



January 23, 2024

Dear AIR Colleagues,

I am writing to recommend Linli Zhou as a candidate for the 2024 AIR Rising Star Award. She currently holds the position of as Institutional Research Analyst at Lasell University, and her contact information is:

linli.zhou@ucla.edu
(424) 355-6252
Apt 2623,
19251 Preston Rd,
Dallas, TX 75252

I first met Linli through the Higher Education Data Warehousing forum, where we shared a common interest in storing and analyzing survey data. More recently I came across some instructional videos she had made on using R for IR work. When I saw the announcement about the award, I immediately thought of Linli.

In chatting with Linli, her passion for learning comes through immediately: learning for herself and understanding how to improve our educational systems. This interest dates back to her first experiences in college, where as a research intern she studied student engagement and pedagogy. Later, working in UCLA's Diversity, Inclusion, and Admissions Office, she tested new ideas in matching students to mentors and then observed changes. This qualitative research overlapped with her dissertation, which led Linli to earn a doctorate in Comparative Education. Her research challenged the assumption that new students should be matched with peers from a similar background, finding instead that cross-cultural mentorships led to quicker assimilation.

Linli has only worked in an Institutional Research Office since 2022, but she has rapidly taken on new responsibilities, including managing and mentoring interns in the IR office, and becoming a member of her institution's management council. On the council she advocates for actional insights from data to office heads from across campus. One recent result of this collaborative work was the development of a survey of student co-curricular activities to (in part) assess belongingness. When the IR director recently went on leave, Linli took over the role of liaison to the board of trustees, for example in reviewing key performance indicators. She has also supported the institution's accreditation process by reviewing academic programs and writing narratives. In addition to institutional data work, Linli continues her scholarship. She has published two peer-reviewed articles since joining the IR office at Lasell. One area of her research is timely and relevant to higher education generally, linking retention, graduation, and careers. Linli is also the lead author in a study of the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study "to explore factors associated with the likelihood of students employment in STEM fields one year after graduation." The findings linked experiential learning to employment in STEM, but also indicated that career services had shortcomings in STEM job preparation. She presented that research at the National Symposium on Student Retention in New Orleans in 2023, one of eleven presentations she has given since 2022. In the reviews of one of them, commenters wrote "Linli has so much energy and enthusiasm, "Lively and very knowledgeable," and "My favorite session out of the entire conference!" Linli's current

research uses IPEDS data from private institutions to understand the effects of tuition changes. In Linli's words, the goal is to study tuition changes "and their associations with factors such as institutions' size, location, student admission, diversity, and revenue. It aims to provide strategies for small private institutions to attract students while balancing the mission of lower costs for accessibility and ensuring the financial stability of the institution."

Linli is passionate about sharing her expertise in qualitative/quantitative methods and data science using R. She organizes and conducts free professional development workshops for IR offices (or anyone else who wants to join). Her github site ([zhoulunli.github.io/](https://github.com/zhoulunli)) provides free access to R code for a variety of IR-related data projects, including working with data from IPEDS, the National Student Clearinghouse, and Common Data Set, as well as tools for program evaluation and survey analysis. Linli maintains a YouTube channel (@linlisharerresearch), where she shares research tips and methodologies suited to junior researchers or students interested in higher education research. She also volunteers in support of the North East Association for Institutional Research.

In reviewing the criteria for the Rising Star award, it seems to me that Linli checks all the boxes and then some. Despite being new to the IR world, she has launched herself into professionalism, scholarship, and service. The increasing trust of her institution and commensurate responsibilities show that others also see star potential in her as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing the enclosed materials. I appreciate the leadership of AIR in promoting early career professionals with opportunities like this award. As someone nearer the end of my career, it's heartening to see enthusiastic young newcomers who seem to learn a lot faster than I did. They do deserve to be recognized.

Sincerely,



David A Eubanks
Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
Furman University
david.eubanks@furman.edu



Linli Zhou • 1st
Ph.D. | Data Scientist | Leading with Data & Research | Driving...
6mo • 🌐

📌 Exciting Professional Development Workshop Alert! 🌟

Join me tomorrow for a workshop on "Improve IR Efficiency Using R: Data Report, Data Freeze, Web Scraping, and Visualization." 📊 🔍 📄

Date: July 13, 2023
Time: 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM Eastern

I will be presenting a comprehensive session where we'll dive into the power of R in enhancing Institutional Research (IR) efficiency. Learn how to generate impressive data reports, ensure data integrity through data freezing techniques, leverage web scraping to collect web data, and create impactful visualizations.

By incorporating these R skills into your IR toolkit, you can streamline processes, save time, and unlock valuable insights. 🚀

Don't miss out on this opportunity to level up your IR game! Register now at the following link: 🗨️

🔗 Registration Link: [<https://lnkd.in/d8XYcHB5>]

I look forward to having you join me in this informative and practical workshop. See you there! 💡

LETTER OF NOMINATION

Mr. Eric Lanthier
Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research
Lasell University
1844 Commonwealth Ave
Newton, MA 02466

Dear Nominating Committee,

I would like to formally submit my letter of support for Linli Zhou as the recipient of the AIR Rising Star Award for 2024. Since Linli joined the Lasell University community in January 2022, she has helped improve the efficiency of the office and grown in her direct knowledge of the Institutional Research career. She has implemented the use of R into the office's daily routine, which has improved the efficiency of cyclical projects such as confirming enrollments or in the analysis of annual surveys. Linli has taken on additional responsibility within the institution, such as:

- The department's representative on Lasell's Baseline Action and Momentum Committee for DEI
- Manager of student work-study employees
- The department's representative on Lasell's Management Council

In addition to these leadership responsibilities, Linli has helped streamline and develop many of the institution's internal surveys and has put together analysis on datasets related to enrollment, student success in courses, program review, and others, showing a wide range of talents within the IR skillset.

Outside of her work for Lasell, Linli has also represented herself and the institution in several regional and national settings. In the last two years, Linli has participated and presented a variety of listed topics in the following venues:

- **NEAIR 2023:** Generative AI in Higher Ed: ChatGPT's Impact & Strategies for IR/IE
- **National Symposium on Student Retention 2023:**
- **AIR 2023:** Identify and Support At-risk Students at Three Institutions (Panel)
 - Using R to Automate and Reproduce IR Works
- **HEDW Conference 2023:** Using T to Automate and Reproduce IR Works
- **EDUCAUSE 2023:** Informing Advising using Data from Starfish and Canvas (Poster)
- **NEean 2022:** Using and Validating Data to Support Student Success (Panel)

Additionally, Linli currently serves on the North East Association for Institutional Research's Program Committee as the Poster Session Coordinator, a three year term and was awarded the opportunity to participate in the National Center for Education Statistics Data Institute in 2023, a privilege awarded to only 30 participants nationwide that includes a 5-week online course, 18-week group capstone project, and 3-day in-person meeting in Washington D.C.

All these successes have been completed within Linli's first two years of employment after completing her Ph.D. and are evidence of a successful career path in Institutional Research.



Eric Lanthier
AVP, Institutional Research
Lasell University

January 22, 2024

Re: Letter of Support for the Nomination of Linli Zhou for AIR's Rising Star Award

Dear AIR Awards and Scholarship Committee:

I am writing to provide my enthusiastic support to the nomination of Linli Zhou for AIR's Rising Star Award. Having had the privilege to work closely with Linli Zhou over the past 2 years, I have witnessed firsthand the qualities that not only make her an outstanding individual in the IR/IE field but also a young lady full of energy and promise very much deserving a Rising Star Award. If you had the opportunity to interact with Linli or attended one of her sessions at AIR Forum, you would walk away smiling at the level of energy that she conveys in her upbeat yet serious data stories.

I came to know Linli Zhou when I was Chair of the Oversea Chinese Association for Institutional Research. She reached out to me to introduce herself and asked to join the association. At that time, she was a PhD candidate at UCLA and was offered an IR analyst position fully remote in a small college in Boston. Since that encounter, I received many messages from her asking questions on the IR field and the association. Her sincerity and curiosity are totally admirable. She left me a very positive impression of someone who is eager to learn, curious, and aspiring for professional success. In exchanging ideas with her on R, Python, GitHub, and AI, I find her ability to grasp complex concepts and develop meaningful insights is nothing short of remarkable.

One of Linli Zhou's most commendable qualities is her boundless energy and the wealth of innovative ideas she brings to her work. She proactively reached out to collaborators to put together AIR Forum session ideas and was able to make the sessions so lively and interesting that one of my staff who attended her session came back to share with me that she wished that we have the budget to hire her away. We don't have the budget but the thought of recruiting her based on what she can deliver at the Forum is a testament of her ability and charming personality. At the NEAIR Annual Conference in Baltimore in November 2023, Linli partnered with me and Branden Hosch for a standing room only session on generative AI. Her youthful energy and her ability to explain technical terms in tangible ideas is simply amazing. We were so glad that she was on our panel!

Beyond her academic and professional achievements, Linli Zhou is deeply committed to giving back to her community. As a second-year member of the Overseas Chinese Association for Institutional Research (an affiliate of AIR), she was elected to the Steering Committee and has been active in supporting professional development events. She organizes monthly webinars and is very effective in persuading experienced IR practitioners to share their ideas in these webinars. Linli worked tirelessly when she had a goal or a project to go after.

Perhaps one of Linli Zhou's most admirable characteristics is her exceptional interpersonal skills. She possesses a natural ability to connect with colleagues and collaborators on a meaningful level, fostering an environment of collaboration and mutual respect. Her empathetic nature and effective communication skills have made her a beloved member of our community and a valued collaborator in various projects.

In conclusion, Linli Zhou's combination of analytical skills, innovative spirit, can-do attitude, commitment to service, and interpersonal skills make her an exemplary candidate for the AIR Rising Star Award. Her contributions not only signify her current achievements but also her potential to make great impacts in the future for the IR/IE field.

Thank you for considering my endorsement of Linli Zhou. I am confident that her recognition with this award will go a long way to encourage her continued passion and dedication to the IR/IE field.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henry Zheng'.

Henry Zheng
Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
Carnegie Mellon University

January 23, 2024

2023-2024 AIR Awards Selection Committee, Association for Institutional Research

Re: Nomination of Dr. Linli Zhou for the AIR Rising Star Award

Dear AIR Awards Selection Committee Members:

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and show my strong support for the nomination of Dr. Linli Zhou for our Association's Rising Star Award. Ever since Linli started her journey in IR related field as a graduate student in 2018 and attended her very first AIR Forum in 2022, she has found interest in investing her time and energy in the field, seeking out a full-time position in an IR office, and pursuing opportunities to both learning more about institutional research as well as sharing her relevant skills and expertise with the community for advancing our field. In fact, for her second attendance of our AIR Forum in 2023, both of Linli's presentation proposals have been accepted on the topics of "Using R to Automate and Reproduce IR Works" and "Identify and Support At-Risk Students at Three Institutions." The feedback from the forum attendees says it all about her exemplary performance, from "[Linli is the] most engaging and fun speaker I've ever heard at AIR," to "lively and very knowledgeable," to "this was my favorite session out of the ENTIRE conference!" And that's not all! Linli has already given many presentations and published on relevant IR topics even before her masterful presentations at the AIR 2023 Forum, as can be seen on her curriculum vitae. In addition to sharing her work at the AIR Forums, Linli is also actively engaging with other AIR Affiliated Organizations and contributing her knowledge and skills for supporting professional development of the community members. Linli stays very active in the field and has shared her expertise and presented or co-presented on the topics such as "Improve IR Efficiency Using R: Data Report, Data Freeze, Web Scraping, and Visualization," "Retention in STEM: Factors Influencing Student Persistence and Employment," and "Generative AI in Higher Ed: ChatGPT's Impact & Strategies for IR/IE." The topics covered by Linli span from the critical issues related to student success to the challenges and opportunities for IR from the cutting-edge emerging technology with generative AI and machine learning.

With demonstrated enthusiasm and exceptional abilities in tackling issues relevant to our field, Linli is entrusted by the community members and selected by AIR as one of the 30 participants for attending the 2023 NCES Data Institute, elected by the membership to serve as the 2023-24 Member-at-Large for OCAIR, and recognized and awarded with the 2023-24 OCAIR Travel Grant to attend the AIR Forum and the 2023 NEAIR Ambassador Grant to participate in the National Symposium on Student Retention. One of the highlights during my workweeks is seeing Linli's "This Month in IR" e-newsletter that comes through my inbox that offers professional development news and other opportunities to the OCAIR community. In addition to managing the monthly e-newsletter to share helpful resources, Linli is also volunteering to serve as co-editor for the annual newsletter for the group. Personally, I have the opportunity serving alongside Linli on an award selection committee and her work ethic and talents have come through in her approach to complete and enhance the review process. Furthermore, I have attended one of the virtual coffee chats that Linli has co-led to offer tips and a safe space for IR colleagues to learn more about mental health and workplace wellbeing and share their experiences. I have found it very helpful to be reminded of the importance of self-care in the midst of a busy work environment. To my knowledge, Linli is actively engaging in conversations and sharing ideas with various interest groups in the broader IR community, such as supporting higher education students and using R for data analytics, with her goals to inspire others to take steps in improving student support and data analytics, as well as to make a positive impact on higher education through the appropriate use of technology. And with both public and personal knowledge about Linli's many achievements and contributions, I strongly support her nomination for this year's AIR Rising Star Award. Thank you very much for your kind consideration and please don't hesitate to contact me at chow@rose-hulman.edu or by phone at (812) 877-8910 if there is any further information that I can provide to support Linli.

Sincerely,

Timothy Chow, PhD
Director of Institutional Research
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
Former AIR Board Member/INAIR Past President/OCAIR Past Chair

LINLI ZHOU

424 · 355 · 6252 ◇ linli.zhou@ucla.edu ◇ <https://zhoulinli.github.io/>

EDUCATION

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|-------|---|
| Ph.D. | Social Sciences and Comparative Education, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) |
| M.A. | Social Sciences and Comparative Education, UCLA |
| B.A. | Education and Pedagogy, Beijing Normal University (BNU) |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

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| Lasell University - Office of Institutional Research <i>Institutional Research Analyst</i> | Jan 2022 - Present <i>Newton, MA (remote)</i> |
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- Designed survey assessments and developed interactive visualizations and dashboards
- Prepared and managed data for internal and external reporting (e.g. Accreditation, program review, national survey benchmarking, IPEDS, Common Dataset, US News)
- Utilized predictive modeling to optimize institutional and student success in yield/admission, retention, graduation, satisfaction, and success

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| UCLA - Diversity, Inclusion and Admission Office <i>Graduate-Undergraduate Mentorship Program Ambassador</i> | Sep 2017 - 2019 <i>Los Angeles, CA</i> |
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| Duke University - International Campus <i>Research Intern</i> | Jun - Sep 2017 <i>Kunshan, China</i> |
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| University of Southern California (USC) - International Office <i>Director Assistant</i> | Sep 2016 - Jun 2017 <i>Beijing, China</i> |
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| Beijing Normal University (BNU) - Department of Education <i>Research Intern</i> | Sep 2014 - Jun 2017 <i>Beijing, China</i> |
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CONSULTING EXPERIENCES

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|------|---|
| 2021 | Research Consultant, Moonshot Academy |
| 2020 | Research Consultant, Cogita Education Initiatives |
| 2019 | Research Consultant, LingYun Education |
| 2018 | Research Consultant, USA-UES |

TEACHING EXPERIENCES

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| 2021 | Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Empirical Research and Statistics, UCLA |
| 2020 | Teaching Assistant, Technology and Society, UCLA |
| 2019 | Instructor, Research Writing and Design, Academic Pioneer Education Institute |
| 2018 | Instructor, Assessment for Teaching & Learning, Peer Experience Exchange Rostrum |
| 2017 | Online Curriculum Developer, Electronic Classroom Project |

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Zhou, L., Stratton, D., & Li X. (2023). STEM Occupation Choice for College Graduates: Retention from Higher Education to Workforce. National Symposium on Student Retention Conference Proceeding.

Zhou, L. (2023). Teaching COVID-19 for Social Justice Purposes at College Social Sciences Seminars. In Waghid Y. & Gross Z. (Eds.), The World Council of Comparative Education Societies Book Series.

Zhou, L. (2022). Expectations, Challenges, and Strategies for Developing Global Competence: Experiences of Chinese International Graduate Students in the United States [Book] (Doctoral dissertation, UCLA).

Zhou, L. (2021). Cross-Cultural Mentoring: Cultural Awareness and Identity Empowerment. InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies.

Zhou, L., & Li, J. (2021). Developing Core Competence With Project-Based Learning: Voices From Chinese High School Students Serving Visually Impaired Students. ECNU Review of Education.

Zhou, L., & Li, N. (2021). Supporting Remote Learning Design at Universities: Lessons from China's EdTech Response to COVID-19. In Hokanson, B. (Eds.), Learning: Design, Engagement & Definition.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Zhou, L., & Stratton, D., Leveraging NCES Data for Student and Institutional Success Research. (2024 May 28) AIR Annual Conference. [Under review]

Zhou, L., Machine Learning for Student Success: A Journey in Institutional Research. (2024 May 28) AIR Annual Conference. [Under review]

Zhou, L., & Li X., Tuition Reset in Private Institutions: Institutional Characteristics and Outcomes. (2024 May 28) AIR Annual Conference. [Under review]

Zheng, H, **Zhou, L.**, Hosch, B & Shen, C. (2023, November 7). Exploring ChatGPT's Implications on IR [Speaker Session]. North East Association for Institutional Research (NEAIR) Annual Conference.

Zhou, L. (2023, July 13). Improve IR Efficiency Using R: Data Report, Data Freeze, Web Scraping, and Visualization [Professional Development Workshop]. NEAIR.

Gershardsen, A., Hu, T. L., Shin, G., Stratton, D., Woods, J. & **Zhou, L.** (2023 June 15). Diversity in Post-Baccalaureate Education and Occupations. National Center for Education Statistics Data Institute.

Zhou, L. (2023, May 31). Identify and Support At-risk Students at Three Institutions [Panel Presentation]. The 2023 Association of Institutional Research (AIR) Forum.

Zhou, L. (2023, May 30). Using R to Automate and Reproduce IR Works [Speaker Presentation]. The 2023 Association of Institutional Research (AIR) Forum.

Zhou, L. (2023, April 25). Using R to Automate and Reproduce IR Works [Speaker Presentation]. The 20th Annual Higher Education Data Warehousing (HEDW) Conference.

Burgiel, H., **Zhou, L.** (2023, March 27). Informing Advising using Data from Starfish and Canvas [Poster Presentation]. 2023 EDUCAUSE NorthEast Regional Computing Program Annual Conference.

Burgiel, H., **Zhou, L.**, Radlo, D. & Niestepski, M. (2022, November 3). Using and Validating Data to Support Student Success [Panel Presentation]. New England Educational Assessment Network Forum.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Quantitative Survey, Quasi-Experimental Design, Regression, Predictive Modeling

Qualitative Interview, Case Study, Thematic Analysis, Text Mining

Softwares R, Python, Excel, SQL, Tableau, Alchemer, Github, LaTeX, MS Office

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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| 2022 - 2025 | Poster Session Coordinator, North East Association of Institutional Research (NEAIR) |
| 2023 - 2024 | Elected Member at Large, Overseas Chinese Association of Institutional Research (OCAIR) |
| 2023 | Reviewer, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Institute |
| 2018 - 2019 | Communication Officer, Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) |
| 2016 - 2022 | Editor Assistant, Journal of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies |

AWARDS AND HONORS

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|------|---|
| 2023 | Ambassador Grant, NEAIR |
| 2022 | Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA |
| 2016 | Innovative Research Project Award, BNU |
| 2016 | National Encouragement Scholarship, China Ministry of Education |