



April 2, 2019

Dear AIR Colleagues,

I was astounded to receive the news that I have been selected to receive the 2019 Association for Institutional Research John Stecklein Distinguished Member Award. There are so many talented people in Institutional Research that have made outstanding contributions to the community of higher education in the United States. I am proud to be part of this distinguished group. I thank the AIR Board of Directors and my colleagues who nominated me for this award.

I came to be an Institutional Researcher by accident, having been a financial administrator at MIT for 15 years. What began as an experiment for MIT and myself, has evolved into a thirty-plus year career for me and a valued resource for the MIT community. When I became part of the IR community I found my people. People who care about the stories that data can help tell, yet understand that data is only a tool for decision making. People who nurture not only their institutional colleagues but their colleagues from around the country and, increasingly, around the world.

The success of Institutional Research at MIT can be attributed to two major factors. Like every profession, the success of the endeavor is directly correlated to people. The Institutional Research staff at MIT is comprised of skilled, dedicated, hard-working, generous, and, by any measure, brilliant individuals. They make me and MIT look good. The defining goal of this office is and has been to be an environment where people can thrive, be creative and importantly long after they have moved on say that Institutional Research at MIT was the best job they ever had.

The other important factor is MIT which provides the basic framework for our success. MIT has wonderful faculty, staff, students, a supportive administration, collaborative and caring colleagues. We are assigned unique and interesting projects that support the mission of MIT. MIT is a hard place to leave.

Outside of MIT I have been privileged to be part of many Institutional Research organizations including AIR, NEAIR, European AIR (EAIR), Boston AIR, Ivy-plus groups, Women in Institutional Research and Assessment (WIRA), and the Association of American Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE). Each of these groups have been comprised of people who are esteemed colleagues and have become lifelong friends.

My greatest sense of accomplishment, outside of MIT, has come from my work with the AAU Data Exchange. When I first became a representative to AAUDE in the spring of 1989, the data exchanged was primarily delivered via the US Postal Service as paper copies of computer output (pin feed). Only a few of the private AAU universities participated in AAUDE. Thirty years later, all members of AAU belong to the data exchange and the data is accessible electronically. It's been a privilege to witness the transformation of institutional researchers at AAU universities from a loose confederation to a vibrant organization that provides service to its members and the community of Higher Education.

Lydia Snover