The First Year

Learnings From My First Year in an Institutional Effectiveness Department

Lisa Kimble, Administrative Secretary / Research Assistant
INTRODUCTIONS

Name /Institution/Title

How did you come to your position in IR?

Length of time in your position
Various Roles

- Receptionist
- Executive Secretary
- Assistant
- Office Manager
- Interviewer
- Trainer
- Interior Designer
- Communicator
- Researcher
- Coordinator
- Other Related Duties as Assigned
Transition

• There is a mountain of information you will encounter when moving into the IE/IR Department.
Primary Functions of IR

**Research**
“Institutional research is research leading to improved understanding, planning and operating of institutions of postsecondary education”
(Association for institutional Research)

**Reporting**
Are the institutions policies and programs effective in achieving the institution’s mission?
Petersons, Chronical of Higher Ed, National Community College Benchmarking Project
IPEDS, Perkins, DAX
(Potential for fines/reprimands)

**Assessment**
The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of its results.
(SACSCOC)
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
ACHE
Alabama Committee on Higher Education
www.ache.edu
Knowledge Base of an IR Professional

FAMILIARITY WITH FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

TECHNOLOGICAL, TECHNICAL, AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS

FAMILIARITY WITH INFORMATION RESOURCES
# My Experiences

## Workshops/ Online Training
- SQL Workshop
- SQL Training on Lynda.com
- Microsoft Publisher Training
- Perkins Briefing Workshop
- IPEDS Keyholder Essentials

## Conferences
- ALAIR
- SAIR

## AIR Data & Decisions Academy
- Fundamental Statistics for Decision Support
- Foundations of Data Management
SAIR,
Greenville SC
2019
Association of Institutional Research

https://www.airweb.org/

- Mission Statement:
  - AIR is a global association that empowers higher education professionals at all levels to utilize data, analytics, information, and evidence to make decisions and take actions that benefit students and institutions and improve higher education.

- A Holistic Approach to IR - Spring 2020, March 30 – May 24th
Working Relationships

- Independent
- Collaborative
Fall Facts 2018
Fall Facts 2017
What I Learned Along The Way

• **Fundamentals of Data Management**
  • Databases
    • **Relational** – database organized around tables in which info can be updated simultaneously
    • **Transactional** – live database that changes as transactions are added
    • **Data Warehouse** – A subset of Transactional data captured at determined times and frozen in flat files for analysis
  • Data Security Access, Confidentiality
    • **FERPA** – The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act – Establishes guidelines for data disclosure
    • **Solomon Amendment** – requires the sharing of student directory info with US Military & Atty. Gen.
  • Data Maintenance
    • Diligently check for errors
    • There are two sets of terminology identifying data, that which is used by the end user uses, and that which an analyst utilizes, you will need to become familiar with both.
Data Base

IT

Validation
Maintenance
Definitions

End Users

IE/IR

End Users
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What I Learned Along the Way

Data Request Fulfillment Considerations

• What question is being answered? May be different than what end user asked
• Who will see data? Internal vs. External
• Cross-checking Data
• Documenting Programs & Processes
  • Takes notes- define research question(s), determine where data (for analysis) is obtained, have a specific description of the data components or variables, a research plan detailing the who, what, when, and how for the project, maintain a copies reports produced.
• Cultivate a reputation of accuracy, honesty, and trust. (AIR Code of Ethics)
What I Learned Along the Way

Data Management Concepts

• Maintaining source information
• Maintain a Data Dictionary *
• Proofing Data
• Data Glossary

Best Practices

in no particular order...

- Meet Face to Face whenever possible – If something can be construed negatively, pick up the phone
- 10 minute team huddles – share projects, keeps everyone on board
- Identifying what I can’t do, ask for help
- Coordinate data requests, What can others do?
- Utilize Calendars and Whiteboards, to keep up with commitments/deadlines
- Give/Get the context to ensure that data is interpreted/used appropriately, Be able to explain where data comes from
- Use Headers or Footers to show when data was pulled where data is stored, or Departmental info..... (Prepared by Institutional Effectiveness)
Best Practices

- Verify, crosscheck data
- Managing Expectations, be timely & proactive
- Designated Training Time
- Personal Commitment
- Be service oriented
- Networking at conferences an on campus
- Create a Resource Binder
- Attend SAIR, ALAIR and AIR conferences if you can
- Ensure Consistency of Reporting – same #s going out
1. Establish priorities
2. Strive for attaining/maintaining valid and reliable data.
3. Distill complex or voluminous data into information that has utility for the report users. Remember your audience and get to know their needs.
4. Staying aware of institutional issues and perspectives is imperative
5. Assist data custodians in error detection and correction. Strive for attaining/maintaining harmonious rapport
6. Promote effective use of information produced by IR.
Man causes Google Maps chaos with a handcart and 99 phones
Becoming a Life Long Learner

- Expect the increasing appetite for information and analysis to continue.

- Be open to learning new information, and using new tools, techniques, systems, software and hardware as you move forward in your career.

- “The one-off of education followed by a career will no longer work; you must commit to constantly update your skill set.”
Questions?

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