

December 29, 2017

Association for Institutional Research
Awards Selection Committee
1983 Centre Pointe Blvd. #101
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Re: Nomination for the Sidney Suslow Scholar Award

Dear Colleagues,

With great pride, we nominate our colleague, Dr. Karen Webber, to receive the Sidney Suslow Scholar Award from the Association for Institutional Research (AIR). The Suslow Award “recognizes an individual who, through scholarly work, has made significant contributions to the field of institutional research and advanced understanding of the profession in a meaningful way.” According to AIR, the Suslow Award requires first that a candidate’s scholarly work has advanced the field of institutional research and its theory, study, practice, application, tools, and/or models. Secondly, the scholarly work must represent original, meritorious and/or creative contributions or applications. Finally, the work must be broadly recognized as being of high quality in its conceptual framework, its presentation and development of relevant ideas and practice, and its implications and applications for institutional research and related higher education policy and practice. Dr. Webber’s scholarly contributions exceed the criteria for the award as outlined below and detailed in her CV as well as in the letters of support gathered from her colleagues on her behalf.

With over 30 years of experience, Dr. Webber’s work notably addresses higher education effectiveness including faculty roles and productivity, graduate education, gender equity, undergraduate student experiences and the importance of building capacity for institutional research and decision support. Her primary research interests are centered in the assessment of academic, cognitive and psychosocial growth of college students as well as gender studies and higher education data management. As Dr. Heather Kelly stated in her letter of support for this nomination, “Karen was doing assessment and outcomes research well before it was ‘in-vogue’ making her a pioneer in this regard.” Dr. Webber’s longitudinal study to capture college student experiences laid a foundation for scholarly work on student academic performance, financial aid, engagement in co-curricular programs, and a host of other topics that are critical to successful outcomes for college students.

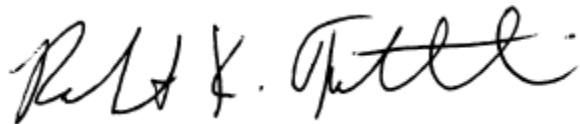
Dr. Webber has expanded her network of colleagues to include people from all over the world to ensure that the practice of institutional research stays true to its scholarly nature while being innovative to address the interdisciplinary needs of higher education. Among her many publications, she has edited four books over the last ten years that bring global perspectives to institutional research. The chapter authors constitute a “Who’s Who” in higher education research. Dr. John Muffo, a Suslow Award recipient, noted that “Karen has not only published a significant amount of scholarly work in higher education and specifically institutional research, but she has also helped connect institutional research with student affairs and other areas of

higher education.” Proof of this statement can be found in the list of journals and magazines that have accepted Dr. Webber’s work for publication including *NACUBO Business Officer*, *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *Research in Higher Education*, and *Journal of College Student Development*, among many others.

In addition to her scholarly work, Dr. Webber shares her time and expertise in educating the next generation of higher education professionals. Past AIR President Jim Trainer states “She is a trusted professional colleague and mentor and has contributed, and continues to contribute, invaluable service and leadership to the organizations to which she belongs, including AIR, NEAIR, SAIR, and SCUP.” Indeed, Dr. Webber received the Distinguished Service Award from the Society of College and University Planners (SCUP) in 2016 for her collaborative work in creating the SCUP Planning Institute. She is a long-time faculty member of AIR’s own Foundations Institutes and has contributed much in service to our regional affiliates.

Dr. Webber embodies the true spirit of the Sidney Suslow Scholar Award. We are confident that she will continue to represent the best that our profession has to offer and we are honored to submit this nomination on her behalf. Please let us know if we can answer any questions or provide additional information. We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert K. Toutkoushian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line at the end.

Robert K. Toutkoushian, Ph.D.
Professor, Institute of Higher Education
University of Georgia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandi Bramblett". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Sandi Bramblett
Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research & Enterprise Data Management
Georgia Institute of Technology

To: Sidney Suslow Award Committee
From: John Muffo
Subject: Karen Webber Nomination

This is in support of the nomination of Karen Webber for the Sidney Suslow Award for the Association for Institutional Research. I have known Karen and her work for many years and feel that she exemplifies the high standards of this award in several ways. First, Karen has not only published a significant amount of scholarly work in higher education and specifically in institutional research, but she has also helped connect institutional research with student affairs and other areas of higher education. Secondly, Karen has consistently contributed to the continuing education of institutional researchers through her participation in workshops and the institutes program. She is one of the few higher education scholars who has consistently participated in the activities of AIR over a long period of time and in an active manner, probably with little benefit to her academic career. In some respects this recognition is overdue.

For these reasons I wholeheartedly support the candidacy of Karen Webber for the Sidney Suslow Award.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John A. Muffo". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the main body of text.



Office of Institutional Research
& Effectiveness
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

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334 HULLIHEN HALL
NEWARK, DE 19716-0172
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November 3, 2017

Dr. Robert K. Toutkoushian
Professor, Institute of Higher Education
Meigs Hall, Room 114
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602

Dear Rob,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I write this letter in support of Dr. Karen Webber being nominated for the 2018 Sidney Suslow Scholar Award. Karen is nationally recognized as a premier institutional researcher and scholar. Karen's course *The American College Student* where I conducted an ethnographic study strongly influenced my decision to pursue a graduate degree in higher education. Karen was also instrumental in my joining institutional research at the University of Delaware. While at the University, I had the opportunity to be involved with Karen's research activities where I benefited immensely from Karen's expertise and mentoring.

Karen puts "research" into institutional research. What struck me most was that Karen went beyond the numbers asking the "why" question. Karen was doing assessment and outcomes research well before it was "in-vogue" making her a pioneer in this regard. For example, two decades ago Karen conducted a longitudinal study to capture college student experiences. Being a pioneer in higher education research has become Karen's mission. Karen's notable research contributions over the years are extensive and diverse and cover topics relevant to undergraduate students (e.g., campus climate, general education, distance learning, problem-based learning, undergraduate research, grade inflation, success and satisfaction, student loan defaults); graduate students (e.g., doctoral degree completion, student debt, post-doctoral experience); and faculty (e.g., satisfaction, STEM career paths, competitive salaries and salary differences, faculty productivity) --- all with the goal of improving higher education. In addition to these numerous research contributions to higher education, Karen has made research contributions specific to institutional research including four books/monographs, almost a dozen book chapters, and a refereed journal article. Beyond Karen's regular contributions at AIR Forums, Karen looks for opportunities to collaborate with IR professionals and scholars so that many may directly benefit from her research efforts.

Karen's scholarship is a great contribution to the IR profession that leads to improvement in higher education and positively impacts student success. It is dedication like Karen's that makes it possible to turn institutional research into scholarship. I strongly support that Karen be awarded the 2018 AIR Sidney Suslow Scholar Award. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather A. Kelly

Heather A. Kelly, Ed.D.

Director of Institutional Research



JAMES F. TRAINER, PHD
AVP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OFFICE of PLANNING and INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

December 28, 2017

Association for Institutional Research
Awards Selection Committee

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to join Dr. Robert H. Toutkoushian, himself a past honoree, in endorsing his nomination of Dr. Karen L. Webber for the Association for Institutional Research's Sidney Suslow Scholar Award. Dr. Webber's scholarly contributions, over three decades, have been absolutely outstanding. She has published nearly three dozen articles in refereed journals (with more to come), twenty one book chapters, and authored and/or edited seven books. In addition, she has written a number of working papers and research reports. Her scholarly presentations number in the dozens, and she is a frequent invited speaker and workshop presenter. She has worked on and/or led fifteen externally funded, sponsored research efforts.

Dr. Webber has published across an array of topics and in a variety of journals and venues. Her earliest work was in her native field of Psychology, but now includes such topics as assessment, engineering education, faculty careers, general education, grade inflation, planning, research productivity, student development, and STEM. Of late, she has turned her attention to the practice of institutional research. Indeed, I look forward to receiving and reading my pre-ordered copy of her new book, *Building Capacity in Institutional Research and Decision Support in Higher Education*, when it becomes available in February 2018, as it will "examine the relevant roles, skills and knowledge needed to build the institutional research capacity across the higher education sector globally" – clearly an important topic for those in our profession.

However, well beyond Webber's absolutely outstanding scholarly record, she is impressive in many other ways. She is a trusted professional colleague and mentor and has contributed, and continues to contribute, invaluable service and leadership to the organizations to which she belongs, including AIR, NEAIR, SAIR, and SCUP. But, beyond all that, what may be most impressive about Karen is simply her demeanor -- leading and contributing, by example, in an unassuming, unobtrusive, constructive way. Indeed, she may very well attempt to argue that there are others who should receive the Suslow Award before she does -- which, in my opinion, may not be true and is all the more reason why she should receive it.

I thank you in advance for considering Karen Webber for this honor and would be happy to address any questions you may have for me. I wish you well in your deliberations. Thank you for your service to AIR.

Sincerely,

Charles Mathies
Academy of Finland Research Fellow
Finnish Institute for Educational Research
University of Jyväskylä

December 28, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today to support the nomination of Karen Webber for AIR's Sidney Suslow Scholar Award. I believe she has advanced the field of institutional research significantly through her scholarship, research, teaching, and practice. She is a vocal advocate for institutional research not just within North America, but also globally.

I met Karen over 15 years ago when she came to the University of Georgia (UGA) as the director of institutional research. Shortly after our initial meeting, I went to work for Karen in the institutional research office at UGA where she served as my direct supervisor for over 5 years. I continued my professional relationship with Karen when she moved to a faculty position within the Institute of Higher Education (IHE) at UGA. It was during this when our first scholarly collaboration (journal article on grade inflation) was published. After I left UGA in 2011 we continued our scholarly collaborations through publications and workshops all over the globe.

Karen's scholarship is of the highest quality and she is constantly in demand globally. I have collaborated with her on a multi-day workshop (on the practice of institutional research) in Croatia and she has been a keynote speaker at institutional research conferences in the UK, South Africa, Australia and in the Middle East. Her passion for institutional research is visible in her scholarship as she promotes responsible use of data in evidence-based decision making. She is a forward thinker in the field evidenced by her role as an editor for multiple books and a NDIR volume on institutional research. She has also published journal articles in the leading higher education journals on topics related to institutional research. In a number of these articles, she has taken an in-depth IR study and expanded it into a full journal article. This takes a high-level of skill to not only complete the study (article), but to understand how it all fits together into the larger landscape of higher education. Lastly, she teaches a course on institutional research at IHE and has worked with a number of graduate students (PhD and masters) to publish their final project from the course. This has created a lasting impact with many of students taking professional positions in the IR field (or in related area).

In closing, I highly recommend Karen for the Sidney Suslow Scholar Award and I am happy to provide additional information for her candidacy.

Sincerely,
Charles Mathies, PhD