

The Role of Institutional Research in a Comprehensive First-Year Assessment Program

Bobby Sharp and Heather Langdon

Appalachian State University

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Overview

...or how to talk to institutional researchers to make the best use of our services...

- steps to take
- factors affecting institutional researchers' contributions to assessment of the first year
- sample reports by institutional research

Learn About the IR Office on Your Campus

- Study the IR office's web site
- Interview the IR officer
- Inventory the reports already produced by the IR office and other offices (e.g., Registrar's Office) for state and federal agencies
- Present your priority needs for the IR office's services

Be Realistic about IR Capabilities: Three Models of IR Offices

- Small: 1-2 people focused on preparing required external reports; little time available for consultation and research
- Medium: 3-5 people with 1-2 available for consultation and research
- Large: 6 or more people, including assessment specialists

Note Factors Affecting IR Functions/Usefulness

- Location in the organizational structure
- Role and scope of the IR Office
- Knowledge, skills, and interests of the Director
- Clear communications with IR Office staff

Review Existing External Reports of Value to Assessment

- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) -
<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>
- Common Data Set (CDS)
- US News Report (includes CDS items)
- Data Exchanges

Learn the Language and Know the Common Tools of IR

- Mostly descriptive statistics (e.g., counts, percentages, multi-year averages)
- Some nonparametric inferential statistical analyses (e.g., chi square, correlation)
- Some parametric inferential statistical analyses (e.g., regression)
- Heavy use of statistical packages (e.g., SPSS, SAS)
- Some use of statistical features in Excel

Consider How to Best Use External Data Sources/Products

- NSSE
- Noel-Levitz (e.g., SSI, CSI)
- EBI-FYI, ACUHO-1
- CSXQ/ESEQ
- Disaggregation by IR may increase value to campus

Sample IR Reports/Products

- Learning Communities Reports
- Retention Tables
- Data Sets
- EBI-FYI Reports
- Freshmen Survey with Supplemental Items

Summary

- IR offices vary in size, skill levels, organizational location, availability
- Prioritize information needed from IR offices
- Numerous existing required reports may be of value to assessing the first year
- Consider getting raw data sets for analysis

Contacts and To See More Samples

Bobby Sharp and Heather Langdon

Appalachian State University

sharpbh@appstate.edu

langdonhh@appstate.edu

<http://www.irap.appstate.edu/>