



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@airweb.org).

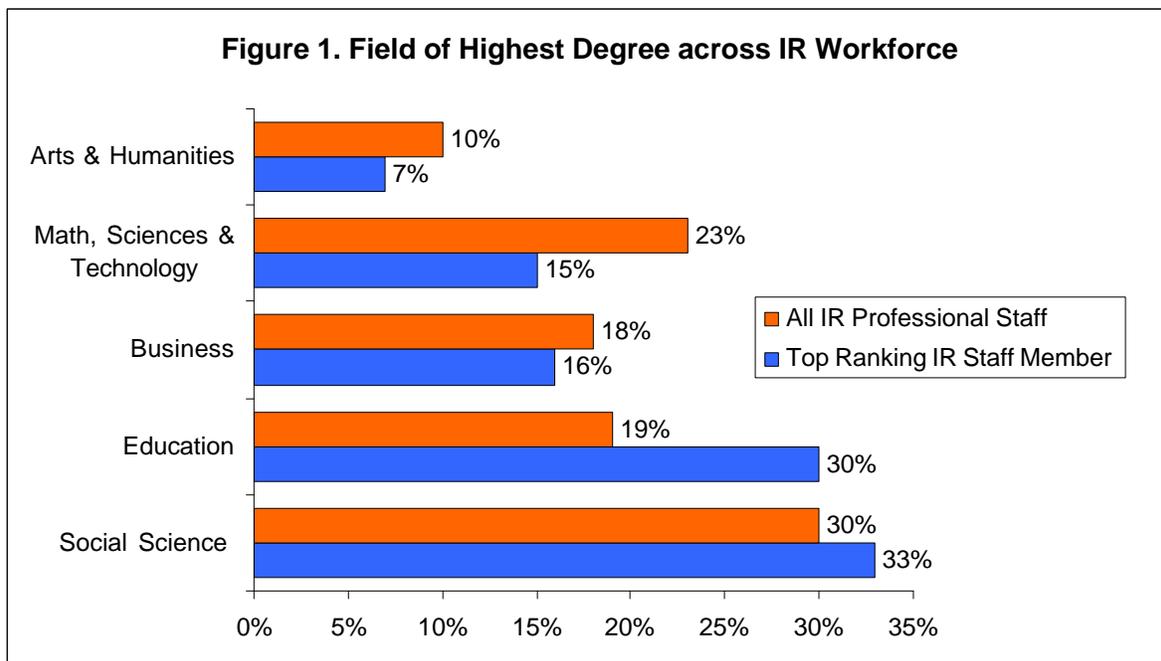
AIR Survey Fact

AIR Survey Fact: Field of Highest Degree among IR Professionals

Fred Volkwein (volkwein@psu.edu)

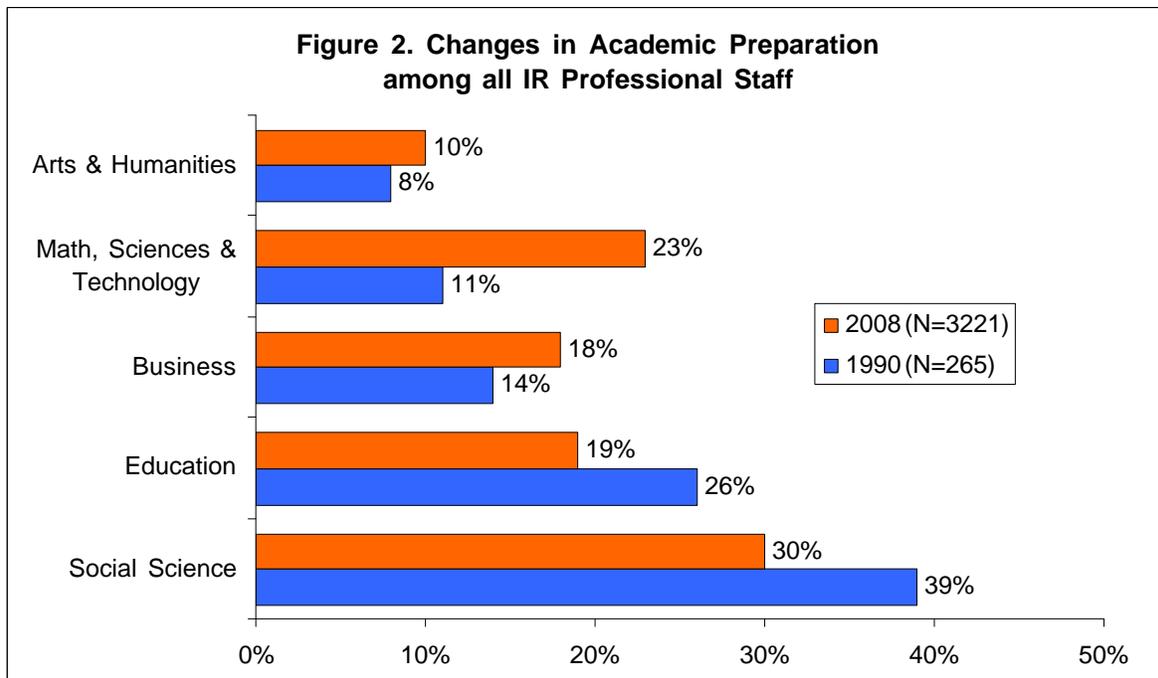
This month we analyze the academic background of IR professional staff from the AIR Survey being conducted and analyzed by Fred Volkwein (volkwein@psu.edu), Jim Woodell (jkw168@psu.edu) and Ying Liu (yzl226@psu.edu) at Penn State.

Analysis of responses from over 1,100 offices in 2008 reveals that most I.R. staff earned their degrees in one of the Social Sciences (30%), followed by Math, Sciences & Technology (23%), Education (19%), and Business (18%). Among the top ranking persons in the office (Director or equivalent), there is a significantly higher percentage of those with degrees in Education (30%), and a significantly lower proportion of those with preparation in math, sciences, and technology (15%). These results in Figure 1 may suggest that the most experienced IR professionals are likely to have come into IR with backgrounds in education, whereas those recruited into IR more recently are likely to possess the technical/analytical intelligence described by Terenzini (1999). The Director level requires contextual and issues intelligence, while the entry level is more likely to require technical and analytical skills.



This impression is confirmed by the data in Figure 2. Compared with the 1990 study of 121 NEAIR offices, the 2008 IR responses show that there has been a decline in the proportion of degree holders in Social Sciences and Education fields, and significant increases in those with backgrounds in math, sciences,

technology, and business. The overall proportion of those with backgrounds in education and social sciences has fallen from 65% to 49% of the IR workforce, while the proportion of those with backgrounds in math, sciences, technology, and business has risen from 25% to 41% during the same period. This finding is consistent with the view that there is now greater demand for IR professionals with analytical skills in statistics, computing, enrollment projections, outcomes assessment, and financial analysis (Volkwein, 1999, 2008).



***Notes:**

Social Science includes core fields like sociology, psychology, and economics, as well as applied fields like law, public administration, and social work;

Math, Science and Technology includes natural sciences like biology, chemistry, and physics, as well as applied fields like engineering, medicine, nursing, agriculture, environmental sciences, forestry, and library & information science;

Arts and Humanities include all the fine arts, humanities, languages, literature, as well as theology and religion.

References:

Volkwein, J. F. (2008). The Foundations and Evolution of Institutional Research. Chapter 1 in *Institutional Research: More than Just Data* (Dawn Terkla, Editor). *New Directions for Higher Education*, No. 141. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., pp. 5-20.

Volkwein, J. F. (1999). The four faces of institutional research. Chapter 1 in J. F. Volkwein (Ed.), *What is institutional research all about? A critical and comprehensive assessment of the profession*. *New Directions in Institutional*

Research, No. 104. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. pp. 9-19.

Terenzini, P.T. (1999) On the nature of institutional research and the knowledge and skills it requires. Chapter 2 in J.F. Volkwein (Ed.), What is institutional research all about? A critical and comprehensive assessment of the profession. New Directions in Institutional Research, No. 104. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., pp. 21-29.

E-AIR Limerick Contest

Enter the E-AIR Limerick Contest!

Marne Einarson (mke3@cornell.edu)

It's cold outside, the days are short, and the work is piling on. You know what that means -- it's time once again for the annual E-AIR Limerick Contest!!

Help us all stave off the winter blues by creating an original limerick. Entries must have something to do with institutional research -- IPEDS, assessment, workload, you name it! Within reason, entries should follow the limerick "a-a-b-b-a" rhyming scheme (i.e., the first, second and fifth lines all rhyme with one another; the third and fourth lines rhyme with each other). Beyond that, you are limited only by your creativity and sense of humor.

E-mail your limerick(s) to Marne Einarson (mke3@cornell.edu) by **February 27th**. All entries received by that date will be stripped of identifying information and forwarded to our esteemed panel of judges – Michelle Appel, Bill Hayward, and the "gold medal" winner from our 2008 limerick contest, Sylvia Reed. We'll publish the winning limericks in the March e-AIR newsletter.

To get your creative juices flowing, here is Sylvia's winning limerick from last year:

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.

Folks who have submitted limericks in our previous contests have told us they

had a lot of fun composing them. Our judges love judging them. And we know you appreciated reading them. So get busy rhyming!

From Your 2009 Forum Local Hosts



In the December newsletter, we had promised that we would have more on shopping for serious bargains outside of the Atlanta area. To get you thinking about further enhancing your economic impact in Atlanta, we invite you to explore the North Georgia Premium Outlets in Dawsonville, GA. The outlet is about an hour north of the hotel and is Georgia's first and only *premium* outlet center. This center offers current-season merchandise from 140 stores. The Atlanta Link offers a Shopping Shuttle, which transports you from downtown hotels. There are other venues as well to consider that will get you out of the hotel and exploring beyond the Atlanta Perimeter. These bargain bonanzas are located within an hour of the Marriott Marquis. Check out their websites for more information:

North GA Premium Outlets:

<http://www.premiumoutlets.com/outlets/outlet.asp?id=16>

Discover Mills: <http://www.simon.com/mall/default.aspx?ID=1241>

Tanger Outlet Centers: <http://www.tangeroutlet.com/commerce> (Northeast of Atlanta) or <http://www.tangeroutlet.com/locustgrove> (South of Atlanta off of I-75)

Prime Outlets: <http://www.primeoutlets.com/locations/calhoun.aspx> (NW of Atlanta)

Now ... on to Track 2:

Track 2: Family Fun!

Are you thinking about bringing your family to Atlanta in May? If so, there are so many fun activities for all ages ... from the world's largest aquarium to the World of Coca-Cola and from CNN to City Segway Tours, we have something for everyone in the great city of Atlanta! All of these activities are within walking distance of the Marriott Marquis and many of them are located within a few steps of each other so you can plan accordingly. Here's a sample:

May 30:

9:00 AM – 6:00 PM
The Georgia Aquarium
225 Baker Street
Atlanta, GA 30313
Phone: 404-581-4000

Dive into a one-of-a-kind aquatic experience at the world's largest aquarium, the Georgia Aquarium! Get up close with gentle whale sharks, toothy sand tiger sharks, graceful beluga whales, playful sea otters and aquatic animals from around the globe. With the largest collection of aquatic animals, you are sure to see things you've never seen before!

Ages: All

<http://www.georgiaaquarium.org/>

May 31:
10:00 AM – 6:00 PM
The New World of Coca-Cola
121 Baker Street NW
Atlanta, GA 30313-1807
Phone: 800-676-2653

From a multi-sensory 4-D theater, a marvelously restored 1880s soda fountain, a one-of-a-kind World of Coca-Cola glass bottle produced in a real, live bottling line, to an opportunity to sample nearly 70 different beverages from around the world, you'll experience something inviting around every corner.

Ages: All

<http://www.worldofcoca-cola.com/>

June 1:
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta
275 Centennial Olympic Park Drive, NW
Atlanta, GA 30313
Phone: 404-659-5437

Located on Centennial Olympic Park, Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta features hands-on, colorful exhibits and activities where children can discover, imagine and explore as they learn how things work in their world. Whether it's building a sandcastle, painting on the walls, or exploring the latest exhibit, children will discover why it's the smart place to play.

Ages: 9 months to 8 years old (and parents will have just as much fun!)

<http://www.imagineit-cma.org/>

June 2:
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Inside CNN Atlanta
1 CNN Center
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: 404-827-2300

Journey into the heart of CNN Worldwide and get an up-close look at global news in the making. Inside CNN is a 55-minute guided walking tour with exclusive, behind-the-scenes views of Atlanta's CNN studios and an exciting glimpse of news and broadcasting in action from the world headquarters of CNN.

Ages: 10 and up

<http://www.cnn.com/tour/atlanta/>

June 3:

10:00 AM and 2:00 PM

City Segway Tours

50 Upper Alabama Street

Suite 256

Atlanta, GA 30303

Phone: 404-588-2274

This is, by far, one of the most fun and offbeat things to do in Atlanta! Cruise through beautiful parks and downtown Atlanta sidewalks while receiving a great historical and informational orientation of the city. The Segway is the first of its kind: a self-balancing personal transportation device designed to operate in any pedestrian environment.

Ages: 12 and up

<http://citysegwaytours.com/atlanta>

For you history buffs out there and for the parents who want to provide "teachable moments" for their children, Atlanta has a plethora of activities for you! We'll cover that in next month's newsletter when we bring you: "**Track 3-Developing the Historical Experience**". In the meantime, we are ready to serve you as you plan your trip to Atlanta. If you have any questions, please contact any of the members of the Atlanta Local Arrangements Team:

Your Atlanta Local Arrangements Committee:

Andy Clark, Armstrong Atlantic State University <Andy.Clark@armstrong.edu>

Denise Gardner, University of Georgia <gardnerd@uga.edu>

Jonathan Gordon, Georgia Tech <jonathan.gordon@oars.gatech.edu>

Lily Hwang, Georgia Gwinnett College <lhwang@ggc.usg.edu>

Sean Mullins, North Georgia College and State University <SMMullins@ngcsu.edu>

Alice Simpkins, Paine College <simpkinsa@mail.paine.edu>

Barbara Stephens, Bainbridge College <bstephen@bainbridge.edu>

Sandi Bramblett, Local Arrangements Chair, Georgia Tech <sandi@gatech.edu>

Bill Hayward, Local Arrangements Associate Chair and Honorary Georgian, Northwestern University <bh@northwestern.edu>

AIR Position Announcement

AIR Position Announcement Reminder: Editor of Research in Higher Education

The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and Springer Publishing Company invite nominations and applications for the editorship of Research in Higher Education (RIHE). Now in its 36th year of publication, RIHE publishes eight times per year and is the leading journal of research on higher education. Indexed in the Social Science Citation Index and other abstracting and indexing services, RIHE is a highly selective, archival journal. Articles focus on the functioning of postsecondary education, including two-year and four-year colleges, universities, and graduate and professional schools. The journal's primary audience includes higher education scholars, institutional researchers and planners, faculty members, college and university administrators, and organizational and behavioral scientists.

Please visit <http://www.airweb.org/RIHE> for more information on the application process, as well as position responsibilities, qualifications, and terms of appointment.

Electronic submissions are welcome.

Applications received by January 30, 2009 are assured full consideration, although applications will be received until the position is filled.

AIR Assessment Institute

Register for the 2009 Assessment Institute for Institutional Research Practitioners Now!

Plans are well underway for the 2009 Assessment Institute in Annapolis, Maryland, March 24-28, 2009. Registration is limited to 100 participants and the Institute is filling up quickly, so visit www.airweb.org/institutes to register now!

If you are a member of institutional research (IR) or institutional effectiveness (IE) staff and already have some level of experience in assessment (such as survey research studies, accreditation support), are an "early career" assessment professional, and/or have responsibility for organizing a cohesive, functional program, you won't want to miss the Assessment Institute.

The Assessment Institute focuses on the skills and tools needed for efficient and effective assessment-related activities. Participants will learn techniques, approaches, and outcome assessment ideas, including institutional effectiveness, general education, and major fields of study.

Modules:

All participants will attend the Primer to Assessment overview module. Participants will attend four additional 6-hour modules. Module choices include:

- Organizing for Assessment, Sharron L. Ronco, Ph.D.
- Institutional Effectiveness, Organizational Development, and Cultural Change, Elizabeth Paul, Ph.D.
- Developing Goals, Using Tools, and Devising Implementation Strategies, Marilee Bresciani, Ph.D.
- Managing, Using and Understanding Assessment Results, Paula Krist, Ph.D.
- Assessing General Education and Accreditation Expectations: Two Hot Topics for IR Professionals, Linda A. Suskie

Participants will request modules in order of preference as part of the registration process.

Registration Fees:

Registration Type	Early Bird Cost	Cost After February 20, 2009	What's Included?
Current AIR Member (2008-2009 membership dues paid)	\$1,210	\$1,260	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition • Instructional materials • Select meals • Refreshment breaks
Non-Member	\$1,335	\$1,385	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Member, <i>plus</i> a 2008-2009 AIR individual membership
Guest with registered participant	\$355	\$405	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select meals • Refreshment breaks • Graduation Gala

Please visit www.airweb.org/institutes to register today.

Accommodations:

A group rate of \$99.00 (excluding tax) per night is available to Institute attendees at the beautiful Doubletree Hotel Annapolis. Reservations must be made no later than Sunday, February 22, 2009 to receive the group rate. To reserve your room now, please call 800-266-7641 and reference the AIR

Assessment Institute to receive the group rate. Visit <http://www.doubletreeannapolis.com> for more information.

Julia M. Duckwall Scholarship

AIR members can apply for a Julia M. Duckwall Scholarship equal to the registration fee. Please visit www.airweb.org/duckwall for more information and to apply.

Additional Opportunities

In addition to the Assessment Institute for Institutional Research Practitioners, AIR offers several other professional development opportunities throughout the year. The AIR Foundations I Institute in Nashville and the Foundations II Institute in Detroit will provide a number of unique learning opportunities. Registration for these Institutes will open on February 2, 2009.

Please visit www.airweb.org/institutes for updates.

We look forward to your participation in one of AIR's upcoming Institutes.

NCES Transcript Study

The National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Education is currently collecting transcripts for students participating in two postsecondary longitudinal sample studies, 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09) and the 2008/09 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:08/09). The transcript collection component of these two studies is called the 2009 Postsecondary Education Transcript Study (PETS:09). Approximately 3,000 institutions will be included in PETS:09. Across both studies, transcripts will be collected, keyed, and coded for approximately 45,000 postsecondary students.

Transcript data are being collected under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that allow the release of student records to the Secretary of Education or his/her agent without prior written consent from students. Both the purposes of the study and the manner in which the transcript data will be acquired comply fully with FERPA requirements.

AIR fully endorses PETS:09, and encourages your cooperation and assistance in providing transcripts to RTI in a timely manner. To find out more about PETS go to <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/pets/>. If you have any questions, please contact the PETS:09 Help Desk toll free at 1-877-256-8029 (PETS@rti.org) or Jennifer Wine, the PETS:09 Project Director, at 1-919-541-6870 (jennifer@rti.org).

NCES Publications

Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2006-07

This report presents findings from "Distance Education at Postsecondary Institutions: 2006-07," a survey that was designed to provide national estimates on distance education at 2-year and 4-year Title IV eligible, degree-granting institutions. Distance education was defined as a formal education process in which the student and instructor are not in the same place. Thus, instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous, and it may involve communication through the use of video, audio, or computer technologies, or by correspondence (which may include both written correspondence and the use of technology such as CD-ROM). The questionnaire instructed institutions to include distance education courses and programs that were formally designated as online, hybrid/blended online, and other distance education courses and programs. Hybrid/blended online courses were defined as a combination of online and in-class instruction with reduced in-class seat time for students.

The 2006-07 study on distance education collected information on the prevalence, types, delivery, policies, and acquisition or development of distance education courses and programs. Findings indicate that during the 2006-07 academic year, two-thirds (66 percent) of 2-year and 4-year Title IV degree-granting postsecondary institutions reported offering online, hybrid/blended online, or other distance education courses for any level or audience. Sixty-five percent of the institutions reported college-level credit-granting distance education courses, and 23 percent of the institutions reported noncredit distance education courses. Sixty-one percent of 2-year and 4-year institutions reported offering online courses, 35 percent reported hybrid/blended courses, and 26 percent reported other types of college-level credit-granting distance education courses. Together, distance education courses accounted for an estimated 12.2 million enrollments (or registrations). Asynchronous (not simultaneous or real-time) Internet-based technologies were cited as the most widely used technology for the instructional delivery of distance education courses; they were used to a large extent in 75 percent and to a moderate extent in 17 percent of the institutions that offered college-level credit-granting distance education courses. The most common factors cited as affecting distance education decisions to a major extent were meeting student demand for flexible schedules, providing access to college for students who would otherwise not have access, making more courses available, and seeking to increase student enrollment.

To view, download and print the report as a PDF file, please visit:
<http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009044>

National Assessment of Adult Literacy: Indirect County and State Estimates of the Percentage of Adults at the Lowest Literacy Level for 1992 and 2003

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released the "National Assessment of Adult Literacy: Indirect County and State Estimates of the Percentage of Adults at the Lowest Literacy Level for 1992 and 2003", which provides estimates on the percentage of adults - for all states and counties in the U.S. - who lack basic prose literacy skills. The study provides data for 2003 and 1992. This new data is currently the only available snapshot of adult literacy rates for individual states and counties.

To produce this study, NCES gathered data from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), a nationally representative sample of more than 19,000 Americans age 16 and older, and the 2000 Census, which provided "predictor variables" such as education and income.

NAAL data were correlated with the predictor variables to see if there was a pattern among them. From this information, a model was established. Using the model, estimates were predicted for areas where there were not sufficient assessment data. The same approach was also applied to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), so changes from 1992 to 2003 can be examined.

The report is accompanied by an interactive web tool, which shows the percentage of adults lacking Basic Prose Literacy Skills for all states and counties. In addition to allowing users to view adult literacy percentages for any given state, the web tool also allows for comparisons to be made between two states, two counties in the same state, two counties in different states, across years for a state, and across years for a county.

The report can be found at:

<http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009482>

The Interactive Web Tool can be accessed at:

<http://www.nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/index.aspx>

News from AAUP

AAUP Faculty Compensation Survey 2008-09

John Curtis, AAUP (aaupfca@aaup.org)

Data collection for the annual AAUP survey is now entering the final phase prior to our published report. We are reviewing data that have been submitted and working to resolve any inconsistencies. We will continue to accept data right up

to our publication deadline (probably March 1) and do our best to process it in a timely fashion. Entries with unresolved errors may not be included in the March-April publication, but can still be revised for our July-August supplemental listing.

If you have already submitted data and have unresolved verification errors or warnings, please be sure that you have provided a detailed response in the "Response to Verification" section. You can also log in to our survey Web site at (<https://research.aaup.org/fcs/default.aspx>) to generate a survey summary report. If you have forgotten your user name, you can request it in the Registration Center; if you know your user name but have forgotten your password, click the "Login" link and you will be able to request your password.

If you have questions about survey data or contact information, please send an e-mail to aaupfcs@aaup.org. (If you want to check the status of your data submission, please log in and check the Web site first.) You can also call (202) 737-5900 ext. 118 for assistance, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Eastern time on business days.

Thanks again for participating in our annual survey.

AAUP Research Office

John Curtis, Director of Research and Public Policy
Doug Kinsella, Research Associate
aaupfcs@aaup.org

Proposals for HEDW Forum

Higher Education Data Warehousing Forum, April 26-28, 2009

The planning team invites presentation proposals for the Higher Education Data Warehousing Forum Conference to be held at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Conference registration will open in early February. For more information or to submit a proposal go to <http://www.stonybrook.edu/HEDW>. The Forum brings together people from information technology, institutional research, decision support, and administrative/business units to share knowledge and best practices for knowledge management in colleges and universities, including building data warehouses, developing institutional reporting strategies, and providing decision support.

Emily Thomas
HEDW Forum President 2008-09
ethomas@notes.cc.sunysb.edu

SACCR Conference

Save the Date!

Southeastern Association of Community College Research (SACCR) 2009 Conference

August 2-5, 2009

Lexington, KY

Theme: Racing with Accountability: Building and Sustaining a Culture of Evidence

Registration opens mid-February.

Anita Kirkpatrick
Savannah Technical College
akirkpatrick@savannahtech.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.

Robert Callaway, Dean of Social Sciences and Human Services and former Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Lorain County Community College (OH), passed away unexpectedly January 9, 2009. Robert attended Bowling Green State University where he earned his PhD. He became Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning at Lorain County Community College in 1998. He was a leader and forward thinker who had a genuine passion for using data as part of the decision making process. His passion, talent and genuine compassion will be missed in the Higher Education Community.

Practitioner Profile

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

In this feature, we summarize the results of an "electronic interview" with

an individual institutional research practitioner. The goal is to foster broader knowledge and appreciation of the diverse membership of AIR, and of the different institutional contexts and activities in which we are engaged.

In this issue, we interview Gordon Mills, Director of Institutional Research at the University of South Alabama (gmills@usouthal.edu).

e-AIR: Gordon, I understand that you are fairly new to IR so welcome to the profession! Tell us about your current position.

Gordon: I am the director of institutional research at the University of South Alabama (USA). I work in the office of institutional research, planning, and assessment. Our office includes a vice president, director of institutional research, director of assessment, two institutional research analysts, and an administrative assistant. We conduct research to support planning and decision-making across the university, provide timely and accurate information to fulfill external reporting requirements, coordinate the assessment of learning outcomes and administrative units, and fulfill responsibilities related to accreditation.

The vice president works primarily with accreditation and interacting with other vice presidents, academic deans, and anything related to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). The director of assessment works primarily with assessment. My primary responsibilities are working with the two institutional research analysts to provide information and analysis to support planning and decision-making, and to complete institutional reporting requirements.

e-AIR: What is your academic and professional background?

Gordon: I completed a BA in liberal studies at Southern Virginia University (SVU), a small, private, liberal arts institution that embraces the values of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Immediately after graduation, I was hired by SVU to work as the director of activities and scheduling. Due to the small size of SVU, I was given many opportunities to work with all administrative and faculty functions on campus. My initial duties included managing all summer conferences and events including housing, scheduling campus facilities, serving as an advisor to the SVU student government association, teaching the freshman seminar (FYE), and working closely with the dean of students to perform a number of other duties related to student life on campus. Later, the academic vice president asked me to join the faculty and teach computer applications courses during the academic year and I continued to manage the summer conferences and events during the summer. I served on the homecoming and technology infrastructure committees and was also very involved as a member of

the web development team. These work experiences provided me a broad understanding of numerous aspects of a private higher education institution that has served me well as an institutional researcher.

With SVU located nearly 1.5 hours from Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia, I made the decision to complete my master's degree online in electronic commerce management from Capitol College. This experience opened my eyes to the importance of providing high quality education not just on campus, but virtually as well. I enjoyed taking classes with students living in Europe, Asia, Alaska, and several other states.

I loved working at my alma mater and thought for a while that I may stay there my entire professional career. However, the academic vice president and other faculty and administrators on campus, though very pleased with my work, continually encouraged me to go on to get a Ph.D. I initially explored online options to complete a doctoral degree but realized that the options to do so were much more limited than to complete a master's degree online. As a result, I broadened my search nationally for a residence-based doctoral program in higher education. I ultimately decided that the Ph.D. program in higher education at Florida State University (FSU) was the best match for me. While at FSU, I had a variety of assistantship experiences in distance education, instructional design, and finance. I also spent six months of my doctoral studies working as an instructional designer intern at Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYU-H).

e-AIR: How did you arrive at institutional research as a profession?

Gordon: At the time of my decision to pursue my Ph.D. at FSU, I was unaware that FSU was one of five institutions that received funding from AIR to offer an institutional research certificate program. Terry Russell, former executive director of AIR, came and spoke to my doctoral cohort at our new student orientation session and encouraged us to complete the IR certificate as part of our doctoral coursework at FSU. However, I was more interested in studying distance education and related issues at that time. Two years later, after repeated encouragement from Dr. Bob Schwartz, FSU IR certificate director, and one of my colleagues in the program who is also working in IR, Dr. Kristina Cragg (Assistant to the President for Strategic Research and Analysis at Valdosta State University), I decided to complete the IR certificate.

Completing the IR certificate at FSU was the best decision I made during my doctoral studies and completely changed my career interests and pursuits. After making the decision to complete the IR certificate, I received an AIR/NSF/NCES National Summer Data Policy Institute (NSDPI) fellowship. The NSDPI experience was the singular event that opened my eyes to IR as a career. There I learned about several of the NCES and NSF databases and, perhaps more importantly for me, met other IR practitioners, faculty, and graduate students from across the

world. It was after this experience that I decided I really wanted to work in IR after I graduated.

e-AIR: What have been some of the most challenging and interesting aspects of your position thus far?

Gordon: For me, the most interesting aspects of my job thus far have been writing multiple research reports. It has been fun to apply many of the things I learned in my doctoral studies and the IR certificate program in a real life setting. The vice president I work for has been an incredible mentor to me. She has challenged me to accomplish many things while also being very supportive and taking the time to provide feedback that will prove very helpful to me down the road as well.

I have also gained a greater appreciation for the importance of institutional data for all stakeholders in higher education. For example, I recently finished my first experience with entering institutional data into IPEDS. Since I used IPEDS data for my dissertation, I now have a much greater appreciation of the importance of these data not just to the institution but to other researchers, peer institutions, stakeholders, etc. I also have a greater appreciation of the effort it takes to enter the data into IPEDS!

One of the most challenging aspects of working in IR has been becoming familiar with all of the acronyms, terminology, reports, etc. While I received a great foundation with the IR certificate and working in higher education, I have found out that I still have a lot to learn and will need to continue to learn to keep up in the future.

e-AIR: What is the best piece of advice you have been given related to IR?

Gordon: The best advice I've been given so far was shared by Dr. Bob Schwartz in one of my IR courses at FSU. This advice has also been reiterated by several AIR colleagues and the VP for whom I work at USA. That advice is that it is very important to provide concise, clear, interpretations of institutional data, whether in oral or written presentations. A dissertation is very "dense" – or at least my dissertation was described that way. However, in IR we need to explain results and implications in a very straightforward manner that someone without a statistical background can easily understand. From writing a dissertation to writing brief analytical summaries has been a bit of an adjustment for me to make. However, it is a lot of fun to be involved in multiple projects of strategic importance to USA and I look forward to continuing to refine and develop this skill in the future.

e-AIR: Tell us about your involvement with AIR as a professional association -- what forms has this taken? What have the benefits been to you?

Gordon: As mentioned earlier, I attended the National Summer Data Policy Institute. Later, I was awarded an AIR graduate student fellowship. This funding fostered valuable professional development opportunities. I presented a poster related to my dissertation research at the 2008 AIR Annual Forum and subsequently served as a proposal reviewer for the 2009 Forum. The fellowship funding also really made a big difference in helping me complete my dissertation in a timely manner. Though I did not have actual experience working in an IR office, the IR certificate and AIR fellowships combined with my other professional experiences at SVU, FSU, and BYU-H gave me the foundation to work as a director of IR straight out of graduate school. Financially and professionally I have been very enriched by AIR!

e-AIR: When your family or friends ask, "What do you do?" what do you tell them?

Gordon: I tell them as director of institutional research my role is similar to that of a research analyst in the private sector. However, instead of a profit centered focus, my efforts are spent on providing strategic insights and analysis for a university. This simple explanation seems to help them understand the basics of what I do. I'm sure other IR professionals have a better way of explaining IR to non IR folks, but that's the simplest way I've found to try to tell friends and family what I do.

e-AIR: How do you like to spend your time when you are not working?

Gordon: I love college football and am a huge Florida State University fan. Go Seminoles!!! March madness is also something I look forward to each year. I enjoy jogging, playing tennis (though I haven't played since I moved to Alabama), spending time with my wife and two boys (ages 7 and 4), going to the beach, park, sporting events, etc. I am also actively involved in my church.

e-AIR: Any thoughts about future professional directions? Where do you hope to see yourself ten years from now?

Gordon: I have loved my experience working as the director of IR at USA and anticipate enjoying an extended career in IR. Ten years from now, I hope to be a vice president with IR responsibilities. Regardless of my professional position, I definitely look forward to a lifetime association with AIR!

e-AIR: Gordon, thank you so much for the interview!

We welcome your feedback on this feature, including suggestions for individuals to be interviewed and questions you would like to have posed in future interviews. Please e-mail your comments and suggestions to Marne Einarson

(mailto:mke3@cornell.edu).

Technical Tips from the Field

Using Advanced Google Search - Hints

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.

At some point in our careers, we have used a search engine to find a report, data, website or document. My approach used to be to put in key words and hope for the best. My husband, who is a librarian, turned me on to his top ways of searching Google efficiently and effectively. I hope you find these helpful! When in doubt – go to Advanced Search and Google will walk you through it!

Find Results:

Operator Example	Find Pages Containing
vacation hawaii	the words vacation and Hawaii
Maui OR Hawaii	either the word Maui or the word Hawaii
<i>"To each his own"</i>	the exact phrase to each his own
<i>virus -computer</i>	the word virus but NOT the word computer
+sock	Only the word sock , and not the plural or any tenses or synonyms
<i>~auto loan</i>	loan info for both the word auto and its synonyms: truck , car , etc.

define: <i>computer</i>	definitions of the word computer from around the Web
<i>red * blue</i>	the words red and blue separated by one or more words

Find a Specific File Format:

Filetype:pdf Only return results of the specified file format
 -filetype:doc Does not return results of the specified file

Advanced Operators:

site:	Search only one website	admission site:www.stanford.edu (Search Stanford Univ. site for admissions info.)
[#]...[#]	Search within a range of numbers	DVD player \$100..150 (Search for DVD players between \$100 and \$150)
link:	linked pages	link:www.stanford.edu (Find pages that link to the Stanford University website.)
info:	Info about a page	info:www.stanford.edu (Find information about the Stanford University website.)

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 very welcome. Send them to [Marne Einarson](#)

Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.
 ~ Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 - 1968), American clergyman and civil rights leader

The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.

~ Barbara Kingsolver (1955 -), American writer

Hope is passion for what is possible.

~ Soren Kierkegaard (1813 - 1855), Danish philosopher and theologian