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May, 2018

Dear AIR Colleagues,

I am extremely pleased and honored to be the recipient for the 2018 AIR Sydney Suslow Scholar Award. What a wonderful surprise to receive the call from AIR President Ellen Peters informing me that I had been selected. I am humbled and proud to be included among previous recipients of this award that recognizes Dr. Suslow's focus on research and scholarship that advances the theory, study, and practice of institutional research.

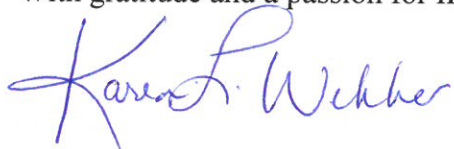
Over the past 30 years, I am honored to have worked with and be mentored by many outstanding leaders and thinkers in the field. Colleagues and work tasks have provided me with myriad opportunities to learn, grow, and refine my own thinking and skills related to IR, decision support, and academic planning. I value my numerous service roles within AIR, including chair of the professional service committee, member of the nominating committee, faculty member in the AIR Summer Institutes, fellow of the Data Policy Institute, discussant on an AIR webinar, mentor for the AIR Data Policy Institute, and member of the data policy committee. I am pleased to have authored a number of peer-reviewed articles and two volumes of *New Directions for Institutional Research*. I am very pleased to have co-edited a book on *Institutional Research and Planning in Higher Education: Global Contexts and Themes* in 2015 and most recently, *Building Capacity in IR and Decision Support* in 2018. My scholarly work on IR has attempted to discuss strategies and considerations for how to make the IR profession and its practitioners stronger and more valued in our higher education settings.

I am deeply indebted to have worked with many great IR colleagues over the years. Who would have known that meeting Dr. Rob Toutkoushian, Sandi Bramblett, and many others in NEAIR and SAIR would turn into 20+ year friendships? Space limits my ability to acknowledge many colleagues who benefitted me over the years. From my early days at The University of Delaware's Office of Institutional Research & Planning to the University of Georgia's Office of Institutional Research, and now as a tenured faculty member in UGA's Institute of Higher Education, I have benefitted from the wisdom of many scholars and innovators. In my early days, University of Delaware colleagues Mike Middaugh and Dale Trusheim set a high bar for IR work and encouraged me to get involved in AIR (I have presented a scholarly paper, workshop, or workshare at every AIR Forum since 1988). University of Georgia's Vice Provost Bob Boehmer (now president, East Georgia State College) took a chance on me and provided unwavering support and political wisdom as I navigated my new environment.

My current home in UGA's Institute of Higher Education has afforded me a unique opportunity to deepen my scholarly understanding of higher education and IR globally. I have benefitted from colleagues like Professor Jan Botha at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, Angel Calderon at RMIT in Australia, and Dr. Charles Mathies at Finland's University of Jyväskylä. I am especially grateful to Professor and IHE Director Libby Morris for her encouragement that part of my research program focus on IR, and I am honored to be afforded the opportunity to work in an academic department where, prior to being established as its own unit, IR originated for the institution!

Indeed, Terenzini's Tiers of Organizational Intelligence (1993, 2003) resonate well and guide my thinking. The rapid changes of globalization, technology, and growing emphases on data analytics and governance that require IR to be central in decision making will require IR leaders of tomorrow to be nimble but exceptionally thoughtful. I am honored to have been a part of the conversations for the past three decades and hope to remain a part of similar dialogues in the future!

With gratitude and a passion for IR,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen L. Webber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

Karen L. Webber