

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT IN INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

**ENHANCING PERSONAL AND
PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are several groups and individuals who I must thank for helping to make this book a reality. The first is the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) board of directors, staff, and especially executive director Randy Swing, publications consultant Leah Ewing Ross, copy editor Alison Hope and designer Karen Groves. The second is a long line of leaders and scholars in the field of institutional research who have studied our profession and its effectiveness: Paul Dressel, Jim Fernberg, Cam Fincher, Rich Howard, Bill Lasher, Tina Leimer, Gerry McLaughlin, Marv Peterson, Laura Saunders, Joe Saupe, John Stecklein, Pat Terenzini, Dawn Terkla, and Fred Volkwein are only a few of the people who come to mind. Indeed, in writing this book I stand on the shoulders of giants. I would also like to thank AIR members who completed the Institutional Research Leadership Development Needs Analysis Survey, those who participated in focus groups at the 2012 AIR Forum, those who attended the presentation of the results of these efforts and offered helpful feedback, and many other colleagues along the way. It is also important to acknowledge the outstanding experience I had at the 2014 Harvard Institute for Management and Leadership in Education that helped me sharpen my thinking about many of these issues. I must also thank the staff of the Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness (especially Rebecca Costomiris, who did a superb job of copy editing the draft manuscript) and the university leadership, whose dedication and support have allowed me to devote time and energy to this project. Finally, I must thank my wife, toughest critic, and biggest supporter, Adriene Knight, who became a book project widow for far too long during the writing.

PREFACE

Why a Book on Leadership and Management for Institutional Research?

As I approach my 25-year mark as an institutional researcher, I am increasingly concerned about the unfulfilled potential of our field. Numerous studies (e.g., Gagliardi & Wellman, 2014; Jaschik & Lederman, 2014) have indicated that information is not being used as effectively as it could be by campus leaders. Scholarship about effectiveness within institutional research (IR) (e.g., Delaney, 2000, 2001; Knight 2010b; Knight, Volkwein, Voorhees, & Leimer, 2010; Leimer, 2011a; Leimer & Terkla, 2009; Lohmann, 1998; Swing, 2009) has also suggested that this unfulfilled potential is something we can influence if we change how we work. During decades of discussions with colleagues, I have heard time and time again about the need for professional development—not in what Terenzini (1993) calls technical-analytical skills, but rather in what he terms issues and, especially, contextual knowledge and skills. Readers who are unfamiliar with Terenzini's work may refer to the summary below and are invited to read the Eimers, Ko, and Gardner (2012) chapter in the *Handbook of Institutional Research* (Howard, McLaughlin, & Knight, 2012), or Terenzini's original (1993) article. Although I think (and I hope that you do, too) that our national, regional, and state IR professional organizations and other sources provide outstanding education and training in technical-analytical knowledge and skills, noticeably lacking has been a place to go to improve practitioners' understanding of issues such as campus politics, interpersonal relations, understanding the perspectives of others, and leadership development. Thus, the purpose of this book is to help improve the effectiveness of your office as well as to improve your effectiveness as a leader.

Here is a summary of Terenzini's concept:

- Tier 1: Technical and Analytical Intelligence
 - Factual knowledge
 - Methodology skills
 - Understanding of computing and computing software

- Tier 2: Issues Intelligence
 - Understanding of key management issues in higher education such as faculty workload, enrollment management, instructional cost, and productivity
 - Understanding of how your institution functions, including the formal and informal decision-making process
 - Ability to work with and through others to accomplish goals

- Tier 3: Contextual Intelligence
 - Understanding of the culture of higher education; including your own institution's culture and history (e.g., personalities, political affiliations)
 - Understanding of how business is done at your institution (e.g., who are key players and what are the key processes at your institution)
 - Respect for the perspectives of all constituencies
 - Knowledge of the environment in which your college operates

Source: Adapted from Eimers et al. (2012).

Like any good institutional researcher, I wanted to make sure I explored this project through information rather than through anecdote. After much thinking, reading, and discussion, I drafted an IR Leadership Development Needs Analysis Survey and asked the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) to facilitate a peer review and send it to a sample of practitioners. AIR also graciously provided me with space at the 2012 Forum to facilitate focus groups to explore

these topics further. The results (Knight, 2012) indicated substantial interest in professional development within the areas of managing and developing staff, planning and resource management, understanding campus culture, and developing oneself as a leader. I was also gratified that Terenzini's 2012 AIR Forum keynote addresses (Terenzini, 2013), where he revisited his (1993) ideas, affirmed the need for this work. This quote from Terenzini sums up the purpose of this book very eloquently:

The danger in being preoccupied with technology is that institutional researchers will increasingly be seen as technicians, good at what they do, but having a limited perspective and understanding of important academic and administrative issues. If that happens, institutional researchers will become increasingly marginal to the making of decisions. The information institutional researchers provide will always be important, but they will be less and less likely to be present at the president's council meetings when alternative courses of action are evaluated, solutions negotiated, and decisions made. (Terenzini, 2013, pp. 139–140)

Let me share a little about my background and perspectives so that you can better understand me as I present this material. My entire career has been in institutions of higher education. I began my career in a group of university regional campuses that was very much like a community college system. I then worked at three public, residential, 15,000- to 25,000-student universities—two in the Midwest and one in the South. I have had the opportunity to branch out in my work from IR to assessment, accreditation, program review, and strategic planning. When I frame this book as being about leadership and management in IR, I really mean within the set of affiliated responsibilities that Leimer (2011b) and others have termed institutional effectiveness. I use the term “institutional research” in this book because it is being published by AIR and because I will always think of myself as an institutional researcher at the core. Along the way I have had the opportunity to serve as AIR's forum chair, president, and member of its board of directors. I edited the *Primer for Institutional Research* (Knight, 2003), and with Rich Howard and Gerry McLaughlin served as coeditor of the

Handbook of Institutional Research (Howard et al., 2012). I have had the opportunity to be a peer reviewer and team chair for the Higher Learning Commission. Currently, I direct Ball State University's IR Certificate Program. I hope these experiences have given me a sufficiently broad perspective to offer a book about leadership and management in IR. I have tried to be sensitive to differences in sectors and office responsibilities. Nevertheless, we are all a sum of our experiences, so any lack of applicability to certain circumstances is a limitation I acknowledge.

Permit me also to share my logic for the order of the presentation of the chapters. I share the opinion of Eimers et al. (2012) that IR tends to attract people who often exhibit introversion rather than extroversion, a sensing versus intuition approach to interpreting information, thinking rather than feeling for making decisions, and judging versus perceiving as personality traits. I believe this often limits our ability to fully take advantage of Terenzini's issues and contextual intelligences and ultimately limits our effectiveness in getting our information used in decision-making. The idea within the book is to progressively move the readers from what might be closer to their comfort zone to areas that are more of a stretch. With this in mind, we begin with a discussion of resource management topics such as budgeting, time management, meetings, and office effectiveness. We then have an extended discussion of emotional intelligence in the workplace. I placed this topic at this point in the book and make it the longest chapter because I believe it is the foundation of effective leadership, which is manifested by the remaining topics: managing and developing staff, understanding campus culture, and developing oneself as a leader.

The tone of this book is deliberately informal. It is designed to be a resource for institutional researchers rather than a work of scholarship, although references are cited and selected literature on topics such as emotional intelligence and leadership is dissected and applied to an IR perspective. While I hope it is useful to professionals who aspire to leadership roles in IR as well as graduate students (especially those in IR certificate programs), it is specifically designed to benefit those who are new to the role of director of IR (or similar title). This book is designed to be rooted in strong content without being overly theoretical and to

stress application without (hopefully) being a series of war stories. I have tried to obscure some of the details in many of the examples to preserve confidentiality. To friends and colleagues who may recognize themselves in any of the chapters, I hope you will find inclusion in a work such as this that is designed to improve our profession to be a high compliment. I have ended each chapter with a section titled Examples for Further Consideration in an attempt to encourage readers to apply these ideas to their current situations. I provide sample solutions to these examples in Appendix 1. It is my hope that these ideas can be shared in more succinct and intentional ways than a book, perhaps through methods such as workshops, Webinars, and blogs.

I sincerely hope that you find this book to be helpful as you progress through your career. I invite your comments, questions, and criticism; address any correspondence to me at wknight@bsu.edu. If it prompts you to join discussions on these topics with your colleagues, then I will consider this work to have been a success.

PART I

Resource Management

YOUR OFFICE BUDGET

Understanding It and Shaping It to Achieve Your Goals

Objective: This chapter will provide a basic overview of major categories of expenditure and general principles of budget management.

While institutional researchers are typically very comfortable with numbers, understanding the office budget and using it as a tool to accomplish your purposes may be a mystery to those who are new to or who aspire to an IR leadership role. Higher education has its own unique approach to managing money that often requires some explanation (Vandament, 1989). This brief overview of budgeting in IR offices covers major categories of expenditure and general principles of budget management. It does not address revenue budgets, since it assumes that IR is budgeted from general institutional educational and general funds and does not raise money on its own. It is important to acknowledge that institutional size and circumstances affect budget processes. IR offices of one person, for example, may be included as part of other offices involving additional functions for budgeting purposes, and the institutional researcher may have no responsibility for budget management (although the institutional researcher can provide recommendations). Also, it is important to recognize that department budgets are related to institutional and state budgets (especially for public institutions); priorities, funding methodologies, and cuts affect unit-level budgets, including those in IR.

The following good practices were adapted from Northern Illinois University's department chair handbook's tips for effective budget management (Northern Illinois University, 2009a):

- Familiarize yourself with campus budget-related Web sites.
- Learn your institution's financial vocabulary and the various financial statements. Attend any budget-related training necessary.
- Be aware of deadlines for budget reviews, for submission of budget plans for the following fiscal year, cut-off dates for purchases, course fee requests, and so on.
- Use the previous fiscal year's expenses for different categories as a guide to develop budget plans for the coming fiscal year.
- Develop a monthly routine for working closely with office staff to print and review budget reports to ensure charges have been recorded accurately, and identify any discrepancies.
- Check with your division's budget director on resolving any identified discrepancies in the budget reports.
- Monitor the budget transactions closely during the last quarter of the fiscal year and estimate expenses for the rest of the fiscal year so you can ensure the allocated budget is sufficient to cover all charges.
- Inform your supervisor and your division's budget director if you foresee any problems with the budget, and address the problems proactively before the close of the fiscal year.
- Establish departmental guidelines on the use of funds for intended purposes, and be transparent about the process with your faculty and staff. For example, clarify in a department meeting at the beginning of the academic year the amount budgeted for travel funds for that year and the guidelines for requesting the use of those travel funds for purposes such as conference presentation, work-related training, and so on.
- Network with fellow leaders and share tips on budget planning, handling discrepancies, and explaining budget-related information to faculty and staff.