



Alabama Association for Institutional Research

## NEWSLETTER

January 14, 1991

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### SAIR MEETS IN FT. LAUDERDALE

by Don Dailey  
ALAIR Vice President

Several institutional researchers and planners met in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida on October 10-12 for fun in the sun at the annual SAIR/SCUP conference. Actually, it was pretty windy the first couple of days, then finally settled down for some nice weather.

The theme of the conference was "Information for Educational Improvement", which dealt with the issues of integrating planning and institutional research to improve the quality of education, and the impact of planning on the improvement of teaching and learning. In addition, the conference offered a wide variety of workshops, papers, panels, software demonstrations and breakfast roundtables. Topics included subjects such as outcomes assessment, enrollment projections, student-faculty interaction, remediation and teacher effectiveness.

Listed below are Alabamians who played active roles in the conference:

Al Searway, JSU--chaired workshops planning;  
Glenna Brown, UAB--chaired SCUP South Central regional meeting;  
Julia Rogers, UM--workshop presentation;  
Kathleen Ballard, UA--workshop presentation;  
Kay Staub, UA--presented paper; and  
Don Dailey, UAB--chaired ALAIR meeting.

During the ALAIR special interest meeting, the group discussed the current objectives of increasing visibility and expanding involvement as a grass-roots organization. A program interest survey was sent to ALAIR and non-ALAIR members this past fall to enhance this theme. Of course, this year's state conference, to be held in Tuscaloosa in April, was discussed. A



continuing discussion revolves around the issue of whether to present the conference in a one or two-day format, which needs to be addressed with sensitivity to members from large and small colleges.

Another continuing issue discussed is the idea of bringing SAIR to Alabama. SAIR is interested in selecting a centrally located site for its 1992 conference, and Alabama is considered a good candidate. Anyone interested? If so, please call Don Dailey at 934-3405. Finally, it was mentioned that Debbie Dailey (UAB) is drafting a history of ALAIR. Plans are also being made to house the archives of ALAIR in the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

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#### ALAIR INTEREST SURVEY RESULTS TABULATED

This past fall the Executive Committee surveyed ALAIR members and others in the State to identify their interests in topics for upcoming conference sessions. Student and enrollment information received the highest responses, while planning and institutional research came in second. The topics are ranked below by level of interest, as determined by frequency of responses:

- Student & Enrollment Management
- Planning & Institutional Research
- Outcomes Assessment
- Methodologies, Tools & Resources
- Financial Resources
- Faculty/Personnel Data
- Physical Resources
- Governance

In addition, two conference formatting questions were asked, and resulted in the conclusion that preference is given to one day conferences over two day conferences. There is also a majority interest in regional workshops being offered.

If you have more specific ideas about topics or formatting for the conference, or if you would like to volunteer to present information on one of the above topics at the April meeting, please contact Don Dailey at 934-3405.

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#### DO YOU KNOW POTENTIAL ALAIR MEMBERS?

If you know someone who might have an interest in belonging to our organization, send his or her name and mailing address to Secretary/Treasurer Jim Carlson (Director, Planning, Information



Analysis and Computing Services, AUM, 7300 University Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117). Jim will make sure the person is included on the mailing list to receive information about the annual conference in April.

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#### WOULD YOUR INSTITUTION LIKE TO HOST AN ANNUAL MEETING?

The Executive Committee is charged with setting the sites for the Spring Annual Meeting each year. We will be accepting invitations to host the Spring 1992 meeting through February 28, 1991. If your institution would be willing to serve as a host for our group, please send a written invitation to ALAIR through Dr. Kitty Collier (Director of Planning, ACHE, Suite 221, One Court Square, Montgomery, AL 36104-3584).

To give you some idea of what is involved in hosting an annual meeting, Teresa Hall, chair of last year's local arrangements committee, has prepared some "tips" on hosting an ALAIR meeting. According to Teresa, "hosting responsibilities" include: 1) securing rooms for meetings, audiovisual and amplification equipment, and a registration site; 2) making arrangements for the luncheon; 3) making arrangements for break food; 4) assembling registration folders; 5) "manning" the registration table; and 6) providing the program chair with advance information on a variety of topics.

For a complete copy of "Hosting ALAIR Annual Meeting", contact Teresa Hall or Kitty Collier.

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#### MEMBER NEWS . . .

Don Threlkeld has retired as Vice President for Institutional Planning and Research at TSUM. Don plans to spend his time working on his farm, entertaining his two grandchildren, and occasionally teaching. Assuming Don's responsibilities will be Frederick Stewart who has been named Vice President for Planning & Special Activities and Assistant to the President at TSUM.

Dr. Judy Miller (Enterprise State Junior College) has been elected Vice President for Programs of the Alabama Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors.

Congratulations to Subrena Simpkins (ACHE) on the birth of a 5 lb. 12 oz. son, Jairius Decari Simpkins, on December 26, 1990.

Delmer Duboise (Northwest Alabama Community College) is Institutional Research Interest Group Chairperson for the Alabama College Association.

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education  
Joint UA/SCUP Conference  
The University of Alabama  
January 24-25, 1991  
Featured Speaker: Dr. Richard Light  
Author of the Harvard Assessment Seminars  
Contact: Dr. Don Crump (205-348-8335)**

**SCUP Facilities Conference  
Atlanta  
February 28-March 1, 1991  
Keynote Speaker: Mr. Walt Schaw  
Executive Vice President of the Association  
of Physical Plant Administrators  
of Universities and Colleges  
Contact: Dr. Glenna Brown (205-934-2384)**

**ALAIR Fifth Annual Meeting  
The University of Alabama  
April 24, 1991  
Contact: Mr. Don Dailey (205-934-3405)**

**1991 AIR Forum  
San Francisco  
May 26-29, 1991  
Contact: Ms. Jean C. Chulak (904-644-4470)**

**Society for College & University Planning  
Seattle  
July 14-17, 1991  
Contact: Dr. Al Searway (205-782-5557)**

**1991 SAIR CONFERENCE  
Oklahoma City  
October 6-8, 1991  
Contact: Dr. Brenda Rogers (919-560-6367)**

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## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ALABAMA ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH**

**By Debbie Dailey  
Immediate Past President**

The group we have come to know as ALAIR has its roots in the early 1970s. A core group of people recognized the need for a state organization to assist in the growing field of institutional research. On November 7, 1973, a group of 29 persons representing 17 institutions met at the Smolian House of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The invitation to participate was issued by Joseph T. Sutton, then Vice President for Institutional Studies and Services at The University of Alabama. Topics of discussion included the organization of a state institutional research group, research projects at the different institutions, and statewide reporting requirements. The first officers were Freddie W. Wood (TSU), President; Gary Strock (UA), Vice President; William H. McWhorter (L.B. Wallace St. Jr. College), Treasurer; and James A. Milner (Jefferson St. Jr. College), Secretary.

The group was officially organized on April 4, 1974 as the Alabama Association for Institutional Research (AAIR).

Few organized institutional research offices existed in Alabama at that time. One of the major accomplishments of AAIR was the assistance provided by its membership in helping to establish IR offices in the State. There were no more official meetings of the group.

In 1987 the need for a statewide IR group was evident. Through the years mention was made frequently about this need, but the advent of new requirements by SACS became a catalyst for action. A requirement for evaluation of institutional effectiveness was implemented and a mandate for institutional research was mandated.

Kay Staub (UA) chaired a steering committee consisting of: John Baker (ASU); Debbie Brewton (Dailey) (UAB); Lora P. Conrad (Northwest Jr. College); Gerald Leischuck (AU); Robert Lewis (Talladega College); Raymond Lewiski (Community College of the Air Force); John Porter (UA); Randall Powell (UAH); Ed Rutledge (ACHE); Bill Ward (LU); and Al Yeager (USA).

On September 23, 1987, the first annual meeting of the Alabama Association for Institutional Research (now ALAIR) met at the Medical Center Holiday Inn in Birmingham. The conference theme was "Strategic Planning and Outcomes Assessment." Featured speakers were James Firnberg (Louisiana State University at Alexandria), James O. Nichols (University of Mississippi), James T. Rogers (SACS), and Joseph T. Sutton (ACHE). The conference



was quite successful and the resurrected state group began with 87 members.

A business meeting was held at which the following officers were elected: Al Yeager (USA), President; Thomas J. McAlpine (AAMU), Vice President/President-Elect; and Harriott Calhoun (Jefferson St. Jr. College), Secretary/Treasurer. The two appointed members-at-large as designated in the ALAIR constitution, were Randall Powell (UAH) and Lora Conrad (Northwest Jr. College).

The second annual meeting came quickly, as the desire of the membership was to hold annual meetings in the spring. ALAIR met on April 21, 1988 in Montgomery on the campus of Alabama State University. "Building and Expanding Institutional Research" was the conference theme. Professional development workshops led by ALAIR members were offered. Workshop presenters were Raymond Lewiski (Community College of the Air Force) and Ed Rutledge (ACHE). Harriott Calhoun (Jefferson St. Jr. College), Robert Lewis (Talladega College), John Porter (UA) and Freddie Wood (UNA) were members of a panel discussion. The keynote speaker was Cameron L. Fincher (University of Georgia). Almost 80 Alabama institutional researchers attended this meeting. Officers elected were: Debbie Brewton (Dailey) (UAB), Vice President/President-Elect and Bobbie Glassco (Snead St. Jr. College), Secretary/Treasurer. Appointed Members-At-Large included Myrtes Green (Stillman College) and Bill Ward (LU).

"Developing the Institutional Research Office: A Nuts and Bolts Approach" attracted 80 ALAIR members to the campus of UAB on April 6, 1989. Workshop presenters included Don Dailey (UAH), Randall Powell (UAH), Karen Freemon (UAH), Johnny Johnson (UAH), Sam Lowther (AU), and Janet Richardson (AU). Roundtable discussion leaders were Brenda Bryant (ASU), Al Searway (JSU), and O'Neal Smitherman (UA System). The keynote speaker was James R. Montgomery of Virginia Polytechnic and State University. Officers elected at this meeting were Kitty C. Collier (ACHE), Vice President/President-Elect and Janet Richardson (AU), Secretary/Treasurer. Janet moved to St. Leo's College in Florida and was unable to fulfill the responsibilities of the office. Judy Miller (Enterprise St. Jr. College) took over the office. Members-at-Large for 1989-90 included Brenda Bryant (ASU), Al Searway (JSU), and Karen Stanfield (Wallace St. Comm. College in Hanceville).

On April 26, 1990, ALAIR met for its fourth annual conference on the campus of Auburn University. The theme was "From Statistics to Strategy: Making the Most of Institutional Research". A presidential panel consisted of John Blackburn (Blackburn Educational Technologies), Asa Green (LU) and Charles McCallum (UAB). Other panels included William H. Freund (National Center for Education Statistics), Harriott Calhoun



(Jefferson St. Community College) and Al Yeager (USA). Roundtable discussions were lead by Sharon Kolb (Executive Budget Office), Gene Murphree (Legislative Fiscal Office), Ed Rutledge (ACHE), Judy Miller (Enterprise St. Jr. College), Gary Robertson (Patrick Henry St. Jr. College), and Delmer DuBoise (Northwest Community College). The luncheon speaker was Joseph T. Sutton of ACHE. Sutton was recognized by ALAIR for his contributions to institutional research in Alabama. Officers elected for 1990-91 included Don Dailey (UAB), Vice President/President-Elect and Richard Middaugh (USA), Secretary Treasurer. Richard accepted a new position in Texas shortly after his election, and Jim Carlson (AUM) accepted the position. The Nominating Committee was elected for the first time and included Brenda Bryant (ASU) and Julia S. Rogers (UM). Appointed Members-At-Large include Harriott Calhoun (Jefferson St. Community College), Ronald E. Estridge (Southern Union St. Jr. College), and Myrtes Green (Stillman College).

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**AN URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ELECTION OF OFFICERS!!**

It is extremely important that we utilize the expertise, experience, and spirit of service which exists within our organization. We are urging each and every member to consider running for office and/or to nominate colleagues they believe would be qualified and who would be willing to serve as officers. It is vitally important that each of us take this responsibility seriously and personally. The future success of ALAIR depends on the full participation of the membership.

\* \* \* \* \* Call For Nominations \* \* \* \* \*

Please indicate in the spaces below the names of individuals you feel would be willing to serve as officers of ALAIR. You may nominate yourself or a colleague. This is very important!! Please return the completed form by March 15 to:

Debbie Dailey  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
212 CHSB, 19th Street  
UAB Station  
Birmingham, AL 35294  
Telephone: 934-3254

Nominations

for: Vice President/President-elect \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary-Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Nominating Committee \_\_\_\_\_

Other (no specific office in mind)

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**DON'T FORGET! THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT  
AND YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VITAL!**

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## GUEST COMMENTARY: ALABAMA INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

by Gerald Leischuck

At the Executive Committee's request, Gerald Leischuck, one of ALAIR's "founding fathers", provides his perspective on the history of institutional research in Alabama and offers observations about the future. Leischuck is the Executive Director of the Office of Planning and Analysis and Secretary to the Board of Trustees at Auburn University.

Institutional self analysis is probably as old as higher education. Within most universities there always have been persons who, as part of their regular duties, routinely assimilated and reported data on various aspects of institutional operations. The registrar attended to matters related to students, the business officer kept information on finances, the personnel director oversaw data on employees, the chief academic officer reported on topics related to academic programs, and the physical plant director kept up with buildings and their utilization. Together, these and other persons conducted whatever institutional research was required.

Two major developments in higher education in the 1950s served as primary impetus for the formalization of institutional research offices. First, there was the rapid growth of universities following World War II, where it became commonplace for enrollments to exceed 30,000 students. From this growth arose increased complexity of institutional operations. Universities became so large and operations so complex that it no longer was efficient to saddle existing offices with the added burdens of routine institutional research activity. A second development compounded matters. As universities became large and complex, there emerged from external agencies greater interest in institutional matters. (More recently, we have come to label this the accountability movement.) At any rate, college and university presidents increasingly were called upon to react to inquiries from state and federal agencies, accreditation bodies, granting agencies, professional societies, and the press. These external demands for data about any and all aspects of university activity highlighted the need for a formalized process of institutional self analysis. It was in response to these developments that offices of institutional research were born.

Institutional research in Alabama parallels the general development sketched above. Since colleges and universities in this state were smaller and grew less rapidly than those in the midwest, formalized internal analysis activity was slower to emerge. My knowledge of the first Alabama institutional research office dates to 1960. During the institutional self-study phase of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirmation process at Auburn University, it became apparent that there was need for a central agency to assimilate, analyze and report data about all aspects of the institution's activity. The self-study demonstrated



that the institutional research process in a decentralized mode did not serve the University well. President Ralph B. Draughon, already aware of such offices at major public universities in the midwest, implemented the recommendation and selected Dr. John Swanson to organize the office. The University of Alabama organized its formal institutional research office in the mid-1960s, and enticed Dr. Joe Sutton back to the State from Stetson University. Soon thereafter, other offices were organized in senior and junior colleges throughout Alabama.

Although more recent, a third major development had a significant role in elevating the visibility of institutional research in the State and region. With the Southern Association's decision to base accreditation judgments upon institutional effectiveness factors, no longer could institutional research be an ad hoc consideration. The new criteria specify that there be formal designation of a person to oversee institutional research efforts on a continuing basis. This resulted in a wave of additional offices being formalized, particularly in the two-year sector, and responsibility added to existing offices. Today, it is an exception to find a postsecondary institution without some formal arrangement for continuous institutional self-study.

In spite of a 30-year history, institutional research is not a well-defined and generally understood administrative function. Even within the higher education community, it often is necessary to describe one's work as a way of explaining what institutional research means. A major reason for this problem may be based in the fact that the character of institutional research offices is as different as are the colleges that support them. In no small measure, the office embodies what the president desires. By way of verification, one need only note the number of changes that occur in these offices with the naming of a new president.

At Auburn University, the Office of Planning and Analysis has undergone a number of major changes since its early days, as its very designation would indicate. First known as the Office of Institutional Research, the unit was called "Institutional analysis" for a large part of its existence, and became the Office of Planning and Analysis in 1985. Nationally, there is wide variance in the way these offices are titled. We believe that Planning and Analysis is a name that fits well for the role that this agency plays in the context of Auburn's administration.

As I reduce my own personal involvement in institutional research matters, I do spend some time reflecting upon the profession's past and possible future. Like other dynamic activities, the institutional research process will continue to evolve. Without doubt, there will be increased requirement for what we do. In fact, the institutional research function may become so important that it is wrested from the institutional researchers. Unless the professionals are sufficiently forceful in epitomizing two important aspects of their operations, others in the administration may seek to fulfill this purpose.

First, institutional researchers, through their presidents, must be persuasive in conveying the importance of having one agency in position of examining data about all aspects of institutional operations--without having a vested interest in any particular function. Other campus administrators have functional area responsibilities first, then have concern for the inter-relatedness of the several functions. Independence can occur best when the institutional research office has direct reporting relationship to the president. Second, institutional researchers must perform well those responsibilities assigned to them. When the institutional research office ceases to be prompt and effective in its response to information requirements, the requestor will turn to alternate sources. To have this occur with any regularity will jeopardize institutional research as a viable, separate function.

Increasingly, vice presidents' offices are adding personnel in the form of assistant and associate vice presidents. These executives, in turn, are building staffs to assist with their operations. At its worse, the lack of effective visibility and persuasive communication by institutional researchers tends to erode the activities traditionally associated with institutional research and diminish the influence of these offices. Even at best, such an environment can produce competing pockets of analysts that duplicate the institutional research function. Where this occurs, conflicting information often is released, with the result that the client's confidence is undermined.

I bring this to a close by reiterating my optimism for the future of our profession. We have a perspective of institutional operations shared few within our college or university. Future success and growth of this enterprise will be related directly to our effectiveness in communicating our mission, and in fulfilling it with prompt and reliable information that undergirds sound institutional policies and decisions. Absent this leadership, others within the institution will move to provide the services that have become synonymous with offices of institutional research.

Tomorrow's institutional researchers will resemble our predecessors only in their service orientation. Otherwise, our successors will be more sophisticated in policy analysis, developing information that will permit decision-makers to review the possible consequences of action before it is taken. I envision the next generation of institutional researchers as the interlocking weave that supports the fabric of the institution's administrative structure.