terry Russell, Managing Editor for this journal, who was instrumental in shepherding this project through.

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Data on Baccalaureate-Origins of PhDs

SED Data Available on Baccalaureate-Origins of PhDs

Which institutions produce the most bachelor's degree recipients who went on to earn a PhD in the United States? This question can be answered for both U.S. institutions and for foreign institutions with data just released from the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), an interagency survey of all research doctorates sponsored by six Federal agencies.

The response rates to the SED are consistently high; 93% of recent doctoral recipients provided their baccalaureate origins. Interagency tables released in June by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the lead Federal agency for the SED, provide data on baccalaureate-origins of research doctorates in the United States over the decade 1997 to 2006. The 8 tables provide data for states and institutions by field of study, by sex/racial/ethnic group/citizenship of the doctorate recipient, by Carnegie Classification (U.S.) and by country of baccalaureate institutions (non-U.S.).

The full Excel tables on the baccalaureate-origins of U.S. doctorate recipients for all institutions are available upon request from the National Science Foundation/Division of Science Resources Statistics (SRS). SRS is conducting a major outreach initiative to survey users about future presentation of SED data and they are soliciting feedback. Free tables can be requested on the web at the address, below.

On the Web: http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/srvydoctorates/2006/sed06data.htm

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.

Nelle Moffett is moving from the Dean of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness at Sacramento City College to the position of Director of Research at California State University Channel Islands, effective August 1, 2008. Her phone number will be 916-307-9790. Congratulations on your new position!

Dr. Kevin Snider has accepted a position as the new Chancellor of Penn State New Kensington in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, effective July 1, 2008. During his 13-year tenure at Indiana State University he has served in a number of leadership positions in research and planning, most recently as Chief of Staff and Executive Assistant to the President for Strategic Planning, Institutional Research and Effectiveness. He has contributed to the field of institutional research as co-founder of the Indiana Institutional Research Public Data Advisory Group, as a regular presenter at national forums around the country, and as a contributor to New Directions for Institutional Research, Journal of Social Issues, and Social Science Quarterly. Congratulations, Kevin!

Dr. H.D. Stearman has been named Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions in Provo, Utah. He formerly served as Associate Director of Institutional Planning and eEfectiveness at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. H.D.'s new email address is hdstearman@rmuohp.edu.

Editors' Book of the Month

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

This month's book is *Inside the Undergraduate Experience: The University of Washington's Study of Undergraduate Learning*, written by Catharine Hoffman Beyer, Gerald M. Gillmore and Andrew T. Fisher, of the University of Washington, and published by Anker Publishing Company, Inc., of Bolton, Massachusetts in 2007. (ISBN 978-1-933371-26-9).

I became interested in this book after attending a presentation by the first two authors at the Annual Forum in Seattle. *Inside the Undergraduate Experience* describes the design and results of the University of Washington's Study of Undergraduate Learning (UW SOUL) which followed 304 undergraduate students from fall 1999 to spring 2003. Key questions underpinning the study were: What did students learn and where did they learn it? What factors facilitated or impeded students' learning? How would students evaluate their own undergraduate experience? How did students personally develop over their undergraduate years, and how did the university contribute to that growth? The study examined six areas areas of undergraduate learning: personal growth, understanding and appreciating diversity, critical thinking and problem solving, writing, quantitative reasoning, and information technology and literacy.

The impetus for UW SOUL was fuelled, in part, by the growing emphasis on assessment in higher education and the authors' convictions that standardized tests fail to adequately capture what students have learned and how they have come to learn it. As the authors write, "As an assessment study, our focus was not so much on where students landed as it was on how they got there" (p. 10). While their original intent was to assess the undergraduate experience at UW for faculty and administrators, as the study progressed the researchers recognized that their findings may be applicable to other institutions. I was very interested, of course, in the study's findings but equally so in learning more about the logistics of the study design itself.

The study followed two groups of entering students at UW. Group 1 students (n=142) were paid $300 a year to:
• Participate in an entry interview and annual interviews
• Participate in annual focus groups
• Respond to open-ended email questions each quarter
• Complete web-based surveys each quarter
• Submit pieces of work from courses each year in a portfolio
• Write and submit a reflective essay about the work in their portfolios annually

Group 2 students (n=162) were paid $100 per year to:
• Respond to open-ended email questions each quarter
• Complete web-based surveys each quarter

Instruments and protocols used in the study are available at:
http://www.washington.edu/oea/soul

Some key findings from the study are:

• Students experience an enormous transition between high school and college with respect to academic expectations and responsibility for independent

learning, particularly in the domains of quantitative reasoning and writing. Many first-year students reported dealing with a tough challenge to their intellectual identities such as failing a mid-term exam in a subject they had handled with ease in high school or getting a lower grade than expected on an assignment – an experience the authors termed "the Hammering." This points to the need for faculty to recognize and help students to bridge this gap in first and second-year courses.

• Students' learning experiences are inextricably shaped by their majors. Indeed, the effect of the major overpowers that of any broader institution-wide programs and events. The authors speak of the "myth" of a unitary undergraduate education even within general education programs which often have distributive requirements; rather, there are many versions of undergraduate education, each mediated by a particular discipline or major. New students do not recognize this disciplinarity and thus struggle in their early college years when they typically take courses across an array of disciplines. The authors suggest that faculty need to explicitly teach students about disciplinary norms and practices in early courses. These disciplinary effects strengthen the argument that assessment efforts must be situated in departments. The role of central assessment offices should be to work with faculty in departments to help them identify their learning goals, design appropriate assessment methods, and conduct assessment work.

• Students **do** leave college knowing and being able to do more than when they arrived. Learning comes from multiple sources but faculty members are a key component – especially when they are seen by students as being expert in and passionate about their subject areas, and show they care about students' learning. As the authors admit, these arguments seem "ridiculously obvious" and yet, these are points of contention among some critics of higher education; nor do we always seem to structure higher education with these findings in mind (e.g., having very large classes for freshman-year courses). And while some broad changes tend to occur at similar points in the college experience, for the most part, students' learning paths are highly distinctive, iterative, chaotic and uneven across different domains.

Longitudinal, mixed-method studies are comparatively rare in higher education, no doubt because they require considerable expertise and resources to conduct. But the benefits of such designs are clear: the UW SOUL affords us a collective view of the student experience as well as richly nuanced information about the unique paths individual students navigate through their undergraduate years. In addition to charts and statistics that concisely capture quantitative results from the study, the weaving of students' own words throughout the book brings the qualitative findings to compelling life. *Inside the Undergraduate Experience* will be of interest to anyone involved in student assessment or responsible for conducting research on the undergraduate experience, more generally.

Technical Tips from the Field

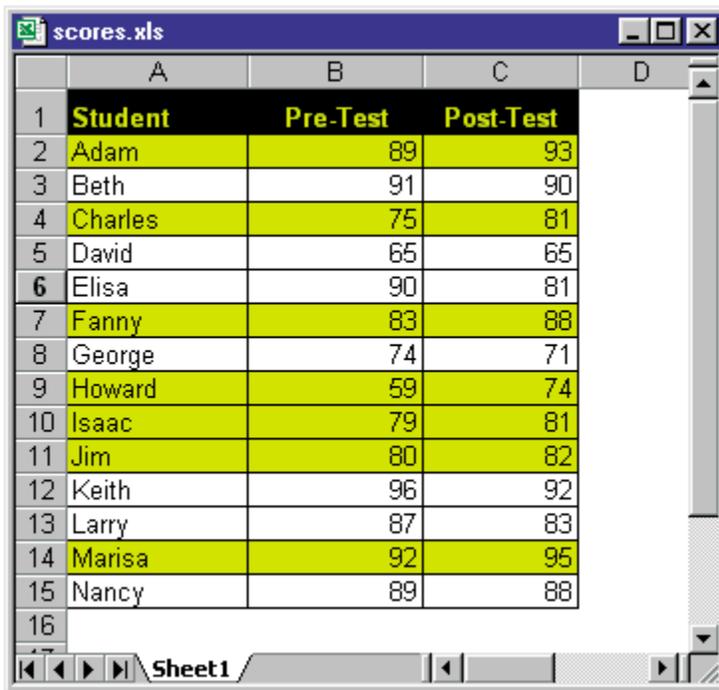## Using Conditional Formatting in Excel
Marne Einarson, Cornell University (mke3@cornell.edu

> **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.**

Gayle is taking some much-deserved holidays so it's my turn to share a Technical Tip. Here's a handy formatting tip I came across on John Walkenbach's "Excel User Tips" web page: http://j-walk.com/ss/excel/usertips/index.htm. The tip and example below are from his web site.

Excel's conditional formatting feature (available in Excel 97 or later) offers an easy way to apply special formatting to cells if a particular condition is met. This feature is even more useful when you understand how to use a formula in your conditional formatting specification.

The worksheet below shows student grades on two tests. Conditional formatting highlights students who scored higher on the second test. This formatting is dynamic; if you change the test scores, the formatting adjusts automatically.

To apply conditional formatting, select range A2:C15 and choose Format, Conditional Formatting. The Conditional Formatting dialog box will appear with two input boxes. In the first box, choose Formula Is, press Tab, and enter the following formula:

=$C2>$B2

Click Format and choose a format to distinguish the cells (the example uses background shading). Click OK, and the formatting will be applied.

The conditional formatting formula is evaluated for each cell in the range. The trick here is to use mixed cell references (the column references are absolute, but the row references are relative). To see how this works, activate any cell within the range and choose Format, Conditional Formatting so you can examine the conditional formatting formula for that cell. You'll find that cell A7, for example, uses this formula:

=$C7>$B7.

This is an easy way to draw attention to aspects of particular interest in data tables.

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

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Eliot Elfner, Professor of Business Administration at St. Norbert College, contributed the following Parting Thoughts:

However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.
~ Winston Churchill (1874-1965), British Prime Minister

Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.
~ P. T. (Phineas Taylor) Barnum (1810-1891), American showman

And John Kalb, Director of Institutional Research at Southern Methodist University, contributed the following "Institutional Researcher's credo":

Well, those drifter's days are past me now, I've got so much more to think about,
Deadlines and commitments, what to leave in, what to leave out.
~ Bob Seger (1945-), American rock and roll singer, songwriter and musician, lyrics from "Against the Wind"